



# Sponson BOX

*Voice of  
the USMC  
Vietnam Tankers  
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



## The Washout

Featured Stories:

2022 Mini-Reuion .....	Page 2 (Inside Cover)
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**Announcing the 2022 Mini-Reunion!!!**  
**The National Museum of Military Vehicles**  
**Dubois, Wyoming**  
**September 17 - 19, 2022**



This is the M-48A3 that guards the museum today ...



This is an M-48A3 on Active Duty in the '60's  
 VTA member Hall Miller is the tall dude

Website: <https://www.nmmv.org/>

On Saturday, September 17, 2022, we will all drive or fly into the regional airport in Riverton, Wyoming, and stay our first evening at a hotel there. Please note: We will be announcing the hotel contact information soon. Then the next day (Sunday, September 18) we will take chartered buses to Dubois (a 125 mile drive). We will plan a full day at the museum including driving tanks and then we will bus back to Riverton that evening. Returning home on Monday, September 19.

Dan Starks, the president and CEO writes: "The new firearms museum itself has lots of good stuff. Our best artifact is our Bunker Hill musket. It fired the first shot at Bunker Hill. A \$500,000 acquisition symbolizing the citizen soldier, the Second Amendment, and the founding of the U.S."

"By the end of summer 2021 we will have four galleries complete—the Unknown Soldiers Weapons Vault, the WWII Marshall Gallery, The Chesty Puller Gallery covering the Korean and Vietnam Wars and the Patton Gallery with rotating exhibits. I can't think of anything more fun than arranging for your group to drive a number of tanks. All of this would be free of charge. You guys are what we live for." As a side note: There are currently 432 vehicles on display and growing.



This fully restored Ontos also guards the front gate to the museum

Letter from the President

**2021 MEMBERSHIP DUES:** We currently have over 60 annual members who have not paid their 2021 membership dues. We also have 32 Life members who have not paid their Annual Life Assessment. Please check the address label on this issue to see the number next to your name. If it is not "21" or higher then you are past due. Unfortunately this will most likely be your LAST issue of our magazine if you do not catch up in the next three months. While you are at it, why not go ahead and pay 2022 dues since they will be payable in a few more months...on January 1st?

As some of you may be aware, it takes much effort and expense to send reminders and re-reminders to those of our membership who habitually forget to send in their dues at the beginning of each year. On top of the postage expense, the stationery expense and the sweat equity of our volunteer board members ... there are several of you who move to a new address and for one reason or another fail to alert us of your new address. When a letter or an issue of the Sponson Box magazine is mailed to your old address and if the forwarding process by the Post Office has lapsed, the VTA has to pay additional postage for the return to our headquarters address. We have to spend too much valuable time and money tracking people down. Please give us some consideration and alert us when you change your address, telephone number and your email addresses.

**PROVIDENCE 2021:** As I write this letter, it is mid-August and we are gearing up to "meet and greet" in Providence. By the time you receive this issue of our magazine, the reunion will have concluded and everyone back home. I know for a fact that we had one heck of a great time and most of us cannot wait for the next time we gather. Below is what may be the next time!!!

**USMC VTA 2022 MINI-REUNION:** In 2012, Dan Starks, the owner and CEO of the National Museum of Military Vehicles, bought a single tank. It was the start of something big. Since then he's acquired hundreds more tanks, jeeps, trucks, motorcycles, landing craft and other military vehicles including a fully restored Ontos and an M-48A3 tank. Now with 300 vehicles his Museum of Military Vehicles is one of the biggest collections of military rolling stock in in the U.S. outside of the US armed forces themselves.

Location - The town of Dubois, Wyoming, is located along the well-maintained US Highway 26/287, about 75 miles from Riverton and Lander to the east and 86 miles from Jackson (where the world famous Jackson Hole Ski Area is located) to the west. The airport in Riverton has direct flights to some cities and unlimited service via connections through Salt Lake City and Denver.

John Wear notes: I have had several telephone and email conversations with Mr Starks. He is thrilled that the VTA is seriously considering conducting a mini-reunion at his museum in Wyoming. He is so excited that he has offered the attendees something that is almost beyond belief. During one of our conversations, Mr Starks said to me, "If any of your members want to drive a tank, I am offering anyone who wants to, a chance to do so for FREE!!!" Just so everyone understands, most places that offer tank driving, charge anywhere from \$200 to \$500 (or more) per person for the opportunity. Mr Starks also added that he'd offer us the ability to drive the vehicles in a private setting or with an invited crowd. I vote for showing off in public!!!

**ON THE OTHER HAND:** My wife gave me a desk calendar for 2021. It features a daily wise old saying about aging. The saying for Jan 4th was "Nothing can last forever. There isn't any memory, no matter how intense, that does not fade at last." My interpretation would fit right into the USMC VTA History Project mantra, "Write it down or it will fade away."

**"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you."**

Maya Angelou



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## New Members

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MOS: 0353  
DOB: 06/12/48  
Wife: Marge  
Recruited by: ???

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Wife: Debra  
Recruited by: John Wear

## Our Readers Write

(Formally known as "Letters to the Editor")



### Rick Lewis on a Christmas Past

My last overseas assignment, I came home for Christmas and got home two days before anybody expected me to. I unlocked the front door to the house ... it was about 11 AM. The looks on their faces is something I'll never forget. Only had 10 days leave but we made the most of it. However, their faces when I left again were not fun to see. Then when I came home again, Joy and I went to their school where Joy showed me the class rooms. My son, Scott was first and he just about knocked me over as he ran into me. Our daughter, Karen was next and she just sat down and cried. When I picked her up, she put a choke hold on me. That is one of the big reasons that had me calling it at quits at 21 years. No more family separation.

### Comments on the Last Issue of our Magazine

Gary McDaniel writes: Great job on the latest edition!

Brad Goodin writes: Just received my copy of the Sponson Box today. Thanks for the compliment.

### Ben Cole and His Story

As a follow up to our conversation a few weeks ago, I am planning on using a few selected photos as the catalyst for telling our stories. Hopefully they will encourage our members and other Marines to jog their memories and add more details and nuance to our history.

My picture of Bastard's Bridge taken a few days before October 14, 1967 is the starting point. It would make a great feature for the Sponson Box with possibly a color cover with related articles inside. I could possibly participate in its expense.

I have already sought out and found credible sources of info within our USMCVTA and the Marines of 2/4. They are eager to contribute.

The edition could also include an editorial about the use and removal of the tanks at the battle which could be discussed in view of future Marine policy.

Some 2/4 Marines have expressed appreciation the tanks already questioned why some of them were absent that night.

Our USMCVTA and Sponson Box could be contacted by 2/4 Marines as I mentioned them in my initial request for info, but is under no obligation to participate.

### Marcia Falk writes

I've read just about every article written and published in the latest Sponson Box (July, August and September). I've learned a lot about Marine tankers in Vietnam which expands my knowledge of their service and the courageous risks taken. I've learned about young men, very young men wielding the power of a tank during the course of the Vietnam war with the hope of destroying an enemy not easily tracked. It's sobering.

My last husband, Steve spoke little of the dangers and risks taken day in and day out in his letters to me then nor throughout the fifty years we were married. I'm sure it was too painful to speak of the experiences of war. He shielded me from them and, perhaps, hoped the memories would fade in time for his own self-preservation.

Reading these now brings me to a deeper understanding of the courage, the grit, the pride, the valor, the dedication to the service of our country, that makes each and every one of you deserving of the title Marine.

A Marine Corps flag flanks my front door alongside an American flag. I am proud to honor the Corps and all those who serve and have served including my dear husband and I will do so until the day I die.

With admiration,

Marcia Falk, widow of VTA member Steve Falk >>

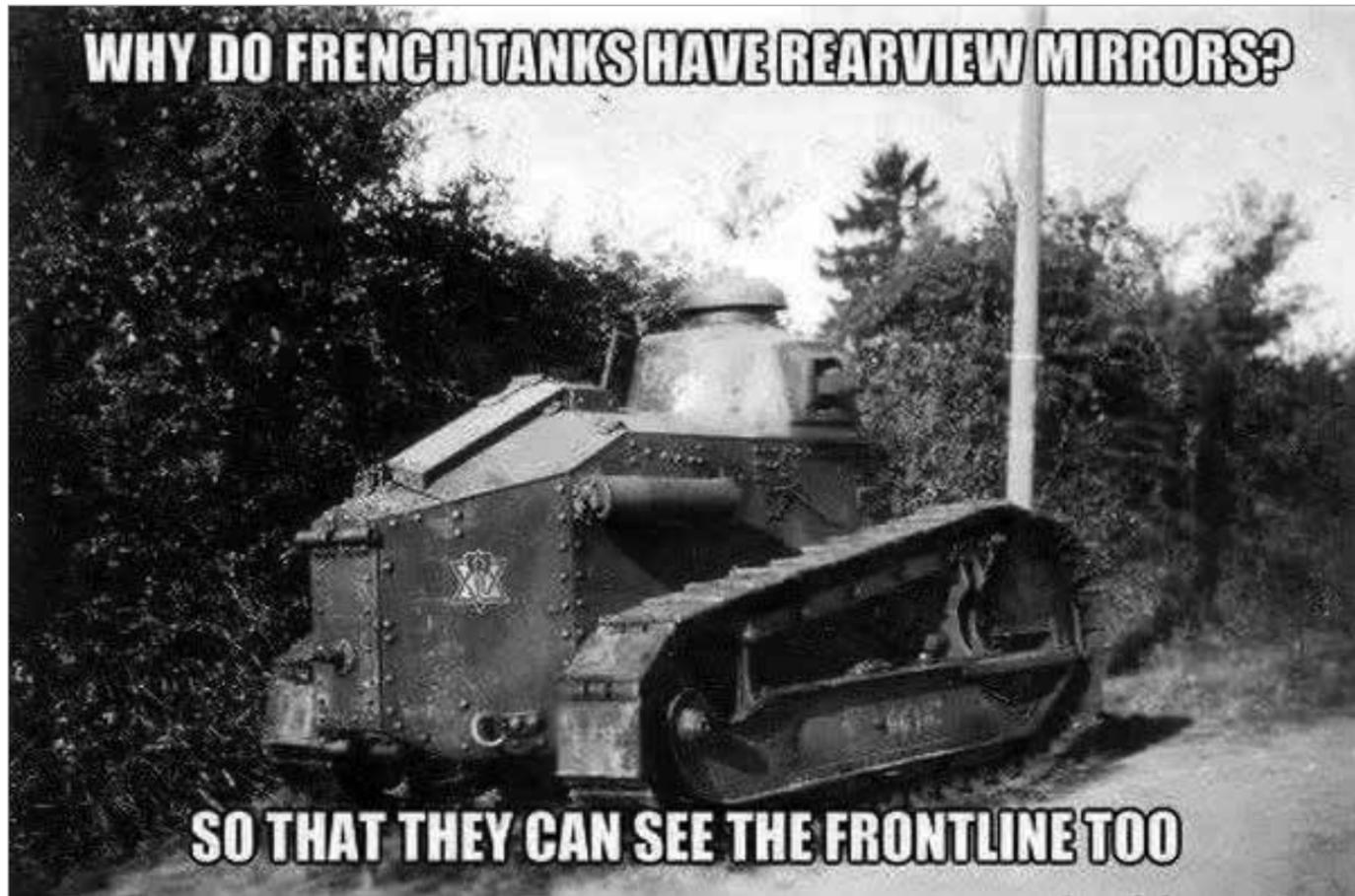


ON THE COVER: Tanks leaving the "Washout Bridge" a few days before the battle that renamed it. Two other tanks can be seen on the other side of the road leading north Con Thien in the distance. The absence of these tanks would have an effect on the defense of the bridge

## We Knew the Skid Steer Would Come in Handy



## Underwater Tank



## Book Review

### Lima-6: A Marine Company Commander in Vietnam

BY RICHARD D. CAMP, JR. and ERIC HAMMEL

Pacifica Military History, Mar 10, 1999–318 pages

In this vivid and intensely frank memoir, retired Marine Colonel Dick Camp recounts his daily experiences as “Lima-6”—the commander of Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines—from June 1967 through January 1968. As much as it is about the Vietnam War, Lima-6 is also a candid account of the camaraderie that a Marine infantry company forges in battle, and the compelling human drama of an infantry company at war as seen through the eyes of a lonely leader upon whom all others depend for guidance and strength.

#### Editorial Reviews

##### From the Author

I wrote LIMA-6 in conjunction with my good friend and exceptional military author Eric Hammel almost twenty years after returning from Vietnam. In the intervening years I used my experiences as a company commander to illustrate combat leadership to the officers and men I served with, first at The Basic School for junior officers and then at various assignments until my retirement in 1988. The leadership lessons I learned while in command of a rifle company stood me in good stead throughout my working life, whether it was on active service or in the civilian community. Of course, the privilege of leading young Americans in combat was the single most important event in my life...one that I will cherish as long as I live.

Semper Fi, Dick Camp

##### From the Inside Flap

In this vividly told first-person narrative, retired Marine Colonel Dick Camp colorfully recounts the daily combat actions and command decisions of his Vietnam experience as “Lima 6”—the commander of Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines—from June 1967 through January 1968.

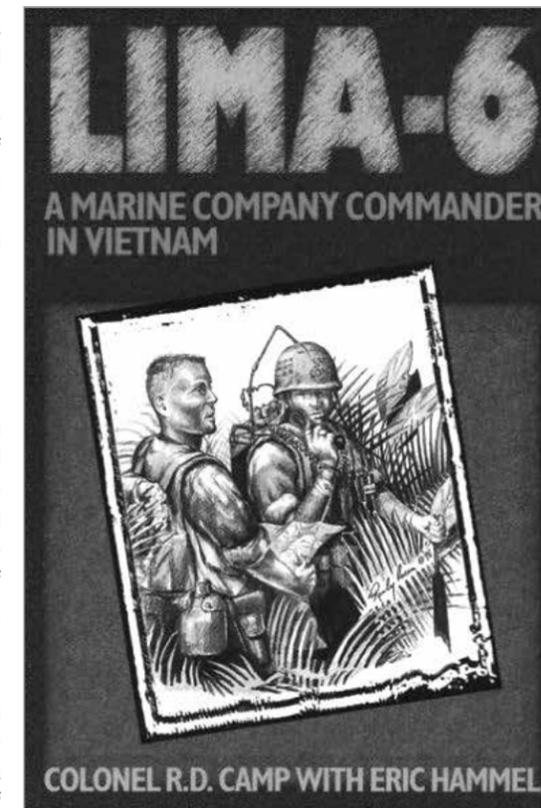
Upon his arrival in Vietnam, Captain Camp finessed his way into the immediate command of Lima Company following the death of it's previous commander near Khe Sanh. Instantly, he was thrown into the tense experience of patrolling the beautiful, deadly jungle valleys along the embattled Highway 9 between Dong Ha and Khe Sanh. For six full months, Dick Camp commanded Lima Company

in alternating periods of intense combat and intense waiting—a typical, virtually emblematic experience shared by his peers in the 1967–1968 phase of the war in northern Quang Tri Province, bordering the DMZ and North Vietnam. In early September 1967, Camp's battalion was almost overrun near besieged Con Thien in an ambush sprung by a full North Vietnamese Army regiment. In early January

1968, Lima Company ambushed the commander and staff of a North Vietnamese regiment apparently charged with assaulting the Marine lines at Khe Sanh. Three weeks later, Lima Company and the rest of the reinforced 26th Marine Regiment were besieged inside the Khe Sanh Combat Base by two North Vietnamese divisions.

As much as LIMA-6 is about fighting the Vietnam War, it is also the story of the tight camaraderie of the Marine infantry company at war—of men from widely disparate backgrounds thrown together to succeed or fail as fighting force. It is a compelling human story of an infantry company at war as seen through the eyes of its commander—the lonely man upon whom all others depend for guidance, wisdom, strength, and humor.

An intensely frank, always human memoir, LIMA-6 sets out to make no political or ideological points. It is a candid, refreshing narrative by a combat commander about the experience of command and the brotherhood of men at war. LIMA-6 is, above all, an honest account of life and death at the heart of the Vietnam War. ■



# To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

“It is wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather,  
we should thank God such men lived.”

Gen. George S Patton

## Jay Thomas Miller 1943–2021



Hutchinson Island, Florida—Jay Thomas Miller, 78, passed away on June 19, 2021, at his home on Hutchinson Island surrounded by his family and lifelong best friend, Gunnar and his wife, Sue. Jay was born in Detroit, Michigan on February 11, 1943 and grew up in Fair Lawn, New Jersey with his two younger brothers and two younger sisters. He graduated

from Fair Lawn High School in 1961.

Jay attended Rutgers University and graduated in 1965. He was a fierce defenseman on Rutgers' soccer team. He received the Alfred Sasser Soccer Trophy.

Feeling the call of duty, in May of 1966, Jay enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corp and was deployed to Viet Nam in April of 1968 and spent 12 months in the DMZ and Khe Sanh. Among many other distinguished awards, Captain Miller received the Bronze Star Medal with Combat “V” for “meritorious service while serving as Commanding Office of Company B, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Third Marine Division.”

After returning to civilian life, Jay again felt the call to public service. He applied to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. After retiring in 1998 from the FBI together, Jay and Gunnar founded their own business as private investigators from 1998–2005. The stories from their escapades are too many to count.

## Frank M. Slovik

June 10, 1935 – January 31, 2017

(No further information was available for Frank)

Obit notice first published in the MCTA newsletter.

## Ben T. Weaver 1957 – 2016



Ben T. Weaver of Saginaw, Texas, went home to be with the Lord on Monday, Nov. 7, 2016, after a well-fought 19-month battle with pancreatic cancer. Ben was the brother of KIA Ontos crewman, Greg Weaver. Ben joined the VTA as an “Honorary Member” during the 2009 VTA reunion in Charleston, SC, after attending the “Fallen Hero” presentation for his brother.

## Mark Steven Anderson Nov. 1, 1947–May 5, 2021



Mark Steven “Andy” Anderson, of Bay City, Oregon, passed away at the age of 73 from cancer at his home surrounded by his family. Mark was born in Portland, Ore. to Dr. E. Dean Anderson and Betty E. Anderson. After graduating from Lincoln High School in 1965 Mark joined the US Marine Corps and proudly served two tours in Vietnam as a tanker. Mark enjoyed living at the Oregon Coast, spending time outdoors fishing, crabbing and clamming. He loved animals and enjoyed walking his dog on the beach. He was an active volunteer in the community for the Tillamook Elks Lodge helping to complete the RV Park, and the Tillamook Anglers/Whiskey Creek Fish Hatchery. Mark had a loveable personality; he will be missed by his many friends and family. He was a long time member of the USMC VTA.

## Frederick E Krapf 1929–2020



Mountain Top, PA – Retired Gunnery Sergeant with 20 years of service that included Korea and two tours in Vietnam. Obit notice first published in the MCTA newsletter.

## MGySgt Donald Gagnon 1927 – 2021

On April 28, 2021, at 92 years old, Don reported to the guard shack in Heaven. Since he had no immediate family (his wife and his only son passed before him) there will most likely not be a formal obituary written recapping his life. We do know that he served as a tank crewman during the Korean War and as a tank company gunny in Vietnam. Art Nash writes: I recently learned of Don's passing. He lived a few miles from me here in Sierra Vista. I would visit him as much as he would allow. I first met Dan Gagnon, on the ramp at Camp Del-Mar in 1958. Funny thing, we kept running into one another, I working for him... On and off through the years. Don lived a long and productive life. He will be missed.

