



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™

**It is just 9 months until we reunite
in Colorado Springs!!!**



Featured Stories:

- 2022 Mini- Reunion recap.....Page 23-26
Bob Embesi Tribute.....Page 31-33
2023 Reunion Announcement.....Page 41-46



We found a source to produce a certificate like the one above. If you are interested in owning your own personalized gem, please call John Wear at 719-495-5998 or email him at johnwear2@verizon.net and we will form a list of VTA members who may want to purchase one.

They come plain paper rolled for \$75 delivered...

Or matted and framed for \$150 delivered.

Later you will provide your specialized information for your own personalized certificate.

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE!

Please pay your 2023 Dues or Annual Life Assessment now: and to make it even more convenient for you, enclosed is a pre-addressed return mail envelope. Check the back cover of the Sponsor Box to see when your membership expires. Collecting the annual dues takes time, money, phone calls and emails, so we are offering a 10% discount if you renew now for 2 or 3 years!

For those who would like to make an “over and above donation” to the General Fund, we have provided a check box. Add your tax deductible donation to the dues amount and write a check payable to

Letter from the President

THE 2023 BIENNIAL REUNION ANNOUNCEMENT!!! We will be gathering in Colorado Springs on September 13 – 20, 2023. More details appear on the last four pages of this issue.

THE WYOMING Mini-REUNION: For the sixty VTA members and the 40 family members who were able to attend, we were treated to (in my opinion) one of the finest military museums in the world. We certainly were lucky!!! There is a color recap in the middle of this issue of our magazine.

THE CURRENT COMMANDANT OF THE USMC: I have been told by some of the membership that my “disrespectful and vociferous language” concerning the CMC’s total and unabated destruction of our beloved Corps is out of place and should not appear in this publication. For those of you who have been offended, I guess I can offer an apology of sorts. What I am wondering is how you folks will feel when the USMC is amalgamated into the US Army and just like US Marine tanks, towed artillery and fast-mover close air support, the United States Marine Corps will be nothing more than a brief note in the history books?

OUR STORIES: Just last month I received an email from the son of a recently deceased retired US Marine Lt Colonel who spent a good portion of his Marine Corps career at a tank officer. The son was looking for anyone who could help him with writing his father’s eulogy for the funeral that was happening in a few weeks. My response to his inquiry was “Unfortunately your father never joined the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association and so we have virtually no background material on him. Do you know what Marine tank outfit he was assigned to and what years?”

The son’s reply to me was: “He was with 3rd Tanks in ‘68 and ‘69.” He continued, “...But unfortunately, like most Vietnam vets, he was a vault when it came to talking about his experiences over there. The only thing I could gather was an article in the Quantico Sentry in 1970 that talked about a Bronze Medal (with V) that he received.”

BOTTOM LINE TO ALL VTAMEMBERS: Please get off of your butts and write SOMETHING about your time in-country and then submit it to the Sponson Box. Share the story with your family and with the USMC VTA. As soon as we publish your story, it will be on the Internet for others to read and to share. Who knows? When you do your PCS to “The Great Tank Park in the Sky,” someone will be able to have some salient history of you to pass on to others.

A CONCERN: I recently read a hand-written note sent to us from a VTA member asking why we had not published the photo that he had sent to us 8 years ago. It is our fervent promise to make every effort to feature stories and photos that are sent to us in a timely fashion. When an original photo is sent ... versus it being scanned and emailed, we have to find a source to scan the photo and then seek counsel about what the identification of the photo’s subject matter. And an even more problematic item is waiting 8 years to comment on the “missing” photo. Think about it. According to the sender, the photo was sent in 2013. Who remembers what they did in 2013 other than attend the VTA reunion in San Antonio?

A REQUEST: If you are going to send photos or stories to us, please follow up with a second email or telephone call making sure that we got them. ALSO, if the story is sent via email, we will always acknowledge receipt of your story so that you know that your effort was received.

QUESTION: We recently got a call from several members indicating that they received TWO copies of the last issue of our magazine. While the printer assures us that we only paid for one being mailed, we are curious if others received more than one copy. Please call or email John Wear 719.495.5008 ... if you got two or more. If no one answers the phone, please just leave a message indicating who you are and how many that you got. Thank you!

USMC VTA WEBSITE VIDEO INTERVIEWS: The following is sent to us from Clayton Price, our “official” VTA videographer:

“Your website video interviews have been viewed over 286,000 times. In hours that adds up to over 58,000 hours of watch time. Your YouTube channel has 795 subscribers who are notified every time we release a new video. Viewers from 38 countries around the world have watched your videos.”

“I am hurt but I am not slain. I’ll lay me down and bleed awhile, then, I will rise and fight again.”
-Sir Andrew Barton (in the 16th Century)

Everyone has a story. If your story is good enough to reminisce about with your buddies then it’s good enough to write down and send it for the Sponson Box and for the VTA website. Your story can be about the war or about the home front. Just write it the same way that you tell it and send it to John Wear. We’d love to share your story with the membership.

John



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Wife: Flora
Recruited by: John Wear
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1103 Forrest Road
Tylertown, MS 39667
Phone: 985.665.3987
No Email
MOS: 1811
B Co, 1st Tanks, '66 – '68
DOB: 04–09–48
Wife: Natalie
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DOB: 08–25–47
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B Co, 1st Tanks, 1979
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ON THE COVER: Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak.

Our Readers Write

(Formally known as "Letters to the Editor")

Seeking Tank Gunnery Stories?

Gene Whitehead writes: I have been extremely busy of late. If you remember we moved to Thailand and built a house. I can send you a short story of me and my tank crews winning the battalion gunnery competition in 1980 along with the signed photo of our crew with the trophy that was presented by the battalion commander. I will write the story ... but only if you are going to do other articles on Tank Gunnery. And the article should not only be of my story. It should include everyone in the VTA.

HOW ABOUT IT EVERYONE? DO YOU HAVE A TANK GUNNERY STORY TO SHARE? PLEASE WRITE IT AND SUBMIT IT VIA E-MAIL TO JOHN WEAR!!! OK?

1st Sgt Rick Lewis’ Birthday Message

On this USMC Birthday it’s a double edge sword! Great to celebrate the Corps Birthday and at the same time there is no more Iron Monsters to hear the roar of or the great warmth standing by the back grill doors, or the scream from inside the turret when the wrench hits the battery terminal. There are many more great times and memories that I am sure we all have. Our Legacy as tankers must never die, thank goodness for the VTA that allows all of us to come together and share all those great times and memories. Happy Birthday Devil Dogs! A Tanks-a-lot

WHAT A SURPRISE!

John, just finished reading the current issue of our magazine and when I came across the “Musings” you wrote 2/9/06. It was about Dennis Wear. How ironic is that? Dennis was a Billings, Montana boy and got married before he went overseas. I never did know him but I know about him. I met his widow and I worked with her and met his son. I got to know her much better and after my wife passed away, I dated his widow for a while. Her name was Jackie (or Jacquelyn) if I remember correctly. I haven’t seen her for a long time but I know she is still here in town. I just thought I would let you know. What a small world. How paths seem to cross from time to time. Semper Fi
Jim “Sause” Sausoman

Bring a Friend with You?

Mike Giovinazzo writes: I received the attached 1/7 Newsletter from a good friend who was a 0331 with A-1/7 in VN in ’67. He was a firefighter in Harlem with me and I mentioned him in the last article I wrote for Sponson Box. He tripped a booby trap when he had just four months in-country and then spent four months in hospitals. It is a miracle that he was able to get into the FDNY, since he has so little vision in one eye and his legs look like a road map. He did 34 years as a nozzle man in a busy engine company. A real standup guy. He is in contact with some of his old platoon members, but has never gone to a 1/7 reunion. I have encouraged him to do so, but he never does. I even offered for him to come to the VTA reunion and explained how he would fit right in. I know you see this same type many times. You can see from the newsletter that their organization may not have much longevity. If you think the next VTA reunion will need more attendees it may be an idea would be to encourage members to ask a friend to come. It could be those of other services, or Marine friends. Just a thought.

John’s reply: You may have an interesting concept here, Mike. One of our longtime members, Garry Hall, brought his cousin, who is also a US Marine Vietnam veteran, to the Wyoming mini-reunion and later Garry said that his cousin had such a great time that he is seriously considering joining the VTA ... even though he was not a tanker we will welcome him.

VTA Member’s son finds a New Member!

Adrian Knox, the son of Clyde Knox writes: Ken was the driver for Charlie 2–1 on my dad’s tank. I’ve been trying to find him off and on for almost 20 years. I found a Mr. Parris on Facebook and I messaged him blindly to see if he had any relation to a US Marine Vietnam tanker. Sure enough, it was his nephew. He was so helpful he gave me his contact number to finally get a hold of his uncle (the Vietnam tanker). Pretty neat!!!

Kenneth D. Parris
225–11 147th Avenue
Springfield Gardens, NY 11413
C Co. 1st Tank Bn. 1811

>>

Liberty Bridge?



Rick Lewis: On Page 9 of the current issue of our magazine (2022 Oct/Nov/Dec), I am sure this is Liberty Bridge that all the 1st Tank companies took turns guarding. Our orders were to use our 30 cals and M-14's to shoot anything floating down the river that might blow up the bridge. The VC/NVA kept us busy shooting up floating rafts with notes on them for us to go home or even had our names and units on some of the notes. Of course, we caught the duty during the monsoons and mud up to your butt every day. You couldn't live in the old French bunkers since the rats were the size of cats and they owned the bunkers. That's why you see the tarp tied to the tank and sitting on the river bank; the other tank was on the other side of river. Also with us was a platoon of grunts. We got stuck there for three weeks at a time. We just never got dry.

Also looking at the picture there are three Ace of Spades

on the 90mm which, would be 2nd Platoon of Charlie Co. This would be C-23, my old tank in 66-67.

Soothing to my Soul

I just finished reading the October–November–December 2022 Sponson Box. I teared up a little when I started putting a beside all the names of the guys I knew on Page 11 ... (Those who have passed away since our organization's founding) ... and at the same time. I realize that since I am in the twilight of my years, I feel a twinge of sadness when I turned the last page because this publication, above all others, is soothing to my soul.

Semper Fi brother, James Renforth

It's a 10!!!

Robert Skeels writes: This is a great article for the Sponsor Box. Received my latest copy today...read it and I rate it a "10" due to its coverage on the "Vietnam Wall" and the announcement of yet another reunion for the brothers.

Col. Reed Bolick

Sorry to be a little late getting my renewal to you-all. The Corps may have done away with tanks but you and the VTA are certainly keeping the Marine Corps Tanker Esprit alive – especially for those of us from the Vietnam era! Thank you.

Photos of Names on the Wall

John, thanks for including the updated website. It mentioned Corpsman David Schonewald, who was KIA in December, 1969. We were good friends in C Company, 1st Tanks. My son and I found his name on The Wall in D.C. many years ago. It was an important goal for me. Thanks again.

Semper Fi.

Karl Buttstadt

Tom Howe?

John Hunter writes: I believe that I have a story about our new member Thomas F. Howe. He was my platoon commander on a Caribbean cruise in 1966–1967. I have not confirmed this, but I will. He was a great officer; he was the person responsible for me making E-4 during the cruise.

The selected design of The Wall was controversial, in particular due to its black color, its lack of ornamentation, and its configuration below ground level. Among other attacks, it was called "a black gash of shame and sorrow." Two prominent early supporters of the project, H. Ross Perot and James Webb, withdrew their support once they saw the

design. Said Webb, "I never in my wildest dreams imagined such a nihilistic slab of stone." James Watt, secretary of the interior under President Ronald Reagan, delayed issuing a building permit for the Memorial due to the political opposition. Since its early years, criticism of the Memorial's design faded. In the words of Jan Scruggs, "It has become something of a shrine."

Negative reactions to Maya Lin's design created a controversy; a compromise was reached by VVMF's agreement to add a flagstaff and a realist statue at the site. Consequently Frederick Hart (who designed the sculpture that was part of the third-place winner in the original design competition) was commissioned to produce a bronze figurative sculpture. Opponents of Lin's design wanted to place this sculpture of three soldiers at the apex of the two walls, to make the soldiers the focal point of the memorial and the Wall a mere backdrop. In the end, the sculpture was placed in an entry plaza. On October 13, 1982, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts approved the addition of the flagstaff and the Hart sculptures.

Saw This on Facebook Photo Identified



J. Heffernan replies: On Page 6 of the current Sponson Box (2022 Oct/Nov/Dec) "Saw this on Facebook" ... I think he is one of mine (3rd Platoon, Alpha Co, 3rd Tanks). I believe he was a replacement TC, a Sergeant. I believe, I think the picture was taken at Con Thien, in July 69. It was the same day Dave Ralston, the XO stopped by. I can't place the Marine's name because I was relatively new to the platoon, but I do remember we referred to him as "Sugar Bear". If the name comes to me, I'll let you know. Sorry, it's been a couple of years.

And the man in the photo replies: I don't really remember where this photo was taken. My memory is not that good. It could be the Rockpile, Dong Ha, Quang Tri or Cam Lo. I

was in 3rd Platoon, A Co, 3rd Tank Battalion. This was in 1969. I was Sgt Kenneth Christopher.

FEAR?



FUN QUOTES:

It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone."–Andy Rooney.

"The older I get, the better I used to be." – Lee Trevino, Professional Golfer.

"The older I get, the more clearly I remember things that never happened."–Mark Twain.

"First you forget names, then you forget faces, then you forget to pull your zipper up, then you forget to pull your zipper down."–Leo Rosenberg.

"Old age is like a plane flying through a storm. Once you are aboard there is nothing you can do about it."–Golda Meir.

"At my age, flowers scare me."–George Burns.

"The years between 50 and 70 are the hardest. You are always being asked to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down."–T.S. Elliot.

"At age 20, we worry about what others think of us... at age 40, we don't care what they think of us... at age 60, we discover they haven't been thinking of us at all."–Ann Landers.

"I was thinking about how people seem to read the bible a lot more as they get older, and then it dawned on me—they're cramming for their final exam."–George Carlin, Comedian.

"Everything slows down with age, except the time it takes cake and ice cream to reach your hips."–John Wagner. >>

“Grandchildren don’t make a man feel old, it’s the knowledge that he’s married to a grandmother that does.”- J. Norman Collie.

“When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it’s a sure sign you’re getting old.”–Mark Twain.

“There’s one advantage to being 102, there’s no peer pressure.”–Dennis Wolfberg.

“There are three stages of man: he believes in Santa Claus, he does not believe in Santa Claus, he is Santa Claus.”–Bob Phillips.

“Looking fifty is great—if you’re sixty.”–Joan Rivers.

“Time may be a great healer, but it’s a lousy beautician.” – Anonymous.

History of the Wall–Opposition to Design and Compromise



The Marine Corps Is Dangerously Close To Losing...
(Continued from page 12)

ers and other comparably unfortunate Marines joined the Army or another service.

Marine Corps culture is built on the primacy of infantry. Marines have always taken pride in the motto “Every Marine a rifleman.” Force Design 2030, Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations, Stand-in Forces, and Talent Management 2030 — the planning documents that have laid the foundation for the corps’ new doctrine — deemphasize infantry skills. Specialists are the new coin of the realm. The deactivation of three infantry battalions and reductions in the number of Marines in the remaining infantry battalions are the best indicators that Marine infantry is no longer seen as the point of the warfighting spear. Long-range precision rockets and missiles and new organizations in which Marines watch computer screens and push buttons to engage the enemy have replaced the rifle and the infantryman as the ultimate arbiters of future battles. To support these new warfighting concepts, Marine infantry has been stripped of the support needed to close with and destroy the enemy. You have to experience, as we have, a life and death struggle against overwhelming numbers of a determined enemy to know the compelling impact of a wall of close and continuous artillery fire, immediately available close air

support, and, at times, tanks. We know firsthand that combined arms win battles that would otherwise be lost. We also believe that close combat, where winners and losers are ultimately decided, is being virtually, but mistakenly, ignored as a relic of the Industrial Age.

Marine Corps warfighting ethos is exemplified by “First to Fight” and “In Every Clime and Place,” rallying calls rapidly becoming empty words. The Marines will soon be little more than a regionally focused afterthought. The misguided divestiture of proven and necessary warfighting capacity has seriously (and, unless corrected, fatally) emasculated the Marine Corps’s capabilities to fight and win across the spectrum of conflict. The narrow tailoring of forces for a backwater role (Stand-in Forces) in the Western Pacific, a concept devoid of rigorous experimentation and validation, comes at great cost. Simply stated, the Marine Corps is no longer the nation’s premier 911 force, ingloriously ceding that distinction to the Army’s XVIII Airborne Corps.

