



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™

It's just three months before we meet & greet in Washington, DC for our 9th biennial reunion.

(Reminder: The cut off for registration for the half-priced reunion t-shirt is Aug 31st)



Featured Stories:

More on the May 19th AmbushPage 28–32

Reunion Section.....Page 43–46

For The Auction in DC!!!

Story of Buckle Quest – Reunion 2015

BY HAROLD AND LAURA RIENSCHÉ



It was shortly after Thanksgiving Day of 2014 when we began to develop ideas for a commemorative belt buckle to be made by Montana Silversmiths that we could have produced and then donate to the VTA auction in DC.

First, we were told that we could not order anything special at the outlet store anymore and everything had to be done online through their website. We then spent an entire snowy, Sunday afternoon looking at buckle blanks and calculating if we could get all the writing we wanted on some of the buckle blanks. Laura called the Silversmiths the next morning to see if they

could also make a bolo tie. She also mentioned that she did not see the Marine Corps emblem in their online catalog. The lady checked with her supervisor and was told that the Marine Corps did not renew their licensing agreement to use the Marine Corps emblem.

We could not allow this glitch to derail our plans so we began writing letters. We wrote to the CEO of Montana Silversmiths and told him, "It seems like a catastrophic disrespect of all Marine Corps veterans that we cannot order something from an American manufacturer made with the USMC Eagle, Globe, and Anchor upon it."

The CEO replied to us by saying that they would have loved to continue with the licensing agreement, but their sales volume did not warrant the minimum sales needed. He also said, "No disrespect toward our armed forces was meant, nor implied with this result."

Meanwhile, we made contact with a customer service rep at Sgt. Grit and she sent us the contact information for the Marine Corps Trademark Licensing Office and we wrote to them next. In our letter to the Marine Corps, we told them specifically what we wanted to order from Montana Silversmiths. We even sent letters to our Congressional representatives on the subject.

The Marine Corps replied to our letter and told us, "We have no objection to Montana Silversmiths manufacturing you a 'one-off' belt buckle at your request as we maintain that Marines have the inherent right to use USMC marks for their private non-commercial use."

Again, we wrote to the Silversmiths and told them what the Marine Corps Trademark Licensing Office had told us, and we enclosed a copy of the Marine Corps' letter. In our letter we told them, "The Marine Corps would have no objection to you manufacturing the products that this Marine would like to obtain." And, we ended our letter with, "We believe that one of your skilled artists should be allowed to make one custom buckle and two bolo ties for us to take to our November reunion in Washington, DC. This action would highlight the state of Montana, the city of Columbus, and the excellence of Montana Silversmiths products."

In less than a week, we had a call from a representative of Montana Silversmiths telling us that they would make the items for us. And in conclusion to our story, I just want to request no-dollars-withheld bidding for these treasures, because this Marine fought long and hard to obtain them for this occasion.

Semper Fi—Harold Riensché

Letter from the President



Do you-all like the new VTA logo?

I am having a problem that I need you to help me with:

I talk to a lot of different members and when I ask them if they read so-and-so in my President's Letter, they shrug their shoulders and say, "No." So what can I do to get you-all to read this column?

For the past few years, we have produced three issues of the Sponson Box magazines per year. I am elated that we have finally begun to receive more personal stories from our members than we can publish and share in three issues so we are going to produce four issues this year. I cannot emphasize how important it is that you-all get off of your duffs ... (of you'll pardon the expression) ... and get your stories written. I don't know about how you ... but I am thrilled to see my name in print. And I am pretty sure that your friends and family will be thrilled to see that your story as a Marine tanker is in print. Don't forget that when an old man dies, a library burns to the ground. Don't let your library burn.

Please Note: The original reunion activity schedule has been changed. Our trip to the National Museum of the Marine Corps entails different times and altered activities. The rest of the schedule remains as we planned.

Also we have dedicated an entire day of the DC reunion for personal history interviews. We have asked that you sign up for them when you turn in your registration paperwork for the reunion. I am a bit disappointed that so few attendees seem interested in participating in this very meaningful history project. I am a firm believer in the saying: "Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do then by the ones that you did do."

Semper Fidelis,

"The best tank terrain is that without anti-tank weapons."
Russian military doctrine

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
858-735-1772 Email: ricklent@aol.com

Bruce Van Apeldoorn, Treasurer

73 Stanton Street, Rochester, NY 14611-2837
(585) 613-6564 Email: bvanapeldoomsr@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: rvaxter47@yahoo.com

Pete Ritcher

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

Mike "Belmo" Belmessieri

279 Dundee Drive, South San Francisco, CA 94080-1028
(650) 756-2324 Email: zippoF-11@aol.com

Greg Martin

6514 - 81st Drive NE, Marysville, WA 98270-8010
Phone: 360-480-1206 Email: usmctanker@comcast.net

Committees & Chairmen

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

Ron Knight

Member Data Integrity
770-623-9237 EST

1st Sgt. Rick Lewis

VA Information
VTA History Project
858-735-1772 PST

Bob Peavey

Fallen Heroes
770-365-3711 EST

Pete Ritcher

VTA History Project
850-734-0014 EST

Jim Coan

Scholarship Committee
Phone: 520-378-9659 PST
Email: zjimco@aol.com

Greg Martin

Webmaster
National Recruiter
360-480-1206 PST
Email: usmctanker@comcast.net

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 USMVCVTA 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

Email: ngiovinazz0@gmail.com
A Co, 1st ATs, '65 – '66
MOS: 0353
DOB: 3/17/46
Wife: Mary Ann
Recruited by: Ontos Assn.

Goodin, Bradford B, MGySgt, USMC (ret) = Welcome back!
131 Millers Way
Foley, MO 63347-2830
Phone: 636-668-8104
Email: bb.goodin@verizon.net
H&S and C Co, 3rd Tanks, '68 – '69
MOS: 1811
DOB: 11/15/49
Wife: Wanda
Recruited by: Tom "Sparrow" Moad

Jewell, James E

1527 Rivara Road
Stockton, CA 95207-1639
Phone: 209-952-0124
Email: captj24@gmail.com
B Co, 3rd Tanks, '67 – '68 – '69
MOS: 1811
DOB: 7/6/42
Wife: Diane
Recruited by: Pete Ritcher

Najfus, Louis L = Welcome back!

3255 Town Manor
Dacula, GA 30019-1444
Phone: 678-546-1444
Email: Najfus@hotmail.com
C Co, 3rd AT, '66 – '67
MOS: 0353
DOB: 1/20/45
Wife: Beverly
Recruited by: Ontos Assn.

Price, Stan

PO Box 127
San Luis, CO 81152-0127
Phone: 432-386-0117
Email: cwo5price@hotmail.com
H&S and B Co, 1st Tanks, '67 – '68
MOS: 1811/0803/0302/0352

MEMBER INFO CHANGES

Doc Aubrey (Gene) Hackemack

614 Woodcreek Circle
McQueeney, TX 78123-3252
Phone: (979)551-0581
Email: squeezezman123@gmail.com

Steve Rasner

Phone: 217-251-7350

DOB: 7/28/48
Wife: Carol

Recruited by: Greg Martin

Valdez, Steve F

12708 Pecos Ave
Norwalk, CA 90650-2515
Phone: 562-929-3504
Email: sfvsmc@aol.com
A Co, 3rd AT, '65 – '66
MOS: 0353
DOB: ???
Wife: Arlene
Recruited by: Ontos Assn.

Wells, Walter L

336 Hoe Ave
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076-1135
Phone: 908-322-7088
Email: lowbedred@yahoo.com
C Co, 1st AT, '66
MOS: 0353
DOB: 8/16/43
Wife: Nettie
Recruited by: Ontos Assn.

Williams, John F

8185 E Geddes Ave
Centennial, CO 80112-1817
Phone: 303-635-1408
Email: jpwlll735@gmail.com
A Co, 3rd AT, '65 – '66
C Co, 1st AT, '67
A Co, 5th AT, '67 – '68
MOS: 0353
DOB: 1/30/41
Wife: Diane
Recruited by: Ontos Assn.

Yohn, Karl R

1460 Yardal Road
State College, PA 16801
Phone: 814-234-4556
Email: kbyon@comcast.net
A Co, 3rd Tanks, '64 – '65
MOS: 1811
DOB: 9/30/43
Wife: Judi
Recruited by: Joe Tyson

Ev Tungent

1416 Madrone Way
Woodland, CA 95695

Bill Wright

Phone: 321-394-5888
Email: darlene5141960@gmail.com

Our Readers Write

Sad Statistics

I'm a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America. In the recent edition of the VVA magazine, the obits section listed a large number of Vietnam vets who passed away recently. I noticed a lot of them were in their 60's. Out of curiosity, I computed the ages of the 166 male Vietnam veterans when they died. I came up with an average age of 70.4. In 2013, the average life expectancy of all males in America, regardless of location and race, was 76.4.

I'm asking myself what accounted for a six-year difference in longevity between Vietnam veterans and American males in general. Was it PTSD related issues, Agent Orange exposure, drugs and alcohol, or what? My guess is that all or some of the above adversely affected us one way or the other.

Jim Coan

Sierra Vista, AZ

From Rumor Control at The Fort

There is talk around the Army camp fire that the Army is planning to reduce their heavy armor units in size and compliment. The word is, due to the mobility and flexibility the Marine Corps has demonstrated in recent deployments, the armor units within the Marine Corps seem to be deploying in a much more efficient manner, so the conventional thinking is that, if and when the Army needs tank support, they will call the Marines. Please note that none of this comes from any "official" source ... Just camp fire gossip.

Art Nash

Ft Huachuca, AZ

God Bless His Marine Training

My granddaughter Brianna is a beautiful girl who will soon be able to date. I asked her dad, my Marine winger son Todd, what he will do when she begins to date.

He said: "When the boy comes to pick her up, I'll toss him one of my 9mm shells and I'll tell him if she isn't home on time the next one will come faster."

Submitted by Jan "Turtle" Wendling

Butt Naked on the Road

It was a bright and sunny day in the spring of 1968. My tank was up at Con Thien when we were told to take our tank and move into a blocking position that was just off the road

between The Washout and Con Thien. The platoon leader said the reason we were doing this was that some general and a civilian VIP from Washington, DC were scheduled to come up to Con Thien on an inspection tour. As we exited the gate, we met up with a squad of grunts that were to be our security and we headed out. A few minutes later, we took up our position about halfway between the two bases.

As hours passed, I started to get hungry so I asked my loader if he could take one of the 5-gallon water cans and pour some water on my hands. As I washed my filthy hands, I noticed that my hands were now pretty clean but I could see how dirty my arms were so I removed my shirt and started to wash my arms. Now I saw that my body was a two-tone color, so I stood behind the tank and stripped down to bare skin, and my loader poured the water all over me. As I began to lather up, I heard a rifle shot and a bullet hit the tank right above my head! My butt naked body started to climb on to the tank. Just as luck would have it, I heard a chopper over head. Here I am, naked as a jay bird, climbing up the rear engine compartment and trying to climb over the bustle rack to get into the cupola!!! All this time, with the VIP chopper flying over head, I managed to get to safety inside the tank and the sniper stopped shooting. The rest of the day was uneventful.

When we returned to Con Thien a few hours later, here comes a young grunt LT wanting to know if I knew anything about a naked Marine on or near a tank. He was not happy. And like a good Marine I said, "No sir, but I'll ask around." That's my story.

Guy Everest

Alpine, CA

Remembrance or Hallucination?

Here's one for you. OK; it's a bit later on in "The Circus" (aka Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks at Quang Tri) and maybe you'd left by then; maybe not. We're driving up the hill past "C-2" and the Washout. Denny Swiehart is driving and I've just installed an 8 track player from Columbia Record Club (Remember that scam? 12 tapes for 99 cents plus a free auto or home player). Anyway, I got the player powered up and wired through our comm. helmets. We're on a fairly straight part of the road and we're listening to "Mustang Sally" by the Rascals. Denny locks down the ac- >>

celerator, climbs out of the driver's compartment and starts dancing on the turret with his comm. helmet still on. I was mildly shocked. Were you with us?

That's almost the best part of the story. Tonight, I was watching the Military History Channel. They were changing track on an M-1 Abrams. It looked exactly like our M-48 track with the treads, end connectors, wedge nuts, and all, which made me remember the circumstances described below; and then, those described above.

The other significant things were the facts that, at this time, our tracks had absolutely no rubber left on them—pure rusty steel—with the adjustment (idler) arm all the way out and loose as a goose. There was no time for fancy driving of any kind or the fucker would've flipped right off the sprockets (which were also so worn that we had to turn them backwards to have any meat). I think we were supposed to get new track at Con Thien, but somehow that doesn't seem logical.

But then, and this is where it got really dream-like, we came upon a small cluster of Army mess tents, just sitting there on the west side of the MSR, about a mile or two from Con Thien. Another part of this remembrance which makes it so illogical is that, when we pulled over looking for a meal, the whole place was deserted—no security, no cooks or mess men, no nothing.

It had the feeling of a wedding pavilion, all done in olive drab. When we dismounted, this field kitchen was fully stocked, but nothing cooking. So we hit the next tent over and loaded up the tank with as many cases of B-ration (freeze-dried and #10 canned) meat, veggies, and juices (concentrated) as we could get in and on the tank—like lots of cases, many cases, of this shit. This was a score of scores, as my 3rd MOS was scrounging and ripping off the Army, the Navy, the USO, and the Red Cross Donut Girls, but mostly for LRRP rations from the doggies and oil cooler lines for our tanks, which I could order, but never seem to get, just like my 13-W boots, which also were on the ship with my tank parts when it sunk.

Another time, one dark night in Dong Ha, we took the 5-ton wrecker and filched an entire power-pack that was still in its shipping container. After we got it over the doggies fence, we were worried that it might be one of those gas engines that their M-48 A-1's used; but when we got it back to the tank park, it was an M-60 motor and trans., just what we used in our A-3's. Perfect.

Now this little caper I know you were innocent of, but

does the above ring any bells for you? I can picture certain scenes in my mind, perfectly, which isn't all that that common or usual.

Andrew "Andy" Anderson
Tucson, AZ

Editor's note: We'd love to publish your scrounging story. We understand that the Statue of Limitations on larceny has long past (It's only seven years) so there should be absolutely no legal problem involved with your confession(s). Please write any and all tales of five-finger discount procurement and send them to John Wear.

Memorial Day 2015

Few people live up to the Honor and Trust of my Vietnam Bros.

Today is a solemn day for me. I remember and pray for the souls of my Bros who lost their life in the Nam. They did not Give Their Life and they did not Trip And Become the Fallen, like the news media spin. Some were shot through the head, some were cauterized through the body by a hot RPG plasma jet, some were shredded into pieces by a hundred pound explosive mine, and some were incinerated in their seat, black and unrecognizable. They died doing their job with fear in their throat but with courage in their heart. They fought the fight for their Brothers beside them. Because they were young. Because they were selfless. Because they were trusted. Because they were courageous. I pray that God welcomed their souls into his Throne Room. I hope I will see them again someday when they welcome me with shining eyes and smiles on their faces.

Gunny Farrell
Ellensburg, WA

Tank Car



Coming Home

From

Vietnam

From his book "Hocus Pocus"

BY KURT VONNEGUT

The event Bruce Bergeron set to music in his head was getting stuck between floors in an elevator when he was maybe 6 years old, on the way with a Haitian nanny to a post-Christmas white sale at Bloomingdale's department store in New York City. They were supposed to be going to the American Museum of Natural History, but the nanny, without permission from her employers, wanted to send some bargain bedding to relatives in Haiti first.

The elevator got stuck right below the floor where the white sale was going on. It was an automatic elevator. There was no operator. It was jammed. When it became obvious that the elevator was going to stay there, somebody pushed the alarm button, which the passengers could hear clanging far below.

According to Bruce, this was the first time in his life that he had ever been in some kind of trouble that grownups couldn't take care of at once. There was a 2-way speaker in the elevator, and a woman's voice came on, telling the people to stay calm. Bruce remembered that she

made this particular point: Nobody was to try to climb out through the trapdoor in the ceiling. If anybody did that, Bloomingdale's could not be responsible for whatever might happen to him or her afterward.

Time went by. More time went by. To little Bruce it seemed that they had been trapped there for a century. It was probably more like 20 minutes. Little Bruce believed himself to be at the center of a major event in American history. He imagined that not only his parents but the President of the United States must be hearing about it on television. When they were rescued, he thought, bands and cheering crowds would greet him. Little Bruce expected a banquet and a medal for not panicking, and for not saying he had to go to the bathroom.