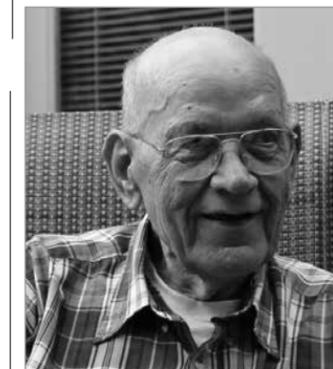
## Col. Albert Willard Snell (Age 96)

Passed away peacefully Saturday, December 15, 2019 at The Fairfax in Fort Belvoir, VA. He is survived by his brother Tom and sister Susan; and by his children Hattie, Sally, Anne, Betsy, Tom, and Frank. He was predeceased by Jane, his wife of more than 50 years, and his sister

Barbara. A Funeral Mass was performed at The Basilica of Saint Mary, Alexandria, Virginia on Saturday, February 23, 2019 at 10:30 a.m.

Colonel Snell was a charter member of the USMC VTA. He was also the Battalion CO of 1st Tanks in Vietnam. Obit notice first published in the MCTA newsletter.

## Lt. Col. Karl Joseph Fontenot April 23, 1930 – November 25, 2016



Karl J. Fontenot, Jr. deceased on November 25, 2016. Born in Ville Platte, Louisiana, he attended Louisiana State University, joined the Marine Corps and retired after 24 years with the rank of Lt. Colonel. He served his country with honor and distinction in Korea and Vietnam, where he commanded the 3rd

Tank Battalion in 1968. Whether in service to our nation, our health care system, or his family, he was the living embodiment of the Marine Corps motto, “Semper Fidelis”, and all the virtues it implies. Interment was at Arlington National Cemetery.

Obit notice first published in the MCTA newsletter.



## GUESS WHO Photo Contest

Can you guess who the Marine is in this photo? The first person to contact John Wear at 719-495-5998 with the right answer will have his name entered in a contest for a chance to win a yet un-named mediocre prize.



## **Last Issue Winner**

There was no winner for last issues "Guess Who" to correctly identify Lt Don Scott, platoon leader Bravo, Co, 5th Tanks in 1968.

Don adds: "THAT was some good ice cream! We all were surprised and enjoyed it immensely."



## Tanks & Medals of Valor



*The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the  
BRONZE STAR MEDAL to*

*FIRST LIEUTENANT HARRIS D. HIMES*

*UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE*

*for service as set forth in the following*

### *CITATION:*

*"For heroic achievement in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam while serving as a Platoon Commander with Company B, Third Tank Battalion, Third Marine Division. On the morning of 19 May 1968, First Lieutenant HIMES was the Section Leader of two tanks assigned to assist a friendly unit heavily engaged with a numerically superior North Vietnamese Army force near the Khe Sanh Combat Base. Arriving at the beleaguered unit's position, the armored vehicles immediately came under intense enemy antitank rocket and small arms fire. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, First Lieutenant HIMES unhesitatingly directed his tanks to advance into the hazardous area and engage the hostile force. Skillfully directing the delivery of 90mm cannon and a heavy volume of suppressive machine gun fire, he effectively provided security for two badly damaged vehicles as they withdrew to positions of relative safety. Continuing to maneuver across the fire-swept terrain, his tank suddenly sustained a direct hit from an enemy antitank rocket that seriously wounded First Lieutenant HIMES and two of his crew members. Ignoring his painful injury, he ably maintained control of his armored vehicle and skillfully executed evasive maneuvers as he directed another tank to move forward and provide flanking fire. Fearlessly maintaining his dangerous position, he resolutely disregarded the intense hostile fire as his vehicle was struck by numerous additional rocket propelled grenades that penetrated the engine compartment and rendered the steering mechanism inoperable. Despite the rapidly spreading fire aboard his tank, he calmly instructed his men to don their field protective masks and resolutely continued directing heavy suppressive fire upon the enemy for nearly one hour. Only when two other tanks arrived and the infantry unit was able to advance, did First Lieutenant HIMES and his crew abandon their burning vehicle. Returning to the Khe Sanh Combat Base, he steadfastly refused medical treatment until all his Marines had been evacuated. First Lieutenant HIMES' courage, bold initiative and unfaltering devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service."*

*First Lieutenant HIMES is authorized to wear the Combat "V".*

*FOR THE PRESIDENT,*

*H. W. Buse, Jr.*

*LIEUTENANT GENERAL, U. S. MARINE CORPS  
COMMANDING GENERAL, FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC*

## What Members Are Doing

### Lee Dill Honored

Hampstead, Maryland is an incorporated city near where I live – they started this program four years ago and they asked me if I was interested to be added this year. There are 30 different banners of veterans hung on poles right along



Main Street!! The Banners are in place until after Veterans Day. Unfortunately, there is no parade ... but this is really close enough.

The first photo it appears as if I am giving you the finger – negative I am pointing at the banner!

### Hokey and Ron Reunite



Thought I would send you this photo of Ron Colucci and me having lunch today. We met up after 50 years at the Se-

attle reunion and since that time we have stayed in touch. If you look closely, he gave me the SPONSON BOX newsletter Vol.V No.III September 2002. We are both coming to this year's reunion. Stay safe and see you there

Cpl "Hokey" Hokanson  
New Jersey

### Ed Hiltz Reunites after 51 Years

This picture was taken at Harpoon Hanna's at Fenwick Island, Delaware last week. Bill (on the left) is a friend from



the old neighborhood that we grew up in and an 11 year Marine veteran. He is a former Drill Instructor and a Gunnery. He had two tours in Vietnam. He had a brother who was also a Marine and Vietnam veteran. Sadly, his brother is buried in Arlington cemetery.

We finally got together after 51 years of no contact. It was a very pleasurable day. We never had to pay for drinks as all the other patrons at the bar kept on buying them and thanking us for our service ... which, of course, was greatly appreciated. There's still plenty of good people in this USA.

### "Crispy Critters" Comes Home

US champion model maker and US Air Force veteran, Andy Bloom writes about his near-perfect creation duplicating M-67A2 Flame-thrower tank, F-32 (also known as "Crispy Critters"):

Well, the season is over for "Crispy Critters." Although she didn't travel to the Nationals like I'd wanted to in 2020, she did have a great adventure. "Crispy Critters" would:

1. Travel 5,094 miles to attend eight shows within IPMS Region 6, visiting Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma,



Texas, and Louisiana.

2. Take three 1st Place awards, two 2nd Place awards, and one 3rd Place award.

3. Also win two Special Awards
  - a. Best Vietnam In-Country Subject
  - b. Best Marine Corps Subject

4. In August, 2021, she was shipped to John Wear for safe keeping in her proper home.

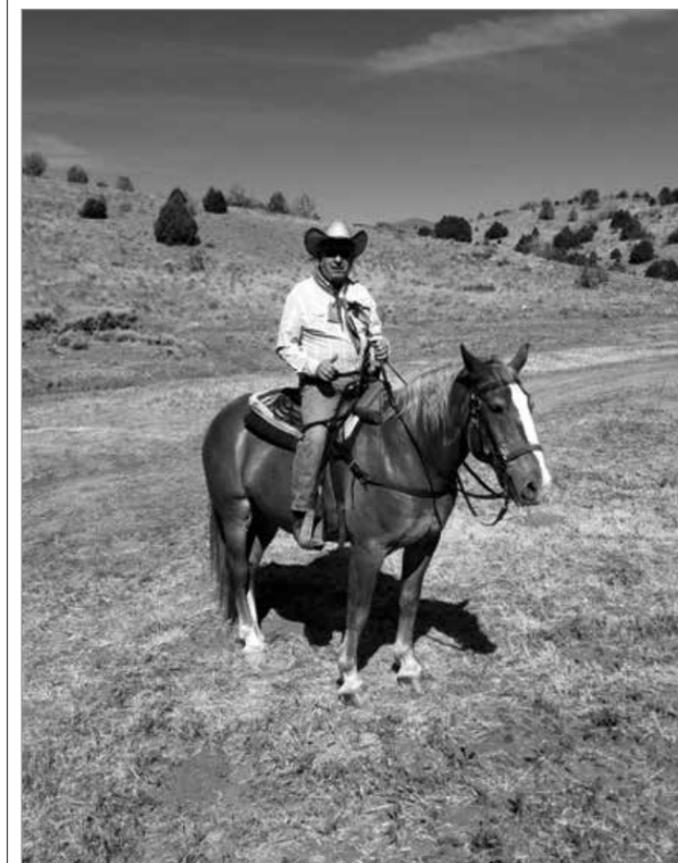
### Bruce is getting ready for the Seminole Wars

This is a Model 1819 issued to Marines fighting the Seminole Indians in Florida as the weapon to use in a jungle type environment. At our Marine Corps Coordinating Council



meeting today our only Army member (Green Beret) who is the owner of the <https://www.rochestermilitary.com/> website brought the weapon for show and tell.

### Ron the Cowboy



Ron Kalanick riding his trusty steed on the Reno Rodeo Cattle Drive.

### Reunion Tank



Bruce found the perfect tank for a future reunion!!!

## VA Appeals

### What to Expect During a Board of Veterans' Appeals Hearing

If you disagree with the initial decision VA made on your claim and decide to appeal the decision to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board), you have a few different options to choose how your appeal proceeds. But many people don't know what to expect, which could cloud their ability to choose the best option for them. In the video at [https://youtu.be/UDI3C\\_ytJt8](https://youtu.be/UDI3C_ytJt8) Judge Tanya Smith, a Veterans Law Judge, explains to Veterans what to expect, what to prepare, and what happens after a hearing.

As explained in the video, one option is to have a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge (VLJ). Hearings are entirely optional and aren't necessary to receive a decision from the Board. (Some Veterans elect to a potentially quicker decision and, to save time, they can choose one of the other options the Board offers. Instead of a hearing, the VLJ will simply review any evidence/statements you have submitted before deciding your appeal.) If you decide you want a hearing, consider choosing a virtual tele-hearing. Virtual tele-hearings are safe and secure, and they allow you to have your hearing from the comfort of your home instead of traveling to a VA facility. Virtual tele-hearings are a great option, especially during a pandemic. They do not negatively affect your appeal, so don't postpone your hearing and delay your decision – choose a virtual tele-hearing.

What can you expect during a Board Hearing?

- At the start of the hearing, the judge will ask you to raise your right hand, if possible, and swear you in. The judge will ask you to take an oath, or affirm that you'll tell the truth during the hearing.
- During the hearing, you, your representative – if you have one, and the judge will have a conversation about the issues on appeal. These hearings are an opportunity for you to tell your 21 story, and you should be comfortable in doing so. The judge will listen to your testimony and may ask you a few questions to better understand your appeal. What should you do during the hearing?
- Tell the judge why you think you qualify for the VA benefits in your appeal.
- Answer any questions the judge has about your appeal.
- Share any new evidence with the judge: You can choose to add new and relevant evidence, either at the hearing or within 90 days after the hearing. Adding evidence is optional. What happens after your hearing?
- Please understand that the judge will not issue a decision on your appeal the moment the hearing has ended.
- When the 90-day time period for submitting new evidence after your hearing has ended, your appeal will be placed on the docket for a decision by a judge.
- You will receive your decision in the mail and your representative will also receive a copy. You can track the status of your appeal by signing in at [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov).

[Source: Vantage Point | Cheryl L. Mason | January 5, 2021 ++]

## VA Obesity Initiative

### Just Released | New Overweight/Obesity Guidelines

Forty-one percent of Veterans receiving care from VA have obesity. There's a brand new eight-page booklet right here that can help bring that number down. The Management of Adult Overweight and Obesity booklet at [https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Guidelines-Cover\\_r1.jpg](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Guidelines-Cover_r1.jpg) provides clear and comprehensive evidence-based recommendations. The updated guidelines booklet describe the critical decision points. It provides clear and comprehensive evidence-based recommendations to inform weight management practices throughout the DoD and VA Health Care systems.

This is not about trying to fit into your old uniform. This is about your health. There are important health benefits that result from weight loss. These include improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol, the risk of developing diabetes and other chronic conditions, and even overall quality of life. The new guidelines answer your questions.

- What is consider overweight?
- What is obesity? (Having a weight that is higher than what is considered healthy for a given height is described as overweight or obesity.)
- What should you ask your health care team?
- What is Body Mass Index? (There's a great chart in the guidelines.)
- What should be my weight loss goal? (For many people with overweight or obesity, an initial goal is to lose just 5% of their body weight.)
- What is a Comprehensive Lifestyle Intervention? (Comprehensive lifestyle interventions are programs that combine changes to habits and behaviors as well as dietary intake, and physical activity, with support from a health coach or other member of a health care team.) Overweight and obesity are terms that describe different degrees of carrying extra fatty tissue – or body fat – above an ideal weight. Healthy eating is an important part of weight loss. Weight loss is achieved when you take in less energy (fewer calories) than your body needs to maintain your current weight, especially if you also increase your level of regular physical activity. A comprehensive lifestyle intervention (such as VA's MOVE! Weight Management Program) is an essential aspect of any effective overweight or obesity treatment program. These programs help you to identify and make lasting changes in diet, physical 23 activity and other behaviors, like regular weighing, to help you stay on track. VA's MOVE! program can help you reach a healthy weight.

The guidelines also emphasize the value of specific medications, as well as surgical procedures for treating overweight and obesity, though these treatments should always be combined with a comprehensive lifestyle intervention. Remember when you pushed back from the table and said, "Well, next year I'm going to get in shape?" Well, this is next year. If you need some inspiration, check out these success stories

from Veterans who achieved significant weight loss after participating in the MOVE! program. Some are amazing and inspiring.

[Source: Vantage Point | Hans Petersen | January 8, 2021 ++]

## Prostate Cancer

### Know Your Risk

Prostate cancer is the most common type of non-skin cancer in the United States. One out of every nine men will get prostate cancer in their lifetime. Unfortunately, there usually aren't any early warning signs for prostate cancer. The growing tumor does not push against anything to cause pain, so for many years the disease may be silent. That's why screening for prostate cancer is such an important topic for all men and their families. In rare cases, prostate cancer can cause symptoms. Contact your doctor for an evaluation if you experience any of the following:

- A need to urinate frequently, especially at night, some- times urgently

- Difficulty starting or holding back urination
- Weak, dribbling, or interrupted flow of urine
- Painful or burning urination
- Difficulty in having an erection
- A decrease in the amount of fluid ejaculated
- Painful ejaculation
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Pressure or pain in the rectum
- Pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, pelvis, or thighs

Remember: urinary symptoms don't necessarily mean you have cancer. Prostatitis or BPH (Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy, also known as enlargement of the prostate) are benign diseases but can cause similar symptoms and are very common. What about difficulty in having an erection? Again, this is most likely not caused by cancer but by other factors such as diabetes, smoking, cardiovascular disease, or just plain getting older. That said: Symptoms are symptoms, and no matter what's most likely to be causing them, you should get them checked out by a doctor. Refer to <https://www.cancer.va.gov/CANCER/pcf.asp> for more info on screening, the PSA Test, Prostate Exams, VA and PCF Partnership Videos, and special information for Veterans

VA has teamed up with the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) to encourage men (and their families) to better understand prostate cancer risk and to take proactive measures to protect their health. 2021 will come with new ideas and goals, and there's no better time to know your risk. Now is the time to make a plan to talk to your doctor at your next checkup about whether prostate cancer screening is right for you.

Gulf War Veteran Milton "Trey" Wilborn III, who lost his battle to an aggressive form of prostate cancer at the age of 49 in 2020, generously volunteered to share his story with other Veterans. Wilborn urged men to get checked, regardless of whether they are experiencing symptoms or feel they are too young. "I was diagnosed with prostate cancer at the age of 45," Wilborn said. "I never even knew what a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) was. I didn't know what a prostate was until I got sick ... VA does take care of their Veterans. Their treatment is the best, you have all the newest, latest, greatest equipment and everything in all the treatments."

VA partnered with PCF in 2016 to advance best-in-class research and care for Veterans at risk for prostate cancer. Oncologists at 12

VA PCF Centers of Excellence (COE's) are collaborating to bring the latest breakthroughs to Veterans. To date, PCF has committed more than \$50 million to this collaboration and recently publicly announced a commitment to help stand up 21 total COEs. So far, hundreds of 69 Veterans have been seen by a doctor for precision oncology at one of 12 COEs across the country. These centers are working to ensure every Veteran can access cutting-edge advances in prostate cancer research and treatment.

When PCF started working with the Washington DC VA Medical Center, Wilborn and his wife Shawni stepped up to work with PCF to champion prostate cancer awareness. You can read more about their touching story at <https://www.pcf.org/c/love-story>. Milton shared how the message of early detection, if it reached just one Veteran, could save lives. "God put me in a position to be able to tell my story," he said, adding that he was grateful for the opportunity to help educate other men and their families.

Among those that VA and PCF hope to reach: African American men remain the hardest hit by prostate cancer. They are 79% more likely to develop prostate cancer than Caucasian men, and are more than twice as likely to die from the disease compared to men of other ethnicities. Precision screening is the best defense for men against prostate cancer. Awareness of your risk and talking to your doctor about screening are the next steps every man can take in 2021. Learn more at <https://www.pcf.org/vets>. In addition, PCF has a variety of resources to help.

[Source: Vantage Point Blog | January 1, 2021 ++]

## Prostate Cancer #2

### For Many Men Surgery Risks Outweigh Potential Benefits

Investigators at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System and the University of Minnesota found that "watchful waiting" or prostate specific antigen (PSA) monitoring may be the best approach for many men with prostate cancer. While practicing watchful waiting may slightly increase risk of death for some men clinically diagnosed with cancer, it reduces harm, compared to surgery. The findings will potentially help improve health care quality and inform clinical practice guidelines.

The results suggest that surgery for prostate cancer may be necessary only for younger patients and those with more aggressive cancers, according to lead study author Dr. Timothy Wilt, of the Minneapolis VA Center for Care Delivery and Outcomes Research, and the Minnesota Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Evidence-based Practice Center. "I hope that clinical guidelines incorporate this information and find a broader role for watchful waiting and PSA-based testing for most men," noted Wilt. The results appeared in the Dec. 22, 2020, issue of the Journal of Urology.

After skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most-diagnosed form of cancer for men in the United States. It is the second leading cause of cancer death in U.S. men. However, most cases grow slowly and do not cause symptoms, even if untreated. About 90% of cases are localized, meaning that the cancer is confined to the prostate gland and may not spread to other parts of the body. This is especially true in men diagnosed currently by blood testing for PSA. The vast majority of men with prostate cancer (90%) do not die from it Despite the fact that prostate cancer is often slow-growing, many patients and doctors opt for an aggressive approach to care, such as surgery >>

or radiation, which can result in urinary, sexual and bowel problems. Radical prostatectomy – surgery to remove the prostate gland – is the most common treatment for prostate cancer. An alternative is watchful waiting, in which direct treatment is deferred while patients are monitored for symptom changes and possible cancer spread.