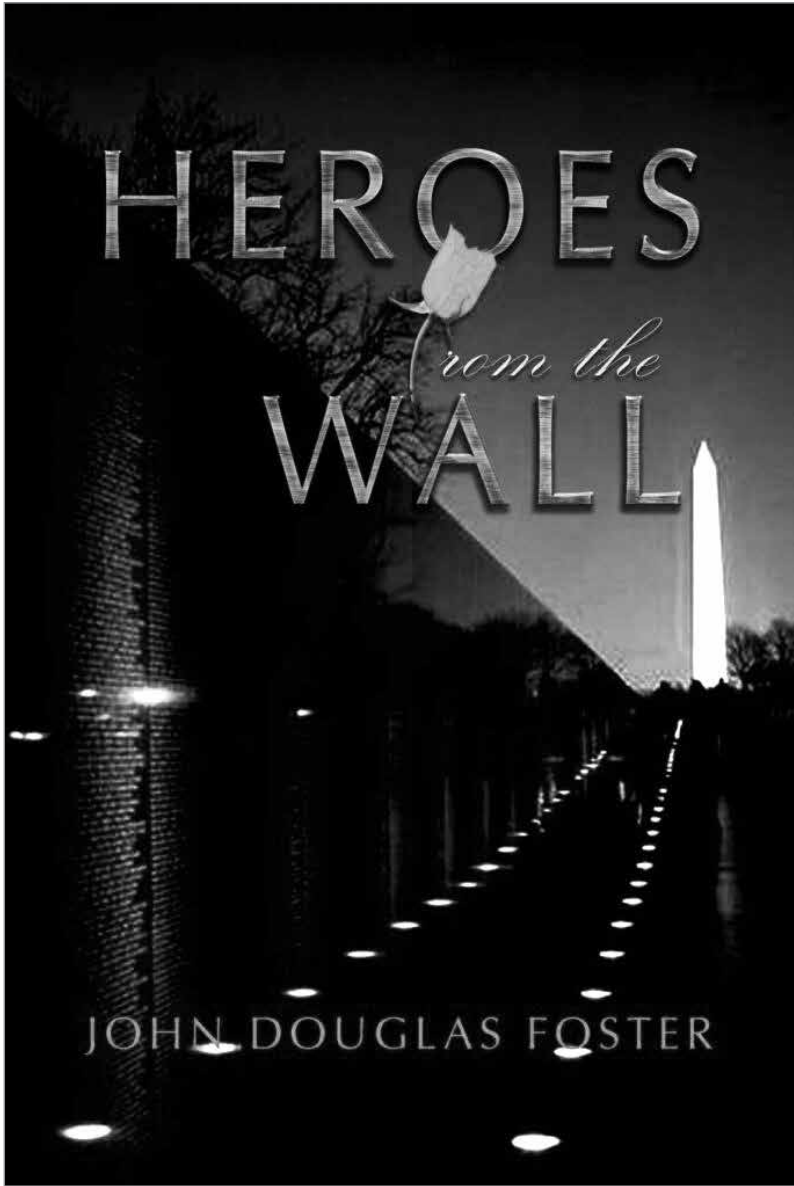
In closing, we want to be perfectly clear. We believe the warfighting dominance and those intangibles that make Marines unique are under attack and at risk of being overrun. The unwise jettisoning of too many tools in the Marine Corps’ toolbox of capabilities and the whole-

sale gutting of others have virtually destroyed its utility for major combat operations. Operating forces have been hollowed out under the illusion of returning the Marine Corps to its naval roots. While reductions in force structure and equipment can be added back at the cost of great time and expense, culture and ethos, once lost, are gone forever. Force Design 2030 and Talent Management 2030, no matter how well intended, are blueprints for disaster.

James “Jim” Livingston is a Major General, USMC (Retired). He was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving as the Commanding Officer, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines during the Battle of Dai Do; Jay Vargas is a Colonel, USMC (Retired). He was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving as the Commanding Officer, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines during the Battle of Dai Do; Harvey “Barney” Barnum is a Colonel, USMC (Retired). He was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving as the Commanding Officer, Company H, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines during the Battle of Ky Phu on Operation HARVEST MOON; Robert “Bob” Modrzejewski is a Colonel, USMC (Retired). He was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving as the Commanding Officer, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines during Operation HASTINGS. ■

Book Review

HEROES from the WALL



“While the author, John Douglas Foster was wounded while serving in Vietnam during Tet of 1968, he received more than a piece of metal in his body, haunting memories of comrades opened his soul in a quest to learn more about those who didn’t return. Far more important than mere names on a monument are the lives of those who died. Memorials to those who die in war need to confront us with real, living persons, with dreams and plans, hobbies and interests, connections to others, who might say something or do something that lingers forever in our heart and soul. Foster’s book provides an opportunity to grasp truly great individuals, not just numbers and statistics, not just names on a wall.”

Rev Ray Stubbe
U.S. Navy Chaplain
Siege at Khe Sanh, 1968

USMC Vietnam veteran of 2/9: “After having serving in Vietnam, I refused to allow myself to think about anything concerning this conflict. So reading this book had sort of a healing power to me. I really enjoyed reading about these young people who sacrificed their lives in a disgraced and underrepresented war. Their stories were truly inspiring and their loved ones should be very proud of them. It took me a while to read the whole book but I was really impressed that someone else cared enough to gather their stories so we can all understand that these heroes were just like each of us. They also had desires and dreams too. I would have been proud to

have been one of the people in that book.”

USMC Vietnam veteran of 1/1: “It took John 7 years to write this in honor of those we lost in Vietnam. This book is a must read. It’s hard not to be touched by each story, as these are not nameless faces from years past. These are people who were willing to give up everything for their brothers, and those they would never meet. And they did. They did so honorably. Heroes from the Wall directs our attention to not only their sacrifice, but to who they were, as human beings. A fantastic work here.”

John Wear writes: If you have ever been witness to any of the “Fallen Heroes” programs during our biennial reunion Farewell Banquets, this book is very similar to those most outstanding presentations that Bob Peavey produces. I highly recommend Heroes from the Wall by US Marine Vietnam veteran John Douglas Foster. ■

To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

“My Marine brother explained shortly before he left me, ‘If you can remember me, I will be with you always.’”
Isabel Allende, Eva Luna

Ronald Colucci



August 30, 1949–September 16, 2022
Ronald Colucci, 73, passed away peacefully on September 16, 2022 in Leesburg, FL.

Born and raised in New Jersey, he enlisted in the United States Marines while still in high school and became a tanker in Vietnam. He was injured 9 months later and returned home to

the United States with a Purple Heart. He served the remainder of his 4-year tour at Marine Barracks 8th & I. He received his White House Security Clearance, allowing him to guard President Nixon at Camp David, MD.

After attending college, he joined the United States Navy, serving in various duties, including rigorous training to become a Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Corpsman. He was stationed at various duty stations including the USNS Comfort during Desert Storm/Desert Shield. He retired from the Navy with the rank of Chief Hospital Corpsman Fleet Marine Force after 16 years of service. After his military career, Ron served his country as an Inspector/Investigator with the Food and Drug Administration, retiring after 21 years.

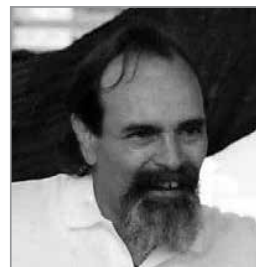
After retiring, he moved to Florida with his wife Carol, to enjoy life and his life-long passion of motorcycle riding up until his passing following a courageous battle with esophageal cancer. Ron (along with his wonderful wife, Carol) was a very active long time member of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association and attended reunions since 2005.

Donald “Flames” Masztak

February 6, 1937 – July 25, 2021

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the death of Donald Masztak of Luna Pier, Michigan, born in Toledo, Ohio, who passed away on July 25, 2021, at the age of 84, leaving to mourn family and friends. Don first became a US Marine tanker in 1956. He was a very proud “Zippo” tanker. He was also an active member of the USMC VTA.

Raymond Craig Whaley



Raymond Craig Whaley, 72, of Orlando, Florida passed away Monday, August 10, 2020. He was born on February 6, 1948 in Miami, Florida and served honorably in the United States Marine Corp. Ray served in A Co, 1st AT’s in 1968. He was a past member of the USMC V

Robert “Cookie” J. DeFazio

August 8, 1949 – October 15, 2021

Robert “Cookie” J. DeFazio, 72, of Export, PA, passed away Friday, October 15, 2021 at Forbes Hospital in Monroeville. He was born August 8, 1949, in Pittsburgh. He was a very proud veteran of the US Marine Corp having served as a tank crewman with 1st Tanks during the Vietnam War. He was an active member of the USMC VTA.

Isaac Goodman

September 28, 1945 – April 5, 2020

We are sad to announce that on April 5, 2020 we had to say goodbye to Isaac Goodman (Millsboro, Delaware), born in Louisville, Kentucky. Isaac served as a tank crewman with A Co, 1st Tanks in 1968. He was an active member of the USMC VTA.

Kenneth “Kenny” Metcalf



1945–2016

Kenneth “Kenny” Metcalf, 71, passed away, peacefully, at Takoma Regional Hospital, in Greeneville, TN, on August 26, 2016. He was born on February 3, 1945 in Madison, NC, to Earl and Ola Mae Metcalf. He served honorably, in the United States Marines Corps as a tank crewman and was a Vietnam Veteran. He

retired from Greeneville Shipbuilders, and the Greene County School System. He will be missed by everyone, including his beloved pets, Mindy and Mattie. He was loved by many, and was known for his generosity, and amazing sense of humor, as well as his devotion to his family. He will be missed by his extensive family and by his US Marine brothers Bruce “Foxy” Fox of NY, David McGee and Jan “Turtle” Wendling.

Willard Melvin Byars



1944–2016

Willard Melvin Byars, 71, died April 6, 2016 in Okeechobee, Florida. He was born May 24, 1944 in Sebring to James Sr. and Thelma Louise (Hill) Byars. He proudly served our country in the U.S. Marines in Panama, Cuba, and as a tank crewman in Vietnam with A Co, 3rd Tanks in 1966. A resident of Okeechobee since 1965, he enjoyed air

boating, hunting, and fishing. He worked as a mechanic at the Division of Forestry. Mr. Byars was preceded in death by his brother, Steve Byars, whom had served as a U.S. Marine and was killed in action in Vietnam.

No services are planned.

James F Johnson

August 2, 1946–July 4, 2018

There was no obituary other than this notice. We looked it up that he was from Corning, California. He served as a tank crewman with 3rd Tanks in 1969 and 1st Tanks in 1966.

Howard Anthony Raby Sr.



1945–2020

Howard Anthony Raby, Sr., 75, passed away July 16, 2020 at his home in North Kansas City. No services are scheduled. Howard was born March 22, 1945 to Cortland and Jane (Martini) Raby in Oswego, NY. He lived a great deal of his life in Florida before moving to North Kansas City. He was a U.S. Marine Ontos crewman veteran of the Vietnam War who

served with C Co, 3rd AT’s in 1965. He was also a past member of the USMC VTA.

LtCol Raymond George Kennedy, USMC, Ret.



1930 – 2022

Oceanside, CA – Our beloved father passed away in July 2022. A true Marine, he dedicated his life to service and fought until the very end. He was born in Belle Plaine, Kansas where he graduated from Belle Plaine High School in 1948 and passed on a football scholarship to Wichita State to join the Marines.

Beginning his military journey in San Diego as a private, he was later assigned to the 1st Marine Division 1st Tank Battalion and fought in both Korea and Vietnam as a tank officer. LtCol Kennedy’s final assignment was to command the 1st Tank Battalion – it is believed that Ray was the only Marine to have served as both a private and commander of the same US tank battalion. He was awarded 17 decorations, including the Bronze Star Medal with Valor. He was a past member of the USMC VTA

Richard Lance “Fuzzy” Runyard



1950–2014

RICHARD LANCE “FUZZY” RUNYARD Age 64, of Riverside CA, died on June 16, 2014. Richard was born on April 23, 1950, in Ames, Iowa. Richard graduated from Marina High School (Huntington Beach) in 1968 and soon afterward joined the U.S. Marine Corps, and received training on the anti-tank “ONTOS” vehicle which coincidentally his father, a mechanical engineer, had helped design. Richard

was then sent to Okinawa for further training and assigned to the 5th Anti-Tank Battalion. In March 1969 he was deployed to Vietnam and assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, where he participated in several combat engagements against the North Vietnamese Army during “Operation Oklahama Hills.” Richard was seriously injured later that year, and was evacuated to Guam for medical treatment and later to other Navy hospitals in California. He received a Purple Heart, among other military decorations. Unfortunately Richard never joined the USMC VTA.

Oscar Edward (“Ed”) Gilbert, Jr.



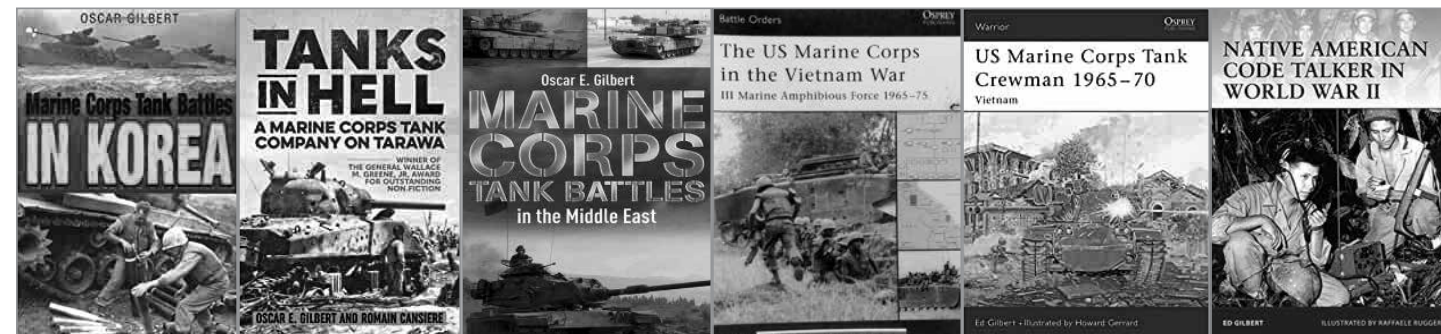
1946–2019

Oscar Edward (“Ed”) Gilbert Jr. died February 10th, 2019 from metastatic melanoma. His last words were “This is a miserable disease, so take care of your skin.” Okay, not really, but he thought it was good advice. Ed was born in Birmingham Alabama on December 10, 1946, the elder son of Oscar E.

Gilbert and Elsie Mae Kendrick Gilbert. He spent his entire youth there, graduating from Jones Valley High School in 1964. He was a graduate of The University of Alabama (B.S.G. 1969, M.S. 1974), and The University of Tennessee (Ph.D., 1981).

He served in the Marine Corps Reserve as an artilleryman and NCO instructor.

His hobby in later years was military history, and he was the author of eighteen books on the subject as well as magazine articles, with emphasis on the history of the U.S. Marine Corps and (thanks to his wife Cathy) the American War of Independence. His book “Tanks in Hell – A Marine Corps Tank Company on Tarawa” was awarded the 2016 General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award for outstanding non-fiction. ■



The Marine Corps Is Dangerously Close To Losing Its Customs, Traditions, And Warfighting Ethos

BY JAMES E LIVINGSTON, JAY VARGAS, HARVEY “BARNEY” BARNUM
AND ROBERT “BOB” MODRZEJEWSK

October 2, 2022

As Marines and Medal of Honor recipients, we believe the intangibles that make the Marine Corps exceptional are under attack and at risk of being overrun.

There is nothing particularly glorious about sweaty fellows, laden with killing tools, going along to fight. And yet — such a column represents a great deal more than 28,000 individuals mustered into a division. All that is behind those men is in that column, too: the old battles, long forgotten, that secured our nation. . traditions of things endured and things accomplished, such as regiments hand down forever.

— Colonel John W. Thomason, Fix Bayonets (1926)

COLONEL THOMASON knew that Marines are not defined solely by their weapons and equipment, but more broadly by their history, culture, traditions, and warrior ethos. These intangibles make United States Marines unique. These almost mystical attributes are fragile, only ever one generation away from extinction. Traditions of things endured and things accomplished are the foundation of Marine Corps combat effectiveness. Without close attention to and nurturing of these qualities, the Corps will lose its identity.

Sadly, we believe the Marine Corps is on that path. Why? The current senior leadership did away with many weapons in order to procure anti-ship missiles. This new warfighting concept consisted of small packets of Marines landing on atolls in the South China Sea with the mission of sinking Chinese warships. This defensive strategy was sold as innovative and necessary to transform the Marine Corps for 21st-century warfighting. It is more likely to relegate the Marine Corps to irrelevance. The history, traditions, culture, and ethos of the Marine Corps are being dangerously and needlessly eroded. Unless this trend is reversed, the Marine Corps we knew and loved will cease to exist.

Many, arguably most, former Marines, ourselves included, find it increasingly difficult to recognize our Marine Corps. The organization in which we served is being radically altered



Marines with Battalion Landing Team, First Battalion, Fourth Marines, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, take part in Exercise Alligator Dagger at Arta Beach, Djibouti, December 2016.

with little or no apparent appreciation for unforeseen consequences. The unnecessary cutting of force structure, coupled with the ill-advised jettisoning of combat multipliers such as tanks, cannon artillery, assault amphibious vehicles, heavy engineers, aviation, and logistics before replacement capabilities have been procured, will perilously weaken the flexibility and lethality of forward-deployed Marine Air Ground Task Forces and the ability of the Marine Expeditionary Forces to task organize for combat across the spectrum of conflict. We fear that soon Marines will no longer be able to pride themselves on being “most ready when the nation is least ready.”

The Marine Corps is being undermined by a corporate approach to personnel management where civilian “best practices” are replacing our traditional values of the “needs of the service” and by a narrowly defined focus on long-range rockets and missiles to win future battles. Some of the changes have been directed by elected and appointed officials. However, most of the injuries to our glorious Corps have been self-inflicted, such as the unnecessary discarding of tanks and the deep and harmful cuts in cannon artillery.

We’re not opposed to change. The Marine Corps has always changed to remain relevant in a changing world. But so many of the changes planned or already made have been poorly thought out. In some cases, the manner of implementation has done almost as much

damage as the changes themselves. In our opinion, the rush to radically transform the institution has altered the very fabric of the Corps by shredding combat capabilities and trampling history, tradition, culture, and ethos.