The elevator suddenly jolted upward a few centimeters, stopped. It jolted upward a meter, an aftershock. The doors slithered open, revealing the white sale in progress behind ordinary customers, who were simply waiting for the next elevator, without any idea that there had been something wrong

with that one. They wanted the people in there to get out so that they could get in. There wasn't even somebody from the management of the store to offer an anxious apology, to make certain that everybody was all right. All the actions relative to freeing the captives had taken place far away—wherever the machinery was, wherever the alarm gong was, wherever the woman was who had told them not to panic or climb out the trapdoor.

That was that.

The nanny bought some bedding, and then she and little Bruce went on to the American Museum of Natural History. The nanny made him promise not to tell his parents that they had been to Bloomingdale's, too—and he never did. He still hadn't told them when he spilled the beans in Music Appreciation.

"You know what you have described to perfection?" I asked him.

"No," he said.

I said, "What it was like to come home from the Vietnam War." ■

The Tank Diet

Article by Otto Kreisher, ARMY Magazine, February 2015, pp. 33-36.

SUBMITTED BY JIM COAN

The Army's efforts to develop a smaller new tank with the Abram's lethality and crew survivability have failed thus far. The quest for a lighter tank continues, however, in other forms. The need for a lighter armored vehicle has grown as the Army's primary focus has swung sharply from the Cold War requirement for forward-based heavy forces prepared to counter a Soviet assault to being able to rapidly deploy combat power from U.S. bases in response to any emerging threat in some distant location.

One Army effort was the XM1202, weighing 20 tons with a crew of two and mounting a 120mm cannon. It could be carried in a C-130. However, scheduling delays, technology gaps, and soaring costs put the program in jeopardy. Finally, with the loaded vehicle weight jumping up to 30 tons, Defense Secretary Gates cancelled the program. For now, the Army has given up on trying to build a lighter tank with the same qualities as the Abrams, but it is looking to replace the M2 Bradley in the near future.

The history of the military tank has

been dominated by the classic struggle between offense and defense. As more powerful guns were countered by thicker armor, there has been a steady increase in the weight of main battle tanks.

The push for bigger and heavier armored vehicles actually went the opposite way in the beginning, because the first tanks introduced by the British in WWI were lumbering behemoths, which in the Mark IV version weighed 29 tons.

The French came out with the FT-17, a more mobile tank. It had a moving turret and weighed seven tons. The U.S. Army used that tank in WW I. Then the trend went to bigger and better-gunned tanks. In WW II, the German Army had the Panzer I at 5.4 tons; the Panther at 45 tons, and the 1945 Tiger II at 69 tons. The primary U.S. tank was the Sherman, a mobile medium tank that started out at 31tons, but went up to 38 tons with a larger main gun. Even so, its lighter weight meant thinner armor, and it was no match for the powerful German tanks. The Russians produced

what many experts consider the best World War II-era tank, the T-34.

Late in the war, the U.S. Army fielded the M-26 Pershing, classified as a heavy tank at 46 tons. Some Historians have expressed that, if the Pershing had been available after D-Day and had replaced the Sherman in Europe, the push into Germany would have proceeded more rapidly and with fewer U.S. casualties.

After the war, the Army developed the M-48 Patton, which evolved from the M-47. The M-60, which weighed 54 tons, came next. It was still in service as late as Desert Storm in 1991.

In the Cold War era, the Soviet Union produced a series of tanks leading up to the T-72, which U.S. forces encountered in Iraqi armored divisions during Desert Storm. By then, the U.S. Army had the powerful M-1 Abrams, which weighed in at 60 tons, had a gas turbine engine, and mounted a 105mm main gun. The latest M-1A2 Abrams with a 120mm main gun hits the scales at 70 tons fully loaded. ■

Looking For

Greg Martin, our very able webmaster recently notified Jim Coan that he had received a "Looking For" request that was left on the VTA website. It turns out that the person looking for Jim Coan had not seen or heard from him for 51 years.

The gentleman's note read: "... Jim Coan was my pledge dad at Phi Gamma Delta at the University of AZ, 1964. I dropped out and went to Special Forces, returned to graduate later. He was/is a great guy and this is the only lead I have."

... and here is the result of the contact:

Thanks for the contact about the "Looking For" info. I rarely go to our website so I probably would never have read it. Today, Dick Gamble and I spoke for a long time on the phone. Seems he was a freshman when I was going into my senior year at the U. of Arizona. He ended up doing two tours in Nam with the Army. Then, as a captain in 1978, he got "riffed" out. He spent the next 22 years as an Arizona Highway Patrol officer. It turns out that we both went

to the same high school in Tucson, both had the same major in college, and both worked in law enforcement-type careers. At one point after my junior year in college, I got suspended one semester from school for a bar fight incident and got a job as a surgery orderly at the Tucson Medical Hospital. It turns out that Dick had also worked there as a surgery orderly a year later when he also got kicked out of school for a semester. It sure was great talking with him. Thanks again for the heads up.

Jim Coan
Sierra Vista, AZ

Looking for Tim Mayte: I saw that you are the president of the USMCVTA and wanted to know if you could point me in the right direction to get an email address for member Tim Mayte?

Thank you, Semper Fi!
LtCol Rob Bodisch, USMC
Commanding Officer
2d Tank Battalion, 2d Marine Division
Office: 910-451-9404
Mobile: 910-546-0773

Email: robert.bodisch@usmc.mil
SIPR: robert.bodisch@usmc.smil.mil
JOHN WEAR REPLIED: Hello, Colonel. Thank you for reaching out to me. The reason that I am saying this is because, for about ten years, Tim had seemingly "fallen off the edge of the Earth" and he had not communicated with me or any of the USMC Vietnam Tankers community during that period of silence. Your email request "forced" me to give Tim a call and, in doing so, he and I were afforded the opportunity to have a "radio check" and to catch up. During our conversation, I gave Tim all of your contact information and hopefully he will follow through and get hold of you.

If there is anything else that I can do for you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Semper Fidelis,
John Wear

P.S. As it turned out, Tim and the 2nd Tank Battalion CO were able to connect and all is well.

Garry Hall called me on the evening that he got his copy of the S-Box to tell me that these three photographs were taken in early April of 1968 by Life magazine photographer Larry Borrows. The scenes were in and around Route 9, west of Camp Carroll, during Operation Pegasus. The photographs were featured in the April 19, 1968 issue of the magazine.



Garry says that the tank on the left was "The Lonely Bull" commanded by Darrell Clock. The Marine in the middle without a cover is probably the driver, Bob Vaxter.

>>



Garry thinks that this photo may have been taken at the Rock Pile, but then Bob Embesi called later in the week. Gunner Embesi thinks that this is Cam Lo Hill where they dug ramps for tanks to fire indirect fire. Note the hill of dirt (tank ramp) between the two tanks.



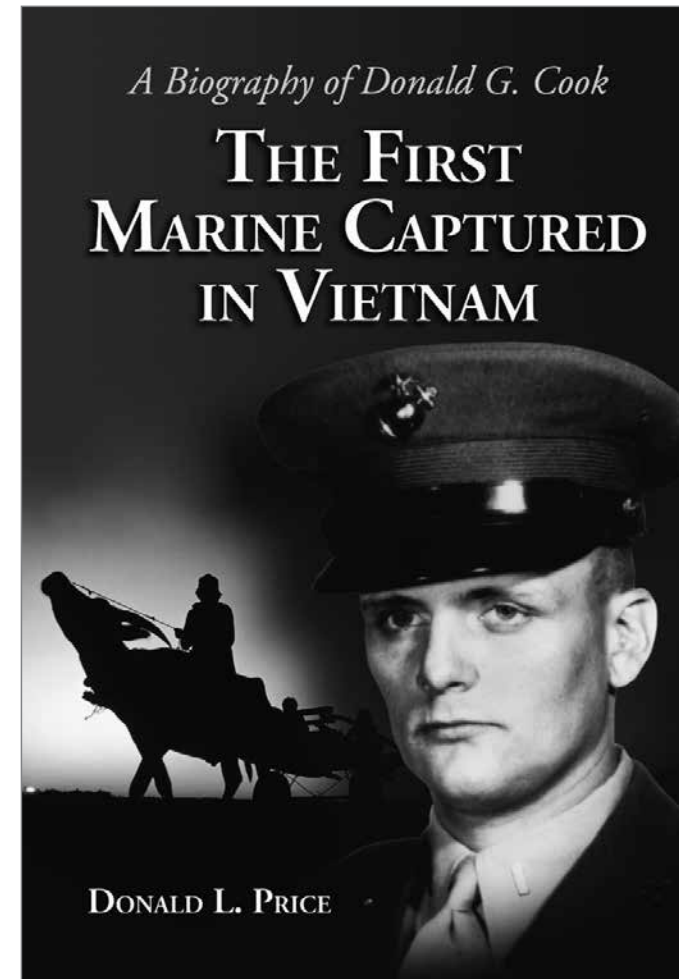
Garry says that this is his back as they are heading west on Route 9. ■

Joke



Updated Vietnamese Tank

Book Review



BY: JAMES P. COAN

"The First Marine Captured in Vietnam: A Biography of Donald G. Cook", McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007, Col. Donald L. Price, USMC (Ret.).

Colonel Donald Gilbert Cook was the first U.S. Marine in history to earn the Medal of Honor while in captivity, and the first Marine POW to have a U.S. Navy ship named in his honor (USS Donald Cook DDG-275).

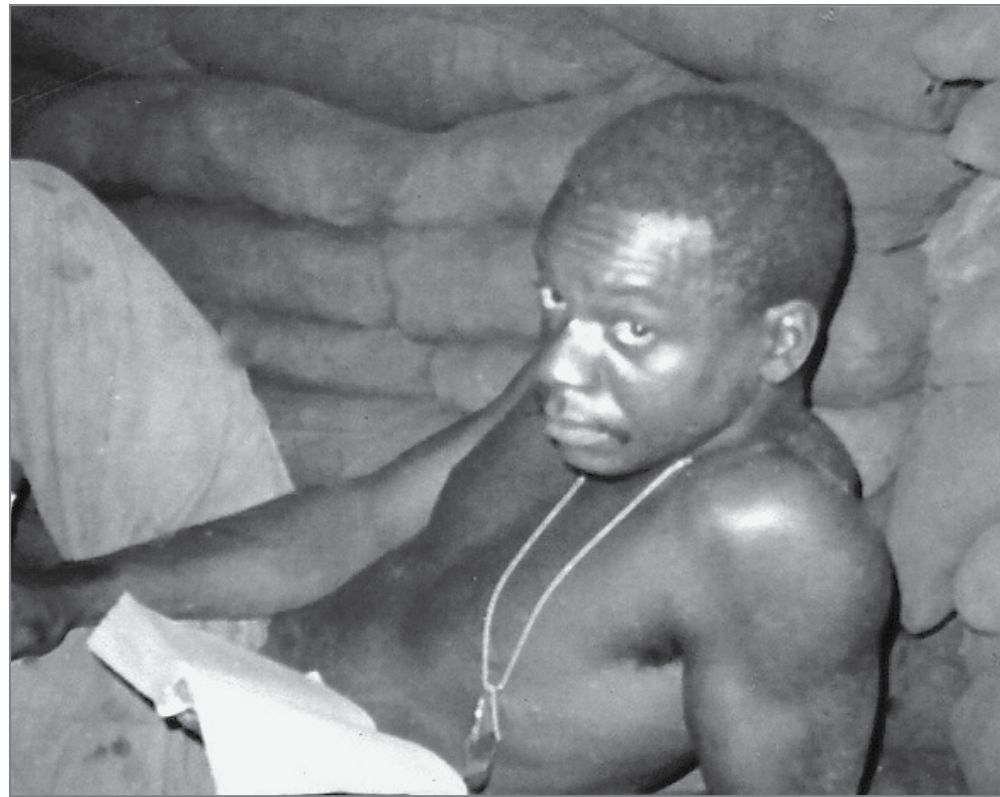
On December 31, 1964, then Captain Cook was captured near Binh Gia in South Vietnam. He was serving as an advisor to a South Vietnamese Marine unit that walked into a VC trap while attempting to retrieve bodies from a downed U. S. Army helicopter. Cook received a serious leg wound in the battle. Before he passed out from loss of blood, he buried his USMC patch and dog tags. The VC never knew they had captured a U. S. Marine. His remains have

never been recovered.

This is the first book-length biography of Col. Donald Cook. It concentrates primarily on his three years in captivity moving from one jungle camp bamboo cage to another; it also covers the ten other U.S. Army POWs under his command. Cook led these men in captivity, always looking out for their health and welfare, while complying with the intent and spirit of the U. S. Military Code of Conduct. Cook's biography is a unique study of exemplary leadership under almost unbearable conditions. One U.S. Army POW survivor later said of Captain Cook that he would have followed him into Hell armed only with a water pistol.

The author, Donald L. Price, is a Naval Academy graduate and a retired U.S. Marine Colonel. He received the Silver Star, three Bronze Stars, and a Purple Heart during his three tours of duty in Vietnam. Colonel Price currently resides in Sierra Vista, Arizona. ■

What Members Are Doing



Can you guess who the person is in this photo? The first person to contact John Wear (at 215-794-9052) with the correct answer will receive a yet un-named mediocre prize

GUESS WHO Photo Contest



Last Issue Winner

Last issue's winner was Ron Kalanick, who called at 2:30 PM EST on April 23, 2015 and identified his old buddy Al Christy. Ron seems to think that he may have taken this photo of Al and his puppy.

A Mini-Reunion in Florida



(Left to right) Ken Ganey, Roy (Ed) Boyette, Rick Lewis, Greg Auclair. Location: the Villages, FL, Feb 21, 2015

RICK LEWIS WRITES: Today was one of the best days of my life to see these guys and share stories, seeing the pictures of four young Marines who stood up and served their country without question, to ensure above all, to do their best to get their buddy Marine home. Some history of this "Wanted Gang" from 2nd Platoon, Charlie Co, 1st Tanks Bn., 1966-1967 Da Nang TAOR:

Ken Ganey was the driver of Charlie-21 when he ran over the mine that split the hull of the tank. Ken was medevaced to Japan and, after seven operations on his back during two years in various VA hospitals, Ken was discharged from the Corps and is retired in Crawfordville, FL.

On Charlie-23, Roy Boyette was the loader, Rick Lewis was the gunner, and Greg Auclair was the driver, while the TC was Cpl. Sawcrant. Sadly, Sawcrant has reported to the Big Tank Park in the Sky. We were all together as the crew from 1966-1967.

At that time, Second Platoon sections were split up for most of 1966; the heavy section was with First Battalion, First Marines. We hardly ever saw the other section, let alone seeing the rest of Charlie Company. Our platoon commander was 1st Lt. Whitehead. He disliked the rear and stayed out in the field with his platoon most of the time. He too has reported to the Big Tank Park in the Sky. What made the LT a great leader and fun to be around was that he

was prior enlisted and he knew how tanks could best support the grunts and had no problem letting the grunt Bn. Commander know.

The four of us very much look forward to doing a video-recorded crew interview at this year's reunion in D.C.

Marines Gather in Clovis, New Mexico



Marines gather at the Lawn Haven Memorial Garden to remember the fallen on Memorial Day 2014 . (L to R) VTA member Jim Cowman, Ramon Romero, Paul Chavez, Alberto Najira, Harold Thrasher and Rube Render.

Clyde Gets Another Honor



One March 3, 2015, a tanker's helmet and a model of a scale model tank was presented to VTA member Clyde Hoch by John Cramsey in honor of all that Clyde has done for >>

the regional "Vets for Vets" program. The citation noted: "Clyde continues to spread good and educates our younger veterans as they come into our lives. His never ending compassion to assist and offer aid to alleviate the burden of stress by addressing the needs of others is commendable to no end. His sharing of his mentoring skills is directly attributed to the strength and success shown by our friends and comrades that we have met along this journey."

Mini Reunion in Phoenix



DENNIS BRUMITT REPORTS: (Left to right) Richard Carmer, Dennis Brummitt and Bobby Joe Blythe who served together on Okinawa and at Camp Pendleton off and on from 1966 to 1968. Bobby Joe is a pilot and flies company execs into the Phoenix area and occasionally he has a chance for us to get together at a Deer Valley Airport, private, for lunch. This was our second opportunity and we took the time for each other.

Sparrow Rocks at the Gem Club



MIKE "BELMO" BELMESSIERI WRITES: Here is Tom "Sparrow"

Moad doing a presentation before the San Francisco Gem and Mineral Society (SFG&MS). Sparrow was asked by SFG&MS member and VTA member Bert Trevail to speak with the society about Sparrow's gold mine (Porter Mine, also known as the "Mountain Girl Mine"). Sparrow described in great detail what it is like to be the last hard rock miner in the Golden State of California. According to many who attended, Sparrow was the best speaker they've had in a very long time. Bert, "Blues" and I were there and we all agreed that Sparrow did a great job at explaining hard rock mining and how he has developed his personal gold mine into a successful and safe mining operation.

