



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



**It's just six months before
we'll see ya'll in San Antonio!!!**

Featured Stories

- **THE NEW USMC VTA HISTORY PROJECT!!!** Page 2
- **"RPG's on the DMZ"** – Page 35
- **San Antonio Reunion Registration Form** – Page 45

USMC VTA HISTORY PROJECT

For a myriad of very valid reasons the USMC VTA Board of Directors has unanimously voted that as of the 2013 reunion in San Antonio, the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association will be solely responsible for conducting & recording personal history interviews and that we will embark on a well-planned & coordinated effort to collect, sort and publish the history of Marine Corps tanks during the Vietnam War. The main vehicles for the publication of our history will be the Sponson Box news magazine and the VTA website. We have arranged for several hotel-supplied interview rooms and we have allowed ample time during the reunion for willing members to sign up for an interview session or two. We also plan to conduct group interviews with members of the same tank crew or same tank platoon who served together. If per chance anyone does not want to be interviewed during the reunion, we plan to have a program for an in-home interview process.

We would also hope that every reunion attendee bring a well-organized photo album of their photos from Vietnam. We'd also like you to bring any letters that you might still have which you mailed from Vietnam to family & loved ones. If you have a scrapbook of mementos & keepsakes from your time in-country, please bring it along. Even if you chose not to be interviewed, we'd love to have you share your photos, letters and keepsakes with us.

We will have a clip board at the Welcome Table for you to sign up for an interview session.

USMC VTA History Project Mission Statement and Goals

Mission Statement:

Capture, document and archive the history of USMC Tanks in the Vietnam War.

Goals:

1. Complete interviews and record the experiences of USMCVTA Members in the Vietnam War.
2. Collect photos with captions from members for inclusion in the History Project.
3. Publish the stories and photos in the Sponson Box.
4. Organize the materials collected chronologically and geographically.
5. Develop a website location where these materials that can be accessed electronically by Members.
6. Share this information with other USMC entities at the discretion of the USMCVTA Board of Directors.

Letter from the President

It is only six months until we gather together in San Antonio, Texas. It should be another wonderful reunion and if the attendance trend keeps going in the same direction that it has been going since our founding in 1999, this will be our biggest reunion yet. If there ever was a time that any reluctant member considers attending this should be the year. As I have said in the past, most first time attendees say, "God willing, I will never miss another VTA reunion!"

As an added component of the **Vietnam Tankers Association History Project**, we are pleased to announce that the folks from the Foundation are actively working on a new e-book project which, when completed, will include a number of articles that our members have previously submitted for publication in the Sponson Box. The VTA Board is honored & delighted that the stories will qualify to be reproduced in this all-inclusive publication. We have ask that Foundation consider the courtesy of attributing credit to the original publication so that anyone who might want to conduct further (more extensive) research on any given subject that they would have an opportunity to be directed to the original publication document.

When you consider that we are losing 15 to 25 members each year as they are permanently transferred to "The Great Tank Park in the Sky," in 25 years there will be virtually none of us left alive. The Foundation's e-book, containing our story, will live on and continue our legacy forever.

Semper Fidelis,

-John

*"I'd like to do it all over again. The whole thing. And more than that - more than anything -
I'd like to see once again the face of every Marine I've ever served with.*

--Lieutenant General Lewis Burwell "Chesty" Puller

The grunts pulled one in but he died. After that, I think maybe two days later, we got hit by a gook recoilless (rifle) while we were setting in. My TC, S/Sgt Pattison, had just gotten off the tank and was with the grunt CO when the first round came in. It got him and some of the grunts. I was a "Lance Coolie" at the time and instantly became the TC. The other guys with me on A-41 were Schossow, who was a PFC, and "Spider," the platoon "wrench", who was our tank's driver. Anyway, the gooks with the recoilless took another shot at A-41 which zipped right over us. I knew the next round was gonna be a direct hit but couldn't see the bastard. I called Sgt Spath, our new platoon sergeant, to see if he had seen them. I also told the grunt CO I was moving the tank to avoid getting hit. The grunt CO told me not to move. I thought, "F--k that! He wasn't in the tank!" I yelled to the grunts in the hole next to us that we were moving, and we did. We only moved enough to change our position. Anyway, Sgt Spath and I agreed we thought the recoilless was about 200 yards out and so we simultaneously fired HE rounds in that direction which got the prick! That night they called in arty around us. The next night, after we'd been moving all day, we'd just set in. Schossow and I had just gotten off of the tank to get some resupply water and C-rats when the gooks hit us again. All hell broke loose! They hit A-51 with four RPGs. Schossow and I somehow made it back to the tank without getting hit. It had just turned dark. I told "Spider" to let me know when the tracers were knee high and started working the .30 cal. We also fired off three quick canister rounds. While this was going on, the grunt CO came over the radio and told us the "tiger men" in the tank next to us had been hit pretty bad. We had our hatches closed when suddenly I hear this banging on the TC hatch and someone yelling, "Sandyyyyyy!!! Sandy!"

We were firing away making all sorts of noise. I yelled to Schossow, "The f'n' gooks know my name and are trying to get in the tank!" Then we both knew that it just couldn't be, so I opened the hatch and there was Sgt Billy Bishop, the TC of A-51, holding a rifle and full of shrapnel. I pulled him into our tank, called the grunt CO and informed him we had a wounded man. Somewhere in this whole story, they called "Puff" in which was awesome!!!

All I remember about the rest of that night is that we got Bishop out with the rest of the wounded and that we'd been told by the grunt CO that a "tiger man" had some of his grunts loading while he fired the guns on A-51.

I do remember, after things had calmed down, that it was totally black; we couldn't see shit. We heard a shot and a scream...I still can't forget it. We're all thinking, "F--k, here they come again!" But nothing happened. What had happened was that "Stinky" Davis yelled at the grunts in the hole next to his tank. When he got no answer, he got off his tank and the grunt shot him. Hey! What would you have done? Anyway, the next day we had arty and air strikes almost "Danger Close!" The gooks shot down one of the Phantoms. I have a picture of that plane going down! We wound up being out there for at least another week. Our tank drove over a 500 pound dud...but that's another story. I don't know how many grunt outfits we worked with on this

deal--seems like at least four. We heard Colson got a Bronze Star for that night which was awesome! I'll be calling Tom soon.

Oh, by the way, just to set the record straight, I recruited Harry Schossow...not "Sparrow."

Don "Sandy" Sanders, Alpha-41 '67 - '68
Elyria, OH
Phone: (440) 366-6157

From the Sgt Grit's Newsletter



Ed's Note: We were only able to publish the above photo of (then) Capt Joe Sanders.

I thought someone might be interested in these pictures. My three platoons were attached to various Marine grunt battalions and my Headquarters platoon was located inside the Regimental Headquarters perimeter less than a mile from China Beach in the Da Nang area. The Company CP had also been located there after we had been there a week or so and shortly before some VC slipped in between two outposts and shot up our water point with French .22 cal. submachine guns and threw hand grenades at our cooks' tents. One of my two cooks, a Corporal, was wounded by a grenade fragment in his elbow. He was the only Marine to return fire at the VC. My other cook was very lucky because he had a dud grenade land under the head of his cot. He never woke up during the excitement. The next morning, there was the grenade next to his duffle bag with his name clearly stenciled on the bag. That was quite a picture but I misplaced it. The only other casualties from this attack were the totally unnecessary loss of two helicopters and their crews when they collided on take off from the aircraft carrier before dawn. They were FRAG to pickup my corporal, the cook, whose wound was not serious and he could have waited.

The picture of the tanks in formation was later and on the hill we had moved to. We had received some promotions and held the company formation for that ceremony. This was prior to Operation Starlite.

The picture with the monkey and me was taken about the same time.

I had two platoons attached to grunt battalions involved on Starlite. Both platoon commanders were wounded and med evacuated. I had one tank commander killed. We lost one tank, C-24. I really hated to see the tank abandoned and left

behind but it was badly damaged and the 1st Tank Bn company commander who was in charge felt that it was too dangerous to try to extract the tank and get it back to the beach. Considering the circumstances, I am sure that was the correct call. I returned to CONUS shortly after Starlite, as I was on the tail end of a 13 month tour as I had brought C Company to Vietnam.

Joe Sanders, Major USMC (ret.)

CORRECTION

Editor's Note: In the story "No Hat? No Problem" that ran in the last issue, VTA member Al Esquivel was identified as a New Guy when John Wear entered the H&S Company tank crew's tent several months after the battle for Hue City. Due to the passage of time, John had forgotten that Al had been choppered into Hue City on the same CH-46 chopper that carried both of them to the battle. Therefore Al was not a New Guy... and John is very sorry for the blunder. See the photographic proof below.



"The Bandits"

Provisional Platoon, H&S Company, 3rd Tank Battalion

February 1968 - Hue City

Bottom Row: (L to R): Joe Rochelau*,
SSgt Fred Stanton, Lt Jim Georgaklis

Middle Row: Bradford "Goodie" Goodin, Sgt Daily,

"Scooby", "Willy" Williams, NK, Al Esquivel

Top Row: Mike Andregg, Al "Marty" Martinez,
John Wear, Carl "Flash" Fleischmann

*Before anyone has a cow because Joe appears to be sporting a Nazi swastika, it is actually a Buddhist symbol for good luck.

A C-Rats Recipe from the Past

If you cook the following in your steel pot, the C-Rats aren't too bad:

One can beef/potatoes

One can ham & mother f*ckers

Half bottle of hot sauce
VC rice....boiled with water x 3

Cooked over 1 oz of C4 till boiling...or, if with Koreans, substitute TNT for C4 but try to avoid breathing in nitrous oxide fumes... unless you have high blood pressure

Blow flies off spoon before spoon enters gizzard

Enjoy a 4-pack of Marlboro or Newport between bites.....

Richard K. Peksens

St. Petersburg, FL

Phone: (727) 520-9151

Ships in the Night...

I checked in at the VA med clinic that I go to when I noticed a fellow around my age with a Vietnam vet hat on. I sat down next to him and was about ask when and where he had been in-country, but he was called in to his appointment before I could speak up. His wife was still in the waiting room so I inquired as to her husband's service. She said he flew in a B-52. She also indicated that he was not inclined to talk about it much. She related that a friend took his place on a specific flight and, as it turned out, the plane made an emergency landing at the Da Nang Air Field and the bomber ended up across the road at the south end of the runway. She was not sure how his friend who had replaced him had died. Back when I was in-country, I went down to battalion HQ with my shotgun rider and, since it was hot that day, we wanted a cold beer. I knew that the "airdales" had a beer garden less the 40 yards from the end of the airstrip and, when we got on the runway road, there sat a B-52! What are the chances of running into someone like this after 40 plus years? It's happened twice to me now.

Pat Vinton

Olympia, WA

Phone: (360) 352-6234

FOUND ON FACEBOOK:

"After we rotate back to the World; we're gonna miss not having anyone around worth shooting" --Anonymous Marine during the battle for Hue City 1968.

Thank You!

To My Marine Corps Tanker Brothers: We want to express our sincere thanks for awarding our daughter, Page Carr, with a 2012 VTA Scholarship. We are very proud of her accomplishments and to have her recognized by our organization (which we hold in the highest regard) is heartwarming and over whelming.



We wanted to share

(Continued on page 10)

To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

Charles D Thatcher

On December 21, 2012, one of only three USMC tank battalion Navy Cross recipients from the Vietnam War, Charles D Thatcher, passed away while awaiting his second quadruple bypass surgery. He was buried with full military honors in the MJ Dolly Cooper Veterans Cemetery in Anderson, SC. His brother-in-law, Larry Best, who knew Charles since they were in high school, reported that Charles loved the Marine Corps & loved being a Marine for his entire life. He also said that everyone loved Charles and his family misses him tremendously.

Editor's note: I must have had four or five phone calls from some of Charles' family members making sure that I got word of his passing. I would imagine that the two folks below would love to hear from anyone who knew Charles and who might recall a story or another remembrance for them to hear.

Larry Best – His brother-in-law
Phone: (573) 683-8663

Carolyn Myers – His sister and primary health care person
Phone: (864) 314-8337

Editor's Note: We mentioned in the last issue of the S-Box that John Gardner of San Diego passed away. Here are more details from his widow:

John T Gardner

John passed away last weekend (Sept 1, 2012). He was buried in Hastings, MN, in the family plot. He served in Bravo Co., 1st Tanks in 1968, and I know that he'd be grateful to have any of you think of him from time to time. He was truly proud to have been a Marine.

Susan Gardner
San Diego, CA
Phone: (858) 693-1615

Tony Rusnak

I want to tell you that Tony Rusnak passed away on December 11, 2012. He has left a huge void in our family and my Tony will be missed greatly. We are planning a Memorial Service in April when all five of his children can come from the West Coast for burial in Holly, Michigan. Please pass this news along if needed.

Patty Rusnak
Warren, MI

Phone: (586) 268-8913

Editor's note: Tony is listed as having served with SLF-A, 3rd Tank Bn., '67 – '68

Ronald E Ingram

In December 2012, the Marine Corps League Detachment that I am Commandant of participated in the "Wreaths Across America" program at the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, CA.



This is where I also serve on the "Avenue of the Flags" committee. At our last reunion in San Diego, I



became aware that we have a brother tanker from 3rd Tanks buried there. His name is Ron Ingram. I had two of my Marines place a wreath on Ron's grave. Please let those who served with Ingram know that he may be gone, but as long as I can make it happen, come every future Christmas season he will have a wreath laid upon his grave with the appropriate military honor. being rendered.

Semper Fidelis,

Mike "Belmo" Belmessieri

FROM THE VITUAL WALL WEBSITE:

Ronald Ernest Ingram

Corporal
C CO, 3RD TANK BN, 3RD MARDIV, III MAF
United States Marine Corps
Home of record: Redwood City, California
(DOB) September 17, 1948 to (KIA) July 06, 1968

The Breach Block e-news letter reports:

George E. Bivens

George was age 65, passed away at his residence. He was born on April 15, 1947 in Willard, Ohio to the late Raymond Bivens and Flossie (Pine) Heintz. George served his country during the Vietnam War, where he was a tank mechanic. He was a jack of all trades and enjoyed cutting wood. His main priority in life was to make sure his family was provided for.

Also from the Breach Block e-news letter:

Daniel Lee Price

Dan passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer.

He was a Marine Corps veteran and served during Vietnam in the 1st Marine Division, 1st Tank Battalion. He also served with the National Guard while employed with the State of Tennessee Department of Transportation for 22 years. Daniel was past Post Commander with American Legion Gatlinburg Post #202. He was a member of Lt. Alexander Bonneyman Detachment # 924 Marine Corps League in Knoxville, and a charter member of Sevier County Marine Corp League, Sevier Detachment #1206. Dan assisted hundreds of veterans to obtain the benefits they deserved during his 12-year service as Veteran Affairs Officer of Sevier County.

From Leatherneck magazine:

Bob Griffin

LCpl Bob Griffin, 65, of Bethel, VT. He served in Vietnam during the 1968 Tet Offensive and saw heavy action as a lead tank driver. He was awarded the Purple Heart and was a member of the DAV. He owned Ver Montane Chimney Sweep in Vermont and raised livestock on his Bethel farm.