The researchers conducted a systematic review of 67 studies to compare the effectiveness of watchful waiting versus radical prostatectomy, along with several other treatments. The review is one of the first studies to look at very long-term results. The results showed that watchful waiting may increase the risk of both the spread of cancer and death from cancer, compared with surgery, in men with clinically detected cancer. Importantly, the studies comparing the two treatments were long-term studies, looking at results over 20 years, begun before PSA testing became common. Clinical detection of prostate cancer relies on physical examination and biopsy. PSA testing, on the other hand, can detect cancer earlier and find smaller, slower-growing tumors. PSA testing is able to diagnose prostate cancer up to five years or so before it would be clinically detectable.

Different studies reviewed found varying levels of risk: overall, after 20 to 25 years, watchful waiting was linked to an increase in death from any cause of 5% to 15%, and an increase in cancer-related death of 4% to 10%. However, patients undergoing watchful waiting had lower rates of urinary and erectile dysfunction than those who underwent radical prostatectomy.

[Source: Vantage Point | Tristan Horrom | April 2, 2021 ++]

## Exercise Five Stretches to Do Everyday

Every morning as you get out of bed or get off your desk in the evening, you know when you need a stretch. Now think of what this simple stretch does to your body. How it can loosen up your muscles, and you end up relieving the muscle stiffness in your neck and back that you experienced all day. Well, this is precisely what stretching can do to your body. It loosens up muscles, relieves tension, and improves joint mobility. These benefits are backed by research that also indicates that regular stretching can improve blood circulation. As a result, your muscles get more oxygen and nutrients to strengthen your muscles, improve body balance, and relieve stress.

On the other hand, if stretching is not a part of your daily routine, you are more prone to experiencing reduced joint mobility, affecting your body balance and risk of falls and injury as you age. So set up your morning alarm a few minutes earlier or skip the last part of your favorite late-night TV show and incorporate five easy and beneficial stretches in your daily routine. Performing these five stretches might only take a few minutes of your time during the day, but the results you get are bound to improve your overall health in the long run.

### Toe Touch

Toe touch is an excellent stretch to get started. This simple stretch brings numerous benefits to your entire body, including arms, shoulders, back, and legs. All you have to do is to sit on the floor or stand upright. Then bend and reach out for your toes. Now hold the stretch for 10 seconds and return to your original position. Repeat this stretch a few times to loosen up your arm and leg muscles.

### Downward Dog

This all-time favorite yoga pose is popular for good reasons. This stretch involves a wide range of muscles, including the back, hamstrings, arms, neck, and shoulders. It is an excellent stretch to improve blood circulation and get you started for the day. Even if you

are not an expert yogi, you can do this simple stretch at home. Start with a plank position. Now push your legs forward and hips upwards to form a triangle. With your head between your arms, you will feel the blood flowing towards your upper body. Make sure your heels are tucked to the floor. Feel the stretch for good 10 seconds, move back to plank, and repeat downward dog stretch a few times.

### Cat and Cow

Do you wake up with a stiff back? Then this stretch is for you. It boosts blood circulation, strengthens your back muscles, and enhances mobility. Get into the tabletop position (on your hands and knees) on an exercise mat. Your wrists should be in line with the shoulders and knees aligned with the hips. Now tuck in the pelvis, look down to the floor, and round your back. You should get an upward bend in your spine. Next, bend your spine inwards as you exhale. Look up with a full stretch in your neck. Repeat this pose a few times, and continue to inhale and exhale as you transition between cat and cow.

### Spinal Twist

Want to strengthen the core and improve spine flexibility? Add a spinal twist to your daily stretching routine. Start by lying flat on your exercise mat and bend your knees such that the feet are flat on the floor. Then, with the upper body still, twist your left knee to the other side of the body in a way that you feel a stretch in your lower back. Hold the position and count till 10. Now repeat the position with your right knee. Complete 5–10 sets of spinal twists to get moving after a long night's sleep.

### Side Oblique Stretch

With this standing side oblique stretch, you get your hips and waist muscles working. Start by standing with feet shoulder-distance apart. Start by lifting your right arm overhead and your palm facing inward. Feel the stretch on your arm and side and bend towards the left side. Hold and count till 10, then switch sides.

[Source: <https://aginghealthytoday.com> | January 3, 2021 ++]

## Gold Star Spouses

Available VA Benefits—During World War I, Americans hung blue stars in their windows for every family member serving in the military. If a loved one died in service, a gold star replaced the blue one. Since then, the Gold Star has symbolized the spouses and family members of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Every year on April 5, America salutes these spouses on Gold Star Spouses Day. If you are a survivor of a fallen Veteran or service member, you are not forgotten. VA provides a variety of benefits that can help you navigate life after your loss. Available benefits include:

- **Education and training.** Survivor's and Dependents' Education Assistance Program may be able to help you pay for school or job training through a GI Bill program.
- **VA home loan guaranty.** You can apply for a Certificate of Eligibility to help you buy, build, repair or refinance a home. You may also qualify for a VA-backed home loan if you are having trouble paying your mortgage.
- **Life insurance.** You may be able to convert a spousal Family Service members' Group Life Insurance policy to an individual policy within 120 days from the date of your loved one's passing.
- **Pre-need eligibility determination for burial in a VA national cemetery.** VA can help you plan ahead to make the burial process easier for your family at that time.

• **Burial benefits and memorial items.** You can apply for help paying burial costs, request memorial items or learn about grief counseling and transition support.

• **Survivors Pension.** Survivors Pension offers monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits set by Congress.

• **Compensation for surviving spouses and dependents.** You may qualify for a tax-free monetary benefit called VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC). Visit <https://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/> to learn more about the

documents you will need to apply for VA DIC.

There are some specific eligibility requirements for each of these benefits, so be sure to check out the full list of family member benefits at

<https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/#benefits-for-spouses,-dependents,and-survivors> to find out which benefits you may qualify for and how to access them. VA recognizes the sacrifices Gold Star spouses have made for their country. To honor the legacy of your loved one, VA continues to ensure that you and your family receive the benefits and services you have earned.

[Source: Vantage Point | April 5, 2021 ++] ■

## 4 things you can't get back:

The stone after it's thrown.

The word after it's said.

The occasion after it's missed.

The time after it's gone.



**SO, WRITE YOUR OWN PERSONAL STORY TODAY.  
BEFORE THEY CONDUCT YOUR FUNERAL SERVICE.**

## Guest Opinion

*Editors' Note: The following is a speech delivered by G. David Bednar, a private investor and former Marine Infantry Officer, to a group of retired and active duty Marines in the New York area. We present Bednar's words here as a reminder that, in his memorable phrasing, "the brave, independent mind is essential to organizations of all sizes."*

Thirty years ago, I sat in your seat. Since, I have done many different things, including earning two degrees from Harvard and working at prestigious banks on Wall Street. But I value nothing more than being a Marine. No amount of money provided the joy of leading Echo 2/7 to the top of Lost Cannon Peak at Bridgeport; nothing was as momentous as speeding through the burning oil fields for Kuwait City; no pride compares to looking at the Iwo Jima Memorial and knowing you own a tiny piece of it.

When a Harvard graduate is convicted of insider trading, it's just news. When a Marine dishonors the Corps, it's personal—like family. For decades I have known a former 0341 (Marine mortar man) who has been an LA County Sheriff's Deputy for 25 years. He is a very hard man. The first time I saw him betray emotion was when he shared his son's graduation photo from Recruit Depot San Diego. Two of my sons are Marine Option ROTC. I sent them his picture with advice they have heard before: Marine Corps leadership is the greatest responsibility before it is the greatest honor. Lives are at stake, as are other things just as important.

At firms like Goldman Sachs I worked with smart, competitive people. They are experts at identifying possessions of value and driven in their pursuit. But when conversation there turned to my time as a Marine, I often noted something like regret, perhaps even jealousy. These masters of attainment sensed something even greater in the title of Marine.

Why do these people, and our society, look up to the Marine Corps? The answer is simple: because of its values. Through two and a half thousand years of recorded history the greatest glory a man could achieve was on the battlefield. The Spartan Hoplite, the bowman at Agincourt, and the Marine at Belleau Wood were esteemed for the same reason. Back home, theirs was the seat of honor. Today, our society celebrates nothing more than tolerance; it cultivates relativism, even cynicism. But these are "negative" virtues; they don't require or celebrate admirable action as much as they mandate doing or believing nothing at all. They are hollow, lacking nourishment for the human spirit. No amount of indoctrination can change a man's soul: what it is, what it needs.

The Marine Corps celebrates very different virtues. Honor, excellence, accountability, integrity, commitment, discipline, respect for tradition, and courage, the king of virtues. Some call these values "old"; the wise call them "proven." A man named Oliver Wendell Holmes gave the Soldier's

Faith Speech in 1895. He was an extraordinary man, a Supreme Court Justice and veteran of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry in the Civil War. This unit took some of the highest casualties in a war of unusual carnage. Wounded three separate times, he lost many friends. Despite his hardships, he spoke of a need in mankind: "The man of the future may want something different," he said. "But who of us could endure a world, although cut up into five acre lots, and having no man upon it who was not well fed and well housed, without the divine folly of honor?"

Our society flees discomfort, to say nothing of danger. As you know, the Marine Corps specializes in discomfort! It runs to danger! We hear calls to ban football in our country because it's too dangerous. Here is another observation from my life: the activities from which I derived the most satisfaction—football, mountain climbing, and being a Marine—all required strapping on a helmet. Two hundred years ago a very wise man named Goethe said, "the dangers of life are infinite, and among them is safety." America is forgetting a human truth that the Corps has not: the greatest things are always the hardest things.

Institutions across America are buckling. Many in leadership positions in business, education, and government act on coercion and fear, not on what they believe. This is a warning to the Corps. Our inheritance is not guaranteed and must be earned every day. The brave, independent mind is essential to organizations of all sizes. In a world of crumbling standards, appreciate the blessing of membership in an enterprise unwilling to betray itself in forced compromise.

The essence of leadership is seeking and achieving what is thought impossible. At some point, every Marine is assured this experience. It tempers us like a sword, making us stronger. How many of our countrymen have missed the benefit of this hard but invaluable lesson? When the Corps faced extinction, the commandant refused to plead: the value of the Corps spoke for itself. "The bended knee," General Vandergrift said, "is not a tradition of our Corps."

The USMC has been defending America for 245 years. The nation has never needed us more. Our marksmanship and tactics, yes, but even more our values Marines don't BS each other. Many of us have faced a choice between what we are allowed to say and what we really believe. I have never seen so much fear in the home of the brave. This is a threat to the freedom that is the soul of America.

As Americans, it is our right to speak the truth. As Marines, it is our obligation. The USMC is one of the most

diverse organizations in the world. We were leaders in breaking down racial and ethnic barriers. As in the teams I played on in high school and college, ethnicity is totally irrelevant to what matters: winning. The Corps does not divide based on immutable superficialities of skin color; we unify in a shared mission. Marines are shades of one color: green. When I see a Marine, I see a sister or brother. Racial division, like a virus, dooms teams, units, and nations. Marine Corps values are its antibodies.

Everyone here raised their hand to stand at the front of a line 330 million people long, to be the "tip of the spear" for our country. If you don't believe in America, you are in the wrong place. But I am here to assure you that you are in the right place. I have been a citizen and student of our nation for 55 years. I have traveled and lived around the world. Like the Marine Corps, America sets for itself the highest bar.

Our nation has often fallen short. But America has never stopped fighting to improve and uphold the highest ideals; we are a noble work in progress among nations. The more

I know our country, understand its place in the world, its striving, its failings and glories, the more I know America is the greatest modern political achievement on earth. She is worthy, if anything is worthy, of the sacrifice asked of Marines.

The Marine Corps is a fighting force, but even more a fighting spirit. We have jets and artillery, but our values are our greatest weapons. We don't just have a history: we stand watch as guardians of an unmatched tradition. These things make us Marines. Without them the title is just another word and the dress blues are just another uniform. Be courageous. Speak the truth even if you are the only one who will. Preserve, nurture and spread our virtues in a land where they are scarce. America needs leadership, and that means it needs Marines.

G. David Bednar served as an officer in the United States Marine Corps from 1987–1991 and served in Operation Desert Storm. He works in finance in New York City. This address was delivered February 10, 2021. ■

## Photos from Vietnam



### Ontos in Hue City, Feb 1968

Rick Walters: Ontos = 226721, 3rd platoon. 3rd arrived in mid-Feb by LCU, same transport for 1st Tanks.

This Ontos was Charlie C-23 and was brand new in 1965. It appears to still be ticking in 1968. Today it is in the Mohave Desert.

John Wear: This is the MAC-V compound in Hue. Since the tank's number (A-52) is from 1st Tanks, the date on the photo is after Feb 15th... and after A Co, 1st Tanks arrived in the city.

As you may know the tank number is the A Co, HQ blade tank. And since it is the only blade tank involved in the Hue City battle, it is the same one that appeared in Life magazine with all of the WIA grunts (right)



# The Honor of Our Corps

BY ROBERT A HALL

*When the beer, it flows like water  
And the talk, it turns to war,  
Then we speak of absent comrades  
And the Honor of our Corps.*

*Of the fights in distant places  
And the friends who are no more,  
Dying faithful to the nation  
And the Honor of our Corps.*

*Though our bones are growing brittle  
And our eyes are growing poor,  
Still our hearts are young and valiant  
For the Honor of our Corps.*

*Should the Eagle, Globe and Anchor  
Call us to the field once more,  
We would muster at the summons  
For the Honor of our Corps.*

*When the years have told our story  
And we close the final door,  
We will pass to you for keeping  
Bright the Honor of our Corps.*

*Will you take the awesome burden?  
Will you face the fire of war?  
Will you proudly bear the title  
For the Honor of our Corps?*

Well...just had another "friend" delete and block me on FB....guy is from France. We where talking about sports history. He asked me "who won the first Tour de France." Apparently the 5th Panzer Division was not the correct answer.



# MATH FOR MARINES



• JOKES • JOKES • JOKES • JOKES •

**"Sir, didn't you see the giant tank on the road?"**



**-- BUT... BUT... it's camouflaged!**

Editor's Note: Since this is the 4th issue of 2021 and in a few months it will be the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, we decided to include some holiday stories for your enjoyment.

## Remember "The Chosin Few" this Thanksgiving

OPINION BY GEORGE F. WILL—NOVEMBER 25, 2020

Seventy Thanksgivings ago, Pfc. Warren Wiedhahn was 21, far from home and freezing. During a winter of record cold, nighttime temperatures were more than 30 degrees below zero in the North Korean mountains. The day after Thanksgiving, as Wiedhahn peered at the ridge across the valley from his listening post, suddenly "whistles and bells and bugles" — modes of communication for a People's Liberation Army that also used Mongolian ponies and camels — revealed that hordes of Chinese soldiers wanted to kill him.

He says he and his fellow Marines burned out the barrels of their machine guns and ran out of ammunition that day, and that much worse was to come. He had craved adventure, and found it.

Born in Upstate New York, too late for World War II, he, like many teenagers then, thought he had missed an adventure. And he thought his brother-in-law, who had been wounded at Guadalcanal, "looked good in his [Marine dress] blues." So, Wiedhahn enlisted in the Marine Corps after his Methodist mother made him swear on her Bible that, after his three-year commitment, he would go to college.

After a deployment in China, he was stationed at Camp Pendleton north of San Diego, where on June 24, 1950, a bartender asked him and a friend, "Are you Marines? Better get up to Pendleton because you're going to war." Told that North Korea had invaded South Korea, Wiedhahn's friend wondered where Korea was. God, Mark Twain supposedly said, created war so that Americans would learn geography.

His unit of the 1st Marine Division immediately plunged into combat at

Pusan on the peninsula's southern tip, where South Korean and U.S. forces were besieged. On Sept. 15, his regiment participated in the most daring operation of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's 44-year career, the amphibious landing at Inchon, some 200 miles north of Pusan, near Seoul. And near North Korea, where MacArthur soon made the worst blunder of his career — dividing his forces while ignoring evidence that China would intervene in force.

MacArthur had told President Harry S. Truman at Wake Island on Oct. 15 that "organized resistance will be terminated by Thanksgiving." Eager to reach the Yalu River along the North Korea-China border, MacArthur ordered the 1st Marine Division to make an amphibious landing on North Korea's eastern shore and march north to the Chosin Reservoir.

There it became cut off, surrounded by 100,000 of the eventually 300,000 Chinese troops on the peninsula. The 1st Division's commander, Gen. Oliver P. Smith, said, "We're going to come out like Marines, fighting!" Intrepid airmen, pushing their aircraft to their limits in the thin air of the mountains, parachuted in enormous components for rebuilding a blown bridge, a harrowing tale told in Hampton Sides's magnificent history of the Chosin campaign, "On Desperate Ground."

Wiedhahn says "what saved us" in the fighting withdrawal from Chosin was "the World War II leadership," the noncommissioned Marine officers who had fought from Guadalcanal to Peleliu to Okinawa. And Navy and Marine aircraft flying off carriers. In retirement, Wiedhahn still runs a tour business, taking veterans to bat-

tle sites from Belleau Wood in France to, next summer, Iwo Jima. On a trip to Beijing, he met four People's Liberation Army veterans who had fought at Chosin. When he asked them what they had feared most, they instantly replied, "Your aircraft."

Wiedhahn recalls that during two weeks of nonstop fighting, some of it hand to hand, during the march to safety, medics, overwhelmed by severely wounded Marines, had to practice triage medicine: Dying Marines, "put outside the tent, froze to death."

After the Marines — including the father of Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2015 to 2019 — reached the North Korean city of Hungnam and ships that took them to safety, the ships returned for the "Christmas miracle." Between Dec. 15 and 24, more than 86,000 refugees were evacuated to South Korea, including the parents of Moon Jae-in, the current president of South Korea.

Since ending a 32-year Marine career (mom was content when he became an officer) that included 1968–1969 near Vietnam's demilitarized zone, Wiedhahn has lived in Northern Virginia, in a community with many immigrants from Korea — "all good friends and all good neighbors." He is president of the dwindling ranks of "The Chosin Few," the organization of that battle's veterans.

Trim and energetic at 91, Wiedhahn had little to be thankful for 70 years ago. Today, his nation should give thanks for him and others like him, including hundreds who are still in North Korea's mountains.

(Continued on page 27)

# President Reads Marine's Letter Before House

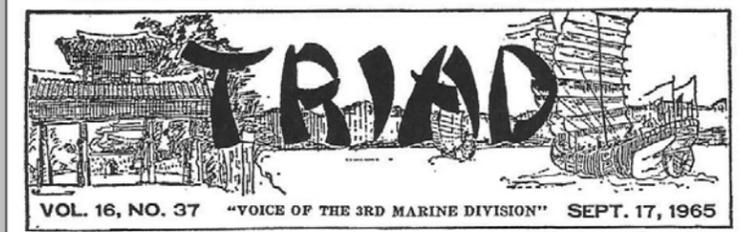
By Sgt F. D. Dunlap  
DA NANG, Vietnam — In all probability the President of the United States receives hundreds of letters every day, but rarely does one of those letters bear the return address of a U. S. Marine. It is even more uncommon when such a letter is given wide publicity and moves the President to have it read on the floor of the House of Representatives.