Belmo Reports In



Hope all is well. The last few weeks have been great. Last week I ran into Marty Sacco from Charlie Co., 1st Tanks and Bravo C., 5th Tanks. I haven't seen Marty in over 40 years. Marty spent 30 of those years as a San Francisco Police Officer and is now working at the Federal Building in the "People's Democratic Republic" of San Francisco. Then today I was at the Golden Gate National Cemetery helping to set up The Traveling Wall and I ran into Rob Bonderud from Alpha Company, 5th Tanks. Despite Rob being a VTA member and living in the Bay Area, I haven't seen him for quite some time. Rob and his wife are doing well and hopefully they may even consider attending our reunion this year.

Here is a photo of Rob and me just after we put the final panel of The Wall in place. I also was able to give Rob some info so that he and Bert Travail could get in touch with each other again. Just one more thing: I expect to see Lee Tannehill tomorrow night at the annual "Tribute to Vietnam Era Veterans" which is held at the Marines Memorial Club and Hotel in downtown. Lee and I are members of the Marines Memorial Club and we usually attend several of the events that happen there.

Bobby Joe Gets His 50th Anniversary Pin!



BOBBY JOE REPORTS: I received my 50 Year AOPA (Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association) Pin on Saturday. I joined when I was 19 years old. I thought many times that I would never ever make it, but by the Grace of God, I finally did. My Guardian Angel has gray hair because of me.

Max and Me



This is a picture of my dog Max. He is a 2 year old Lab/Bull Terrier mix.

Not Everyone Can Be A Marine

Author Unknown

And on the 7th day, as you know, God rested. But on the 8th day, at 0530, God looked down upon Earth and was not happy. God was just not happy! So He thought about His labors, and in His divine wisdom, God created a divine creature. And this He called Marine. And the Marines, who God created in His own image, were to be of the air, and of the land, and of the sea. And these He gave many wonderful uniforms. Some

were green, and some were blue with red trim. And in the early days, some were even a beautiful tan. He gave them practical fighting uniforms, so they could wage war against the forces of Satan and the evil. He gave them service uniforms for their daily work and training. And He gave them evening and dress uniforms, sharp and stylish, handsome things, so they may promenade with their ladies on Saturday night and impress everybody. He also gave them swords, so that

people who were not impressed could be dealt with accordingly.

And at the end of the 8th day, God looked down upon the Earth and saw that it was good. But was God happy? No! God was still not happy. Because in the course of his labors, He had forgotten one thing. He did not have a Marine uniform for himself. But He thought about it, and thought about it, and finally satisfied Himself in knowing that, well . . . not everybody can be a MARINE!!! ■

I am planning on being at this year's reunion in DC. I will be coming with my new service dog, Max. I received him in February. We are currently training together. I have been taking him to my weekly VA group meeting for the other vets to see. I am also currently helping a couple of other vets to get a service dog from the same place I got mine. I very much look forward to seeing you all in DC.

Jimmy Didear

Memorial Day 2015



Retired Marine Master Sgt. Bruce Van Apeldoorn leads the way at the Memorial Day ceremony at the Greater Rochester Vietnam Veterans Memorial this past May. Bruce adds: "We have a similar ceremony on Veterans Day. I carry the rifle next to the American flag. During the ceremony

the names of the 280 from the Rochester area who made the ultimate sacrifice are read while the color guard stops at each of the 280 bollards. It is a well attended ceremony covered by most of the local TV stations and the newspapers. ■

To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

**'Til the last landing's made
and we stand unafraid,
on a shore no mortal has seen.**

—Author Unknown

**'Til the last bugle call
sounds taps for us all,
It's Semper Fidelis, MARINE!**

Ernest E. Perez



Ernest "Ernie" E. Perez, 68, lifelong resident Salinas, passed away on March 13, 2015 in Stanford, CA. He was born on November 12, 1946 in Hanford, CA. Ernie had proudly served in

the U.S. Marines as a tank crewman including a combat deployment in Vietnam with Charlie Company, 3rd Tank Battalion. After his discharge from the Marines, he went on to work in construction for over 28 years. Ernie was a long-time member of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. He is survived by his wife, Yolanda Perez; sons, Billy Joe Perez, Zedrick and Steven Zapata; sisters, Cecilia Santos and Charlotte Varela; nieces and nephews whom he considered and loved as his own children, Timothy, Mark and Vonnie Martinez; other nieces and nephews include; Marlene, Michael, Sandy, Erica, Justin, Jarrett, Elisa, Bella and Mark, Jr.; along with his loving pets that brought him lots of joy, "Roxy", "Chloe", "Zero", "Scotty" and "Lucky". He is preceded in death by his parents, Ernest Perez and Rodrigo and Mary Pena.

Charles William Doering



Charlie and Joe Tyson at the Outer Banks, NC in 2009.

Age 70, of Canton, NV passed away Wednesday, February 11, 2015. Born on Thursday, December 21, 1944 in Union Beach, NJ, Charles was a tankerman with the US Marine Corps, serving two tours in Vietnam and was the recipient of a Purple Heart and several other commendations. While he never joined the USMC VTA, he was a member of the Marine Corps Tankers Association. He enjoyed traveling; especially to Revolutionary War and Civil War sites, and volunteered with various organizations. He was a calm, quiet, honorable man and a true

American hero. With respect to Charles' wishes, no formal services were held.

Editorial Comment: We want to thank four VTA members from Charles Doering's Vietnam tank platoon ... (Joe Tyson, Karl Yohn, Oscar "Moe" Mosley and David Bennett) ... who generously donated a large sum of money to the VTA in Charles' memory.

James C. "Jimbo" Lawson



James C. "Jimbo" Lawson, 68, of Palmetto, Florida, passed away February 6, 2015. James was a lifelong resident of Manatee County and a Palmetto High graduate. He served as a tank crewman in the U.S. Marines and was a proud Vietnam Veteran. He also owned Lawson's Marine and worked for Tropicana

for 18 years. Inurnment took place at Sarasota National Cemetery on February 25, 2015.

Reported by Jim's son, Nathan Lawson

Benjamin W. Beck

Capt Benjamin W. Beck, 81, in Albuquerque, N.M. He enlisted in 1951 and served 20 years. From 1952 to 1953 he served as a tank commander in Korea. Upon his return from Korea, he was a drill instructor at MCRD San Diego. While he was on recruiting duty in Las Vegas, he volunteered at a local high school and helped students prepare for rifle and drill competitions.

In 1965 he attended Officer Candidates School at Quantico, Va., and later served in Vietnam as a tank platoon commander.

Posted in Leatherneck Magazine

Steven Andrew Hyatt



Rich Hamilka (left) and Steve Hyatt (right)

Age 63, passed peacefully on February 27, 2012 in his home with his devoted wife by his side. Steve was born on April 28, 1949, in Tacoma to William and Beverly Hyatt. He attended Wilson High School in Tacoma, WA. Steve was a Vietnam Marine veteran who served with Charlie Company, 3rd Tank Battalion at Khe Sanh. He spent several years working as an engineer on various crab boats on the Bering Sea. Steve loved to fish, ski, and golf, and was always in search of a new adventure.

Editorial Comment: A few months ago, perspective VTA member, Rich Hamilka contacted Greg Martin, our VTA webmaster, hoping that Steve might be a member of the VTA. Greg found Steve for Rich ... but unfortunately it was about three years too late. ■

V. A. News & Updates

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

Crisis Hotline ► What it Offers to Vets

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. (Users need not identify themselves). Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1...

Or chat online at [http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx?account=Veterans Chat](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx?account=Veterans%20Chat),

Or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available.

People experience emotional and mental health crises in response to a wide range of situations—from difficulties in their personal relationships to the loss of a job. For Veterans, these crises can be heightened by their experiences during military service. When emotional issues reach a crisis point, it's time to call on the Veterans Crisis Line for support. Sometimes a crisis may involve thoughts of suicide. Learn to recognize these warning signs:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

Many Veterans may not show any signs of intent to harm themselves before doing so, but some actions can be a sign that a Veteran needs help. Those in crisis may show behaviors that indicate a risk of harming themselves. Crisis, stress, depression, and other issues affect people in different ways. Maybe you're having trouble sleeping or feel out of control. Maybe your energy level is down or you feel anxious all the time. If these issues and others seem to be leading to a crisis, treatment can help. The Crisis Hotline website <https://www.vetselfcheck.org/Welcomes.cfm> offers a confidential, anonymous risk assessment to see how you might benefit from VA or community-based services.

The assessment is done in 3 easy steps:

1. Fill out a brief online Self-Check Quiz, which takes about 10 minutes.
2. A VA Chat Counselor will review it and leave a personal response for you on this secure website, usually within 10-15 minutes. If the volume is especially high, it may take up to 30 minutes. The Counselor's response will offer options for follow-up if it's felt that could be helpful.
3. You decide what's next. You may enter the online Veterans Chat and continue talking with a Counselor without identifying yourself. You may want to get a referral to see someone in person. Or, you can decide to do nothing further at this time. It's all up to you. No follow-up services will be provided unless you request them.

When the recent Oscar nominations were announced, "Crisis Hotline: Veterans Press 1" received In the Documentary short category a nomination. The 40 minute film was produced by HBO Films and shown on HBO on Veterans Day 2013. You can see more about it at: <http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/crisishotline-veterans-press-1#/>.

[Source: <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net> Jan. 2014 ++]

Vet Charity Watch Update 51 ► Wounded Warrior Project Lawsuit

A national veterans nonprofit group is suing a Gig Harbor veteran in federal court, alleging that the former airman has defamed the organization in articles he posted to several websites. The Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) is seeking unspecified financial damages from Vietnam veteran Gordon "Alex" Graham in a lawsuit the nonprofit filed in federal court in Tacoma in early FEB. Based in Florida, the Wounded Warrior Project raised \$225 million in 2013. It collects funds through a one-time and monthly giving program that has drawn celebrity endorsements, including a recent commercial featuring actor Mark Wahlberg. The nonprofit alleges that Graham's postings to websites such as Veterans Today and Graham's blog have hindered its fundraising by creating an aura of suspicion around its work. Graham has called the Wounded Warrior Project a "scam" in articles that criticize its spending on fundraising, advertising and salaries.

In court documents, the Wounded Warrior Project's lawyers

point to dozens of statements from social media websites in which people linked to Graham's stories, criticized the nonprofit and said they would not donate to it again. "WWP has and will continue to suffer irreparable harm as a result of Graham's defamatory statements regarding WWP," the lawyers wrote in their complaint. One posting they cited reads "I'm greatly concerned about all of the rumors and articles circulating that's suggesting [WWP] is a scam . . . I hate to say it, but I want to cancel my membership." Reached by phone 9 FEB, Graham, 63, said he had not yet been served with the lawsuit. He said he had been anticipating that the Wounded Warrior Project would file suit against him because it pursued legal action against another critic last year in Indiana. Wounded Warrior Project won that case against Dean Graham, who is not related to Alex Graham of Gig Harbor. Dean Graham retracted the allegations he leveled against Wounded Warrior Project in a May court filing. Alex Graham removed his articles from the Veterans Today site Monday after a reporter informed him of the lawsuit.

Alex Graham takes issues with salaries paid to Wounded Warrior Project executives. The group paid a total of \$2.2 million to 11 executives in 2013, according to tax forms the Wounded Warrior Projects posts to its website. "They're spending so much money on fundraising that there's nothing left for the veterans,"

Graham told The News Tribune. Wounded Warrior Project contends that it spends 80 percent of its revenue on its own programs for wounded veterans and grants to other organizations. It gave a small grant to Tacoma's Goodwill in 2013, for example. The group, founded in 2003, wrote in court filings that it provided support to almost 58,000 wounded veterans or military family members in 2014. Alex Graham's campaign gained so much attention that the nonprofit database Guidestar in 2014 issued a statement distancing itself from Graham's characterizations of financial records he obtained from its website. Several national news organizations also have produced segments challenging Graham's depiction of the organization. For info on WWP refer to <http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org>. [Source: The News Tribune (Tacoma, WA) | Adam Ashton | Feb 10, 2015 ++]

VA Individual Unemployability ► Understanding the Basics

What is IU?

Individual Unemployability (IU), also called Total Disability based on Individual

Unemployability (TDIU), allows VA to pay certain Veterans at the 100-percent disability rate even though their service-connected disabilities are not rated as 100-percent disabling. Veterans may be eligible for this rating increase if they are either unemployed or unable to maintain substantially gainful employment as a result of their service-connected disability (or disabilities).

What is substantially gainful employment?

Substantially gainful employment is simply full-time

employment that provides a wage greater than the poverty level. (Note: In 2014, the U.S. Census Bureau considered a poverty-level, yearly wage for a person under the age of 65 to be \$12,316.) For instance, if a Veteran has been trained to drive a truck, but can't work because of service-connected back and stomach conditions, he or she may qualify for IU. Individual Unemployability Compensation.

Are there any other eligibility requirements?

In order to qualify for IU, you must have one of the following:

1. a 60-percent or more disability evaluation based on a single service-connected disability or,
2. a 70-percent combined disability evaluation based on multiple service-connected disabilities, with at least one disability rated at 40 percent or more.

In these cases, VA will consider a Veteran's eligibility for IU, if there is evidence showing he or she cannot work due to service-connected disabilities. In both instances, VA reviews all the evidence of record and decides if a Veteran's disability is, by law, severe enough to grant IU. Let's use a hypothetical situation. Say a Veteran claims he can't work and doesn't understand why he isn't getting IU. He is service-connected at 30 percent for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 10 percent for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Since the Veteran has only two service-connected disabilities, both the Veteran's PTSD and IBS have to be evaluated at a higher combined rate and be the reason he can't work to receive IU.

How is the way VA decides total disability different from other agencies?

The law requires different criteria for other government agencies that process disability benefit claims. The Social Security Administration, for example, requires a claimant to be totally disabled after considering age, education, and prior work experience in order to be eligible for social security disability. VA only considers service-connected disabilities when considering entitlement to IU, and those disabilities must be the reason the Veteran can no longer be gainfully employed. IU is meant to compensate a Veteran for service-connected disability or disabilities which do not meet the scheduler requirements for a total evaluation at the 100-percent rate.

If you think you fall into this category, you are encouraged to work with a Veterans Service Organization, a state or county service officer, or see your public contact team at your nearest regional office. You can also find more information on the IU website, http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-specialindividual_unemployability.asp.

The author of this article is also happy to answer any questions you may have. Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked at the bottom of the link <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/17608/individual-unemployability-understanding-basics/#comment-97163>.

[Source: VAntage Point Blog | Dominique Joseph | Mar. 06, 2015 ++]

>>

Agent Orange ▶ Ten Things Every Vet Should Know

The Vantage Point blog at the Department of Veterans Affairs website has some very useful information that most veterans should be aware of. They report:

1. Agent Orange was a herbicide and defoliant used in Vietnam. Agent Orange was a blend of tactical herbicides the U.S. military sprayed from 1962 to 1971 during the Vietnam War to remove the leaves of trees and other dense tropical foliage that provided enemy cover. The U.S. Department of Defense developed tactical herbicides specifically to be used in "combat operations." They were not commercial grade herbicides purchased from chemical companies and sent to Vietnam. More than 19 million gallons of various "rainbow" herbicide combinations were sprayed, but Agent Orange was the combination the U.S. military used most often. The name "Agent Orange" came from the orange identifying stripe used on the 55-gallon drums in which it was stored. Heavily sprayed areas included forests near the demarcation zone, forests at the junction of the borders of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam, and mangroves on the southernmost peninsula of Vietnam and along shipping channels southeast of Saigon.
2. Any Veteran who served anywhere in Vietnam during the war is presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. For the purposes of VA compensation benefits, Veterans who served anywhere in Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides, as specified in the Agent Orange Act of 1991. These Veterans do not need to show that they were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides in order to get disability compensation for diseases related to Agent Orange exposure. Service in Vietnam means service on land in Vietnam or on the inland waterways ("brown water" Veterans) of Vietnam.
3. VA has linked several diseases and health conditions to Agent Orange exposure. VA has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service. Veterans and their survivors may be eligible for compensation benefits.
 - AL Amyloidosis. A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters and collects tissues or organs.
 - Chronic B-cell Leukemias. A type of cancer which affects a specific type of white blood cell. Chloracne (or similar acneform disease). A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.
 - Diabetes Mellitus Type 2. A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to produce or respond properly to the hormone insulin.

