



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



A Tribute to Our Docs Page 26-44



Working with the Pentagon's official mint we created a one of a kind challenge coin that made its debut at the San Antonio reunion... they sold out! This is not your average dull bronze challenge coin; it is a ¼ inch larger than most (1.75") and features bright metallic gold and silver-like finish in full 3-D relief. The tank is bright gold on a shiny silver back-ground. Only a few colors were added by hand to enhance the appearance. This is a totally custom-designed coin that you will not see anywhere else. The coins are \$20 each plus \$4 (each) for postage and handling. There is no limit to the quantity that you can order. There is also a velvet lined display box available that holds two coins. The display boxes are \$15 each plus \$4 (each) for postage and handling. Please send your order and your check made out to: "USMC VTA" to:

USMC VTA
 c/o Fred Kellogg
 15013 NE 16th Street
 Vancouver, WA 98684-3605



Letter from the President

The image on the front cover of this issue first appeared in Life magazine back in early 1968. It is my understanding that the tank that was ferrying the WIA Marines to medical aid was the blade tank from Alpha Company, 1st Tanks. If I am not mistaken, the driver of that tank is a current member of the VTA, and in the recent past he & I had been in communication. I'd love to resume that contact with him and be in contact with any and all of the Hue City Marine tankers and Ontos crewmen. While I have been lucky to reunite with some of the tankers from the battle on the south side of the river, I have been unable to connect with any of the 1st Tanks crewmen who fought so gallantly on the north side in the Old City. In the not so distant future, I would really like to put a bunch of our collective stories together in a special issue of the Sponson Box. In addition, there is a group of Marine veterans who are planning to create and dedicate a monument to the KIA Hue City Marines. This monument will be located at the Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville, Florida. Mayport is the home port of the USS Hue City. If you were in Hue City during the Tet "celebration" of 1968, would you please give me a call or send me an email?

During the long hot summer of 1968, I too recall ferrying wounded and/or sick grunts to the LZ for medevac. Some of the heat-stroked Marines were choppered out to the USS Repose for a day or two of recuperation. The Navy gave them cold baths and Cokes and then sent them back to hump the bush all over again. When they returned, some of them were so weak that they could not dig fighting holes for the night, and sometimes we'd catch incoming NVA arty fire, and the hapless ... (and still-sick) ... grunts would be blown to shit. Then we'd load them up on our tank and have to medevac them all over again. Or worse, sometimes we had to carry their lifeless bodies to the LZ in a body bag.

As a follow up to the note that I wrote in my last letter about a certain VTA member requesting to leave the association because he felt "left out." My rusty dusty brain housing group tells me that the USMC VTA exists to reunite with our comrades in arms, renew our brotherhood and to remember the past. The way that I figure it, the association is an empty vessel; it can only be made better by what you bring to the table. If you simply sit by and wait for good things to happen then you are not helping the association move forward. Your financial support is very much appreciated...but we need your active participation in order to make the VTA that much better. We need all of you to step up and participate with your own stories and with your new member recruiting efforts.

For those of you who have not been to a recent reunion, you should make definite plans to be in **Washington, DC** for our next gathering on **October 28 to November 2, 2015**.

Semper Fidelis,

John

"If you just set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time and you would achieve nothing."

Margaret Thatcher



Board of Directors 2007–2009

Executive Directors

John Wear, *President*

5537 Lower Mountain Road; New Hope, PA 18938
(215) 794-9052 · E-mail: johnwear2@verizon.net

1st Sgt. Richard “Rick” Lewis, *Vice President*

5663 Balboa Ave (#366), San Diego, CA 92111-2793
858-738-1772 Email: ricklent@aol.com

Bruce Van Apeldoorn, *Treasurer*

73 Stanton Street, Rochester, NY 14611-2837
(585) 613-6564 Email: bvanapeldoornsr@gmail.com

Ronald C. Knight, *Secretary*

6665 Burnt Hickory Drive-Hoschton, GA 30548
(678) 828-7197 Email: rckusmcvta@att.net

Directors

Lt. General Martin R. Steele, *USMC (Ret.)*

16331 Ashington Park Drive; Tampa, FL 33647
E-mail: MRSteele@aol.com

Carl Fleischman

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

Fred Kellogg

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

Robert H. Vaxter

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

Pete Ritch

833 E Gulf Beach Drive, St George Island, FL 32328-2915
(850) 734-0014 Email: goldendog@mchsi.com

Mike “Belmo” Belmessieri

279 Dundee Drive, South San Francisco, CA 94080-1028
(650) 756-2924 Email: zippoF-11@aol.com

Committees & Chairmen

Terry Bocchino

Chaplin's Assistant
518-537-2509 EST

Mike Burnett

Awards & Medals
209-383-2261 PST

SgtMajor Bill “JJ” Carroll

Nominating Chair & Reunion Chair
CRCS/CR Representative
651-342-0913 CST

Bruce Van Apeldoorn

Audit & Finance
585-613-6564 EST

CW04 Bob Embesi

CRCS/CR Representative
406-821-3075 MS

Joe Liu

Jerry Clark Memorial Buddy Fund
801) 731-7591
Email: pjliu@hotmail.com

Lt. Col. Harris Himes

Chaplain
406-375-0097 MST

Ron Knight

Member Data Integrity
770-623-9237 EST

1st Sgt. Rick Lewist

VA Information
VTA History Project
858-297-8909 PST
Bob Peavey
Fallen Heroes
770-365-3711 EST

Pete Ritch

VTA History Project
850-734-0014 EST

John Wear

Sponson Box Editor
215-794-9052 EST

Greg Martin

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

Web Site: www.usmcvta.org

Copyright 2012. USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. All rights reserved. No part of this document may be republished, reproduced, copied, faxed, electronically transmitted or in any other manner duplicated without express written permission from both the USMCVTA and the author or authors.

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

Tuyen Pham – Layout and Design

Sandra Coan – Proofing

Printed in the USA

New Members

Please note: During the run up to any of our biennial reunions, we normally have anywhere from ten to fifteen new members joining the VTA. We are woefully behind that number and we need for you to redouble your efforts and find more new members... Please!!!

Andregg, Michael

3132 Cobblestone Ridge
Tecumseh, MI 49286-7787
Phone: 517-424-4521
Email: None

B,C & H&S Cos, 3rd Tanks, '67 – '69

MOS: 1811

DOB: 6/29/48

Wife: Patricia

Recruited by: John Wear

Arnone, Stephen C

114 Eastman Estates
Rochester, NY 14622
Phone: 585-305-1627
Email: cap1steve4@aol.com

H&S Co, 1st Tanks, 1969

MOS: 2531

DOB: 4/6/51

Wife: Cheryl

Recruited by: Mike Brandi

Denton, Robert K

PO Box 1269
Morganton, NC 28680-1269
Phone: 828-430-0739
Email: rkd@byrdlaw.com

DOB: 10/9/74

Wife: Lauren

In honor of his friend VTA member
Chris Hicks

Fierros, Robert

820 Citrus Place
Carlsbad, CA 92008-4112
Phone: 760-729-3194
Email: robtong@roadrunner.com

Bravo Co, 1st Tanks, '65 – '66

H&S Co, 3rd, '68 – '69

MOS: 1811

DOB: 10/6/30

Wife: Olga

Recruited by: Website

Heniff, David R

103159 Block Road
Tomahawk, WI 54487
Phone: 715-453-4306
Email: patheniff@yahoo.com

B & C Co, 1st Tanks, '68 – '69

MOS: 1811

DOB: 6/21/49

Wife: Pat

Recruited by: Ron Davidson / DAV
magazine

Marvin, Kim I

Box 50341
Sparks, NV 89435-0341
Phone: 775-225-0698
Email: kim@nevcaltru.com

Alpha Co, 3rd Tanks, '68 – '69

MOS: 3516

DOB: 4/25/49

Wife: Toni

Recruited by: VFW magazine

Suthers, Mark S

180 Concession 5A
Lanark, Ontario, Canada K0G 1K0
Phone: 613-259-3065
Email: mark.suthers@sympatico.ca

B Co, 1st Tanks, '65 – '66

MOS: 2861

DOB: 5/2/44

Recruited by: Tom Snyder

MEMBER INFO CHANGES

Robert Hoover

706 Rocksprings Road, High Point,
NC 27262
Phone: Not known

Valmore L. Lee

7970 S. Dehmel Road, Frankenmuth,
MI 48734
Phone: 989-992-9809

David Owen

Phone: 660-924-9000.

Ken Pozder

2305 Mammatus Drive, Sparks,
NV 89441
Phone: 775-432-2412
Email address, kpozder39@yahoo.
com

Letter to the Editor

At the San Antonio Airport

While I was sitting in the San Antonio Air Terminal awaiting my flight home after the 2013 reunion, I noted a gentleman sitting with his wife across from me. He wore a cap with USMC stuff on it and looked to be about age 80. On a hunch, I asked him if he had been part of the group of Korean War officers who had their reunion at the same time as us. He said he had been at the same hotel and we began to talk. I learned that he had been a platoon leader at the Chosin Reservoir withdrawal. He had also stayed in the Corps and later commanded 2/5 in Nam, retiring as a Lt. Col. He asked me about my Vietnam experiences and he listened to every word. I told him I was recently elected Commandant of my Marine Corps League Detachment and described one of our members, a retired sergeant major who had been a corporal at Chosin, earning two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts. The colonel pulled a challenge coin out of his pocket and gave it to me to give to the sergeant major. The coin was dedicated to the Chosin Marines. On Veteran's Day, our Marine Corps League members were placing USMC flags on all graves of Marines buried at the Southern Arizona Veterans Cemetery. I saw the sergeant major there and called him aside, handing him the challenge coin that the colonel gave me. I know sergeant majors don't cry, but his eyes were sweating . . . must have been the bright morning sun that day.

Jim Coan
Sierra Vista, AZ

Bruce Shows Us How to Do It!



This photo was taken by Joe Vernon at the VTA golf outing during the 2013 reunion in San Antonio

Had a Great Time in San Antonio!

I had a great time and met some good people at the reunion. I went alone so I was kind of forced to mingle. My cohort in crime

that I was with in Vietnam died in 2008 and I was hesitant to go. Well, you know Marines! Everyone gets included and this was no different. I hope to see you next time in our nation's capitol.

Jim Manson
Springfield, OR
Phone: (541) 741-3820

A Birthday Party

I see you printed the article about Ricky Dycus & Bill Bloomfield that I had sent you while I was living in Vermont. I was on C-21 during Operation Pipestone Canyon and, as it turns out, June 2nd was my 19th birthday and what a way to spend my special day! But I tell you that I'd rather have been there than with the pukers at Woodstock. Just glad I haven't had another birthday party like that one back in Vietnam... but I did have a lot of brothers to celebrate it with.

Todd Phillips
Bellaire, OH
Phone: (740) 296-8184

The a Refrigerator Liberator

I just got a phone call from the Charlie Co, 3rd Herd's Plt Cmdr, Lt Ralston. We had a nice chat. He was one of the guys that help steal the refrigerator for the company EM Club. What a nice way to end the old year!

Jim Langford
Carlsbad, CA

A Note from a VTA Scholarship Winner

My name is Katherine Mulligan, and I was a recipient of the USMCVTA scholarship. I just wanted to thank you again for the award and let you know how things are going! I'm currently in my sophomore year and have decided to be a biology major with a chemistry minor. I am secretary of UNC-Chapel Hill's undergraduate family medicine interest group chapter, and we are currently organizing a bone marrow donation drive in March. I am also a part of the club cross country and track team, and am training for a marathon which I will run in April! I also play clarinet for the University Band here at UNC. My interest in Spanish has picked up this year, and I am currently volunteering at a nearby elementary school. I work with kids in the school's dual language program who are struggling with Spanish. We read books and discuss them in Spanish, so it's a great way to help me improve my Spanish as well! I hope you are doing well! Just wanted to say hi and let you know how things are going! Thank you so much again for all that you do!

Katherine Mulligan
Granddaughter of Lt Col Frank Slovik, USMC (ret)

(Continued on page 8)

Meet Your Board of Directors

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

Editor's Note: For a number of reasons, Jim Coan, our very capable and highly reliable association Treasurer for the past five years has resigned. Jim's resignation letter is included inside of this issue. While we will miss Jim and his fine work, during the San Antonio reunion Bruce Van Apeldoorn stepped up to the plate and volunteered to fill this very important post. Welcome Bruce!!!

Farewell Letter

Your new VTA Treasurer Bruce C. Van Apeldoorn Sr



1968



Bruce Today

Military Bio - MSgt., USMC Retired

Dates of active service: December 8, 1966 – December 8, 1986

Decorations, Medals, Badges, Citations and Campaign Ribbons Awarded: Combat Action Ribbon - Presidential Unit Citation - Navy Unit Commendation - Good Conduct (6 Awards) - National Defense - Vietnam Service w/3* - VN Gallantry Cross (Unit w/palm) - Republic of Vietnam Campaign

After completion of Boot Camp (MCRD Parris Island), Infantry Training (Camp Geiger/MCB Camp Lejeune), and the Basic Tank Crewman Course (Camp Pendleton) Bruce was assigned to 1st Tank BN, 1st Mar Div in Vietnam. As a PFC he was issued an M-14 and assigned to the S-3 as a member of the Security Platoon. For four months he was afforded the opportunity to hone his 0311 skills by going on patrols, guarding strategic structures such as bridges, building bunkers, stringing concertina wire and burning shitters. In January of 1968, Bruce was promoted to LCpl and assigned to the 2nd Plt, 'C' Co, 1st Tank BN as a tank crewman. At the end of that month the Tet Offensive started which ended a period of hunting the elusive Viet Cong guerillas and began the fighting the regulars of the North Vietnam Army.

In May/June of 1968 he participated in "Operation Allenbrook" as a Corporal. That operation would be the focus of the book "Every Marine; 1968 Vietnam - A Battle for Go Noi Island" written by Robert A Simonsen.

Bruce rotated back to CONUS in July. A letter from his Company Commander, Captain R. P. Hopkins, stated: "Your outstanding leadership as a tank commander under the trying conditions of almost daily contact with the enemy is appreciated."

Assignments during Bruce's career were 2nd Tank Battalion at Camp LeJeune; a Mediterranean cruise with 3rd BN, 6th Marine Rgt; Recruiting Duty in Rochester, NY; 3rd Tank BN on Okinawa with cold weather training at Mt. Fuji. He then retrained in Avionics as a S/Sgt. and was assigned to Marine Air Group 14 MCAS Cherry Point. As a GySgt he transferred to Marine Air Group 32 and enjoyed a second trip to the Mediterranean. Final assignment was as NCOIC of Naval Air Training Detachment at Cherry Point in support of the AV-8B where he was promoted to M/Sgt.

Bruce found a challenging and rewarding second career in education with his current position as Assistant Professor at the College of Business and Management at DeVry University. (Undergraduate and graduate degrees earned via off-duty education while at MCAS Cherry Point).

Bruce continues to live by the Corps' ethical standards learned during his career as a U.S. Marine. He's physically fit, recently completing a half-marathon with a goal of running the Marine Corps Marathon in 2014, and has a squared-away set of dress blues. Life member of USMC Vietnam Tankers Association, Marine Corps Tankers Association, Marine Corps League and Vietnam Veterans of America (Chapter 20 – Rochester, NY).

Vietnam Marine Tankers:

I resigned as the Treasurer of the VTA effective this January, 2014. It has been a most rewarding and satisfying experience to have served on the Board of Directors all these years, and to have witnessed the organization's growth. Other demanding events have come into my life this past year and I've made the difficult decision that I will need to direct my full attention elsewhere.



I am a charter member of the USMC VTA but missed the first reunion in 1999 due to other commitments. I still recall when I attended my first reunion in Minneapolis in 2001. It was like coming home again. Greeting inside the door was Ken "Piggy" Bores, my driver on A-11, whom I last saw just before he was wounded and evacuated from Con Thien.

I served in the capacity of V.P. for both the VTA and VTHF until 2005, when I resigned due to health problems. A year later, John Wear called and asked me to take over the Treasurer job. At the time our finances were in a mess, and it took John and me many months to get our finances back on track, including getting our IRS status clarified. Whoever takes over the Treasurer position will find our finances on solid ground.

We've shared many successes over the years. Since I returned to the fold in 2006, our reunions in Las Vegas, Charleston, San Diego and San Antonio have worked out really well. I was proud to have had a part in helping plan them. Also, the new VTA History Program has been a tremendous success. Kudos to VTA President John Wear, Vice President Rick Lewis and Board Member Pete Ritch for implementing this program so that our legacy as USMC tankers in the Vietnam War shall be recorded and never be forgotten.

In the future, I hope to see that we have recruited many more USMC Vietnam tankers into the VTA. Belonging to an organization like us provides many benefits to the members, not least of which is the camaraderie we experience at our reunions. We owe it to our former comrades-in-arms who haven't yet joined us to get them involved. Our brotherhood is contagious. One of the highest compliments I ever heard about us tankers was at the Charleston reunion, when a former Basic School buddy (an invited dinner guest) commented, "You tankers sure are a down to earth bunch—you don't have any guys going around trying to act more important than everyone else." And that's precisely why I'm a Life Member.

Semper Fi!

Jim Coan

Letter from the Editor
(Continued from page 5)

Editor's note: Where do we get such great kids?

For Our Docs

Thought I'd share with our membership one of the most heartfelt tributes to our Corpsmen that I have ever read. This is a copy of a letter sent out to all Marine Corps League members in our detachment after a member had grumbled publically about having a Corpsman as our Chapter Commandant. The author had served as a grunt in Korea. I obtained his permission to use it in our newsletter.