But that was the destiny of a letter received by the President from Cpl Dennis L. Stefanacci (Ambridge, Pa.), presently serving in Vietnam. Cpl Stefanacci, with three years Marine service, reported for duty in Vietnam during early July 1965. He was assigned duty with the 2nd Bn, Seventh Marine Regiment. Several weeks later he lost a

good friend who was killed in action during a brief but fierce encounter with the Viet Cong. "I became bitter about it and wrote my fiancée expressing my feeling," Stefanacci said. "She wrote back telling me I shouldn't feel bitter, that the VC were only doing exactly as we are doing—fighting for a cause they believe in." He said that statement caused him considerable thought for several hours, and he had a "long talk" with himself. He thought of why he was fighting over here. He said his thoughts turned to the United States and he realized how "grateful and grateful" he was to be an American and how glad he was for the opportunity of being born and raised there and for the American way of life. "I realized that freedom is something every American is born with, even though many of them give it little thought, just taking it for granted," he said. "Over here it is different. These people have been under communist domination for so long that many of them don't know what it means to be able to do as you wish, and go when you want to and where you want to... in short, where you don't know what freedom is."

He said he recalled hearing newscasts and reading in newspapers that much criticism was directed at President Johnson's policies and views concerning Vietnam and his sending American servicemen here to fight. "That is why I thought of writing the President," he said simply. "I have a lot of respect for him and feel the criticism of him and his policies were unjustified."

"It never occurred to me that President Johnson would see the letter, but I thanked him for the opportunity of serving here," he continued. "I told him that I wished there was no war and no killing, but communism must be stopped and this is a good place to help stop it." Stefanacci said in the letter that the men who have been killed in the war "...and that's what it is even though no declaration of war has been made" have not died in vain, but for a good cause—that of freedom from communism and its terrorist ways. He added that he has two older brothers who served during World War II—Emil, who served with the Marine Corps, and Henry, with the Army. A third brother, Gildo, also served with the Marines in Korea and his father served in World War I. "Now," he continued in the letter, "this is my chance to do my part—to defend our constitution, and my life is dedicated to that cause." Advised that his letter was seen by the President, who had it read on the floor of the House of Representatives, the young Marine said, "It came as a complete surprise," he said. "I can't believe it... I just can't believe it. It makes me feel awfully proud. "If the publication of the letter will enlighten the American public as to the reason we are fighting in Vietnam, then I am even more proud and glad since our being here is justified and, definitely, for the best." Stefanacci is presently attached to the Command Section of the III Marine Amphibious Force.



## Buddist Orphans Treated To Party

By LCpl R. K. Sandbank  
HUE/PHU BAI, Vietnam—Parties are a rarity for Marines serving in Vietnam but it was even more of a rarity for the children of the Hue Buddhist Orphanage when they were treated to one by Phu Bai area Marines. The party was given for the 150 orphans as part of 3rd Bn, Fourth Marine Regiment, "People-to-People" program. Ranging in ages from infants to 15-year-olds, the children were treated to cake and soft drinks and were given a taste of American rock 'n' roll and folk music. According to Navy Lt LeRoy E. Muenzler, battalion chaplain, the children also received badly needed dishes, bowls and medical supplies. Funds for the party were collected during the battalion's Sunday morning church services.



NEW VC WEAPON—Sgt Cline James of 2/4 holds a bamboo viper he retrieved from an unoccupied Viet Cong spider hole. The VC place the poisonous snakes in hidden holes and tunnels to strike at Marines conducting search-and-clear operations. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Cpl J. F. Gorak)



LONG, LONG TRAIL—It's a hot, sweaty, walking war for men of "H" Co., Third Marine Regiment, as they kick up clouds of dust on a recent search-and-clear operation in the Da Nang sector of Vietnam. The 3rd Division Marines accounted for more than 30 Viet Cong killed and captured and helped 50 Vietnamese refugee families move to a secured area. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Pfc G. R. Durbin)

## Air/Ground Team Efforts Saves Downed MC Pilot

By Gysgt Tom Segel  
DA NANG, Vietnam, Aug. 23 — The Marine Corps air/ground teamwork performs just as efficiently saving lives as it does on assaults against the Viet Cong. The gears which meshed to rescue 1stLt John Dodson of El Paso, Ill., are proof. FirstLt Dodson was piloting a Crusader jet which lost power on take-off and crashed five miles southeast of here yesterday. When he realized that there was no hope of avoiding a crash, he ejected... a bare 10 seconds before the plane ripped a jagged slash across the ground. The crash occurred close to the Marine perimeter, but no Marine or Vietnamese lives or property—other than the aircraft—were lost. When the lieutenant's parachute slapped him to the ground, he found himself waist deep in sticky rice paddy mud. Worse, the area immediately south of him has been under constant harassment by the Viet Cong. Within minutes, the air/ground Marine team made 1stLt Dodson its primary interest. A flight of Skyhawk jets, returning from an air strike, was diverted to circle the crash site. Seconds later, a pair of Phantom jets from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA)-513 launched from this airstrip and flew over above the orbiting Skyhawks. A platoon of 3rd Marine Division tanks on patrol dispatched one tank at flank speed to provide fire support, if needed, until the rest caught up. While that was going on, the stripping crew finished its work and was "copter out." The line of tanks began firing their destruction mission. All that's left of the Crusader now is twisted, charred rubble. (Cont'd on Page 4)

## Morning Sun Brings Relief From Tense Vietnam Nights

By LCpl Dan Bisher  
DA NANG, Vietnam—"I thought it was machine guns when we first got hit. I was scared; my mind went blank. Then I remembered to get my head down." This is how Cpl Peter J. Brewer (Davenport, Iowa) felt as the Viet Cong attacked the defense perimeter of the strategic air base here two days after his arrival. Brewer is a member of "L" Co., Ninth Marine Regiment, which forms a part of the guard for the air base and men inside the perimeter. The troops of "L" Co., were surprised when the attack began. It was their first day on post. But they returned the fire with such ferocity that the Viet Cong turned and fled. "L" Co., commanded by Capt David Colcombe (Pittsburgh, Pa.), suffered no casualties but an unconfirmed number of Viet Cong were killed and several more wounded. Eddie Bourgeois (San Diego, Calif.) was the first one to be fired upon. He was checking positions with one of the squad leaders when the attack began. Bourgeois said the VC came within 50 feet of the Marine positions during the fighting. Excitement and action are not always the story for "L" Co. For the most part the Marines find that guarding the perimeter is monotonous. Loneliness is only one of their enemies. Sitting alone in the black of night in a strange land, there is time to think of better days and better things. As the sun peeps over the horizon with it comes a feeling of relief that a night of tension and suspicion is finally over. Then they sleep, eat and relax by writing letters and reading tattered paperback novels. The rest of the day is spent improving their defensive positions and on other routine chores. The positions the Marines occupy are quite unique. They live in holes, so they make them as comfortable as possible. Most of the positions have built-up platforms on the bottom so that during the coming monsoons the water will drain to the bottom of the hole and keep the men from sitting or standing in a puddle. During the daylight hours the Vietnamese children watch with curious eyes through the barbed wire fence that separates them from the Marines. Often they will play little games to amuse the men. On many occasions the Leathernecks have received sniper fire from nearby villages and jungles just outside the perimeter. No Marine has been hit yet and the sniper fire has served to keep them on the alert. According to 2ndLt Terry DeLong (Macungie, Pa.), guarding the perimeter is an "exciting job" and he is proud to "be doing a job that the whole world is watching." When the sun sets and darkness falls upon Da Nang, "L" Co. is on the job, providing the tightest security possible with all the efficiency it knows how to muster.

## Marines Cut Recruit Training To 8 Weeks

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — The Marine Corps has reduced its recruit training at Parris Island, S.C., and San Diego, Calif., from 12 to eight weeks. A similar intensified program adding hours to the training week was used during World War II and the Korean Conflict. WASHINGTON (AFPS)—Free mailing privileges went into effect Sept. 1, for U.S. military personnel in the Republic of Viet-Nam. "Free mail" consisting of letters and postcards will automatically go as air mail to any place in the United States and to any military post office world-wide. To receive the free mailing privilege the sender, in his own handwriting, must write "free" in the upper corner of the address side. In the upper left side, the name, service number, grade and complete military address of the sender must be noted.

# Starlight Defeats VC

By WO Jim Smith

CHU LAI, Vietnam—The Marine Corps' air-ground team, with supporting naval gunfire, has defeated the Viet Cong in the largest and most significant American victory in Vietnam.

Operation Starlight, a scheduled four-day regimental search-and-destroy mission in the Van Tuong village complex 12 miles southeast of here, has thus far netted 600 confirmed Viet Cong dead, 147 suspects detained, and 127 weapons and numerous war materials seized. Naval gunfire, in addition to causing heavy enemy ground casualties, destroyed 39 VC boats.

More than 500 Vietnamese refugees lined the rice paddies seeking Marine protection from the Viet Cong. The refugees were given clothing, food and shelter and provided with medical treatment.

Starlight began at 6:30 a.m. Aug. 13 when three rifle companies from the 2nd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, were heli-lifted deep into enemy-held territory. Two rifle companies from the 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Regiment, landed simultaneously from amphibious tractors to form a blocking force for the heliborne assault.

Aircraft from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM)-161 at Hue/Phu Bai and Da Nang, based HMM-261 and -361 landed the three rifle companies with no enemy opposition. The helicopter crews remained in the middle of the fight throughout the day, flying more than 12 consecutive hours supporting the ground units with ammunition, food, water, and evacuation flights for the wounded.

The initial clash with the Viet Cong lasted close to eight hours. The Marine lines held strong. The Viet Cong, with their backs to the South China Sea and supported by numerous 57mm recoilless rifles, 81mm mortars, and heavy automatic weapons, fell in defeat.

"A strong enemy force hit us with everything but the Brooklyn Bridge," reported Marine Pfc John R. Womble of Covington, Ky., a gunner aboard an M-48 tank which received four direct hits from a VC recoilless rifle. The tank and the four-man crew never went out of action. It also drew more than 150 rounds of small arms fire, and the driver's "scopes were destroyed by enemy rifle grenades."

Many of the Viet Cong dead were accounted for during the first day's action by Marine aircraft, artillery and naval gunfire.

Enemy obstacles in the helicopter landing zones were cleared earlier in the morning by naval gunfire, artillery and Skyhawks from Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)-12 which collectively delivered tons of ordnance into enemy troops and fortifications.

Gun crews aboard the cruiser USS Galveston and destroyers Orleck and Pritchett stood off the coast before, during and after the landing and shelled enemy positions continuously with their five and six-inch guns.

The operation was the heaviest concentrated air action against an enemy since World War II. More than 120 tons of bombs and 600 rockets were delivered against the VC by jets from Marine Fighter Attack Squadrons (VMFA)-51 and 542, and Skyhawks from Marine Attack Squadrons (VMA)-214, 225 and 311.

The VC attempted two company-size probing actions against the Marines during the first night.

Neither was successful.

Moderate enemy resistance was met during the second day. Numerous VC dead from the first day's action were found in tunnels and spider caves as the Marines searched for the enemy. A brief fire-fight cost the enemy 15 dead on the second day.

The battle-weary 2nd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, and the 3rd Bn., Third Marine Regiment, were withdrawn from the fight on the third day. Elements of the 1st and 3rd Bn's. of the Seventh Marine Regiment began mopping up operations.

"I" and "L" companies of the 7th Marines, part of the Seventh Fleet's Special Landing Force, were heli-lifted from the USS Iwo Jima into the action by HMM-163 at 5 p.m. of the first day. "M" Co. landed the following morning from the USS Taladega to bolster the 3 1/2-mile frontal attack.

President Lyndon B. Johnson, in a message to MajGen Lewis W. Walt, commanding general of the III Marine Amphibious Force, said in part: "I extend my heartfelt thanks and congratulations—and those of the American people—to the military units under your command which have achieved a clear cut victory against the 1st Viet Cong Regiment at Chu Lai.

"This nation is deeply proud of its fearless fighting sons. They



LIFE SAVER—Holding the helmet that saved his life is Maj James E. Clark (Bellefonte, Pa.), a communications officer with the 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam. The major was hit by a fragment from a Viet Cong 57mm recoilless rifle during the large-scale amphibious operation in the Chu Lai sector Aug. 18-22. Maj Clark credits the helmet with deflecting the fragment, saving his life and leaving him with only a minor wound. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Pfc G. R. Durbin.)

will have the continued, united, and determined support of their people at home. Our hearts go out to the families and comrades of those who have given their lives."



BEACH ACTION—A Marine Corps ONTOs searches a beach for Viet Cong while Vietnamese fishermen go about their daily tasks. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Sgt L. D. Choate.)



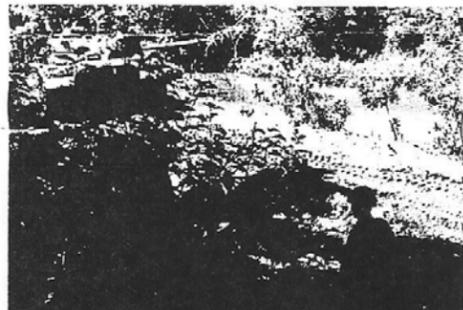
REINFORCEMENTS—Members of the 3rd Bn., Seventh Marine Regiment, land by helicopter from aboard the USS Iwo Jima. Three infantry battalions participated in the air-ground action which wiped out most of a VC regiment. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Sgt L. D. Choate.)



VILLAGE SEARCH—Troops of the 2nd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, search a small village for hidden Viet Cong. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Sgt L. D. Choate.)



ON LINE—A platoon from the 2nd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, moves on line in a search-and-clear mission during Operation Starlight. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Sgt L. D. Choate.)



RIVER SEARCH—A Marine tank searches a riverbed. The search party found several holes along the shores which could be hiding spots for Viet Cong. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Sgt L. D. Choate.)



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## 3/4 Cleaning Up Villages With Soap And Water

By LCpl R. K. Sandbank

HUE/PHU BAI, Vietnam—Marines in this sector have been cleaning up—on the Viet Cong with rifles and hand grenades, and on children in the surrounding villages with soap and water.

The 3rd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, which has killed 38 VC to date, has been operating a bathing service for youngsters as part of the battalion's Medical Civilian—Assistance—Program (MEDCAP).

"Our primary effort," said Lt Paul R. Ek (Oceanside, Calif.), commander of 3rd Bn's. Joint Action Company, "is to make every river a bathtub."

According to Ek, one of the major health problems in the villages is personal hygiene. He added that it is hoped that through MEDCAP the children will eventually take the baths on their own.

"The children seem to enjoy their baths," he said. "Some of them have come back for seconds within an hour."



BRIEFING—LtGen Victor H. Krulak, Marine Corps Pacific area commander, briefs U. S. Marine advisors to the Vietnamese Army I Corps units during his tour of Vietnam Aug. 18-21. The advisors are hosted bi-monthly at a briefing by MajGen Lewis W. Walt, commanding general of the III Marine Amphibious Force and 3rd Marine Division. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by Sgt J. F. Fraley.)

## 10,000th Viet Patient Treated By 3/4 MEDCAP

By LCpl R. K. Sandbank

HUE/PHU BAI, Vietnam—A team of Navy doctors and corpsman treated their 10,000th Vietnamese patient as part of 3rd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, Medical Civilian Assistance Program (MEDCAP) on Aug. 31.

During the past four months this team has made 56 medical

visits in the sector, treating about 200 patients each visit.

Observing the team in action, LtCol Phan Van Khoa, Thua Thien Province chief, said, "The United States Marines are doing a fine job here. I am sure that working together, the Americans and Vietnamese will overcome the Viet Cong and this is a step in that direction."

The team is currently beginning Phase II of the MEDCAP program: training young villagers in basic medical procedures. When the training is complete the people will be provided the necessary supplies to establish full-time medical stations in each village.

At present, village medical personnel work under the guidance of their American counterparts.

## Assault Company Initiated To RVN

CHU LAI, Vietnam—Special Air Mobile Assault Co., of Marine Aircraft Group-36 has received its initiation to Vietnam. It had its first encounter with the Viet Cong shortly after arriving at Chu Lai Sept. 1.

The various squads of men from various squadrons of MAG-36, was being used as a perimeter defense when an attack by the VC rudely welcomed the unit aboard.

Pfc Julius L. Bowen (Hugo, Okla.), a machine gunner, recalled the action. "I saw movement on the beach, about 100 yards from my post, so I challenged. In reply, I was fired upon. I immediately put my machine gun into action, returning the fire. After a short exchange of rounds, the VC withdrew."

Bowen received a superficial wound on the left arm which was treated with the application of an adhesive bandage.

## LtGen Krulak Makes 4 Day Tour Of RVN

By Sgt Ben Marrufo

DA NANG, Vietnam—LtGen Victor H. Krulak, Pacific Marine commander, got more than he bargained for during his four-day tour of Marine defenses in Vietnam which ended here Aug. 21.

From the moment he stepped off his C-130 "Hercules" at the Da Nang airfield, he busied himself with finding out how the Marines have improved their position in Vietnam.

Returning to the airstrip at Chu Lai, he walked down the flight line to speak to men of Marine Aircraft Group-12, who had formed to meet him.

10 minutes was back in the battle zone talking to his Marines.

Although the schedule for his visit had been laid out in advance, his immediate concern was to see how his Marines were faring in the battle.

MajGen Lewis Walt, III Marine Amphibious Force commander, had arrived just moments before from the battlefield, still clad in his combat helmet, to meet the general.

The general kept only his first appointment on the first day's schedule which was a luncheon with the mayor of Da Nang and BrigGen Nguyen Thi, Vietnamese I Corps commander.

At an artillery position there, the general was shown a demonstration of a coordinated fire mission between the Vietnamese artillery unit and the Marine guns. The mission was entirely controlled by a Vietnamese lieutenant who marked the target with a round from his position, then called the Marine guns into action.

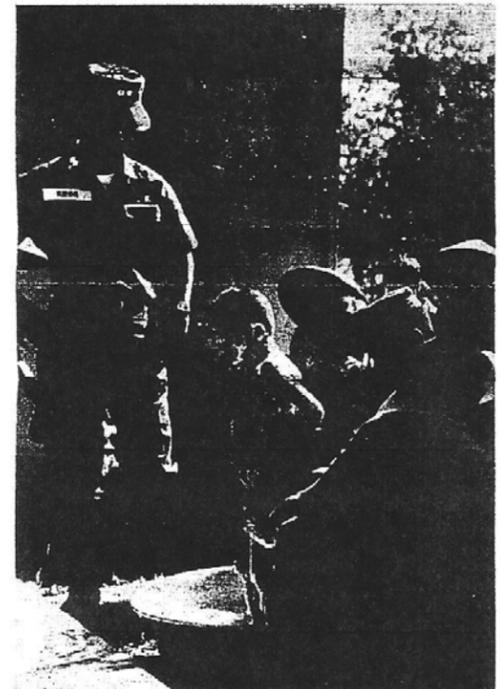
General Krulak flew back to Hue/Phu Bai, the northernmost defense position held by Marines of the 3rd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, 4th Bn., Twelfth Marine Regiment and HMM-161. Later, the general flew to Hue/Phu Bai, the northernmost defense position held by Marines of the 3rd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment, 4th Bn., Twelfth Marine Regiment and HMM-161.