- Hodgkin's Disease. A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.
 - Ischemic Heart Disease. A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart, that can lead to chest pain (angina).
 - Multiple Myeloma. A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.
 - Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.
 - Parkinson's Disease. A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement
 - Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset. A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and muscle weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of herbicide exposure.
 - Porphyria Cutanea Tarda. A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.
 - Prostate Cancer. Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among older men.
 - Respiratory Cancers (includes lung cancer). Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.
 - Soft Tissue Sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma). A specific group of malignant of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues
4. Veterans who want to be considered for disability compensation must file a claim. Veterans who want to be considered for disability compensation for health problems related to Agent Orange exposure must file a claim. During the claims process, VA will check military records to confirm exposure to Agent Orange or qualifying military service. If necessary, VA will set up a separate exam for compensation.
 5. VA offers health care benefits for Veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides during military service. Veterans who served in Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are eligible to enroll in VA health care. Visit VA's health benefits explorer to check your eligibility and learn how to apply.
 6. Participating in an Agent Orange Registry health exam helps you, other Veterans and VA. VA's Agent Orange Registry health exam alerts Veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to Agent Orange exposure during their military service. The registry data helps VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively. The exam is free to eligible

Veterans and enrollment in VA health care is not necessary. Although the findings of your exam may be used to inform your subsequent care, they may not be used when applying for compensation as a separate exam is required. Contact your local VA Environmental Health Coordinator about getting an Agent Orange Registry health exam.

7. VA recognizes and offers support for the children of Veterans affected by Agent Orange who have birth defects. VA has recognized that certain birth defects among Veterans' children are associated with Veterans' qualifying service in Vietnam or Korea.
 - Spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta), a defect in the developing fetus that results in incomplete closing of the spine, is associated with Veterans' exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during qualifying service in Vietnam or Korea.
 - Birth defects in children of women Veterans are associated with their military service in Vietnam but are not related to herbicide exposure.
 - The affected child must have been conceived after the Veteran entered Vietnam or the Korean demilitarized zone during the qualifying service period. Learn more about benefits for Veterans' children with birth defects at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/benefits/children-birth-defects.asp
8. Vietnam Veterans are not the only Veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange. Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam were used, tested or stored elsewhere, including some military bases in the United States. Other locations/scenarios in which Veterans were exposed to Agent Orange may include:
 - Korean Demilitarized Zone. Exposure along the demilitarized zone in Korea between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971
 - Thailand Military Bases. Possible exposure on or near the perimeters of military bases between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975

- Herbicide Tests and Storage Outside Vietnam. Possible exposure due to herbicide tests and storage at military bases in the United States and locations in other countries.
 - Agent Orange Residue on Airplanes Used in Vietnam War. Possible exposure of crew members to herbicide residue in c-123 planes flown after the Vietnam War
9. VA continues to conduct research on the long-term health effects of Agent Orange in order to better care for all Veterans. VA and other Federal government Departments and agencies have conducted, and continue to conduct, extensive research evaluating the health effects of Agent Orange exposure on U.S. Veterans. An example is the Army Chemical Corps Vietnam-Era Veterans Health Study designed to examine if high blood pressure (hypertension) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are related to herbicide exposure during the Vietnam War. Researchers have completed data collection and aim to publish initial findings in a scientific journal in 2015. Learn more about Agent Orange related studies and their outcomes at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/research-studies.asp>.
 10. VA contracts with an independent, non-governmental organization to review the scientific and medical information on the health effects of Agent Orange. VA contracts with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences every two years to scientifically review evidence on the long-term health effects of Agent Orange and other herbicides on Vietnam Veterans. The IOM uses a team of nationally renowned subject matter experts from around the country to gather all the scientific literature on a topic, identify peer-reviewed reports, and then examine the studies to determine the most rigorous and applicable studies. The IOM looks for the highest quality studies. The IOM then issues its reports, including its conclusions and recommendations to VA, Congress, and the public.

[Source: Beaufort Observer | George Schryer | March 16, 2015 ++] ■

Poem

A Marine Corps Birthday Toast

The wonderful love of a
beautiful maid,
the love of a staunch
true man,
the love of a
baby, unafraid,
have existed since time began.

But the greatest of loves,
the quintessence of loves,
even greater than that
of a mother, is the tended,
passionate, infinite love,
of one drunken
Marine for another.

"Semper Fidelis"



The Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation published a chart in their 1st Qtr, 2015 “Breach Block” e-newsletter showing the monthly average high air temperature for Da Nang between 1965 and 1970. This was interesting data but interpreted incorrectly.

The scenario that they provided was that of a newbie arriving at Da Nang and facing the heat and humidity stepping off the plane. We have all seen or read this scenario in many publications. To me it appeared that each FNG was about to take a step backwards when exiting the aircraft. Can all these accounts be wrong? The Foundation’s conclusion, based upon the below chart, is that triple digit temperatures were impossible at the airport and then goes on to say anyone making such a claim has never been to Vietnam.

Climate data for Da Nang averaged between 1965 – 1970

| Month | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Year |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Record high °C (°F) | 32 (90) | 35 (95) | 37 (99) | 41 (106) | 39 (102) | 38 (100) | 38 (100) | 38 (100) | 37 (99) | 36 (97) | 35 (95) | 32 (90) | 41 (106) |
| Average high °C (°F) | 24.8 (76.6) | 26.1 (79) | 28.7 (83.7) | 31.0 (87.8) | 33.4 (92.1) | 33.9 (93) | 34.3 (93.7) | 33.9 (93) | 31.5 (88.7) | 29.6 (85.3) | 27.0 (80.6) | 24.9 (76.8) | 29.93 (85.86) |
| Daily mean °C (°F) | 21.7 (71.1) | 23.0 (73.4) | 25.1 (77.2) | 27.2 (81) | 29.2 (84.6) | 29.7 (85.5) | 29.8 (85.6) | 29.7 (85.5) | 27.8 (82) | 26.4 (79.5) | 24.3 (75.7) | 22.1 (71.8) | 26.33 (79.41) |
| Average low °C (°F) | 18.5 (65.3) | 19.8 (67.6) | 21.5 (70.7) | 23.3 (73.9) | 24.9 (76.8) | 25.5 (77.9) | 25.3 (77.5) | 25.5 (77.9) | 24.1 (75.4) | 23.2 (73.8) | 21.6 (70.9) | 19.3 (66.7) | 22.71 (72.87) |
| Record low °C (°F) | 8 (46) | 7 (45) | 11 (52) | 7 (45) | 18 (64) | 20 (68) | 17 (63) | 21 (70) | 21 (70) | 12 (54) | 7 (45) | 11 (52) | 7 (45) |
| Precipitation mm (inches) | 96.2 (3.787) | 33.0 (1.299) | 22.4 (0.882) | 26.9 (1.059) | 62.6 (2.465) | 87.1 (3.429) | 85.6 (3.37) | 103.0 (4.055) | 349.7 (13.768) | 612.8 (24.126) | 366.2 (14.417) | 199.0 (7.835) | 2,044.5 (80.492) |
| Avg. precipitation days | 13.7 | 6.9 | 4.8 | 5.6 | 8.9 | 8 | 8.6 | 11.4 | 15.4 | 21.2 | 20.9 | 18.6 | 144 |
| % humidity | 83 | 83 | 83 | 82 | 78 | 75 | 74 | 76 | 81 | 84 | 84 | 84 | 80.6 |
| Mean monthly sunshine hours | 136.4 | 144.1 | 105.4 | 207 | 257.3 | 237 | 257.3 | 207.7 | 174 | 145.7 | 120 | 116.6 | 2108.5 |

Source/span>#1: World Meteorological Organization (UN)[25]

Since I am an author who has been there, and have written about the reaction of newbies stepping off a DC-8 in Da Nang, the Foundation needs to be aware of how to interpret the chart’s data; the chart totally ignores calculating the Heat Index.

Heat Index is what it “feels like” and is the combination of air temperature plus humidity. Using the chart and looking at the month of May, which is not a blistering month like August, it shows the average daily high temperature was 92-degrees with an average humidity of 78%. If you calculate the Heat Index using the two measurements, it equals 121-degrees! In other words, that’s what it felt like

stepping off out of a 70-degree air-conditioned airplane, a 50-degree temperature difference. We cannot look at just air temperature alone, especially in a place as humid as Vietnam.

The Foundation did point out that the chart was the average airport temperature; an airport that sat right on the China Sea taking advantage of any breezes coming in. It does not, however, represent the surrounding TAOR by any stretch of the imagination. The chart would grossly mislead anyone who was not in Vietnam that the surrounding area would be of a similar temperature. This would be a tremendous disservice to the men of 2/7 and

3/27 who fought in 110 – 120 degree air temperature on Operation Allen Brook in May of 1968 outside Da Nang. NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association) calculates that the heat index for 110-degrees with a humidity of 78% would make it feel like 165-degrees! The thermometer outside our tank was pegged at 120-degrees for several afternoons so the index was even higher.

If there is any doubt about the air temperature difference between the Da Nang Airport and Goi Noi Island in May of 1968, then I suggest that you go to the USMC History and Museum Division publication, “U.S. Marines in Vietnam – The Defining Year 1968” and go to page 333 and note the air temperature quoted of 110 – 120 degrees. You could also

check with Col. Tullis Woodham, the CO of 3/27, who lost as many men to heat exhaustion and heat stroke than by the NVA.

Before accusing any writer of overstating temperature claims, we need to be more cognizant of the combined effect of temperature and humidity. To say an author was never in Vietnam if he wrote about triple digit temperatures is dismissive and flippant.

The chart makes Da Nang look like a vacation destination throughout the year. But only if you were never in Vietnam would you ever think that.

Sgt. Robert Peavey
5th & 3rd Tanks, 1968 – 1969

Please Note: “The Guest Column” is a new feature created for anyone who wants to send us a 200 – 300 word essay that pertains to the interest of Marine tankers, past or present. The Sponson Box editorial board will consider all submissions and determine which essay to run; this does not replace, “Letters to the Editor”. This is a venue for expressing what may be controversial or the writer has a strong opinion about. We only ask that is not be political or religious in content. Opinions expressed in The Guest Column are not necessarily those of the Sponson Box editor or the VTA Board of Directors. ■

Joke

Marine Corps Facts

A MARINE can build a house from the roof down.
When Alexander Bell invented the telephone he had 3 missed calls from a MARINE.
Fear of spiders is arachnophobia, fear of tight spaces is claustrophobia, fear of MARINES is called Logic.
A MARINE doesn’t call the wrong number. You answer the wrong phone.
There used to be a street named after the MARINES, but it was changed because nobody crosses the MARINES and lives.
Most Marines have a grizzly bear carpet in their room. The bear isn’t dead, it is just afraid to move.
The MARINES have already been to Mars; that’s why there are no signs of life.
Some magicians can walk on water, MARINES can swim through land.
Ghosts sit around the campfire and tell MARINE CORPS stories.
A MARINE and Superman once fought each other on a bet. The loser had to start wearing his underwear on the outside of his pants.
A MARINE can cut through a hot knife with butter.
A MARINE once urinated in a semi-truck’s gas tank as a joke....that truck is now known as Optimus Prime.

A MARINE doesn’t flush the toilet, he scares the sh*t out of it.
Death once had a near-MARINE experience.
A MARINE counted to infinity – twice.
The MARINES is the reason why Waldo is hiding.
A MARINE won American Idol using only sign language.
Once the cop pulled over A MARINE....the cop was lucky to leave with a warning.
A MARINE can slam a revolving door.
A MARINE won the World Series of Poker using Pokemon cards.
When the Boogeyman goes to sleep every night, he checks his closet for U.S. MARINES.
A MARINE will never have a heart attack. His heart isn’t nearly foolish enough to attack him.
A MARINE can win a game of Connect Four in only three moves.
A MARINE once kicked a horse in the chin. Its descendants are known today as Giraffes.
A MARINE once got bit by a rattle snake.....
After three days of pain and agonythe rattle snake died.
There is no theory of evolution; just a list of animals the MARINES allow to live.
When A MARINE does a pushup, he isn’t lifting himself up, he’s pushing the Earth down.
A MARINE can light a fire by rubbing two ice-

cubes together.
A MARINES’ hand is the only hand that can beat a Royal Flush.
A MARINE doesn’t read books. He stares them down until he gets the information he wants.
When a MARINE throws you into a bottomless pit, you hit the bottom.
A MARINE doesn’t wear a watch. HE decides what time it is.
A MARINE does not sleep. He waits.
A MARINE once made a Happy Meal cry.
Prisons don’t keep society safe from criminals. Prisons keep criminals safe from the MARINES, for now.
Outer space exists because it’s afraid to be on the same planet with U.S. MARINES.
When a MARINE is born, the only person crying was the doctor. You NEVER slap a MARINE.
If A Marine’s weapon were to ever run out of ammo, his weapon would continue to fire out of fear of disappointing the MARINE.
A MARINE called 911 to order Chinese food and got it....
Guns are warned not to play with the MARINES.
A MARINE runs until the treadmill gets tired
A MARINE doesn’t mow his lawn, he dares his grass to grow
A MARINE can give aspirin a headache.
—Submitted by Jim Langford

Editor's Note: We would like to add a brand new section to our magazine. If you or your loved ones have been fortunate enough to have kept any correspondences that you sent home, we'd love to share them with the membership.

A Letter Home From Vietnam

June 1967

BY LARRY HOGUE

Dear Folks,

I've been out on a ten-day operation. It was called Operation Arizona; maybe you read about it in the paper. It started on June 13 and we came back on June 22. The first day we gathered all the tanks, amtracs and troops. The next day we crossed a river to go into the operation area. A tree limb ripped off the driver's hatch on my tank so I didn't have any protection from things falling on top of me. We crossed the river which was about 4 1/2 feet deep so I got a little wet. After we crossed the river, our tank and a flame tank parked by the river by a tree line as a blocking force with a company of infantry, about 180 men. The other tanks and troops went ahead to try and sweep the VC toward us. That afternoon we saw some suspicious movement about 1000 yards to our front. A five man patrol went out to see what was going on. About 200 yards from us, the VC opened up on them with machine gun fire. All five of the men's M16 rifles jammed, so they were shooting a pistol and throwing grenades. The VC were about 25 yards in front of them. As soon as we heard the shooting, we took off in our tanks. We pulled up to where the five men were and the VC started shooting at us. We fired back with the 90mm and .30 cal. machine gun. It lasted just a few minutes. The infantry said they found blown away trees, bones and blood trails. They said that we got at least two confirmed kills. Luckily, none

of the five on the patrol were hurt. One guy got a small scratch when he hit the ground.

The next day about noon, we saw two men with rifles standing in a tree line about 1000 yards away. We called the infantry on the radio and they said that they didn't have any troops out there. We fired two 90mm rounds. Then we went to check on the area. About half way there, we saw five or six more VC run up to the bodies and start taking things away. We fired three more 90mm rounds. When we got there, the infantry found three bodies. Their weapons were gone but one had on a cartridge belt with gun magazines, a bayonet, and five grenades. The next two days we fired at five more at different times but didn't search the area for bodies. I'm pretty sure that we got them.

The fifth day all of the units in the area moved toward each other in a sweep. We only saw farmers and their families. We all congregated in a large open area. That ended Phase 1 and began Phase 2. We had a news correspondent with us the first 5 days. He tape recorded a lot of the things that we had done with the tanks and did interviews with a few people. One side is garbled but the other side is understandable in places. The fifth night we moved farther from the river. We were about 14 miles southwest of Da Nang. We set in for the night with two gun tanks and a flame tank and two companies of infantry. That night the VC dropped mortars on us. They landed several rounds inside our CP.

One infantryman was killed and several were wounded. Some of the mortars landed near our tanks, but none of the tankers were hurt.

That day we didn't run into too much other than VC snipers shooting at resupply helicopters when they would land. One of our flame tanks that was about a mile away with a company of infantry and some amtracs ran into an ambush. They had used the flame on a building with VC in it and a group of VC opened up on them with machine gun fire and three RPG rockets. The flame tank was hit twice but it didn't do much damage. They said about thirty infantrymen were wounded and five killed. They said that the shooting was so bad that they had to pull out of the area. When another infantry company went through that area the next day, they said they found a lot of new graves that the VC had dug. We set up that night on some high ground in a grave yard with a couple of companies of infantry. Nothing happened that night.

The next day we all ran a sweep back through the area. They found a lot of discarded medical supplies; some of it from the U.S. We shot back at a few snipers that day; otherwise, not much happened. We found some high ground and set up for the night again. Just after dark the VC threw some grenades at a listening post out in front of our line. The word was passed for the infantry to get into their holes and we got ready on our tanks. A few minutes later, the VC mortared us again. Since I didn't have a hatch cover after losing it to a tree limb on the first day, I pulled a road wheel from the fender over the drivers area. They dropped a lot of mortars in on all around us. One hit close enough for dirt to fly into my open driver's area. Just after the mortars started falling, our gunner could see some flashes at a distance in the dark from a tree line. We fired ten rounds with the 90mm as fast as we could. The mortars soon stopped. A few of the infantryman were wounded, but no tankers were hurt. The next day we all went for another sweep through the area. They found supplies and a rifle in some caves and tunnels. That night we set up on top of more high ground in another graveyard. The infantry called in F4 Phantom air strikes and artillery barrages on the tree lines on both sides of us. It was close and loud. Nothing else happened that night. The next day a company of infantry went on a sweep with a gun tank and a flame tank. Our tank and a flame tank stayed on the graveyard with a company of infantry. Each time a resupply helicopter came to our area, VC snipers shot at them. They didn't hit anyone.