From Dick Carey:

Howard Cleveland "Wally" Wallace

Wally Wallace, 78, was born on Dec. 10, 1933, in Douglas County, Mo. He had a 23-year career in the Marine Corps and Air Force. He retired as a master sergeant at Luke Air Force Base. He was a tank mechanic and aircraft mechanic and served in the Vietnam War from 1964 to 1966.

Letter to the Editor
(Continued from page 7)

some background on Page and her brothers:

In 2003, Page accompanied me and my wife, Kathy, on a two week vacation to Vietnam where we toured the country from Hanoi to the Mekong Delta with overnight stays in Hue, Da Nang, Hoi-an and Saigon.

Page's oldest brother, Frank, was in the Marine Corps from 1994 – 1998. He was an air traffic controller and was the rank of sergeant at the time of his discharge.

Our youngest son, Garik, was in the Marine Corps from 2000 – 2005. He was in the Marine Air Wing and worked on some of the same equipment that his older brother had used. He also reported to some of the same officers! Garik was also a



sergeant at the time of his discharge. Sadly, Garik was killed in a tragic accident in March of 2007.

I am enclosing a picture of his memorial that is at our backwoods cabin in the area of Forks, Maine.

Cpl Frank Carr
"C" Co. 1st Tanks, Feb '68 – Nov '69
Pittston, ME
Phone: (207) 582-1609

Found On Facebook

VTA Honorary member Monica Himes Garzoni wrote: "In Feb. 1968, (I think it was the 18th or 19th) 10,000 infantrymen were sent off to Vietnam because of the Tet Offensive. Among these brave young men was my brother L/Cpl Bernard Himes. He was considered a tanker since his MOS was 2141. He used to comment in his letters home: "I wish I could go back to tanks." Those 10,000 men were from Camp Pendleton, California, and some were cooks, tankers, engineers (and office pagues), etc. They had just started running patrols after getting to Vietnam. My brother died on May 17, 1968 in Southern Quang Province, Vietnam, during an ambush. His unit was India Company, 3rd Bn, 27th Marines. They were on a search and destroy mission called "Operation Allen Brook". My brother Bern was a squad leader that day. Twenty other Marines lost their lives that day in the same ambush. God bless them all. They were so young...."

**Vietnam Tankers Association
Scholarship Program**

The Board of Directors of the VTA has implemented an academic scholarship program. A scholarship will be awarded each year in the amount of \$1,000. To be eligible, the applicant must be a spouse, child, stepchild, or grandchild of a VTA member who has a DD-214 on file with the VTA and whose membership dues are current. VTA Board of Directors are not eligible. The scholarship recipient's eligibility will remain in effect for up to four years of school, provided that the student continues to maintain an overall accumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.

Student Scholarship Criteria:

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

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

To obtain a scholarship application form, contact Jim Coan, 5374 E. Lantana Drive, Sierra Vista, AZ 85650, or e-mail him at zzjimco@aol.com.

Can you guess who the Marine tanker is on the left of this photo? The first person to contact John Wear with the right answer will receive a yet unnamed mediocre prize.



**GUESS WHO
Photo Contest**

Last Issue Winner

For some strange reason not one single VTA member made an attempt to identify the underwater gun carrier in the last issue of the Sponson Box!



Looking For

FINDING NEW MEMBERS IS SOMETIMES EASY

Bob Peavey writes: Larry Crazier, a non-member at the time, had just read my book, "Praying For Slack – A Marine Tank Commander in Vietnam", and went to our website. Larry was with 3rd Platoon, Bravo Co., 5th Tanks. He sent an e-mail to John Wear and included his phone number. He asked if John could have me call him over an incident mentioned in my book. John then sent me an e-mail with Larry's phone number saying Larry wanted to talk to me about an incident from my book involving a Robert Ford who was an ex-amtrucker picked up during our last minute mount-out from Camp Pendleton.

Naturally I called Larry right away; he wanted to know if this was the same Robert (Rob) Ford he spent convalescing time with in the hospital. I asked if the Ford he knew had lost a leg in June of 1968, to which Larry said, "Yes." He also expressed how much he would like to find Ford again. But we agreed, with a name as common as "Ford" it would be almost impossible to find him. Larry then thought he remembered that he thought Ford was from the Phoenix area. With that, I said I bet I can find him. It proved far easier than I would have ever imagined.

I went to Google, typed in "Robert Ford, Phoenix" and got about 12 hits along with the age of each one; only two were in their mid-sixties according to my search. I made a call to the first name and a young woman answered. I explained why I was calling and that I was calling all the Fords in the metro-Phoenix area looking for a Vietnam buddy. I never got the chance to mention that he was a Marine or a tanker.

I heard her say, "Rob? It's for you!"

He got on the phone and I asked him if he served with the Marines in Vietnam. He said, "Yes."

A tank unit I asked? "Why yes," he said surprisingly.

I knew then that I had the right Rob Ford. I didn't ask another question but rather told him, "You were with 2nd Platoon, Bravo Co., 5th Tanks supporting the Korean Marines in Hoi An. You took an LSD to Da Nang from Camp Pendleton. You were our truck driver."

He said, "Yes, how do you know that?"

I told him I had two people looking for him: Larry Cazier, his hospital buddy, and our platoon sergeant, then S/Sgt Robert Embesi (now retired Gunner CWO-4 Embesi).

Rob's reply was, "I didn't know anyone was looking for me!"

I added, "Embesi was the first one on the scene after you stepped on a booby trap; it was he who gave you morphine and carried you to the chopper."

He was speechless for a minute . . . and then replied that Embesi was the only name he could remember from the platoon after all this time. Rob Ford was the 2nd platoon's truck and Jeep driver and was an ex-amtrucker who was scooped up just before

Bravo Co. mounted out from Pendleton in February of 1968. Rob had stepped on a mine inside the Korean compound . . . but that's another story.

The amazing thing is that it took me all of five minutes to find him. I immediately shared Rob's phone number with Embesi who called him immediately. Embesi had always been haunted by Rob's last words as he was carried to the chopper, "Why me, Sergeant Embesi? Why me? I just got married?" I knew that Embesi had been trying to find Ford for 42 years due to the nature of the incident; it had bothered him to lose a man in a "safe" compound. The Koreans were sick bastards. But that's another story.

I then called Larry and gave him Ford's number and he was astounded. I followed up by sending Ford our platoon picture (which he was in) and a picture from Larry of both of them recuperating in the hospital.

Sometimes it can be a really small world.

(To find out the rest of the Korean story please read Bob Peavey's book, "Praying For Slack" and see what happened with the Korean Marines.)

THIS IS THE FOLLOW UP NOTE THAT LARRY CAZIER WROTE TO ROBERT FORD:



In the photo (L to R): Robert Ford, Frank Cabral and Larry Cazier

Hi Robbie, you may not like being called "Robbie" but that's the name that I remember you by.

Before last night it, was probably September or October of 1968 since I last spoke to you. Although I tried to find you on Facebook many times, I wasn't able to. If you're on FB then I am there under "Larry Cazier". As far as I know there is only one. It's a crazy set of circumstances that finally led to you. Bob Peavey really got excited when I told him I knew who you were when I read in his book about when you got wounded. With the info I

knew about --your first name and that you lived in Phoenix--Bob got busy and started making phone calls. I am glad he did. You'll get a kick out of his book "Praying for Slack." It's the story of our Vietnam experience including the mount out from Los Flores and the three miserable weeks on the ship.

If you can possibly swing it, please plan on attending the get together in San Antonio, TX, in October. It will be the first time I have attended a gathering of fellow veterans. Either way, I want to see you. I know we will both be different from the mental image we have from the last time we saw each other. It's been most of our adult lives after all. It was a pleasure talking to you on the telephone, and I will continue to be in touch.

Your friend from the old days,

Larry Cazier

DONALD C MAY



(Left to right): LCpl Koski, Unknown and Cpl Don May

Rick Lewis read Clyde Hoch's account of Corporal Donald C May in the last issue of the Sponson Box and seemed to recall the name. He dug into his photo album and found the above photo from back at the 1st Tanks tank ramp while performing "Q" Service on his tank. Does anyone recognize May?

Here is Rick's reply:

I sat down last night and poured over more pictures trying to come up with names and dates. Cpl May was the loader on C-25, 1st Tanks on the night of Jan 15, 1967, when Kilo 3/1 was over run and our Heavy Section Leader, Sgt John Bartusevics, disobeyed orders that he had to stay in the battalion compound... but instead headed out to help the over run grunts. At the time we could not find the Plt Sgt, Gunny Jones, so May took the loader's position. There is good story about that harrowing night for which I have contacted Bartusevics asking him to come to the reunion this year so he & I can re-write how the three tanks saved the grunts asses (again). Bartusevics was awarded a Silver Star for that night's action.

Editor's Note: As an aside, Don May's son, **Donald C May, Jr.** was a Staff Sgt with 1st Tanks during Operation

Iraqi Freedom. He was the tank commander of the hapless M-1 Abrams tank that went off of the road and fell upside down into the Euphrates River. All four crewmen perished in the accident.



Above is a picture of a 1LT who was the XO of C Company, 1st Tanks. I know it was taken in '67 but that's all I can recall. Maybe somebody remembers him? If so, please contact either Rick Lewis or John Wear.

Rick Lewis, 1st. Sgt. USMC (ret)

San Diego, CA

Phone: (858) 735-1772

FROM THE LAST SPONSON BOX - LCPL R.H. WOODRUFF

Pete Ritch has provided us with the two photos (below) as a back up for his Looking For LCpl R.H. Woodruff that we posted in the most recent issue. If you recognize this man, please give Pete a call.

Pete Ritch

St George Island, FL

Phone: (850) 734-0014



R.H. Woodruff

GUNNY RAMOS

I am looking for Gunny Ramos who was with me in Bravo Co., 1st Tank Bn. in Chu Lai, 1965-1966.

The other person I'm trying to locate is: Allan W. Lamb

(Captain, Co. B, 1st Tank Bn., 1965-1966 in Chu Lai)

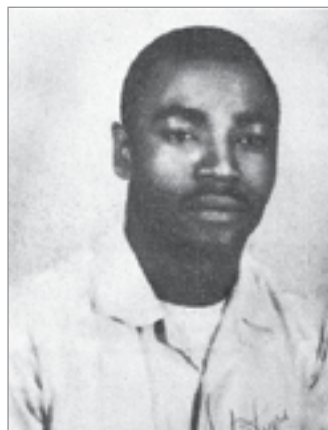
(Major, HQ Co., 3d Tank Bn., 1966 in Da Nang)

(Colonel, Marine Liaison, 1968 at Fort Knox, KY)

Last known location is Utah.

Jim Renforth
7210 Worchester Ct.
Hudson, FL 34667
Phone: 813-453-9962

JODIE LEWIS



Need help to find where Jodie Lewis, Sergeant, United States Marine Corps, was wounded in Vietnam. Jodi is trying to get a VA disability rating. Please call Gunner Bob Embesi at (406) 821-3075 with any information.

TANKERS IDENTIFIED!

The tanker on the left in the picture is Eddie Mannix from New Jersey. I have been looking for him for 20+ years with no success. If anyone from the VTA knows where Eddie is, I would appreciate you contacting me. On the right in the picture is L/Cpl Knutson, but I can't remember first name.



These two tankers were reloading their gun tank to go out to "Fox Hill" which was one of the forward bases for 2nd Bn / 1st Marines. The picture was taken early in 1969 at C Company, 1st Tanks' rear area. We were compounded with 2/1 and an amtrac unit. I am not sure which amtrac unit. Recently, after seeing another photo on my Facebook page, a corpsman from 2/1 sent me an e-mail and he told me that this picture was taken at a place called "Camp 413",

which was on the MSR from the Marble Mountain area going west. Mannix and I were also together at A Company, 5th Tanks on Okinawa before we went to Vietnam. There were about six of us that transferred from A Co., 5th Tanks to B Co., 1st Tanks in 1968. We all extended 6 months and when we came back in Jan 1969 we were sent to C Co., 1st Tanks.

For any of our VTA brothers: My pictures from Vietnam are on my Facebook page under "DC Scrivner". Please take a look and if you see yourself or someone that you know, then send me the identification names since I don't remember all your names.

Doug Scrivner
Hamilton, OH
Phone: (513) 887-6266

TANKERS IDENTIFIED! (AGAIN)

I got a phone call the other day from Freddie Martinez. He had just received his copy of the S-Box and was able to identify the Marine on the right in the above photo as "Knutson." Freddie relayed the following story that included this Marine:

I was a crewman on the Bravo Company, 1st Tanks blade tank at Hill 55. Our platoon got called out on an operation to help an outpost of doggie Green Berets that had gotten overrun. As we headed out toward the mountains, we were crossing a river. Each tank was tracking the tank in front of it. The last tank in our line started to sink into the muddy river bottom and, because it was the monsoons, the rain-swollen river began to rise. The crew of the sinking tank began to pull all of their gear and equipment off of the tank and, eventually, everything including all of the ammo and the radios were taken off. Our platoon sergeant asked for volunteers to stay on the shore of the river near the abandoned tank to keep the gooks from messing with it. As it turns out, Knutson and I got chosen and it ended up being the longest night of my life. It was pitch black as we sat in the pouring rain. The hordes of hungry, blood-sucking mosquitoes were horrible and we had no repellent. Neither of us had a wrist watch, so we could not tell what the time was. And since I did not know Knutson very well, I did not feel a lot of trust for him, so I stayed awake all night in the pouring rain. The next morning, when it finally got light enough to see, if you looked toward the abandoned tank, all that was showing was about two feet of antenna. A few hours later, the Marine engineers showed up and they blew the tank in place.

We were out in the field for two weeks and we ran out of C-rations, so I sent "Chico" Famularo down to the village below our position and he brought back two chickens and a beer can full of uncooked rice. I killed and cleaned the chickens, got a pot of water boiling with C-4 explosive, and when the food was cooked, we had one of the best meals that I have ever eaten! The monsoon rains finally stopped, and they sent a resupply chopper with a bunch of those thermal containers (Marmite cans) full of pea soup. I am a Chicano and never had pea soup before, but let me tell you, it was goooooood!

Freddie Martinez
Edinburg, TX
Phone: (956) 686-7218

(Continued on page 18)

What Members Are Doing

A Photo from our 2011 San Diego Reunion

In order to illustrate what kind of a great time that we have during a typical fun-filled VTA reunion, this is Bobby Joe Blyth on the flight line at MC Air Station Miramar.



Here's What Ric & Judy Have Been Up to:

My wife and I love to travel and we were on a cruise of the Baltic Sea and northern Europe back in July of 2011. We had stopped for two days in Oslo, Norway. We were wandering around the city on the second day when we found the Akershus Fortress with a nice military museum. This picture was taken of an M48A3 with a 105 mm gun. I always thought that "more gun" was better.



And this is a photo of us at the Shibaozhai Pagoda in Shibaozhai China in September 2011.

We have not talked since the San Diego reunion. We had a great time and you guys did an outstanding job. We are so looking forward to San Antonio, Texas, in 2013

"Ric" and Judy Langley
Lompoc, CA
Phone: (805) 736-2134

I Love My Job!

This is proof that "Doc" Hackemack was out performing in many different ways at the 2012 Tomball German Christmas Fest. His comment was: "What? You mean that I get paid, too?"