Marine Corps history is embodied in its regiments. Marines have always taken immense pride in their regimental histories, at times even defining themselves by the regiments in which they served. With a cavalier disregard for this special bond, Marine Corps leadership recently discarded the name of one of the Corps’ most storied regiments, the Third Marines. The Third Ma-

rines we knew no longer exists. Its name has been indifferently changed to the Third Marine Littoral Regiment; this experimental, one-dimensional unit lacks the flexibility, lethality, and supporting arms required to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver. The same humiliation awaits the Fourth Marines (an infantry regiment) and Twelfth Marines (an artillery regiment), legendary regiments whose names have been immortalized defending our nation and are etched in blood. Regimental designations are Marine Corps history, sources of pride for all Marines. And casing the colors of the Eighth Marines (an infantry regiment in the Second Marine Division) for the sole purpose of offsetting the costs of current and future force developments was as poorly thought out as the naming protocols and restructuring of the infantry and artillery regiments in the Third Marine Division.

Marine Corps tradition is “we take care of our own.” Leaders have always looked out for their Marines and their families. The harried rush to toss aside tanks took priority over the well-being of many Marines and their families. The tankers, mechanics, and their families were simply sidelined and forced to make the best they could of what was left of their careers. To a lesser degree, others similarly affected had the rug pulled from underneath them. With few options available, many tank-

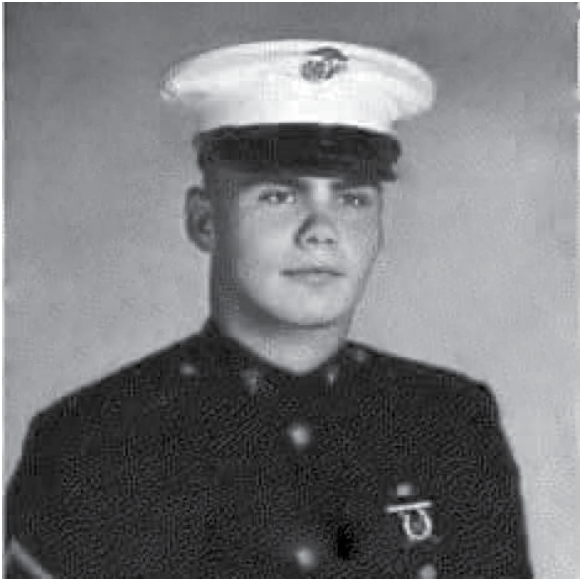
(Continued on page 8)

GUESS WHO Photo Contest

Can you guess who the Marine is on 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.



My first Tank in Vietnam 1965.



Last Issue Winner

On September 28 at 4:50 PM (Mountain Time), the ink was still wet from the printer when long-time VTA member, Richard Tilden called to identify Dick “Carney” as the Marine in the above photo. Since Richard only slightly mispronounced VTA Founder, Dick Carey’s name, we granted him the title of winner.

Michael C. Wunsch

HOME OF RECORD: Feasterville, Pennsylvania

Silver Star

AWARDED FOR ACTIONS DURING Vietnam War

Service: US Marine Corps

Rank: Captain

A Co, 3d Tank Battalion, Division: 3d Marine Division (Rein.), FMF

GENERAL ORDERS:

CITATION: The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Captain Michael C. Wunsch (MCSN: 0-92921), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as Commanding Officer of Company A, Third Tank Battalion, THIRD Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On 27 July 1969, Captain Wunsch's unit, in conjunction with an infantry company, was participating in Operation IDAHO CANYON northwest of Cam Lo in Quang Tri Province when the Marines came under a heavy volume of mortar fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, Captain Wunsch fearlessly exposed himself to the impacting rounds as he skillfully directed the movement and fire of his tanks, causing the hostile unit to withdraw. That night, while the combined force occupied a defensive position, the Marines were subjected to a vicious ground



attack by North Vietnamese Army soldiers determined to penetrate the defensive perimeter. Boldly moving to an exposed vantage point, Captain Wunsch dauntlessly pointed out enemy targets until the assault was repelled. During the early morning hours, he detected movement forward of his position and, reacting instantly, boldly stood in the turret of his tracked vehicle to better observe the area. While thus exposed to the intense hostile fire, he was mortally wounded by the detonation of a rocket-propelled grenade which impacted on his tank. His heroic actions and determined efforts inspired all who observed him and were instrumental in the defeat of the enemy. By his courage, bold initiative and unwavering devotion to duty, Captain Wunsch contributed significantly to the accomplishment of his unit's mission and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

V. A. News & Updates

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

VA Appeals Update 39: 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 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.

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

VA Obesity Initiative Update 03: Just Released I 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 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 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 Update 18: 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: VVantage Point Blog | January 1, 2021 ++]

What to Do If a Loved One Dies

The death of a loved one can be overwhelming. But even while processing the grief in the days and weeks afterward, those left behind are expected to finalize the affairs, responsibilities, and financial accounts of the deceased friend or family member while also making funeral arrangements. We asked experts to provide insights to those unsure on the immediate steps.

Find Your Loved One's Legal Documents

Tracking down a loved one's will, trusts, and other end-of-life legal documents outlining their wishes and financial affairs is a key first step, says Brannon Lambert, a certified financial planner and owner of Canvasback Wealth Management. "Hopefully these are easy to locate. If the obvious spots don't yield the documents, you need to start looking for an attorney's contact information laying around the house ... or locate a safety deposit box. These documents will dictate everything moving forward," Lambert says.

Identify Funeral Wishes and Begin Making Arrangements

Finding a loved one's end-of-life documents will also (ideally) help you make necessary funeral arrangements. "If you know your loved one made an advance funeral plan, gather any associated documentation — it might be a binder from a funeral home or a digital file containing instructions and agreements related to things such as funeral insurance, a burial plot, and even savings set aside for a memorial gathering," says Karen Bussen, founder and CEO of Farewelling, an online platform that helps people navigate funerals and end-of-life planning. Finding this documentation will help guide you through important next steps and decisions.

Get the Death Certificates

When someone dies, getting an official, certified copy of the death certificate is critical to closing out their estate, which includes settling financial accounts. The death must also be registered with the state's vital records office. "In many cases, 10 copies of the death certificate

will do, but the more accounts the individual has, the more copies you will need," Lambert says. The death certificate is usually created by a medical examiner, but it can be requested from a funeral home.

Tell Family and Friends of the Individual's Passing

If you have access to the deceased's cellphone, look for frequent contacts in their call log or emergency contact information and begin notifying these people of the death. "Find other close contacts by looking through their email, U.S. postal mail, notes left around their house, their social media posts, or connect with their neighbors," advises Bob Castaneda, program director for Walden University's master's program in finance.

Create a Memorial Website

Telling people about a death can be simplified by creating a memorial website to share details about funeral services, photos, and even stories about their life, Bussen says. The website can be used to point friends and family to charitable organizations where donations can be made in honor of the deceased. There are many online platforms that can help, including Farewelling. Additional options include Remembering. Live and Memories.

Take Inventory

Perhaps one of the most significant tasks when someone dies is taking inventory of their financial affairs. Make a list of every account held in their name, and every asset. This includes bank accounts, brokerage accounts, retirement accounts, automobiles, insurances, credit cards, personal property, utility accounts, real estate, Social Security, and Medicare numbers," Lambert says. "Anything and everything matters. You don't want to leave anything out." This step is important because you want to know who you need to contact about the death and find out what they need to close or process the account.

Pay Off Debts

While sorting through financial affairs, you may need to begin paying off debts. "The easiest way to ascertain debts is by accessing the decedent's mail or reviewing bank accounts to identify electronic funds transfers that were made to pay bills," says attorney Mary Kate D'Souza, founder and chief legal officer for the estate planning website Gentreo.. "Most people or agencies who are owed money also send regular statements in" the mail detailing the amount owed." Certain bills should be canceled right away, such as health insurance; others, such as those related to property, may need to continue. Keep a home's heat and lights running if a home must be inspected and sold.

Do Not Run to the Bank

Many people make a beeline for the bank upon the death of a loved one, but Lambert advises against it. "If you happen to be married to the deceased person, you may accidentally cut yourself off from your accounts held in joint name," Lambert says. "The banks are quick to freeze funds and force you to open estate accounts and consolidate monies there. It is by design. Their goal is to retain control of the monies and then refer you to one of their advisers ... Only contact the bank once you're organized, have all your required paperwork and a plan regarding how to proceed with the estate."

Notify the Individual's Employer

Reach out to the deceased's employer so that you can inquire about

benefits, final paychecks, or life insurance. "Employee death benefits may include survivor's insurance, transporting of the deceased — if the death occurred on the job — or paying out unused vacation or [time off]," Castaneda says. The employer may also need to coordinate the return of company assets and get a death certificate to process life insurance claims.

Stop Social Security Benefits

If the deceased was a Social Security beneficiary, contact the Social Security Administration immediately to stop the checks. "Individuals can be penalized and imprisoned under penalty of law for any Social Security benefits spent after a loved one dies," Castaneda says. "All benefits received after a beneficiary's death must be returned to SSA"

Take Care of Pets Left Behind

Don't overlook a loved one's pets after a death. "Ensure they have immediate food, water, and shelter," Castaneda says. "If the pets already have a veterinarian, confirm whether they are up to date on their shots and medical treatments. And work with family members to facilitate permanent new housing for any pets."

Secure the Loved One's Property

If the loved one lived alone, you'll also want to be sure to secure their property. "Change door locks or passcodes, pick up delivered mail, and contact their service providers to cancel or transfer their phone contract," Castaneda says. "If your deceased loved one had safety boxes in their home, move them to a discreet, secure location where they cannot be accessed by others." man calling credit card company.

Notify Credit Agencies

Upon the death of a loved one, you should get in touch with the three major credit reporting agencies — Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian. "This is important to help prevent any fraudulent activity," says Jacob Dayan, CEO and co-founder of Community Tax. "Check every so often to verify no new lines of credit or other suspicious activity is taking place in your loved one's name. It can happen from time to time." elderly work from home.

Contact Government Agencies

Beyond notifying Social Security of a death, there may be other government entities and agencies to reach out to, Dayan says. These can include Medicare, the Department of Motor Vehicles, Veterans Affairs, and the post office, so you can have mail forwarded to an appropriate address and cancel accounts or subscriptions you might have missed when reviewing financial accounts.

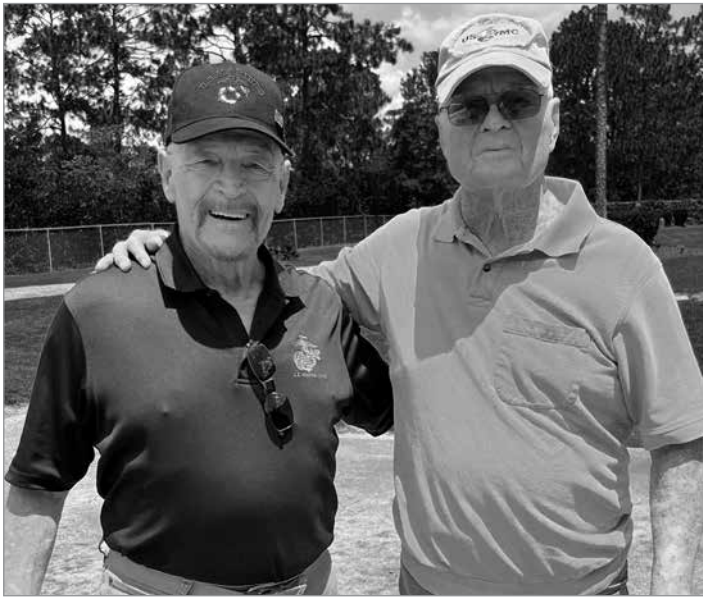
Initiate a Family Meeting

Hosting a family gathering is a good way to discuss and finalize remaining details and arrangements. This meeting could address such things as the deceased's funeral wishes and associated costs, as well as next steps, such as getting an estate attorney involved with distribution of the individual's assets and liabilities. "Grieving families should also discuss temporary care of any pets, cleaning out perishable foods in the home, and establishing who will maintain any property, such as houses, cars or personal items, until they are disposed or distributed," Castaneda says.

[Source: Cheapism | Mia Taylor | December 08, 2021 ++] ■

What Members Are Doing

Id Buddies Finally Reunite




Joe Tyson (L) and Dave Bennett (R) had served together in 1966 in Vietnam. They had been in touch with one another for years, and with Joe’s recent trip to Charleston SC was not that far a drive to Jessup, Georgia to see his old buddy. Tuyen: Please crop out the people on the right

Garry Hall’s High School Reunion



Garry writes: Our class of 1965 high school reunion this past weekend. I’m driving our class sponsor in the homecoming parade.

Ken Zebal Swears In



News Release Selective Service System

National Headquarters | Arlington, Virginia 22209-2461
www.sss.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 29, 2022

Media Contact: Robert Kenny, Deputy Associate Director
Public and Intergovernmental Affairs | 703-605-4103
Robert.Kenny@SSS.gov or PublicAffairs@sss.gov

Marine Corps Veteran Kenneth “Ken” W. Zebal Sworn In as Arizona State Director

“The Selective Service enables our Nation to respond effectively to military personnel needs, should it be called upon to do so.”


Rosslyn, VA: U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Kenneth “Ken” W. Zebal was sworn in as Arizona State Director on September 14, 2022 by Selective Service System Region III Director Steve Kett. Mr. Zebal was nominated by Arizona Governor Doug Ducey.

“Having served in the U.S. Marine Corps, I appreciate and respect the sacrifices and commitment that young people who serve are making for our country. The Selective Service System enables our Nation to respond effectively to military personnel needs, should it be called upon to do so. It is an honor and privilege to serve as Arizona State Director and support this mission. I will ensure that we are fully coordinated with Arizona state officials in the event that we mobilize in response to a national emergency,” Mr. Zebal said.

Mr. Zebal’s military career included service in numerous command and staff positions. As a civilian, he was a support contractor in the aerospace industry.

Mr. Kett said, “Mr. Zebal is a decorated veteran who served his country with honor and distinction in the U.S. Marine Corps for more than 20 years. He brings a wealth of military and private sector experience to the Agency. We are fortunate to have him on our team. He’s the right person for the job and will lead our efforts in Arizona to strengthen our readiness capabilities in coordination with State, county and local leaders.”

Mr. Zebal earned his Master of Business Administration degree from United States International University in San Diego, CA and his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of San Diego. He currently resides in Tucson, AZ with his wife Liz.



Take a LEO to Lunch



Armando Moreno writes: My retired Santa Barbara Co. Sheriff’s buddies and me at Chef Rick’s in Orcutt, CA on 10/3/22. (Left to right) Ross Ruth, Stan Freedman, “Mando” Moreno, and Tom Southwick. We try to get together at least

once a year for lunch. We ALWAYS have a fun time. Lunch was on me today, since I wanted to celebrate with good friends. These guys are the cream of the crop.

GUNNY???



He’s not a VTA member but he sure is cute!!!

3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Tank Battalion



(L-R) Ellis Vandiver, Bill Phillips, John Hunter, Ned Schultz, Stan Williams.

This is a little story about 3rd Platoon’s recent mini reunion in Pendleton, OR at the “Pendleton Round-Up.” We went to the rodeo on September 15, 2022. A good time was had by all, watching the cowboys riding and getting bucked off the horses and bulls. There were also some cowgirls roping steers and American Indians racing bare back horses. Pretty exciting stuff.

Bravo Co, 1st Tanks



Two Marine buddies (Lee Dill and Ed Hiltz) getting together for dinner at Corner Stable restaurant in Cockeysville, Maryland. We were in 4th Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Tank Battalion.

A Salute to Veterans, Woodland Park, CO



On August 21, 2022, John Wear (R) helps unveil a permanent monument located in Woodland Park, CO, that is dedicated to veterans. It seems as if being so short in stature precluded him from effectively accomplishing the task. ■

Above & Beyond

We are extremely grateful to the following members who reached deep into their pockets and made a financial contribution to the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association this past year. You are the lifeblood of the brotherhood and we thank you very much.

Arnsan Danial
Auclair Sr. Gregory
Barnhouse Robert
Bates Donald
Belmessieri Michael
Berryhill Lon
Bisbee William
Bohlen William
Bolick Reed
Boylan Doug
Brazeau Max
Brightwell Leroy
Brusha Joseph
Bunock Michael
Byrne John
Carroll William
Cartier Thomas
Cercone Edward
Christy Charles
Corace Charles
Coulter Richard
Cowman James
Cramer Monty
Cummings Charles
Curtis Michael
Dahl Kenneth
Danner David
Didear James
Diggs Buster
Doty Don
English Richard
Estes Kenneth
Everest Guy
Falk Marcia
Farrell Danny
Fenerty Thomas
Giovinazzo Michael
Griffith Jeffrey
Hackemack Aubrey

Hackett Timothy
Hancock Jr. John
Hayes Thomas
Heffernan John
Henderson Rodney
Hightshoe Janet
Hildabrand Theodore
Hildabrand Ted
Hiltz Jr Charles
Hunter Terrance
Hutchins Glennie
Jefferies Brian
Kellogg Fred
Kilgore William
Knight Ron
Knox Clyde
Knox Adrian
Kues Yukiko
Landaker Joseph
Lee Valmore
Lewis Richard
Lorance Richard
Manson James
Martin Greg
Mastrangelo Joe
McCleery Geary
McDaniel Gary
McDonald Bryant
McKnight James
Mefford Gary
Miller Harold
Moreno Armando
Mortensen Carlton
Murphy Jr. John
Murray Paul
Nagle Richard
Najfus Louis
Newberry Craig
Olenjack Stanley

Ouellette Reynald
Owen David
Peavey Robert
Peterson Gary
Raasch Jim
Reish Thomas
Remkiewicz Francis
Riensch Harold
Roth Jack
Santos Landis
Sausoman James
Scanlon David
Schlieben George
Shapiro Myron
Shaw George
Singer, Jr Robert
Stayton James
Tanis Harold
Thompson Kenton
Thompson David
Traynor Jr. Andrew
Trower John
Tyson Joseph
Tyson Jr. Joseph
Van Dusen Dyrck
Vaughn Michael
Vaxter Robert
Voss John
Vrakelos Chris
Wahl Jerry
Wear John
Wendling Jan
West Charles
White Jerry
Williams Larry
Young Vernon
Zebal Kenneth
Zitz Kenneth
Zuley Lawrence

If we inadvertently missed someone who participated in the financial well-being of our organization, we humbly apologize for the omission and ask that you please notify us of our oversight.