That night, just after dark, our lieutenant was showing us on a map which way we would be leaving the area the next day. The VC dropped mortars on us again. We couldn't see where they were coming from this time. One landed inside our CP but most were short outside. I don't think that anyone was hurt that night. The rest of the night, jets bombed all around us and artillery was called in. We could see tracer rounds being fired at the jets, helicopters, and spotter planes.

The next morning we all moved out and headed towards the river where we had come across. We got to the river about 3 in the afternoon. The bombs from the jets had completely wiped out one of the villages we passed by because there were a lot of suspected VC there. We saw quite a few men run out of the area, but we didn't shoot because they didn't have weapons.

We made it to the river and crossed O.K. It was a little over 4 feet again, so I got a little wet, but it felt good because it was so hot. In fact, it's been really hot every day lately. Several of the infantrymen got sick from the heat and we carried them on our tanks. After we crossed the river, we got on a road and came back to B Co HQ on Hill55.

I was sure glad to come back and clean up some. After 10 days, a shower feels awful good. I was surprised that we didn't have any trouble with our tank the whole operation, especially after going through all that deep water. I took four rolls of film and sent them yesterday. I'm not sure if they will develop the pictures of the dead VC, but try. No tankers were hurt in our area of the operation. In another area I heard that on the fifth day one tanker lost his legs and another was wounded when they were hit with a VC 57mm recoilless weapon. Three rounds hit them when they were outside of their tank. I saved one bullet for a souvenir that hit a case of C rations 3 feet from my head. It lodged in a can on the front fender of the tank on that firefight we had with the VC on the first day. It made us mad because it tore through some cans of peaches, pears, and fruit cocktail, our favorite meals. We broke some more torsion bars on the tank suspension that we will be working on for a week. We have the only running tank in the 3rd platoon right now. We have a lieutenant for a platoon leader now. Sgt. Garza is the platoon leader of the new fourth platoon in B Co. It's made up of tanks from A Co. The rest of A Co is now spread out between Da Nang and Chu Lai. Could you send me some more film. Thanks

Larry ■

The Lingering Stigma of the 'Troubled Vet'

BY MARTIN KUZ

Stars and Stripes

Published: November 9, 2014



They came home without leaving Vietnam, angry and depressed, retreating from the world and burdened by memories of the dead. They came home intent on resuming their lives, changed but resilient, returning to work or school and driven by ambitions for the future. The first category describes most Vietnam veterans as held in the country's imagination and depicted in Hollywood films of the era. The second describes the ordinary reality most of them lived. Yet the "troubled vet" stereotype, while rooted in truth, shadowed that silent majority of returning troops as they again donned civilian clothes. The stubborn perception colored how others treated them and complicated their recovery from psychic wounds that, if not so severe as to push them to homelessness or suicide, still needed to mend.

"So often, people reacted to them as broken," said Philip Napoli, author of "Bringing It All Back Home: An Oral History of New York City's Vietnam Veterans," published last year.

Napoli interviewed hundreds of former service members who told stories of employers, friends and family members pulling back from them as they tried to re-assimilate. Taking into account that some of the men and women struggled with addiction and mental trauma, he found that many had felt stigmatized by their service.

"The myth that all of them are damaged is, in fact, the defining aspect of their generation of veterans," he said, referring to the more than 3.4 million troops who served in Southeast Asia. "They had to live inside that myth. It shaped the trajectory of their whole life."

Public opposition swelled as the conflict in Southeast

Asia dragged on, and returning troops encountered a country mired in a culture war.

"The myth that all of them are damaged is, in fact, the defining aspect of their generation of veterans. They had to live inside that myth." —Philip Napoli

Vietnam Veterans Against the War staged a protest in 1971 in which more than 800 former military members hurled their service medals onto the steps of the U.S. Capitol. The surging peace movement, with actress Jane Fonda in a leading role, attracted several prominent veterans, including future U.S. Senator and Secretary of State John Kerry and Ron Kovic, author of "Born on the Fourth of July."

Other veterans chose to conceal their military past, trading buzz cuts and uniforms for the campus camouflage of long hair and jeans.

"I tried to blend in the best I could," Karl Marlantes said. The former Marine is the author of a meditative memoir, "What It Is Like to Go to War," and the acclaimed novel "Matterhorn." The books mine his experiences in and after Vietnam, where he earned the Navy Cross and Bronze Star. For years after his tour ended in 1969, he kept his medals stashed in a drawer and seldom mentioned he had served, the lingering effects of an incident not long before his discharge.

During a short administrative posting in Washington, D.C., he happened upon a small antiwar rally near the White House. A group of protesters standing across the street noticed his uniform and shouted obscenities at him. He had returned to an America that seemed as far away as when he landed in Vietnam.

"It didn't make me angry; it hurt," said Marlantes, who had left Oxford to volunteer for the Marines. "The world didn't have a clue as to what you'd been through and what you had to carry. And at the same time, you had this attitude of, 'You don't know anything' — a superiority complex — that further alienated you."

Stories circulated of demonstrators spitting on troops back from the war and calling them "baby killers." The veracity of such claims remains disputed. In "The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam," Jerry Lembcke investigated hundreds of media reports of protesters spitting on veterans and uncovered no supporting evidence.

"The world didn't have a clue as to what you'd been through and what you had to carry. And at the same time, you had this attitude of, 'You don't know anything' — a superiority complex — that further alienated you." —Karl Marlantes

He argues that President Richard Nixon's administration concocted the narrative as part of its effort to weaken the peace movement, and likewise sought to trivialize antiwar veterans by dismissing their accounts of U.S. atrocities and failed military strategies.

"The veterans who spoke out were pathologized as 'damaged' as a way to discredit them," said Lembcke, who deployed to Vietnam with the Army as a chaplain's assistant. "And so some of them muted their voices."

Movies released late in the war and soon afterward reinforced the image of the broken veteran. "Coming Home," "The Deer Hunter" and "Taxi Driver," among other films, branded returning troops as psychological casualties of war.

After feeling ignored and sometimes demonized, veterans saw Hollywood recast them as victims unable to reintegrate and apt to detonate. The portrayal deepened their reluctance to talk about Vietnam and what they endured.

"Most of us weren't homeless or shooting from bell towers," Marlantes said. "Most of the struggles happened quietly as you went about your life." In his case, he married, helped raise four children and ran a consulting business while coping with anger, anxiety, flashbacks and nightmares. His condition strained his marriage until it collapsed. He later realized he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

PTSD was recognized as a clinical diagnosis by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, five years after the last U.S. troops left Vietnam. The designation reflected an emerging awareness among behavioral health providers

of the mental trauma of combat veterans.

In 1978, Fred Gusman, a social worker with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Menlo Park, Calif., had developed the country's first residential therapy program for troops back from Vietnam. He had learned that they favored alcohol and drugs to tame their rage, depression and insomnia. He persuaded a group of them to try another approach, gathering them once a week to discuss the unseen wounds of combat.

The VA created variations of Gusman's program across the country over the ensuing decades. But the expansion of behavioral health services has failed to erase the lingering stigma of the "troubled vet." "People have to realize that the majority of veterans with PTSD manage it," he said. "Asking for help is OK. Asking for help doesn't mean you're forever broken."

Gusman departed the VA in 2007 to establish The Pathway Home in Napa, Calif. The nonprofit residential treatment program works with Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. He fears that, beyond the "thank you for your service" refrain that Americans offer to returning troops, the country has forgotten the lessons of Vietnam and, in turn, a new generation of veterans.

"Everyone says 'Support the troops' because of what went on during Vietnam," Gusman said. "But we've seen how long it's taken those veterans to heal — and that a lot of them didn't — and if we don't want a repeat of that, we have to do more than say thanks."

Nixon withdrew most of the remaining U.S. troops from Southeast Asia in 1973, and Saigon fell to North Vietnamese forces two years later. For the U.S., the war marked a military defeat, a political humiliation and a national tragedy.

In 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in Washington, a divisive project for a divisive war. Critics derided artist Maya Lin's design as "a black gash of shame." Their scorn faded to silence as visitors flowed to the memorial, beckoned by its minimalist grace and subtle, unrelenting power.

Etched into the black, wedge-shaped wall are the names of 58,300 U.S. troops killed in the war. People standing before the wall can see their own reflection, a cue to remember the living veterans while honoring the fallen.

"The memorial has helped close wounds and open conversations for the Vietnam generation," Gusman said. "It's been a place of healing." ■

BY FRED KELLOGG
Bravo Co, 3rd Tanks
With the 3rd Marines

May 19, 1968

A Follow Up Story

In the early morning hours of May 19, 1968, my tank was to assist Marines conducting a road sweep just outside the Khe Sanh Combat Base. A second tank was commanded by Buzz Conklin. Shortly after beginning the road sweep, my radio headset came to life with the words, "Charles is in the area." Moments later the dug-in NVA triggered their ambush and all hell broke loose.

We started firing the .30 caliber coaxial machine gun at likely NVA positions concealed in a hedge row several meters to our front. For some unknown reason during the fight, I felt the overwhelming urge to get the turret pointed toward a tree line that lay almost 90 degrees to the right. I grabbed the TC override to spin the turret as fast as it would go and, just as I completed the spin, there was an explosion that violently rocked the tank.

At first I thought my gunner had fired the main gun and I started to yell at him because there were other Marines around our tank. But, a split second later I realized we had just taken a hit in the gun

shield from an RPG. The RPG team reloaded another rocket and stood up from behind a low berm to get a second shot. My gunner yelled over the intercom that he could see them preparing to fire another anti-tank rocket from point blank range. Realizing taking the time to reset the firing switches to machine gun could lead to our death, we immediately fired the main gun. The gun tube contained a high explosive round (HE) and I was worried that the NVA were too close for the round to arm itself. A micro-second later the rocket team vaporized as the 90MM round detonated against the berm just a foot or two from where they were standing.

The fight continued to rage and we continued to fire everything we had (.50 cal, .30 coax, 90MM main gun) wherever the NVA were seen or likely to be.

In no particular order:

I was firing the .50 caliber machine gun and directing the driver where to go when I saw a grenade thrown from a spider hole. The spider hole was concealed by a small bush and I had seen the smoke from the burning fuse as the grenade arced through the air. It landed a couple of yards in front of our tank so I directed the driver on how to maneuver until the grenade was under our vehicle. There were several Marines

nearby and I was afraid they may be killed if we didn't do something to prevent it. Several seconds later, the grenade detonated harmlessly, the shrapnel being contained by the road wheels and the armored underbelly. We then did a neutral steer on top of the bush killing the NVA soldier who had thrown the grenade.

The NVA were too close at times for us to engage them because we couldn't depress the tank's weapons low enough. Therefore, I grabbed the M3A1 submachine gun (commonly called a grease gun) and fired it from an exposed position out of the TC's hatch. This was made even more difficult because the magazines had weak springs forcing me to fire the weapon upside down to make it work.

Marines were pinned down by enemy soldiers firing from numerous bomb craters. The Marines were unable to get close enough to engage them and, because tanks are a direct fire weapon system, we couldn't engage them, either. Therefore, I directed my driver on which way to turn etc., until I was close enough to throw hand grenades into the bomb craters. We did this until I had exhausted my supply of 19 hand grenades.

Looking for the other tank I noticed its blast deflector canted approximately 45 degrees. I radioed that information to Conklin's crew, telling them that their gun tube may be out of trunion. If it was, then firing the main gun could have catastrophic consequences. Conklin radioed back that he had been wounded and he wasn't going to stick his head out again to take a look. Realizing that they were all but defenseless, I ordered our crew to put ourselves between Conklin's tank and the attacking NVA. We were still in the fight and we would protect them as long as possible.

When we were in position, we were hit by a barrage of small arms fire so we began delivering machine gun and cannon fire into the attacking NVA. The fight continued to rage and we continued fighting until we were hit by another RPG. This anti-tank rocket struck the right side of the turret just behind the blister for the range finder. This area is approximately two inches thick and the jet of plasma generated in the explosion easily cut through the armor. Unfortunately for me, I was standing on the other side directly in the path of the explosion. I remember seeing a blinding yellow flash and then it felt like I had been hit in the chest by a baseball bat swung by the mightiest of major

leaguers. The impact was so severe I couldn't control my body as I fell head first to the turret floor. I knew I was hurt, but I didn't know how badly. I was later to learn that I had been hit 73 times in my face, neck, chest, both arms and both hands.

Our tank was on fire after the explosion and, as soon as possible, we disengaged by backing to a safer location. Sometime afterward I was lifted out of the turret, placed on a truck, and taken to the aid station at the Khe Sanh Combat Base.

There, I was treated and prepared for helicopter evacuation. However, the incoming was too intense for helicopters to land so my stretcher was placed on the floor (I thought to die). Within a very short period of time it was as if God had raised His hand causing the incoming to stop. Helicopters began to land and the wounded were rushed on board. However, I was hurt too badly to travel alone, so I had my very own corpsman assigned to go with me. The helicopter had only been airborne a few seconds when the door gunners opened up with their machine guns. I remember saying a prayer asking for safe passage because I would not have survived if we were shot down.

During the flight to the hospital ship waiting off shore, I looked up to see a frantic look in the eyes of my corpsman. I had lost so much blood the doctors had inserted four simultaneous IV bottles and all were now empty. I tried to yell for the corpsman to look at my legs, but he couldn't hear me over the noise of the helicopter. After three or four more futile attempts to yell at him, he put his ear next to my face and he heard, "My legs! My legs!" He felt the outside of the blanket covering my body before telling me my legs were fine. Again I tried to yell for him to check my legs. This time he threw back the blanket; the doctors at Khe Sanh had put four more IV bottles between my legs for the flight to the hospital ship. He gave me the most wonderful grin as he immediately changed out the bottles.

When we landed on the hospital ship, I was transferred to a gurney and I remember people running as they pushed me along the deck. A few yards from the flight deck I was stopped by the triage doctors, and one immediately said, "You're going to feel a stick." He then pushed a large bore needle into my femoral artery. While this was taking place, someone else leaned over and asked, "Do you want a priest?" To this day I remember my exact words, "Do I need one?"