The Apple Does Not Fall Far From "The Tree"

Forgive me for this note, but I wanted to share sort of a "continuing legacy" story. As some of you may recall, I picked up the moniker "Tree" while in Viet Nam. Now my son Matt has served in the U.S. Navy for about six years

before being picked up as a Navy Mustang. He attended OCS from September to November this year, and then he was commissioned (Navy-owned and Marine Corps-trained). He and I were talking when he mentioned the fact that most of the OCS candidates had begun to call him "Oak Tree." Many of you remember that I am 6'7" tall and my son is 6'9", so not only is it appropriate for his nickname, but it is legacy-based. I have informed him and his group on board the USS Nimitz that the Marine Corps is the Men's Department of the US Navy, and don't you know that almost got me thrown overboard?!!

Frank "Tree" Remkiewicz
Oakdale, CA
Phone: (209) 848-4433

At The Wall in DC

Some of our Avon, CT Vietnam VFW post members (including yours truly) attended the November 2012, 30th Anniversary ceremonies for "The Wall" (aka Vietnam Veterans Memorial) in Washington, DC. We each had the high honor of reading twenty-five names of our brothers-in-arms that did not make it back home from that war. We plan to do this every five years!

Bottom row (L to R): VTA member Bob Skeels (3rd Tanks, '69); Brian O'Donnell (Army); Scott Thomas (Navy); Bill Newman (Army). Top Row: Jim Hutton (Air Force); Rich Eckerman (Navy); Bill Samol (Army); and Tim Curran (1st Mar Div - CAP).



Bob Skeels
Simsbury, CT
Phone: (860) 658-2164

Bob adds: I also met the below Vietnam Marine tanker and his group of tankers from Arizona at The Wall this past November in DC. I gave them the VTA website address and told them all to join the USMCVTA. Now it seems like they did!!! You owe me a drink in San Antonio!



New VTA member: Joe Vernon

Memorial Day 2012



I thought you (and others) might enjoy seeing this photo of our niece's 8 year old son, Jack Plaia's tribute on Memorial Day 2012. His Mom videotaped his touching narration of "America's White Table" for her Uncle Jeff (Griffith ~ 3rd Tank Battalion). We thought it was wonderful that she is teaching her young children about our missing & fallen soldiers.

Mary Beth Griffith wife of
Jeff "The Griff" Griffith
Dingmans Ferry, PA
Phone: (570) 828-1338

Before & After



The first picture was taken in December 1962 in the barracks at Windward, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Second Platoon, Charlie Company, had just moved from the Boy Scout Camp, where we had spent three months living in bunkers, into the barracks.

The second picture was taken in December, 2011 at my house in Tallahassee.

The differences between the two pictures are almost 50 years and 50 pounds. The utility shirt may be the same one in both pictures, but I doubt it!!!

Dick Jugenhimer
Tallahassee, FL
Phone: (850) 893-3295

Who's That with the .50 Cal?

I went to my brother Jim's reunion (1/7 Vietnam) in Florida last year, and we went to a Vietnam War Museum there in Orlando. They had several tracked vehicles, planes and helicopters on display. They also had a neat firebase model set up inside a building with bunkers, tanks, barbed

wire, and everything you would expect to see on a firebase. It was pretty cool.



That is an APC I'm in. Those are all dummy .50 cal. rounds. We were led to the museum by a Viet Nam veteran's motorcycle group.

Jan "Turtle" Wendling
Mansfield, OH
Phone: (419) 566-0692

From an Entry in Facebook:

Jeffrey Griffin wrote: "Marines are trained to be killers regardless of their secondary profession in the Corps. They yearn to be in combat! When the D.I. said that I was going to tank school, I jumped for joy to think I was going to be a tanker. I was so proud to think that I was going to be a member of such an elite group of Marines! Yesterday was my 48th anniversary of joining the Corps. To think that there was a war going on in Vietnam and that I was going to war! I was ready to give my life to my country for something that I believed in to this day. A combat Marine! I served 18 months in the Nam to be with my boys, a sergeant at 18 years old! I wish that I was able to be in the Middle East to fight in a different climate even though I worked in Saudi Arabia twice! I'm proud to be a Marine!"

Jeffrey "Griff" Griffith
Dingmans Ferry, PA
Phone: (570) 828-1338

3rd Herd Reunion

Once again, the crusty ole' salts of 3rd Platoon, Bravo Co, 1st Tanks, RVN '66, '67, assembled in St Charles, MO, May 16-20 for a reunion and re-enactment of events that exist only in our minds. Many years have passed, but the memories are still sharp and clear - give or take a lie or two!

Ron & Jo Davidson were the prime organizers and battle planners of the operation. Because they had done an excellent job two years ago planning the operation, it was only fitting to continue with a highly successful battle plan. Assembling in St Charles was not without incidents and casualties along the way.

Mike McCabe had to rendezvous his tank, B-32, camouflaged as a RV, with Ron Davidson's tank, B-34, camouflaged as a RV, and effect a rescue of Ron from the VA Facility in Nashville, TN.



L-R; Harlan Langlitz, Mike McCabe, Mike Shaw, Stan Olenjack, Glenn Barnett, David Walters, Paul Tate, George Shaw- Kneeling; Ron Davidson, Rod Henderson, Tim Hackett

Several members of the platoon, Dick Traiser, Tony Wills, and Harry Herren had health issues arise just prior to deployment and John Beck found himself encircled by the enemy called WORK!

We enjoyed our operation in St Charles and plan on using this site as a rally point again. Our battle plan called for exploring the "ville" and surrounding communities, and sampling of the food and spirits of the area. An excursion run across the mighty Mississippi River to commandeer a supply of \$1 hamburgers and tons of shrimp at "Fast Eddie's" in East Alton, IL, was successfully executed, with only minor casualties from over indulgence!



During a reconnaissance run, a tank was spotted and taken over by the 3rd Herd. Although it was a M-60 Army tank, we were confident that we could press it into action. We boarded the tank and it was only with the insistence of our Sgt Majors (wives) that we refrained from cutting the locks on the hatches and driving it away. We must admit, rather than jumping up on the tank, we enlisted the use of a step ladder - we didn't want to show off to the natives!

MORE ON THE DRAGON SEARCH LIGHT COVER



I got a phone call the other day from Art Allen from Port Orange, FL. He had just received his copy of the S-Box and was able to identify the tank on Page 18 of the last issue of the S-Box. Art relayed the following story:

I was stationed with 3rd Tanks on Okinawa back in the early 1960's. We went on a WESTPAC float on the USS Alamo. The tank with the dragon on the searchlight cover is my tank that we called it "The Dragon Wagon." It was the blade tank from Bravo Company. While we were on the cruise, I got a sailor to paint the picture of that dragon on the searchlight cover. Later, I got deployed to Vietnam and I was with 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Tanks at Chu Lai, but the blade tank was already in-country.

Also, I think that the cover photo on the most recent issue of the Sponson Box that shows the Marine ground guiding the tank onto the USS Alamo was (then) Platoon Sgt. Pete Frano.

Art Allen
Ft. Orange, FL
Phone: (386) 882-4020

AND EVEN MORE ON THE DRAGON SEARCH LIGHT COVER

The picture is of 2nd Platoon, Charlie Co, 1st Tank Bn in 1966 when we were attached to B Co, 1st Tanks. We are on an operation sweeping just the other side of Marble Mountain. We

called the search light dragon image "Little Dino." We replaced the old 18" round spotlights by mid-66. Soon after the light was replaced they added the new vision ring and bracket to keep the



50 cal from shooting out the new Xenon light. I was in the gunner slot by then.



Check out my picture as I was the driver on this one.

Rick Lewis, 1st. Sgt. USMC (ret)
San Diego, CA
Phone: (858) 735-1772

V. A. News & Updates

For more VA information please go to our website
www.USMCVTA.org

VA Pension Program:

VA's pension program provides monthly benefit payments to certain wartime Veterans with financial need, and their survivors. As Veterans and survivors consider applying for these benefits, VA would like to share important information about the pension program and organizations offering assistance with pension applications. Towards this effort the VA has released a new and updated fact sheet on VA pension programs that includes important information for veterans, survivors and their families. The fact sheet explains who is eligible to receive pension benefits, and who is eligible for "aid and attendance." The document also provides a website list of accredited representatives that are available to assist claimants with preparation, presentation and prosecution of a claim for VA benefits. The information is accessible in the attachment to this Bulletin title, "VBA Pension Program" or via VBA's website link at http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/docs/PensionProgramInfo_final.pdf

[Source: VA Secy Vet Group Liaison Officer Kevin Sector 22 Oct 2012 ++]

VA Pension/Disability:

VA Pension by definition says that the person does not have and can not hold gainful employment due to disability, and their total income is below the threshold set by law and regulation. The rules for working on a VA Disability are not so cut and dry and vary with the type of service compensation and each veteran's circumstances. There are several types of VA Service Compensation, 100% disability for work purposes.

1. 100% Scheduler

Rated 100% for physical disabilities based on the VA CFR schedule. Disabled veterans on a 100% scheduler disability can work without limitations except where the definition of the disability makes the presumption that the veteran is unable to hold a job.

2. 100% TDIU – Individual Unemployability

You are only allowed to be marginally employed. You can only make a certain amount of money, and if you make more than that marginal amount of money, your IU rating will be reviewed for possible reduction in your current rating!

3. 100% Scheduler for PTSD or other psychiatric disability

Veterans receiving 100% disability for PTSD may not work, as that is part of the definition of 100% disabled by psychiatric disability. The definition of 100% PTSD is, "Total occupational and social impairment due to such symptoms as: gross impairment in thought processes or communication; persistent delusions or hallucinations; grossly inappropriate behavior; persistent danger of hurting self or others; intermittent inability to perform activities of daily living (including maintenance of minimal personal hygiene); disorientation to time or place; memory loss for names of close relatives, own occupation, or own name."

4. 70% TDIU – Individual Unemployability

The PTSD 70% definition is, "Occupational and social impairment, with deficiencies in most areas such as work, school, family relations, judgment, thinking, or mood, due to such symptoms as: suicidal ideation; obsessional rituals which interfere with routine activities; speech intermittently illogical, obscure, or irrelevant; near-continuous panic or depression affecting the ability to function independently, appropriately and effectively; impaired impulse control (such as unprovoked irritability with periods of violence); spatial disorientation; neglect of personal appearance and hygiene; difficulty in adapting to stressful circumstances (including work or a work like setting); inability to establish and maintain effective relationships." You can see that even at 70%, employment is not consistent with the rating, and at 100%, 'inability to perform activities of daily living' and 'Total occupational and social impairment' says that work is an issue. Having this problem implies a person is unable to work. Veterans should exercise caution, even if working as a volunteer. If the VA determines that the nature and amount of unpaid work that you are performing demonstrates that you are not unemployable, TDIU can be revoked. Anytime the VA revokes a TDIU rating, the amount of disability compensation drops to the level of the veteran's actual rating under the rating schedule.

There are laws and regulations that protect VA disability ratings that have been in place for certain periods of time. If a VA award of service connection for a disability has been

in effect for ten years or more, absent evidence of fraud in applying for compensation for that disability, the VA may not revoke service connection but can reduce the rating percentage. Similarly, if a specific rating percentage has been in effect for 20 years or more, absent evidence of fraud, the VA may not revoke service connection nor reduce that rating.

Bottom line, veterans assigned a VA disability rating are subject to reevaluation based on employment or improved condition. Lowering a rating is possible up to a point and the criteria for lowering can vary with each veteran's circumstances. The type and duration of any work is a major factor in the VA's decision on whether to lower or remove a preassigned percentage. If in doubt, check with your assigned primary physician and/or local VARO for clarification on any limitations placed on you regarding employment or voluntary endeavors. [Source: <http://forums.military.com>, vetsfirst.org & CalVet Oct 2012 ++]

Vet Benefits (Federal):

In addition to the pensions and benefits to which you may be entitled because of both public and private employment, you may also be eligible for certain benefits based on your military service. The following is a summary of veteran's benefits and what you need to know about them:

Major Veteran Benefit Programs -- <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#1>

PTSD Support -- <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#PTSD>

Important Documents · <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#2>

Eligibility -- <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#3>

Application -- <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#4>

Related Links -- <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#5>

Major Veteran Benefit Programs. The Department of Veterans Administration operates a number of programs providing financial, medical and other assistance to veterans. For Americans who received an honorable or general discharge, there are 4 major benefit programs:

Disability compensation · <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veteran-disability-compensation.html>

Veteran's pension programs · <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-pensions.html>

Free or low-cost medical care through VA hospitals and medical facilities <http://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/veterans-health-care-overview.html>

Education Programs · <http://www.military.com/education/gi-bill/learn-to-use-your-gi-bill.html>

There are also benefit programs concerning: Housing and Home Loan Guarantees; Job Training; Small Businesses and

business loans (Through Small Business Administration); Counseling; Burials and Memorials; Franchise Opportunities (Vet Fran); PTSD Support - National Center for PTSD Website.

PTSD Support:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a disorder that occurs after a life-threatening event, such as personal assault, natural disaster, or military combat. The affects of PTSD can be debilitating with symptoms ranging from severe nightmares and flashbacks to insomnia and increasing social isolation. It is common for service members to deal with post-combat depression, insomnia, nightmares and family issues; however, it's the duration and intensity that differentiates PTSD. Each military branch has programs for its service members, and the Department of Veterans Affairs offers free counseling sessions. For more information on PTSD or VA assistance, go to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder website <http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

Important Documents:

If you are applying for a VA benefit for the first time, you must submit a copy of your service discharge form (DD-214, DD-215, or for WWII veterans, a WD form), which documents your service dates and type of discharge, or gives your full name, military service number, branch and dates of service. Your service discharge form should be kept in a safe location accessible to the veteran and next of kin or designated representative. Your preference regarding burial in a national cemetery and use of a headstone provided by VA should be documented and kept with this information. The following documents will be needed for claims processing related to a veteran's death: (1) veteran's marriage certificate for claims of a surviving spouse or children; (2) veteran's death certificate if the veteran did not die in a VA health care facility; (3) children's birth certificates or adoption papers to determine children's benefits; (4) veteran's birth certificate to determine parents' benefits.

VA Benefits Eligibility:

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based on discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, the Environmental Services Administration, or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Current and former members of the Selected Reserve: You may be eligible for certain benefits, such as home loan guarantees and education, if you meet the time-in-service and other criteria.

Honorable and general discharges qualify a veteran for most VA benefits. Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits. Veterans in prison and parolees may be eligible for certain VA benefits. VA regional offices can clarify the eligibility of prisoners, parolees and individuals with multiple discharges issued under differing conditions. Application: Veterans and their family members who wish to contact the Department

regarding a claim, benefits, or services, may fill out question forms on the website (<http://www.va.gov>), or call VA Toll-Free: (800) 827-1000 – Phone (800)827-4833 - TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) [Source: Military.com Oct 2012 ++]

Vet Pro Bono Assistance:

There are numerous organizations which provide medical and social services for Veterans, and there are guides for these organizations and services, but there has been no comprehensive system to provide free legal services to Veterans until now. The VALOR Guide in six volumes gathers together in a single reference all known providers of free legal services for California veterans in order to provide vets assistance with the legal services which they need and have earned through their military service to this country. The volumes cover Northern California, Central California, Los Angeles County, Orange County, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, and San Diego and Imperial Counties. The guide addresses that need by bringing together a network of law firms, clinics and other providers who are dedicated to providing free legal services for Veterans. Not every legal clinic or military legal assistance office can handle every type of legal problem, but by working together they can provide the right service in the right location. The VALOR Guide is designed to make finding the right legal provider quick and easy. Legal providers are listed in the guide by practice area, by location, and alphabetically.