SPECIAL STORY

RICK WALTERS DIAGNOSED THESE ONTOS PHOTOS



This looks like Camp Le Jeune with the scrub pines. White sand indicates close to an ocean and a beach. State side utilities, boots, Lt. with a white T shirt are all good indicators. Serial number 226830 is late Ontos after 1965, dipping into the Depot supply, which I believe is Albany, GA? It is a good clear picture of the vehicle #, which I have an Excel schedule. I have 200+ accounted or listed, out of 299. This may be new?



This one this looks like Chu Lai and 1st

Mar Div. 1st Mar Div. was fresh out of Camp Pendleton to be more precise with bumper ID numbers. Since 3rd MAF was not as concerned with ID numbers.

Any Charlie Company pig never looked so good. There was no more Charlie Companies after DEC 1967 in Vietnam. If the C31 is the same 31 in picture 2164, it could be Chu Lai? Although everything is covered, when landed, in 1st photo. Covered weapons, in Chu Lai are rare, as it was a lot hotter (enemy activity) than Da Nang. There may be a 3rd MAF triangle on the Comm. helmets, which would be Red Beach?

UPDATE: 3rd platoon Charlie Company—3rd A-T's arrived Aug 16th, 1965 from Okie in Da Nang. And 3rd platoon Charlie Company—1st A-T's arrived Aug 18th, 1965 from Okie in Chu Lai. From Command Chronicles Aug 1965



This picture looks like Da Nang, Ontos guarding the jet strip. 3rd A-T's insignia, triangle, and dual antenna's = Vietnam. Plus, they are slightly beat-up, as all the fender flaps are missing. Great combat picture ■

THE INCIDENT IN DUBOIS

On Saturday, 17 September 2022, my wife Linda, and I traveled to Lander, Wyoming, to attend the USMC VTA Mini-Reunion. We were excited to make the trip, in that this was my first tanker reunion, done at the most effective behest of VTA President John Wear. Old memories were conjured up, including my and Platoon Sergeant Ben Busch's (member of the Frozen Chosin – now deceased) escort of the first flame tanks to enter Viet Nam at Da Nang in the spring of 1965. Shortly after arriving in Viet Nam, I was assigned to escort the body of 1st Lieutenant Bob Butz and the crewmembers of the tank he was riding on to the Saigon mortuary after their drowning during a river crossing.

On the following day (Sunday) our reunion group traveled to Dubois, Wyoming to spend the day at the National Military Vehicle Museum. The museum matched the size, sophistication and grandeur of the Tank Museum, Bovington Camp, Dorset, England; home of the world's finest collection of tanks, including the tank used in the movie "Fury." My wife and I had visited the museum four years earlier.

One of the museum events in Dubois provided for Marine attendees to drive either an M48A3 or M60 tank around a short oval course. My name was selected by default to drive when one of the first ten drivers was unable to participate. My identity thereafter became known as "Driver #11."

Around noontime, I climbed aboard an M48A3 and positioned myself in the driver's compartment. My wife Linda boarded with me to stand in the Commander's cupola. I was unaware of any other individuals boarding the

tank. Just prior to boarding, a fellow tanker pulled me aside and cautioned me that I needed to keep an eye on the tank's accelerator, in that it tended to stick, requiring him to 'un-stick' it with his shoe when he drove. I thanked him.

As I sat in the driver's seat, I commented to a museum staff worker who was kneeling adjacent to the driver's hatch, that the seat was positioned lower than what I thought it should be. I worked to manipulate the seat release lever several times but was unable to lock the seat to fit my height. The museum staff observed the problem but, like me, was unable to provide a solution. Since I could still see the tank in front of me, I thought no more about it.

A museum staff voice on the intercom stated for me to pull onto the track and proceed with the drive. Unbeknownst to me, several more individuals had been loaded onto the tank.

After two laps around the track, I pulled off the oval track, approaching a stop point behind a stationary tank to my front. When attempting to apply pressure to the brake, I found that my lowered position in the compartment made it difficult to retract my left leg sufficiently to easily access the brake. Although my right foot was off the accelerator, I observed that my foot pressure against the brake was having minimal effect. It was later that I came to believe that the accelerator pedal had not fully released and was continuing to propel the tank forward. Although the speed of travel was greatly reduced, the sickening feeling of an imminent collision was on full display in my brain. Later, rumor had it that a pole

with a hook had been considered to retract the accelerator pedal.

Upon disembarking the tank, I became aware that another veteran tanker had been aboard the tank, but had jumped off just prior to the collision, incurring injuries that required medical attention of some significance. I did not deem my personal injuries significant enough to require outside treatment.

I have written this article to give my version of what took place at that time and date following the incident. I cannot say that I had a great time after the accident. No one asked me what had happened and negative assumptions were made by a vocal few of the attendees, depreciating the overall experience for my wife and me. The museum staff were all caring and concerned and I continue to hold them in high regard, as I do the VTA. Issues were certainly exposed, many of which fall under the heading of "twenty/ twenty hindsight."

The museum staff opened their museum to the VTA, possibly to a fault when one includes the tank drives, although I still consider this a great and fun opportunity, but lacked the inclusion of control issues if riders are to be allowed on the rides. People can choose to believe what they will. I thank the few that took the time to not condemn my actions out of hand. Bruce Van Apeldoorn and Rick Lewis stand out in that regard. Subsequent discussions with Rick have provided me with the motivation to write this article.

Semper Fi! Gary Peterson (A.K.A. "Driver #11") ■



The group in front of the museum

Wyoming Mini-Reunion Comments

Art Hines writes: Just wanted to thank you guys for the warm welcome at the reunion.

Everyone I met impressed me with their esprit de corps! You guys have an outstanding organization! We younger Marines always admired and looked up to you Vietnam Veterans. As an 81mm mortar man, it was very cool to hear stories of life in a M48. Hope to see everyone again in Colorado Springs. Semper Fi brothers,

MCTA President, Buster Diggs writes: First thank you for allowing me to attend your "mini reunion." If you hadn't allowed me to come, I would've never seen a most amazing National Military Vehicle Museum that was just so special to me.

I'm giving you my address in hopes you will attach the reunion group photo to me. I will make a 7 X 10 to show the MCTA membership. Even better,

I will shoot a copy to Sean, our newsletter editor to perhaps insert into our newsletter. I don't think the MCTA will ever be visiting due to our pledge that our reunions would always be easy to get to. You have got to admit, one had to WANT to go to Lander. No rush and will wait until you have a chance to shoot me a mail. It was nice at a mini reunion that we had the time to finally get to know one another better.

Glen Hoopman: My wife and I had a blast in Wyoming with the 'Nam Tankers. Everything went well and we really enjoyed how the owner, Dan Starks treated the vets! I told him that I considered him a veteran for everything he has done for those that served! He seemed grateful.

Adrian Knox (son of Clyde Knox): Thanks for everything. The trip exceeded our expectations. It was very special to me—to have my dad drive me around in a tank. Very cool...



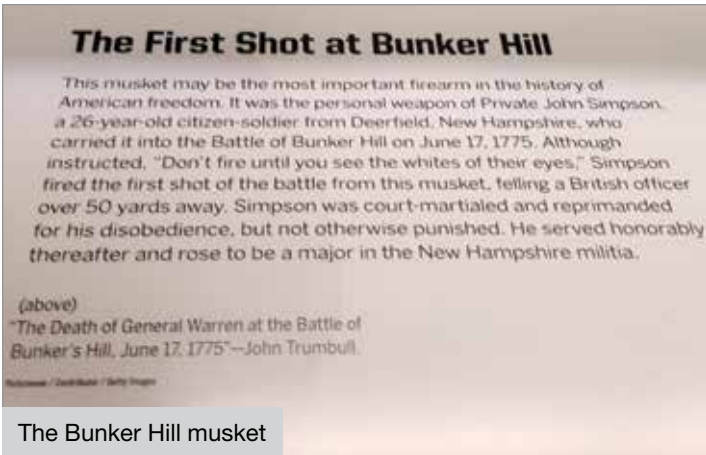
A brief introduction by Dan Starks



CEO and Owner, Dan Starks



The Bunker Hill musket



The Bunker Hill musket



WW2 Tanks



1903 Chuck wagon



George Patton's M-1911 Pistol



One gallery of the gun vault



Alfie finds a Russian MIG



Rick presenting Dan with our "Forgotten Tracks" books



Iwo Jima Marine cutting our cake



John presenting Dan with our logo



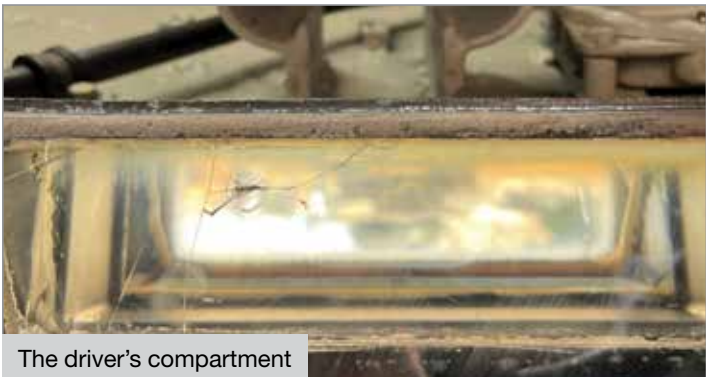
Wally Young brought his whole family



"Hey! I still fit in here!!!"



Wally Young getting ready to drive



The driver's compartment



Adrian Knox filming his ride



Clyde and Adrian Knox



The gunner's seat



"Grunts" riding on top



Best buddies since 1965



The Slopchute and sea stories



First time attendee, Col. Jim Coleman and Rita



"Hokey" and an M-103 "Ramp Queen"



Lee Aitken and Wally



Blues and Fred



A nice relaxing meal in town

SHORT STORY

The Proud Wife of a US Marine

KATHI HILTZ-WIFE OF VTA MEMBER ED HILTZ

OCTOBER 9, 2022

This is a love story that began on November 25, 1970, between a 22 year old U.S. Marine Viet Nam veteran and a seventeen year old young lady. Our serendipitous meeting took place at GINO'S, a local hamburger hangout where everyone would hang out with their muscle cars and motorcycles.

It was the day before Thanksgiving 1970. My cousin, Karen and her family were visiting from Florida for the holiday. We were two 17 year olds who wanted to go out for a while before we had to be home to babysit our siblings, 10 in total! Our curfew was 9 pm so we didn't have much time to socialize. After driving around for a while we decided to get a burger before we headed home.

As we were waiting for our food I looked around the restaurant looking for any familiar faces. I didn't see anyone I knew BUT I did see a handsome "bad boy"-looking blonde guy sitting with a guy I knew vaguely. They both had helmets sitting on the table, so I knew they were riding motorcycles! I told my cousin "You see that blonde haired guy over there? I am going to marry him."

Her immediate reply was "Kathi, you don't even know him!"

I said "I will get to know him watch me!" I have never been a shy person so we took our trays and I told Karen to "follow me." I approached the two guys with the tray in my hand and asked "Can we sit with you?"

Thankfully, they both said "YES!" We introduced ourselves and they did also...Eddie (bad boy) and Scott. We chatted a bit, but Eddie was quiet and shy; didn't say much. So I broke the ice by asking him where he was from and why hadn't I seen him at Gino's before. It was like pulling "hen's teeth" trying to get him to talk. So I went in for the "kill"! I asked, "So where have you been because I haven't seen you before."

Eddie stated "I just got back from being in the military service in Viet Nam."

I said, "REALLY! And what branch of service were you in?"

He proudly said "The Marine Corps."

This was my chance to seal the deal for me before we had to leave. I said, "WOW I just LOVE Marines; when are we going out?"

He replied, "How about Sunday?"

I said, "Sounds great, but give me your hand" ... and I wrote my phone number across the top of his hand.

I said. "You better call me or you will be missing the chance of a life time!"

As Karen and I headed back to the car she just shook her head and said. "I can't believe you had the nerve to do that."

My reply was, "Well, you snooze you lose."

I later told Eddie he had to talk more because he was boring!

Well the rest is history. We were engaged on Christmas Eve 1971 and married on June 25, 1972. We have three beautiful daughters, Kara and identical twins Kasey & Kristi; four grand kids. We just celebrated our 50th anniversary.

There was always something about a Marine in uniform, especially dress blues that I found attractive. Even though Eddie was not in uniform, I could picture him in it. His time in the Marine Corp and in Viet Nam made him the man I fell in love with and even more so after 50 years of marriage. He has always told me "Once a Marine always a Marine!"

The proud wife of a Marine and Viet Nam veteran, Kathi Hiltz



Kathi back in 1970



Ed and Kathi today

Ronnie E. Ingram

BY JOHN HUGHES

Ron was at Bravo Co, 5th Tank Battalion at Camp Las Flores on Camp Pendleton in 1967. He and I deployed to Vietnam at the same time in October 1967. He was not in my Tank School class earlier in that year. In Nam he and I were drivers on C-21 and C-22 at the “Charlie – 4” outpost that was out along the South China Sea from mid-November ’67 to end of March ’68. We both made E-4 and went back to Dong Ha. He went to 1st or 2nd Platoon and I went to 3rd Platoon Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks. The last time that I saw him alive, I had contracted malaria in late May and was in the US Air Force hospital at Cam Ranh Bay for six weeks. When I came back to 2nd Platoon in mid-July ’68 I was told he’d been killed the week before. It truly was a real kick in the guts. He was a good friend. A little later, I talked to one of his crew who was wounded when Ingram was KIA. He said they were hit while doing



by a sniper while standing in the open cupola.

John Wear wrote: If I recall correctly, we were in the same Tank School class Jan 1967 and with 5th Tanks early in 1967 as the 5th Mar Div. was forming up. Ingram may have been in our boot camp series together with you and me too. I have a photo of him (somewhere) with a bunch of other snuffies outside of Charlie Co, 5th

Tanks barracks at Las Flores before he deployed.

John Perry	Garry Hall
Bob Martinez	Ingram
John Stovall	Me
Bob Peavey	

We called ourselves “The Boys” because there was a bunch of stuck up ass wipes who took themselves very seriously and they called themselves “The Men.” I had not thought about the above “The Boys” and “The Men” for 40+ years!!!

preventative maintenance on their tank. Ron was hit by a gook sniper while standing in the cupola while he was trying to shoot back.

Much later, in 2018 or 19, I was contacted by a niece of his who said the family still talked about Ron, She said his mother went to her grave still missing him terribly. I told her that Ron was a good Marine and a good tanker. I also told her that she could contact me if she needed anything else. Sadly I never heard from her again.

Garry Hall wrote: I remember Ron well. I remember when he was killed

Ronald E Ingram

Born: September 17, 1948 – San Mateo County, CA
Died: July 6, 1968 – Quang Tri Providence, South Vietnam

During his WESPAC service in the Vietnam War, Marine Corps Corporal Ingram experienced a traumatic event which ultimately resulted in loss of life on July 6, 1968. Recorded circumstances attributed to: Died through hostile action, small arms fire.

Ronald Ernest Ingram is buried or memorialized at Golden Gate National Cemetery, San Bruno, San Mateo County, California. This is a National American Cemetery administered through the Department of Veteran’s Affairs.

Ronald is honored on the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial in Washington DC. Name inscribed at VVM Wall, Panel 53w, Line 27.

COMMENDATIONS

- ★ Purple Heart
- ★ Combat Action Ribbon
- ★ National Defense Service Medal
- ★ Vietnam Campaign Medal
- ★ Vietnam Service Medal
- ★ Marine Corps Presidential Unit Citation
- ★ Vietnam Gallantry Cross
- ★ Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal
- ★ Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal

USMC Parris Island:
Legendary Training Depot
Will Be Underwater
by 2050

The Marine Corps is preparing for an enemy it can’t stop, but is ready to fight: rising sea levels. The Corps and the Department of Defense are working to create a resiliency plan before climate change puts one of the oldest Marine Corps bases underwater in the next few decades. That’s the very real risk for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot on Parris Island in South Carolina. The base is one of the main training installations for new recruits, and it is already prone to partial flooding from storms. As sea levels rise and coastlines erode, that is expected to get worse, per reviews, with multiple floods expected each year by 2050. Three quarters of the island could be underwater daily by the end of the century, according to a new report from the Associated Press.

A draft military installation resiliency review published in April outlined threats to the base and nearby low country communities. It also laid out potential mitigation efforts to adapt to the risk of storms and flooding. It recommended taking steps now to reduce shoreline erosion, protect the bridge linking the island and base to the mainland and updating infrastructure to prevent storm water and runoff from impacting drinkable water supplies. Heavy damage from worsening storms and climate change are not a hypothetical. Floods and sea level

rise have significantly damaged the Atlantic seaboard, both in hurricane season and out of it. The base on Parris Island has already had to evacuate due to being in the path of hurricanes in recent years.