Jim Coan
Sierra Vista, AZ
Phone: (520) 378-9659

“ . . . Have you ever opened your eyes in intense pain and looked up at a “Doc” (U.S. Navy Corpsman) sweaty, unshaven, as scared as you are, telling you “you’re okay, the bleeding’s stopped, you’re going to make it.” Or, maybe you’ve never had that same “Doc” stop at your fighting hole, put his arm around your shoulder, and tell you how hard he tried to save your fire team brother, but the damage was too much. Maybe you haven’t seen the pain in his eyes behind the tears when all he can do now is try to comfort you and push back his own grief for others he has lost. Maybe you haven’t spent a night in his boots . . . exhausted, unable to sleep, haunted by visions of broken and shattered bodies, screams of pain, shortages of medical supplies, rain, cold, collecting body parts, flies, stench and abject misery. Never mind that he is a prime target of the enemy that wants to kill him. Not a Marine? He earns that title with every suture, burn dressing, wound bandaged, tourniquet applied, broken bone set, limb lost, plasma bag hung, morphine shot, graves registration tag, and Purple Heart validation.

I am a Korean War Marine and I have the deepest respect and love for every Corpsman that has ever taken the field with our Corps.”

Jim Willig
Thunder Mountain Detachment 1283,
Marine Corps League
Sierra Vista, Arizona

Can you relate your first experience to visit “The Wall”?

In the distance, the sun shined brightly on the granite. It was early morning and no one was in sight. As I approached the Wall a park ranger was nearby. He must have sensed my anxiety and directed me to follow him. He opened a directory which had a listing of all the names and panels in order of dates. I gave him March 30, 1967. I slowly read from my list, “ten names”, I said. He found them easily as I fought back the tears. “17E”, he said, “all ten.”

I turned and faced the Wall, took a deep breath as I scanned the names. “So many”, I said. I stopped in front of Panel 17E and ran my finger down the names beginning nearing the top which were out of my reach. There. I read the names as my finger

touched the letters and the memories returned the sight and the sounds, the faces. The cry of “Corpsman Up!” I see myself running and running, and there they were suddenly. We were just going on a routine patrol that bright and sunny morning to guard the villagers while they harvested their rice crop.

“Honey?” I heard a voice from behind me. Startled, I turned and looked in the face of a blue eyed girl. The tears then flowed uncontrollably and my body slumped in her arms. “Let’s go home”, she said. I turned and looked back gave a quick salute.

I will never forget the faces, names, and the place of those young men nor the others that followed. I honor all the “Heroes”... those who survived and those who did not. I make a point of visiting the Wall in DC and the Moving Wall when in town. And yes, I cry tears.

I have contributed my story along with (pictures) “Faces on The Wall to be Honored and Remembered for future Generations” to be placed in the new Vietnam Wall Education Center in DC. Semper Fidelis to my brothers. We shall never forget.

Frank “Doc” Morelli

**From an email from Craig Newbery
WOW! Thank You “DOC”!!!**

For those of us who heard and used the term “Corpsman Up!” it is a term that remains everlasting in both our hearts and our minds. The truth is that we ask and expect far too much from these young men who are called Corpsmen, and who like most young Marines were first exposed to the horrors of war in ways most will never forget. Those assigned to the Fleet Marine Forces Marines (FMF) lived the way we did and that of the units to which assigned, and they endured and participated in every hardship and disappointment, as well as the praise and glory awarded their units.

The truth is many in Vietnam were 18 years old and upwards, and were just as fearful of being hurt or killed as the rest were, and like the rest failed to receive mail for extended periods of time. Like every other Marine in the ground combat units, Corpsmen dug their foxholes with other Marines, ate the same C-rations as the rest, felt the stings of ants, leeches, bees, and scorpions, and they also dug their own toilets like the rest of us and they also buried their cans, papers, etc., after cooking and eating their meals. They were just as tired as the rest and at times just as afraid of the unknown as was anyone else. However, Corpsmen still had to check on the sanitation of our locations, as well as tending to the minor and major injuries and ailments suffered sooner or later by all. And those ailments and injuries ran the gamut from diarrhea to coughs and colds, and from elephant grass cuts which usually festered into very large and ugly sores, to the usual heat related issues such as heatstroke, and on to more serious mental and physical issues to include VD and other issues of that nature.

Our Navy Corpsmen did all that while still carrying the gear needed to care for a platoon or company sized unit as well as carrying their own gear and weapons. And often times they were told to help out the locals with their illnesses, injuries, or wounds, and that in turn meant using up precious bandages

and medications which the Corpsman had carried in his pack and medical bags for his fellow Marines. That then caused the Corpsman to pray or ask help from somewhere that he would not run short of needed medications and supplies, and just in case and when the next firefight, or mine explosion, or enemy mortars or artillery might happen upon his unit.

To ask the above of a young 18-22 year old FMF Corpsman is asking much more than many in the field ever realized until much later and after the fact. After all, that Corpsman is thought by many to be an “expert” on wounds, or how to handle other major injuries, in addition to which medication might be needed and requested to be used for everything from fleas or hair lice to trench foot or crotch rot or pink eye. While every Corpsman that our units had in Vietnam might not have been quite as astute, courageous, gifted, and the logically- minded individuals we make them all out to be, I would love to have just one more time to shake their hands and hug them all, and to thank them all for that which they did for so many over the years, and especially for those units I was honored to be a part of.

For you DOC, THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE, BRAVERY AND CARING - A TRIBUTE TO THE F.M.F. CORPSMAN...

The Faces of Angels



Editor Note: I was lucky to never have been physically wounded during my time in Vietnam but if I had, I sure would have loved to have awakened to the sight of one of these beautiful women. God bless nurses all over the world... and most especially for military nurses (and corpsmen)!

You see them? They are absolutely beautiful. When I got hit the last time and the medic stabilized and kept me alive. These beautiful angels took over and did miracles. They dealt with so much pain, suffering and death and just kept doing their magic. They never quit and stood strong in spite of everything. But I saw a side of one that still is strong in my mind. As strong and tough as they were, they were also human. After one young grunt died, a nurse standing behind a screen silently cried and I could see the pain and suffering she had. I was very touched and never forgot that. Yes, look at these beautiful ladies...

Posted on a Facebook Vietnam tribute page...

From the Sgt Grit's Newsletter

Went to the VA today for my monthly check up and sat two seats away from a Fallujah Corpsman. He lost his left leg.

"Two of my Marines went down with an I.E.D. so I ran to them and hit one myself. I left my leg in that damn place."

I sat listening, quietly, for about 10 minutes, stood up and walked over to him to shake his hand and thank him. He saw me coming, saw the Birdie on the Ball on my t-shirt and cover, he stood up, almost at attention, accepted my hand and pulled me in for a bear hug, then He Thanked Me For My Service and called me Marine... all before I had a chance to say anything to him. Then I couldn't talk, I was too choked up and had tears in my eyes.

After what seemed like an eternity, I composed myself and said that's why I came over to see him. That I was listening to his conversation with the Soldier sitting next to him and I was moved, as all Marines are by Corpsmen. He said that he is doing fine. It took a lot of work, emotional as well as physical, and he is now working on getting a non-profit started to help other amputees.

What an outstanding young man! And I was honored to meet him today.

Cpl Joe Farrell
Nam '68-'69

And Another One from Sgt Grit:

When I was with 2d Tank Bn at CLNC as a Corpsman, the 2ndLTs had to go to the range to qualify. I was assigned to be the Corpsman. (I was an HM1, E6 at the time). As the Butter Bars were taking their positions, I happened to notice one of the gentlemen using a "revolver" grip on holding the 1911, instead of the standard both hands under hold. I remarked to him that he might find it more comfortable in the long run if he used the under grip. He told me "I am an officer, and I know what I am doing!"

(RIGHT!)

So, I went back to my position with the Range Safety Officer. Sure enough, the first round he fired, the slide came back and gouged the h-ll out of the "V" in his left hand. >>

RSO calls... "CORPSMAN UP!"

I cleaned it out thoroughly (ok, maybe a little more thorough than necessary). I told him what my Daddy had told me... "If yer gonna be stupid, ya gotta be tough!" Needless to say, he used the proper hold after that...

Addison Miller
HMC(FMF), Unites States Navy/Ret

It's a Small Marine World

Note: I got an email from a Vietnam Marine grunt that was with 3/26 in 1969 until they went back to the World and then he was sent to 2/5. He had this to say about a doctor visit:

Last week, I had a consultation with my doctor before my colonoscopy. In his office, I noticed he had an award from the VA for "Outstanding Service, etc." I asked him how long he was with the VA and he told me he was also a Navy doctor in Vietnam. I asked him where and he told me 1st Med in Da Nang and with 3rd Med in Dong Ha. I asked him if he was at 1st Med in September of '69. He replied that he had been. Since he was a gastro surgeon, I am willing to bet he might have done some work on my best friend who took 8 rounds while two were in his stomach. I then asked him if he remembered how bad August and September were in Southern I Corps. He replied that those were his worst months in Vietnam. He then asked me where I was... and after I told him "2/5," he said, "You guys and the 7th Marines kept me a very busy guy." He's a great doctor and a great guy. And here he is, still practicing his trade.

Jim McPeak
Newtown, PA

WELCOME HOME!!!

I was recently filling up at a gas station near my home when a car full of older Vietnamese pulled in. One of the men, (he was probably my age or older), walked slowly over and stopped three feet from me. He pointed to my Vietnam Campaign Ribbon bumper sticker and said "You Vietnam?" I was really at full alert and expecting a confrontation. I answered that I was. He then smiled; bowed deeply to me and told me: "Thank you." He also said that he hated North Vietnam. He then turned and went back to his car. I finished my business and drove off with a new feeling. It was strange but I felt at least as vindicated as I felt the first time any American told me "Welcome Home". I guess I was applying a bit more balm to my wounds.

Greg Kelley
Groveland, MA
Phone: (978) 521-1392

From a Vietnam Doggie Tanker buddy:

There is a (Vietnam) "Wall South" located adjacent to the bay in Pensacola where I lived in the 90's. I drove by the site twice daily for three years and only looked as I passed by. Finally, one night on the way home from my fudge store on Pensacola Beach, I was all alone so I gathered my nerve and stopped. It was a few minutes before midnight. The directory gave me the location of McGee, Andy, Goss, Anderson, Beitlich and Highberger... my Bravo Brothers. I wrote them down and one by one found my old

friends carved in the dark stones. It was a very strange experience and I know this sounds crazy, but I was not alone.

Later I had the chance to see the Wall in DC. It was a hot summer afternoon and all I could do was take a prompt walk by it. It too was a very emotional experience for me.

I am glad we all made it back.



From Dick Peksens: View from Liberty Bridge of Convoy arriving from An Hoa

Thanks Docs!

I have read a few stories about the great deeds the Navy Corpsman's have done and decided to share one of my own.

My wife and I purchased a new car while on vacation in Oregon. We live 800 miles away in Utah, so we had to take two cars back home with us. My mother volunteered to help us drive both cars home. We normally make the trip in one day so we appreciated the extra help.

We were in the middle of nowhere in the desert. I was sleeping shot gun and my mother was driving and my wife and kids were in the car behind us. We were going approximately 77 MPH.

Anyway, I was sleeping with my seat fully reclined with my seat belt on. It felt like we were driving on a dirt road for a minute. My mom shook my shoulder and woke me up. She kept saying, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." We were in the median. The car got back on the road. She over corrected. The car went into a power slide. I grabbed the "Oh Shit!" handle and looked at the steep dirt hill we were about fly up. I kept thinking to myself, "Not today! Not today!" My wife and children were going to watch us die.

The car flew up the hill and we rolled violently. My head hit the side airbag so hard I passed out for a second. I saw an iPod and sunglasses and many other things flying around inside the car. I heard a distinct sound of breaking glass and the car being crunched up. We rolled twice and landed right side up with the wheels on the ground. I had the taste of metal in my mouth.

I checked to see if I still had all my fingers and toes. I made sure I could still move my legs. I looked to my right and saw my mother's head slumped on the steering wheel. I got out of the car and stood up. I tried to walk around to my mom's side but I was

having trouble moving my legs. My mom woke up and told me she was ok. I saw a car pulled over on the side of the road and a man running towards me. I noticed his kid get out of the car to chase his dad across the highway. I tried to run to grab the kid out of the road but again, I couldn't move my legs. The man was able to turn around and rush his kid back to the safety of his car. I had a few people around me asking me questions. I saw the stars and felt the signs. I told them all I was going to pass out and needed to lie down.

I pointed my legs up hill and laid down because I knew I was going into shock. I felt better within a minute. A man jumped over me and was talking to me. He said, "Everything's going to be all right Marine. I'm a Navy Corpsman."

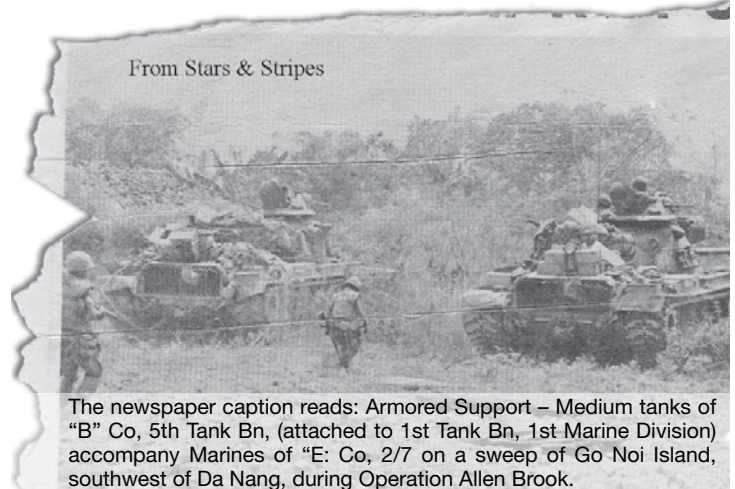
Enough said. My mother and I were safe and alive and being looked over by a Corpsman. What a feeling knowing a Corpsman was in total control of the situation. I wasn't even worried anymore. He stayed until we were loaded onto an ambulance.

Such a simple thing of a Corpsman being there for me in a devastating situation was beyond words. I hope you're reading this, Doc. Thank you for being who you are. Thank You for being what you are. Semper Fi, Doc!

Jeff Steiner

From the Sgt Grit's "American Courage" E-Newsletter

Stars & Stripes, 1968



From Stars & Stripes

The newspaper caption reads: Armored Support – Medium tanks of "B" Co, 5th Tank Bn, (attached to 1st Tank Bn, 1st Marine Division) accompany Marines of "E" Co, 2/7 on a sweep of Go Noi Island, southwest of Da Nang, during Operation Allen Brook.

Thank You For Your Service (A Moment of Truth)

Marines don't wear their uniform (camies, digitals etc) in public because we can't (we're not allowed to)... however I see many Army "Joes" walking through the airport as I travel and good on them. Did you know that American Airlines will move a service member up to first class if they are in uniform and available? Just ask, they will do it.

I was on a flight last week and saw a young Captain (US Army type) sitting on the plane. The Marine in me was initially like, "Be happy you have a seat," but then the big brother in me thought for a second and tapped a flight attendant on the shoulder and asked if it would be possible to move the young Captain up to first class. She said, "No problem," and they moved the Captain up. Today's Marines tend to "stick out" but those Marines, sailors, airmen and soldiers of the past may not. So if you're traveling or while you're keeping situation awareness and notice a past warriors' tattoo, ask them if they served. If they did, tell them thanks. It will make their day.

Posted on line from "One Marine's View"

Rest in Peace

It was 46 years ago, 19 days past my 19th birthday; I was very nearly shot thru the head (within 2")... and Lt. John P. Marken, who was in the cupola above and behind me, was killed instantly. In the same 90 second period, a young NVA had come out of a spider hole about 25 feet in front of the tank. I was driving. He came up firing but not at the tank. Instead, he fired at the grunts on line beside us. We all returned fire. Nugent disappeared and I rolled the left track over his hole and in front of him. For many years, we have Anglicized the Vietnamese name Nguyen as Nugent, but I have since learned it is properly pronounced "When." I often think about this and other things that happened that day and wonder. R.I.P. John Marken and R.I.P. Nugent (Nguyen).

John Hughes
Jay, FL

Phone: (850) 206-0825
Posted on line from Facebook

THE VTA HISTORY PHOTO PROJECT

Please gather up all of your Vietnam photos and pick out as many clear (in focus) photos as you want. Then please give Greg Martin a phone call at (360) 480-1206 (Pacific time zone) to discuss your photos and to coordinate sending them to him for posting on the VTA website. All photos will be copied and the originals returned to you.