- If you know the particular type of legal advice you require, you can use the 'Index of Legal Providers by Practice Area' to find a legal provider with expertise in handling your particular problem.
- If you would prefer to find all the legal providers in a particular location, you can use the guide's 'Index of Legal Providers by Location', which arranges legal providers conveniently according to their location within your geographic area.
- If you know the name of the provider and want more information about that provider, the guide's 'Alphabetical Index of Legal Providers' contains an alphabetical list of legal service providers in your geographic area including important details regarding their hours of operation, types of services provided, and any applicable restrictions or limitations on those services.

To view the 2012-2012 Central California Edition of the guide, refer to the attachment (PDF Only) to this Bulletin titled, "The Valor Guide". For inquiries regarding this VALOR Guide, including corrections and requests for copies, please contact: Adam Siegler, Greenberg Traurig, LLP, 1840 Century Park East, Suite 1900, Los Angeles, CA 90067-2121 Tel: 310.586.6536, Cell: 310.777.1111, Email: sieglera@gtlaw.com [Source: [Veterans Advocate](http://VeteransAdvocate.com) Msg. | [Carl Young](http://CarlYoung.com) | 26 Dec 2012 ++]

DFAS Direct Deposit:

The Department of the Treasury has announced that all

payments from the federal government must be made electronically and not by paper check beginning March 1, 2013. This means most military retirees and annuitants receiving paper checks will be required to sign up for direct deposit. This will save the American taxpayers about \$120 million every year. Each check costs \$1.04 while each electronic payment only costs 8 cents. With direct deposit, DFAS sends your payment straight to your bank account. Direct deposit gives you immediate access to your money on pay day, and it eliminates the risk of lost or stolen checks, forged signatures and identity theft. There are three ways to start direct deposit. Before you enroll, you'll need to gather information including your financial institution's routing transit number and account number. Then do one of the following:

- Send a signed Fast Start Direct Deposit Form available at <http://www.fms.treas.gov/eft/2231.pdf> to Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military Retired Pay, P.O. Box 7130, London, KY 40742-7130;
- Use your myPay account at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx> to set up a direct deposit to your checking or savings account; or
- Call the DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay Customer Care Center at 800-321-1080.

Don't have a bank account? Find a bank or credit union in your area that is reputable and provides the services you need at little or no cost. And make sure they offer FDIC coverage of your account and accept direct deposit. Military members or civilian employees paid by DFAS should contact their base finance office, employer's Customer Service Representative (payroll liaison), or human resources office, to start direct deposit if they're unable to access myPay. Those needing additional assistance can call DFAS customer service at 1-800-321-1080 (for retirees and annuitants) or 1-888-332-7411 (for military and civilian employees). It can take 30 to 60 days from the day we receive your enrollment for direct deposit to start. If, after enrolling, you receive a paper check, cash or deposit it as you normally would. DFAS will send you a notification when we process your enrollment. [Source: [DFAS Newsletter](http://DFAS.com) 19 Dec 2012 ++]

Retiree IDs Now Have Expiration Date:

Blue retiree identification cards issued prior to December, 2012 had the word "Indef" instead of an expiration date. Since December, retiree cards issued have an expiration date effective the day before the retiree's 65th birthday. Although benefits will not automatically expire, some changes will take effect based on Medicare eligibility. Retirees who have the new card showing the expiration date will get a replacement card showing the indefinite status once they turn 65. Retirees who need to renew their retiree ID card can go to the nearest Real-time Automated Personnel Identification System office (military personnel section), or call their nearest RAPIDS facility for assistance and guidance.

What Vietnam Taught Me

Editor's Note: Unfortunately, this may be the last installment of our series called "What the War in Vietnam Taught Me" because there appears to be little or no interest due to the lack of participation by our membership.

PTSD: Don't Leave Vietnam Without It Bad Conduct Discharge - or not?

BY WOODY WOODWORTH

WHEN I WAS IN VIETNAM IN THE SPRING OF 1965, I GOT MYSELF INTO serious trouble. It was so bad that the Marine Corps put me on a ship and sent me back to San Diego, CA for a Bad Conduct Discharge. Let me back up a year or so and mention that I had been transferred from Co. G 2/6/2 a USMC Rifle Company located at Camp Le Jeune to 3rd Marine Division Okinawa.

Side note: Most Marines after doing 2 years in a line outfit usually get a transfer to something other than another infantry outfit but I wasn't lucky in that department. I got another grunt outfit 1/9/3.

Once I reported to 9th Marines HQ, they sent me TDY from Camp Hanson to Camp Butler. There I became a special Military Policemen and was used for special assignments. I was required to do a lot of muscle jobs to my fellow Marines. In the Marine Corps every thing is done in threes including beating up on a fellow Marine. I was never in charge when I first took the Job and I worked for a Gunnery Sgt. and a Warrant Officer.

They liked me and used to give me a lot of time off. I always followed orders and tried not to disciple anyone to the point of death.

I worked with several A/C, D/C Marines or bisexual. It was forbidden in the USMC but I never ratted on them as long as they didn't molest me. I had been sexually molested in G2/6/2 and I didn't report it because my squad leader transferred me to a new section. He had an A/C/D/C buddy that said I attacked him so it was a stalemate. This event

caused me to deal with prostitutes and I had caught VD five different times.

Shortly before I was sent to Vietnam, I was transferred to Sub unit #1, Headquarters Co, Headquarters Battalion, 3rd Marine Division (Reinforced) FMF Attached to 3/9/3.

The first time I contracted V.D. I was counseled and put on 30 days medical restriction. The second time I was counseled by the company commander. He threatened to write a letter to my mother and he gave me 60 days medical restriction. The third time I concealed my VD and had a Navy Corpsman supply me with antibiotics. Then I caught it a fourth time and I lost my contact with the Navy Corpsman because he was charged with manslaughter. When I caught it again the Marine Corps put me on a ship and sent me back to San Diego, CA for a bad conduct discharge.

To my surprise an office pogue asked me if I wanted to reenlist. I said that I was sent back to the USA from Vietnam and would be awaiting a BCD, so I answered him, "How could you ask me about a reenlistment?" The office pogue replied "According to your 201 file there is no record of any BCD forthcoming.

You have three choices you can either extend, reenlist or be transferred to the USMCR with an Honorable DD- 214. "What do you want?" I'm not the smartest Jarhead in the world but I'm not brain dead and I want to get the h--- out of here. I knew with a BCD I'd have to lie on all work applications in the civilian world the rest of my life.

I also realized that there was a great chance of not being able to father children as a result of VD. I was right because I wound up about 90% sterile.

A few days after being *honorably released* from the Marine Corps, I flew home to Buffalo, NY and soon reported to a VA representative in the county seat of Lockport, NY. The VA representative was a WWII Navy Veteran who I highly respected but he didn't show me any respect for the four years that I had served in the USMC. I asked him politely if he would look over my DD-214 and let me know if I had any government benefits coming to me. He said "No you have nothing." I repeated this back to him a second and third time and then he got irritated with me then raised his voice and told me in strong field language, "Get your sorry a-- across the street and file that DD-214 and get the h--- out of my office!" I asked him where do I report to the USMCR? He replied "Can't you read it says here Garden City Long Island NY and Buffalo, NY is out of the question because it is filled up with guys like you!" So I left his office believing him for approximately 40 years.

I suffered with PTSD and never had any idea of how to treat it. With my Honorable DD-214 I was able to get many jobs but I never could hold on to them very long. I was not lazy and always showed up for work but I had a bad temper and found myself getting into fights with other employees and then I was fired from the job. I managed not to get arrested and kept out of jail.

It wasn't easy for me to get back into the military but I worked hard and retired after 24 years of service. I completed 8 years in the United States Marine Corps Reserves and was fired in my 12th year because I didn't make Staff Sergeant. They submitted a negative fitness report to Washington, DC stating that my leadership was unsatisfactory because I had the lack of force. In addition I completed one year in the United States Air Force Reserves on a try one program. Finally I finished up my military career and the New York Army National Guard.

My military career was very difficult for me and I found some peace hanging around Combat Vets like myself. The Combat Vets frequently counseled each other and we were able to work out our problems.

My wife and I were blessed and had one son. When he grew up he joined the Army and has a military career the same as mine. He also is a combat veteran of

Afghanistan and Iraq. About the time I retired from the army, my wife noticed that my personality changed since I was suffering from PTSD and didn't realize it after I was taking my frustrations out on her verbally.

In the year of 2000 a Vietnam buddy that also suffered from PTSD suggested to me that I open up a government claim. After a lot of help from my wife and many counselors and psychiatrists at the VA hospital in Buffalo NY it was proven that I had PTSD before going to Vietnam, during Vietnam and after Vietnam and it was all connected to the military.

First I was rated at 20% disability then after an appeal it went to 40%, and then one more appeal it went to 60%. Then the government awarded me another 40% since I was unemployable. I thought I hit the lottery when the government deposited \$5000.00 in my savings account, then I received \$23,000.00, then \$60,000.00 back pay. Then I received

\$9,000.00 back pay from the army.

I spend a great deal of time at the VA now and belong to a number of veteran's organizations and try and do my best to help all Vets that suffer from PTSD. Like our son and so many other vets coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq I try and help them out.

At the present time I'm making as much money as a retired general but I would trade it all away just to get back my rabbit a - - mind.

In conclusion, I'm not a very religious man. Both my wife and I have Jewish ancestry and we raised our son in Protestantism and Judaism until he had his Bar Mitzvah. Then we all took RCIA training and became Roman Catholics. It's the only religion that offers a guy like me purgatory. The bottom line is I don't want to go to hell since I already came back from there.

Semper Fi,

Woody

Editor's Note: They say, "No matter how things change, they seem to stay the same."

More Marines to Japan; Vietnam, Cambodia next

By Gidget Fuentes - Staff writer, Marine Corps Times
The Marine Corps' shift to the Pacific will ramp up considerably this year, with more personnel and aircraft rotating to Japan and other destinations throughout the region.

As of late January, there are two infantry battalions rotating through Okinawa for six months at a time, with a third scheduled to start this summer. The Corps also intends to send a contingent of electronic warfare aircraft to its air station in mainland Japan, and a group of explosives experts will undertake a humanitarian mission in Vietnam. Future engagement with Cambodia is on the horizon, too.

The Marine Corps' commandant, Gen. Jim Amos, told reporters at a conference in San Diego last week that the infantry units cycling through Okinawa this year will conduct training in Guam, Australia and, he hopes, the Philippines. The two battalions currently deployed are permanently based in Hawaii and North Carolina. Plans call for another infantry unit, likely from California, to deploy in August or September, Amos said. "So we'll actually have three rotating," he said. "... That is part of the [Pacific] reorientation ... to get these units into the theater."

Additionally, the service will send an unspecified number of EA-6B Prowlers to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, which already hosts rotations of F/A-18 Hornet fighter squadrons. The Prowlers are long-range aircraft equipped with advanced

electronic countermeasures capable of disabling enemy air defenses and gathering intelligence.

"We haven't had them there, flying out of Iwakuni, in a long time," Amos said. "They are going to come back. So I'm pretty excited about it."

In July, Marines from Camp Pendleton, Calif., many expert in handling explosives and mines, will head to Vietnam, where thousands of unexploded munitions remain from the Vietnam War. They'll teach locals how to handle and dispose of unexploded munitions, according to a Marine Corps news release.

"We are not training in Vietnam," Amos said, "but I would hope that someday down the road, with relationships we build over the next year or two, that we'll be able to train in Vietnam, perhaps with air forces, and operate along with them and build those relationships."

The Navy's top officer, Adm. Jon Greenert, said during the same conference that the U.S. is seeking new opportunities in Cambodia as well. The commanding general of Marine Forces Pacific, Lt. Gen. Terry Robling, told Marine Corps

Times last fall that Vietnam and Cambodia have a strong interest in exchanges or training centered on medical and humanitarian-response missions.

"Missions in Malaysia, Indonesia and India also are on the horizon," Robling said at the time.

JOKES

ONLY IN TEXAS

A lady from San Antonio was telling her neighbor that she saw a man driving a pick-up truck down the interstate, and a dog was hanging onto the tailgate for dear life!

She said if the pick-up truck driver hadn't been going so fast in the other direction, she would have tried to stop him.

A few weeks later, her neighbor saw this truck at the local Bass Pro Shop.

The pick-up truck driver is a local TEXAS taxidermist with a great sense of humor!

Taxidermists are a twisted lot anyway! And it is not a dog in the 1st place; it is a Coyote!!! Can you imagine how many people tried to stop this guy?



TEXAS TAN LINE



Editor's Note: Fred Kellogg, one of our VTA board directors, sent me an e-mail with the name and address of a VTA recruit asking that a "Recruiting Package" be sent to him. Fred also indicated that the new guy mentioned that he had read the book, "Praying for Slack" by Bob Peavey, and that one of the WIA tank commanders that is in the book, Robert Ford, was an old buddy of his. He also said that he'd like to contact Bob to see if he could locate his buddy...and that story is on the inside of this issue. After the two old Marine tanker buddies were reunited, they then asked Bob Peavey about our upcoming reunion in San Antonio. This is Bob's reply to them:

Why We Reunite

By Bob Peavey

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

But let me share with the two of you something we see at every reunion. The new members attending their first reunion always come up to us afterwards with big

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

We only get together once every two

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

I am so glad I was able to find Rob and put you both together; you have a lot to catch up on. I hope you can both make it to San Antonio in October.

Semper Fi and Welcome Home!

Bob

Another Reason for Why We Reunite:

BY JOHN WEAR

I am honored to receive a newsletter from the men of Alpha Co., 1st Tank Bn. of the Korean War. In the last issue of their newsletter they included an announcement for their 2013 reunion. The announcement said that it will commemorate the 63rd anniversary of the Korean War. The notice also (very sadly

to me) indicated that the upcoming get together will be their LAST reunion. Why? They said that it is because the number of surviving members has gotten so low. In fact, the newsletter's editor, Roger "The Loader" Chaput, indicates that the current membership is the equivalent of one Korean War-era M-26

tank crew...which in case you did not know, it is just five members.

The USMCVTA is currently close to 500 members, but we are losing more of our brothers each successive year. This is an even more compelling reason to attend our reunions...before it is too late to do so.

USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn

2013 San Antonio Reunion Activities

1. On the first day of the reunion, after the morning business meeting, we will eat a quick lunch (on your own) and then we'll assemble in the hotel lobby. We will walk, as a group, the 0.4 miles to the Alamo where we will enjoy the IMAX Theater presentation of the highly acclaimed program called, "The Alamo: The Price of Freedom." After the show, we will proceed to the Alamo (it is next door) for a guided tour of the Alamo battlefield (1 hour) and then a self-guided audio tour of the Alamo building (1 hour).

Please note that the Alamo tour will be fairly strenuous so if you have any physical disabilities, you might consider not participating.

2. On the evening of the first day, we will convene in The Slopchute hospitality room for a VTA-sponsored pizza & pasta dinner followed by our very popular and fun-filled fund-raising AUCTION event.