The base is one of the oldest Marine Corps installations. Marines first were stationed there in the 1890s, but became a recruit training depot in 1915. The Marine Corps Recruit Depot on Parris Island isn’t alone in being at risk – more than 1,700 bases worldwide could be impacted by rising sea levels – but the extremely low lying nature of Parris Island presents a unique vulnerability. Parris Island itself is heavily composed of salt marshes and the highest point is barely more than a dozen feet above sea level. That already makes the base at risk of flooding, and with sea levels rising, that risk only increases.

Other bases have seen billions of dollars in damage from hurricanes. In October 2018, Hurricane Michael directly hit Tyndall Air Base in Florida. It heavily damaged base structure and rendered 17 of the 55 F-22 Raptor fighter planes out of commission. The Pentagon put the damage at \$4.7 billion. The Department of Defense’ own Climate Adaptation Plan, published last September, noted that damage from these types of severe weather events cost tens of billions of dollars

annually and impact the military’s capabilities.

So what happens if sea levels keep rising to unsafe levels for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot? Since that is seemingly inevitable, the Pentagon is exploring different types of mitigation measures to keep the base on Parris Island open. Some are smaller ones, such as updating culverts to handle rainwater, not building on the marshlands and other drainage improvements. Larger efforts could include building a seawall around the base. Although it’s not the current strategy, relocating the base is not off the table.

Beyond the physical barriers recommended for the base, it needs to take other measures under consideration to address the impacts of the changing climate. The Associated Press cited the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch in pointing out that more than 500 people suffered from heat-related illnesses in the period between 2016 and 2020. That is likely to continue to be a threat, as are the impacts of worsening humidity and temperatures which could potentially limit the training that could be done on the base.

[Source: Task & Purpose | Nicholas Slayton | May 22, 2022 ++]



Mike Pipkin writes: In late 1966 and early 1967 two tanks were located at the south end of Hill 65 in Dai Loc. One had “**Ho Chi Minh’s Nightmare**” painted on the barrel and the other had “**Conglomeration**” on its barrel.

QUESTION: Do you happen to know what unit these tanks were from? The attached is a photo of me beside “Conglomeration.”

I was with India Co. 3/7 on Hill 65 and during

Operation De Soto as the F.O. radio operator for 81s. Hill 65 was in Dai Loc along the Vu Gia River just west of an area known as Dodge City and the Arizona Territory was on the other side of the river. Hill 52 (Mike Co. 3/7) was further down the valley and a Special Forces air base was a few clicks past Hill 52. After Operation De Soto I was transferred to M 3/7 as their F.O. radio operator for 81s.

John Wear writes: After posting the above message, I was looking at an old issue of the Sponson Box (Jan – Feb – March 2010) and wouldn’t you know it? The below article was posted in the LETTERS section:

Ho Chi Minh’s Nightmare

I was very interested in your article that appeared in the July–September Sponson Box. I am looking at two photos from 1966 that picture the M48A3 that has “Ho Chi Minh’s Nightmare” painted on the gun tube.

The photo includes (SSgt/GySgt) Alvarado & myself. I believe it was taken on the finger of Hill 55 where the Bravo Co., 3d Tanks CP was located. I was a 2nd Lt. at the time and platoon leader of the 1st. Platoon. I later became the XO when Dix Garner took over as CO of Bravo Co. from Major Tunget (who was featured in the April–June Sponson Box). Your name sounds very familiar as, of course, does Sgt. Alvarado’s—he was one of my section leaders.

Richard Nagle



Robert D. Embesi

NOVEMBER 10, 1940–SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

Bob Peavey: This morning one of the finest of Marines passed on. Marine Gunner Robert Embesi was my role model during my time in the Corps and even through my later civilian life. To me he will always be Staff Sergeant Embesi for that’s when I served under him. Bob was destined to be a great leader solely by his birthdate alone. He was born on of all days, November 10, 1940, the Marine Corps birthday.

For those of you who may have read my book, “Praying for Slack,” you certainly know the role he played in many peoples’ lives in Vietnam and in the States. He was the calmest under fire, there was never much of a change in his voice over the intercom no matter the situation. In fact, no one else of our crew was even aware that during Operation Allen Brook we had North Vietnamese soldiers on top of our tank with a satchel charge! We only heard about it later that night from Bob in his usual understated way. He would say, “I just did my job as a tank commander and platoon sergeant, taking care of my men.” He had taken care of the problem with his .45 and a call over to another tank to, “Scratch our back.” The acting loader on B-24 was Sgt. Gerry Hearne, who was normally the TC of the tank, was throwing the rounds into the main gun as fast as humanly possible, keeping the .30 going, and even changing it’s barrel. He was oblivious to the visitors on top of the turret as I, the gunner, alternated between the machine gun and firing the 90mm as soon as I heard the breech close (Gerry and I had an agreement that the sound of the breech closing would suffice for yelling, “Up!”). Gerry is a good friend who also attended the funeral coming from Seattle. He and I had a wreath created that said, “From the Crew of B-24”.

Bob was so dedicated to his platoon and our tank crew that he refused to be medevacked after an RPG landed between his legs while walking back to the tank one night. Gerry and I had to pull him up on the



back of the tank...he was unable to walk or stand. He made us build him a seat late into the night so he could sit down yet still have his head out. The bad thing was that he could never get down to protect himself from incoming fire...but he was not going to leave his platoon or tank crew. If you knew Bob, you probably were aware of his limp; he seldom talked about it. The RPG had fractured his hip. The remainder of his career Bob hid the limp as best he could and still made the yearly PRT run. He toughed it out for 19 years. He paid for it later in life having great difficulty getting in and out of his truck . . . all because he wouldn’t leave his tank crews out in the field and short us a crewman at the same time.

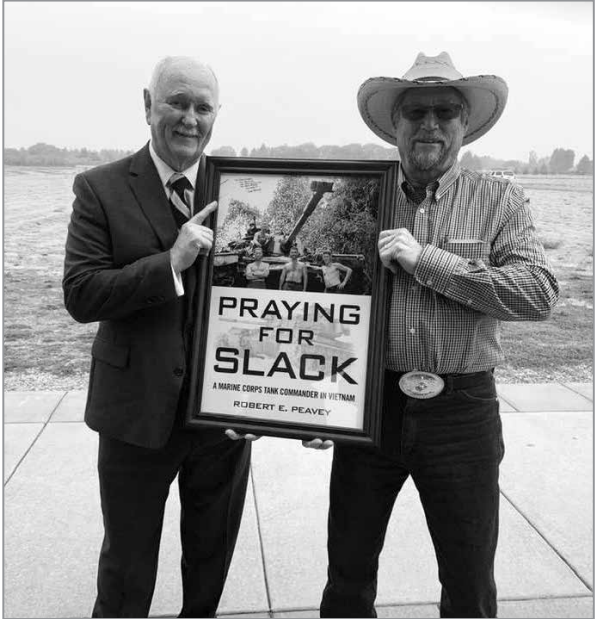
Bob was also a hell of a shot with both rifle and pistol. He led the Marine Corps shooting team at matches all over the country. He was one of the few Marines to ever win the Double Distinguished Shooter gold badges for pistol and rifle on the same day, something only accomplished by a few Marines.

And for the men that he liked and respected, he called them frequently right up until his passing. I was honored to be on his list and spoke with him nearly every other week for the last 30+ years. He usually initiated the call, or as he called it, “Checking up on my men.” I will miss those Friday night phone calls. We talked politics for at least an hour with each call. The Corps never left him and those that got to know him respected his knowledge immensely.

Bob’s son, Anthony Embesi, was a Corpsman of Marines serving with 3/1 on the “March Up” in Iraq. He was wounded July 4th, 2004, losing an eye, while covering a fallen Marine during a mortar attack. It is eerily striking how much Anthony looks like his dad and has many of the same mannerisms. It is almost like Bob never left us.

Rick Beirne: I first met Bob at the 5th Tank Battalion tank park when I assumed command of Company C. I was always amazed at his >>

Bob Peavey and Gerry Hearn



The Embesi family with Bob’s casket



calm demeanor and knowledge of the M-48 tank’s characteristics, operation, and tactics. He seemed to have a sixth sense of what was about to happen, or the direction things were headed. A cool head, he never seemed to get rattled or let things get out of hand. Always a pleasant person, I enjoyed being in his presence. Humorous when appropriate, but serious and all business when it was the time to be so. There were times I felt envious of his being such a well-rounded leader. He seemed to have it all!

I always felt confident leaving things to him be it operations, maintenance, training, or leadership of the tank crews under his responsibility. He was very personable, and everyone had great respect and admiration for Bob. Most of all I remember Bob as the very pleasant individual with an infectious laugh and impish ideas. But when it came to warfighting and its preparation, he was a true, all-kidding-aside professional.

I was saddened to learn of his illness recently because I looked forward to seeing him at the reunions and reliving sea stories. Unfortunately, it wasn’t to be. He truly was the myth, the legend, and the Marine’s Marine.

The request for me to recall Bob Embesi caused me to delve deep into my memory bank ... (Yeah, in my next life I’m going to have more RAM installed) ... some of which has eroded after 50+ years. I do recall the professionalism of the officers and SNCOs with whom I was privileged and honored to have served in Company C, 5th Tanks, particularly: Gunny Duncan, 1st Sergeant Moss, Sam Kaleleicki, George Ogle, Johnson (a black Marine whose first name I forgot), Lieutenants Spalsbury and Kozma and Gunner Jim Carroll ... (or was he my XO in H&S Co?). As I said, the gray mist has wafted in obscuring much of those memories.

Roger “the Loader” Chaput: Gunner CWO-5 Embesi took time out from his activities to come to Pahrump, Nevada, to honor the passing of G.G. Sweet. I asked if he would say a few words to honor RIP Capt. Sweet. He credited GG with passing considerable tanker knowledge to him.

Rick Ellis: When Bob Embesi’s son, Tony called to tell me that Bob had passed away I received the news with a sense of disbelief. Bob was the original tough guy. Illness and disease weren’t supposed to get the best of him as they would the rest of us mere mortals. But, of course, they will eventually have their way with all of us in the Lord’s good time as they did with Bob.

When I reported to 1st Tank Battalion as a newly minted Lieutenant, I was assigned as commander of a good platoon that had only one weakness. The platoon sergeant was a less than stellar performer. The saving grace for the platoon was that the section leaders were very good, as were the tank commanders.

When my mother passed away and I came back from emergency leave, I was assigned to a new platoon. The company XO told me that the platoon sergeant was top notch, a Staff Sergeant named Embesi. I had never heard of him, and after my experience with my first platoon sergeant, I was prepared to take that with a grain of salt. I started to jump right in and do things as I had in the past, but Staff Sergeant Embesi sat down with me and explained that I was trying to do his job and my efforts weren’t necessary since he was fully capable of doing it himself. Upon reflection I had to admit that the platoon was tuned like a fine Swiss watch. Everyone knew their job, and everyone did their job. One of the finer aspects of the platoon was that we felt as much like family as we did a military unit, and I attribute that to the example of caring for all the men that Bob Embesi evidenced. He and the section leaders knew the troops, their strengths, and weaknesses.

Bob wasn’t perfect, no one is except Jesus Christ, but he was as close to an ideal platoon sergeant as I have ever seen. He was brave as a lion under fire, tough as nails, and made sure everything ran like clockwork.

Bob and I maintained a brisk correspondence for a couple of years after we returned to CONUS, but we gradually lost touch. Then, about

4–5 years ago we reconnected through the USMC VTA. Bob told me that when he found me, he had been trying to locate all the members of the old platoon to ensure that everyone was doing OK. This was typical Bob. If you were one of his guys he wanted to see if you needed help of any sort

I told John Wear that Bob and I had a good relationship. He made sure the platoon was squared away, and I kept him from going to jail. I thought sometimes that I had the harder job. Bob was a Marine’s Marine. He was a multi-degreed black belt in karate, a Marine Corps Rifle and Pistol Team member, and retired as a Marine Gunner CWO-5. He was the epitome of the expression “No better friend, no worse enemy.”

Terry Wallace: John, thanks for your fine tribute to Bob. I did not know him personally, but your words painted him with honor. Please pass along my sympathies to his family.

Greg Kelley: Although I did not know Bob, I am sorry that a great Marine has passed. My heartfelt condolences to his family and those that were fortunate enough to have befriended him. Semper Fi, Bob.

John Wear: When I arrived to Charlie Co, 5th Tanks at Las Flores from USMC Tank School in Dal Mar in the spring of 1967, I was assigned to 1st Platoon. My best buddy, Bob Peavey, went to 3rd Platoon. Both 1st and 2nd Platoons were housed in the lower squad bay of the barracks while 3rd Platoon was housed in the upper squad bay. I seem to recall that the first time that I went upstairs to visit Bob, while we were sitting on his footlocker shooting the shit, Bob’s platoon sergeant entered the squad bay and in no uncertain terms, his commanding voice pierced the din of voices and a perfect silence came over the squad bay. I do not recall what transpired after that but leave it to understand that SSgt Embesi demanded and received total respect and full compliance to his wishes and commands. To be perfectly frank, I was in awe of this Marine’s presence and his abilities. And I was quite jealous that my own platoon sergeant was not as “gung ho” or as knowledgeable about all things Marine Corps as SSgt Embesi. Fast forward 36 years and during the USMC VTA 2003 reunion in Seattle, the exact same Bob Embesi was there and, other than aging (as we all had done), Bob was the exact same Marine’s Marine that I met back in 1967. May he rest in eternal peace.

Mike Belmessieri (Belmo): I’ve been thinking about Gunner Bob Embesi ever since I received your email advising me that he has joined our brothers in that Great Tank Park in the Sky. Our brother Marine Tanker Bob Peavey put it absolutely right on when he said “This morning one of the finest of Marine’s passed on—Gunner Robert Embesi.”

I met Gunner Embesi in ’68 when we were with B Company, 5th Tanks. At the time he was a Staff Sgt and the Platoon Sergeant with 2nd platoon. I was with the 1st Herd but I was immediately impressed by him and wanted to serve with him in the 2nd platoon which, in my opinion, because of his leadership and knowledge, was the best platoon in the company. I was also serving with Staff Sgt Embesi when he became a Warrant Officer. There wasn’t a single Marine in the company who didn’t want to render the honor of a salute to Gunner Embesi but I am not too sure that he enjoyed the attention.

I’ve always viewed Bob Embesi was as a motivational field Marine who exemplified our Corps’ core Values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. During my over 50 year relationship with our beloved Marine Corps I have never met a Marine who cared more about other Marines and not just the snuffles who were in his platoon. In early 69 I was transferred to 2nd ITR but, later that year I returned to D Company 3rd Tanks and Gunner Embesi was the OIC of Motor Transportation and I was assigned to Flames platoon.

During my time with that command, I was briefly the acting Platoon Sgt. Another Marine, Joe Petro, was in the same position as me, in one of the gun tank platoons so we often were able to shoot the shit with the Gunner. When it came to Tanks he had a wealth of information and he

shared his knowledge freely. He was also not a man that you wanted to piss off as one loud mouth condescending Sgt found out.

The gunner was also a Marine who I just naturally respected. He was a very fair man who I did not want to BS. One day as I walked onto the Ramp after having left the Skipper’s officer due to an investigation into the one and only fight I had ever allegedly gotten into with another Marine the Gunner called out my name and asked me to join him. Standing next to him was the former Coronal’s driver big mouth Motor T Corporal who had a habit of screwing with junior Marines. The previous night he made the wrong choice when he was giving my gunner a bad time and that ended with him being carried to Sick Bay. While pointing to the big mouth’s bruised face the gunner asked “Did you do this to my man?”

My first reply was “Sir we just left the Captain’s office. Apparently the Corporal came into a dark squad bay and tripped over a foot locker.”

The gunner’s reply “Don’t bullshit me Belmessieri did you do this?”

My reply “Yes sir”.

His reply was, while looking at the Corporal “Good, you have had this coming for a long time and I myself have even considered doing it.”

To the best of my knowledge that was the last time that this corporal gave junior Marines a bad time. I left the Corps in 1970 and I got to see and introduce my Marine son to the Gunner during our Las Vegas reunion in 2007.

Carl Hokanson: I had just gotten back from my two week R&R in England. While I was there I received a call from Bob’s son, Tony, telling me that his dad had passed away. He told me that he was in the hospital for three (3) weeks fighting an infection. Like a good Marine he fought the infection but his heart gave out. I read the kind words that Bob Peavey wrote and put out so everyone could read how great of Marine and man he was.

So here are my words:

It was early February 1970. I was with 1st Platoon, Delta Company, 3rd Tank Battalion (the M-103 “Ramp Queens”) at the 41 Area, Camp Las Flores on Camp Pendleton. It was a Sunday afternoon when I heard a voice yell, “L/Cpl Hokanson / L/Cpl Burns pack your duffle bags. You are going on a trip.”

After hearing that loud stern voice, we looked up and it was CWO 4 Embesi. He told us to be ready by 0700 Monday morning because we “volunteered” (...like we could say no?) to head out to the Mojave Desert to be part of the advance working party.

We arrived and spent a week setting up a camp and target locations before the rest of the tankers from Camp Pendleton would arrived. It was known as “Desert Operation One.”

John Bartachevits and Bob Embesi



Note: It was a 30 day training exercise where all the tankers from different companies both M48A3 and M103A2, would compete to see who would be the best. I spent 37 days with Gunner Embesi out there and it was a life changing experience for me.