Book Review

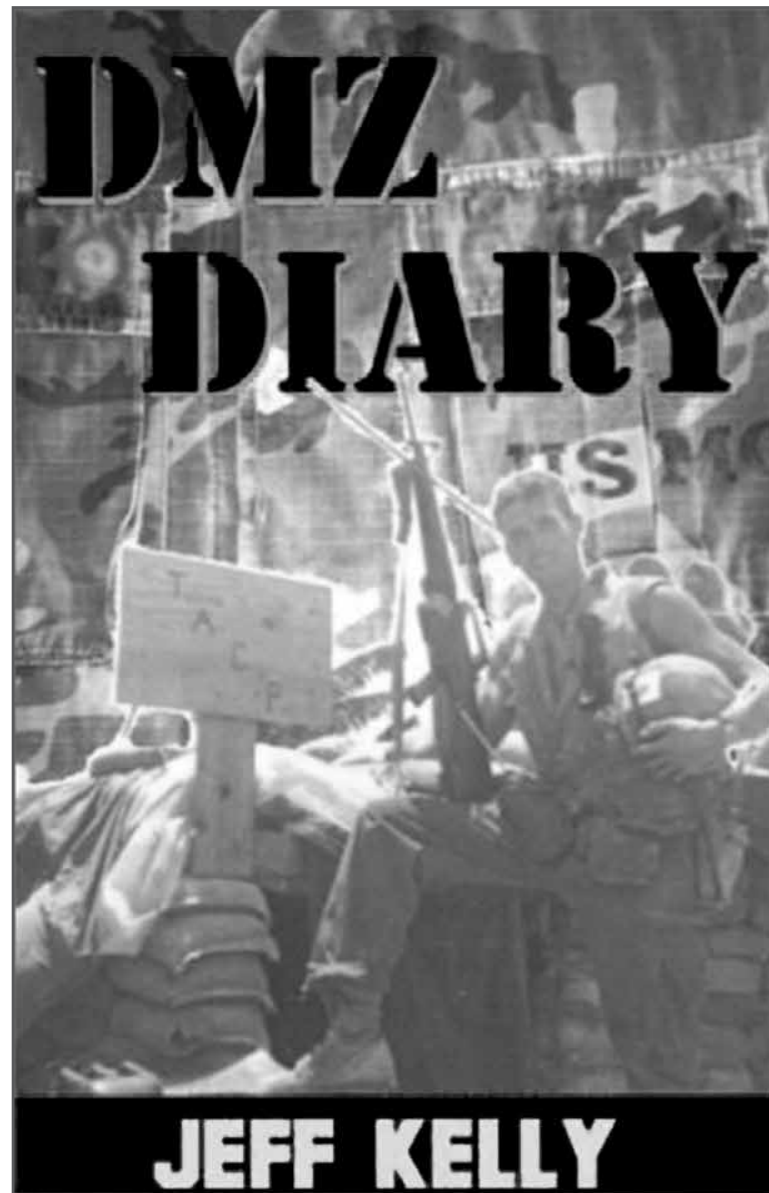
Editor's Note: I just finished reading DMZ DIARY authored by Vietnam Marine grunt veteran Jeff "TJ" Kelly. I have to tell you that for me being a tank crewman, it took me a little bit to get into the book... but once Jeff mentioned "tanks," I sat up and began my page-by-page enthusiastic close examination.

Jeff Wrote: This book is an account of what I saw and did in Vietnam in 1968. I began the first draft more as therapy than as historic record or artistic expression in 1969 while on MP duty in Japan. Years later, when my battalion's command chronology was declassified, I was able to verify my notes against it and found my memory of events surprisingly accurate. In preparing this work, I relied heavily on the command chronology and on conversations with former comrades. In this second edition I have made a few factual corrections and added some previously unpublished material.

Psychological wounds from exposure to heavy combat are deep and long lasting. The political climate in the United States in the early seventies tended to aggravate that trauma. Many valuable lessons have been learned about the treatment of post-traumatic stress since then, but at the time a returning vet was on his own. Writing was my release, my safety valve. Through writing the memories returned with astonishing clarity. Conversations, facial expressions, even details like the texture of a leaf -- all were recorded in that voluminous first draft. I have used those recorded impressions in this work and, although I cannot attest now decades later to their verbatim exactness, I have faith in their authenticity.

Map coordinates, village names, other Marine units and aircraft types are all historically accurate and verified by the command chronology. My quest for accuracy is, I hope, more than a quirk. Through accurate reporting my aim is to offer a revealing glimpse into the rarefied circumstances of the DMZ where death was sudden, life stripped of the superfluous, and survival dependent of teamwork and a little luck.

We called each other brother. Young men from very different backgrounds formed iron bonds of friendship that were tested by North Vietnamese fire. It wasn't political; it had nothing to do with stopping the spread of communism or concerns for the domino theory that made us fight. We had a better reason to fight and take chances and sometimes die. We fought for each other.



Jeff Added: The tankers I write about in the Cua Viet fight did one of the bravest things I ever saw. RPGs were flying right past them and they kept on coming. Lima Company would have been hurt much worse if not for those guys. Don't know if they got a medal for that but they sure should have.

Earlier, on February 7, 1968, we assaulted an NVA bunker complex with two Marine infantry companies and three tanks online. That was my first big firefight. Afterwards, we loaded 29 of our KIAs on two tanks. It was a sight I'll never forget. Nobody said a word. The tankers just looked at all those dead Marines and were speechless. Everybody was in shock.

Absolutely you can use quotes from my book for a review. I'd be honored for you to do it. And thanks for reading my book.

Semper Fi,
Jeff "TJ" Kelly
jeffkelly2531@gmail.com



Can anyone identify this hard charging Marine tanker?
The first person to contact John Wear with the right answer will receive a yet un-named mediocre prize.

GUESS WHO Photo Contest

Last Issue Winner

Todd Phillips called me at 11:36 AM on December 31st and identified Clyde Hoch.

I also got the below (late) email identification from Ralph Schwartz on January 4:

"This is Clyde Dennis Hoch, TC of C-35, 1st Tanks! He was the head honcho of the Light Section of the 3rd Platoon. I was the TC of C-32, which was the rest of the light section."

As an aside: Several members tried to identify "Miss June" that was on the wall to the left of Clyde



To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

Lenny Mendez



Photo: Bruce Van Apeldoorn (left) & Lenny (right) on top of C-22 at 'C' Co. 1st Tk. Bn. The note written on the back of the photo: "2nd Bn. 3rd Marines - Feb 68 - Tet Offensive."

It is with a heavy heart that I report the passing of Lenny Mendes in March of 2013. We sent a Christmas card to him with our phone number included and Lenny's daughter, Christine, called us immediately. Christine informed us that Lenny had become very sick with kidney problems and finally his heart gave out. He was provided with a Marine Corps burial with full honors.

For those who knew Lenny, please excuse me for not notifying you personally but I just could not make those phone calls. As you know, Lenny and I reported to 'C' Co, 1st Tanks around January 1st of 1968. We became very close and spent practically 24/7 together the next six months. We survived the Tet Offensive, several weeks with the Korean Marines and Operation Allenbrook.

We drifted apart for awhile, but Lenny did call me

about a decade ago. A Marine in his VA support group provided him with the alpha roster found at the USMC VTA website which contained my name and phone number. We talked a lot, I sent him an airline ticket and for the second time in his life Lenny left California to visit us for a week. I finally felt like I understood the meaning of esprit de corps.

We kept in phone contact and I tried to convince Lenny to attend the Las Vegas and the San Diego reunions, but I just could not get him to commit. I would call him after the fact and he was always full of questions about who was there and what we did.

At this point my only comfort is knowing that according to the third verse of The Marine Corps' Hymn that Lenny is on guard duty in Heaven.

Semper Fi Brother,
Bruce Van Apeldoorn

David W. Douglas, Sr.

Vietnam Marine tanker, David Douglas, 68, of Drexel Hill, PA, on Jan. 24, 2014. After his discharge, he went to work at the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service Center, and over the next thirty years, acting as an advocate, he helped thousands of veterans with claims and other issues with the VA. Although he was invited several times, David never joined the USMC VTA. He will be missed by the Philadelphia veteran community.

Corpsman from Vietnam War Returned for Burial

Found in Leatherneck Magazine

Navy Hospital Corpsman Third Class Michael B. Judd of Cleveland was buried on July 15 (2013) in Virginia's Arlington National Cemetery.

On June 30, 1967, HM3 Judd was aboard a CH-46A Sea Knight helicopter that was attempting to insert a U.S. Marine Corps reconnaissance team into hostile territory in Thua Thien-Hue Province, Vietnam. As the helicopter approached the landing zone, it was struck by enemy fire from the surrounding tree line, causing the aircraft to catch fire and crash. Although most of the reconnaissance team survived, Judd and four others died in the crash.

In 1993, joint U.S. and Socialist Republic of Vietnam teams investigated the crash. The team interviewed local villagers who claimed to have discovered an aircraft crash site in the nearby forest while searching for firewood in 1991. The team surveyed the location, finding aircraft wreckage that could not be associated with a CH-46A. After several more attempts to identify the crash site in 2012, a joint U.S./S.R.V. recovery team began excavating the site and recovered human remains. Scientists from the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing In Action Accounting Command and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence in the identification of HM3 Judd's remains.

Colonel Charles Waterhouse, USMC (ret)

Editors Note: During the 2005 VTA reunion in Philly, we had arranged for Col Waterhouse to be our Guest Speaker. The day that our transportation was to have picked him up at his Toms River, New Jersey home, his wife called and informed us that the colonel had taken a tumble and was not able to make the Farewell Dinner.

Colonel Charles Waterhouse, USMCR, 89, passed away early on Saturday morning, Nov. 16, 2013 in Toms River, N.J. Col. Waterhouse was the first and only the artist-in-residence of the U.S. Marine Corps. He continued to paint until three weeks before his death. Upon graduating from high school, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and was attached to Company C, 5th Engineer Battalion. 5th Marine Division, FMF. On Feb. 19, 1945, Col. Waterhouse was seriously wounded during the first wave at Iwo Jima. Nerve damage resulted

in him losing the feeling in most of his left hand, but there was no damage to the hand that would become his painting hand. Three tours of duty as a combat artist in Vietnam resulted in hundreds of on-the-spot drawings that were later turned into one large volume called "Delta to DMZ." In 1973, at the age of 49, Charles Waterhouse was brought back to active duty at the rank of major to create a series of 14 paintings of the "Marines in the Revolution" in celebration of the bicentennial. It was supposed to be a nine-month commission, but the Marines had found "their Rockwell" and they kept him on until he retired on Feb. 19, 1991, the 46th anniversary of the landing on Iwo. By that time, he had completed over

160 major works for the USMC, and had painted every campaign in the history of the Corps, from its inception through Operation Iraqi Freedom. After his retirement, he continued to paint his beloved Marines. In 1999, the Colonel Charles Waterhouse Museum, a non-profit organization based in Toms River, N.J., was established. When the museum closed its doors, the majority of Waterhouse's body of work was gifted to the United States Marine Corps. In his final years, Waterhouse embarked on a series of paintings chronicling the USMC and Naval Medal of Honor recipients.

Ken Norton

Found in Leatherneck Magazine

Former All-Marine boxer, Kenneth H Norton, who became the World Boxing Council Heavyweight Champion and is remembered as the man who broke Mohammed Ali's jaw, died Sept. 18 in Henderson, NV. He was 70. At 6 feet 2 inches and 200 pounds when he graduated from high school, he went on to college on a football scholarship, but after an injury sidelined him, he joined the Marine Corps for four years. He racked up a 24 - 2 amateur record and won the All-Marine Heavyweight Championship three times. He was a member of the International Boxing Hall of Fame and the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame. ■

GERARD REILLY

Gerard Reilly passed away on January 31, 2013. His widow, Mary, contacted us and said that she would like to get a photo of him in his Marine uniform. She indicated that he was discharged in February 1973 from Training Support Co, H&S Bn, TBS, MCB Quantico. He was a L/Cpl and his MOS was 1811 - tank crewman. He lived in Philadelphia after his discharge. If you have any information on Gerard Reilly, please contact his widow Mary at (267) 923-5543.

JOHNNY BROWN

The last time I laid eyes on Johnny Brown was during the Marine Corps Ball at Las Flores on Camp Pendleton. We went through boot camp from April 16, 1968 - June 26, 1968, Platoon 246, Fox Company, 2nd Battalion and then from there to Camp Geiger for AIT. He went on to Tank School and I went to Courthouse Bay for school and then to Camp Pendleton where I met up with him again. From there I went to Vietnam and I assume Johnny would go also. The Corps didn't let me hang around to see if he did, but I think (bad recall now days) someone said he was with 3rd Tank Battalion... but I am not really sure. He would have been in Vietnam in 1969.

Thanks for the help and God bless you for the effort you make keeping our brothers in touch with one another!

MSgt Robert A. Parker USMC (ret)
10014 Prevatt Street
Gibsonton, FL 33534
Home Phone: 813-671-0111
Cell Phone: 813-454-6418
Email: rparker@tampabay.rr.com

AMIL JACKSON

Looking for any Marine that served with Corporal Amil Jackson during his tour with 1st / 5th Tanks. He is and was a brother to me. We both joined the Marine Corps together after high school. He was bound to Officers Candidate School through an Army program but chose to go on active duty with me on a "Buddy Program." He was KIA on 01-25-1969. I would very much like to talk with or hear from anyone who was with him during his tour. I'm also trying to find any pictures or photos with him or his buddies.

My Name is Paul Celedon, I served with 12th Marines, 3rd Mar Div at Con Thien and the "C-2" firebase near the DMZ. I believe that Amil Jackson was with 3rd Platoon, C Co, 5th Tank Bn, 1st Mar Div. He was killed near Quang Ngai with H&S Co, 3rd Bn, 26th Marines, 01-25-1969.

My contact info:
Paul Celedon
Email: celedon1@hotmail.com
Home: 830-981-9120
Cell: 210-385-3593

STEVEN P. LARSON

1stSgt Jim Langford, C Company, 3rd Tanks, would like to get in contact with anyone who knows the present whereabouts of 1stLt. Steven P. Larson, who was nicknamed "Magnet Ass" due to his propensity for running his tank over land mines.

Jim Langford
4878 Park Drive
Carlsbad, CA 92008-3811
Phone: 760-729-1933
Email is TheBedouin@roadrunner.com

ROBERT FIERROS

Bob is brand new VTA member and he is really interested in hearing from anyone who served with him in Vietnam.

802 Citrus Place
Carlsbad, CA 92008
Phone: (760) 729-3194
Email: robtonlga@roadrunner.com

MIKE ANDREGG = TANKER FOUND!

John Wear writes: After serving together in Hue City during Tet of '68 and then later with Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks, Mike and I were then able to reunite for a very short time during the summer of 1970 in Denver, Colorado. It was then another 44 years, but this past January I read where a Marine veteran named Jim Pool made a post on Facebook indicating that his step-brother had served on a flame-thrower tank in Hue City. While I did not know any Marine tankers named "Pool", I asked Jim to ask his brother to call me on the telephone. Lo & behold! I found Mike living in Michigan, and it turns out that Mike had been looking for me, too! And by the way, he's on the "New Members" section of this issue of the magazine. Ooo-Rah!!!

STEVEN MURPHY, SALINAS, CA

GLEN HUTCHINSON, FT. WALTON BEACH, FL

JAN HOLUB, NYC, NY

Looking for these three men. We served together in 2nd Plt, Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks in 1968. Murph and Hutch were 1811's, while Holub was a truck driver getting OJT for tank crewman. Does anyone know any of them? Please call me if you do.

John Hughes
Jay, FL
Phone: (850) 206-0825

What Members Are Doing

Congrats to VTA member Mike Fischer!

It is my distinct honor and privilege to congratulate Pleasant Prairie Post 7803, commanded by Paul A. Fredrickson, and Rochester Post 11038, commanded by Michael Fischer, for meeting or exceeding All State standards by October 1, 2013 in accordance with the "Membership Excellence Program." Both Posts, from Commander to staff and members, have worked very hard and are to be applauded for their accomplishments. In addition to meeting the reporting, program requirements and administrative requirements in a timely manner, Post 7803 has already achieved 140.38% and Post 11038 has achieved 112.69% in membership. Commander Fredrickson and Commander Fischer will be presented a \$1000.00 "Membership Excellence Award" for their respective Posts in the near future. Congratulations again for all your hard work.



Earl Banks
Past - NY State VFW Commander

Pennsburg, PA Veterans Center



(L to R) Jake Leone, Spencer Simmons and Clyde Hoch, in front of the Vet to Vet Center in Pennsburg,

Clyde Hoch writes: Jason Leone and his friend Chris Haney started a veteran's center in Pennsburg, PA, last year. Jason used his own money to purchase an old U.S. Post Office building. He expects to house up to seven veterans who are having a hard time adjusting to civilian life. Families may

be accepted. This will not be a place to do nothing. Jason believes when we serve in the military we are taught ethics that we lose when we readjust to civilian life. He wants to preserve these ethics. Veterans will have a limit of six months. They will have chores to perform at the center. They will be either enrolled in a school or be actively searching for a meaningful employment. They will also do odd jobs in the community. Jason expects this to be a model veteran's center. I have the greatest respect for Jason and Chris. Jason served in Afghanistan. Chris never served but is devoted to veterans. Clyde Hoch and his grandson, Spencer Simmons, volunteered to scrape paint like a sailor at the Pennsburg Veterans Center. Contact info: Jake Leone, 32 4th Street, Pennsburg, PA 18073. Phone: 484-938-VETS; Email: www.soldiertocivilian.org

"Doc" Tony Embesi gets a wolf



This is a photo of the wolf that "Doc" Tony Embesi bagged on a recent hunting trip

Tanker Down

Ed Note: The other day I got a letter that accompanied a very substantial Life Member donation check from Lt Col Frank Slovik. In the upbeat note, Frank lauded the Sponson Box and included that he was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. My point for this is to ask anyone who knows Frank to please mail him a note of encouragement. I later spoke to Frank's wife, Ruth, on the telephone and she said that Frank is having problems with his hearing so that a written note may work better than a phone call.