I was taken below for surgery and stayed on board for six days (I think) until I was strong enough to be moved. I was eventually transferred to a U.S. hospital in Yokosuka, Japan. After two weeks in the hospital, I was strong enough to be put on a plane (C-141 Star Lifter) for the flight to the United States, eventually reaching Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, Oakland, California.



~~~~~  
Fred continues: This is kinda short but it is all I have. I got most of the information from Himes and others several years ago.

Subject: Lehman

In the early morning hours of May 19, 1968, my tank was one of two assisting Marines conducting a road sweep just outside the Khe Sanh Combat Base, South Vietnam. Within a short period of time, Marines spotted members of a numerically superior North Vietnamese Army force and radioed that information. Almost simultaneously, the dug-in NVA triggered their ambush and all hell broke loose. Because May 19th was the birthday of Ho Chi Minh, it is believed the purpose of the ambush was to totally annihilate the Marines as a gift to the Communist leader.

During the course of several hours, my loader, Charles Lehman, worked feverishly to meet the demands of combat by loading the main 90mm gun, keeping the .30 caliber coaxial machine gun firing and the barrels changed whenever they began to fail. Our tank was repeatedly raked by small arms fire, hit by exploding hand grenades, and struck by at least two anti-tank rockets. One of the anti-tank rockets impacted the turret just behind the range finder, blew through the armor plate and severely wounded everyone in the turret.

The gunner and I (the tank commander) had been >>

incapacitated by the explosion and Charles Lehman had been seriously wounded. Even though the tank was now on fire, Lehman refused to abandon his wounded teammates. Fighting through the smoke and covered in blood he reached around the wounded gunner and began laying down a barrage of machine gun fire from the tank's .30 caliber coaxial machine gun. Repeatedly, Lehman went to his loader's position to reload the machine gun before returning to a hatch to stick his head out into the maelstrom. For although

it was at great personal risk, he knew the driver needed guidance because Marines all around the vehicle were fighting hand-to-hand.

It would have been impossible for Lehman not to have heard the crack of bullets whizzing by his head as he looked for a place to maneuver. He quickly spotted a clear pathway and radioed directions to the driver. However, as soon as the tank began to move, the wind swept the oily smoke from the fire across the turret choking Lehman. Repeatedly, he ducked inside just long enough to gulp a breath of air before returning to his exposed position to continue providing steering corrections to the driver. As other tanks and Marine reinforcements began arriving at the ambush site from the nearby Khe Sanh Combat Base, Lehman directed the tank until reaching a place where his severely wounded teammates could receive medical attention.

Charles Lehman's dedication to the crew and his steadfast devotion to duty the morning of May 19, 1968, was in the highest tradition of the United States Naval Service and the United States Marine Corps.

Steve Baker was on R&R during the May 19th fight and Adrian "Buzz" Conklin took over as TC and was the TC on May 19th. He and I had the two tanks providing cover for the road sweep team that triggered the ambush. Stanley "Cricket" Williams was my driver. Charlie "Sugar Bear" Lehman was my loader. Carlos "Loopy" Trinidad was my gunner.

Buzz suffered a head wound while he had his head up looking out the TC hatch and became blind in one eye (I don't remember if he actually lost the eye or not). I have had only one contact with him since that day and that contact was by snail-mail over 30 years ago. I heard from a Huey pilot who had befriended Buzz during their many alcohol

treatment programs, but nothing in more than 30 years.

Cricket called me several years ago to ask if he could stop by some time. He said he likes to travel and would be heading out west during the summer. However, after he explained that he spends the winters in jail or prison for fighting with cops but usually gets out for the summers for good behavior, my wife said no way. Again, nothing since. I do some checking to see what I can put together.



Rene Cerda writes: This picture of Bravo 15, USMC 201939, was taken around Feb-Mar 1968 out in the field. If I recall correctly, "Gypsy Rover" was the name on the gun tube. Jack Butcher later changed the name to "Chaos" just before we went on Operation Pegasus.

The crew in the picture are: Rene Cerda, gunner (left), Jack Butcher, loader (center), Bob Fornwalt, TC (right) and "Cricket" (driver) in back of Butcher.

Note: I saw a photo in one of the Sponson Box issues, B-15 which was my tank after we arrived at Khe Sanh where we conducted indirect fire. You can see barely the name "Chaos" on the gun tube.

When Lt. Harris "Alfie" Himes took over as platoon leader of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, he had us change all of the names on the gun tubes to represent names of the Devil. To the best of my recollection they were changed to the following:

- Bravo 11 was "Pandemonium"
- Bravo 12 was "Beelzebub"
- Bravo 13 was "Memphisto" (aka Mephistopheles)
- Bravo 14 was "Misanthrope"
- Bravo 15 was "Chaos" ■

*Editor's Note: In the last issue of the Sponson Box, we ran a series of articles about a deadly NVA ambush that happened outside of the wire near the Khe Sanh Combat Base on May 19, 1968. I spoke to VTA Board Director, Bob Vaxter, about that battle, and he informed me that he and his tank, the "Lonely Bull," was nearby on the other side of the ambush. Here is his story:*

## May 18, 1968

BY BOB "LURCH" VAXTER

Here is another tale of my time as the greatest M48-A3 driver in the 3rd tank Battalion in Vietnam in 1968.

The grunts dismantled and set up a defensive line facing southwest. Darrell Clock had me place the tank into a small



patch of trees to hide it a bit. We then sat and waited for the Marine unit that was doing the sweep to push the enemy our way.

We sat there all day and saw nothing. From time to time we could hear small arms fire in the distance to the southwest but it never seemed to get closer. About an hour or so before dark the word came down to get ready to return

to LZ Hawk for the night. Trucks showed up to take the grunts while the "Lonely Bull" was told to stand by, as no one was sure where we were to go. And you guessed it, the grunts and their trucks left and there we sat. The word finally came over the radio that the "tiger" (code for tank) was to go to Bridge 35 for the night since we could not get back to LZ Hawk before dark. Driving directions were transmitted on how to get back to Highway 9 and which way to turn once we got there to get the "Lonely Bull" to Bridge 35. Now comes the fun part!

Now comes the fun part!

The "brain surgeon" that was giving the directions was sitting on his back side at Khe Sanh. So his directions were backwards for the direction the "Lonely Bull" needed to go. We turned the "Bull" around and we began going northeast back towards Highway 9. The know-it-all that had given us the directions had advised that upon reaching Highway 9, we needed to turn left to get to the turn off to Khe Sanh and Bridge 35.

On May 17th 1968, we (3rd Platoon, Charlie Co., 3rd Tanks, 3rd Marine Division) had just received a re-supply at LZ Hawk. As it was late in the afternoon, the Motor-T driver was staying at the LZ until the next day so he could hook up with the next convoy that would leave Khe Sanh for Dong Ha or Quang Tri. Somehow, the Motor-T guy talked our platoon commander, Lt. Ralston, into letting him stay another day longer and to allow him to ride on one of the platoon tanks. As I remember it, he just wanted to get out of that truck and do something other than drive for at least one day. Anyway, Lt. Ralston said, "Yes," and placed him on the "Lonely Bull" otherwise known as Charlie-31.

Now comes the fun part!

The next day, May 18th, the crew of the "Lonely Bull" loaded up along with the Motor-T man and left LZ Hawk to be part of a blocking force a few miles southwest of Khe Sanh. That day, the "Lonely Bull" crew consisted of TC Darrell Clock, gunner Tom Freeman, loader Tony Sims, and driver Bob Vaxter (aka The Greatest M48-A3 driver in Third Tanks) ... and the unknown Motor-T driver. As I recall, there were about a platoon's worth of grunts riding in trucks following us while the tanks got top billing over grunts.

As we reached Highway 9, and as I began to turn right, my TC, Darrell Clock, advised, "No, turn left. Those are the instructions." So left we went. After a few minutes of driving, the road changed from a well-worn dirt road to a grassy two-track trail. And a few minutes later, the >>



two-track trail was gone ... along with any signs of a road. It was now clear that we had gone in the wrong direction and were lost.

A few words were said about the mental abilities of the officer who had given the directions over the radio to us, but at this point the sun is very low on the horizon and the "Bull" was all by itself. Darrell Clock advised me to back the "Bull" up and turn around.

As I backed up there was a grinding sound and the "Bull" came to a stop! We all got off of the tank except the Motor-T driver, who stayed on the engine plate. Here we were, out in the middle of nowhere, and I had somehow run over about twenty feet of barbed wire. The wire had gotten under the track and lifted the track off of the left drive sprocket. We were not going anywhere with a thrown track and the sun was starting to set.

Clock jumped up on the tank, tossed me his M-16 and three magazines of ammo. He gave the Motor-T man the grease gun and three loaded magazines. He told us to get on the flanks and provide security. He then told Tom Freeman and Tony Sims to start taking the track apart to get the barbed wire out. Then, Clock got on the radio and called Khe Sanh. He advised them of the situation and asked for some grunt security to be sent to our location.

Now here is the situation: All day long the grunts have been pushing an unknown number of NVA towards the spot where the "Lonely Bull" has broken down and it is all but pitch black (dark). We have one M-16 with three full magazines, one grease gun with three full magazines, and four .45 cal. pistols, each with three magazines. Oh yes, one tank with a full load of 90mm rounds, a couple hundred rounds for the .50 cal. machine gun, and a couple of thousand rounds of ammo for the .30 cal. machine gun, but we also had a tank that couldn't move.

There I sat behind a tree stump and a couple of small bushes about fifty feet from the tank with my M-16 and my vast supply of ammo. The Motor-T driver with his grease gun and his large supply of ammo was sitting about forty or fifty feet away on the other side of the tank. I can hear Tony and Tom taking the track apart. I can hear Darrell talking on the radio to someone. He is shouting about needing help NOW as it is getting dark. The one-sided conversation goes on for a few minutes and then Darrell climbs down off the tank. I hear him tell Tony and Tom that there are grunts coming to help but it might be several minutes before they arrive. What he really meant was that it would be a half hour or more!

A few minutes later, Tony reported that he and Tom have gotten the wire out of the track and the drive sprocket and they were ready to put the track back together. Darrell calls to me to get to the tank. I run and jump into the driver's seat and start the engine. I put the tank in reverse and slowly back up as Tony and Tom pulled the track over the drive sprocket. Darrell, Tony, and Tom, then put the track back together.

Now everyone, including the Motor-T driver, got back on the tank and we started back the way we had come. Soon the non-road turned into a two track and after a few minutes it turns into a dirt road. By now the sun had set and it was pitch dark. A few minutes later a truck load of grunts meets our tank and we followed them to Bridge 35 where we set up for the night.

Decades later, while reading a book about Khe Sanh, I learned that area where we had spent the day and had broken down held a regiment of NVA soldiers who were planning on attacking the Khe Sanh Combat Base the following day. We were incredibly lucky that the enemy did not attack our lone tank when we were stuck so that their planned attack would not be given away. It would appear that the Gods looked after Uncle Sam's Misguided Children ... or at least tankers.



As a side note, two days later, Lt. Ralston sent the "Lonely Bull" back to the rear at Quang Tri. It turns out that the captain who Darrell Clock had been arguing with over the radio had thought that he was talking to an officer. When the skipper found out that Clock was a sergeant, the skipper wanted Clock arrested for impersonating an officer. As a "punishment," it turns out the crew of the "Bull" got two days in the rear where there was COLD beer!!! ■

## Rocket Attack on the Da Nang Air Base

EV TUNGENT WRITES: *I thought you might enjoy reading the email exchanges between Bill Lochridge and me re: the first rocket attacks against the Da Nang Air Base back in '66.*



EV TUNGENT: Yes, I too vividly recall the first rockets that hit Da Nang. That night, I had just left the operations bunker and had hit the rack in my hooch next door. It must have been about 0300 or so when I was awakened by the sound of freight trains going overhead. I went outside quickly enough to see some of the rocket (exhaust) tails. When I got to the bunker, someone said that rockets were hitting the Air Base. Do you remember the Arty O.P. we had on top of the hill just behind Division HQ as part of our Southern Sector defense setup for Da Nang? Shortly after I got into the bunker, the Sgt. manning the O.P. called in on the radio and gave us the coordinates where the flashes were coming from.

I got on the hook to Division and gave them the coordinates and requested counter battery fire. I was told to "Wait", which took several minutes, by which time the VC were long gone. Division came back and said that those coordinates were too close to a "No Fire Zone" and that they would send an infantry unit in the next morning to search the area. Well, guess what? They found the launching ramps exactly where we had told them along with the casings the rockets had been in, but surprise, surprise, no VC!!

I had never heard of the term "Politically Correct" back then, but I sure realized that we had our hands tied behind our backs so often. Today we are fighting an even worse enemy and our hands are still tied!!

Bill Lochridge: Yes, but I seem to remember an arty unit

that was not back with Div HQ but had been moved onto our hill, Hill 34, and it fired H&I at night. The first night that they fired I thought the world was coming to an end... and I couldn't get to the bunker fast enough.

EV TUNGENT: As I recall, we had an armored LVT (howitzer) battery located just to the north of 34. They would fire H&I at night. I remember the first night I reported in to Battalion HQ, I was sleeping in a strongback tent near the Ops Bunker

when that battery fired a regular fire mission. I rolled out of that cot and went flat on the floor. I looked around and I was the only one on the deck. All the others had simply rolled over and gone back to sleep!! I also recall that we had one or two of those armored amtracs on Operation Macon with us, along with regular LVTs.

The Arty Observation Post I referred to was an OP manned by an artillery sergeant who worked with us on arranging H&I fires for the defense of the Southern Sector of Da Nang Air Base. I would send him coordinates for H&I fire and he would radio them to a 4.2" mortar battery that was located just on the other side of the Song Cau Do (river) and to the LVT howitzers. I did this every afternoon when I had the locations of all of our patrol action and ambush sites and all of the other units plotted. That's why I never left the Ops Bunker until I knew everyone was back home safe and sound. The night the first rockets went over, I knew for sure that they were not "friendlies"!!

BILL LOCHRIDGE: Skipper, yes we did have two of those LVTs w/ 105 howitzers mounted on top during Op Macon. Also, do you remember "movie night" at BN when we got mortared and you got wounded? Holy shit! Did we scramble all over the place that night.

EV TUNGENT: Man, are you stirring up the memories! I certainly do remember the night we were mortared. I know you were somewhere in front or behind me on the way >>

to the bunker. When I was hit, I grabbed a handkerchief out of my pocket and pressed it to my face but there was blood all up and down my utilities. When I hit the bunker, our S-2 chief, S/Sgt John “Red” Flynn, saw me and about fainted. Right after I got into the bunker, Bill Corson came in through his “tunnel” from his hut. He told someone to get me across the road to the AT Bn Aid Station. When I got there, their doctor said we’re going to have to stitch that up right away. He asked me what my pain tolerance level was because he didn’t have any Novocain. I said go ahead because my cheek is pretty numb right now. He put 28 stitches in my cheek and all I felt was a small pin prick the whole time!

Speaking of Flynn, did you know that I wanted to court-martial him because of an incident when we were still out on (Hill) 55? You recall that we were sending infantry battalions back to Okinawa for rest and refit from time to time. Flynn was in our 3rd Platoon under Voight, which was supporting 2/9, and at the time they were being sent back. Flynn was really counting on that little vacation so he could get laid, etc. Since we were short of section leaders, I made the decision to keep Flynn in the company and reassign him to the platoon coming in to us from the 26th Marines because they had taken a number of casualties when they first landed up North. The tank platoon we got had quite a bit of structural damage and they even had a 90mm round jammed in the barrel and couldn’t even get the breech open. You remember our Maintenance Chief, GySgt “Buddha” Clark? He came up with the idea of putting the end of the barrel against a tree and having the tank drive forward to force recoil...and it worked! As the barrel was forced back,

## The Little Things

BY TOM FENERTY

Fox Co, 2/9

And proud member of the VTA

It’s so freeken’ hot...I’m gonna hafta break out the green towel!

Walking on patrol during the hot season; you know, that time before and after the monsoon, with my rifle, gear and that “Prick 25”? It was an ass kick to say the least. The sun was out, burning. The heat and the humidity meant no comfort even in the shade. It was hot. You know it and I know it.

I had a green towel that my parents sent in one of those frequent “Care Packages” and I almost always had it wet and around my neck. For some reason when that towel was wet...it was cool, not cold mind you, but cool. Just cool enough to help me cope. It stayed wet because I was soaked with sweat. Taking it off and just getting some air in it and then putting it back on was refreshing. Sounds way too simple, but it worked and it helped.

We were working ridge lines in the northwest, but every once in a while the patrol route would move down to the jungle floor and we’d find a stream. Here was a

the breech opened and the round was extracted. Obviously there was someone inside to catch the damned thing.

When Voight told Flynn he wasn’t going out with the platoon, he started railing at Voight and called him everything but a “white man”. I went ballistic when I heard about it and told Bill Corson I wanted to bring him up on charges of disrespect to a senior officer and cowardice. (That was a real stretch, but I was furious with the man.) Bill told me that he would bring him back to Battalion and re-assign him to some job there and let him know that he was skating on very thin ice! I never had much to say to Flynn when I came back to battalion as the S-3 and he walked very softly around me whenever I was in the bunker.

Another little vignette about that night. When you deployed with the reaction force and kicked the shit out of the sappers heading for the Air Base, we had one of our units in the Southern Sector defense set up that had their bacon saved that night by you. Do you remember that just north of Hill 34 there was a Navy POL Dump on a direct line to the Air Base. You know of Roger Staubach, Naval Academy All American and 1st round draft pick of the Dallas Cowboys? Well, Staubach was an ensign who had just graduated from the Academy in June of ‘66 and was assigned as a Supply Officer. He was serving in that POL Dump unit. If I knew how to get hold of him, I would remind him that he owes us a couple!!

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

BILL LOCHRIDGE: Yes, I remember that night, and as I pulled out with two of our HQ tanks (one gun tank and the other a flame tank) heading toward the POL dump, we spotted a bunch of sappers in the wire and lit them up big time. ■

small oasis with cool running water. Forget the A/O, we didn’t know (or care). Who wouldn’t stop and have a refreshing pause? Like I said, it was hot.