On Friday (Aug. 20), the general flew to Qui Nhon, the southernmost Marine defense position, where he visited with members of the 2nd Bn., Seventh Marine Regiment. He continued south of Saigon and there conferred with the commander of the U. S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Gen William C. Westmoreland.

General Krulak concluded his tour with a medal presentation at the Third Marine Regiment west of Da Nang and a press conference with members of the Da Nang press corps.

While talking of the Chu Lai operation and of the casualties suffered by Marines there, he said, "A dead Marine is a tragedy... a wounded one is only somewhat less a tragedy, but you can't equate flesh and blood with achievement in terms of the inspiration that this victory has given our side or the damage done the enemy."

"Our casualties were light," he pointed out, "but we don't take them lightly."



CLEANING UP—LtCol Phan Van Khoa, Thua Thien Province chief, observes Marines of the 3rd Bn., Fourth Marine Regiment's Joint Action Company giving baths to children of Thuy Tan village as part of the Marine Corps Medical Civilian Assistance Program. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by LCpl Jim Hallas)

**Antsville**

Pvt. Cong, for action beyond the call of duty in closing with the imperialist enemy and destroying one of his machine guns.....

I take great pleasure and pride in being able to award you the supreme order of the Red Star with the special distinguishing mark of the ant cluster.....

.....posthumously

### Sports Quiz

(AFPS Weekly Feature)

1. Swimmer Bernie Wrightson of Arizona State University recently won what three titles at the National AAU Outdoor Championships in suburban Toledo, Ohio?
2. How long did it take Cornelius Choy to land the largest catch of the 1965 Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament?
3. First Lieutenant Billy Mills, USMC, recently beat German Distance Champion Lutz Philip by more than 100 meters in the 10,000 meter run in what time?
4. The University of Michigan football team lost its final game to Chicago in 1905 by a score of 2-0. How many points per season did the team average from 1901 to 1905?
5. Who was the first left-handed golfer to win the British Open Golf Championship?

**Answer**  
 Zealand won the title in 1963.  
 5. "Lefty" Bob Charles of New Zealand won the title in 1963.  
 4. The team averaged 556 points per season in the early 1900s.  
 3. The team averaged 556 points per season in the early 1900s.  
 2. In a faster time.  
 1. Wrightson swept the men's events, three-meter and 100-meter, and the women's 100-meter and 200-meter.

### Air - Ground.....

(Cont'd From Page 1)

Two helicopters from Marine Aircraft Group-16, on emergency standby, took off. One flew south to pick up the lieutenant; the other rotated across Da Nang's airstrip to load technicians who, later, stripped the crashed jet of all classified material.

The tank was first to reach Dodson. He was loaded aboard and brought back through the rest of the tank patrol which, by that time, had arrived and formed a defensive line, their gun snouts roving over suspected Viet Cong avenues.

The copter next picked up the lieutenant and took him back to his flightline, where a doctor was waiting.

### CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Answer to Previous Puzzle

ACROSS

- 1-Prison compartment
- 5-Highest point
- 9-Minor item
- 11-Atmospheric disturbances
- 13-Indefinite article
- 14-Wand
- 16-Exist
- 17-Pippen
- 19-Consumed
- 20-Wager
- 21-Part of foot
- 23-Animal's foot
- 24-Possessive pronoun
- 25-Showers
- 27-Searches
- 29-Deam
- 30-Inlet
- 31-Join
- 33-Animal coats
- 35-Entrasty note
- 38-Guido's high note
- 39-Total
- 41-Courageous
- 43-Weaken
- 44-Note of scale
- 45-Various
- 47-Parent (colloq.)
- 48-Vast herds
- 49-More rapid
- 50-Killed
- 53-Verve

DOWN

- 1-Chief attraction
- 2-Latin conjunction
- 3-Spanish plural article
- 4-Insects
- 5-Solar disk
- 6-The heart
- 7-Title of re-pict (abbr.)
- 8-Glaving coals
- 9-Sprint
- 10-Juices
- 11-Cooks slowly
- 12-Places

41-Sleep product

42-Heraldry: granted

43-9,050 (Roman number)

44-Baker's product

45-Hindu cymbals

49-9,050 (Roman number)

51-Note of scale

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## Recent V C Tactics Cause U.S. Optimism

WASHINGTON (AFPS)—Changing events over the past few weeks have led some high United States officials to voice cautious optimism for a solution to the immediate military situation in Viet-Nam.

A change in tactics and the high fatality rate among Viet Cong prompted the present consensus.

Recently, the Viet Cong have invoked terror and harassment on villagers instead of engaging in large unit operations.

This change in tactics is a reflection of the high level of activity by Republic of Viet-Nam forces, officials said, made possible by introduction of United States combat battalions as strategic reserves.

RVN forces previously held in strategic reserve can now be introduced into combat.

The optimism received impetus in mid-August when the biggest United States search and destroy operation of the war in Viet-Nam was conducted against Viet Cong forces about 55 miles southeast of Da Nang near the Marine Corps complex at Chu Lai, on the South China Sea coastline.

The successful assault was made by units of the Marine Corps' 7th Regimental Landing Team, supported by air, artillery and naval gunfire.

U.S. Army helicopters and light observation planes, Navy amphibious ships, a cruiser and destroyer, and Air Force transports participated in the mission, known as Operation Star Lite.

The mission materialized from intelligence reports indicating a Viet Cong force of about 2,000, situated in the Chu Lai area.

Preliminary reports indicate the Viet Cong may have suffered an estimated 1,000 killed, several hundred wounded and more than 100 captured.

Success of Operation Star Lite is attributed to accurate intelligence, quick response and security of operations plans, officials said.

It is anticipated that RVN forces will also engage in future actions in the Chu Lai area.

### Delivery By Air For Free Mail

WASHINGTON (AFPS)—The Department of Defense has praised enactment of free mailing privileges for service personnel in designated overseas areas, but feels more legislation is needed to insure air delivery service.

Congressional testimony was given by Army Adjutant General Major General Joe C. Lambert, appearing as DOD representative concerning H.R. 10441, one of several bills on the subject.

One provision supported by DOD would extend first-class letter air mail privileges for designated areas and for personnel hospitalized in service facilities due to disease or injury incurred in the area covered.

DOD did not lend support to a provision allowing parents, and others, to send certain air mail parcels to designated areas at a reduced rate.

General Lambert explained that DOD does not favor setting a precedent for the general public which would affect military budgets.

A Military Assistance Command Viet-Nam message reports the new pay bill "free mailing" provision was "enthusiastically received," but says to be truly beneficial it should insure air mail privileges.

Loss of time in surface mail delivery regardless of good motives would have an injurious effect on morale, the message stated. Service personnel in the Republic are using air mail almost exclusively, it was explained.

## New Reenlistment Bonus To Be Paid In Installments

WASHINGTON (AFPS)—Department of Defense officials are working with the services to put the new variable reenlistment bonus into effect as soon as possible.

No definite date has been set, but one service official estimated it would be sometime in October before certain critical skill reenlistees would begin receiving the bonus.

Under the new military pay law, an individual serving in a designated critical skill could receive several thousand dollars in addition to the regular reenlistment bonus, based on pay grade, term of reenlistment and longevity for pay purposes.

Critical skill first-termers authorized the bonus would receive a down payment upon reenlisting, with annual payments made each year thereafter, an official said.

An example would be a critical skill E-4 completing a four year enlistment and reenlisting for four years. The normal bonus would be \$864, four times a monthly base pay of \$216. If authorized the maximum variable bonus, the individual would receive an additional \$3,456 in four equal installments.

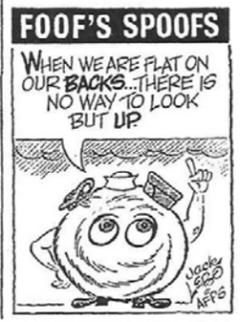
This means getting \$1,728 on reenlistment (normal bonus and first variable payment), then receiving three annual payments of \$864 for a \$4,320 total.

An E-5 under similar circumstances would receive \$5,232. For a six year reenlistment, the amount would be approximately \$7,000.

The new bonus does not count against normal reenlistment entitlements. A person may collect up to \$2,000 in normal bonuses during a service career.

In some meritorious cases, the variable bonus may be paid in fewer installments if the service secretary determines it to be in the individual's best interest.

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Blond, blue eyed, 21 year old Mary Hughes makes a delightful subject for any photographer. (Photo by American International Pictures, all rights reserved.)

### Short Stories (Continued from page 22)

## CHRISTMAS AT CAMP CARROLL, 1967

BY HARRY CHRISTIANSEN

As many who were there at that time may recall things were quiet . . . given the Christmas "cease fire" which went into effect during the day. Things were very quiet . . . no incoming . . . no outgoing . . . no road sweeps. My tank - the blade tank - was heavy and given the substantial rain hip deep mud - was unable to operate.

In my hometown Marblehead, MA I had seen many hurricanes, but nothing that would compare to this monsoon weather. The good new . . . no more combat, no more death . . . the bad news I miss my friend on R&R, 2nd Lt. Harris "Alfie" Himes. I always felt safe when Lt. Himes was with us.

On this day I was approached by Captain Kent, our commanding officer of Bravo Company, who asked me

if I could help to put together a tent for a Christmas gathering. I, of course, said that I could. Shortly thereafter 1st Sgt. White asked me the same thing and I agreed. He pointed toward a six-by truck loaded with lumber which could be unloaded and used for tables and benches along with a tent for the celebration. I didn't know where to start!

Then like a miracle came Lance Cpl. Jack Butcher. He organized a group of Privates and PFC's and within three to four hours the tent was up and four picnic tables along with benches were made and ready for the celebration - Christmas Eve at Camp Carrol, 1967.

As each platoon purchased round after round (each approved by 1st Sgt White) of beer which was consumed

by many including myself. I believe I closed the tent down close to 3am and staggered to my tank at the time. Once inside I received the following "sit rep" from Bunker 51. "Chris there are gooks in front of us laughing at us and throwing shit at us". My reply, "Well shoot 'em". Bunker 51 then opened up with 30 cal. At the time I thought I was responsible for breaking the Christmas Cease Fire. Actually, it was at least 3am or 4am Christmas Day!

Once the firing occurred the whole hill was illuminated with flares, and most of Bravo Company was too hung over to remember who did what or why, including me. Nothing was said the next morning by anyone including Captain Kent. I couldn't believe it!

### Santa

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

I remember tearing across town on my bike to visit Grandma on the day my brother dropped the bomb: "There is no Santa Claus," he jeered. "Even dummies know that!" My Grandma was not the gushy kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her "world-famous" cinnamon buns. I knew they were world-famous, because Grandma said so. It had to be true.

Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me. "No Santa Claus?" she snorted, "Ridiculous! Don't believe it. That rumor has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad!! Now, put on your coat, and let's go."

"Go? Go where, Grandma?" I asked. I hadn't even finished my second world-famous cinnamon bun.

"Where" turned out to be Kirby's General Store, the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars. That was a bundle in those days. "Take this money," she said, "and buy something for someone who needs it. I'll wait for you in the car." Then she turned and walked out of Kirby's.

I was only eight years old. I'd often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself. The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping.

For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill, wondering what to buy, and who on earth to buy it for.

I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbors, the kids at school, the people who went to my church.

I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobby Deck-

er. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollock's grade-two class. Bobby Decker didn't have a coat. I knew that because he never went out to recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note, telling the teacher that he had a cough, but all we kids knew that Bobby Decker didn't have a cough; he didn't have a good coat. I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobby Decker a coat! I settled on a red corduroy one that had a hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that.

"Is this a Christmas present for someone?" the lady behind the counter asked kindly, as I laid my ten dollars down. "Yes, ma'am," I replied shyly. "It's for Bobby."

The nice lady smiled at me, as I told her about how Bobby really needed a good winter coat. I didn't get any change, but she put the coat in a bag, smiled again, and wished me a Merry Christmas.

That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat (a little tag fell out of the coat, and Grandma tucked it in her Bible) in Christmas paper and ribbons and wrote, "To Bobby, From Santa Claus" on it.

Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy. Then she drove me over to Bobby Decker's house, explaining as we went that I was now and forever officially, one of Santa's helpers.

Grandma parked down the street from Bobby's house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes

by his front walk. Then Grandma gave me a nudge. "All right, Santa Claus," she whispered, "get going."

I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his door and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma.

Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally it did, and there stood Bobby.

Fifty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shiv-

ering, beside my Grandma, in Bobby Decker's bushes. That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were—ridiculous. Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team.

I still have the Bible, with the coat tag tucked inside: \$19.95.

May you always have LOVE to share,

HEALTH to spare and FRIENDS that care...

And may you always believe in the magic of Santa Claus!

## WHAT COURAGE MEANS TO A MARINE

BY C.C. KRULAK, COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

February 13, 1997

WASHINGTON— A Message from the Commandant to All Marines:

Courage is not the absence of fear, but is our personal assessment that something else is more important than the fear which confronts us. A life lived in fear is a life of bondage, while a life of courage is one which experiences liberty and freedom.

Courage is the determination to make the best of whatever circumstances you find yourself in—regardless of cost. More often than not, that

cost is not cheap. Shakespeare wrote, "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste death but once."

Courage is a necessary ingredient for living a life without regrets. It takes courage to make the right moral and ethical choices which confront us daily. Courage, acted out in our lives, watches out for the oppressed, speaks up for the weak, takes a stand against injustice and immorality, and does so at our own expense. But the courage to take a stand against what is popular and easy, when required, is the key to

experiencing a clear and uncluttered conscience.

United States Marines are renowned the world over for their courage, both in war and in peace. This fame and admiration which Marines have earned is based not on fearlessness, but on each individual act of bravery and the willingness of Marines to subordinate their fears for a higher calling and a greater good.

Semper Fidelis.

C.C. Krulak, Commandant of the Marine Corps  
— USMC—

Editor's Note: We received a hand written note from Tom and we painstakingly typed it out for your reading pleasure.

## A Letter from an Office Pogue

BY TOM HAYES  
Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks  
1967-1968

Dear VTA members,

As I sit her having dinner with Dale Dye, I keep thinking why does John Wear hate him so much? He certainly deserves the Pulitzer Prize for his book "Citadel."

Ok, all the above is bullshit, but I figured one sure quick way to get one of my stupid letter in the Sponson Box magazine was to mention Dale Dye and I know the hair on John's neck stands up and he arches his back like a

cat and starts hissing.

Also, please tell me that Dale Dye is not the guest speaker at the 2021 VTA reunion in Providence. Can anyone tell me if the area called C-2 or Charlie-2 was Cam Lo Hill? Charlie Co. HQ was at Cam Lo Hill from April '68 to Sept '68 and then we move to Mai Loc on the Cua Viet River.

(Editor's note: No, Mr Dye will not be the guest speaker. And "Charlie-2" was an artillery support base that was

located in the MSR between Cam Lo Hill and Con Thien.)

So I read that John Wear tried out for the 3rd Mar. Div. band? I don't remember sending him to the tryouts in Quant Tri...but lucky for us at Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks, he sucked and didn't make the band. He stayed w Charlie Co and became a "Legend in his own Mind."

As time goes by, we lose our tanks and cripple the artillery. What the hell

is happening? Where will the USMC go in the future? What support will the grunt have? Army tanks? Will the Army follow us or do we follow them?

So it seems as if any of the USMC tank veteran associations will be hard pressed to get new members in the future and will just wither away? Is this Commandant (Berger) an ass wipe or what? Is the USMC going away? Who will fight for us?

As I read the Sponson Box magazine, I see hardly any, if not zero letters or stories from non-1811 MOS's. Come on guys! Hundreds of you truck drivers, corpsmen, tank mechanics, supply and ammo techs, office pagues, cooks, comm. guys. Where the hell are you?

In reference to Bob Skeels' story "After Nam" in the most recent issue of the Sponson Box, he states that he got back to the World in 1970 and gets a part-time job as a bouncer in a bar at night. I guess that he had a really slack duty assignment. Clint Eastwood was a rising star in 1969 with Richard

Burton in "Where Eagles Dare" and "Kelly's Heroes." So he was pretty well known. He was also married then, so why was he sitting on a cigarette machine looking for women?

A question for John Wear: You received and published a letter from a James L. Tubbs, II. He states that his father, a tanker, was with 2/8 on Saipan and asks for help finding records of his father. I wonder how his father could be with 2/8 when he was a tanker. My own father, Pat Hayes was a BAR man with Baker Co, 1/8 on Saipan and said that he never had tanks or tankers in his outfit.

I also read the article on Gene Whitehead and wondering why his address was Thailand...and then he wrote his reply letter that he moved to Thailand to get away from the assholes who seem to be running the country now. I applaud you, Mr Whitehead, you are totally correct.

As an aide to Mr Whitehead, I joined the Army Reserve in 1976 and got out as a Master Sergeant. Why

## My Bout with Malaria

MGYSGT BRAD GOODIN (USMC) RETIRED

In summer of 1968 I and my tank crew were at the 3rd Tank Battalion Tank Park in Dong Ha for routine maintenance on F-32. Either John Wear or Charlie West was the TC (I can't remember. Old age setting in) ... and I was the driver. One day I woke up feeling just terrible. Cold chills and uncontrollable shaking one minute then sweating profusely with very high temperature the next. I felt this way for a couple of days. Tankers living in the same tent kept me supplied with water and some food from the Motor T mess hall. I was delirious. Finally, someone called for the Doc. He came over and evaluated me. Next thing I know. I am at the main sick bay in Dong Ha. Stripped naked and packed in ice laying on a stretcher outside. Every once in a while a corpsman would come by take my temperature and water me down with a water hose. What's

wrong with me doc? You have Malaria Marine.

Next day I am on a C-130 heading for the Army hospital at Cam Rahn Bay. I was immediately put in one of those inflatable Quonset huts. The Malaria ward. About twenty or so of us in there. Mostly Army. It was 55 degrees F in there. They laid me out on a bed with no blankets. And there I stayed for the next 10 days or so. Every morning a Vietnamese doctor would come around with a handful of pills for each of us, check us over and leave. They claimed he was the duty expert on Malaria. They kept us hydrated with plenty of water and fluids but no food. Not that I was craving any at that time. After about a week I was starting to feel a little better and getting hungry. This was no hospital like in CONUS. No food delivered to your bedside. If you wanted to eat you made your way

to the chow hall which was about 200 yards away or so. After a few days of managing to get to the chow hall on my own. The Vietnamese doc told me that I was almost cured. He informed me that there were several strains of Malaria. After you are cured. Some strains will cause recurring symptoms to come back every so often for a day or two. And other strains will not have any recurring symptoms at all.

I was assigned to an Army rehab platoon. Standard daily routine of PT and running a few miles in formation. I felt like shit but managed to keep up. Finally, after a month being at Cam Rahn Bay. I got my strength back and returned to 3rd Tanks at Dong Ha for duty. Subsequently, got my ass chewed by the First Shirt for not writing my Grandmother for over a month. Seems she had complained to the Red Cross. He didn't want to hear any excuses. >>

And a reminder, you non-tankers, please send your letters and stories to John for the Sponson Box.