Lt Col Frank Slovik, USMC (ret)
4945 Marlin Court
Wilmington, NC 28403

Poems

THE CORPSMAN AND THE WALL

By "Doc Hutch"
2nd Plt, Alpha 1/5, 1st Mar Div '68-'69

Thirty-two years had come and gone. I needed to see my friends.
I took a list, a few small gifts, and went to visit them.
I was their "Doc" in Vietnam and silently recalled;
How their names had earned a resting place...
Engraved there on "The Wall".

My bag of gifts was personal – simple things I guess:
Florida sand, some hot cocoa, and a pack of cigarettes.
I took my list to the "Lady in blue" to help me find them all.
Soon I stood there moved to tears -
Staring at "The Wall".

I slowly approached the massive "Wall", my list of names in hand.
I touched each name; mourned them all; and traced Bud's name with sand.
"Did you know him well?" asked a lady's voice,
Whom I turned around to face.

She was there to mourn her fallen son – I saw it on her face.

"Was he family, or did you serve with him? You know he's now at rest."
I smiled and held my palms toward her, "These hands were in his chest."
I was his Doc in Vietnam...I couldn't save them all."
Recalling my Field Med Instructor's voice,
I turned back to "The Wall":

"Rule 1: Good men will surely die when all is said and done.
Rule 2: You do the best you can, but you won't change Rule #1!"
I spent the night there with my friends - the ones who gave their all.
When the sun rose bright, I had wept all night....
Staring at "The Wall".

I went to my room, but soon returned just after a few hours sleep.
To deliver the cocoa and cigarettes...promises I had to keep.
As I sat and watched the mourners file by
With names they sought to find,
A heartfelt peace fell over me
As I opened up my mind.

As I saw them point and search for names, "The Wall" came alive to me!
In my mind appeared a list of names – names THEY could not see.
I recalled the men I'd treated – every casualty!
Each Marine I had given back life!
Names NOT there.....because of me!

Chris would not tremble here searching for Lauren's name!
Janie would not weep here mourning Fred!
The list grew long – lives and limbs now saved...
Among the living –
Not here with the dead!

I sat the third night all alone.
With my heart at peace I saw....
My tour in 'Nam was justified.....
By the names NOT on "The Wall"!

THE CORPSMAN

Written by Kurt P Dudt upon hearing that
Vietnam corpsman Donald Conversa had died

Moving from place to place, sleeping in
A bombed-out school, Buddhist pagoda, Catholic church.
Parry and thrust, search and destroy.
Looking, searching, running, hiding.

U.S. Marines combined action platoon. Vietnamization.
Training Vietnamese Popular Forces and
Giving hope to terrorized villagers.
Ambushes, ambushed. Death in the heat and rain.
Forgotten and hated by those at home.

Boredom, anger, frustration, hate –
The friends of soldiers everywhere.
The trick: how to keep from slipping into an animal.

In the midst of the destroyers,
You were a man of hope and caring.
A corpsman.
Calming voice, reflective thoughts.
Bag of medicine...a healer.
You helped keep our standards high.
A light and a reminder that the
World is not all weapons, killing and destruction.
Encouragement, loyalty, patching the wounded.
Doing what's needed to be done without fear.

Thirty-four years later, I hear you have died, old friend.
Trembling voice of your wife, Ann.
Sharing that you died on the porch.
After working in the garden.
Do your neighbors know you are a hero?

As a corpsman and after the war.
You lived a life worth living.
A true companion.
A true companion.



What Vietnam Taught Me

by RICK LEWIS

It's was nothing like they told us!

I can remember in tank school in 1965, sitting around talking about when we got to Viet Nam, we were going to blow those "rice burners" apart. We would be on the 407 gunnery range at Camp Pendleton, just feeling the power of the 90 going down range and thinking, "Man! I can't wait till I get the bad guys in my sights."

We were invisible even when we did a training operation with the grunts at Pendleton. I remember one night, we had a firepower exercise that put the five tanks and a company of grunts all on line and we let it rip. The fire power was outstanding. There was no way the Viet Cong could touch us.

Then I arrived in country. As I got off the plane and looked around, I saw a C-130 being loaded with coffins. Some old Marine sergeant said, "Those are Army. Don't worry; we know what we're doing."

I thought to myself, "I sure hope so."

When I arrived at B Co, 1st Tanks in Chu Lai, I saw several tanks that were flagged for deadline. Later in the day I went back to look at the tanks, climbing on them, I see holes in the side and dried blood inside the turret. I thought to myself, "Something does not add up here. How did this happen? The VC didn't have tanks, right?"

About that time, an old Gunny Sgt in charge of maintenance asked, "Who the hell are you"? I told him that I had just got in country and that I was looking at the holes in the tanks.

He said, "Those are from RPG's."

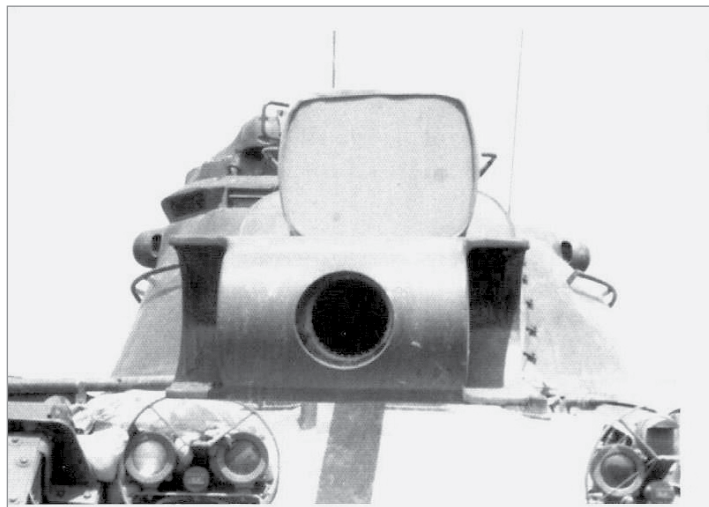
I asked, "What are RPG's?"

He replied, "You'll find out soon enough".

He was right!! Although it did not happen till we moved to Da Nang a few months later. We soon learned that it's the bullet that says, "To whom it may concern" is the one that counts.

Home cooking was missed, and all of the things I should have said to everyone back home kept running, like a broken record, in my head. Life had become about making it home, getting a do-over and pushing the edge of the envelope every day from here on out.

Once I saw the first dead Marine, it was burned in my brain housing group forever. To make it worse, his body bag got loaded on the back of my tank. I thought, "I'm



sure glad I'm inside this tank".

You learn how to take care of your tank, your gear and yourself... better than ever.

Everything you did or saw comes home with you; it does not take long to realize you are very different from your old high school friends. They are still smoking and joking around. You soon distance yourself from them and look for new ones.

I was lucky because I stayed in the Corps and we learned to lean on each other for understanding. We were good "buddies", remembering what our Gunny said to all of us "You only have buddies in combat.... not friends". ■

Operation Scotland II

15 April 1968 - 28 February 1969

1st Marine Division operation centered on the Khe Sanh area of Quang Tri Province

On April 15, Operation Pegasus ended and Operation Scotland II began. The Marines at Khe Sanh Combat Base broke out of their perimeter and began attacking the North Vietnamese in the surrounding area. The Army 1st Air Cavalry Division, with over 400 helicopters under its control, conducted airmobile operations deeper into enemy controlled areas. The fighting was heavy. An additional 413 Marines were killed during Scotland II through the end of June 1968. Operation Scotland II lasted until the end of the year, resulting in the deaths of 72 additional Marines. None of the deaths associated with Scotland II are included in the official body count:

VC/NVA KIA's = 3,304 KIAs and 64 POWs

U.S. KIA's = 435 KIA and 2,396 WIA

Silver Star Citation

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the **Silver Star** to Hospitalman Third Class Eric Karl Hefright (NSN: B-407407), United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while participating in combat operations while serving as a Hospital Corpsman with the First Platoon, Company G, Second Battalion, Ninth Marines, THIRD Marine Division (Reinforced), in Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam. On 19 April 1968, Petty Officer Hefright was a member of a reaction force dispatched from Ca Lu to relieve Marine elements which had been ambushed at Bridge 28 along Route 9. Upon arriving at the ambush site, the First Platoon came under intense enemy crossfire and two Marines were hit immediately. With complete disregard of his safety, Petty Officer Hefright ran to their assistance. One Marine had been killed outright and the other had been struck in the right hip by a heavy machine gun round. While administering first aid to the Marine, he was exposed to increasingly heavy fire and was wounded twice. In spite of extremely painful foot, hand, and multiple back injuries, Petty Officer Hefright continued to administer first aid until he could move his patient to relative safety behind a disabled tank. Disregarding his own injuries, he continued treating injured Marines and organizing litter teams. Petty Officer Hefright's inspiring bravery, bold initiative, and impressive devotion to duty reflected great credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Reprinted from the Khe Sahn Veterans website

EVERYONE HAS A STORY!

If your story is good enough to reminisce about with your buddies, it's good enough to write down and send it for the Sponson Box and for the VTA website. Your story can be about the war or about the home front. It can be about something that happened to you or to a buddy. It can be grim or it can be funny. Just write it the same way that you tell it and send it to John Wear. We'd love to share your story with the membership.

V. A. News & Updates

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

VA Malpractice Payouts ▶ \$845M in Last 10 Years

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs paid out roughly \$845 million in malpractice cases during the past 10 years — a period that has seen the agency face scrutiny for giving bonuses to medical professionals who provided or oversaw substandard care. The payouts reached a high point in 2012, a Cox Media Group nationwide investigation found, leaving government watchdogs and members of Congress wondering if the VA is learning from its mistakes.

“The VA likes to say they’re accountable. I don’t believe the word even exists in the VA dictionary,” said Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. Cox reporters analyzed federal treasury data that found taxpayers spent more than \$800 million paying 4,426 veterans and their family members who brought malpractice claims against the VA medical system since 2003. In 2012, a total of 454 financial settlements and awards added up to \$98.3 million.

“This is something that has been going on for close to a decade and yet we haven’t seen major reform happen at the Department of Veterans Affairs,” said Daniel Epstein, executive director of the Washington-based group Cause of Action. Reporters went behind the numbers to talk to families who said all that money was not worth what led to the payouts: a flag-draped casket or a brave man or woman left broken. Their stories were wrenching: a 20-year Marine Corps veteran who went in for a tooth extraction and is now paralyzed and unable to talk; the Vietnam War veteran who died from cancer after doctors failed to note evidence in multiple X-rays over three years; the Korean War veteran who went in for a routine biopsy and bled to death without being checked on for hours. VA officials point out that they manage one of the nation’s largest medical networks, and say the number of malpractice claims are relatively low. In 2012, the VA treated more than 6.3 million veterans and had only 1,544 claims filed. Dr. Anupam Jena, an assistant professor at Harvard University, noted that the VA pays out on about 25 percent of claims. Meanwhile, private sector health systems pay out for about 20 percent, according to a study he participated in of 40,000 doctors published in The New England Journal of Medicine.

“Are VA doctors worse than other doctors?” he said. “No.” But the 454 payments issued in 2012 are the second most in 10 years, eclipsed only by 462 payouts in 2008. “It’s very apparent because of the spike in payouts that have been happening over a number of years that they’re woefully falling behind on a curve that they never should be behind in the first place,” Miller said. While being protected from malpractice lawsuits, VA doctors, nurses and administrators routinely receive pay raises and transfers the same year they are found to have provided substandard care. A U.S. Government Accountability Office report in July found that in 2011 the VA gave performance bonuses and awards totaling \$160 million to medical providers without adequately linking that extra pay to their performance. The performance bonuses averaging \$8,049 went to 18,500 medical providers – or about 80 percent of the total of eligible providers. Performance awards averaging \$2,587 went to about 20 percent. Federal auditors looked at records from VA centers in Georgia, Maine, Texas and Washington and found several examples of providers who made mistakes still getting bonuses and hospital administrators who oversaw massive failures at their medical centers. They included:

- A radiologist who failed to read mammograms competently, but received a bonus of \$8,216.
- A surgeon who received \$11,819 after he was suspended without pay for two weeks for leaving a surgery early.
- A physician who refused to see emergency room patients in the order they were given to him, leaving some waiting more than 6 hours, but he got a \$7,500 bonus.
- A physician who practiced with an expired license for three months but received a \$7,663 bonus.
- The man who oversaw the Pittsburgh VA during a legionnaires outbreak that led to five veterans dying and 21 becoming ill, received a \$62,895 service award shortly after the outbreak was revealed.
- An Atlanta VA Medical Center director pocketed a \$13,000 bonus in 2011 and another \$17,000 worth of salary bonuses in 2010 while an audit found management problems contributed to two veterans committing suicide.
- The director of the Dayton VA Medical Center received an >>

\$11,874 bonus in 2010 and was transferred to a headquarters job in 2011 following revelations that a dentist there failed to change gloves and sterilize equipment between procedures for more than a decade, putting possibly thousands of veterans at risk.

Not only are these doctors and administrators not named in malpractice suits, but the money to pay malpractice claims doesn’t even come out of the VA budget. It comes out of a federal treasury fund set aside to pay legal settlements against the government. “They use bonuses like handing out candy at the VA,” said Rep. Miller. “You usually discipline somebody by removing them from the position that they’re in, and that’s not the VA’s modus operandi. They move them to another hospital somewhere. “I don’t know if removing the immunity is the way to go, but certainly having them feel the pain of these settlements or these awards being given out, I think is probably the only step that’s going to make a difference.” Unlike private sector hospitals, the VA system has a built-in process for making malpractice claims. It starts with an administrative claim that must be filed within two years of when the mistake took place. The VA has six months to offer a settlement before the claimant can take the issue to court.

Department of Veterans Affairs officials declined to be interviewed for this story. Instead the agency issued a statement that read in part: “VA takes this issue very seriously and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) personnel remain committed to maintaining a high level of quality care, transparency and accountability.” Agency analyses of patient mortality and safety have found that VA medical centers outperform top health systems across the country, according to agency officials.

[Source: Dayton Daily News | Josh Sweigart & Aaron Diamant | 12 Nov 1213 ++]

VA & Affordable Care Act Update 02 ▶ Underage Children Not Covered

The recent requirement for all Americans to have healthcare has caused joy for some and heartache for others. John Vogel, a recruiting consultant for HireVeterans.com and a columnist for Veterans Today.com, recently reported that “A “glitch” in the Affordable Care Act [ACA] could cost some families thousands of dollars, especially veterans with children.” Under the law, healthcare plan costs should not exceed 9.5 percent of an employee’s household income. The apparent “glitch” surfaces when an employer does not extend health care benefits to an employee’s family. Under the ACA, these families will not be able to receive health care through state subsidized programs and these families will be required to “pay extra” – and for some this will exceed the 9.5 percent threshold. Lawmakers are aware of the issue but there is no “fix” yet. Veterans who are receiving health care benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs need not worry. Your benefits will continue as-is. However, if you don’t have coverage for underage children, you will need to start shopping. Veterans who are not eligible for VA (i.e. Vets not

enrolled in VA healthcare or are Reserve or National Guard vets who served on active duty for training purposes only, and their families, could go to the Health Insurance Exchange. Another option, gaining Medicaid coverage, is limited in states that are not expanding the program. Here are some ways to enroll in VA care or determine your eligibility:

- 1) visit <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll>.
- 2) call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).
- 3) visit your local VA health care facility.

For more information, visit VA, the Affordable Care Act and You webpage at <http://www.va.gov/health/aca>. For more updates on VA benefits programs, visit the Military Advantage blog.

[Source: Seattle PI | Michael Schindler | 4 Nov 2013 ++]

PTSD Update 154 ▶ PTSD Coach Online

A coach is someone you can trust. Someone who can help you build the skills you need. How about a coach who can help you manage your PTSD symptoms? Privately. Online. Any time. No appointment necessary. If you’ve read this far, you may have PTSD and know you need help. Or, you think some of the emotions you are going through may mean you have PTSD and you would like to learn more. It’s so personal, so internal, that many Veterans put off coming in to see a doctor and they let things get worse. VA hears you. That’s why VA’s National Center for PTSD has developed a very helpful, easy to navigate program called PTSD Coach Online that you can access from your computer at home. Here a Veteran can learn to manage troubling symptoms.

Let’s walk through the way it works with Sergeant Petersen. First, he goes to the PTSD Coach Online website <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/ptsdcoachonline/default.htm> and discovers a gateway to the self-help tools that build coping and problem-solving skills. Here he can learn to manage troubling symptoms following trauma, such as trouble sleeping, trauma reminders and anger. He can choose from 17 tools to work on a problem related to the following subjects:

- Worry or anxiety.
- Anger.
- Sadness or hopelessness.
- Sleep problems.
- Trauma reminders.
- Avoidance of stressful situations.
- Disconnection from people.
- Disconnection from reality.
- Problem solving skills.
- Direction in life.

For instance if he were to select Sleep problems he would be offered both written and video guidance on how to:

- Change how you think about sleep.
- Form good sleep habits. >>

- Relax through breathing.
- Relax through visualization.
- Relax your body.

However, Sergeant Petersen has had some trauma flashbacks so he clicks on: Deal with Trauma Reminders (i.e. http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/ptsdcoachonline/tools_menu.htm). A unique feature of PTSD Coach Online is the inclusion of videos from coaches who provide introductions for each tool and offer video help through each tool. On that page, a click on the video and “Coach” Robert Jenkins (a VA Psychologist) helps him understand how to deal with trauma reminders: “From time to time, you may be triggered by reminders of scary or uncomfortable things from the past. Your mind and body might act like you’re right back in the situation. “When you are reminded of the event, these automatic reactions can make the situation worse. “Deal with trauma reminders” will help you learn to cope if this happens to you.” Sergeant Petersen then continues in the tool and finds three steps he can use to deal with his trauma reminders. which are: Relax, Identify the trigger, and Decide what to do. As he surfs through, he discovers things like worksheets he can print out and fill in to help him fully understand how to deal with his situation. The worksheets are private and don’t go anywhere — they are just there to help him stop and write down his own ideas to help him heal.