I was then discharged from the Corps in August 1971 and I lost all contact with CWO 4 Embesi until luck of fortune happened some 50 years later. I joined the “USMCVTA” and when I received my first Sponson Box magazine, I started going through it. When I saw the “Committees & Chairmen” listing, I could not believe my eyes. I saw the name of CWO4 Bob Embesi and a telephone number. I said, “No way!” Thinking that it was impossible but how many Embesi could there be? I called the number and left a voice message telling the person my name and asking if it was CWO4 Embesi who I had served with back in 1970. A few days later I received a call back from his son. In speaking with him, he told me it was his father. He also said that he was in the hospital. I replied that his father was a tough Marine and would pull through.

About 2 weeks went by. Then one day my cell phone rang and when I answered it and I heard that loud stern voice saying “How you doing? It’s Embesi.”

I was speechless, I said, “I’m ok. What about you?”

He came back and said, “If Vietnam didn’t kill me then nothing will.”

We talked about the “old” days. He said that Bob Peavey wrote a book about their time in Vietnam. The book was called “Praying for Slack.” So I went out and purchased the book. In reading it, I would often call Peavey and Embesi and ask them questions about what I had read. Peavey would give straight answers. On the other hand, Embesi would tell me like it was, he never held back. He would say, “Those mother *&^%\$@s.”

As time went on, I would call him sometimes twice a month, holidays or just to shoot the shit.

He would “tank” me for calling him. He said that he used to call Marines but the list was getting short because they were passing away. He kept telling me to come out to Montana to visit him. It was on my bucket list ... but for now, I will cherish the times in the Corps when we served together and the lasting telephone calls we had.

I look forward to the day when I reach the Pearly Gates and having Embesi give orders and all the other great Marines I served with and knew.

As an aside: In reading Peavey’s words in his book about the incident of “scratch our back”—One of the phone calls Embesi and I spoke about was that specific incident. He told me he radioed a nearby tank to “scratch his back.” Well the other tank did ... but used a flachette round instead of their coax machinegun. Well, it worked. But when Embesi opened the TC hatch and saw the damage the 90 mm round had done to their personal gear in the gypsie rack ... and when he recognized the other tank that fired that round and who the TC was, he was really PISSED OFF! It was TJ Siva. Embesi called him every name in the book. Need I say more?

May you rest in peace my friend

Simper Fi

Cpl Carl “Hokey” Hokanson

New Jersey

John Bartusevics: I am on my way up to Missoula, Montana, for my good friend, Bob Embesi’s funeral. I met Bob in 1961 and we have been friends ever since. One heck of a Marine and a heck of a tanker. A proven combat Marine who was deployed to Vietnam twice. He was selected for the Marine Gunner Program within the Warrant Officers Field and became a Tank Officer 1802. I will miss him greatly. Every year on my run to the Northwest, I would stop and visit Bob. He lived in Conner, Montana. Funeral Services at 1400 on 14 September. ■

Editor’s Note: This story first appeared in the #4 – 2015 issue of our magazine. Since Gunner Embesi recently passes away, we thought it a fitting tribute to republish his story.

Setting the Record Straight

BY CWO4 MARINE GUNNER ROBERT EMBESI, USMC (RET)

It was common knowledge throughout I Corps during the Vietnam War that the Republic of Korea Marine Corps (ROKMC) were highly regarded and considered the fiercest fighting unit in Vietnam. They had the highest kill ratio per capita of any allied unit in country including the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, Australians, ARVNs and the Vietnamese Marine Corps. It was common knowledge that the numbers were posted on a plastic covered wall chart back at MACV. But unless you worked with them, you have no idea just how fierce they really were.

I worked under the commanding general of the Blue Dragon Brigade for 3 months supporting their combat units with our tanks when needed. Over time it became obvious the Koreans had a different take on the war then we did, but that will come later. I am writing this to set the record straight, but first I need to provide the reader with some history.

A brigade made up from the 2nd ROKMC Division (ROKs for short), calling themselves the, “Blue Dragons”, landed in Vietnam at Cam Ranh Bay in September 1965, 300 miles south of Da Nang in Khanh Hoa province in southern II Corps. A year later they moved up to I Corps to Chu Lai and Hoi An. Hoi An was about 20 miles south of Da Nang and was the brigade HQ.

At the end of my first tour in late 1966, I was a Staff Sergeant assigned as a platoon sergeant in the newly forming 5th Tank BN at Los Flores in Camp Pendleton. The 5th Marine Division was in the process of forming another of its regiments, the 27th Marines, its’ 26th Regiment shipped out to Vietnam in July of 1966. Alpha Co., 5th Tanks also deployed but never ended up supporting the 26th Marines. Therefore, at Los Flores, we were forming Bravo, Charlie & Delta Companies of 5th Tanks, none of which were up to T/E (Table of Equipment) or T/O (Table of Organization).

I had been back in the States for 15-months and knew it would be a short time before getting orders for another tour, in fact, I was overdue. On January 30th, 1968, the Tet Offensive broke out throughout all of Vietnam. Fourteen days later the 27th Marines received orders to mount out in two days; the third day found them in Vietnam. A couple of days later, Bravo Co., 5th Tanks, was quickly brought up to T/E and T/O by grabbing anyone who had time left in the Corps; some were as short as 6-months. We loaded aboard the LSD, USS Thomaston from Camp Delmar and arrived in Vietnam 21-days later; each tank platoon was assigned to its respective battalion of the 27th Marines. Since we were the 2nd Platoon of Bravo Co., our home would be with 2/27 at it’s CP. It was in the middle of an area known as, “Dodge City”, about 20 miles SW of Da Nang.

May 5th found us on a sweep supporting 2/27 and 2/7 on Goi Noi Island; it was a Search & Destroy mission later named Operation Allen Brook. After three weeks of heavy fighting, we were pulled out and returned to 2/27’s CP. Two weeks later, without any notice, we were ordered to Hoi An, about 20 miles south of Da Nang. The orders specifically stated to proceed with all possible speed to the HQ of the Republic of Korea Marine Corps in Hoi An. We were to replace a tank and amtrac unit from 1st Tank BN. We assembled a column of 5 tanks and 8 amtracs and departed the next morning. We anticipated working with the renown ROK Marines. We had no doubt we would see action with this highly regarded ally.

We departed the next morning; 2 hours later we arrived in the ROK Marine HQ compound. We found the American tank and amtrac area inside the ROK compound right on the beach of the South China Sea. We were surprised and disappointed to find the area empty; the Marine tank and amtrac unit we were to relieve had already departed. We had expected a briefing as was customary when replacing a unit. We were

looking forward to learning what is like working with the notorious ROK Marines and what their habits were and what to avoid. Lt. Rick Ellis, the Platoon Leader, and I were quite annoyed; there would be no, “changing of the guard” if you will. We found out they had left in mass at dawn two days earlier. It was odd. Something just didn’t feel right.

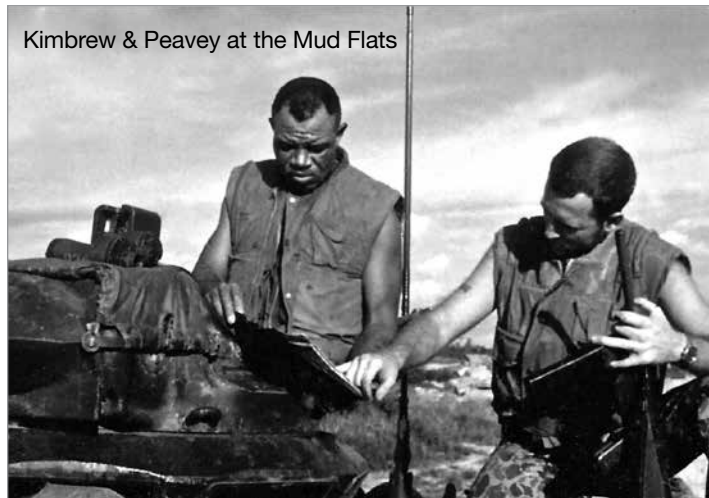
Late that same morning, Lt. Ellis and I reported to the ROK Command & Control bunker. The Korean Commanding General conducted two daily briefings inside a very large underground structure built by the Sea-Bees. It housed the KMC (Korean Marine Corps) Brigade staff and all the American supporting arms staffs like, FACs (Forward Air Control), tanks, amtracs, artillery, and a strange non-uniformed colonel who claimed to be the U.S. Army liaison officer. The bunker usually had reporters hanging around looking for stories of the toughest unit in all of Vietnam. The ROKMC’s enemy kill numbers grew daily.

It was at our first briefing when we learned we were to split up our tanks; two tanks were required at a remote outpost called, The Mud Flats. It was unknown to us, but The Mud Flats turned out to be a hell-hole. It was just a click north of the river, across from Goi Noi Island. It was also at the western edge of the Korean TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility) and adjoined the “Dodge City” area.

That afternoon I sent the light section (2-tanks) to The Flats. Sgt. Kimbrew was the light section leader and was ordered to relieve two tanks from that same 1st Tank BN platoon the next morning. Upon their arrival, Sgt. Kimbrew called in on the radio and said the two tanks from 1st Tanks had departed at sunrise two days earlier, the same time as the tanks at the Korean CP. I can’t say it was a big surprise since you wouldn’t leave two of your tanks behind. But it was still in the back of my mind; something just didn’t smell right.

Inside the large bunker we had a cube area that was set up with a couple of radios; we could communicate with almost anyone. It seemed most KMC morning briefings began with the report of a firefight or ambush that occurred within the Korean TAOR the night before. These guys sounded really aggressive. As I told you, the Korean Marines had the highest enemy kill rate p/capita in all of I Corps.

A week went by when during a morning briefing the general announced that a large ambush and firefight had taken place outside The Mud Flats, naturally my ears perked up. I was wondering why I had to hear it from the general and not my section leader. The general reported 50 NVA killed, which is a sizable engagement. I immediately wanted to find out the status of my crews and how much ammo they expended and if they required a resupply.



I radioed Sgt. Kimbrew and Cpl. Peavey who were out at The Flats. They were both on the same tank with com-helmets on for our prearranged twice-daily check in. I asked for a Sit Rep (Situation Report) on the previous night.

“No change. Same-o, same-o”, replied Kimbrew.

“Is everyone OK?” I asked.

“Yeah, I guess so. Why?” he replied.

I knew damned well there had been a major firefight at or near their outpost and I am wondering what’s this lackadaisical bullshit was.

“Were you involved in last night’s action?” I asked.

There was a long pregnant pause . . . then they both came back on the radio, “What action?”

“The Korean general back here said there was a large firefight at your “POS” (position) with a large amount of ammunition expended and 50 NVA killed.”

Again, a long pause, “When did you say this happened?” asked Kimbrew.

“Last night!” I said again. “How much ammo do you need?” I said in a raised voice.

Again, another pause, and Kimbrew says, “Say again your last?”

I was really getting annoyed and repeated what I had just said but with more volume. I was pissed they were not taking this more seriously.

Then Peavey asks, “Are you sure you have the right tanks? We’re at The Mud Flats. Maybe you mean the heavy section, over.”

I asked again, “You weren’t involved in a firefight?”

Again, a pause, and Kimbrew comes back, “What firefight?”

It was sounding like an Abbot and Costello, “Who’s on First?” routine. They had no idea what I was talking about. But eventually it became clear there had been no firefight, no ambush, and no attack. They verified that no one went beyond the wire last night or any other night since they arrived. Each tank sat in front of one of two gates leading into the compound; if anyone knew who left the compound, it would be my tank crews.

It didn’t take a brain surgeon to figure out what the ROKs were doing. They were padding the numbers. They seldom had enemy bodies and often said they had counted blood trails. Slowly over the next couple of weeks these “tough” fighters began losing all credibility with us. But why they were doing it was beyond our imagination.

I established a rotation for the crews assigned to The Flats; it was a brutally hot place. It was surrounded by solid white concrete-like mud, which reflected the heat right into the compound. Since my CP was right on the ocean, I thought it would be a good break for the crewmen. Our platoon CP was beautiful and included a couple of hardback hootches, a cook, and a few other amenities. As each crewman rotated through the CP from The Flats, I got to learn what was going on... or rather... not going on.

It turned out that the Koreans never went beyond the wire. There were no night listening posts sent out nor ambush teams. During the day they never patrolled around the base. They were more concerned

Ariel view of The Mud Flats



at the perfect alignment of every sandbag. They would tamp each bag into a perfect brick and carefully placed each one and squared it up some more. The walls looked like the work of a mason. This was a unit with too much time on its hands. What it really was, they were scarred to leave the outpost. And yet they called in body counts every few days attributing them to patrol and ambush actions. And another little indicator was they never called for a medevac after one of their “actions”. They had everyone fooled back at MACV. This was a chicken-shit outfit.

The few times we did field ops with them it would turn into a total cluster fuck. When entering a ville they were the bravest and most brutal troops you can imagine. They were ruthless towards the Vietnamese civilians, hitting them with rifle butts and roughing them up . . . but only if they weren’t taking enemy fire. When shot at, you couldn’t find a Korean to save your life; they were already in another zip code before the second shot.

After our first month, rumors began trickling in as tankers and Amtrackers rotated through the CP; they got to talk with friends from other units. The unofficial word was that things had gotten very bad between the ROK Marines and the previous tank and amtrac crews. It was rumored to be so bad they packed up and left with no notice. That could explain our quick redeployment to Hoi An without any change of command. Another rumor was one of the CP’s cooks sat down on his cot triggering a booby-trap losing both legs. We ruled that one out as being a little farfetched. It was said the cook died on a medevac and that the entire incident was quietly swept under the rug. And they were just that – rumors.

Working in the field with them was a problem, not only because of the language barrier but their tactics. Kimbrew called me over the radio on the first op saying the Koreans would only walk behind the tanks in the impressions we left behind; they wouldn’t spread out to support the tanks on the sides or up front. He said he tried to communicate with them, which was all but impossible. I instructed him to sit tight and not to proceed until he got proper infantry support.

So, the tanks sat, the Koreans sat, and they went no further than 100-meters outside the wire. Late in the afternoon one of the Korean officers approached Kimbrew’s tank and hand gestured they had to go back; it was going to be dark soon.

A few days later the heavy section went out with a different Korean company and I got a similar call from Staff Sgt. Jim Reed, the section leader. He said the ROKs would not move out of the tank’s tracks. Just as he and I got off the radio, an RPG slammed into Reed’s tank from an NVA soldier who jumped up in front of him. The rocket hit the tank’s searchlight, wounding his driver and loader with shrapnel. When Reed called and told me what happened I decided, “Enough of this shit!”

The LT and I went directly to the Korean general’s personal quarters and knocked on the door . . . like a boot reporting to his drill instructor. It took the general a few minutes to answer the door, but I never stopped knocking. I was really pissed with these gutless bastards. Finally, the door opens and the general is dressed in a housecoat kimono; there was also someone in the back room out of sight, I could only guess it was a “she”. He reluctantly invited us into his quarters . . . and he wasn’t very happy. I told him right from the git-go about the lousy the support my tanks were getting and that his men hid behind them. I then told him I had lost two men because of these tactics. He spoke moderate English, so it wasn’t impossible to get one’s point across. I noticed a chalkboard in the room, went over to it, and drew a picture showing him how his troops must be deployed to support us and we them. He got on his radio and made some calls. We of course didn’t understand a word he was saying, but he was blistering someone’s butt.... an ass chewing is a universal language. We left the general quarters and the lieutenant and I walked back to the bunker.

Reed is calling me on the radio and tells me the Korean NCOs and

(Continued on page 40)

Editor's Note: This story first ran in the 3rd issue of the 2017 Sponson Box magazine. Since it has everything to do with the next story by Ted Hildabrand, we thought is fitting to republish it here.

THEN THERE WERE ROCKETS

BY LEE DILL

Not all days in Vietnam started out bad ... some just ended up that way...

Originally, I was on F-12. The TC was Markley, Goldstein was the gunner and I drove. I hated the gunner position on a flame tank. There was no space to move around with only the huge 300 plus gallon bottle of napalm to lean on. I'd rather drive, it was safer, there was more air to breath and it was far more fun. It was only 4 AM and after spending two hours looking into the blackness that was Vietnam at night I was bushed. I had really struggled to stay awake and alert the past two hours. All I knew was that I had at least two hours of sleep coming up and thankfully sleep would come quickly. In Vietnam, my experience was if the gooks didn't hit us by 2 AM, we were home free ... at least for this night. But before I could pull my poncho liner over myself, I had to wake Goldstein.

It seemed as if the next guy on watch always woke slowly then climbed behind the 50 caliber in the commander's cupola and began to monitor the radios. Vietnam was the land of long sleepless nights followed by days of heat, and humidity. I got comfortable on the armor plate and slept until dawn. Vietnam wasn't bad, if you didn't miss home too much, and if you didn't expect much in the way of creature comforts. The C-rats weren't all that bad and there were 12 selections to choose from – I liked at least eight of the meals. We all had also developed a taste for pound cake and peaches. They seemed to be a favorite for everyone. It required some discipline as the pound cake came in one meal and the peaches in another. The trick was to hoard the one and acquire the other then, when you were on watch, you mixed them together and ate them with relish. If you were lucky enough to stash away a warm Pepsi, then life was good and you finished yet another day in Vietnam.

So that was life for me at that time at An Hoa, but this is not about me, it's about the last day of life for PFC Fred-eric Lee Schrecongost. His nickname was "Ghost." He was one of the most pleasant, easy going, Marines that I ever knew in-country. He was a good driver and friend to all. In less than three months he was going home to his family and to Steph, his girl. Her name was even painted on the slope plate of B-44, the tank also known as "Cheap Thrills." Bravo 44—"Cheap Thrills" was the tank that Ghost drove for Jellerson. It was a good tank and Jellerson was an out-



"Cheap Thrills" (L to R) Colucci, Jellerson, Schrecongost in April '69—An Hoa. Unfortunately, "Ghost" was hit in that open space to the right of the tank

standing tank commander. Ghost knew he'd been lucky to get on a good crew. His chances of surviving while Jellerson was in-country were good.