I racked my brain trying to figure out where I had contracted the disease. It dawned on me that I had missed a couple doses of those weekly Malaria horse pills when we were guarding the water point at the "Washout" on the way to Con Tien. That must have been

where I contracted it. Mosquitos were very thick there. And they ate me up. As far as I know I was the only Malaria casualty in 3rd Tank Battalion. Hard way to learn that those Horse pills actually worked.

For 10 years after. Just like clock-

work, once a year for a day I felt those terrible symptoms. My wife would feed me Tylenol and I would be fine the next day. Have not had a recurring episode since 1980.

## My experiences with helicopters in Vietnam

BY CLYDE HOCH

When talking to many people, I hear them say, "I didn't know they had tanks in Vietnam. You associate that war with helicopters." To me it was strange because I saw tanks every day.

While stuck in a small compound in a place called the mud flats. We (tanks) were attached to the Korean Marines because the Koreans did not have tanks in Viet-

nam. The compound was nicknamed Little Khe Sanh. We had two tanks in the compound one at each end. It was a free fire zone which meant we did not have to ask permission and could fire on what we wanted when we wanted. There was nothing anywhere near us except enemy. It was a transit area for North Vietnamese regulars.

One day I got a radio message that said a helicopter was going to pick me up and fly me to another area. A city called Hoi An. The helicopter came in and I boarded. It was a CH-46, they always reminded me of a grasshopper. We in tanks did not have the metal helmets the grunts or infantry had. We had a fiberglass tank helmet. That



stayed with the tank, So, we wore our soft covers.

As I boarded, I noticed all the grunts were sitting on their helmets. I thought what an uncomfortable way to sit. As we lifted off, we got incoming, and I quickly wished I had a metal helmet to sit on. I could not think of a worse place to get shot.

Most of my experiences with helicopters were the CH-46 They would come in every couple of weeks to resupply us. One we came in from and operation and had wounded. It was dark by the time we got back. They called in a helicopter to take out the wounded. The helicopter pilot could not see where he was to land so they asked me

to shine the search light at a good spot for him to land. I did so which is a hell of a target at night for an RPG. Instead of landing where the light was shining, he attempted to land on the source of the light.

I was on top of the tank in the tank commander's hatch and had to lean sideways to keep the helicopter from hitting me. They finally called him off and he

landed where the light was shining.

Once we had a resupply come in and as he took off, he was hit in the hydraulics and dropped back down. As he hit the ground it broke off one of the back wheels. They called in another helicopter, and they picked up the crew. In the morning they flew out people to repair the helicopter and, in the evening, they came back to pick them up. This went on for about a week.

I thought here we are sitting out here living in bunkers eating WWII C-rations every day and these guys are going back eating nice warm meals and cold beer. Sleeping in beds and having nice, heated showers every day. Life is just not fair.

## Today's No. 1 Recruit Concern before Heading to Basic Training

A recent scan of online forums revealed that new recruits beginning their military career have one very big concern: number two.

"What is it like peeing or s\*\*ting in boot camp?" asked one Redditor. His concerns were not isolated. Scores of

posters on Reddit, Quora and Twitter have taken to social media and message boards to ask about the service-by-service basic training bathroom situations. Offered solutions to the deuce dropping conundrum run the gamut, with some of the experiences of past

recruits proving rather harrowing.

The most consistent advice, it seems, is to go after dark. "Poop at night. It's most peaceful then," wrote user DogofWar. "Technically you can always ask to go to the head if you absolutely can't hold it. Usually you'll get f\*\*ked

with but they'll still let you go."

A few others echoed that sentiment. "You'll be awake prior to 0400 due to all kinds of noises at night," user Tactical-Taco01 wrote. "Use this time to use the head, even if you don't think you have to go, go ahead and flush yourself out. It really sucks holding it in while getting f\*\*ked with in the morning on line."

Another user found his latrine time downright enjoyable. "I used to s\*\*t every evening after mail call during your one hour 'free time,'" wrote CoffeeJoeJava. "Sitting on the can reading letters!"

However, not everyone experiences the same luck when pursuing flood-gate release. "Had one guy in my platoon piss himself on the firing line

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Tell you not to do something stupid when drunk

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will post 360 security so you don't get caught.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Call your parents Mr. and Mrs

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Call your parents Mom and Dad.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Hope the night out drinking goes smoothly, and hope that no one is late for the ride home

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Know some wild stuff will happen, and set up rally points and an E & E route.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Bail you out of jail and tell you what you did was wrong.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will be sitting next to you saying, Damn...we f\*\*ked up...but hey, that was fun!"

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Borrow your stuff for a few days then give it back

during weapons qualification because he waited two hours for his turn to shoot and didn't want to lose his spot," wrote user TheLaughingMan21. "He decided peeing himself was the correct answer."

Most accidents, it appears, are self-inflicted like the above. In essence, if you have to go, sound off. You might be given a hard time about it, but the alternative is ... much messier.

"While in basic, we were on a 10-mile ruck and one of the guys in my platoon needed to take a s\*\*t," wrote user gte401e. "Didn't say anything on the bus back to the barracks or when we were dropping off the weapons. Afterwards, he told our [drill sergeant] and immediately he yelled for me to

## Military vs. Civilian Friends

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Steal each other's stuff so often nobody remembers who bought it in the first place.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Will listen to your relationship problems and hope it works out for you.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will listen to you over a long hard road march, and will help you straighten it out better than Dr. Phil.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Know a few things about you.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Could write a book with direct quotes from you.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Might try to hit on your girl behind your back.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Have spooned with you in the field more than your girl has, and would never even think about doing that.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Would knock on your door.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Walk

accompany this guy to the barracks. I had no idea what was going on until we were inside and took a whiff. That smell could have woken up the dead."

Despite the fears of new recruits, one Quora user said that drill instructors are generally reasonable — that is, unless you break a rule. "The only reason, I see, for a drill instructor not to allow you to go to the bathroom is because the last time you got permission to go to the bathroom, you came back late, and broke the fundamental bathroom rules of your beloved drill instructor," wrote Ben Kolber. So, in the words of Tormund Giantsbane, "Happy s\*\*tting."

[Source: Military Times Observation Post | Sarah Sicard | June 16, 2021 ++]

right in and say, "I'm home!"

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Will wish you had enough money to go out that night, and are sorry you couldn't come.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will share their last dollar with you, drag you along, and try to work free drinks all night.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Want the money they loaned you back next week.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Can't begin to remember who owes who money after taking care of each other for so long.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Will tell you "They'd take a bullet for you."

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will actually take a bullet for you.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Will ignore this

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will call you a dumb bitch...

## In Military Collectibles, Supply often falls Short of Demand

BY JERRY GARRETT—PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 20, 2017

When the producers of "Fury" planned to make a technically correct film about an American World War

II tank crew's exploits, they ran into a problem. The type of tank they wanted to use was nowhere to be found, the

result of heavy casualties on the battlefield. So they had to use the wrong tank. >>

And that's a problem that a lot of collectors, or rather would-be collectors, of certain World War militaria can encounter. Many of the most desirable collectibles, like early tanks, airplanes and certain armaments, no longer exist except in photographs, old newsreels and the occasional museum.

In fact, when trying to find an original Voisin airplane, which had become the world's most common type of aircraft in the years leading up to World War I, one noted collector, Peter Mullin, found there were none left.

"I searched the world," Mullin recalled "I found one, in Switzerland, but it turned out to be a replica."

The Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., claims to have the oldest surviving Voisin bomber, a Type 8 manufactured in 1916. "Tens of thousands of Voisin airplanes were manufactured," Mullin said. "It seems almost unimaginable that they're all gone."

The same could be said about certain early models of the once-ubiquitous Sherman tank, which were also manufactured in the tens of thousands.

In "Fury", the 2014 film starring Brad Pitt and Shia LaBeouf, a five-man crew in the storied 66th Armored Regiment, part of the U.S. Army's 2nd Armored Division, pushes into the heart of Germany in April 1945 – just days before the Nazi surrender.

In the film's telling, the crew was really attached to this particular tank – enough to bestow the name "Fury" on it – and they'd been fighting together in it since the North Africa campaign in 1942. With that provenance, "Fury" likely would have been a Sherman M2 or M4A3, each of which went into production in 1942. But here's the rub: It would have been unlikely for an early-model M2 or M4 to have survived all that time. Tank battles in that part of the war, you see, had a 50 percent casualty rate.



In fact, only one Sherman tank – a Canadian one – is known to have survived all the way from the D-Day landing in June 1944 to V-E Day in May 1945. One!

So the filmmakers used a later model, which went into production in late 1944. A number of those examples still exist, as they were produced through the Korean War and even later. Those enjoyed a better survival rate, if for no other reason than they were no longer up against the German juggernauts. The American Sherman tanks in the movie – 10 were used – all came from the Tank Museum in Bovington, in southern England, which boasts one of the finest and most complete collections of historic tanks.

That's also where the filmmakers got the movie's nearly indestructible German Tiger I tank, known as a Panzer, a relic whose production ended with the demise of the Third Reich. The Panzer at the Tank Museum is reputed to be the only surviving Tiger 131 tank still in working order.

That brings up another obstacle facing would-be American collectors

who might want a World War II tank: The few that exist are generally "over there." They were seldom judged to be worth the trouble to ship back to the U.S.

"I heard of a guy in Texas who was supposed to be building an exact replica of a Tiger I," said Leigh Miller, a collector of tank memorabilia and an authority on tank trivia. "But I'll believe that when I see it."

There's another interesting aspect of appeal for military vehicles like the Sherman tank. Production notes from "Fury" mention that that tank was "designed and built by Henry Ford," while the German tanks were masterminded by Ferdinand Porsche. In truth, Ford Motor Company didn't design the Sherman, but it did build a small number! of them.. General Motors and Chrysler built the vast majority.

Regardless of who built them, a key reason why so few Sherman's have survived is that the early models had a reputation for being death traps. British soldiers called them "Ronsons" – like the lighter – for how easily they burst into flame. ■



## Cover Story

# Marine Tanks at Bastards Bridge Were the NVA Watching?

BY BEN COLE

In September 1967, a muddy little creek crossing on the road leading north to Con Thien became the weak link in the supply chain to the beleaguered Marines fighting there. It was just a rifle shot down the hill from the most northern firebase in South Vietnam overlooking the Demilitarized Zone and constantly under fire from the North Vietnamese artillery. Built on the high ground around an old French bunker, it was the key strong point of Operation Dye Marker, Defense Secretary McNamara's plan for a cleared and fortified barrier along the DMZ.

Earlier in the year Marine engineers began work on a new road to handle the heavy traffic needed to support this outpost as the Marine's war shifted to counter the increasing NVA attacks in northern Quang Tri Province.

The old road, Route 561, basically a widened trail, was rutted and flanked by overgrown foliage, and plagued by ambushes and landmines since the days of the French. Trees and brush were cleared on both sides and by early summer the engineers had completed all-weather road from Cam Lo to Con Thien, with the exception of this creek crossing.

Initially, riprap and a large metal culvert was placed under the roadbed there. It proved effective at channeling the normal watershed during the warmer summer months with normal rainfall. But this was not a normal year, on the 17th

of September typhoon Opal poured almost 18 inches of rain in a twenty-four-hour period.

It became a rushing torrent washing the culvert away just as a company from 2nd Battalion Ninth Marines were crossing. Three Marines and a Corpsman were swept downstream. Weighted down with packs and weapons all but one managed to hang on to tree limbs until they were rescued. The Corpsman was never found.

Only by chance was a tank and crew not added to the toll that day. Lt. Jim Coan of 1st Platoon, Alpha Company Third Tanks watched the men being swept only seconds before the tanks of his mine sweep detail were to cross.

It was obvious that this flooding stream helped the NVA as they tightened their grip around the battered firebase. They had almost succeeded in May of that year, but the tanks and their crews played a major role in holding the base. Marine tankers were awarded two Navy Crosses and a Silver Star for their actions that night. Setting the stage for another try, NVA ambushes increased steadily that summer and fall. Incoming rounds from the DMZ fired at Con Thien had increased to 1500 rounds a day by September 25th.

When the weather cleared after the storm and the stream returned to its banks, Marine engineers went back to work. Heavy tractors reinforced the roadbed, and a Bailey >>

bridge was installed. This prefabricated, metal truss-type structure, developed in WWII could be put in quickly and strong enough for tanks. Installed from one bank to the other, sections were added and pushed across until the gap was bridged. A long single span would give the stream room to rise without being washed out when heavy rains fell again, hopefully.

Five Marine tanks from Third Platoon Alpha Company moved up from Charlie Two. A tank was placed in each company sector and one was held in reserve on the south side of the bridge.

Two of tanks were placed on north side of the bridge facing Con Thien. Charles Thatcher's tank was on the west side of the road along the bunker line overlooking a rice paddy. He was one of the Marines that won the Navy Cross in the May battle at Con Thien four months earlier. My tank was across the road covering the north and eastern flank of the bridge.

By the first in October the "Washout" as it was known at the time, had become an almost comfortable with dry bunkers and ample supplies. Rocks brought in to reinforce the bridge made a great place to wash or swim on a sunny day. It was relatively safe with only a few night probes and an occasional shelling or sniper. It was gaining a reputation as a quiet island in a sea of war and a good place for battered Marine battalions to rest and reorganize.

A few weeks earlier three companies of Second Battalion Fourth Marine Regiment, the "Magnificent Bastards," were sweeping an area a couple of clicks to east on Operation Kingfisher. On September 21st they made contact and were drawn into a battle with an NVA battalion occupying a bunker complex. The fighting was intense and continued all day and by nightfall sixteen Marines had been killed and 118 wounded. The Bastards pulled back to Con Thien and were slated to return to Dong Ha to rest and rebuild but first they would replace 2/3 and guard the bridge for a few days.

The fighting of the past few months had taken a toll on the unit. With only 462 left men of their original 900 made it impossible to man all the positions the full-strength battalion were leaving. There was another factor that would also play a part in their defense of the bridge.

A couple of days before they arrived, our two-tank section on the north side of the stream and our reserve tank from were pulled out for a sweep east of Con thien. Ironically, it



Tanks leaving the "Washout Bridge" a few days before the battle that renamed it. Two other tanks can be seen on the other side of the road leading north Con Thien in the distance. The absence of these tanks would have an effect on the defense of the bridge.

took place in the same area that 2/4 had been blooded a few weeks earlier. When we left that morning the northside of the bridge was unguarded by tanks.

When the depleted battalion moved in, to cover their entire section they had to increase the distances between manned positions. Echo Company took the southeastern sector bordering the main road with one of the two remaining tanks. Hotel was on west side south of the stream with the other one. Foxtrot filled in northeast of the bridge where my tank had been, and Golf manned the northwest sector where Thatcher's tank had been. It was not far from the battalion CP inside their company perimeter near the bank of the stream.

Around 1:30 am on October 14th Hotel Company became the target of a barrage of more than a hundred rockets, mortars and artillery rounds. A small group Marines on an ambush in front of the Fox and Hotel lines took a company of NVA under fire. They took three casualties and were ordered to pull back toward Golfs line to re-enter.

Hotel Marines with starlight scopes spotted troops massing for an attack in their front. The tank from Echo came across the road to help and before the attackers could launch their assault all the fire power along the line was unleashed. The attack was stopped almost before it began. Greg Kelly, a gunner on one of the tanks remembered that only two attackers made it to the wire before they were stopped.

Bob Herndon of Third platoon Hotel spotted an NVA in the open and sounded the alarm. His bunker was under the

main gun of a tank that had moved into position and started firing. He recounts that he could not hear anything for a couple of days afterward.

A few days earlier when Corporal Kenneth Lambton of Golf Company had to fill in as platoon sergeant who was a casualty at Phu Oc a few weeks earlier. There were plenty of holes and but not enough men. One section along the line had less than a dozen men to cover a section of fifty yards. He took the hole with his radioman and a green new guy covering the right flank. A machine gun team and was next and then and a couple of two-man rifle pits.

They were stretched thin, but he reasoned it was a quiet place where nothing ever happened, he recounted fifty years later. There was hardly any wire to slow them down, only a wide ride paddy out front bordered by trees, he recalled. Con Thien, just up the hill, was the NVA'S main focus he told himself. Besides, they would be in Dong Ha in a couple of days. Hot showers and cold beer were the near future.

After being stopped cold in front of hotel lines around 2:30 am the NVA shifted around and targeted Golf Company. They slipped in close and fired a green flare typically used by ambushes re-entering the line.

Expecting the Marine ambush team to be returning, Golf held their fire long enough for RPG teams to get close enough to knock out two key machine gun positions. After a short fight but vicious fight, the enemy created a breach that an assault teams rushed through. This opening was where Thatcher's tank was located a few days earlier.

An estimated force of over thirty attackers swarmed



This photo taken from Echo Company quadrant of the south east side of Bastard's Bridge was where the reserve tank had been stationed before the battle. Across the road, route 561 was Hotel Company where two tanks help repel the first assault. The green area in the distance is where Golf Companies line was breached and the Battalion CP was attacked. The tanks from north of the bridge and the reserve had been pulled out a few days before the attack. Across the road was Fox Company who help Golf drive the NVA back.

through the hole with fully automatic AKs and satchel charges. They spread out and fought their way behind the main line. Marines hunkered down shooting anything that moved. The NVA were finally stopped within grenade range of the battalion CP by hand-to-hand combat and point-blank fire, but not before almost wounding or slaying almost all of the senior officers and NCOs.

During the fight Sergeant Paul Foster covered a grenade in the fire direction bunker and saved the lives of several other Marines. He was awarded Medal of Honor posthumously. The CP was quickly reinforced and moved across the creek to the rear of Hotel Company's perimeter.

An AC-47 "Puff" gun ship joined the fight and provided fire and flares. A reaction force with help from Fox and Echo counterattacked killing or driving the attackers out of the perimeter by 4:30 that morning.

The NVA lost at least twenty-four killed, but drag marks indicated at least twice that number. Twenty-one Marines and Corpsman were killed and over twenty-three were wounded. The deaths included five officers three of which were replacements that had arrived just the day before.

The following day the site was given a new name. The crossing was first called "Rocky Ford" after bulldozers stripped foliage away and big rocks were added. It then became the "Washout" after the September typhoon. The morning after the fight after a request by the wounded battalion commander it was official renamed "Bastard's Bridge".

How long the actual metal structure survived after the war is unknown to this writer, but it has now been replaced.

The new modern concrete bridge that spans the historic creek is frequented by old friends and foes. Although the old green bridge that for a while withstood the whims of mother nature and war is gone, but the name still remains in history books and the minds of men who fought there. bc

#### Epilogue

Looking back at events that determined the outcome of a battle five decades ago many would argue is a waste of time, but human curiosity and pattern recognition can be helpful when trying to make sense of history when looking to the future.

Were the circumstances of the attack that night just unrelated events or hastily planned attack by NVA watching the bridge? They probably knew 2/4 was tired, understrength and stretched thin along the line. When most of the tanks left, greatly decreasing their firepower, did they then decide it was time to strike. >>



This machine gun bunker at a key point on the Golf Company line was knocked out by NVA RPGs. This led to a breach that was only stopped short of the battalion headquarters in a last ditch stand. The tank that had been this position near the breakthrough had been pulled out a couple days before. The commander of that tank, Corporal Charles Thatcher, had been awarded the Navy Cross defending against a similar attack at Con Thien three months earlier.