That’s just one example of one of the helpful tools that thousands of Veterans are using every day to help them cope with PTSD. There is also a PTSD Coach mobile app, but you don’t need a smartphone for PTSD Coach Online. Anyone who has Internet access can access its tools. PTSD Coach Online can help you with symptom management, problem solving and skill building, but it is not a substitute for professional mental health treatment and care. You can start here and then contact a VA healthcare provider. To find PTSD Coach Online, the PTSD Coach Mobile App and other resources on trauma and PTSD go to <http://www.PTSD.va.gov>.

[Source: Hans Petersen | VA Staff Writer | 28 Oct 2013 ++]

VA Issues Fraud Alert

Veterans should be aware of a marketing scam targeting callers trying to reach the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Call Center or GI Bill Call Center. A marketing company has established two fraudulent numbers that differ from the two official VA call center numbers by one digit. If the fraudulent number is dialed by mistake, the answering party will offer a gift card and try to obtain personal and financial information, including credit card information, from the caller. The answering party may even transfer the caller to the VA after the caller’s information is obtained.

The numbers to be avoided are:

800-872-1000

(the VA National Call Center number is 800-827-1000)

888-442-4511

(the VA GI Bill Call Center number is 888-442-4551).

The VA has notified law enforcement authorities to address this situation.

VA Burial Benefit Update 30 ▶ New Monetary Burial Award Rules

The VA has proposed to change and simplify the rules for a surviving spouse to receive the basic monetary burial award. Basically it is recognizing that any funeral will cost more than the allotted benefit. Thus to make it easier on the survivor they will not require a written application with attached receipts. They also say that they will be simplifying the descriptions and regulations to make it easier for the survivor to understand. Following are the VA’s proposed guidelines for the benefits for a non service related death:

Non-service-Related Death. For deaths on or after October 1, 2011, VA will pay up to \$700.00 toward burial and funeral expenses (if hospitalized by VA at time of death), or \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses (if not hospitalized by VA at time of death), and a \$700.00 plot-interment allowance (if not buried in a national cemetery).

For deaths on or after December 1, 2001, but before October 1, 2011, VA will pay up to \$300.00 toward burial and funeral expenses and a \$300.00 plot-interment allowance. The plot-interment allowance is \$150.00 for deaths prior to December 1, 2001. If the death happened while the Veteran was in a VA hospital or under VA contracted nursing home care, some of all of the costs for transporting the Veteran’s remains may be reimbursed. An annual increase in burial and plot allowances, for deaths occurring after October 1, 2011, begins in fiscal year 2013 based on the Consumer Price Index for the preceding 12-month period.

Monetary Burial Benefits Regulation Change VA is proposing to change its monetary burial benefits regulations to pay eligible survivors more quickly and efficiently. If approved, these regulations would authorize VA to pay, without a written application, eligible surviving spouses basic monetary burial benefits at the maximum amount authorized in law through automated systems rather than reimbursing them for actual costs incurred.

- Under current rules, VA pays burial benefits for burial and funeral expenses on a reimbursement basis, which requires survivors to submit receipts for relatively small one-time payments that VA generally pays at the maximum amount permitted by law.

- The proposed amendments to the burial regulations will permit VA to pay, at a flat rate, burial and plot or interment allowances thereby enabling VA to automate payment of burial benefits to eligible surviving spouses.

The changes are intended to help survivors of Veterans bear the cost of funerals by changing regulations to get them the benefits they deserve more quickly The proposed regulation, if approved, would do the following:

- Restructure, consolidate, and clarify VA’s current monetary burial benefits rules to make them easier to understand by

Veterans, their survivors, and other stakeholders;

- Clearly establish VA’s priority of payments and enable automated payment to eligible surviving spouses;

- Remove the requirement for eligible surviving spouses to file a claim for basic burial allowances and simplify the burial claims process for all beneficiaries;

- Establish in regulations a presumption that VA will pay the service-connected (SC) burial allowance for Veterans that were rated totally disabled from service-connected conditions at the date of death; and

- Implement portions of Public Law 112-260, authorizing monetary burial benefits for Veterans without wartime service whose remains are unclaimed.

Statement: “VA is committed to improving the speed and ease of delivery of monetary burial benefits to veterans’ survivors during their time of need. The proposed changes will permit VA to automatically pay the basic burial or interment allowances to eligible surviving spouses, without the need for a written application. VA wants to help survivors of Veterans bear the cost of funerals by changing regulations to get them the benefits they deserve more quickly.”

[Source: T REA News for the Enlisted 9 Dec 2013 ++]

Non-VA Emergency Care Fact Sheet

At some time in your life, you may need emergency care. This document explains what VA might be able to do for you. When it is not possible for you to go to a VA Medical Center, you should go to the nearest hospital that has an emergency room. If you are in an ambulance, the paramedics will usually take you to the closest emergency room.

What is an emergency?

A medical emergency is an injury or illness that is so severe that without immediate treatment, it threatens your life or health.

How do I know my situation is an emergency?

Your situation is an emergency if you believe your life or health is in danger.

If I believe my life or health is in danger, do I need to call the VA before I call for an ambulance or go to an emergency room?

No. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

When should I contact the VA regarding an emergency room visit?

You, your family, friends or hospital staff should contact the nearest VA medical center as soon as possible, preferably within 72 hours of your emergency, so you are better aware of what services VA may or may not cover. Provide VA with information about your emergency and what services are being provided to you. Ask VA for guidance on what emergency charges may or may not be covered, so you can plan accordingly.

If the doctor then wants to admit me to the hospital, must I obtain advance approval from the VA?

- If the admission is an emergency-NO, although prompt notification of the VA is necessary.
- If the admission is not an emergency-YES

If a VA bed is available and I can be safely transferred, do I have to move to the VA hospital?

YES, if you want VA to continue to pay for your care. If you refuse to be transferred, VA will not pay for any further care.

If I am admitted to the hospital as a result of an emergency, how much will VA pay?

This depends on your VA eligibility. VA may pay all, some, or none of the charges. Some highlights are listed in the next column.

For service-connected conditions, here are some of the criteria that must be met:

1. Care or services were provided in a medical emergency, and
2. VA or another federal facility were not feasibly available, and
3. VA was notified within 72 hours of the admission.
4. Ask your local VA Medical Center’s Non-VA (Fee) Care Office for further eligibility guidance.

For non-service-connected conditions, here are some of the criteria that must be met:

1. Veteran is enrolled in the VA Health Care System, and
2. Veteran has received health care services from VA within the previous 24 months, and
3. Veteran has no other health insurance coverage.
4. Ask your local VA Medical Center’s Non-VA (Fee) Care Office for further eligibility guidance.

How do I know if I have a service-connected condition?

A service-connected condition refers to an illness or injury that was incurred in or aggravated by military service and has a rating assigned by the Veterans Benefits Administration.

How long do I have to file a claim for reimbursement for emergency medical care?

File your claim with the nearest VA Medical Center quickly because time limits usually apply. For non-service-connected care, the time limit is 90 days. Again, consult your local VA Medical Center for more information.

Will VA pay for emergency care received outside the United States?

VA will only pay for emergency care outside the U.S. if your emergency is related to a service-connected condition. For more information about care provided outside the U.S., contact the Foreign Medical Program (FMP) at (877) 345-8179, or go to the FMP website at: <http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/fmp> ■

FMF Navy Corpsman



What my friends think I do.



What Marines think I do.



What society thinks I do.



What my boss thinks I do.



What I think I do.



What I really do.

MEMES & FUNNY PICS FRABZ.COM



JOKES

My Last Day

by JERRY SEZAR

Editor's Note: In a past issue we presented Jerry's "My First Day"... this was his last day

My last day in the United States Marine Corps should have been on July 27, 1968, but due to circumstances beyond my control, I was requested to stay a little longer. My new discharge date was set for October 12, 1968, which was seventy-six more days than I had planned and seventy-six more days than Captain Moore had planned to put up with me.

We actually got along quite well. It was just that every time he turned around, I was in trouble for something and I am quite sure his commanders leaned on him to control my behavior. Captain Moore knew that it was next to impossible to control my colorful behavior so we made a deal. As I already lived off-base in Yermo, I would be allowed to report to my job as a warehouseman from 0800 till 1600 Monday thru Friday with no inspections, no marching, and no PT. I would just do

my job as a warehouseman and try my best to stay out of trouble. That was it. No more getting up at the crack of dawn, jumping in the car, driving to the base, standing inspection, listening to what to prepare for in the future when you already knew, "He who was telling you" was going to be shipped out soon and then he would know what you already knew, firsthand. It was a no brainer for me, although going for seventy-six days in a row without getting in trouble was not going to be an easy thing for me to do. I was up for the challenge.

Within a week I was in trouble. Driving a forklift, pulling stock in huge warehouses and loading rail boxcars was the primary job. All of us were recently returned Nam vets and we

liked to compete with each other to see who could pull stock and load the quickest. It became a game of speeding thru the warehouse, out the door, across the loading dock, across the plate that allowed the forklift to enter the boxcar, turn left or right and set down your load. Everything was going along pretty smoothly until I crossed the loading dock at speed and realized the train had moved out. Fortunately for me I was carrying a tank copula in a big heavy wooden box so the forks didn't dig into the ground. I was thrown off the lift and I remember looking up wondering if it was going to fall over on me. I got up to see my buddies laughing their asses off then we all realized that we better clean this mess up in a hurry... before Captain Moore finds out.

After that I attempted to keep a lower

profile, no more speeding in the forklifts, no goofing around, just do my job as I was supposed to. This was probably the only time in my entire four years in the Corps that I went this long being good... well, at least not getting caught. I was extremely cautious since I really wanted out of the Marine Corps.

The day before my discharge I went thru the normal routine of returning things, getting a few signatures here and there, and then I went back to the warehouse to say a few good byes... and then I walked Captain Moore.

He approached me and said, "See you in the mess hall at 2400 hours." He then turned and walked away. I arrived at the mess hall around 2330 hours on October 11, 1968. I grabbed a cup and filled it with coffee, sat down and wondered why

Captain Moore wanted to meet me here this late in the day. I thought I would be spending most of the next day at the company office waiting before they finely let me go. Just a minute or two before midnight I walked Captain Moore. I stood, he handed me a large envelope with all my discharge papers and a final paycheck. He shook my hand and said "I heard about the forklift incident right after it happened".

I thanked him for not reporting the incident.

He saluted me and said "That will be all, Lance Corporal Sezar".

I saluted him, said, "Goodbye, SIR!" I grabbed my cup of coffee, turned and walked out the mess hall door.

I seem to recall hearing Captain Moore saying something about bringing the cup back!

I STILL HAVE THE CUP!!! It's pictured below... it's the white cup with two blue stripes. ■



Doc and the Piss Tube

In addition to our beloved corpsmen, the U.S. Navy also provided medical doctors to Marine units in the field in RVN. Our battalion surgeon, Doctor

Lawrence, was attached to 1st Tanks and promptly earned the name "Doc Grungy." It seems that he always showed up dressed in dirty & wrinkled utilities and his

personal hygiene seemed questionable at best. None the less, Doc was a good man; he worked tirelessly and I got to know him pretty well since he lived in Hooker and my hooch for some time. I might

add that he was a tad timid, especially compared to us Marines. It also seemed that his coordination was missing, especially after a few drinks. At times, his drinking caused his behavior to be such that Hooker and I (and others) had to keep an eye on him. For example, late one evening, after a drinking session at the rather crude building that served as the "O Club" for 1st Tank Battalion, Hooker and I realized that Doc was missing. Later that evening we found him collapsed on the ground around the piss tube, sound asleep and content as he could be.

Jim Cowman

Clovis, NM

Phone: 575-799-3091



A Tribute To My Friend Lanny Long — Corpsman 1968

BY LT COL DAVE ALTHOFF, USMC (RET)



The Vietnam war is just a vague memory now,
And most of us who fought it were never even asked to take a bow.
We simply came home, picked up the pieces and went on
somehow.

The American public doesn't have a clue,
As to what some of their U.S. Marines were asked to do.
But I know, and I'm writing this to show my respect for you.

The battlefield has always been the Corpsman's domain.
He's there for us no matter how harsh the weather or how rough the terrain.
He brings comfort, and just by being there he eases the pain.

Being wounded in battle is a terrifying plight.
Somehow it's worse yet in the middle of the night,
But having a Corpsman there helps us to overcome our fright.

The call "HELP!! CORPSMAN, I'M HIT" always comes at the worst
possible time.

There is no cover, the hillside is always steep and hard to climb.
It's either rocky shale or covered with slime.

War is hell!! It's the scourge of the earth,
And combat is the "acid test" of a man's true worth.
He's not a coward or a hero just by virtue of his birth.

He takes on his values from his family, his leaders and his friends.
He's no saint! That he never pretends.
But, we can see his true character by the message he sends.

He's a gentle soul, but his body is hard and lean.
He may be frightened but his voice sounds out calm, firm and serene,

"COVER ME BOYS, I'M GOING OUT TO HELP THAT WOUNDED MARINE!"

He dresses our wounds, then as he looks into our face,
He prays to God for strength, wisdom and grace,
Wondering if any of us will ever get out of this terrible place.

We are far from the comforts of home, and death is always near.
When we are about to lose our life, it becomes even more dear.
We bond closely together as we try to overcome our fear.
But we wouldn't even consider trading places with the guys in the rear.

When there is a trouble spot in the world and tempers begin to flare,
You can bet that the Marine Corps will soon be there,
Whether it be on land, at sea or in the air.

We Marines are a proud bunch and our motto is "Semper Fi."
We train hard and we shoot for the X in the bullseye!!
We look sharp in our dress blues and we make the ladies sigh,
But when the chips are down and we watch our comrades bleed and die,
Every one of us is man enough to break down and cry.

When the battle is over and the dust has had a chance to settle,
We try to pay tribute to those who have truly shown their mettle.

We praise the pilots, the tankers, and the gunners.
We pin ribbons on everyone from the generals to their runners.

But it's the Corpsman who has cradled a bloodied head to his chest,
That will be remembered with kindness when we have forgotten the rest.
You proved that you had the right stuff when put to the test, so...

STAND TALL MARINE, YOU ARE ONE OF THE BEST!!!
SEMPER FI !!



With Device, Corpsmen Could Consult With Doctors from the Battlefield

BY HOPE HODGE
Marine Corps Times Staff writer

Petty Officer 3rd Class David Riley uses the experimental Tactical Telemedicine radio during the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab's limited objective experiment 2.2 at Fort Pickett, Va., in August 2012. (Lt. Cmdr. Henry S. Warren / Navy)



time now," he said. "We're trying to leverage the advances from the private

sector in that regard: How can we take what happens at the tip of the spear in the battlefield so we can send information from the battlefield back to the ER?"

The device that officials envision is a shoebox-size one-stop shop for urgent patient care.

Gribben said the device would measure vital signs and have the ability to beam them back to a ship or larger headquarters. As technologies develop in the medical industry, officials hope to make the device capable of diagnosing shock from the wounded patient's symptoms and responses.

"It will have a blood pressure cuff, it will have leads, it will have a pulsometer," Gribben said.

It will also have a camera and a microphone, he said, so the corpsman can connect rapidly and securely to a more experienced doctor or specialist off-site,

giving them real-time access to whatever he is observing.

The unit would also be lightweight enough to hump and reliable in a crisis, he said.

"Every ounce we take up in that pack is an IV or a bandage that [the corpsman] can't take in that pack," Gribben said. "The [prototypes] we've seen now definitely would fit in their packs."

The device could also revolutionize how medical information is transferred from the combat zone.

Ideally, when a Marine is wounded today, the corpsman fills out a card as he prepares the Marine for medical evacuation or transfers care to another provider, Gribben said. "In more hasty and stressful environments, the vitals are written with sharpie somewhere on the patient," he added.

In addition to providing a secure, accessible place to track medical information and provide it — in a timeline — to future caregivers, its automatic measuring and analytical devices will not be affected by the subjective factors of combat zone operations.

"The device won't know that the environment is stressful," he said.

Warfighting Lab personnel are experimenting with off-the-shelf hardware and existing technologies to arrive at a device that meets all of their requirements and can function on a secure military network or channel — a necessity for patient privacy as well as operational security.

"What we want to do is nest our requirements with the Marines' envisioned communication networks of the future," Gribben said.

Versions of the device are set to be tested at an Advanced Warfighting Experiment, taking place during the joint exercise Rim of the Pacific in summer 2014.

But while officials at the Warfighting Lab said Marine leaders have been very supportive of the development of Tactical Telemedicine despite budget austerity, the cost of the device may present an obstacle for widespread fielding: Gribben said they currently cost around \$35,000 per unit, thought he expects that figure to drop as more are produced. ■

A Young Corpsman's Story

by ANTHONY "DOC" EMBESI

On July 4, 2004 at 1300 hours while getting ready to mount out with



my Marine sniper platoon to take out a hajji weapons cache, I was standing in the open back of a Humvee when a mortar attack started. As four mortars came walking in, the fourth one landed right next to my Humvee. I jumped out of the vehicle to move for cover when I realized that I was hit in the left leg by shrapnel. Just then, Cpl Neda ran up and yelled, "Come on Doc! Let's go! Let's go!"