3. The second day of the reunion, we all load up on tour buses and travel to Fort Sam Houston where we will visit the two on base military museums. After the two tours and a group photo session at their

M-48 tank display, we will enjoy VTA-sponsored lunch at the base Service Club.

4. On the evening of the last day of the reunion, we will hold our Farewell Banquet in the ballroom of the hotel. We will have a guest speaker and "The Fallen Heroes" program.

5. We have provided a substantial amount of free time for you to explore the city and to also partake in our oral history interview program. Please check the activity schedule that is included in this issue.



2013 San Antonio Reunion Schedule

Thursday October 31	0900 – 2330	Arrival Day – Pick up Reunion Welcome Packet at the Reunion Registration Desk
	1300 – 1600	The "Company Office" will be open in "The Slopchute" Hospitality Room for problem resolution and questions answered
	0900 – 2330	Slopchute Open Lunch & Dinner on your own
Friday November 1	0900 – 1130	Reunion Kick-off Meeting and VTA Business Meeting Enter to win a FREE stay!
	0900 – 1130	Ladies Coffee (Hospitality Room)
	1130 – 1300	Lunch on your own
	1300 – 1345	Walk to the Alamo & IMAX Theater
	1400 – 1445	IMAX Alamo history presentation
	1500 – 1600	Alamo Battlefield guided tour
	1600 – 1700	Alamo audio tour
	1730 – 1830	Pizza dinner (Location to be announced at the business meeting)
	1830 – 2030	AUCTION
	2030 – 2300	Slopchute Open
Saturday November 2	0900 – 0915	Board Buses for Fort Sam Houston museum tour and reunion photo. (Be sure to wear your reunion t-shirts!)
	1200 – 1300	Lunch at the base service club.
	1303 – 1345	Board Buses for hotel
	1400 – 2330	Slopchute Open
	1600 – 1730	Personal & Group History Interviews Dinner on your own
	1900 – 2030	Personal & Group History Interviews
Sunday November 3	1000 – 1700	Free Time – Tour city or other activities
	1000 – 1500	Personal & Group History Interviews
	1000 – 1700	Slopchute Open Lunch on your own
	1730 – 1815	Reunion Banquet – Cash Bar
	1830 – 1845	Presentation of Colors & Remarks
	1845 – 1930	Dinner Please note: Dress for the Banquet will be a shirt with a collar, dress slacks and shoes... Coats & ties are optional. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 minute - Break • 5 minute – San Diego Reunion Review • 5 minute - Awards Presentation • 30 Minutes - Guest Speaker • 30 minutes - Fallen Heroes
	2000 – 2330	Slopchute Open
Monday November 4		Departure Day

Reminder: November 5 is National General Election Day - So get out and vote!

ACTION AT THE AUCTION

For those of you who have never attended a USMC VTA reunion, we conduct an exciting and fun-filled auction immediately following one of our evening meals. The auction is one of our key fundraisers.

All of the items offered in our auction consist of some rare and hard-to-find items that the membership donates to the organization. Many of these items tend to be souvenirs of our time in-country and our time served as Marine tankers. Below are just a few of the items that we will be auctioning at the San Antonio reunion.



This is 18" x 24" full-color print on canvas that was painted by nationally recognized artist and Vietnam veteran, Tim Hinton, was donated by Bob Vaxter and will be available for our auction.



This is a hand-made (in Montana) sterling silver USMC belt buckle that Harold Riensche & his wife are donating.

ACTION AT THE AUCTION



Hand made sterling silver cross with Marine Corps emblem.



We have received two framed 9" x 12" and one framed 18" x 20" prints that are signed by the artist & by the author and will be available for our auction.



Look what Bob Peavey found and donated for the auction! The "Grease Gun" field manual was printed in 1969. Bob says that it is in mint condition and will come in a plastic envelope.

HELP PLEASE: We would really appreciate it if you would scour your attics, your garages and your basements to see if you have any treasures that we could use for our auction. We have had simple items such as canteens, steel piss pots, tank comm. helmets, books about the Vietnam War, t-shirts and jungle utilities all the way up to hand-built scale models of tanks, demilled-90 mm shells and beautiful antique plaques. Some members even find items on E-Bay and other Marine related sites to obtain items for our auction, which they donate to us.

If you have a great item or two please contact any one of our VTA Board of Directors. You can find Board of Directors names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses on Page 3 of this issue. If the items that you have are too large to carry on an airplane and if we think it is a viable auction item, we may be able to help you with shipping it to the reunion... but we need to hear from you at least SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE the reunion.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME FOR SAN ANTONIO HERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT A BURGLAR WON'T TELL YOU

These are real tips that might be helpful and give you some things to think about when you go away. Even if you've read this before, it's worth a refresher before you leave your home for the San Antonio reunion.

1. Yes, I really do look for newspapers piled up on the driveway. Cancel your newspapers or have a neighbor pick them up. And put your mail on vacation hold.
2. If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Virgin drifts in the driveway are a dead giveaway.
3. If decorative glass is part of your front entrance, don't let your alarm company install the control pad where I can see if it's set. That makes it too easy.
4. A good security company alarms the window over the sink. And the windows on the second floor, which often access the master bedroom - and your jewelry. It's not a bad idea to put motion detectors up there too.
5. It's raining, you're fumbling with your umbrella, and you forget to lock your door - understandable. But

understand this: I don't take a day off because of bad weather.

6. Do you really think I won't look in your sock drawer? I always check dresser drawers, the bedside table, and the medicine cabinet.
7. Here's a helpful hint: I almost never go into kids' rooms.
8. You're right; I won't have enough time to break into that safe where you keep your valuables. But if it's not bolted down, I'll take it with me.
9. A loud TV or radio can be a better deterrent than the best alarm system. If you're reluctant to leave your TV on while you're out of town, you can buy a \$35 device that works on a timer and simulates the flickering glow of a real television. (Find it at <http://www.faketv.com/>)
10. The two things I hate most: loud dogs and nosy neighbors.
Editor's Note: Tell your neighbors that you are leaving and when you'll be back home. Also tell your local police and ask them to stop by once in awhile to check on your home.
11. I'll break a window to get in, even if it makes a little noise. If your neighbor

hears one loud sound, he'll stop what he's doing and wait to hear it again... If he doesn't hear it again, he'll just go back to what he was doing. It's human nature.

12. I'm not complaining, but why would you pay all that money for a fancy alarm system and then leave your house without setting it?
13. I love looking in your windows. I'm looking for signs that you're home, and for flat screen TVs or gaming systems I'd like. I'll drive or walk through your neighborhood at night, before you close the blinds, just to pick my targets.
14. Avoid announcing your vacation on your Facebook page. It's easier than you think to look up your address.
Sources: Convicted burglars in North Carolina, Oregon, California, and Kentucky; security consultant Chris McGoey, who runs <http://www.crimedoctor.com/>; and Richard T. Wright, a criminology professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, who interviewed 105 burglars for his book "Burglars on the Job."

Editor's note: *Our nation and its leaders just can't seem to get a firm grasp on history and so we seem to be just repeating our mistakes.*
Jan 2, 2013

Taliban likens US Afghan role to Vietnam War .

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) -- The Taliban Wednesday likened the planned withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan to America's pullout from Vietnam, calling it a "declare victory and run" strategy.

A statement from the militant group said the ongoing transfer of security operations from U.S. troops to Afghan forces was merely a retreat similar to the American withdrawal from South Vietnam prior to the communist victory there in 1975.

American-led NATO troops are scheduled to pull out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, although the U.S. will leave a residual force behind and other NATO countries have pledged continuing support of the Kabul government.

"They want to flee from Afghanistan just as they turned tail and ran from Vietnam," the Taliban statement said. "When America faced utter destruction in Vietnam, they came up with the

formula 'declare victory and run' and want to utilize the formula of 'transfer security and run' here in Afghanistan."

The United States withdrew its combat troops from South Vietnam in 1973, leaving South Vietnamese forces to face the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong who marched into the capital, Saigon, two years later.

Reprinted with permission from MILNET

Editor's note: After you have made your plans to attend our get together in San Antonio, maybe you should study up on the language?

Understanding Texas Lingo

He's all hat and no cattle. – this is probably pretty obvious, but it is someone that likes to put on a good front or appearance but really has no credentials, real world skills or any knowledge on whatever he is spouting off about. In other areas this individual is the know-it-all, blowhard, or the poser.

Toad choker – this is also referred to as a frog strangler or a turd floater, and means a heavy torrential downpour. Since most of Texas is pretty flat, heavy rains pose a true flash flooding hazard as well as lots of issues with closed roads.

Y'all – y'all, which is often pronounced yaaaaaallllllllllll, is a way of referring to at least one other person. In general, if you are talking to more than a handful of people, the correct southern and Texas address would be "all y'all". This is sometimes a bit confusing, but just go with the flow.

Do wut? – this is the standard response if you weren't paying attention or didn't hear what the speaker said for some reason. In other cultures, the way this is often expressed is "excuse me" or "pardon me" or even "could you please repeat that?" Sometimes this phrase is expanded to "Do wut now?"

Greeze and Earl – despite what you might think, these are actually components to your car. Greeze, otherwise known as grease, and earl or oil, often cause stains on your hands or clothes. These stains are considered to be greezy, and are really problematic in hot weather. Of course, you also have to constantly keep checking the pressure in your tiyures (tires), because the hot temperatures cause

problems there as well.

Uh huh – when you say "thank you" often you were hear the response "uh huh". This should be interpreted in this situation as you're welcome. It can also be a sign of agreement with the last statement made.

Bowed up – when someone is really angry and is taking on an aggressive body stance, they are said to be all bowed up. Kids that are talking back to their parents will often be told not to get all bowed up or they will get a "whippin".

Jaw Jackin' – just talking to hear yourself or talking smack to someone. Jaw jackin' is often combined with getting bowed up.

Hitched but not churched – this is a way of saying that a couple is living together without being married. In the Bible belt, this is still a taboo, and there are many sayings that relate to heathens, sin and immoral behavior.

Broke bad – basically this refers to anyone that seems to come from a good family, but he or she has gone over to the dark side. It can refer to horses that are incorrectly "broke" or trained, resulting in mean and unfriendly animals but, in Texas, it typically refers to people.

They are proud of that – being proud of something means that you place an unusually or unreasonably high value on some item that is really not worth near that amount. This is a subjective statement, but it is commonly heard at auctions, swap meets, garage sales and farmer's markets.

Chunk – Ok, this one is really weird. If you are throwing something a short distance, they say they are chunking

it. Don't know why Texans don't say chucking it like the rest of the world, but there ya go!

Neighbor – neighbors are the people in your community, someone you talked to once at the Dairy Queen that lives up (or down) the road, someone you are distantly related to through marriage, or someone that lives in the same county as you do. It really doesn't have anything to do with physical address locations and can be really misleading.

Coke – anything that is called soda or pop anywhere else is called Coke in Texas. For example, Coke can be Pepsi, Sprite, Dr. Pepper or almost anything else that fizzes and comes in a can or bottle.

Tea – tea is always iced tea and is always sweet iced tea, unless you specifically ask for unsweetened. If you have never had southern sweet tea, you may want to try a small taste before ordering a whole glass. Let's just say it is sort of like drinking icing!

Not plum but pert near – this is a highly descriptive and phonetic way to say everything isn't exactly perfect, but it is close enough to be workable. If someone asks you how you are doing, you can always answer "fair to midlin", which is the equivalent of not plum but pert near!

Fix'in – this is the ultimate in Texan speak. Fix'in, which is not said fixing, but is sometimes pronounced as "fiddin", is a way to indicate that, at some yet-to-be-determined-time, some action is going to be taken. An example of this would be "I'm fix'in to go to the store". Notice this doesn't indicate when and can be also used to indicate you are thinking about the possibility doing something sometime.

Below is a list of additional activities that you may want to check out before you arrive in San Antonio...

One of America's oldest cities, San Antonio was colonized by the Spanish empire in the early 1700s. Rich layers of this and other cultures give the city its distinction. Some of the history itineraries are broad strokes and hit the high points. Others delve deeply into one subject like the River Walk or the Alamo.

Rio San Antonio River Cruises

Phone: 800- 417-4139 or 210- 244-5700

Take a tour with entertaining narratives of the rich history of the San Antonio River and helpful information to assist you and your family during your visit to the River Walk. Cruises are 35 to 40 minutes long and cover two and a half miles of the beautiful San Antonio River

San Antonio Nightlife

When the stars come out over the South Texas Plains, it's time to head to the nightclubs and dance halls. Check out Main Plaza, in the heart of downtown, which has live music all year long. You can two-step to a country-western band at the Cowboys Dance Hall, or soak up Tejano's Latin rhythms at Graham Central Station. San Antonio is home to the revered Jim Cullum Jazz Band (you may have heard their weekly radio show on NPR) and they play live at The Landing on the River Walk. Whatever you're in the mood for, San Antonio offers a wide range of entertainment options when the sun goes down.

El Dia de los Muertos



Translated literally as "the Day of the Dead," this Mexican cultural tradition is a celebration in which the family welcomes back departed loved ones, sharing the joys of life with them as their memories live on. Creative and respectful

altars are set up around town at galleries, cultural centers, cemeteries and restaurants to commemorate loved ones who have passed on. Poetry readings, and calavera processions (participants dress as skeletons) are typical events as well. Citywide. Some events have an admission charge.

Wurstfest



A unique celebration rich in German culture and full of Texas fun! During this 10-day salute to sausage, you'll find a variety of entertainment options including a polka contest, games, rides,

food and drinks on the Wurstfest Grounds in Landa Park as well as special events throughout New Braunfels and Comal County. New Braunfels at Landa Park. Admission.

Diwali San Antonio; Festival of Lights



Diwali is one of the biggest festivals largely celebrated in India and for the second year is being celebrated in the Alamo City. Event starts at 5:00 p.m. Experience this colorful event filled with Indian music, dance, food and a special lighting ceremony as a thousand tea lights are

released into the fountains at HemisFair Park.

Sea World San Antonio

10500 Sea World Dr, San Antonio, TX 78251

Phone: (210) 523-3000 / Fax: (210) 523-3199

Toll Free: (210) 800-7786

A trip to SeaWorld to see the awe-inspiring Shamu show, One Ocean, is a must-do while in the Alamo City. Enjoy Sesame Street Bay of Play, an attraction for families featuring Elmo, Big Bird and all...

Six Flags San Antonio

17000 IH 10 West, San Antonio, TX 78257

Phone: (210) 697-5050 / Fax: (210) 697-5265

Toll Free: (800) 473-4378

Six Flags Fiesta Texas offers an array of award-winning shows, a complement of thrill and family rides and excitement for the

whole family with a free waterpark in the summer. Come see why Six Flags...

Splashtown

3600 IH 35 North, San Antonio, TX 78219

Phone: (210) 227-1400

With 20 landscaped acres of cool, clean water excitement, this family water-park has something fun for every age - from Kids Kove to the Siesta del Rio offering a relaxing ride down a lazy river to m...

San Antonio Museum of Art

200 W. Jones Avenue, San Antonio, TX 78215

Phone: (210) 978-8100 / Fax: (210) 978-8101

The San Antonio Museum of Art reclaimed the historic Lone Star Brewery, built in 1884, and turned the immense building into one of the most impressive art museums in Texas. Its permanent collection spans the continents. Asian art, European and American paintings, and antiquities from Greek and Roman eras attract art aficionados of all ages. The Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art houses the museum's extensive collections of pre-Columbian art, Latin American folk art, Spanish Colonial art and contemporary Latin American Art.