Marine tankers posing in front of an M48 Patton tank being used as a reserve for the defense of the bridge and be deployed during an attack. This tank along with two others of the five-tank platoon left for another operation a few days before the attack on the bridge.

If the three tanks remained in place could they have changed the outcome? Chances are they could have because two tanks that remained quickly help blunt the attack on Hotel company. The tank that would have been at the critical breach in the Golf company line had a topnotch commander and experienced crew. Corporal Charles Thatcher a few months earlier won the Navy Cross for his actions at a similar attack on Con Thien.

Future wars will use weapons that now only now live in

the minds of war planners. We must adapt to the perceived weapon capabilities of those who may threaten us. However, when lives are at stake, Marines need all the weapons available, especially the proven ones that are already on hand. In view of the Marine Corps plans to phase out tanks let us hope that when the next crisis arises there is something available that will do the job that this weapon has done for the last hundred years. bc ■

## (You are assigned to a) **Work Detail** (and other dumb shit)

BY JAMES S. RENFORTH

My final duty station prior to release from active duty in the Crotch was on the Inspector-Instructor Staff at the 89th Rifle Company in Columbia, South Carolina.

Before being assigned there, my continuous activities were interrupted by a brief period ‘in limbo’ while they tried to figure out where the hell to send me for my last year.

This vacuum was eventually filled by a temporary duty assignment known affectionately as “Brig Chaser”.

Having recently returned from Vietnam, as the grenadier in a killer team for S-2 in Da Nang, and finishing work on the drill field, the idea of “chasing prisoners” was not altogether unfamiliar with regard to “chasing something”, but more intriguing were some of the restrictions placed upon that job description—among them being, “No Sarge, you can’t carry a gun – you’re not going to shoot anyone—they’re NOT the enemy”.

My immediate recollection was when they used to pick up our magazines and ammunition because the order of the day had changed to “no firing”. I simply told myself that was then – this is now.

So, Monday morning I reported for duty and began my new temporary experience as a Brig Chaser.

The first couple of weeks were rather dull and uneventful. Following breakfast, I picked up my prisoners and after formation, roll call, marched them off to their work detail(s); break for lunch, then back to picking up litter and cigarette butts and whatever other kind of shit that was lying along the roads at Parris Island. I must’ve done such a fan – fucking–tastic job with these guys I was rewarded with a somewhat more interesting group in the third week.

Did I mention they wouldn’t let me carry a gun?

I arrived the morning beginning my third week to pick up my prisoners. My first impression was that these guys were all BIG motherfuckers! A few were serving time for fighting, assault, and assaulting a superior officer, among other infractions. These were not the drunk tank boys.

The detail was to clear out side ditches and brush along a five-mile stretch of road. This was hot, hard work, but they seemed equipped for the job. These prisoners were carrying shovels, picks, rakes, axes, and one of them carried a five-gallon water can on a backpack. (I know this sonofabitch is heavy because I carried one – a full one – ONCE!)

Did I mention they wouldn’t let me carry a gun?



We formed up, saddled up, and began marching single file towards our assigned work area. After we were out of sight of the main location I stopped them, “Detail halt. Left face. Order arms or whatever else you’re fucking carrying. At ease. The smoking lamp is lit”.

Oh, by the way – did I mention the weapon they DID give me was a night stick.

I said, “Look. If any of you motherfuckers think it’s time for you to haul ass and you decide you’re leaving, just remember this – I understand you have some pretty fucked-up weapons in your hands, but in order for you to leave, you’re gonna have to go through me AND this fucking night stick!!! You got that?”

A moment’s silence.

Then laughter. Loud laughter that went on for several seconds followed by a unanimous “YESSIR!”

I received my orders to the I&I Staff a couple of weeks later. These guys worked hard for those next two weeks and never gave me an ounce of regret.

Semper FI. ■

# UNIVERSAL Marine

BY FRANK "TREE" REMKIEWICZ

It is interesting to note the ways in which our lives turned out despite the many commonalities we experienced during our tours in Vietnam. I continue to read books and stories of those of us who served during the critical years of 1965 through 1971. I continue to watch as many Vietnam movies I can, both those while we were there and those movies that depict the Vietnam veteran in later years. I tend to avoid chroniclers and lean heavily into first hand accounts of things past and present. There are so many similarities in our prior years, war years, and, post war years that are at least anecdotally related. So let me conjure up some of those seeming similarities and see how you, the reader, feel about them.

First, there is the abrupt dead silence that overtakes the plane as it approaches the Da Nang runway. Coming in from Okinawa with a group of Marines who had all graduated from Tank School in the same class there was a sort of naïve nonchalance about our conversations. The things we were going to do. The operations we planned. The VC/NVA we would kill. The exploits and heroic deeds we all thought would happen. Those were the last thoughts we had and the last time we thought those thoughts when the pilot announced the final approach to Da Nang, Vietnam. Abrupt and absolute silence as all eyes turned to the windows to see for the first time the reality that was Vietnam.

The second common experience we all shared was seeing these old, tired, grizzled men getting on that great big bird back to the world. My very first thought was how much older these guys looked compared to the 18 year old kid that just put boots on

the ground. What experiences must these men have had that would put what appeared to be years and years of age on their faces. The battles I envisioned prior to Vietnam bore no resemblance to those that these men went through that darkened their eyes, grooved their faces, furrowed their brows, and singed their souls. And, as it turned out, I could not even imagine these experiences at that point in my tour.

Almost as early on came a rude awakening. Sleep was a thing of the past. Never quite turning off your hearing and never quite shutting your eyes became the order of the day. While it did not come easily it did come quickly. The distant pop became the one sound everyone heard. The slight discontinuity of colors in the trees and shrubs, the ever so mild yet distinguishable odor that was out of place. And the most unusual part was your senses knew what was what before you consciously became aware of those subtleties.

I think every one had the opportunity to find the one or two Marine tankers you could learn all the tricks of the trade from as well as the one or two who could keep you alive. Oftentimes these were the same people. For each of us these "old salts" may have been the same or they were different but the fact remains to learn what you needed to do and to stay alive to do it was universal. Let's remember it was the NCOs that really knew how to pursue the war, how to engage, and how and when to disengage. Officers were nice, maybe necessary, just not for this. And so in later life we all speak of the one or two tankers that we owe our lives to. Mine was Bert Travail. Who was yours?

Speaking of officers, we all seem to

know of at least two kinds of officers. The officers who constantly sought out your advice and oftentimes consulted with you prior to any kind of action. Then there were the officers who just wanted to get medals. You remember the type, the ones that would get you killed if you let them. As an FNG you paid attention to your tank commander and everything rolled off. Then, as the old salt you got close to the ones that worked with you and listened politely and then ignored the ones likely to get you killed. I sometimes heard about fragging, as I am sure most of us did but this, for me was really non-existent. The single time I heard what I would consider a first-hand account, it was about a fake grenade rolled in with a note that said, "Next time it is real". Again, that was just a story from sometime in the past before I got into 'Nam.

The universal experience of R and R. Another topic of universal reflection. Sometimes you went alone and sometimes with a friend but everyone went and everyone has those great stories of "sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll", figuratively speaking of course. This experience evolved into the "I am going to Hawaii to see (pick one) family, girl friend, wife". And then the other type. We may have gone to different cities and countries but we all went. And for a few days we were nothing more than international travelers looking to forget and experience. Then the inevitable letdown when you returned to the 'Nam. For those of us 18 and had never traveled out of state before, the experience shaped a small portion of our character.

Then there was the experience that none of us share except in the quiet moments in our heads and in dreams most nights. I think you all

know where I am headed on this one. The universal experience of the fire-fight. As tankers we all experienced it. You could not have avoided it. That time when chaos reigned everywhere. Your focus was so tight it felt like a knot in the back of your neck after. In this case virtually every person's experience was unique to the tanker but everyone universally experienced that time. And, at least for me, this culminating Vietnam experience(s) were the heart and soul of the character I am today.

And finally, the going back to the world event. We all went in different ways and landed in different places but we all went home and had to face

the "real world". It just never seemed like the real world. I would like to think that everything back home changed, but it did not. What changed was me. I left a little kid just barely 18. I can home at 19. My how time flies when you are having fun. I was more sul- len a darker soul, my convictions in certain areas and on a host of top- ics became harder. Slowly the people around me noticed I had changed, I was not the same, even though I never let anyone in they all sensed something was different and something had changed me forever. The world I grew up in became a place where I was never comfortable.

It is my belief that most of these

experiences are universal to all of us. Not the specifics of the experience but the type of experience. I know this is only anecdotal, not scientific, but the conversations I have over heard and the conversations I have had led me to this belief.

And to draw this to a conclusion then, there is no question we are all different human beings coming from different places and headed to different spaces. But we all have taken the same road, the road less travelled. This road seems to be paved with Marine history and that is what makes it the road less travelled. And that is exactly what makes us so similarly unique. ■

## Photo from Vietnam



Picking Up WIAs outside of the Hue City MAC-V compound, Tet 1968

# LONG HOT SUMMER

BY RIC LANGLEY

Making the flight from Da Nang to Dong Ha, after our little vacation, early in the morning gave us time to catch a ride back out to Camp Carroll to rejoin the platoon. When we arrived, we found the platoon packing up and getting ready to move back to the hill at Con Thien to relieve another tank unit. Two days later we rolled through the gate at Con Thien. The place had changed greatly since we had last been



Con Thien spring 1967

there. The whole hill was covered with trenches and sand bagged bunkers. Not the kind of top of the ground. These bunkers were dug deeply into the ground, covered with timbers and then covered with four or five layers of sand bags.



There was not a blade of grass left on the hill just the red dirt of Con Thien. The hill had become the bull's eye on Charley's target. Artillery, mortar and rocket rounds were being fired at the hill daily. Some days only a few rounds and other days it seemed like a non stop barrage. On one day the hill took over a thousand rounds. You could hear the guns firing from the DMZ leaving you just a few seconds to find cover. To say the least this was very nerve racking and made day to day life miserable. At times we could spot the muzzle blast and smoke from the guns. By the time we had gone through all the red tape to get permission, if we could get permission, to fire back the NVA were long gone. Very frustrating!

Almost nightly the enemy would probe the perimeter looking for weak spots and mapping the positions of the bunkers. Another new wrinkle in northern I Corps was, the then under construction, McNamara line. The McNamara line, known as the trace to the troops in the area,

was the brain child of the secretary of defense Robert McNamara. Robert McNamara was a Washington wiz kid who didn't have a clue. The idea was to bulldoze a six-hundred-yard-wide path, through the jungle, from the east coast of Vietnam to its boarder with Laos in the west. Along this path they would put up guard towers and seed the area with mines and sensors to detect enemy movement. The first section

of this path would be built from Gio Lihn in the east to Con Thien. The Marine commanders in I Corps had fought this idea tooth and nail but to no avail. Even the lowest private, hunkered down in a bunker at Con Thien, could tell you this was a disastrous plan. The fools, thousands of miles away in Washington, had won.

The Marine engineers and a few Sea Bees had moved in with their equipment and had started cutting the trace. They would move down every morning on their bulldozers to spend the day clearing the jungle. Here were these guys out in the open, unprotected, on these bulldozers. They were shot at by snipers, mortars, artillery and rockets. Mines were planted where the enemy knew they would be working. It was like a large shooting gallery with these guys moving back and forth on their dozers. Tanks and grunts were sent to try and protect them but it was an impossible task. Many a day we loaded dead heavy equipment operators on our tank, returning them to Con Thien to be flown back to Dong Ha. What a waste. When we were not trying to protect the



The Trace in background

construction workers down on the trace, we were out with the grunts patrolling the area just south of the DMZ. Every day we would encounter some kind of enemy activity. We were finding large caches of weapons, ammunition, food and medical supplies. They had base camps set up with hospitals, kitchen and sleeping quarters for more than a hundred men. Sometimes we would find these camps and there would still be food cooking on the fires. Charley was there and he was there in force. One day while moving through a grove of banana trees we came upon a large well established camp with several grass houses spread out around a larger central building. This must have been a meeting room or a dining hall. We started through the encampment with our three tanks on line and the grunts following using the tanks for cover. When we came to within about fifty yards, we started to receive small arms and machine gun fire from the larger building. As we moved closer the fire intensifies slowing our pace. We returned fire with our 30Cal. And 50Cal. machine guns as we were not yet in range to use canister rounds with the greatest affect. The grass building began to smoke, probably set on fire by the 50 Cal. incendiary rounds. Once we were within range for the canister rounds each tank fired one round into the building causing the roof to collapse in a shower of flames. The enemy fire ceased as we began to see smoke rising out of numerous spider (fighting holes) holes in the areas, some as far away as one hundred yards. Along with the smoke coming out of the holes several individuals also stumbled out coughing and hacking and trying to catch their breath. Two of these people were armed and tried to escape by running for a near by hedgerow. They only made it a short distance before they were cut down by automatic weapons fire from the Marines. The rest of the group was rounded up, secured and blindfolded. The fire fight had lasted only a few minutes but dealing with the prisoners, searching the tunnels and bunkers and the rest of the houses was taking forever so we broke out some C Rats and had lunch. The main building had burnt itself out so a team was sent to search it. Under what was left of the floor, they found a large bunker which was connected to all the spider holes by a network of tunnels. Also, in the bunker they found all kinds of supplies. They found the machine gun team dead from smoke inhalation. The Marines drug the bodies of the team out of the bunker and then reentered the dark hole under the floor and started to remove even more bodies. This time the bodies were women and children. A total of nineteen corpses were brought out of that hole and laid on the ground. Two were NVA and the rest were woman and kids. Why they were there we don't have a clue. This area was a free fire zone which meant that anybody there was considered enemy. Did we feel good about having killed these people? No! Did we feel bad? No! It was just another day in Nam. After a few weeks at Con Thien we were told to pack up we were moving back to Camp Carroll. Camp Carroll was like R&R compared to Con Thien. As plans had a way of doing in Nam,

things changed. We were ordered back to Dong Ha for some maintenance work and then we would be heading for Gio Lihn another hot spot on the NVA's target list.

Dong Ha was as it always was; we partied too much and managed to piss just about everyone off before we departed for Gio Lihn. Gio Lihn was on the eastern end of the trace on a



Ric Langley at Gio Lihn May 67

slight hill with a dominating view of the DMZ. It was a smaller perimeter than Con Thien making the danger from incoming artillery more concentrated. Our tanks were dug in so we didn't have to build bunkers we just hollowed out underneath them and used that as our living quarters during the day. At night we manned the tanks as there was lots of probing and enemy activity. The living conditions there were no better than at Con Thien. From this base the Sea Bees were to build the towers that would be placed along the trace. At first, they started hauling the materials for the towers out to the sites where they were to be erected. This plan failed as Charley would come in at night and either destroy or haul away the building materials. They decided to build the towers inside the perimeter and then drag them out to where they were to be located with a bulldozer. This worked great. They got the towers built, hauled out to their site and erected only to have the enemy burn them down



Tank position at Gio Lihn

overnight. They eventually wanted to have grunts man the towers at night to protect them. Not something I would want to do. Our supply system at Gio Lihn was not as consis- >>

tent as it was at Con Thien. At Con Thien a lot of the supplies were flown in while at Gio Lihn they were brought up the main highway by truck. The least little thing would delay or cancel the convoy for that day. We were always low on water and C rats so bathing was out of the question most of the time. May 14, 1967 had been a quiet day at Gio Lihn. There had been very few enemy artillery rounds impact our perimeter and it was now late in the afternoon with the sun just getting ready to set. I was sitting cross legged on the ground next to our tank cleaning my pistol. The tank closest to ours was about thirty yards to the north guarding the main entrance to the camp. I could see Ron Knosky standing beside the left side of the tank shaving. Dale Otto was standing in the tank commander's hatch doing something with the 50 cal. machine gun. I'm not sure but I think that Johnny Holmes was the other crewman standing on the left front fender. I don't remember who the fourth crewman was or where he was at this time. This was not an unusual situation, on most days the shelling would slack off about this time of day giving us to chance to take care of some of our routine chores. I had gone back to cleaning my pistol when there was a tremendous explosion right in front of the tank to our north. I looked up to see Knosky lying on his back on the ground next to the tank. His legs were flaying around but he was making no effort to get up. I knew he must be hurt. Holmes was still standing on the front fender but Otto was no where in sight. I jumped up and started running toward the tank yelling at Holmes to get down, knowing full well that Charley usually didn't fire just one round. Luckily no more rounds came in. As I reached Knosky he was still on his back with his arms and legs shaking uncontrollably and a large pool of blood under his head. I knelt down beside him calling his name, his eyes were rolled back in their sockets and he did not respond in any way. I scooped his head up in my hands only to find that the side and back of his skull had been ripped open and his brains were lying on the ground. I knew at that moment that his injuries were not survivable. His body shuttered for a few more seconds then he was quiet. I closed his eyes and in that brief instant said goodbye. The corpsman arrived and confirmed that he was gone. I arose to see Holmes still standing in the same spot on the fender. I yelled again at him to get down but he just stood there dazed by the blast and apparently unable to move. Running to him and yelling I was finally able to brake through the daze and get him to understand the danger he was in. I grabbed his arm and pulled him down to the ground. The concussion from the blast was so great that he could neither see nor hear. I checked him over but could find no visible wounds so I led him to an area behind the tank where he would be safe and a corpsman could check him. I ran around the tank looking for Otto but he was no where to be found. I remembered seeing him up in the turret so I mounted the tank and made my way to the commander hatch. Before I even reached the hatch, I knew it was not going to be good. There was blood and what looked like brain matter all over the hatch. As I looked down into the open hatch my worst suspicions

were confirmed. There was Otto's lifeless, almost headless; body slumped down on the tank commander's seat.

By this time the platoon commander and the platoon sergeant had arrived. Nobody else in the area had been hurt and Holmes seemed to be recovering. The medevac choppers where there in no time, picked up the two dead tankers and headed back to Dong Ha. We were two men short so it was decided that myself and Hamby would join Holmes to man Knosky's tank. Other tankers would be moved around so that we had at least three crewmen on each vehicle. You can operate a tank with just three men but it isn't the ideal situation. It was dark by the time everybody had their new assignments and had taken their posts. Hamby, Holmes and I knew we had a gruesome job ahead of us. The inside of the tank's turret was covered with skull fragments, brain matter and blood. We had to get it cleaned up as quickly as possible or in no time at all it would start to smell so badly you would have a hard time staying in that turret. We used our helmets as buckets and rounded up some rags and started washing things down. The inside of a tank turret has all kinds of equipment stuffed in to a very tight space. It is very difficult to get all the tight little nooks and crannies cleaned out. This was no easy or pleasant task. Taking turns inside the turret by ten o'clock we thought we had done the best we could do with the little light we had.