I jumped back in the Humvee and we moved out. Around 1515 hours we were going down from "Chicago North" to "Pittsburgh East", and as we got near the Checkpoint One, I was in the last Humvee in the convoy. I saw a black Mercedes approach with four insurgents who had dyed (black) long beards and they seemed to be staring me down. I turned my weapon on them and yelled to my Humvee driver, "We should kill those hajji motherfuckers!" But due to the USMC Rules of Engagement, we could not, so we just passed them by.

We then drove past five or six kids standing on the side of the road. They seemed to be able see right through what I had in my front pockets: candy and some American coins. As we passed them, I turned around to look where they had gathered. Then I looked ahead of our line of travel over the top of our driver's head, and I realized that there was no one out on the street. The street was completely deserted so I yelled to the corporal: "There's no one out! We're going to get hit!"

He yelled back, "I know, Doc. I know."

Right after the corporal replied to me... BOOM!!!

An IED blew up the left side of our Humvee, sending it straight up in the air at least 15 to 18 feet. This happened very quickly as my head was slapped to the right side; and, without me realizing, my left eye was blown out just as the Humvee went up in the air. The explosion spun me around and I was facing the rear of the vehicle. I had hooked my left arm on the roll bar above the driver's head and all that I remember is that I was looking at my feet and seeing the asphalt coming up very quickly. The Humvee landed on its rear tires and then the front end bounced all over the road. It threw me forward facing the front as I yelled out while shaking my head, "You motherfuckers ain't going to knock me down!"

I then looked at the assistant driver, Cpl. Lopez, as he was facing me. His ears were blown out and I could see blood coming down both sides of his face. I looked at the driver, Cpl. Nada. He was knocked out and laying across the seat and the center consul. I managed to grab the back of his flak jacket with my left hand to move him closer to me

so I can render medical aid to him. As I grabbed for him, his body was instantly gone. I thought for a moment that we were hit again but with all the bloody and smoky confusion and the adrenaline rush, I looked far to the left outside the Humvee. I saw his body laying approximately 15 feet from the back of the Humvee on the asphalt.

I had blood coming out of both my ears and spraying out of my left eye socket that messed up my right field of vision. When I saw the driver, I then went out the back of the Humvee and crawled out to him, getting on top of him to protect his body and to shield him from any incoming fire. I started rendering first aid to him by opening up his flak jacket, giving him a sternum rub, and talking to him in a low voice. He became conscious, yelling out. "Kill all these motherfuckers!"

I then kept my M-4 over the top of his body as I looked toward the front of the convoy see my Marines making a perimeter about 200-300 yards out. Then two Marines came running down toward me and I heard First Sgt. Miller yelling, "Come on Doc. Pick up the fucking Marine! Let's go! Let's go!"

I realized that he had no idea how bad I was hit so I turn my head far to the right so he can see that my left eye was gone. As soon as I did this, First Sgt Miller yelled back at me, "Holy fuck, Doc! Stay down! Stay down! You're hurt bad! You're hurt bad!"

That's when I stood up; picked up the Marine and carried him back to the Humvee. When I threw the corporal in the back of the Humvee, my weapon and his weapon fell on deck. First Sgt. Miller yelled back at me. "Hurry up Doc! Get the fuck in the Humvee!"

I yelled back at the First Sergeant, "Wait a goddamned minute!" I reached down, picked up both weapons, and crawled in the back.

Doc Barroso was the other Marine who ran up with the Top and he rendered aid to the corporal. I told him that I was going to take care of myself, and I started bandaging the left side of my face as we made it back to Camp Fallujah to wait for the medevac chopper.

This is a recount of what happened on that day. I told the same exact story to Col. Buhl and Sergeant Major Sax as soon as we got back to Camp Fallujah and before the medevac chopper transported me to Baghdad.

Anthony "Doc" Embesi
Kilo Co, 3rd Battalion 1st Marines
Operation Iraq Freedom II
Conner, MT
Phone: (406) 821-3075
Email: kilooifdoc@yahoo.com

Note: "Doc" Embesi is the son of VTA member CWO Robert (Bob) Embesi, USMC (ret). Doc was medically retired from the U.S. Navy and lives in Montana with his father.

In the photo: VTA member John Bartusevics (on the left) congratulating "Doc" Tony Embesi during Tony's Purple Heart medal ceremony. ■



USMCVTA Scholarship Program

The USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn. currently has three participants in our Scholarship Program. They have been continued on scholarship due to meeting the mandate of maintaining a 3.0 accumulated grade average for a full year of academic studies. It should be noted that we did not receive any new scholarship applications for the year 2013.

Brittany Kelley, daughter of VTA member Greg Kelley, was our first \$1,000 Scholarship recipient in 2011. She enrolled at Keene State College in Keene, N. H., majoring in sports medicine and nutrition. She took several truly challenging courses for a freshman, equal in level of difficulty to a pre-med major, and barely missed attaining the 3.0 GPA cut off. The Scholarship Committee agreed to place her on probationary status for the fall 2012 semester, and Brittany pulled her GPA back up to 3.0; thus she was awarded another scholarship award for 2012-13. Because she continued to meet the 3.0 GPA mandate, Brittany was awarded another academic scholarship for 2013-14 at her new school, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

We had two outstanding applicants for the scholarship award in 2012 and decided to deviate from the norm, awarding two scholarships. The first went to Page Carr, daughter of VTA member Frank Carr from Pittston, Maine. Page had a four-year high school grade average of 95.26%. Her class rank was 18 out of 153. During her high school years, she was a member of the National Honor Society and contributed over 300 hours of service to her community. She enrolled in St. Joseph's College of Maine's Nursing Program, planning to eventually become a pediatric nurse practitioner. Page attained a 3.64 GPA her first year of college, thus qualifying for another scholarship award for 2013-14.

Our second recipient in 2012 was Katherine Hannah Mulligan, granddaughter of VTA member Lt. Col. Frank Slovik. She was an honor graduate of Orange Senior High, Hillsborough, North Carolina. Her cumulative GPA (unweighted) for four years of high school was 4.0. She achieved Carolina 3A All-Conference Honors in cross country her senior year. She also played the clarinet and was named to the North Carolina All-State Band. Katherine enrolled at The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, as a biology major. Her long-term goal is to travel to third-world countries and administer medical care as either a physician's assistant or M. D. In her first year of college at UNC-Chapel Hill, Katherine obtained a 3.820 GPA, making the Dean's List both semesters. She also qualified for another scholarship award for 2013-14.

We want to emphasize that we have not had a huge response to our scholarship program. The money is there, all we need are applicants. Your children and more so your grandchildren can apply.

Jim Coan, Scholarship Program Chairman

Phone: 520-368-9659

THE VTA HISTORICAL INTERVIEWS NOW AVAILABLE ON LINE

If you will log on to the USMC Vietnam Tankers website (<http://www.usmcvta.org>) there are 16 hours of recorded personal history interviews that the VTA conducted during the San Antonio reunion. They are housed in the "Members Stories" section of the website. If you do not have a home computer, you can probably visit a public library in your town and log on there.



Almost every Marine who spent time in Vietnam has heard the cry, "Corpsman Up !!!!!" The circumstances varied widely, but the result was a constant. A U.S. Navy Corpsman, wearing the same dirty, torn and smelly green utilities worn by his Marine brothers and "armed" with his B-1 medical kit, went to the aid of wounded Marines. Usually under enemy fire, these "angels in green" performed lifesaving miracles with complete disregard for their own safety.

These FMF (Fleet Marine Force) Corpsmen were something special to us Marines. Although they took their fair share of kidding and good-natured harassment, they were in every sense of the word a fellow Marine. They took the same chances, lived in the same mud-filled hole, ate the same cold C-rations as Marine grunts. Many of them share the same space on "The Wall" as the men they tried to save.

Wherever you find the Marine Corps, there you will find the Navy Hospital Corpsman. In times of peace, he or she toils unceasingly, day and night, providing quality care to numerous beneficiaries. In times of war, he is on the beaches with the Marines, employed in amphibious operations, in transportation of wounded by air, on the battlefield, and on all types of ships, submarines, aircraft carriers, and landing craft. In short, wherever medical services may be required, the Hospital Corpsman is there, not only willing but also prepared to serve his or her country and his fellow man above and beyond the call of duty.

A great many of us made it home because of a Corpsman. We will never forget them.

Valor Awards for FMF Corpsmen

VIETNAM	
Medal of Honor	5
Navy Cross	30
Silver Star Medal	127
Bronze Star Medal	291

Hospital Corpsman's Pledge

"I solemnly pledge myself before god and these witnesses to practice faithfully all of my duties as a member of the Hospital Corps. I hold the care of the sick and injured to be a privileged and sacred trust and will assist the Medical Officer with loyalty and honesty. I will not knowingly permit harm to come to any patient. I will hold all personal matters pertaining to the private lives of patients in strict confidence. I dedicate my heart, mind, and strength to the work before me. I shall do all within my power to show in myself an example of all that is honorable and good throughout my naval career."

Devil Doc

BY ED BECKER

From the halls of Montezuma
First words of a famous song,
When Marines go into battle,
A Navy corpsman goes along.

From its very beginning
The Corps has steadily grown,
Ant the attitude of a Marine is
"We take care of our own."

Marines may give up their water
Or even their last bean,
But never their Navy corpsman
Wearing the Marine Corps green.

When Marines and their corpsman
are standing side by side,
The first thing you notice
Is the sharing of their pride.

If you are looking for trouble
Of a kind you've never seen,
Attack their Navy Corpsman,
The one in Marine Corps green.

From the August 2011 Leatherneck Magazine, "Gyrene Gyngles"

>>



CORPSMAN UP!

by GYSGT TOM BARTLETT

Up at the front and filled with fear,
he pleads with God, don't leave me here.
Wounded and bleeding and hunched with pain,
thrown on his back in the mud and the rain

Others went down, some hit, all scared;
no one moved, no one dared.

We'd moved swiftly through the paddy mire,
and then it happened; enemy fire

It's Corpsman Up," when things get hot,
the nearest thing to God, we've got
"Corpsman Up," to save a breath.
"Corpsman Up," in the face of death.

Stop the bleeding, treat for shock;
no time for hesitation "Doc"
Patch him up and get him back;
back to the rear; call a medevac.

Operating room well lit and clean;
Doctors waiting, dressed in green.
Operate with speed and skill,
experts with a determined will.

Save lives or limbs to save dreams,
no matter how impossible it seems.
Work on in a sweat in mud and grime;
to save a life... there's not much time.

You joined the navy to learn your trade,
went to school, and made the grade.
It's "Corpsman Up," when the rounds are flying;
"Corpsman Up," when men are dying.

You're one of us, a grunt of grit;
like it or not you just can't quit.
"Corpsman Up," step from the ranks.
"Corpsman Up," and accept our thanks.



A MARINES TRIBUTE TO CORPSMEN

by BOB HINGSTON and CARL KING
1st Plt, Hotel Co, 2nd Bn, 1st Marines, 1st Mar Div
1968-1969

The ideal squad is 13 men and a Corpsman. The Corpsman is a Navy enlisted man who has medical training and is skilled enough to get you and whatever pieces that are left of you back to a hospital. Although he's a Navy man, he has the respect of the Marines and is thought of as one of them and is known to everyone, as Doc.

He's the one that responds to the call Corpsman up! He is the one who'll run to you when you've taken on in the chest, the wind is knocked out of you, and you're trying your damned best to move so the people behind you know you're still alive, yet not so much as to have Charlie pump more rounds into you. He is there when there is complete chaos: automatic rifle fire, hand grenades exploding M-79 rounds being lobbed into the brush a few meters in front of you and more noise than anyone ever hoped to make on the Fourth of July. When it seems like you have been lying there forever, he is the one that has exposed himself to enemy fire to run up to you to scream in your ear, "Where are you hit!!!" If you're lucky, you can point to the place because you sure as hell can't talk. You're gasping for air because it's leaking out your lung like a tire with a hole in it. You're trying to stay out of shock and feel like your whole body is on fire. You're wrenching with pain. And bullets bounce all around your head and body because they are now trying to kill you and the Doc.

For some strange reason, God knows where the courage comes from; the Corpsman seems immune to or oblivious of all that is going on around you. His only focus is you. In the movies a guy gets hit once and that's about it; in Vietnam, there wasn't any limit to the number of times in one firefight you could be hit. Hell, you could get hit a dozen or more times if someone possessed little else to do but try to nail your young butt. It should be easy for you to see how panic and fear can work on a guy that has been wounded and is basically helpless and the people keep shooting at him (it's not fair). Fear that every round that just misses you

means the next one won't. And lying helpless and unable to move or breathe can cause a panic that does its damndest to conquer your soul and leave you pissing all over yourself in fear.

The Corpsman yells for a medevac to be called. One is called by a good radioman while someone else is calling in a fire mission that may take twenty minutes before the first round comes in. A lot can happen in twenty minutes; your whole outfit could be wiped out. If the ambush is big enough and you're caught in a cross fire, it could take a lot less than twenty minutes.

The action is hot, bullets burn your skin. They get close enough to feel without actually hitting you and that's close. The dirt and sand are red hot as bullets kick it in your face. You think, "God that was close!!" Please, God, just get me out of this one. I promise to be good from now on!! Suddenly, someone is dragging you by your collar or some piece of clothing, you're not sure what is going on but you do know that the pain is bringing you close to unconsciousness, your whole body is shaking uncontrollably, your chest has a hissing sound coming from where you think your lung is, it's spouting air and filling up with this warm substance that makes it harder to breath, you're sure that blood is now filling your lung up to the point of collapsing. Fear and panic is gone and replaced with sheer terror and shock.

Yet, this Navy guy keeps miraculously dragging your body towards safety, while half the enemy forces are trying to nail him. "Mother Up!" You hear through your fog; you know another one of your friends has just taken a hit and could possibly be worse than you are. "Coming!" screams the Doc. He tells someone to keep pressure on the rag covering your chest and not to take his hand off of it. He turns and heads in the direction of the last caller, while the enemy continues to do their best to nail him before he can reach his next casualty.

Maybe this is why we considered the Corpsman to be one of us, although they never went through boot camp at Paris Island or San Diego, they were Marines at heart, and damn good ones. Only a fool or a hero would leave a place of safety to throw his body in harm's way for someone he may not even know. I never met a Corpsman that I thought was a fool. To me a hero does things that his logical mind is telling him not to do. His logical mind says to stay put, get further down, but above all don't get up and go where someone else just got shot!

The hero ignores what his mind is telling him and goes forward in the face of the enemy fire. His only thought is to get to the guy that has called for help. He will get to him! He may get shot himself but he will not let that guy die by himself. Sometimes they aren't alive when he gets there, but he's there and exposed to the same fire that killed the man he came to rescue.

He goes from wounded to wounded doing what he can to save their lives, doing what he can to give them a little more time--time to get them back to an aid station where they may be saved. Let

me be point man any day over being a Corpsman in a Marine infantry outfit. At least I can take cover and return fire.

The Corpsman is special. The Navy offers a lot of other programs that are a hell of a lot less dangerous. Corpsmen knew going in that they will be placed in harm's way. They knew that they would be assigned to the heaviest fighting areas in Vietnam, yet they volunteer anyway. They cared about human suffering and wanted to do all in their power to aid, and were willing to give their lives to their calling. Check out the Wall, you'll find a lot of corpsman on that Wall. They gave their all. Many of us, who were fortunate enough to return home did so because of their unselfish acts of heroism. In many cases they did so without any medals or rewards except the personal feeling of having done their job and done it well. Because of them, thousands of Marines today can greet each other and say welcome home.

When you go to see the Wall, a tribute dedicated to the Vietnam serviceman who paid the ultimate price for their country, you will see a statute dedicated to the grunts. You will see an area dedicated to the nurses who served their country. What you won't see is a tribute to the Corpsman—a tribute to the men who risked their lives by exposing themselves to tremendous enemy fire, by running, by crawling, and by inching their way into the thickest of the thick of fighting, to answer a call for help. They sacrificed their safety to save other's lives.

I wonder why there are no special honors awarded to these individuals.

These men prevented so many of us here today from having our names on the Wall. There is a place where a statue could and should be placed. A statue of a single individual, loaded down with his medical gear—a statue representing those that were always ready and willing to give their lives in the hopes that they might save a life. Corpsmen are a special and distinct breed of men who stand out proud and strong. Their everyday acts of bravery and heroism deserve to be recognized by their brothers in arms. They



gallantly served, and were unselfishly willing to give their all. Because of them, many of us were given the opportunity to make a difference in the world.

There may never be a statue to honor the Corpsman who served our country so well, and who were so important to the Marines in the field. Statue or not, I would like to personally salute you and to say to you: Semper Fi, Marine, as the title is well earned, and the honor

long overdue.

Thank you for your willingness of service, and self sacrifice, so that many like myself today are able to say, "Welcome Home Doc"... a job well done. ■



Company Corpsman, he took great pains to familiarize himself with tank crewman jobs, including driving, loading, and that of the gunner. In fact, I often had to rein him in when he asked to go out as a crewman with a platoon leaving the CP for a few days to support infantry efforts in our area.

I did, however, make sure that he was included for any operation where the bulk of the company was committed, such as the initial phase of Operation Macon in the summer of 1966. We forded the Song Thu Bon to link up with the 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines, which had been heli-lifted into the Arizona Territory the day before. We then started a sweep for several days through the Eastern portion of the Arizona Territory toward the coast. The operation was relatively uneventful until the last night when we concluded the operation.