Lackland Air Force Base

2051 George Ave, Bldg 5206, Lackland AFB, San Antonio, TX 78236

Phone: (210) 671-1110 / Fax: (210) 671-1053

Lackland is the basic military center for Air Force recruits, one of four training centers nationwide, as well as the site of the Defense Language Institute English Language Center and Iner-American Air forces Academy for International students. The Gateway Historical Collection is the repository for photos and documents pertaining to both Kelly and Lackland AFBs and early military aviation in San Antonio. Base tours for general public guests are offered on the second Tuesday.

Randolph Air Force Base

550 C. Street West, San Antonio, TX 78150-4573

Phone: (210) 652-1110

Randolph is home to the 12th Flying Training Wing, the only unit in the Air Force conducting both pilot instructor training and combat systems officer training. In addition, the 12th FTW provides host-base support to more than 30 Department of Defense units, including HQ Air Education and Training Command, Air Force Personnel Center and Air Force Recruiting Service.

PLEASE NOTE: The best way to plan your free time during the reunion is to go on line to:

<http://www.visitsanantonio.com/index.aspx>

VIETNAM SHORT ROUNDS

September 26, 1946 – First American soldier killed in Vietnam

Lt. Col. Peter Dewey, a U.S. Army officer with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Vietnam, is shot and killed in Saigon. Dewey was the head of a seven-man team sent to Vietnam to search for missing American pilots and to gather information on the situation in the country after the surrender of the Japanese. He would prove to be the first of nearly 59,000 Americans killed in Vietnam.

September 29, 1965 – Hanoi announces that downed pilots will be treated as war criminals

Hanoi publishes the text of a letter it has written to the Red Cross claiming that since there is no formal state of war, U.S. pilots shot down over the North will not receive the rights prisoners of war (POWs) and will be treated as war criminals.

September 13, 1968 – Large Operation begins in the DMZ

The largest sustained operation inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) opens when U.S. and South Vietnamese infantry and armored troops, supported by planes, artillery and U.S. Navy ships, move two miles into the buffer zone to relieve enemy pressure on Allied bases along South Vietnam's northern frontier.

The operation was also meant to prevent an anticipated offensive by two North Vietnamese divisions thought to be currently operating within the DMZ. On September 17, an additional 2,000 U.S. Marines were airlifted into the area and B-52 bombers, striking for the first time in a month, hit targets on both sides of the demarcation between North and South Vietnam. Ten days later, an additional 4,000 Marines attacked into the buffer zone in a coordinated pincer movement designed to trap remaining

communist forces. The operation achieved the desired objectives and resulted in 742 North Vietnamese killed; U.S. losses were 65 killed and 77 wounded.

October 29, 1971 – U.S. troop strength reaches five-year low

The total number of U.S. troops remaining in Vietnam drops to 196,700 – the lowest level since January 1966. This was a result of the Vietnamization program announced by President Richard Nixon at the June 1969 Midway Conference. U.S. troops were to be withdrawn as the South Vietnamese assumed more responsibility for the war. The first withdrawal included troops from the 9th Infantry Division, who departed from the Mekong Delta region in August 1969. The withdrawal continued steadily, and by January 1972 there were less than 75,000 U.S. troops remaining in South Vietnam.

ATTENTION GOLFERS!!!

We are considering running a "golf day" on the first day our reunion in San Antonio on Thursday, October 31 with a tee time of noon (sharp).

Grab three of your buddies and please let us know right away if you are interested. There will be limited foursomes available. However, singles will be welcome as well as wives and girlfriends. We want to make it a fun filled day.

Rental golf clubs will be available to save you the airlines checked baggage fees.

If there is enough interest, then transportation will be provided to a local San Antonio golf course. You might even find the beverage of your choice provided as well. But we have to know today, since planning starts now for this one-day event / tournament with prizes.

Please contact:

Joe Vernon

Phone: (530) 320-3601

Email: j4343vernon@cox.net

Or

Mike Hermes

Phone: (352) 350-6330

Email: michaelrhermes1@gmail.com

How To Win A Free Hotel Room!

You can win a free hotel stay for this year's reunion when you bring this coupon to Thursday's Opening Meeting no later than 07:59 EST

Rules: This coupon is your raffle ticket to be given at the door of the meeting room before 07:59 EST for a chance to win a free 4-night stay during the reunion. The prize covers the basic room rate (\$99) less taxes. **Prize value: \$396.00.**

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

Doors will close at exactly 08:00 EST to determine who is in the room on time. Winner MUST be in the room when the bell rings. If someone is almost at the door when the bell rings and he is not physically in the meeting room, he is NOT eligible for the drawing. No exceptions will be made. Only one (1) entry per person allowed.

Name: _____ Room # _____

RPGS on the DMZ

BY: TOM COLSON

A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I HAD JUST ARRIVED IN-COUNTRY (APRIL 1968), I WAS KNOWN AS L/CPL. T. L. COLSON. LATER ON, VERY FEW PEOPLE KNEW MY NAME, BUT I GOT A NICKNAME FOR ALL MY LUMPS FROM WAR INJURIES; I WAS CALLED "LUMPY." I WAS JUST ANOTHER GUNG-HO YOUNG MARINE WHO GOT SENT TO VIETNAM FOR ONE YEAR, TWO MONTHS, AND ONE DAY AS MY TOUR OF DUTY. I ENDED UP IN NORTHERN SOUTH VIETNAM WITH ALPHA COMPANY, 3RD TANK BATTALION, 3RD MARINE DIVISION, AND I WAS STATIONED IN DONG HA. I HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO MY SECOND TANK BY THIS TIME. MY FIRST TANK WAS AN M-67A2 FLAME TANK, F-13, THAT I WAS ASSIGNED TO AT THE MIDDLE OF APRIL 1968. THE SECOND ONE WAS AN M-48A3, 90 MM PATTON MEDIUM GUN TANK WITH THE CALL SIGN "ALPHA-51."

I was on Alpha-51 and we had been out on an operation for several weeks providing security for the 9th Engineer's bulldozer company. The bulldozers had been clearing a new fire break along the DMZ (or as we called it, "The Trace"). Our tank commander, Cpl. Bishop, had been on R&R for some time and was due back any day. Cpl. Potemara or as we called him, "Pappy", had been standing in as our TC while I had taken his position as the tank's gunner. PFC Palmer was our driver, and our temporary loader was nicknamed PFC "French" because of the black beret that he wore.

At around 7:50 PM that evening or, as we Marines knew it to be, 1950; it was starting to get dark. All of the tank commanders were over at a meeting at the command tank (I think that it was

hatch and took over TC position as I slid down into the gunner's seat. I took up my sights on the light flashes and asked Pappy if I could fire the 90mm at the muzzle flashes. Pappy checked with the skipper on the radio and came back to me, "Let 'em rip!"

I started firing at the flashes, trying to adjust my fire toward the lights as the enemy's rounds started getting closer and closer to our tank. By this time, it was completely dark outside. I had fired three rounds of 90mm and I felt I had them on target, so I started to fire for effect. Just like clockwork, French, the loader, slammed the 90mm round home and yelled, "Up!" I would yell, "On the way" and pull the trigger. I stayed glued to the gunner's sights, trying to follow the 90mm projectile to its mark that was up on the low hillside where the light flashes were coming from. PFC Palmer fired up the tank's engine in case we had to move.

As I said, the enemy's explosive rounds kept getting closer. I kept up the repeat fire for another four rounds when the incoming stopped and Pappy said, "Cease fire" over the intercom.

Pappy said that we needed to slow down on the 90mm H.E. because we were running low from yesterday's firing at the NVA (North Vietnam Army) as they were crossing the northern border into South Vietnam. That's another story for the books.

Anyway, all of our firing came to a stop and it got real quiet. Pappy told our crew that S/Sgt. W. W. Pattison, our 5th Platoon Sgt., was medevaced. He apparently got hit with shrapnel trying to make it back to his tank. We were all on high alert the rest of the night.

The next day our company sent us a



Left to right: Cpl. T.S. "Pappy" Potemara, PFC "French", PFC W.S. Palmer and L/Cpl. T.L. "Lumpy" Colson. Regrettably I never got a picture of Cpl. Bishop.

On the hot night of June 20, 1968, we were north of Con Thien on the DMZ.

incoming rounds as they were fired by the enemy. When Pappy got back to the tank, he climbed down through the loader's

resupply of 90mm ammo and our TC, Cpl. Bishop, came back from R&R. I moved back over to the loader's position, Pappy went back to gunner, Palmer stayed the driver and, I think, French went back to Dong Ha. That was the last time that I ever saw French, and I never did know his real name.

The next day, June 21, 1968, became a day I will never forget. We moved into a new position that was about another 2000 yards away from our overnight position. The area had a lot of big bomb craters and vegetation of about 3 to 4 feet tall. The area reminded me of home, up in the northeast part of San Diego County (California) where there are rolling hills of sage brush. After the Marine bulldozers worked all day clearing the area, they cut a large circle around our position with a low berm. All our tanks spread out equally around the circle and set in for the night. After we got set in, Pappy, our gunner, set up his night range card. That's where each tank ranges in on the tanks that he can see in each direction. This is done so that, in case one of the tanks gets overrun by the enemy, the supporting tanks can shoot the attacking enemy soldiers off of the other tank. The tank can either "scratch the tank's back" with the .30 cal. or .50 cal. machine gun, or they can destroy the fallen tank with a well-placed Heat Round from the 90mm gun. After we all got set up and ate our C-rations (from 1948), I asked my TC, Cpl. Bishop, if I could walk down the clearing to the next tank on our right and see my friend, L/Cpl. Easley. My friend is the driver of that tank. Bishop said, "Go ahead, but make it quick, it's getting dark fast."

I made it to Easley and, as we were talking, we started seeing a lot of movement made by the grunts. One of them told me that they had seen movement out front of our position, so I then high-tailed it back to my tank. As soon as I got back to the tank and hopped inside, Bishop said, "Get ready! There's movement out front of us!"

Being the loader and manning my position inside of the turret, I couldn't see anything outside that might be

happening. Then the gunner, Pappy, yelled, "I am firing the .30!"

So I replied with an "up". The word "up" lets the gunner know that whatever gun he has called for, like the 90 mm or the .30 cal., has the safety off and it is ready to fire. Pappy started letting the lead fly and I could feel the turret move back and forth as the .30 cal. machine gun kept pumping out bullets. I didn't have my comm. helmet on but I could hear Pappy telling Bishop, "They are all over." Suddenly, I heard L/Cpl. Palmer, the driver, scream and I could see sparks flying all over down in the driver's compartment. After a couple-second pause, I heard Pappy, as sparks came flying in all over and under his legs. Then Pappy yelled, "I'm hit!"

Just then, the .30 started to have cook-off's, and then it jammed up. We were getting hit hard and fast, so I couldn't take time to change out the .30 barrel. Then I felt the tank rock again, but this time there were no sparks. I quickly flipped the safety off the 90 mm gun and yelled, "Fire the 90!"

I stepped sideways with my arm up on my right side, preparing for the 90-round casing to fly out of the breach, after it was fired. From my right eye, I saw sparks fly just outside the loader's hatch. The hatch was closed but cracked open to cut down on concussion if we were hit. At the same time, the tank rocked and I saw a real bright flash with sparks inside the tank. I screamed and went out like a burned-out light bulb. When I came to, it seemed as if there was no one inside of the tank. I yelled for someone, but I got no answer. Everything was really blurry and smoke-filled. I could smell burnt flesh, hair and sulfur. I can still smell that same smell today. I wasn't wearing a shirt, flack jacket, helmet, gun/pistol, rifle or even a K-bar. I knew that I had to get out of the tank and seek help. I crawled out of the loader's hatch and jumped out behind the gypsy rack. I groped for my piss pot helmet that should be sitting on top of my personal "40 Mike-Mike" box that is tied to the gypsy rack on the back of the tank turret. When my hand reached the top of the helmet, I heard a "ting-ting" sound and I leaped

backwards off the tank. As I fell, my left arm hit the travel lock and it ripped off my watch. My dad had presented me that watch for my high school graduation. I fell down behind the tank and crawled underneath it. I couldn't see very well, due to my head injury and the concussion that the RPG's had caused. I felt wet all over and I didn't realize it was blood. I didn't know where to go or who to call for help because

I had no idea if the NVA were right there. I saw something blurry moving on the ground behind the tank, so I took a chance and yelled, "Help! Help! I am a Marine!"

The movement came toward me and he said, "I am a Marine too."

I replied, "I need a corpsman!"

He said, "Come on. I will get you to one."

We crawled away from the tank and got to a corpsman. I told him that I needed help. The corpsman was hiding behind a bush of some kind and he said that he had just got in-country a couple days ago and he didn't know what to do. Then he seemed to awaken from his deep shock and he told me that I needed to lie down.

He said, "Let's get down in this hole, right here next to us." The hole had some C-ration case box tops laying in it. I laid down on them while the corpsman worked on me. I asked the corpsman if he had an M-16 (rifle). He said that he only had a .45 (pistol).

I said, "Give it to me and I will stand guard while you bandage me up." He removed the .45 from his holster and handed it to me. He bandaged my head and then looked me over for other injuries. By then, other Marines started calling, "Corpsmen up!"

He said to me, "I got to go."

I said, "Okay, go! I'll be okay."

He replied, "I need my .45 back."

I asked, "Are you sure? I have no protection."

"Yeah," he said. Of course, I gave it back to him.

As I lay in the bomb crater on the C-rat boxes, I could hear other Marines a few feet away yelling to each other over

the gunfire. I could barely make out what they were saying, because the ringing in my ears was so loud from the RPG blast. I think they were saying that, if they could get the tank back up, they could get our lines back. So I crawled over to them and said "I am a tanker, did you want to get the tank back?"

"Yes, we do!"

I told them, "I need two people, one to drive and one to load the 90 gun."

The grunts said, "Let's go take the tank back!"

"Okay," I said. "The tank is easy as driving a Cadillac, and I will show whoever how to load the 90. Just get me back to the tank!"

The two Marines said, "Okay, let's go!"

I told the Marine going to the driver's seat to crawl under the tank and slide over the slope plate in front of the tank and then down into the driver's compartment, if it's empty. "Put the helmet on and I can talk to you over the intercom, once I get into the tank."

As we started back to A-51, I came across Palmer laying down with a corpsman working on him. The corpsman said that he was going to get medevaced along with the other two tank crewmen. The corpsman also said, "You need to get medevaced, too, so stay right here."

"No!" I said to Palmer, "I'm going back and take the tank back for you guys and kick some ass!"

We came up on the right rear sprocket of A-51 and the one grunt started crawling under the tank. The other grunt said to me, "Okay, here we are!"

I still was having trouble seeing much at all, so I told him, "Get up and check inside to see if anyone is inside."