After breakfast of either C-rats or the greasy stuff in the mess hall, it was normally time for track tightening and general clean up, but not today. No, today was a special day. Battalion Maintenance had dropped off an entire tank platoon's worth of new track yesterday. Our old worn-out track needed constant care ... It seemed as if we did nothing but tighten the center guides; hammer and tighten the end connectors every day. The worst thing that could happen to a crew (besides an RPG or MINE) was throwing a track. Since he was the driver, the track was mainly his responsibility. It took four men to maintain it but it was the driver's job to keep an eye on it. It seems as if all the drivers did this task with a vengeance. When you broke track, or threw one, you were in for some ball- bustin' work, and don't even ask him about torsion bars! A broken torsion bar would usually be replaced in Battalion and it could take a few days and involve pulling the engine and the fuel cells. The worse part about being back in Battalion was that the Lifers would pick your crew to stand guard and give the "pukes" in the rear a break. So, the plan was that we would put on the new track by nightfall and be able to rest easy at least for a while. The new track would need tightening and maybe remove a block when the track stretched into place, but we could

live with that. Along with the new track had come a case of steaks and a pallet each of beer and Pepsi. So there would be a platoon party after the track was on.

We started all together: five tanks and 25 Marines working together (the maintenance crew jumped in, too) and just like it is written in the book, each tank was handled the same way. The new tank tread came in blocks of ten. A number of these 10-piece blocks would be hammered together to make up one track. The tank to have its new tread put on was driven over to the two long strips of black rubber and metal that lay in the dusty red dirt of An Hoa. The existing track would be broken and the old track allowed to run out the front. The tank would back up using the one track that was still mounted, and the other side of new tread would be placed over the sprocket using tank bars and muscle. The sprocket would then feed the new track forward until the track would come together to become a solid piece of new rubber. It was then bolted together, the other tread broken, and the procedure repeated.

And so it went with all the tanks. We worked steadily, no one slacking or complaining more than expected. The work was back breaking and the heat oppressive, but we were used to it. This was our job. In a sense, it reminded me of home; changing tires, working on engines with the guys. The main difference was we weren't home and this was real—nothing else we ever did would be as real as our tour of Vietnam. It seemed as if suddenly we were finished. It certainly wasn't sudden but the day had gone quickly. Finally, it was chow time. The beer and sodas cold (cool) and the steaks burnt not too badly. We ate, talked of home and women (actually since we were only 19–20–21 years of age they talked of girls) and all the love that they had experienced. Most of us lied about the girls and our experiences. In reality it was only the ones who had returned from R&R (with a certain warm glow) that had any experience at all.

After their meal, there was still some clean up to be done in the tank park. There was lots of packing material to be picked up and tools to be cleaned and stored. We drifted into our tasks with the lazy attitude of those that had put out a max effort all day and we were tired. Tonight would still involve taking the tank out on the berm and standing guard. On the positive side, at least it didn't look like it was going to rain. April 26, 1969 had been a clear sunny (hot) day in Vietnam. That evening it would get cool around 1 a.m. but now it was still hot and sticky. We stood in the dust of the tank park and looked around with that certain smug look of one who had worked a good day.

I was standing next to Ghost and we shot the shit for a few minutes, talking about almost nothing. I turned and started back towards F-12 and I had gotten no more than 10 feet when the gook rockets came in. They came so close there was no warning sound like you hear in the movies. These mothers were right on top of the tank park. At the time there were only 8 or 9 people in the tank park since

the rest hadn't made it back from evening chow. The noise was a roar! My heart almost stopped and my mouth had the taste of fear that lies in the back of your throat. The taste of fear is immediate. I ran to F-12 and climbed behind the 50 in the cupola and turned on the radios. If we were under an enemy ground attack, the radio would tell us where to go and what to do. Our job was to man the tanks and help the wounded later. Someone was in front of our driver's hatch with a leg wound and a corpsman quickly showed up to help the guy. There was other wounded screaming for attention. The radios were silent. Thankfully there was no ground attack, just rockets.

I looked nervously around, afraid that the fear I felt would show on my face and be seen by everyone. That was no problem; everyone had the same look, a mixture of fear from the rockets but satisfaction for still being alive. That's when Jellerson spotted Schrecongost. Ghost hadn't moved from the spot in the tank park where I had left him. He lay on his back, strangely quiet, his eyes open, and his face pale. Jellerson called for a battle bandage and one appeared. Jellerson tried to apply the bandage but there was this sucking noise which meant he was breathing from his chest. Jellerson put plastic on this hole then the battle bandage went in place.

We all began to feel a little bit better. We had gotten hit, taken a couple wounded, bandaged them up and called for a medevac. The 5th Marine Regiment hospital was close by. The medevac jeep arrived in no time. The plan was for us to place him on a stretcher, lift him up to the jeep and they would drive 100 meters, pump some blood in him, and then chopper him to Da Nang. He would then recover, and make his way back to the World and live happily ever after. It didn't work that way at all. We picked him up to place him on the stretcher. It was then we saw that a rocket fragment had gone into his chest small but had come out as a large hole in his back. Those of us that were not wounded told each other that we had reacted in time, that the wound wasn't so bad, that the doctors were good, and that he would be back in the World in no time. What we didn't know was that he had lost a lot of blood, was in shock, and his chances for recovery were slim. He died on the chopper going to Da Nang.

The tank park was rocketed nearly every day until I went home for my 30-day Six-Month Extension leave in late-May. Enemy rockets are supposed to be inaccurate but they had us ranged in pretty good. It was safer to be in the bush or on a road sweep than to stay behind in the rear. When I returned to An Hoa in early-July, the rockets had gotten so consistently good at nailing the tank park, that finally all of the tanks were moved to the other side of the base.

A disclaimer: I first put this day to paper in 1994 – Twenty-five years after it happened. This is how I remember it! ■

"A Ghost Story"

BY THEODORE "TED" HILDABRAND

APRIL 2022

Pretext: The purpose of this story is to motivate all of us so that we write and publish the history of our experiences and those of our fellow Marines. We definitely shouldn't assume that the families of our fellow Marines know the history of the KIA and WIA. As difficult as it may be to document and publish the history, our VTA is the perfect vehicle to publish that history. And this is the motivation behind "A Ghost Story."

The Marine Community is smaller than we realize. So, the published history documented within the VTA reaches well beyond our preconceived boundaries of communication. However, if we pass and do not relay that history it will be lost forever. You should be motivated to reach the families in our Marine Community. The reward, my belief, will release us from some of the pain we carry. In some cases from the burden we carry within our souls. It is not easy but as Marines we expect that. "Nothing good in life comes easy!" My other thought is to broaden our Marine community. We can do that by encouraging others in the Marine community to join the VTA. Semper Fi, Ted!

July 2014 – 2015

I belong to a large sportsmen's club that is located south of Pittsburgh in Washington County that is North of I70. The club is basically a shooting club but most of the members either hunt or fish. However, all are from the shooting community related to the previously mentioned outdoor activities and competitive matches or just casual fun shooting. It is big in Western Pennsylvania and other areas of our state which have a large population of sportsmen's clubs. Another common associate element of our membership is a large majority of the membership are Veterans. Again, that is common to Western Pennsylvania with patriotism. It is woven into the fabric of our communities. It is no surprise either that Marine Vets are common in our club and the shooting sports.

Our club is also very social in nature driven by communication related to our activities and the use of our ranges. A common topic of introduction in casual conversation is determining your veteran's status and branch of service. During those discussions if the member is a Marine the typical questions are what is your MOS and where have you served. That brings up a strong association of communication and discussion besides "what is that rifle you are shooting", "what caliber is it", "do you reload your ammo"?

Well that is how I met "Schreck". His real name is John Schrecongost. That is quite a handle to carry around. Schreck was a Marine. Acquisition of his nick name of

Schreck is not rocket science. Just as all my fellow Marines who were Polish, were simply just called Ski. It doesn't take long within the Corps for your label to come out. Most of the time it just gets spit out by your DI in basic. Then you are stuck with that label forever, such is life in the Corps.

Well, when Schreck and I met on the range we developed a quick link. Schreck's cousin was a Marine tanker and served on Hill 55 with 1st Tanks. He served just a few months passed me. I left Hill 55 in March 68. Schreck told me his cousin was KIA in 69. April 26, 1969 to be exact, as I found out later. Anyway, all I knew at the time was his cousin's name Schrecongost. I would see Schreck frequently on the rifle range where he liked to shoot a Garand. No mystery here either for a Marine to like a Garand, another common thread for a Marine association.

July 2017

I was reading "Sponson Box" (SB). There was a previously written article about Russian Rockets. Actually, the article reads "Then There Were Rockets." Well out jumps the name Schrecongost. It wasn't a hard association to make. It describes in painful detail of Schreck's cousin's KIA. It was by shrapnel from a Russian rocket. Painful story, but Schreck's cousin was well liked by his tank crew and his other fellow Marines. Schreck's cousin's nick name was "Ghost". Not a mystery here again as all is made easy in the Corps. What is interesting in the SB article is that Ghost was just in a group of other Marine's from his tank on the ground in the tank park. Ghost was the only Marine hit within that group even though all the Marines were in close proximity to Ghost. However, that's typical irony for a lot of Marine KIA in Vietnam. Typically, there is no logic why some Marine's survive, and others are KIA or WIA. War is not logical, in fact just the opposite it is "Illogical". It causes a lot of pain as a typical mental reaction by fellow surviving Marine's is "Survivor Guilt."

I copied and passed on the article to Schreck. I wrote him an email on July 30, 2017:

"Schreck, I found an article on your cousin in the magazine for the Vietnam Tankers Association (VTA). I'm not sure if you or your family have seen it. It gives you all the detail when he was hit. He was well liked by his fellow Marines. They did all they could to save him. I'm sorry for his loss. You might want to reach out to his friend who wrote the article in 1994. This must be the 2nd publication of the article. If so, I'll put you in contact so you can try and contact Lee Dill."

Schreck emails me back same day July 30:

"Wow! Ted, thank you so much. We have wondered how it happened for decades. If he had been standing a foot away, he would have made it home. I always imagined his tank was hit and the crew got it too, Wow! Thanks again! "Ghost will live forever."

I then advised John Wear about the exchange. John en-

couraged me to write it up along with some other stories. The nice write up by Marine Tanker, Lee Dill was also published in "Forgotten Tracks Volume 4 on page 38 – 41 as published by USMC VTA.

Postscript April 2022

I'm planning on giving Schreck my copy of the book, Forgotten Tracks Volume 4 so he and his family can appreciate the history surrounding "Ghost" and his service. The obvious question is why it has taken me this long to write this article. My failure to get this done is a contradiction to the Pretext above. Up until September 2021 I have struggled with the issues surrounding my Vietnam service history.

There is nothing special or unique about my Vietnam service. I served at H&S from April to November 67. I served on the Reactionary Platoon that was coordinated by Staff Sergeant Boddy. I was subsequently transferred to Hill 55 as the MT Chief for Bravo Company of 1st Tanks from

Nov 67 thru March 68. All I can say is my attendance at the September 21 Reunion has put me in a better place. Thanks to Larry Zuley! I have struggled with the history surrounding the February 6, 1968 Reactionary Platoon event West of H&S Company and Battalion HQ. Based upon Larry's input I now understand what happened. We had 5 KIA and 8 WIA Marines. Steve Falk had worked on that history and story as it relates to his friend Jim Sefrhans and the other Marines from the Reactionary Platoon lost on that day. Steve did a great job at the 2015 reunion recognizing this event. I was also able to meet Steve's wife Marcia Falk and her daughter at the September 2021 Reunion. The VTA does a great job but especially at reunions. Thank you!

I think there still needs to be further recognition by VTA of those events and the history of February 6, 1968. If you were there and can help us with the history, please contact me, tkhaquariusnetwk@gmail.com. ■

SPECIAL STORY

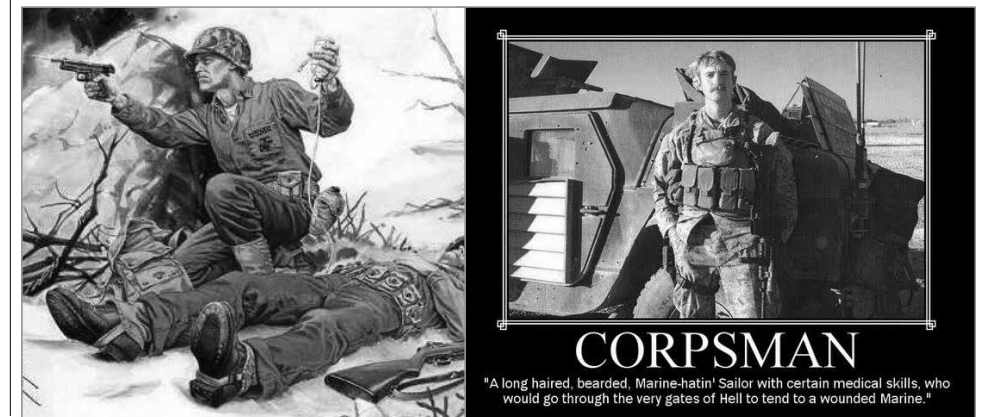
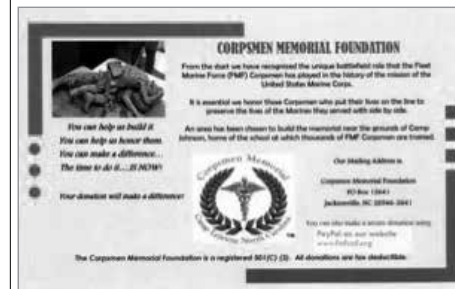
"DOC"

The time is now. A long-awaited dream is at last being realized. The FMF Corpsmen Memorial, nearly 15 years in the making, will finally be dedicated on **October 12, 2022, at Lejeune Memorial Gardens** on Montford Landing Rd. in Jacksonville, NC. The ceremony, complete with the 2nd Marine Division Band Brass Quintet, Military Color Guard and much more will occur **at 1000 hours (10 a.m.)** directly behind the Vietnam Memorial. Limited seating is available.

The members of the Corpsmen Memorial Foundation, formed in January 2008, fought an uphill battle to obtain the private funding for this project through many fund-raising projects and grant appeals. They are now happy to reap the rewards of their efforts and present to the public an emotional statue created by renown sculptor, Abbe Godwin, who also created "The Guardian" statue for the Beirut Memorial.

The statue (**which is loving referred to as "Doc"**) depicts a wounded Marine being treated by a Corpsman who is also shielding him from incoming fire. It

is a tribute of the lasting bond between Marine and Corpsman both on and off the battlefield. We welcome the public to join in this celebration and witness firsthand the emotion displayed by



both figures in this sculpture. There will be no photography prior to the unveiling of the statue at the conclusion of the ceremony. ■



Setting the Record Straight
(Continued from page 35)

officers were kicking, punching and beating their troops, making them get in front of the tanks and to our sides. The harsh treatment of their men wasn't new to us, we had seen the horrible way they beat their men with sticks and fists. Out at The Mud Flats, Peavey told me that they had seen men staked out on the ground for 24-hours for some infraction.

Once the heavy section got back to the platoon CP, before nightfall of course, SSgt Reed waves for me to come over and look at his tank. The searchlight was gone and there was a furrow plowed half an inch deep running across the top of the turret, front to back, like someone had used a cutting torch. The RPG exited the searchlight and the cone of its shaped charge ran right between the TC's and loader's hatches. It was 12-feet long! A million-to-one occurrence!

The next morning after the Korean briefing, the civilian-dressed Army colonel approached me and said, "Don't you ever do that again! Do you understand me? You don't talk to an officer the way you did yesterday! You could have caused an international incident!" I told him as long as my troops weren't in danger there wouldn't be any need to . . . "Sir". But if I get any more WIAs or KIAs due to these misfits, I will be back in that general's face... "Sir". He didn't like my answer very much.

Since the day of our arrival, the Koreans were always coming around our compound looking for things to trade. Their idea of trading was unrealistic for they wanted everything for nothing. Arguments were becoming more frequent between our men and the Koreans. Two weeks after our arrival things began to disappear. About our sixth week, a commotion started on the amtrac side of the CP. A fight broke out with a half dozen Korean's and Amtrackers. I ran over to break it up only to find out one of the Korean's had been caught stealing. I then pushed all of them out of the compound and told them to never come back. They were yelling in Korean all the way out as I "escorted" them; they were really pissed. I then made it clear to everyone within our CP that no more Koreans were allowed in our area and all trading was to cease. I didn't give it a thought after that.

Then, 5-days after the fight, the unthinkable occurred. Jim Reed and I were playing poker in our hooch when Lance Corporal Robert Ford, our jeep driver, came in to ask if he could go over to the abandoned fishing village to get some decorations. The abandoned fishing village was within our CP area and people were scrounging through the village bringing back anchors, fishing nets, large bobbers and bamboo fishing rods and reels. They would then hang them around our common area where we ate and relaxed. I had told everyone that I wanted to know before they went to the ville, this is what brought Ford into the hooch. The village was only a hundred-yard walk on a trail that we used every day.

The decorated common area in our CP

Korean flatbed trucks pulled alongside each American semi, they were almost touching. The ammo was then transferred from one to the other; it never even touched the ground. When the American trucks left, the Korean trucks formed up in a column and proceeded out the gate going north. I decided to follow them while keeping some distance between us.