3/3 was to be heli-lifted back out of the area the following morning. With my tanks and some infantry support units from the 3rd Bn, 9th Marines out of An Hoa, we occupied the western edge of the battalion perimeter for night time defense. "Doc" was with me in my CP located just to the rear of our assigned area. The 81mm mortar section of 3/3 commenced registration firing just before dark, using WP rounds. Whether it was a "short round" or a screw up by the mortar crew, one of their rounds hit just to the rear of one of my tanks on the perimeter. It set the camouflage netting in the bustle on fire and seriously wounded the crewman on turret watch. We heard the crump and saw what had happened. "Doc" and I took off at a dead run, jumped up on the tank, and with the help of another crewman got the wounded Marine's flak jacket off, which was still smoldering from the explosion. "Doc" immediately treated some serious burns on the Marine's neck and arms while I ran to the Battalion CP, got the registration fires halted and had a call put in for a medevac.

Where ever you are "Doc" and you happen to read this, thanks again for your dedicated and professional service to your Marines of Bravo Company.

Originally published in the Breach Block e-newsletter and reprinted with permission of the author.

The Corpsman

by MIKE "DOC" PIPKIN, FOX, 2/1

A Tribute to the "Doc" of Bravo Company, 3rd Tank Bn

BY LT COL EVERETT TUNGET, USMC (RET)

Ev's Note: This is in response to your request for "Doc" stories. As you recall, much of our activities were in a support role to infantry units where we depended on their Corpsmen for any medical care. However, the following story is one where the Corpsman for Bravo Company really earned his keep!

When it was requested that stories regarding the Corpsmen with whom we served be submitted, I had to clear a few cobwebs from my aging brain. Memories of my Company Corpsman when I commanded Bravo Co., 3rd Tanks from April - October 1966 came flooding back. Since I am not blessed with total recall, I have to admit that I can't remember his name; however, if he ever reads this he will know I'm proudly remembering him and his dedicated service to the Marines of Bravo Company.

Our "Doc" was a quiet, unassuming man who went about his duties to see to our medical needs, both in the CP and in the field, in a most efficient manner. In addition to his duties as the

US Navy medic attached to Mike Co, 3rd Bn, 7th Regt, 1st Marine Div, Vietnam, 1968



Navy Corpsman, Ted Whitten, (kneeling - center) treats his first combat casualty near Hill 55, West of Da Nang in Oct 1968. Ted was wounded in action a month later and evacuated out of Vietnam.



I was a US Navy Hospital Corpsman with 3rd Platoon, Foxtrot Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division... arriving in Viet Nam late April 1968.

From the Da Nang airfield we were trucked to the 1st Medical Battalion to get our orders to our units. Three other corpsmen, whom I had served with at Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, California, and I were told to report to 2/1, which was at Khe Sanh on the DMZ. We had arrived in Viet Nam under "Emergency Orders" that cut our 30-day leave in half because at the time corpsmen were in short supply due to the February 1968 Tet Offensive. This enemy activity had thinned the ranks dramatically. When we arrived in-country we had no real idea what would be ahead of us, but we would soon learn to respect these small Third World people and their dogged determination fighting against the might of the USA.

Throughout history, the U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman has had a proud relationship with the Marine Corps. Be it with the Marine Air Wing (planes and helicopters), armor (tanks, amtracks and Ontos), motor transport, or the infantry, the corpsman has always served with pride. Having an assignment to helicopters, tanks, amtracks and even to Ontos was looked on with envy as the thought that those guys had it made. They could commute easily, they had lots of ammo (and I mean "lots"), they didn't have to hump those damn hills, and they could carry personal comfort gear. In a rifle platoon, if you couldn't carry it on your back then it did not exist. Rifle ammo, machine gun ammo, hand grenades, LAAW rockets, smoke grenades, claymore defensive mines were humped while medical supplies were carried by the corpsman.



Photo: The Corpsman's Combat Pack

Plus, you had food and water to add to the load. Socks were next on the list to keep the feet dry and protected since our feet were the heart of the Corps. Up to this point, religious medals were the first of personal items followed in line of "must have's" followed by a supply of Kool Aid used to cut the taste of water purification tablets that we added to our canteens that had been filled up by the fast-running streams that crisscrossed the mountains. If you had a steady supply of food (canned goods and packaged food) from CONUS, you could carry that in you pack... then what ever you had and wanted to carry was a "go". I said that I envied you tank Marines with radios in your comm. helmet and internal combustion motors. You could carry excess amounts of gear... but that was only until I saw the four tanks of Bravo Company, 3rd Tanks get knocked out of the fight in a big battle.

I have heard that pilots say, "Keep me in the air, I don't want to be on the ground" and tankers say, "Keep me in my tank, I don't like being on the ground." My comment is, "Keep me off tanks and keep me off aircraft because I love the ground! I can find a fallen tree, a bomb crater, a slight depression in the blasted landscape to embrace."

We were assigned to 3rd Platoon, Fox Company, choppered in to Dong Ha where we were checked in, and then choppered on to Khe Sanh Combat Base the next day. At Khe Sanh, our ears were quick to learn the sound of incoming rockets or artillery. Our bunkers were on the outer perimeter of the base. If you recall, Khe Sanh was the large Marine base and airstrip located on a plateau in the rugged western Vietnamese mountains >>

that was east of the border with Laos and just south of the DMZ. The base had been under siege for 77 days by the NVA infantry and artillery before they were beaten back by US air power. The siege was broken in mid-April, but by mid-May it was still a hot spot, a place to die from 1,000 different ways.

The NVA had a huge base to protect across the border in Laos, they kept the pressure on Khe Sahn for both military and political reasons. The NVA had Soviet 130mm artillery that could out shoot our 105mm and 155mm artillery, thus keeping the base covered with what seemed like endless incoming artillery shells and 122mm rockets. You cannot operate a combat base and airstrip from underground protected by an earth cover, and due to international laws we could not invade Laos. An option would be to close the base and operate by helicopter tactics--mobile and quick--which actually happened in July. On July 4th the U.S. military brass found the base was down to critical supplies and not many bunkers to protect us. That night, the whole base had a real "fireworks" display as automatic weapons, crew serviced weapons, quad-50's mounted on 6x trucks, and 40mm antiaircraft guns all fired with lots of flares lighting up the sky. Sgt. Carl King, the platoon commander/ platoon sergeant of Hotel Company 2/1 was out in the field and he thought the base was being overrun.

Viet Nam jungles were not kind to Hospital Corpsman; 628 were killed in-country. Of the three Corpsmen I arrived with, two were killed and one badly wounded after only 19 days in-country. Of my group of four Corpsmen, we had a 75% casualty ratio. I was hit in the DMZ that August, but I accepted no Purple Heart since I could not justify a medal for my minor wound. I still have the "media tag" that was filled out but I never turned it in. Thirty-five years later, I found in my military records a set of orders with the names of fellow Hospital Corpsmen being sent to Camp Delmar at Camp Pendleton for the Field Medical Service Technician 8404 MOS, which meant we were destined for the "Green Machine." That was in the spring of 1967. With this list I could cross reference their names with names on "The Wall." I have no way to find out how many got wounded or were awarded the Purple Heart. Out of my Field Medical class, it figured to be about 20 % had their names on The Wall. Most of us were four year enlistments, but the two-year active duty, then Navy Reserve Corpsman, had about ten months into their tour (Boot Camp, Hospital Corpsman School and Field Med. School) and then they were sent to FMF after graduation. The brass had to get them to Viet Nam before they were short in their enlistment contract. My friends and I were all smiles in our dashing Marine khakis. Like I said, the Reserve's were off to war while the rest of us were sent to hospitals, clinics, where ever a Corpsman was needed until we were needed in Viet Nam.

I was nervous about being assigned to a Marine combat unit, These were fighting men. I wondered about being accepted (Navy). If I could I keep up with the group (one of my fears was to be separated and get lost in the jungle). What I would do under fire? Would I live for a full tour? I did have a curiosity about war since it could be exciting at times as well as horror filled. Fear could be a motivator as well as an anchor. I feel I was

not as brave as I should have been.

I told another Corpsman (who wants to remain unnamed) that I was writing a piece for the Viet Nam Tankers Association and was asked if there was anything else I should mention. This other Corpsman started his Navy career as UDT and then went to Corpsman School. He went FMF with a rifle platoon near the DMZ, returned to CONUS, went back on to take SEAL training, and had many missions completed. With a grin and a twinkle in his eyes, he replied in his thick Irish brogue, "Let the healthy Marines get the wounded and bring them back. Corpsmen are too important to get killed". I translated it as, "You're out with your friends. You live, eat, sleep, stand watch (a two man fighting hole on a stretched perimeter is very lonely on a far away hill top) and fight with them. When you see them get wounded, the natural reaction is to go to their aid no matter what.

I was with my rifle platoon 19 days when the May 1968 "Mini Tet" entered our sphere of influence. 2nd platoon, Fox Co. and two tanks started a road sweep for mines on the main supply route (MSR) parallel to the southern flank of the base at Khe Sahn. While 3rd platoon of Fox was waiting on 6X trucks to act as security for a "Rough Rider" convoy to Ca Lu and on to Dong Ha Combat Base. They were also going to leap frog the sweep team if necessary. The MSR had previously been closed for eight or more months as the NVA controlled the steep-sided ravines and narrow, one-lane mountain road twisting its way to Khe Sanh and the Laos border. The road had been open for about a month and limited convoys had been run.

In May 1968, Viet Nam exploded into a spring offense (we called a "Mini Tet") where the NVA were going for broke. The enemy soldiers that we ran into were there to die and take with them as many Marines as possible. It doesn't make sense to me because they could not win even if the base opened the gates; one company of NVA would have been bitch slapped by men in the base. The enemy fought one hell of a fight but the tanks turned the tide. Later, we got close air support as well as from artillery and 81mm mortars. The reason I say the tanks turned the tide was the withering machine gun fire and the 90mm shells... plus the tanks afford us shelter from the NVA. Studying topographic maps of the area in question, I find the plateau drops over a jagged edge that was carved by rain with ravines that could hide many NVA and their supplies. It is in the area of the massed assaults and the trenches that the enemy dug to the base perimeter during the siege. This was the NVA killing field as Bravo Company 1/9 Marines had been decimated twice on patrols to the area north of these ravines. Easy in, easy to hide, were many NVA and presorted ammo and RPG's. They probably had a small field hospital dug into those ravines as well. The NVA held the road, which was on a slightly crowned ridge giving best shooting advantage to the NVA, with the enemy staging area hidden from the view of the base. The area had been bombed so many times by B-52 "arc light" missions that the area around the base was ground up forming massive amounts of bomb craters, broken trees, and small scrubs poking out of the ground which gave a person some cover on that almost flat plain. The 3rd Platoon, Fox

(Fox 3) dismounted the 6x's and ran down the road as soon as we made enemy contact. Meanwhile Fred Kellogg and Rick Osgood ground down the enemy with 90mm and their machine guns. As I was soon to learn, combat is very intense and confused, not like the movies. You don't know shit what's happening. Fox 3 ran into the middle of the fight and we were split into three groups. Sgt. Thompson (he was always aggressive) and the CP group ran out of the front side of the tanks and got trapped by the NVA, while 2nd squad, Fox 3, was behind the tanks on the road with the survivors of Fox 2. Later, Colonel Duncan called in artillery and directed air strikes. The squad I was with was across the road on the other side of Kellogg's tank. The tank was keeping the enemy down in front and on the flank. I moved to Thompson's bomb crater and was treating wounded and got trapped up there. We were out of ammo and desperate for more.

Fast forward to today: I just learned that a fellow Marine e-mailed Sgt. Thompson this week and informed him that, during the battle, Capt. Oliver, CO of Fox Company, had him run a message to Thompson, but was unable to cross the road and was sent back to protect Col. Duncan with the message undelivered. I have no idea when Capt. Oliver arrived or if he was with Fox 1, but he was killed during the fight. Sgt. Thompson was the highest ranking NCO out there by now but he was trapped by NVA fire and low radio batteries. I don't know when Lt. Himes arrived with his reaction force tanks that added a lot of firepower. I don't think I could have heard a "nuke" go off near me with the amount

of noise everywhere at that time. Lt. Himes and the other tank finished the NVA, as NVA snipers kept everyone low. Sometime later, Golf Company showed up sweeping the right flank from the base to the tanks. Hotel Company moved in from Hill 471 to the west of us on an ascending ridge line from the plateau. A Bravo company tank from 2/5's pontoon bridge that was down the road at an old French bunker guarding the river crossing had arrived with our much needed ammo. With Sgt. Thompson out of communication and with low ammo supplies, Col. Duncan ordered S/Sgt Phil Leslie to take charge of Fox Company, since it was a decimated unit and would have to be rebuilt with fresh Marines for on-the-job-training. Later, Foxtrot Company moved to the base under the cover of darkness. One last heart-stopping moment happened when some units at the base had shown a spotlight on us, since everyone on base was jumpy. We hoped and prayed that we would not be confused for the enemy. Now I know what a deer feels like in the glare of truck headlights.

Being an FMF Corpsman was the most challenging, hardest, happiest, saddest, fearful and beautiful experience of my entire life. I'm proud to have served. We were all changed by the war, the men we served with formed long lasting friendships. I learned we were not as invincible as we thought we might be. We bled and died so others might live. We fought for each other, not the Union, not the politicians; when you strip everything away, we fought for ourselves. ■

From a Docs Point of View

by "DOC" HUTCH
2nd Plt, Alpha 1/5 RVN '68 - '69



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

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

They speak of our honor, bravery, and skill,
And the cry "Corpsman Up!" still gives me a chill.

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

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

You see we're adopted "Sons' of the Corps"
No more "Anchors away" ---- "Semper Fi" evermore!

It's true when you're wounded your life's in our hands
And we'll treat and protect you to the very last man.

For you are our point man, our cover, our shield.
And we count on your skills all our days in the field.

Many a Grunt laid his life on the line
To make sure Doc got to the wounded in time.

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

A Day in the life of a Corpsman!

by "DOC" DAVE STEINKUELHER

ECHO-2/9 67-68

It was a day for all kinds of weather. This morning when we moved out it was damp and foggy. Later on in the morning, the sun came out and cleared out the fog and evaporated the miserable dew on the vegetation. God, it was hard to stay warm when you were wet all the time. The afternoon sun started leaving us, in favor of clouds again. We had just started getting the word from the front of the column to get ready to move out. We all kind of let out one of those bore ass of moans as we saddled up to go. I think I could have napped there all afternoon.



1/5 Grunt Corpsman – Hue City

It was the first time I was warm all over for a couple days. The guys really have a lot of foot problems and jungle rot. I hoped I had enough antibiotics and bandages to last till we got in. The word was to make your c-rats and gear last, because we would be going in before we would get re-supplied again. We looked like an old rag-tag string of packhorses coming off the mountain from back-to-back elk hunts. Our clothes had almost rotted off long ago or been used for toilet paper; now my Marines' feet and hands were rotting away, too. We had been out way too long this time. No contact with "Charlie" the whole time, just a losing war, with us against the elements. Just surviving "Charlie's" environment was a full time job. I was suddenly snapped out of my thoughts by the ever-familiar

hand signal to move out and to keep a good interval. I knew, in an operation of this size, I still had a little time before I would actually be taking any steps, so I tried, unsuccessfully, one last time to try to make my piece of shit pack feel comfortable. If I had to wear this kind of shit hunting, I would never go! What the Hell was somebody thinking when they put us in the bush dressed in this kind of shit, what was left of it anyway!

Finally, we were moving out! It was getting into early afternoon and shit was going slow as usual. Word was going around we might set in for the night soon. I didn't know what was going on, but heard through the grapevine later that somebody up front was having navigation problems. (We weren't where we thought we were!!) Soon we were moving again. The forward part of what I could see of our column was disappearing into jungle. I was surprised when I got to the jungle because it opened up into a series of very clear areas separated by brushy hedgerows. I remember palm trees or banana trees here and there in the hedgerows. It must have been an old plantation of some sort.

At that moment, I heard AK-47's and .30 cal. carbines going off. I knew somebody up front had just walked into a lot more than sniper fire. Soon there were rounds buzzing

through the air everywhere, it seemed. I was standing in the middle of one of those lovely clearings; there wasn't enough cover for a dung beetle to hide behind. I went hard and fast for the hedgerow about 30 meters in front of me. The gooks must have been flanking us to our right, or they let us get this far on purpose, because now we were taking heavy small arms where we were. Sticks and brush were being cut off above our heads and the rounds that were hitting the ground were throwing sand and dirt in our faces. I tried to look up a couple times, but went right back down. The rounds were just too damn close.

Then I heard the "Gun"! That was our own L/Cpl. Jack Hartzel and he was making that gun sing. One only had to hear Jack and that gun make music once or twice; you never forgot what it sounded like. Jack had his own "Rock Band" in that belt of ammo! Even when all the other guns were firing, too, I knew where Jack's position was in the progression of things. He dove into the hedgerow just to my right. Our column had been cut in half at the plantation. Jack, Smitty, and I must have been the cut-off point.

The rest of the CP was behind us in the last hedge-row we had gone through. Our radioman, Adolph Novello, and a couple of sergeants were part of that group. Novello was a good man to be around. It seemed like all he had to do was get on that radio and, somewhere, somehow, he could open the sky with Angels of anything you happened to need at the time. No one was in need of my services as a Corpsman, at the present, so I tried to unload as many M-16 clips as I could, wherever I thought the little assholes might be. Besides, it would be less shit to carry out when this was all over. Jack started hollering like hell. I could tell he wasn't hit, but still didn't know what was going on until I looked to his position. My hot brass had been going down the collar of his flak jacket and was burning his neck.