Next morning, we would hit it again. We figured out the watch schedule and turned in for the night. I had taken the last watch but was not having much luck sleeping. It was around one o'clock in the morning when trip flares started going off on the other side of the perimeter. We all immediately manned our positions. I took the Tank commanders position; Holmes was at loader/driver and Hamby was the gunner. The activity increased and moved around to our side of the small compound. Several tear gas grenades and flares went off right in front of us. The grunts started firing at nothing hoping to scare off the intruders. I had Holmes switch on the infra-red driving lights and I took the binoculars and started scanning the area. Several individuals were in the wire trying to clear a path for a large group that was spread out waiting behind them. I cocked the .50 cal. machine gun and fired a short burst into the wire. I knew this would get their attention. After the first burst I knew I was right on target so I fired two longer bursts, then as usual the damn gun jammed. Hamby already had the .30 cal. machine gun up and ready to go so we just started raking the area. After several passes with the .30 I called cease fire and checked the area with the binoculars. Three or four bodies lay in the wire but the rest of the group had disappeared for now. The rest of the night we all stayed at our positions as the enemy tried different locations around the perimeter, with no success. We would spend a couple more weeks at Gio Lihn before being relieved and sent back to Dong Ha. Gio Lihn had been another one of Vietnam's hell holes. We were beaten down, our equipment torn up; we sorely needed some time to regroup. Dong Ha would not be our chance, as the long hot summer rolled on. ■



## NOT THE BRIGHTEST...

### Or My Day as a Drug Runner

BY LEE DILL

*I would guess there are a bunch of Vietnam stories that should not be written, this may be one of them....it makes the writer looks stupid! Oh well, here goes:*

It was early April of 69, I had just finished a year as a PFC in March. Rank was not flowing and I was rather disappointed but then again I was going back to the world for 30 days in 7 weeks. I had extended already and was going home then returning. The tour so far wasn't that bad, Schrecongost would not die until the following week so I felt pretty good.

I was going from An Hoa to Da Nang to get dental work done. Usually I would grab an early chopper to Da Nang, go to get the work done, stop by Hill 327 for cheeseburgers and catch a chopper back to An Hoa before dark. I had done this maybe 4 times since January. Since I was going to the rear I was asked to pick up "stuff" that wasn't readily available at An Hoa. Being the accommodating sort of Marine I agreed.

The "stuff" I was picking up was marijuana. There was always a bunch of "heads" back then that smoked.

They didn't bother anyone and they were a hoot to hang out with, as I often did. I didn't smoke, never did, but I sure got a buzz around this group! This is before secondhand smoke was ever considered.

That morning in April I am off to the dentist with maybe \$10 in MPC money to buy 10 packs of "Jays." The "stuff" was sold in plastic sandwich bags maybe 10 jays to a bag...so maybe 100 total. But these bags were stuffed.

It's getting late in the day. I have been to dental, Dogpatch near hill 327 to make my purchases and Hill 327 for cheeseburger and Pepsi lunch. All in all a decent day in Vietnam. I am waiting near the chopper pad in the Alpha Co 1st tanks area. The side pockets of my jungle pants "Stuffed with stuff".

I have the buttons closed so not to lose anything or have anyone actually see what I have, I am a most casual drug runner...until the Captain's office pogue runs up to me and says that

the Captain wants to see me NOW! Holy Crap! Carrying drugs to go see the Captain, no place to hide them, no one to pass them off to and if the Office Poog sees me with the "stuff" he will surely turn me in...yep rock and a hard place for sure!!

Since I have no idea what the Captain wants I hope for the best. Well, it seems my promotion to Lance/Corporal has come thru, in the Captain's office along with the XO, the First Sergeant and the Office Poog I am getting promoted! My hands along the seams of my trousers, oh yeah right on the "stuff" -BAM! and I am promoted!! Thank you's given out, race to the chopper pad and luckily gone in 10 minutes.

Back to An Hoa, I related my story to everyone and said no more for me, I was closer to the Da Nang Brig that day than I would like to think, my drug running days were done!! ■

# Recalling Operation Starlite

BY LTCOL KY THOMPSON, USMC (RET.).

## PART ONE

I arrived Chu Lai, 29 June 1965. I reported in to C Company Headquarters (Captain Joe Sanders) located in the 4th Marines CP area on the high ground, above the Marston matting airstrip. While technically an airfield, only A-4s were operating from it. The A-4 pilots told us that by the time they reached take-off speed the aircraft was shaking so badly—due to the uneven surface of the matting—that it was virtually impossible to read their instruments.

My driver and jeep (officers were not authorized to drive vehicles such as the jeep) soon appeared and we headed for the beach, passing the 3rd Marine Air Wing's storage tents where they kept their ski boat, surf boards, swordfish, and other beach "equipment." It seemed a page out of Apocalypse Now. While we conducted combat operations across the Song Tra Bong River, Wing personnel water skied out on the Bay. Occasionally I wondered what the VC might have thought as they watched these antics. Perhaps, with a few new lyrics, we would revive Kipling's, Come you back to Mandalay:

*Come you back to Dung Quat Bay  
Where the old Flotilla lay:*

*Can't you 'ear their amtracs clankin' from Da Nang to  
Dung Quat Bay.  
Where the flyin'-fishes play,  
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer Chu Lai  
'crost the Bay!*

This was my first command, I was a new 2nd Lt and would be relieving 1st Lt Ken Zitz as Platoon Commander, 3rd Platoon, Alpha Company, 3rd Tanks. The bigger picture organizational structure went something like this; A-3 was attached to 3/3, but under the Operational Control (OPCON) and Administrative Control (ADCON) of Company "C", 3rd Tanks. This matrixed arrangement was a result of the wide geographical distribution of Alpha Company's tank platoons.

Ken had brought his platoon ashore—well, almost ashore—from the LSD-28, USS Thomaston, on 12 May. The Marine Corps service tank, the M48A3, with fording kit installed, was capable of operating in 8 feet of water. Unfortunately, the Navy's Landing Craft Utility (LCU) bringing Ken's heavy section (3 tanks) ashore is "alleged" to have gone aground while the craft was still 50 feet from the beach. Prompted by the Navy coxswain, Ken directed LCpl. Andy Senecal, his driver, to head for the beach. The tank clattered down the bow ramp, into the water, went a short distance, and died; A-32, following in trace, suffered the same fate. The crew of A-33, last in line, having seen the first two embarked tanks

in their section choke out with salt water, took a more cautious approach and arrived safely ashore. A-33 also profited from the fact that the LCU, having disembarked two tanks, had lightened its load by over 100 tons. It now drew less water and could approach the beach more closely. The two dead tanks were towed to the platoon area on the beach. They would be dead-lined for about a month as the supply system attempted to locate and ship generators for them. We were beginning to see the warts in the system as we transitioned from a peace time footing to war.

Approximately one month later, A-31 with a new generator and 2nd Lt Thompson as Tank Commander (TC), embarked on a Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM). The LCM, smaller than the LCU, has a single ramp in the bow and could only transport one tank. The object of this exercise was to test an idea, proposed to 3/3 by 2nd Lt Thompson, to embark a tank aboard a landing craft and provide fire support to an infantry unit sweeping the area for Viet Cong (VC). As infantry advanced, they would maintain contact with the tank as the LCM cruised along the shore, with its main gun trained over the side of the craft. Fire missions could/would be called in from the shore by radio or flashing light, and targets marked with smoke. The Platoon was fortunate to have a communications technician (comm. tech), Cpl. Chris Vrakes, who had learned, perhaps from navy signalmen during a previous deployment, how to read the ship's light signals. The concept worked. While it required training and practice, we showed that it could be done.

But then *deja vu!* The cruise home to our section of beach was uneventful. We arrived off the beach and the Under-Water Demolition (UDT) swimmer went off the ramp to check the depth. He reported a little over six feet of water. I told Senecal, the driver, to ease down the ramp and head for the beach. With a lurch, 52 tons of A-31 roared off the ramp and headed for the beach. When I looked down at my boots, I saw water over the fighting deck. As soon as we cleared the surf and stopped on the beach, I climbed down from the TC's hatch and found Senecal, looking sheepish and sitting in water up to his neck. He'd never closed the driver's hatch! When Sgt. Donald J. "DJ" Clark, the platoon sergeant, and Sgt. Dan "Mac" MacQueary, the maintenance chief, arrived and saw Senecal I thought they would kill him. Mac, having just put replacement generators in A-31 and A-32 and got them back on-line, was surely thinking, "Oh shit, here we go again." We spent the night, all night, dumping 55-gallon cans of fresh water in the hatches and watching it flow out the bottom of the hull where all the hull plugs had been removed. It took hours to flush out A-31 to Sgt. Mac's satisfaction, and it was a real learning experience for a young Second Lieutenant.

Bah Mouy Bah and the Kool Aid Caper



Life on the beach at Chu Lai was really pretty boring, the only variety coming from periodic patrols with infantry from one of 3/3's rifle companies and the occasional trip out to "the 'ville" with its little shops where the locals could buy tooth paste, etc. It had been incorporated within 3/3's Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) and was considered safe. One prize item that our little forays to the 'ville offered was ice! The troops, when off duty, were authorized two beers a day and 3/3 was buying a Vietnamese rice beer, Bah Mouy Bah, which translated was "33." A sister brand was Bier LaRue 33, know affectional as "Lash LaRue", after the principal character in a TV western series then popular in the States. The name could also be applied to one's digestive system as, "Lash had me in the head all night." We would make daily runs out to the 'ville to buy ice with our Vietnamese money which were called Dong, in Vietnamese. To this day, I couldn't tell you how they made the ice, but it came in large hollow rectangular blocks, covered in saw dust and wrapped in burlap sacks. You certainly wouldn't want to suck on a piece of this ice, but it did a commendable job of keeping our Lash and 33 cold or at least drinkable.

The leadership of the 3rd Platoon, realized that a bored Marine could be dangerous to himself and others when working on a 52-ton piece of heavy equipment that can break your back or crush your body in a heartbeat. I wrote home and asked my parents and my girlfriend to buy Kool Aid and encourage their friends and classmates to do the same. Soon thereafter I received quite a number of shoe box boxes filled with Kool Aid packets in a multitude of flavors. I asked DJ what might be the best way to distribute the packets. He recommended we give each man three packets, and they could be handed out at Pay Call. As Pay Day was twice a month, this gave the Marines several choices as to how he consumed his Kool Aid. For example, one could binge drink it, consume one-a-week until the next pay day including a spare, or if lucky at cards, he could increase his holdings significantly. Kool Aid was even being loaned. Pay Day came and our troops queued up on the beach in the hot sun; the line shuffled forward until each man reached the pay clerk, who, armed with

a .45 caliber pistol that rested on the table next to him, counted out each man's money. This was tradition ... but wait! Here was something new! Sitting next to the pay master's rep was one of our guys, who drew three packets of Kool Aid randomly from a laundry bag. No one could complain that this wasn't a "blind draw" and gave them to the man standing in front of him. I think virtually everybody was dumbfounded. "What's this?" most asked. A few, perhaps seeing future trading opportunities asked if they would swap for another flavor. DJ stepped in, "Take what you've got and move along." He turned to me, "If we let them pick what they want, it will be the same as with the C-Rations.

"Meal, Combat, Individual" also known as Combat Rations, C-Rations, C-Rats or C's.

C-Rations were the meals issued to those of us in combat and living under combat conditions. As with all things in life, individuals had their favorites and C-Rations were no different. C-Rats gained some curious superstitions during the Viet Nam War. For example; the Ham & Lima Beans meal, when eaten cold was detested by Marines who called it "ham and mother-fuckers", amphibious tractor (Amtrac) personnel believed that the halved apricots were bad luck during combat operations. The peanut butter issued in a B-1 unit although unappetizing to some was consumed by those with diarrhea as it was certain to help stop the problem. Likewise, there were C-Rats that were beloved by all including spaghetti and meatballs, meatballs with beans (beans and balls) and beef slices with potatoes and gravy.

C-Rations were generally distributed by the case, a large, heavy rectangular cardboard case weighing 25 to 26 pounds and bound with bailing wire. Each case contained 12 individual rations arranged in two rows of six rations. Individual meals were boxed according to the menu and organized by their Box Unit (B1, B2, and B3). Each case also contained four paper wrapped "P-38" can openers which were considered one of the greatest inventions devised by the hand of man. Most of us still have one safely tucked away in a cigar box with other memorabilia.

## MENUS

- The Meat Unit came in many varieties; M1 was either beefsteak, chicken or turkey loaf, chopped ham & eggs or ham slices in juice. M2 was either beef chunks with beans & tomato sauce, ham and lima beans, beef slices with potatoes and gravy, or beans with frankfurter chunks in tomato sauce, and spaghetti with meat balls in tomato sauce. M3 was either beef in spiced sauce, boned chicken



or turkey, chicken with noodles in broth, or pork steak cooked in juices. Beans with frankfurter chunks ran a close second to ham and lima beans as the most disliked meal and were lovingly referred to as, “beanie weenies” or “beans and baby dicks.”

- The Bread Unit came in three different varieties: B1 had seven crackers and two chocolate discs and peanut butter spread, B2 contained four hardtack biscuits “John Wayne cookies”, a cookie sandwich, and cheese spread and B3 had four cookies and a packet of cocoa powder and Jam spread, most frequently used with the bread found in a D3 can.

- The Dessert unit had fruit such as sliced apricots, quartered peaches, sliced pears or a fruit cocktail and the ever-popular pound cake.

- Each individual meal had an accessory pack. The pack contained salt, pepper, sugar, instant coffee, non-dairy creamer, two pieces of candy-coated chewing gum, a packet of toilet paper, a four-pack of cigarettes, and a book of 20 cardboard moisture-proof matches. Immediately after the Viet Nam War, the cigarette 4-packs were discontinued – go figure.

At chow time the senior tanker would turn the C-Rat case upside down and rearrange the individual meals within the case to ensure a blind choice. Some of the third herd had memorized where their favorite meal—and undoubtedly someone else’s favorite—resided. It was after the crew had drawn their meals that the horse-trading for preferred items began such as trading pound cake for pears or ham and motherfuckers for beans and balls.



Photo of Charlie’s back with him sitting on a water can playing cards at the Plt CP

As the platoon commander, A-31 was my tank, an M-48A3. The M-48A3 was long in service (introduced in 1948) but still considered mission effective. The crew: driver, Andy Senecal, the gunner, Charlie Denton, and the Loader was someone whose name has been forgotten over the years. I was pleased to learn that the crew was generally well trained. Every now and then though one of those “Oops!” moments might arise and, in this case, it involved Charlie. We’d been on standby all day, prepared to assist in whatever way possible, a company-size operation on the far side of the Song Tra Bong River and forever and for whatever

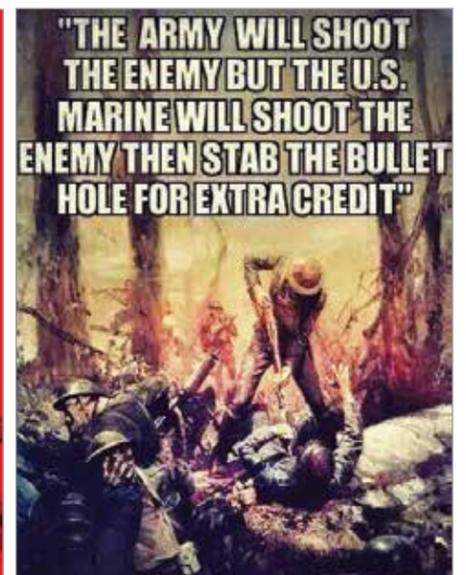
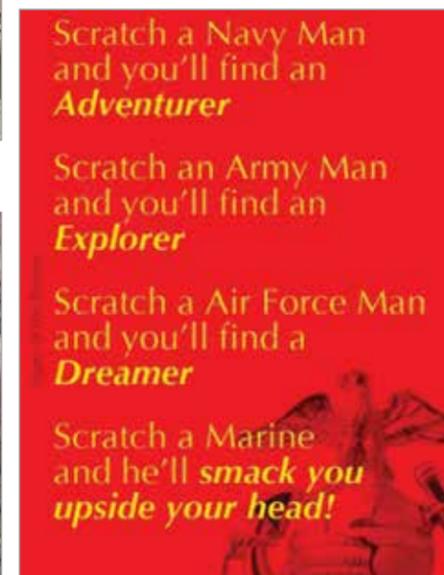
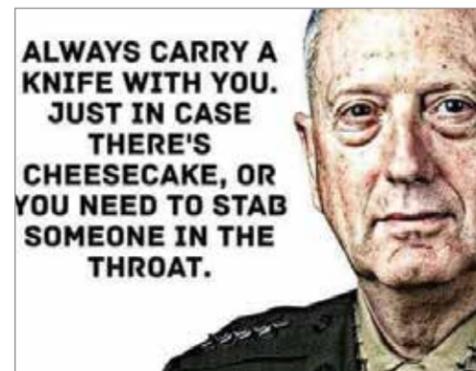
the reason, Denton had assigned himself as loader that day. As luck would have it, this was a unique operation because we had no means of crossing the river and we were required to provide immediate, on-call, direct fire support from the Chu Lai side of the Song Tra Bong to 3/3’s unit on the south side of the river. Late that afternoon we received a call on the radio alerting us to the fact that a withdrawal was imminent and that we should be prepared to provide support as necessary. The infantry would designate targets with white phosphorus (WP) which would show up clear and bright in the night. I told the loader, “Load one round HE and prepare for firing.” He sung out, “Up” meaning the round was loaded, the breach block was up and that he was clear of the 90 mm recoil path. The gunner had also acquired the WP burn and confirmed my spot. I told the gunner, “fire when ready.” The gun went off with an ear cracking bang and I told the loader, “With one round HE, load.” There was no response, nothing was moving inside the turret. I looked to my left and I could see Charlie Denton’s silhouette. He was intently watching the activity across the river. I reached over and slapped his crewman’s helmet. Surprised, he turned towards me. “Load one round HE!” I bellowed. He disappeared like a shot and in what seemed like seconds later, I heard, “Up!” We watched as the am-trac platoon formed up on the south beach across the river. A-33 and A-34 provided direct fire on selective enemy targets using our 90-millimeter cannons and we also provided illumination with our 18” incandescent searchlights. With all the noise and activity, we were extremely fortunate that no enterprising VC Forward Observer (FO) observed us and summoned up a mortar crew. The Amtrackers counted their vehicles and were short one tractor. I can still recall to this day the late in the afternoon conversation between someone with the 3/3 unit across the river and someone in the 4th Marines CP on our side of the Song Tra Bong. As we were monitoring the tactical communications network (Tac Net) I heard it all and it went something like this:

- 3/3 element: “Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to recover the P-5 (Landing Vehicle Tracked Personnel-5) that bogged down earlier in a paddy. The engineers are going to blow it in place, over.”

- 4th Marines: “Be advised, you will not, repeat not.” Here, the voice from the 4th Marines was interrupted as off in the distance we heard an earth-shattering explosion “ka boom” followed by a towering column of black smoke quickly moving skyward. The 4th Marines voice resumes “repeat not, destroy that vehicle.” We were sure that the sound of the LVTP-5 in question going skyward in pieces could have been heard at the 4th Marines CP and that certain officers, at that very instant, knew their careers would be summarily terminated.

The LVTP-5s were counted on the beach and, as expected, there was one missing. The 3/3 commanding officer (a LtCol.) and the Operations Officer (a Major) were both relieved of their duties and were gone by the next day.

Part Two of this story to be published in a future issue of our magazine. ■



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# SEA TIGER



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*Happy Birthday*