Streams can be dangerous to visit. I remember a point squad walking up on 8 of ‘em having the aforementioned refreshing pause. Unfortunately, we had one fatality as well.

We’d stop, set out security, get a quick dunk, a full canteen, and in my case, a cold wet towel. Then we traded places with security.

It was Heaven...my friends...simply Heaven. ■

# The Essence of an American Warrior

BY FRANK “TREE” REMKIEWICZ

“Marines have a cynical approach to war. They believe in three things; liberty, payday and that when two Marines are together in a fight, one is being wasted. Being a minority group militarily, they are proud and sensitive in their dealings with other military organizations. A Marine’s concept of a perfect battle is to have other Marines on the right and left flanks, Marine aircraft overhead and Marine artillery and Naval gunfire backing them up.” Ernie Pyle

Over the life of our country, in considering our national military, one thing has become clear. There are at least two classes of nation protectors. The first is the class known as citizen-soldier. The second is a class known as warrior. The warrior class marks its foundation on a unique culture and basic training. Basic training incorporates the most grueling physical training coupled with stripping the recruit of any semblance of the “I” and in exchange replaces the “me” with the Marine Corps. By the end of boot camp a recruit has earned the title of Marine. That title is yours and no one can take it from you. Included in this class are Marine Corps officers, but the bulk of this class is made up of enlisted men and women in the Marine Corps.

There are some small force groups that should be defined as elite fighting forces. An example would be SEALs or perhaps Green Berets, but some critical warrior traits are missing. First, it will take at least two training periods to bring these soldiers to an elite force. Second, these are small groups that, outside of the group, the members of the group are not only specialized, but also are not really interchangeable.

The warrior class holds a position that everyone is trained and, at the class base, holds the same position. In the Marine Corps, all personnel are at their base riflemen. Also, the warrior class is interchangeable. Everyone not only is a rifleman, but is trained to work with any group that in an emergency needs their assistance. And, the commitment to the Corps is a lifelong one.

“None the less, patriotism is not something you put on each morning like a clean shirt. Patriotism is not something you can buy at the super market. Patriotism is not something you can get in return for a monthly paycheck to a man in uniform. It is devotion to an ideal—a principle; a burning desire that the things that people think are best for their country and its people are protected from erosion—protected from any and everything which would tend to lessen in the

mind of the individual the image he has of how things should be in his ideal country.” General David M. Shoup, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps, 4 July 1962

This warrior class is definitely unique when compared to citizen-soldiers.

“These are my recruits. I will train them to the best of my ability. I will develop them into smartly disciplined, physically fit, basically trained Marines, thoroughly indoctrinated in love of Corps and country. I will demand of them, and demonstrate, by my own example, the highest standards of personal conduct, morality, and professional skill.” Drill Instructor’s Creed

The differences are character traits and qualities that are brought to boot camp and later refined to a razor edge. The would-be Marine is almost always a volunteer, while the citizen-soldier can be a volunteer or a draftee. The mentality of the volunteer into the Marine Corps is a mindset of “I want to fight”. It may be distorted by fantasies of personal glory, but it is the starting place for the unwitting volunteer. Citizen-soldiers go in with the idea “how fast can I get in and get out”. The duty of a citizen-soldier is to commit for only a set period of time and then get out to really begin their life. One is not better than another, but rather the outcome is preset in the mind of each; the outcome predetermined. Marine boot camp with unique drill instructors takes the man, his shadowy and vague idea of what he wants to become, and transforms him into a warrior. But, never one at a time.

Once again we can use the words of the CMC, General David Shoup, who told a group of reporters that, “Marines do not need to hate, not Communists, socialists, or any other group. We don’t attempt to build a big hate against anybody, we just train them (Marines) to be ready to fight whatever enemy the president may designate.”

Close order drill, while seemingly boring and superfluous and tedious, is one of the most important routines a boot camp can engage in. In the Marine Corps, there is an elite group of Marines known by what they do, the Silent Drill Team. The precision of the team easily translates into battlefield discipline. How important is close order drill? You need only see this group perform once to understand. They are silent because they know and understand what they are supposed to do, but they are also part of a team and must know and

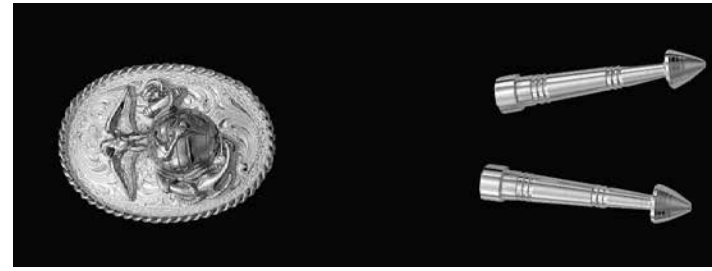
*(Continued on page 38)*

# ACTION AT THE AUCTION

For those of you who have never attended a USMC VTA reunion, we conduct an exciting and fun-filled auction immediately following one of our association-sponsored evening meals. The auction is one of our key fundraisers. All of the items offered in our auction consist of some rare and hard-to-find items that members donate to the organization. Many of these items tend to be souvenirs of our time in-country and our time served as Marine tankers. Below are just a small sampling of the items that we will be auctioning off during the Washington, DC reunion. And we have it on authority that just as he did in San Antonio, Sgt. Major Tommy Ayers, USMC (ret) will be again serving as our auctioneer this year.



Did somebody say, "Tank Track End Connectors"?



Two hand-made in the USA sterling silver USMC bolo ties.



We'll have at least three colorful USMC logo stoneware coffee mugs ...  
Hand-made by John Wear in his pottery studio



This hand-made highly-detailed and fully-accessorized model of a USMC M-48A3 tank look as if it is fresh from combat in Vietnam. It was custom-built by Marine veteran Cliff Wiley of Rochester, NY. Cliff served two tours in Vietnam as a door gunner on the CH-46 Helicopter. He is now retired and is pursuing his passion of building models of tanks and other combat vehicles. He is the President of the ROC City Scale Modelers and an active member of the Marine Corps League where he serves as the "Toys for Tots" Coordinator.



A full-size Woodlands-pattern poncho liner



We have several ready-to-assemble kits of the M-48 tank. And for the M-50 Ontos



Your very own ditty bag



HAND GRENADES!!!

These are authentic (inert) heavy-weight metal copies of the real thing...



A CLAYMORE MINE!!! An inert copy of the real thing to serve as a desk accessory.



This stunning American-made commemorative sterling silver belt buckle has its own story on Page 2 of the issue.

A Novelty Parking Sign



## PLEASE HELP:

We would really appreciate it if you would scour your attics, your garages, and your basements to see if you have any treasures that we could use for our fund raising auction. We have had simple items like canteens, steel piss pots, tank comm. helmets, books about the Vietnam War, t-shirts, covers, and jungle utilities all the way up to hand-built scale models of tanks, demilled-90 mm shells, and beautiful antique plaques and commemorative K-Bar knives. We even had a tank's ballistic computer one year!!! Some members find items on E-Bay or other Marine-related websites and they obtain items for our auction which they donate to us. As most of you know, all donations to the USMC VTA... [which is an IRS sanctioned 501 (c) 19 non-profit]... are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

If you have a great item or two, please contact any of our VTA Board of Directors and let them know that they will be available for the auction. You can find your board members' contact information on Page 3 of this issue. If the items are too heavy or bulky to carry on the airplane and if we think it is a viable auction item, we may be able to help you with the shipping to the reunion; but we need to hear from you at least a month before the reunion... that's by September 28th.

**The Essence of an American Warrior**  
(Continued from page 35)

understand what the team's goals and objectives are and what each member of the team is doing. This allows each member of the team to seamlessly step in for any other team member and perform just as well.

There is a fairly standard boot camp routine for the Marine Corps called "the three mile run". This run is done in platoon formation and, of course, is done in unison. The twist, the warrior mentality, is that no one finishes until everyone finishes—together. A warrior is a member of a group and that group is only as strong as the weakest of the warriors in that group.

In this world of "me first, I can beat you, I am greater than you", and hardcore competition, the trait of supporting each other, holding the group up, is not held in high regard. In combat, it is the characteristic most called on by the other warriors of a group. A warrior's very existence depends on those around him as he expects the same from the other team members. For a warrior to revert back to that "me first" principle is to not only seek the death of your friends, but yours as well.

Can one imagine anything more frightening than to be nose-to-nose with a drill instructor who has your best interests at heart and is willing to share all he knows with you, since, obviously, you do not understand what your best interests are. As the D.I. explains everything in great detail, the recruit begins to figure it out as he sorts through the many four letter descriptive words. Moreover, those words refer to your mom and dad and your dog and all kinds of acts you are pretty certain are physically impossible to perform. To make matters worse, the drill instructor uses your body to punctuate the drill instructor's sentences. I often wondered why every drill instructor I came in contact with mistook my solar plexus for the end of a declarative sentence.

Warriors are not just physically strong, but also mentally strong, psychologically strong, and spiritually strong. Working on a battlefield requires all these character traits. Battlefields are places for quick decisions that may put the warrior in jeopardy while keeping others out of harm's way. Or you may be crouched down in a slit trench while someone pours 168 rounds of 155 Howitzer rounds raining down on you and all one can do is pray for one more day.

Citizen-soldiers await the time when their tour of duty is

finished. Warriors train for the next conflict. General Shoup said, "We don't have to develop hate. We don't just keep talking Communism, Communism, Communism. I've made a hundred speeches and I've never mentioned Communism. I don't think that, to be a good fighter, you have to hate somebody. A professional boxer doesn't hate his opponent. If he does, he doesn't fight as well." The initial training instills a certain mentality that belies the foundation of the warrior. The warrior mindset is one in which one doesn't use resources lightly or superficially. When the warrior is called, there are no half-measures and rarely, if ever, a question. The initial planning was done yesterday. But one of the warrior strengths is to be able to hit the ground running and then evaluate the initial outcome, revise the plan and adapt to the circumstances. It is the warrior who is always into the "soup" first. And often times lifts his boots off the battlefield long after everyone else has left.

Citizen-soldiers are emotion based. Warriors are conflict based. Soldiers are frequently moved to action by emotion charged governmental propaganda. The idea of racial and ethnic degradation in that process provides the baseline for soldiers to be able to carry out death on the battlefield. Because warriors are always prepared, there is no need for the degradation of other combatants. The main difference is that one going into combat recognizes that the enemy is equal. The idea that the enemy is some how less than human opens the door for sloppiness and an idea that "this will be a piece of cake". There is an old adage that goes, "When good guys fight bad guys, bad guys win. Good guys play by the rules and bad guys have no rules." Citizen-soldiers are good guys. Warriors know that in combat there are no rules, because they are trained to see clearly, and the first combat experience bears that out.

And what of the many warriors that stop being warriors? No such thing; once a Marine, always a Marine. However, the warrior qualities and characteristics and all becomes repatriated to the civilian world. But, those qualities and characteristics are no less part of the warrior.

"The U. S. Marine is a professional who stands ready to fight anytime, anywhere, any enemy that the President and Congress may designate and to do so coolly, capably, and in the spirit of professional detachment. He is not trained to hate, nor is he whipped up emotionally for battle or for any other duty the Corps may be called on to perform." Com. Robert D. Heinl, USMC (Ret.) 1970 ■

# Company "C", 3rd Tank Battalion

## 9/5/64-10/7/65

BY JOE SANDERS

On 5 September 1964, after spending 32 hours on a flight from Travis Air Force Base in California to Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, and then a half an hour of ground transportation to Camp Hanson, I reported to Lt. Col States Rights Jones, C.O. 3rd Tank Battalion, and assumed command of "C" Company. (Please note: we left Travis on 2 September and arrived on 5 September. At some point we lost 3 September and 24 hours when we crossed the International Dateline.)

HEADQUARTERS  
3d Tank Battalion, FMF  
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF  
c/o FPO, San Francisco, California 96601

1/ASK/jlc  
1303  
5 September 1964

**ORIGINAL ORDERS**  
BATTALION SPECIAL ORDER  
NUMBER . . . . . 101-64

1. The following Intra-Battalion Transfers are effected.

| NAME                          | ORG    | ED      | REPORT TO                                                             |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2ndLt BESS L R<br>088600 1801 | H&SCo. | 8Sept64 | CO, "C"Co. f/du with 2/B                                              |
| 2ndLt HILL D U<br>088322 1802 | "C"Co. | -do-    | CO, H&SCo. f/du as Flame Plt Cdr.<br>vice 2dLt. BISHOP M. D. relieved |

2. The following assignments are effected.

| NAME                            | ORG    | ED      | REMARK                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2ndLt BISHOP M D<br>086977 1802 | H&SCo. | 8Sept64 | Asg. Duty Bn S-2, Bn Lang Off, Bn Legal Off,<br>Bn Security Off, 3dMarDiv Association Rep. Off,<br>vice 2ndLt L. R. BESS. |
| Capt SANDERS J P<br>071521 1802 | "C"Co. | 5Sept64 | Asg. duty as Commanding Officer "C"Co. vice<br>1stLt. McCARON, E. D. Jr.                                                  |

*M H Stevens*  
M. H. STEVENS  
Major U.S. Marine Corps  
Executive Officer

DISTRIBUTION: "A" & "C"  
copy to DistO

From 2 January 1965 to 9 January 1965 I was TAD for 3rd Marines Tactical Test of BLT 1/3 at Camp (Mt. Fuji) McNair in Japan. And from 21 January to 31 March 1965 I was TAD to Jungle Drum III USMC/Thailand MC Exercise as a liaison officer. >>

On 24 April 1965, I received the following PCS orders with the three attachments:

**ORIGINAL ORDERS**  
HEADQUARTERS  
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF  
FPO, San Francisco 96601

7B/TFP/omc  
1320/2  
24 April 1965

From: Commanding General  
To: Captain Joe P. SANDERS, 071521/1802 USMC  
Via: Commanding Officer, 3d Tank Battalion

Subj: Permanent Change of Station Orders

Ref: (a) FMFPac msg 312225Z MAR65  
(b) III MEF msg 121101Z APR65  
(c) Par 4100 JTR (Group Travel)  
(d) Par 7005 JTR (Dep)  
(e) Par 8008.2 JTR (HHE)  
(f) Par 8253.2D JTR (HHE)

Encl: (1) Roster of personnel

- In accordance with reference (a) and (b), on 24 April 1965, you and the personnel listed on enclosure (1) will stand detached from your present duties and report to the CG RL7-4 for transportation to such place as the 9th MEB is located and on arrival there report to the Commanding General for duty.
- These orders constitute permanent change of station orders for yourself and the personnel listed on enclosure (1). Copies of these orders, countersigned by you will constitute permanent change of station orders for all personnel listed on enclosure (1).
- These orders constitute group travel as defined by reference (c).
- In accordance with FMFPac Order 8370.1 privately owned weapons are not permitted in the Republic of Vietnam.
- Effect immunization requirements in accordance with HUMEDINSts 6230.1D and 6230.13 and have in your possession your immunization card at all times.
- In accordance with reference (d), travel of dependents is not authorized. Shipment of household effects is authorized in accordance with references (e) and (f). In addition no advance pay is authorized.
- Travel Char appn 1751105.2753; MFMO-65; CG 21 EAM 74152 OffTvl; 74162 EnlTvl; CG 12.

*W. R. Collins*  
W. R. COLLINS

Copy to:  
CG TF-79 (G-1); DivDistG; DivPostalG; DivRot; F I L E

| NAME                   | RANK   | NAME            | RANK  | NAME            | RANK  |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| SULLIVAN, Daniel H.    | 1stLt  | MASSIE, M. A.   | 2ndLt | HARRIS, P. J.   | 2dLt  |
| ARGETSINGER, Donald R. | 1stSgt | BRINGHAM, G. L. | SSgt  | SUMNER, J.H.    | GySgt |
| SHEWELL, Jules V.      | GySgt  | HERR, V. F.     | Sgt   | ASH, F.         | Sgt   |
| SHAFFER, James H.      | SSgt   | JOHNSON, F. M.  | Sgt   | FANNING, J.D.   | Cpl   |
| MILLER, Samuel W. Jr   | Sgt    | BOONE, H. G.    | Cpl   | MATTHEWS, G.R.  | Cpl   |
| SIRON, Donald L.       | Sgt    | HOLLAND, R. E.  | Cpl   | BALDWIN, F.G.L. | LCpl  |
| CARRILLO, Luis A.      | Cpl    | SHAW, M. L.     | Cpl   | CARR, D.B.      | LCpl  |
| ROCKS, Francis A.      | Cpl    | EPTING, B. A.   | LCpl  | COURT, T.       | LCpl  |
| WONGAN, Ivan A.        | Cpl    | FLOER, R. C.    | LCpl  | DAGUE, P.J.     | PFC   |
| ZYCH, Joseph M.        | Cpl    | LAWROSKY, R. M. | LCpl  | DEAR, J.        | LCpl  |
| BUMGARNER, Charles D.  | LCpl   | MASON, T. S.    | LCpl  | ELMER, R.L.     | LCpl  |
| HARRINGTON, Joseph W.  | LCpl   | PIERSON, J. S.  | LCpl  | GORDON, E.W.    | LCpl  |
| KILE, LeRoy D.         | LCpl   | POLICKA, R. A.  | LCpl  | HIPSHER, G.A.   | LCpl  |
| MOBLEY, Ronnie T.      | LCpl   | SERRANO, R.     | LCpl  | KEIR, J.A.      | LCpl  |
| ODETTE, Allen S.       | LCpl   | WHITE, C.       | LCpl  | LANE, R.W.      | LCpl  |
| OSBORNE, George C.     | LCpl   | ANDERSON, R. R. | PFC   | MAYHUGH, P.P.   | LCpl  |
| THOMPSON, Robert R.    | LCpl   | LESSARD, J. G.  | PFC   | ONEILL, J.M.    | LCpl  |
| GATES, Harry D.        | PFC    | MCAFEE, A. S.   | PFC   | WENDT, P.O.     | LCpl  |
| JOLLY, Franklin L.     | PFC    | OLSEN, C. K.    | PFC   | TOWNER, J. F.   | LCpl  |
| MAPEL, William D.      | PFC    | POWERS, D. E.   | PFC   | CLAVAN, R.E.    | PFC   |
| MEJIA, Johnny          | PFC    | REDWINE, M. E.  | PFC   | HOLLAND, R.K.   | PFC   |
| PALMIGIANO, Anthony P. | PFC    | REESE, J. E.    | PFC   | SERVOSS, W.R.   | PFC   |
| TRIMBLE, James D.      | PFC    | ROCHE, R. T.    | PFC   |                 |       |
| KLAAS, Robert A.       | Pvt    |                 |       |                 |       |
| ROWLEY, Jack B. (USN)  | HN     |                 |       |                 |       |

Although I had my 1st and 2nd Platoons, my 3rd platoon was the 3rd Platoon from "A" Company. I never saw them until we landed at Chu Lai. As best I can remember, they were already afloat with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines. My own 3rd Platoon stayed behind and was later attached to a battalion that landed in Northern I Corps.

I learned some very tough lessons from this deployment. The amphibian tractor company commander and I were designated to form an alternate regimental headquarters headed by the 4th Marines Regimental Executive Officer. This meant that my executive officer took the company while I was on a different ship. Since they started loading our tanks, almost immediately I lost the assistance of my executive officer and the company gunny in getting personal gear that was not going to accompany us into storage and in preparing the company headquarters for the move. It turned out that once aboard ship there was no alternate headquarters planning or an office for the use of the other captain or me. We never set eyes on the Regimental Executive Officer on the voyage. All we had was a squad bay with bunks, but no tables or chairs. The Recon Battalion did not encourage us to hang around their office either. What a waste of precious time that I could have spent with my command. It was a mistake not to have taken this issue to Lt. Col. Jones as soon as I got back from the regimental briefing. I am sure he could have gotten me out of this, but my XO might have had to go in my place. Live and learn.