The trucks headed towards the docks in Da Nang where they were unloaded next to a Korean ship. There was a lot more than ammo on those trucks. There were uniforms, C-rations, grenades, and a lot of ammo. Now it all made sense; they were in this for the ammunition and supplies! The higher the body counts they claimed every morning to MACV, meant they needed to be resupplied by Uncle Sam. I came to discover over the next few weeks that the American trucks made ammo deliveries to the ROK compound every 2 weeks! All without them firing a shot.

There was one more rumor that we had all heard, not only at the CP, but out at The Mud Flats as well. The Koreans often boasted that

they were going to get our tanks, amtracs and all our support equipment when we left. U.S. Marine General Walt had supposedly promised it when he made a visit. They were adamant about it and continually wanted to know when they were getting our tanks. It became more and more obvious why that 1st Tanks platoon high-tailed out of there.

Two months went by and we were given orders to report to Marble Mt., HQs of 1st Tank BN. It was there that we heard the 27th Marines was being ordered back to the U.S. along with its supporting arms, which would include us.

We were supplied with a date and time to leave the Korean compound. Lt. Ellis and I told the Korean HQ we were leaving on that given date and we requested infantry support to get back to Da Nang and Marble Mountain.

The Korean's immediately demanded all of our equipment and that none of it was to leave as promised. I got back on the radio with 1st Tanks to confirm what the Koreans were telling us. Battalion said, "Negative. It was all to come back with us. Lt. Ellis and I could see there was going to be a problem with our departure; the Korean's were certainly not going to give us infantry support as we took all our equipment out.

I then got on the radio with our old battalion, 2/27. I asked if they could chopper in a platoon of infantry to support us; I explained the situation to them. I then alerted the two tanks out at The Flats to get their stuff together and be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. I would have them exit The Flats the afternoon before our departure date so we would be a full tank platoon again.

The morning of our departure we had all the vehicles in column ready to leave at sunrise. Soon an H-46 Sea Knight landed on our beach and a platoon of grunts were split up among all the vehicles. We placed them on the ocean-side of the vehicles for cover in case the Korean's tried to stop us. I had decided the safest and quickest way to Marble Mountain was a run straight north up the beach. We would be gone before the Koreans knew it. I wondered if another Marine tank platoon would be replacing us; I hoped not. That was the end of our experience with the toughest combat unit in Vietnam.

To bring things up to the present, in 2000, the Korean press brought to light several atrocities committed by the Republic of Korea Marine Corps, the Blue Dragon Brigade in particular. The atrocities began in early 1966 outside the Cam Ranh Bay area but most were in the Hoi An area. Testimony from ex-Korean Marines and Vietnamese survivors along with human remains uncovered from mass graves, confirmed what the ROK Marines had done. The following is what has been discovered up till now:

2/12/66 Tay Vinh 1,200 Killed
2/26/66 Binh An 380 Killed
10/9/66 Dien Niem & Phuoc Binh 280 Killed
12/3/66 Binh Hoa 430 Killed
1/12/68 Phong Nhat & Phong Nhi 79 Killed
1/25/68 HaMy 135 Killed

As I stated before, the ROK Marines were vicious when not being shot at. They were also brutal to their own troops. The tanks at The Mud Flats reported several times the horrible treatment and beatings inflicted upon the Koreans by their own NCOs and officers. This was their idea of "leadership".

I only wish to leave you with this: Believe nothing about the "fear-some" Korean Marines. It is all bullshit.

There is a good finish however to the story. Bob Peavey was able to track down Robert Ford in 2013 in Phoenix, Arizona. It was a surprise to all of us to find out he was working for the VA... making prosthesis for veterans! We talked on the phone for more than an hour. Until that phone call he had no idea who planted the booby trap; he assumed it was an enemy device. And yet he had no hostility towards the Koreans once learning the details. He is still the good man he was in 1968.

But it never goes away, "Why me, Sergeant Embesi? Why me?" ■

Before anyone makes a decision about not wanting to attend the 2023 VTA reunion in Colorado based on the 2022 midterm elections where the state turned quite "blue," we want to make it perfectly clear that El Paso County, the county where Colorado Springs is located, has a total population of 400,000. Of that total number there are approximately 100,000 US military veterans residing here. **That is 25% of the total population.** The county is most definitely a RED bastion in a blue state. Please remember this very salient fact when you decide to spend your money supporting a large percentage of veteran owned businesses.

USMC VTA 2023 REUNION
SEPTEMBER 13-18, 2023
Embassy Suites – Colorado Springs
7290 Commerce Center Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

HOTEL ROOMS: Call the reunion hotel directly: 719.599.9100 and be sure to mention "USMC Vietnam Tankers Reunion" (Code XVT) for the special room rate of \$149.00 per night. The special room rate is good for three days prior and three days after the reunion dates as well. Please note the regular hotel room rate is \$217 per night.

You can also call the hotel sales office and speak to Veronica Kellerman 719.599.6848.

If you choose to make an online reservation the website link is:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/coscces-xvt-e1277f05-e5ad-46a3-964d-3466ec409ea7/>

You must make your own hotel room reservations by July 30th to get the reunion room rate!

ARRIVAL: If you are flying to the reunion, you can fly into Denver and rent a car (it is about 60 miles to The Springs). Or you can fly to Colorado Springs and take a taxi to the hotel (which is about 20 miles from the airport). Unfortunately there is no hotel shuttle for our reunion hotel.

Popular Hotel Amenities and Features–Enjoy an indoor pool, a spa tub and a 24-hour fitness center. Additional amenities at this hotel include complimentary wireless Internet access and a fireplace in the lobby. There is a 24-hour business center, express check-out, and dry cleaning/laundry services. Free self-parking is available onsite. There is no RV parking onsite.

Restaurants, Bars, Lounge & Dining options–You can enjoy a meal at the hotel's restaurant serving the guests ... or stop in at the grocery/convenience store. There is also a complimentary reception / cocktail hour, held daily with a two free drink limit. A complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast is served on weekdays from 6:30 AM to 9:30 AM and on weekends from 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM.

There are also an assortment of restaurants within walking distance of the hotel (see the list below).

Hotel Accommodations and Guest Rooms – Guestrooms featuring refrigerators and microwaves. Complimentary wired and wireless Internet access keeps you connected, and cable programming provides entertainment.

Pet Policy for Embassy Suites by Hilton Colorado Springs–If you are thinking of bringing your pet and want to know if pets are allowed at Embassy Suites–Colorado Springs, please log into the hotel website and read the latest rules and regulations.

THINGS TO DO IN COLORADO SPRINGS:

National Museum of World War II Aviation – This is the only museum in the world to focus exclusively on the unique story of the role of aviation in World War II.

Penrose Heritage Museum – This museum showcases the history and heritage of the Pikes Peak region through the personal artifact collection of Colorado Springs' philanthropists Spencer and Julie Penrose.

Pioneer Museum–Located in the 1903 El Paso County Courthouse, the Pioneers Museum portrays the history and culture of the Pikes Peak Region in dynamic exhibits, tours & programs that emphasize the unique character of this community.

Peterson Air & Space Museum–Colorado's oldest aviation museum and the site of Colorado Springs first municipal airfield.

Fort Carson–Fort Carson is the home of the 4th Infantry Division, the 10th Special Forces Group, the 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB), the 440th Civil Affairs Battalion (USAR), the 71st Ordnance Group (EOD), the 4th Engineer Battalion, the 759th Military Police Battalion, the 10th Combat Support Hospital, the 43rd Sustainment Brigade, the Army Field Support Battalion-Fort Carson, the 423rd Transportation Company (USAR) and the 13th Air Support Operations Squadron of the United States Air Force.

Garden of the Gods Park – The Park is a registered National Natural Landmark. Imagine dramatic views, 300' towering sandstone rock formations against a backdrop of snow-capped Pikes Peak and brilliant blue skies. This world-class Visitor & Nature Center and museum is the most visited attraction in the region with all new interactive exhibits.

Rock Ledge Ranch – This historic site is a living history museum located on 230 acres at Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, CO. Historical interpreters, dressed in clothing appropriate to their respective era, offer tours, demonstrations, and hands-on learning activities.

Pikes Peak–America's Mountain–The Broadmoor Manitou and Pikes Peak Cog Railway

This is the world's highest and the longest cog railroad in the United States. Nine miles to the summit of "America's Mountain." The first passenger train arrived on the summit in June 1891 and has seen many modern developments over the years. Most recently we have taken three >>

years to rebuild and bring Pikes Peak Cog Railway into a new era, with new trains, new track, new depot and a new Summit House for visitors at the top.

Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame and Museum of the American Cowboy – This museum educates the public about rodeo, its history and impact on Western American culture, and provides recognition to rodeo notables of the past and present and serves as an inspiration for the future.

Royal Gorge Bridge and Park–Home of America’s highest suspension bridge and zip line!

Royal Gorge Route Railroad–Experience America’s most spectacular rail journey aboard the Royal Gorge Route Railroad.

United States Air Force Academy Visitors Center & Planetarium

U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs – This is the flagship training center for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee and the Olympic & Paralympic Training Center programs.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is–Named #3 “Best Zoo” in North America.

Will Rogers Shrine of the Sun–Is 1.4 miles up the Russell Tutt Scenic Highway from the Zoo entrance.

Entertainment

City of Cripple Creek–The historic gambling, and mining town that is one of the most dynamic and scenic tourism destinations in Colorado.

Mountain Jeep LLC–This is all about providing Jeep tours and a fun service to visitors and/or locals who’s never explored the areas we explore.

Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine Tours–This is a historic vertical shaft mine near Cripple Creek, Colorado.

Flying W Ranch Chuck Wagon Dinner & Western Show–A western spread of smoked meats with all the “chuck wagon trimmings” is followed by a western stage show performed by the world-renowned Flying W Wranglers, the second longest-running western performance band in the world.

Rocky Mountain Vibes (Major League Baseball Partnership League)

Weidner Field – Home of the Switchbacks Football Club (soccer)

Restaurants near The Embassy Suites

The Margarita at Pine Creek
7350 Pine Creek Road
Cuisine: Fine Dining
Phone: 719.598.8667

Old Chicago
7115 Commerce Center Dr
Cuisines: Italian, American, Bar, Pizza, Pub
Phone: 719.593.7678

Outback Steakhouse
7065 Commerce Center Drive
Cuisines: American, Steakhouse, Australian
Phone: 719.590.6283

Carrabba’s Italian Grill
7120 Campus Drive
Cuisines: Italian
Phone: 719.264.0401

Tilted Kilt Pub & Eatery
7061 Commerce Center Dr
Cuisines: American, Bar, Pub
Phone: 719.354.4780

ViewHouse Colorado Springs
7114 Campus Dr
Cuisines: American, Bar
Phone: 719.394.4137

Las Palmitas
6805 Corporate Dr (Suite 110)
Cuisines: Mexican, Southwestern
Phone: 719.260.9393

Falcon’s Bar & Grill
8110 N Academy Blvd
Cuisines: American, Bar
Phone: 719.278.7024

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE!

We are making plans to continuing our award-winning personal interviews video program during our upcoming 2023 reunion. We would like for you to sign up for your own interview session while we are reuniting in Colorado Springs this September. You can sign up on the regular reunion registration form on the back of this Sponson Box ... or at the Welcome Desk at the start of the 2023 reunion.

If you have access to the internet, please visit the USMC VTA website (USMCVTA.org) and take some time to view one... or all 75... of the personal interviews that we feature.



2023 Colorado Springs Reunion Schedule

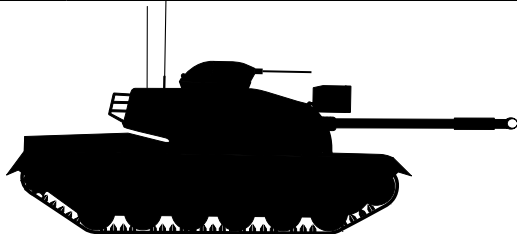
Wednesday, September 13 – Monday, September 18

Wednesday (Sept. 13)	0900 – 2330	Arrival Day – Register and pickup Welcome Packet outside The Torsion Bar hospitality room (In the Atrium). Sign up for VTA History Interviews; Writing Workshops; Podcasts
	0900 – 2330	The Slopchute Bar is Open Lunch & Dinner on your own
Thursday (Sept. 14)	0600 – 0815	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Atrium)
	0830 – 1200	Ladies Coffee (In the Slopchute Bar)
	0900 – 1200	Reunion kick-off and VTA Business Meeting (In the Atrium) <i>Enter to win a FREE hotel room for reunion! Must submit ticket before 0900 in the meeting room and be present for the drawing to win.</i>
	1200 – 1630	Free Time and lunch on your own
	1100 – 1630	The Slopchute Open
	1700 – 1800	Italian Buffet Dinner Cocktails - Cash bar (In the Atrium)
	1800 – 2000	Live Auction! (In the Atrium)
Friday (Sept. 15)	2000 – 2300	Slopchute Open
	Wear your reunion T-shirt today!!!	
	0600 – 0815	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Atrium)
	1000 – 1015	Load buses for The Dragon Man’s Military Museum and Firing Range... (Load on the west - mountains side of the hotel)
	1045 – 1545	Tour – 2-1/2 hour museum tour and then shooting range. Lunch – on your own at the Airplane Restaurant
	1545	Load buses for return to hotel
	1600–1700	Return to hotel
	1700 – 2300	The Slopchute Open Dinner on your own

(See reverse side)

2023 Colorado Springs
Reunion Schedule

Saturday (Sept. 16)	0600 – 0745	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Atrium)
	0800 – 0900	Load buses to Pikes Peak Cog Railway (On the west side of the hotel)
	0920–1130	Tour the top of “America’s Mountain” – Pikes Peak (for lunch on your own)
	1230–1430	(Lunch on your own in Old Colorado City)
	1445–1500	Load buses to return to hotel
	1530	Return to Hotel
Sunday (Sept. 17)	1600 – 2300	The Slopchute Open Dinner on your own
	0600 – 0815	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Atrium) Open Day–All Day Interview Schedule Posted in Slopchute Lunch on your own
	1000 – 1530	The Slopchute Open
	1600 – 2030	FAREWELL BANQUET (The Slopchute Room) NOTE: Dress for this function is a shirt with a collar, dress slacks, shoes and socks. Coat & tie optional. Wearing of military ribbons or medals on a jacket is highly encouraged.
	1600 – 1645	Cocktails – Cash Bar
	1700 – 1715	Presentation of Colors and remarks
	1715 – 1800	Dinner Served
	1800 – 1805	05 minutes – Head Call
	1805 – 2030	30 minutes – Guest Speaker 45 minutes – Fallen Heroes 05 minutes – 2024/25 Reunion
Monday (Sept. 18)	2030 – 2400	The Slopchute Open – Last Call.
		Departure Day



OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM
2023 Colorado Springs Reunion
Embassy Suites

Want to save \$30?
Mail your registration before July 30
And avoid the Late Fee



Please Print all information

Member’s Name: _____

Guest’s Name (s): _____
and relationship _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Cell Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Vietnam Tank or AT Bn: _____ Co: _____ Years in-country: _____ to _____

(Circle “Tank” or “AT” above)

Are you a first time attendee? YES _____ NO _____ MOS _____

Would you like to participate in our personal interview program? YES _____ NO _____

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

Reunion Refund Policy: If you find that you cannot attend the reunion after you have pre-paid your reunion fees, the USMC VTA will refund your total reunion fees if you notify us prior to July 30, 2023. If you notify us of your cancellation after that date, we are sorry but we cannot make any refund offer.

Pre-July 30 Form

NAME(S) as you want them to appear on your reunion name tag

Men's T-Shirt Sizes S – XL = \$15 each
(\$5.00 extra for XXL & XXXL)

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

TOTAL REUNION FEES

My Registration Fee:\$170 \$ _____
(After July 30th the late registration fee is \$200 each)

My T-Shirt..... \$15/\$20 \$ _____

Number of quests _____ X \$170 = \$ _____

(Early registration fee for each guest is \$170.00 and late registration is \$200 for each guest)

Guest T-shirt _____ X \$15/\$20 = \$ _____

SUB TOTAL = \$ _____

Optional: Would you like to donate a few dollars
to help with expenses? \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

You must make your own hotel room reservations by July 30th to get the reunion room rate! Call the hotel directly: **719-599-9100** and be sure to mention “**USMC Vietnam Tankers Reunion**” (**Code XVT**) for the special room rate of \$149.00 per night. The special room rate is good for three days prior and three days after the reunion dates as well. Please note the regular hotel room rate is \$217 per night.

CAUTION: Do not confuse the above hotel booking deadline date with the early registration offer which has an July 30th deadline.

YOUR HOTEL ROOM RESERVATIONS MUST BE BOOKED BY JULY 30, 2023

HOW YOU CAN SAVE \$30.00

Submit this form along with your payment by July 30th to purchase a reunion t-shirt and save \$30 off of the Reunion Registration Fee of \$200.

Send check or money order made out to: **USMC VTA** and the completed registration form to:

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



CAMOUFLAGE

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USMC Vietnam Tankers Association

16605 Forest Green Terrace, Elbert, CO 80106-8937

Please note: If the last two digits of "EXPIRES" on your address label is "21" then your 2022 membership dues were payable back last January.

If you do not pay soon, this may be your last issue.

And since 2023 dues are payable in three months, you may as well go ahead and pay for 2023 now.

Make your check out to: USMC VTA for \$30* and mail to:

USMC VTA c/o Bruce Van Apeldoorn, 99 Shoreline Drive, New Bern, NC 28562-9550

***Over & Above donations are always gratefully appreciated.**

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INDIVIDUAL, UNDERSTOOD
ONLY BY ANOTHER MARINE.**



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