Our eyes had barely made contact when I heard it! "Doc up, Doc up, Corpsman up!!" I knew "my other half" (other Corpsman) should be up about where the shit started to begin with; I knew he had plenty to do. The call was coming from behind me. I think it was natural instinct for me to take one last look around at things and people, before taking off to find that Marine. This time, Jack, working out on his gun and those fence-like hedgerows, were my last images as I

moved out in the direction of the "call". I had to get "tuned-in" to where I was going.

As I was running back, I saw someone stand up above the hedgerow waving to me. I figured that was where my next objective was; I worked my way there. Actually, I got up and ran like hell!!!! It was usually a blurred adrenaline reaction, at least with me. While at the same time, part of my brain was very busy homing in on sounds and guiding me to my Marine. This time it went well. I was to my man in mere seconds. It was the young S/SGT who had just joined us in the "bush" earlier this month. He was conscious and his flak jacket was pulled open. He had a classic textbook "sucking chest wound". An AK-47 round had penetrated and exited his chest in his upper right quadrant. The blood was bright red and foamy; I could smell the wound as I watched the steam escape from his chest with every breath. I got his flak jacket off so I could see the exit wound; carbon copy of the front; not so much foam, though. I immediately sealed the exit wound with cellophane from my smokes and taped it. The suction from the entry wound, in the front, sealed this nicely. I then concentrated on the front wound. It was getting messy and Sarge was starting to look like he was going into shock.

I started an IV right away; someone held it, while I put cellophane and tape over the entry wound. It wouldn't seal real well, but the exit wound was still doing fine. I knew, somehow, I had to get pressure on the entrance wound, so



that the cellophane would stay in place, to make sure he would last till the medevac arrived. All I had left were large battle dressings. I knew one alone wouldn't do it or put enough pressure on the wound. So, I took one, folded it in half and put it over the cellophane. I then placed an open dressing over this and cinched it up as tight as it took. I got him positioned on his bad

side with his legs up and he started to get his color back again. The IV was still looking good. I gave some Marines instructions on how to transport him to the LZ and asked Novello what he had going on, and how long? He said they were clearing an LZ and medevacs were on the way. I filled the Sarge in on what was going on and wished him luck in the "World". I left him with his Bros who got him to the LZ and out of there. Then I headed back up front to see what Jack and Company were doing. ■

Call me Corpsman, Call me 'Doc'

by KEITH POUNDS

FEBRUARY 13, 2010



Perhaps to the surprise of some, I won't blast our President on his inability to pronounce the word "corpsman" (which he pronounced "corpse man"). Instead, I'd like to take the opportunity to give much-needed praise to Navy/Fleet Marine Corpsmen who are, as you will see, a special breed of warriors.

During my own service as a Corpsman, I served at the Naval Hospital, Camp LeJeune, N.C., as well as on board the USS Joseph Hewes (FF-1078) home-ported in Charleston, with the 4th Marine Division, New Orleans, La. My specialties included combat casualty care and nuclear, biological and chemical warfare.

After initial basic training (boot camp), prospective Corpsmen are sent for medical training at the Naval School of Health Sciences in San Diego, Calif. From there, they can specialize in any number of medical ratings, including X-ray technician or pharmacy technician.

Corpsmen act as health advisers and emergency first responders for the Navy and the Marine Corps. They treat a variety of illnesses, from the common cold to decompression sickness requiring hyperbaric treatment.

Many attend Fleet Marine Service School where they are trained in all aspects of Marine Corps operations. From there, they can further specialize as a Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Corpsman or FMF Recon.

Corpsmen stationed with a Marine unit, or far out at sea on a Navy warship, often find themselves in volatile, life-threatening emergency situations. There are often no sterile operating rooms and equipment. Doctors and nurses are often miles, if not hours, away. As one author wrote, "Bunkers become operating rooms, shirts become tourniquets, and Corpsmen become miracle workers."

For a Corpsman, being stationed with the Navy means

serving in a Navy hospital or clinic or onboard a U.S. Navy ship. We call this being "on the blue side." For Corpsmen stationed on "the green side," it means serving as a specialist in emergency medicine and combat care with the Marine Corps.

Ask almost any Marine who has been in combat what the phrase "Corpsman up!" means and he'll tell you it's a cry for what the Marine Corps calls the "angels in green." These are U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman, specially trained for combat medicine.

Combat Corpsmen are trained in patrols, tactics and navigation and wear the same grungy, dirty, sweaty uniforms as Marines and serve as the front-line emergency medical response personnel, very often under enemy fire with little regard for their own safety.

As many Corpsmen share a space on memorial walls with the Marines they tried to save, they have adopted as one of their mottos, "Where angels and Marines fear to tread, there you'll find a Corpsman dead."

In World War II, 1,170 Corpsmen lost their lives. In Korea, it was 108. In Vietnam, 638. Fifteen died as a result of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. Seven Corpsmen have been killed in Afghanistan; 31 have died in Iraq.

Quoted in the Navy News Service article, "The Making of a Fleet Marine Force Corpsman," Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Richard Lister said, "A Doc is someone you can count on. He's someone in your platoon that when something happens to one of our fellow Marines, you can call on him and not have to worry. He's your buddy, a comrade in arms, a person who you count on to cover your back, to lay down fire, dig fighting holes or do whatever the hell Marines are doing. That's who a Doc is."

As Herschel Smith wrote in Captain's Journal: "They carry a rifle, they engage in combat, and they do all the things that Marine infantrymen do. When the Marines go on 20-mile humps with full body armor, backpacks and weapons, the Corpsmen do all of that, and more. The Corpsmen take all of their medical gear in addition to their other load."

In his 2005 book, *Corpsman Up*, Paul Baviello tells of the anguish that all

Corpsmen carry with them. He writes how Corpsmen "journey into a living hell and experience the thrills and horror of combat, the agony of the wounded and dead, and see foxhole relationships develop between blacks and whites, farm boys and city kids... when friend after friend is wounded and he knows that their lives are in his hands and then wonder for the rest of



As further testimony to the bravery and commitment of our Corpsmen on the battlefield, they have received 1,582 Bronze Stars, 946 Silver Stars, 31 Distinguished Service Crosses, 174 Navy Crosses and 22 Medals of Honor.

There have been 20 Navy ships named after Corpsmen. Corpsman John "Doc" Bradley was one of the six men photographed by Joe Rosenthal raising the second United States flag on Iwo Jima during World War II.

As any Corpsman will tell you, few honors sit on one's heart as well as being called "Doc" by your Navy and Marine buddies.

his life if he did the right things."

Yes! Our Corpsmen are among the most respected, revered members serving in the U.S. Navy and the Marine Corps. If you know a past or present Corpsman, call him "Doc" and thank him for his service. He deserves it.

Keith Pounds served as a Hospital Corpsman 2nd class (SW) during the Lebanon/Grenada-era. He is the author of "The Psychology of Management" and holds an MBA with a concentration in organizational psychology. He can be contacted at: Keith.Pounds@alumni.aiuonline.edu ■

WERE THEY GHOSTS?

BY "DOC" DAVE STEINKUELHER

ECHO 2/9 '67 - '68

I had been in Viet Nam about three months and the rain from the early monsoon season was pounding us. Echo 2/9 was patrolling the Lac Son area straight east of Con Thien. We had been in the bush a long time. We were all hoping we were going to the rear for a few days after this one was over. We had been humping all day in this shit, and it was only getting worse. I swear, if you tried to look up at the sky, you would drown! As we topped out over the hill, I could see the forward part of the column below, starting to go through the valley below us. It was about 100 meters wide and ran down to our right as far as I could see. Where the jungle stopped and valley began was all rice paddies, dikes and trails running up and down both sides of the paddies. As our part of the column started into the paddies, we had people strung out clear across it.

They were already coming out and evaporating into the jungle on the other side.

I was about half way across the paddy when I saw people passing a message back. Then they started sliding off the backside of the dike into the rice paddy. All of us followed suit and before the message even got back to us, I could see what was going on. Down in the valley, on the opposite side we entered from, were two lone figures appearing out of the foggy mist and heavy rain and coming straight at us! The heavy rains must have gotten to them, too! They were coming straight up the trail alongside the paddies. They were in the open with their heads down and their poncho hoods up! They weren't looking at anything but the trail in front of their boots. By this time, everyone in the column could see them; they were like a bunch of starving hounds on chains being teased with a bone. Word was going up and down the column.

"Can we shoot?"



"What the hell is going on?"

Our Lieutenant was on the radio trying to find out if there were any "friendlies" in the area. You just don't see this kind of shit in broad daylight, even if it was a "free-fire zone." Now I know how they must feel, while they watch us walk into their ambushes. This was the first time, even after numerous firefights we had been in before, that most of us had seen a live "gook". That in itself had a mesmerizing effect of a dream or a hallucination. Finally, someone couldn't take it anymore and opened up. The whole column across the rice paddy let loose. They were getting the full force of everything we had, M-60 machine guns, M-79's, and rifle fire for what seemed like 5 minutes or more.

Slowly, the firing diminished in the rice paddy. The misty fog was joined by the heavy smoke of our gunfire to make visibility even worse. The smell of gunpowder filled your nostrils with every breath. The rain was still coming down, but even it seemed to let up after it was all over.

As the air started to clear, we were already on line to make a sweep through to that side. We silently waited for what seemed an eternity for the smoke to clear enough so that we could confirm by vision that we had two "confirmed kills". As visibility increased, it was very obvious that there were no bodies lying on the trail where the Gooks had last been seen. We immediately swept the hillside where they had been when we opened up. Nobody could have gotten out of that alive, let alone seriously wounded gooks! The hillside of jungle was literally shredded where the Gooks had last been seen. It was now raining as hard as before. The rain had washed any blood trails away. The footprints on the trail from which they came were even washed away. They were gone as silently and quickly as they had appeared, leaving no trace they had even been there. It was an eerie feeling. We tightened up and swept the hillside two more times, and still couldn't even turn up a piece of torn clothing, sandal, anything. Were they really there? ■

TANKERS WHO BECAME GRUNTS

by JOHN GROOMS

3rd Plt, B Co, 5th Tanks



I received my January issue of the VTA magazine and was surprised to see the USS Alamo on the cover. We sailed to Viet Nam on her in 1966. We were BLT 1/5. I never thought that I'd ever see her again! On our cruise to Viet

Nam, we left San Diego in Feb 1966 on our way to Oahu, Hawaii. We stopped there for a week or so and then on to Okinawa. Where we picked up more troops. The next stop was Olongapo, Philippines to do some jungle training >>

and try to "climatize." Man! Was it hot!

We were issued M-14's at the time and had to lock up or 45's in our tank. We thought, "What in the hell is going on?" For a few days we fired our M-14's and set the sights on combat setting at 300 yards. Then we turned the 14's back in to the armory... but we kept the serial number. Again, we thought, "What's going on?"

Well, on to Viet Nam... more about the 14's later. On our way, we were caught in a storm or typhoon for about 2 or 3 days. The sea waves were 50 to 60 feet high as they came over the bow of the ship. We were ordered to strap ourselves in our bunks. The only time we could get out was to go to the mess or to the head. Going to chow was a waste of time. We'd walk into the mess hall and puke! The deck was covered with milk, eggs, SOS and other food.

I remember a fuel ship coming to fuel the Alamo. They had to keep the ships into the wind with the waves making it very difficult in the storm. They shot a line over and both of the ships came together and they cut a hole in the troop compartment. Of course the wildest thing was that one Marine panicked and tried to go out the hole in the bulkhead so they grabbed his arm, pulling him back, thus breaking his arm. Boy! Was he pissed! I don't remember seeing him again on the cruise.

We went to the Philippines to have the ship repaired and were there about ten days. Then we left for Viet Nam.

On March 25th "Operation Jackstay" began. We had to go over the side of the ship like they did in WW II. Down the nets into the landing craft. I'm thinking, "Hey! I'm a tanker not a grunt! Did I go through all of the tank training for nothing?"

I had an M-14 and later that evening the armorer installed a night scope. After we had walked around a bit and crossed a river, I kept asking myself, "What's going on?" Later that evening, I found out.

Gary Petty and I were put out on point. The rest of the Marines were behind us as a blocking force next to the river. The order was for us to scope the area and call back in any movement was spotted. We were told not to employ any automatic fire what so ever. They did not want Charlie to pinpoint any machinegun positions.

When the first shot was fired, that order went out the window. All of the .30 caliber machineguns opened up. We had taken all of the .30s off of the tanks and the grunts had their m-60s. We were in a foxhole that was full of water with rounds coming from behind and in front of us. What do we

do now? If I had used my M-14, the enemy could target our position. We went to hand grenades and busted their asses! They couldn't tell where they were coming from.

The following morning I had the armorer remove the scope from my M-14. What a piece of crap! It does not work at all in the rain. Later that day we started to sweep of the Long Thank Peninsula. It took us until April 6th. We captured:

27 individual weapons and 60,000 rounds of 7.92 mm ammo.

1,460 hand grenades and 55 – 60 mm rounds.

180 water mines and 200 land mines.

2 training camps and 2 arms factories.

270 bunkers and 12 camp sites.

2 field hospitals and 2,205 bags of rice.

And we got 63 confirmed enemy KIA.

When the operation was over, they ordered us back on the ship... but instead they loaded us onto helicopters and took us to the village complex of Phu Loc – Vink Los and into the Tan An – Cau Dong area that was north of Da Nang. We moved to Huc – Pau Bia which was north of Operation Jackstay.

The next day BLT 1/5 started Operation Osage which ran from April 27th to May 2nd. On the last day of that operation we got back on board ship and went down to Chu Lai where we off loaded our tanks and began operating in our permanent area.

In Chu Lai, one of our duties was to guard the newly build airstrip. We had a platoon of tanks around the airstrip at all times. We were roaming all around so the VC could not set up mortars or rockets to shoot down planes on approach or to attack the airbase. We would rotate platoons to go out on operations and to support the grunts. They always seemed happy to have our tanks along. And we were always happy to help them as long as it was inside of our tanks. We'd have the grunts ride on top of our vehicles and we'd carry the Marine WIAs and KIAs to the airstrip for medevac.

That's about all I have for now. If any Marines reading this were on Operation Jackstay or Osage or were on board the USS Alamo with BLT 1/5, they can give me a call at 317-697-2471 and we can talk about the time that tankers became grunts.

John Grooms

PO Box 144

Bargersville, IN 46106

Phone: (317) 422-8731

DO-IT-ALL MUNITION

Single tank round designed to blow up varying targets

Marine Corps Times

by JAMES K. SANBORN, jsanborn@militarytimes.com

The Marine Corps is looking to buy a large volume of multipurpose tank rounds that can shred armored personnel carriers, decimate dismounted troops, demolish bunkers and destroy nearly any target that tank crews might engage.

The 120mm Multipurpose High Explosive munition provides M1A1 Abrams tank crews with a single round for any mission. It has seen limited use with Marine tank units in Afghanistan since 2011, when it was procured through Germany-based Rheinmetall Defense to fill an Urgent Universal Needs Statement from commanders downrange who were seeking a more versatile, harder-hitting round.

"After-action reports from these units indicate the MP-HE is the round of choice for infantry support operations," said Barb Hamby, a Marine Corps Systems Command spokeswoman at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

The key to the round's versatility: a programmable fuse that is set through an electronic interface in the breech.

"This round's fuse will function in three modes: point detonation, delay and airburst," according to a request for information from industry posted March 19 to FedBizOpps.gov.

Once the round is loaded into the breech, a tank crew chief programs one of those three capabilities, depending on the specific type of target, and sends it downrange.

"The point detonating fuse will allow for the destruction of light armored vehicles and bunkers at extended ranges due to fin stabilization of the round," according to an Office of Naval Research fact sheet.

"The delay mode will provide enhanced breaching capabilities for dynamic entry by dismounted infantry, and provide greater internal blast fragmentation within a building to destroy concealed enemy targets. Finally, the potential air burst capability of this round duplicates the effects of the canister round, but increases the maximum effective range from 300 meters to 5,000 meters to adequately engage [anti-tank guided missile] teams."

The round not only extends the tank's effective range against some targets by about 16 times, but greatly increases accuracy, according to ONR.

While the round is available to tank units in combat, the Marine Corps purchased just 3,000 rounds to satisfy the UUNS.

"The purpose of this Request for Information is to conduct market research on commercially available ammunition that meets the existing technical requirements for the 120mm Multi-Purpose High Explosive round," Hamby said.

The Corps could purchase from 10,000 to 20,000 rounds a year over the next five years, according to the RFI.

In addition to the added lethality, officials hope MP-HE munitions will help ease the service's logistics burden, saving money and lives by keeping vulnerable resupply convoys off the road. Marine Corps M1A1 tank crews now carry four different types of rounds to accomplish their mission, according to ONR.

"Crews must substitute a different round for each threat they encounter, increasing the logistical burden across the board," according to the MP-HE fact sheet. "The proposed 120mm MPHE round will have the ability to perform all of these capabilities within a single round."

The specs:

- 1 Tungsten balls for fragmentation
- 2 Insensitive high explosive
- 3 Programmable fuse... for detonation in flight, on impact or after impact
- 4 Contact (on base of cartridge) for programming fuse through gun breech
- 5 Tracer
- 6 Stabilization fins ■



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 "14" then your 2014 membership dues are now payable. Make your check out to: USMC VTA for \$30* and mail to:

USMC VTA c/o Bruce Van Apeldoorn, 73 Stanton Street, Rochester, NY 14611-2837

*Over & Above donations are always gratefully appreciated.