I remember very little about the landing on the beach at Chu Lai. I think we may have used the nets and a regular personnel landing craft. I don't remember getting my feet wet but Chu Lai had a good beach for landing craft, so I may not have. We were greeted on the beach by Vietnamese officials and young girls dressed in white. I thought it was kind of strange to see all the heavily-armed Marines and these young girls in white greeting them with flowers.

I know that it was the next day before I ever got my command back fully my under control. Of course, the platoons were with their battalions so I did not initially have to worry about them.

The regiment established its headquarters in an open, flat, sandy area about a mile in from the beach. We stayed in this location for several weeks before moving the headquarters to a ridge that overlooked the north end of the beach.



This is a picture of the company command post near the middle of the regiment's position. The mess hall, the cook's tent and the water point are just over the sand dune in the right of the picture. The picture was taken after we had been there a week or so and only shortly before some Viet Cong slipped in between two outposts and shot up our water point with French .22 cal. submachine guns and threw hand grenades at our cooks' tents. One of my two cooks, a Corporal Joseph Zych, was wounded by a grenade fragment in his elbow. He was the only Marine to return fire at the VCs.

My other cook, Lance Corporal Charles Bumgarner, was very lucky. He had a dud grenade land under the head of his cot. He never woke up during the excitement. The next morning, there was

the grenade next to his duffle bag with his name, Bumgarner, clearly stenciled on the bag. That was quite a picture. The only other casualties that occurred from this attack were the totally unnecessary loss of two helicopters and crews that collided on takeoff from the carrier before dawn. They were FRAG to pick up my corporal whose wound was not serious. He could have waited until morning or could have went out by boat just as my 1st/Sgt and I did the next morning to see him.

When we left Okinawa, our tanks were in great shape; however, almost immediately we started having track problems. Within the first week one of the platoon tanks threw a track while driving along a sandy hill. Before the week was out we had a tank throw another track. These were no real problems, because they were inside battalion perimeters. We tightened tracks, but the next one occurred while out on patrol some distance from a safe area. Because of the slope that the tank was on, we took the retriever out the next day to help get the track back on the tank. The crew and their security team were very lucky as they had not been bothered during the night. Surprisingly, this was the last incident of a tank throwing a track for the remainder of my tour with Charlie Company. >>

Around this time, the Reg. was considering a sweep south along the road to Con (or Son) Tinh and to Quang Nai. We had a helicopter recon of the road and then someone decided that we should run a jeep recon between the beach and the road on the afternoon before the operation. We had five jeeps, counting mine and my 3rd Platoon Commander's. Mine was the only one that didn't still have a snorkel mounted. We encountered absolutely no one until, as we were approaching a village, we heard a round whine over our heads, followed by the sound of a shot. Everybody bailed out and the troops spread out and headed for the village. It had sounded like an old M1 carbine. I am not even sure that he had intended to hit us as there was no second shot. Needless to say no one was in the village.

After going through the village we turned west toward the road and immediately discovered a problem. The middle of the bridge across a stream had been torn out. This was no problem for the other jeeps because they could ford the stream, but a really bad problem for my jeep. There was no turning back. We found two of the timbers, about 7" wide, still intact and put them back on the supports. We had nothing to nail it down with though. My driver, L/CPL Allen Odette, pulled up to the two timbers and we made the necessary adjustments to the two boards. Then I got on the other side of the stream and ground guided him inch by inch across. The jeep was about six foot in the air and between supports. If it had fallen I don't think we could have gotten it out. Odette and I made a good team.

When we got back, I had quite a surprise waiting for me. Lt. Dan Sullivan, my XO, who had been using C-41 to help with an infantry sweep just north of our headquarters, had gotten my command tank stuck in a peanut field. This was no ordinary peanut field. These plants were in long, one-foot wide rows with about a one-foot wide and two-foot deep gap filled with water between each row. When Dan realized what he had gotten into, he had the driver floor it, and they were just about a hundred yards shy of getting the tank out of the paddy when the tank lost traction. We used both of the search light tanks from one of the platoons, one on each side, to illuminate the area. We had security out and they did catch a local that walked up wanting to know what was going on. Our retriever used all of its cable, and we still had to attach several tank cables together to reach the tank. It was very close to daylight before we had it out and ready to be the lead tank in the operation. Although my Maintenance Chief, S/ Sgt James Shaffer, the retriever driver, L/CPL Leroy Kile, and the tank's crew were instrumental in getting the tank out, the real hero was Sgt. Donald Siron. In addition to all the work he did, he placed himself in a dangerous position where he could see the tank, the cables and the retriever, so that he could signal the retriever when to take up the slack, the tank when to put it in gear, and the retriever when to pull and when to stop. We were very lucky that we did not have any cables break. I wrote Sgt. Siron up for a meritorious commendation, but it was turned down by 4th Marines and I was told to resubmit it at the end of his tour. It is a shame as he did an outstanding job and was truly in danger, with two searchlights pointed at him and a taut cable where if something broke it could have cut him in half. (Someone said we should have fired a couple of shots. I don't think so. It should have been enough without that.)

The sweep to Con Thien turned out to be a real dud. We didn't have a round fired at us and they greeted us when we got to Con Thien in the same way they had when we landed except no girls or flowers.

When I left Chu Lai by air in October of 1965, you could still see the trench we had created getting my command tank out of the peanut paddy. We were having problems with someone shooting at us from an area on our west perimeter. I suggested that we put one of our flame tanks out in that area and provide a demonstration of what could happen if they continued their harassment from that area. After this demonstration, we were not bothered again for the remainder of our stay in that location. We were pretty sure it was someone from the local village. Company "C" flame tank is firing in late May, 1965, at Chu Lai, Vietnam. ■



## Why Come to the DC Reunion?

*Editor's Note: I got the following email from a VTA member who has never been to one of our reunions:*

I am thinking about attending my first Tanker's reunion this fall in D.C. If my wife chooses to come with me, we'll probably fly. Her question to me is what will there be for the wives to do? Are they included in some (or all) of the events? We will probably be there for Friday, Saturday, Sunday and then fly home on Monday morning. I really don't know what to expect and may only know two or three people there. I do know Bruce Van Apeldoorn and, if Bill Zobie attends, I know him, as well. Other than those two, I'll be re-uniting with strangers. Any thoughts?

MY REPLY: It is great to hear that you are considering attending your first reunion. Most first time attendees say, at the end of our get together, "I'll never miss another one!"

First and foremost, please come with NO expectations other than you will

meet & greet brothers whom you never realized that you had. I say with a lot of humor: They may be "strange" but they are not strangers. And if nothing else, we are Vietnam Marine tankers or tank-support Marines, and we have a common thread running through all of us who attend. If there is nothing more to talk about than bootcamp... or ITR...or Staging BN...or 1st or 3rd Tanks ... or a specific operation...and on and on and on.

Based on our past reunion experiences with first time attendees, we have all "new guy" attendees wear a red ribbon on their reunion name badge. We encourage the "old timers" to be very inclusive and welcoming with the first timers.

I have attended every reunion since our founding in 1999. I always seem to find a new guy who either remembers me and helps me recall back 50 years ago some stuff that I had forgotten ... or I find some photographs that someone brings that have images of me when I was in-country and that I do not remember being taken. Heaven knows that today, trying to remember

everything that we did six months ago is a stretch ... forget about remembering everything from 50 years ago!!! The main thing to keep in mind is that we have to be willing to open up and talk ... and to listen.

With regard to wives: yes, a lot of the ladies have attended many reunions with their husbands, so many of them already know each other. Most of them are very welcoming and inclusive with the new wives. We do have a "Ladies Only" get together while the men have a Business Meeting on the first morning. Everyone (wives, kids, grandkids) are included in all of the activities as well. It is not just an "old boys" reunion. A lot of wives have a common thread running through them as well. That is, they all have Marine husbands who spent some time in hell, and that experience has made their husbands just a little bit crazy.

If the many incredible places to visit in DC are not enough for the wives, there is world class shopping at the Pentagon City Mall that is nearby; the hotel shuttle bus drives over there. Enough said??? ■

### How To Win A Free Hotel Room!

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

Rules: This coupon is your raffle ticket to be surrendered at the door of the meeting room before 07:59 EST for a chance to win a free 4-night stay during the reunion. The prize covers the basic room rate (\$109) plus taxes. **Prize value: \$436.00+.**

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_\_\_



## 2015 Washington, DC Reunion Schedule

|           |             |                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wednesday | October 28  | 0900 - 2330                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Arrival Day</b> – Pick up Reunion Welcome Packet just outside of the “Slopchute” hospitality room ( 3rd Floor)<br>**Sign up for VTA History Interviews and For photo scanning for the website**<br>Slopchute Open<br><b>Lunch &amp; Dinner on your own</b>                       |
|           |             | 0900 - 2330                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Thursday  | October 29  | 0800 – 1000                                                                                                                                                                            | Reunion Kick-off and VTA Business Mtg.<br><b>Enter to win a FREE stay!</b><br>Ladies Coffee (Hospitality Room)<br>Load buses to to Nat. Museum of the Marine Corps<br><b>Be sure to wear your reunion T-shirt for group photo.</b><br>Tour NMMC<br><b>Lunch on your own at NMMC</b> |
|           |             | 0800 – 1000                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|           |             | 1000 – 1045                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|           |             | 1115 – 1400                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|           |             | 1400 –1430<br>1430 – 1445<br>1600 – 2330                                                                                                                                               | Reunion Group Photo<br>Board buses to hotel<br>Slopchute Open<br><b>Dinner on your own</b>                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Friday    | October 30  | 0900 – 1500                                                                                                                                                                            | Operation VTA History Day<br><b>**Interview Schedule Posted in Slopchute**</b><br>...Or Tour city on your own<br><b>Lunch on your own</b>                                                                                                                                           |
|           |             | 1200 – 1500                                                                                                                                                                            | Photo scanning for the website                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|           |             | 1500 – 2330                                                                                                                                                                            | Slopchute Open<br><b>Dinner on your own</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Saturday  | October 31  | 0800 – 0815                                                                                                                                                                            | Load buses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|           |             | 0830 – 1300                                                                                                                                                                            | Guided Tour of the city                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|           |             | 1300                                                                                                                                                                                   | Stay in city or return to hotel<br><b>Lunch on your own</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|           |             | 1330 – 1700                                                                                                                                                                            | Slopchute Open                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|           |             | 1730 – 1830<br>1830 – 2200<br>2200 – 2330                                                                                                                                              | Pizza Party (Slopechute)<br>Auction<br>Slop chute Open                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Sunday    | November 1  | All Day                                                                                                                                                                                | Open Day<br><b>Lunch on your own</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|           |             | 1000 – 1700                                                                                                                                                                            | Slopchute Open                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|           |             | 1730 – 1815                                                                                                                                                                            | Reunion Banquet – Cash Bar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|           |             | 1830 – 1845                                                                                                                                                                            | Presentation of Colors & Remarks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|           |             | 1845 – 1930                                                                                                                                                                            | Dinner Served<br><b>Please note:</b> Dress for the Banquet will be a shirt with a collar, dress slacks and shoes...Coats & ties are optional.<br>Birthday Cake cutting & desert served                                                                                              |
|           | 2130 – 2400 | • 5 minute - Head Call<br>• 30 Minutes - Guest Speaker<br>• 30 minutes - Fallen Heroes<br>• 5 minute – San Antonio Reunion Review & 2017 Announcement<br>Slopchute Open – Last Call... |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Monday    | November 2  | <b>Departure Day</b><br><b>Reminder:</b> November 3 is National General Election Day - So get out and vote!                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |



## OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM 2015 Washington DC Reunion Hyatt Regency Crystal City October 28 – November 2

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

### PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
and relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit#: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Are you a first time attendee?** YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Your USMC VTA membership dues must be current in order to attend the reunion. If your membership is delinquent please mail your dues with this registration (or the dues will be collected at the sign-in desk). No partial payments of the registration fee are accepted. Fee covers planned food functions, bus transportation & lunch, meeting facilities, hospitality room, beer & sodas and other expenses associated with the cost of hosting the reunion. Registration fee does not include your sleeping room, taxes or air fare.

**Reunion Refund Policy:** If you find that you cannot attend the Washington DC reunion after you have pre-paid your reunion fees, the USMC VTA will refund your total reunion fees if you notify us prior to August 31, 2015. If you notify us of your cancellation after that date, we are sorry but we cannot make any refund offer

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

| NAME (as you want them to appear on your reunion name tag) | T-SHIRT SIZE                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> _____                                | <input type="radio"/> _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> _____                                | <input type="radio"/> _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> _____                                | <input type="radio"/> _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> _____                                | <input type="radio"/> _____ |

**Your total reunion fees**

**My Registration Fee:** ..... \$150.00

**T-Shirt:** ..... \$ 10.00

**Number of guests** \_\_\_\_\_ X \$150.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Registration Fee for each guest is \$160.00)

**Guest T- Shirt** \_\_\_\_\_ X \$10.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Grand Total = \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Optional:** Would you like to donate a few dollars  
to help with the beer & soda fund?        \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**GROSS AMOUNT ENCLOSED:**        \$ \_\_\_\_\_

You must make your own hotel room reservations by October 1st to get the low room rate! Call: 1-888-421-1442 and ask for the "US Marine Corps Vietnam Tankers Association Reunion" for the special room rate of \$99.00 per night. The room rate is good for three days prior and three days after the reunion dates as well.

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

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

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



# Ask Me What I Was

I'll reply with what I've done.  
Those things others would not do, I did;  
Those rivers others would not swim, I swam;  
Those hills others would not climb, I conquered;  
Those bridges others would not cross, I crossed;  
I have celebrated. I have mourned.  
I have smiled and I have frowned.  
I have seen death and felt its warm breath. It did not faze me,  
For I was different. I was a warrior.  
You ask me what I was? It was my destiny,  
Until my last breath,  
To be a United States Marine,  
And my spirit shall live forever.

Semper Fidelis  
For I was, am and shall forever be a  
"United States Marine"



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

Please check your address label... if the last two digits of "EXPIRES" is less than "15" then your 2015 membership dues are now payable. Make your check out to: USMC VTA for \$30\* and mail to:

**NEW ADDRESS!!!!**

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

\*Over & Above donations are always gratefully appreciated.