He did and gave me the "Okay." I crawled up and over to the TC hatch that was open. I found my TC's Army flack jacket that he had traded or commandeered at some time. I picked it up and put it on. I then slid down into the TC's cupola and put on the TC's helmet. I tried to talk to the grunt driver, but got no answer. I could see someone in the seat but got no answer. I tried over and over and still nothing. I took the helmet off

and asked if the grunt loader could hear anything from the driver. My ears were still ringing really badly from the RPG's blasts and my vision was still blurry. The loader got down under the 90mm and called to the driver. The loader got back up and told me that he went to put the driver's helmet on and it was full of blood and skin and he didn't want to put it on. I told the loader to tell him that it was okay and to start the tank. I explained to him how to start it. I added that we would shout to him if needed. I put my helmet back on and keyed it for the radio. I called out to the other tanks that A-51 was back up and running.

Our tank platoon leader came back over the radio and asked, "Who is this?"

I said, "L/Cpl. Colson."

The transmission came back to me asking, "What's the password?"

I said, "I can't remember" and said something that was from many days ago.

The platoon leader came back again. "That's okay, Colson, it's a good thing you came up on the radio, because we were about to blow you away. We could see movement over on the tank and then heard it start."

I transmitted back, "Yes, we got the tank started and I have two grunts on the tank for a crew, the driver and loader. I will run the tank from the TC's override."

I also asked if I could back up to the CP area, since the .30 cal. is out and the 90mm took a hit in the breach area. I told him that I am having trouble seeing and need time to check out the weapons.

He said, "Let me get back to you."

Then he came back and said, "You can back up, but put ground guides out, because there are grunts all over the area. It would be better if you could stay on the line, but it's your decision."

I said, "Roger that."

I checked the 90mm and found that the RPG blast hit the breach block, but only the fat, all-steel part. The 90mm was still fully operational. I couldn't see well enough to work on the .30, and the grunt didn't know anything about changing the barrel or setting the head space. I thought that the .50 was still operational. I radioed

back to the platoon leader and said we would stay put.

The grunts said that we still had movement out front of us, so we fired a couple of canister rounds. Then the grunts came up on the radio and asked if I could guide "Puff" in the area of movement. They said, "Puff is above us now."

"Puff the Magic Dragon" is the nickname of a Douglas AC-47 aircraft gun ship. Puff's call sign was "Spooky." This airplane was capable of putting a high explosive bullet into every square yard of a football-field-sized target in 3 seconds. I radioed back that I would try, but that I was having trouble seeing anything and never have done that kind of thing before. Then my grunt loader said he was squad leader and has called in Puff before. I got back on the radio and told the command about my squad leader/loader and that he would call in the position. I then I turned the radio over to him. Here came Puff lighting up the whole area with fire power! It sure didn't take him long with that Gatling gun. I had seen Puff operate before, but in the distance; this time, he was right in front of us. Puff has such a distinctive sound, along with a stream of red when he fires his guns. Puff finished up and left the area. I was starting to feel really weak and light-headed. I told my loader I was going to lie down on the deck of the turret for awhile and for him to get me up if something happens. I actually curled up in the gunner's seat, because we had empty 90 mm brass on the turret deck. I fell asleep and woke up in what seemed like only minutes, but turned out to be several hours. As I got up, it was just starting to get light out. I was really stiff all over and my side and my butt hurt badly. I thought I was hurting because of falling asleep in the seat for so long. Daylight came and, luckily, there were no more attacks through that night or early morning. The grunt squad leader, loader and the grunt driver had to report back to their unit, so they left. I never did get their names or get a chance to thank them.

My stomach started growling and I was feeling sick and ready to explode out my pants. I barely could get off the tank from

being so stiff and sore. Then I got behind the tank and pulled my pants down so I could relieve myself, when I found out why I was hurting so bad. On my right side of my hip and butt, I had three large open holes. One was the size of a silver dollar and two were the size of a quarter. There was no blood, just a gaping deep hole that was maybe 3/4 of an inch deep. I guess that, when the RPG hit me, the molten metal had burned and seared my wounds and kept them from bleeding. I then took off the flack jacket and I found more holes and hundreds of small pieces of shrapnel stuck all over my right side, arm, neck and lower part of my face. My head was covered up with a big bandage that the corpsman had put on me. I finished up my business and found my watch lying on the ground below the travel lock. I went to the front of the tank to check out the damage. I found where the RPG hit the driver's slope plate, slid up the plate and detonated on the driver's front periscope. That must have been when I saw all the sparks in the driver's compartment last night. L/Cpl. Palmer had been the driver and I think he got hit in the face, legs, chest and head. I took a few pictures of that damage.



This is a photo of A-51 after a battle with the NVA where four RPGs hit her. The first RPG hit the front slope plate where the detonation blasted up towards the driver's periscope and up into the 90mm gun shield. The driver's periscope blew down into the driver face, legs and chest.

Then I went to the right front of the tank and found where an RPG hit us just above and in-between the second and third road wheel with penetration into the turret. Then I found where another RPG hit the right side at the second support roller with no penetration. Before I crawled back up onto the turret, I had to

check out one of the dead gooks that lay in front of the tank.



After the battle: Two NVA KIAs:



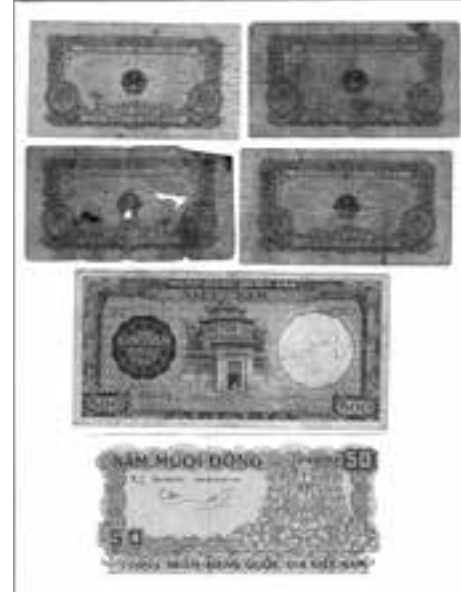
This is the SKS (today) that I took off of the dead NVA soldier.

He was out front about 20 ft, just to the left of our front fender. I had no fear of anything like the NVA body being booby trapped, because I wasn't thinking straight from my pain. I just walked over to him and pulled his SKS rifle off his hands and the money that he had in his pockets. I took his belt that had a large star on the belt buckle and his canteen.

He and the other dead "gooks" (that's what we called them) were peppered with holes like they were shot with a shot gun. That might have been from the canister rounds I fired last night. I took all my war trophy finds back to the tank and crawled back up on her. The grunt in the fox hole off to the left of the tank exclaimed, "You're crazy for going out there! That could have been a booby trap!"

I replied, "Now you tell me! I am still new in-country!"

I wrote a note saying, "This rifle belongs to L/Cpl. Colson," and attached it to the SKS. Then I stashed the SKS up behind the radios in the turret. I then removed the lid from my 40 Mike-Mike storage box and removed all my personal items that were stored there. I put the belt, money and canteen in the bottom of the container



and put my extra clothing back in on top of the souvenirs. Then I closed the lid.

I looked at my piss pot helmet that I had just removed from the top of the 40 Mike-Mike boxes and I found two bullet holes that had gone right through



the helmet. The NVA must have seen me jump behind the turret and they

shot at the helmet thinking my head was in it! I put the damaged helmet behind the radios with the SKS for safe keeping. I went back to inspecting A-51 to see where the fourth RPG hit that took me out. I found where the RPG had entered the left (loader's side) of the turret. As with most tanks, we had extra tank track attached around the tank turret for a couple of reasons. This gives extra tank track for the tank, if it hits a land mine and blows the track up. The other reason is to help protect the tank from RPG's. If an RPG hits the rubber part of the track and detonates, the rubber acts as an air gap to keep the shaped charge from penetrating all the way through the turret armor. In this case, it didn't help, because it was either a well placed shot or pure luck. Anyways, the RPG shaped charge came through the turret's armor right in between where the center guides are on the spare track. On the inside of the turret, the blast came through where the loader's seat is stored on the turret wall, right up next to where the .45 cal. "grease gun" machine gun is stored. The blast also went through the center of the strap that holds the loader's seat. From there, the blast came right by my right side



only inches away. If my arm hadn't been up in the air after flipping the safety off the 90mm and, if I had not been turned sideways, standing back, waiting for the 90 brass to be ejected, my arm would have been torn off or I would have been cut in half from the shape charge blast. I thank God over and over for protecting

me at that point! I think how all I needed to be was just over a couple of inches and there would be two of me, or maybe I'd be just a little shorter. Ha! Ha! Ha!

The RPG blast continued on and landed into the fat steel part of the 90 mm



gun breach block. The hot stream of molten metal shaped charge cut a hole into the right side of the breach about 1/2 inch deep and threw molten metal all over the interior of the turret.

Now I knew, for sure, we got hit by



four RPG's with two of them penetrating the tank and two detonating on the outside of the tank. One of the two RPG's that detonated on the outside blew the blast through the driver's periscope. I then got out of the turret and sat atop of A-51 waiting for some new tankers to show up and relieve me of duty so I could get medevaced to a hospital and get taken care of.

Then here comes a CH-46 helicopter

which landed over in the CP area.



I remember thinking to myself that the old CH-46 must be bringing in my replacements, but then I couldn't see anyone get off the copter, except one person. I thought, "Oh well, they are coming soon, I hope."

My pain was getting stronger. Then the CH-46 lifted off and flew over and landed just off A-51's right front fender. A Marine got off the helicopter and came over to the tank and yelled up to me as I was sitting on top of the turret, but I could hardly hear him with the CH-46 still running. I jumped down from the turret and knelt down on the front fender where the Marine was and I said, "What? I can't hear you."

The Marine repeated what he said, "The Commanding Officer (a colonel?) of the 3rd Marines is on the chopper and he wants to see you right now."

I said, "Oh shit! I don't have my cover on!"

The Marine, who was a Staff Sergeant, told me to just get my ass over to see the colonel, so I jumped off the tank and fell on my face, because I was still real weak. Now I had dirt on top of the dirt & blood that was already dried all over my body. I must have looked like a shitbird with my pants cut off at the ankles, no shirt of any kind, no cover, no shave, and a big bloody bandage on my head that almost covered my right eye and now dirt & brush stuck to the bandage. I got to the opened door on the far side of the helicopter and saw the colonel sitting there.

He asked, "Are you L/Cpl. Colson?"
"Yes, Sir!"
"Well, get in. I am personally medevacing you."

I said, "Sir, I can't leave, because my tanker relief hasn't showed up yet."

The colonel said, "Lance Corporal, don't you worry about that, it will get taken care of. Now get in, so we can go."

"Yes, sir!"

I hopped in and sat on the floor, leaning on the rear bulkhead of the helicopter. The helicopter revved up and took off. The colonel thanked me for what I did by staying on the line last night. I was so weak that I passed out and came to when they were unloading me from the CH-46 onto a gurney. I don't remember much from that point, but woke up again while being loaded on a C-130.

The next time I woke up was two days later on a folding cot bed in what they called a "ward." I had an I-V in my arm and I really felt weak. I asked a corpsman sitting at a desk at one end of the tent ward, "Where am I?"

He told me I was in Phu Bai and that I had been there for three days.

I stayed in Phu Bai for about 14 days. I got to radio home to my parents in El Cajon, California and let them know that I was okay. Then I got sent back to Alpha Co., 3rd Tanks back in Dong Ha. I went on light duty for about another 8-9 days and then got back on another gun tank. When I arrived back at the Dong Ha tank park, there was Alpha-51 sitting there "deadlined." I got up inside her and took some pictures after they had welded up the RPG holes. My camera and all my things were still on the tank, including the SKS and piss pot helmet. I removed everything and stored it at the company's storage area. I ran into Cpl. T. S. Potemara ("Pappy"), the gunner from A-51 back at Alpha Co. E-Club.

That brings me back to the picture and article of Pignato. (Ed's Note: We ran that story in the last issue.) I think that the person across the table facing out on the right is Pappy.

He told me that Bishop, Palmer and he all got medevaced to the USS Repose hospital ship. The rest of the crew was wondering what happened



(L to R) Cpl. Tom "Lumpy" Colson, LCpl. Joe "Pig" Pignato and Cpl. "Pappy" Potmara

to me. I told him what went on that night. Palmer had the worst injuries of the three of them, but was doing okay. Pappy said he was back at the company checking out to go home. We had our two beers and that was the last time I saw Pappy.

This story will continue, but I want to back up and start from my first tank, F-13 (a flame tank). I also want to write about my first operation and when Cpl. R. N. Minetto got killed on 05/09/1968. His tank was just across the ravine as we watched the tank commander get killed

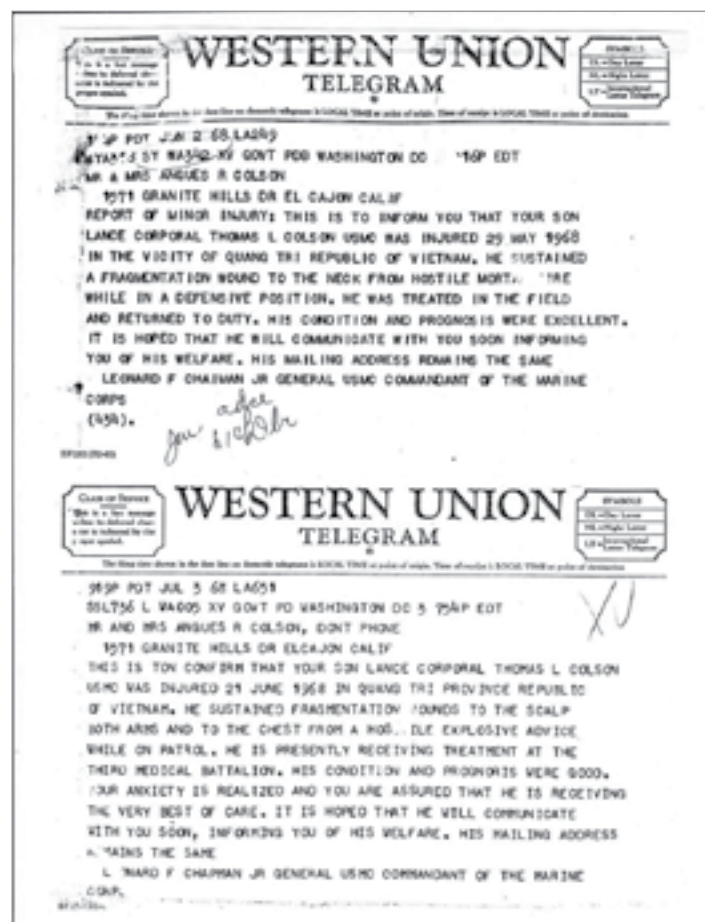
and fall out of sight into the TC cupola. All my stories come from my letters that I wrote home and from the many pictures I had taken. They also come from my vivid memory, cassette tapes I taped and sent home, and the Marine Corps declassified files I have read.

Semper Fidelis

Tom Colson
Tucson, AZ

Phone: (520) 382-7268

As a post script to this story: The USMC saw fit to send two notification telegrams to Tom's parents which appear below.



In Tom's words: "I took a piece of shrapnel from a mortar at the Washout on May 29, 1968, so it was only 2-1/2 days from the time I was WIA to when my parents received the first notification telegram.

"The next telegram was for when I was injured on Alpha 51 with the story of the RPG's on the DMZ. The second telegram was for June 21st injuries and was received by my folks on July 3rd. That is 12 days after the fact, which is way too long and, to me, unacceptable, even for back in that time frame. I remember radioing my parents from the Phu Bai hospital area a few days before I got released from that facility. When I radioed home and talked to them, I was told they had just got the telegram the day before. I remember

thinking how awful that must have been for them.

"If you read both telegrams, there are a few misspelled words, which could lead to misconception and misunderstanding. Take the telegram where I was wounded by a Hostile Explosive Advice instead of Device. This kind of thing, when it comes to a child's physical wellbeing, could send a family into a mental tail spin. Plus, taking over 12 days to get a telegram delivered is horrible.

"For my first WIA event, the local Marine Recruiters came out and told my parents the day before the telegram arrived. On the second WIA event, the Marine Recruiters came out as soon as they got the word, but it was just the day after the telegram arrived. How screwed

up everything was back then, just like the war. Like the first telegram said, I wasn't medevaced...which I was, but it was the next morning on a jeep back to Dong Ha. I had refused medevac that night, but the corpsman made me go the next morning. Also, remember that in Vietnam, we were, I think it was, One Day and 8 hours ahead of the USA time zone. But, for this telegram, there is no reason for such a big screw up.

For a bit of "gallows humor", Tom thinks that the USMC may have decided to wait to send the second telegram so that they did not have to send another one, just in case Tom did not survive getting WIA for the second time.

Poems

DON'T MISS THE NEXT TANKERS REUNION!

by Maj Leo Gildersleeve, USMC (ret.)

We tankers gather every other year

At some designated place

We come in hopes of seeing

That one particular face

Each year, a friend or even more

Is missing morning muster.

Like fading light, they pass away

No fanfare or fluster

It's sad to see an old Marine

Looking here and there

For a buddy that missed the muster

And he is unaware

He looked at me and I could see

His ultimate despair

Oh, why did I miss last year?

I know my buddy was there

What a difference

A year can make

Those here today

Death will overtake

We old tankers

Relics of the past

Each year lose a buddy

Who will be the last?

My First Day

BY JERRY SEZAR

My “first day” in the Marine Corps was a bit of a shock. I had no idea at all as to what was going to take place during the next twenty-four hours. I wasn’t prepared at all. All I knew on July 27, 1964 is that I got a full-time job.

My Dad, all of my uncles and all of their friends were all WWII veterans. They were Army Air Corp, Army, Navy and Merchant Marine but NONE had been in the United States Marine Corps. I should have known something was up when I walked into my dad’s garage where the assorted buddies were working and I announced my decision. Uncle Jack (Merchant Marine) roared with laughter; Uncle Walt and Uncle Buck (USA fought in the Pacific Islands) gasped and Uncle Terry (USA Europe) said something to my dad to the effect, “His mother is gonna kill him!”

Oh I guess I forgot to tell you the part where my dad had had about enough of my behavior and when I left that morning, he told me I better come home with a full-time job. I have to admit that getting kicked out of one school, not graduating from the following one, an arrest for a carrying a fake ID saying I was older than I was and getting a drag racing ticket from the local police.....And did I mention blowing the rear end in his car?...I was in deep trouble. My father and most of his friends drank quite a lot and you had to be careful to not upset them because they also liked to fight. I was pretty good at fighting myself. My younger brother had Polio since birth and if anyone teased him, my dad taught me “what to do”. I

got pretty good on the street and boxing at the Oakland and the San Leandro Boys Clubs. It might not be the best way to get your point across, but it works.

Why the Marine Corp? Well, Jimmy (my younger brother) had overheard my dad’s request and we both knew by the time I got home I would be in deep shit without a full-time job. It was a no-brainer. The only option was that I would need to join the service. I had wondered, “Which one?” out loud and Jimmy replied, “The best, the United States Marine Corps”. And like a damn fool, I jumped in my car and headed to the Marine recruiter’s office in Hayward. I tell you, anything was better than pissing my dad off...As I said, he could get very physical at the blink of an eye...I am pretty sure that it was the drinking.

The morning of the 27th was a nice day...even in the city. My family said their good-bys at the steps of the Federal Building. I spent most of the morning sitting in a room waiting. I found out that this was important training because it is the thing you do most in the Marine Corp...WAIT!!! Finally we loaded into a bus and headed to the San Francisco Airport. All morning and during lunch everyone was quite cordial to everyone else. The ride on the bus and the flight to San Diego were uneventful. At San Diego we were loaded into a “cattle car” trailer that was hooked to a truck. It was exciting, a little different and a bumpy ride to Marine Corp Recruit Depot, San Diego. As soon as the vehicle stopped, things began to change. The personality’s

of the Marine-in-charge was not cordial at all. He reminded me of my dad and some of his friends when they drank too much and started arguing, yelling and then fighting. I was getting tense. I was getting confused. Then the DI punched the guy in front of me. I thought that he was being a bully, just like the guys who teased my little brother, Jimmy. What’s going on? I stepped off the yellow footprints and slammed the DI with a roundhouse punch. Not good. I really don’t know how many DI’s tackled me down...but they got to me pretty quick and isolated me from the group.

I was yelled at for what seemed like an eternity and was given a toothbrush & cleanser and a whole bathroom (I didn’t know it was called a “head” yet) too clean while everyone else was being yelled at elsewhere in the building. I continued my cleaning project for many hours with an occasional loud instruction each time a DI walked by. Everyone that I arrived with had gone somewhere for awhile, I guess to eat. I got to stay and brush away. As everyone was getting ready to turn-in, I was relieved of my toothbrush activity (and don’t you know? I was just starting to get good at it!)...and I was given a rather short haircut. They then took all my clothes, gave me some of theirs and finally they gave me a place to sleep. I went to sleep thinking. “What did my little brother get me into?”

Jerry Sezar
Discovery Bay, CA
Phone: (925) 634-8743

THE MOVE NORTH

BY RIC LANGLEY

I had been with 1st Plt. “C” Co., 3rd Tanks for a short time and things were good.

I had a roof over my head, good food, a hot shower and the maintenance guys had just finished brewing a new batch of applejack, a crude form of home brew. What more could a Marine ask for? Being the fifth crewman on C-12, until someone rotated back to the World, I was odd man out. We were not doing much anyway. I had spent most of my time helping my crewmates getting the new tank checked out and squared away. Like me, the tank had just arrived from the States. It still had that new tank smell. We cleaned the guns, checked the suspension, tested radios and all the other things that had to be done to make sure we were ready when and if we were called on. We did spend a few days out on small patrols, but nothing serious. I traded off with the other loader on those patrols where he went one day and I went the next. I wasn’t too fond of the loader job and knew for sure that I did not want to be a gunner. What I really wanted to do was drive. The guy with that job at the time was the next crewman in line to be sent home, and I thought I might have a shot at the position when he left. I asked Sgt. Jones what I had to do to get put in the driver’s seat. He told me to be patient, that when the driver was gone, he was going to move Rodriguez, the present loader, up to driver. I was disappointed, but that was the way things worked. I knew the gunner was also close to rotating, so maybe I would get another chance. In the meantime, I just wanted to do the best job I could do as loader. Later on, I would learn how important every crewman on that tank was and how much we depended on each other.

As we mounted up one morning to go out and test fire all our weapons, Sgt. Jones told Rodriguez to take the driver’s

position for the day so he could get some practice. We moved out through the wire and across the sandy terrain to an area a short distance away, which we used as a firing range. The tank jerked, bounced and bucked all the way to the range. I could tell Sgt. Jones was not a bit happy with Rodriguez’s debut as driver and, I had to agree, he was pretty bad. We fired all of our weapons including our .45’s and headed back to the company area. Rodriguez’ driving showed no improvement on the way back in. In fact, it got worse. He just did not seem to have the knack for driving. Maybe there was still hope for me being behind that funny shaped steering wheel.

I had become right at home with my new surroundings. I was with a good unit with good people and good equipment and hadn’t been exposed to anything even close to what you would call combat. During morning formation, sometime in late July or early August, our platoon leader passed the word that he wanted to meet with the whole platoon in the mess tent after we were dismissed. We headed for the mess tent, clueless as to what this meeting was all about. There had been scuttlebutt (rumors), as there always was about a move, but nothing you could hang your hat on. There were all kinds of speculation that we were going back to Da Nang or that we were going to Hue or that we were going on a float, but none of this speculation even came close to the true story.

Our platoon leader came in the tent and took his spot in front of a large map of Vietnam. He began to lay out the plan that was to become our future. In a few days, First Platoon would load their five tanks on an L.S.T. (landing ship tank) to be transported north to a place with the name Dong Ha. We would set up a platoon area and do whatever “the powers

that be” called upon us to do. And that tells you a lot? All extra personnel (that would include me) would travel by convoy up Highway 1, past Hue and Quang Tri, and into the Dong Ha area. At the time, the Air Force, Sea Bees and some Marines had established a small compound, so life would be on the primitive side.

The next few days were spent installing fording gear, double checking everything, and packing and loading the entire platoon’s equipment into trucks. Departure day came and First Platoon was up early making preparations to head north. The tanks and the truck convoy were staged; the personnel not manning the tanks were given their assignments. I was assigned to ride shotgun with the company 1st Sgt. in the lead jeep. As the first sunlight of the day flooded the countryside, the word was passed to mount up. I checked my .45 and grabbed the M-14 rifle I had been issued. Checking the safety, I slapped in a twenty-round magazine, chambered a round, and placed the rifle in the rack between the seats in the jeep. After a long deep breath, I took my place in the passenger seat. The 1st Sgt. climbed into the driver’s seat asking if I was ready for a little drive in the countryside. I replied that I was as ready as I would ever be.

The tanks fired up their engines and, after a few minutes, they moved onto the road and headed out to meet up with the L.S.T. The 1st Sgt. pulled the jeep onto the road, made a hard right, and pointed the nose north. At that moment, I got that funny feeling where the hairs on the back of your neck stand up and you get that gnawing sensation in the pit of your stomach. I would know these feelings many more times before I would make my way home. This was the first time I had been in contact with the Vietnamese people. I knew for sure that, every time we

passed a bus or a group of people, their pockets were full of hand grenades and they were going to whip out their AK-47s and blast us. The 1st Sgt. must have noticed my tension so he told me to relax and enjoy the ride. I took his advice and was able to somewhat enjoy the next few hours of the trip to Dong Ha.



We arrived at Dong Ha without being gunned down or accosted in any way. It

was late in the afternoon as we drove through the gate and passed the airfield to what would be First Platoon's new C.P. (command post) at the end of the landing strip. Dong Ha looked really sparse at this time. We made our way to the location where we were to set up shop; it sure was not Da Nang or Phu Bai. It was late in

the day and the 1st Sgt. said we would start setting up tents and unloading the trucks in the morning, but for now we were to break open the

C-rations and find a place to bed down for the night. This was my first opportunity to enjoy the gourmet delights found inside those little cardboard boxes.

I would eventually learn to almost like these canned wonders. We sat around and

talked about home and our families, told war stories for those guys who had them, and we just generally relaxed.

The 1st Sgt. made up a watch schedule where each man had an hour watch, so we drew straws to see who got what watch. I drew the time from 2:00 AM to 3:00 AM. Sitting there on that warm summer night, I was able to reflect on my time thus far in Vietnam. I realized that the longer I was in-country and the farther north I moved, the more primitive and dangerous my life had become. Was this to be where I would spend the rest of my in-country stay? The members of First Platoon did not realize that when they rolled out of "C" Co. compound that day in the summer of 1966, that it would be the last time they would have a company headquarters to call home. First Platoon would become the "gypsy tank platoon" of northern I Corps. In some ways this was a good thing and, in other ways, it was bad. I still had a lot of unanswered questions, but I was learning fast--you had to--you had no other choice.

To be continued...

Richard "Ric" Langley
Lompoc, CA
Phone: (805) 736-2134

OPERATION DECKHOUSE VI

BY ARMANDO MORENO

This photo shows a column of grunts with a burning village (Sa Huynh) on the right. If you look very hard and carefully,



there is a ditch alongside the road. Up ahead on the left, there is an Ontos in the ditch that is supporting the grunts from Charlie Company 1/4. At this point, we had used up all of our 106 rounds and pretty near all of our .30 caliber machine gun ammo; that is when our Pig encountered transmission problems. This was a very scary moment because the grunts started to take fire from the other side of the village, and they left us to take care of the problem. We could have been ambushed anytime and anywhere from the left, but, thankfully, nothing happened. With our

transmission problems, we could only move forward and, eventually, we had to go back to the beach where we boarded a Mike boat that took us back to the USS Vancouver. It was very frustrating having to leave the fight (just as it was getting good) and to seemingly abandon the other Ontos on the beach. The grunts in the foreground of this photo have grabbed a local suspected VC and now they seem to be trying to decide what to do with him. The smell of the smoke, the intensity of the situation, and the fear of being ambushed will be with me forever.

Armando Moreno,
Bravo Co, 3rd AT Bn.
Santa Maria, CA
Phone: (805) 937-1912



OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM 2013 San Antonio Reunion Crowne Plaza Riverwalk Hotel October 31 – November 4

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

Member's Name: _____

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

Address: _____ Unit#: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

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

You must be a **current** 2013 USMC Vietnam Tankers Association member to attend the reunion. If your membership is delinquent please mail your dues with this registration or the dues will be collected at the sign-in desk. No partial payments of the registration fee are accepted. Fee covers planned food functions, bus transportation & lunch, meeting facilities, hospitality room & beverages and other expenses associated with the cost of hosting the reunion. Registration fee does not include your sleeping room, taxes or air fair.

New Reunion Refund Policy: If you find that you cannot attend the San Antonio reunion after you have pre-paid your reunion fees, the USMC VTA will refund your total reunion fees if you notify us prior to **September 16, 2013**. If you notify us of your cancellation after that date, we are sorry but we cannot make any refund offer.

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



NAME (as you want them to appear on you name tag)	T-SHIRT SIZE

Your total reunion fees

My Registration Fee: \$ **150.00**
 T-Shirt: \$ **10.00**

Number of guests _____ X \$ 150.00 = .. \$ _____
 (Registration Fee for each guest is \$150.00)

Guest T-Shirts _____ X \$ 10.00 = .. \$ _____

Grand Total = .. \$ _____

Additional Donation: Would you like to help with the beer & soda fund? \$ _____

GROSS AMOUNT ENCLOSED: ... \$ _____

You must make your own hotel room reservations by Sept 30th to get the low room rate! Call: 1-888-623-2800 and ask for the "2013 USMC Vietnam Tankers Reunion" for the special room rate of \$99.00 per night. .

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

Submit this form along with your payment by August 31st to get a half-priced Reunion t-shirt worth \$20.
 Send check or money order made out to: USMC VTA and the completed registration form to:

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



**YOU KNOW YOU'RE A TEXAN WHEN...
 YOU TAKE A ROADTRIP AND THE
 LONGEST PART IS GETTING OUT OF
 YOUR OWN STATE.**

**YOU KNOW YOU'RE A TEXAN WHEN...
 EVERY ADULT EXPECTS YOU
 TO SAY "MA'AM" OR "SIR"**



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

Please check your address label...if the last two digits of your name is less than "13" then your 2013 dues are now payable. Make you check out to USMC VTA for \$30 and mail to: USMC VTA c/o John Wear, 4437 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938.



**IN MEMORY
OF THE MEN AND WOMEN
WHO SERVED IN THE VIETNAM WAR
AND LATER DIED AS A RESULT
OF THEIR SERVICE

WE HONOR AND REMEMBER
THEIR SACRIFICE**