



# Sponson BOX

*Voice of the USMC Vietnam  
Tankers Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™

JANUARY 2014

[www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck](http://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck)

# LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES



## USMC VTA Featured in Leatherneck Magazine!!!

	Cover Story: A Self-Imposed Charter.....	Page 22-27
Featured Stories:	Meeting John Wayne .....	Page 32-33
	2024 Mini Reunion .....	Page 45-47

ALL FOUR VOLUMES OF "FORGOTTEN TRACKS" ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

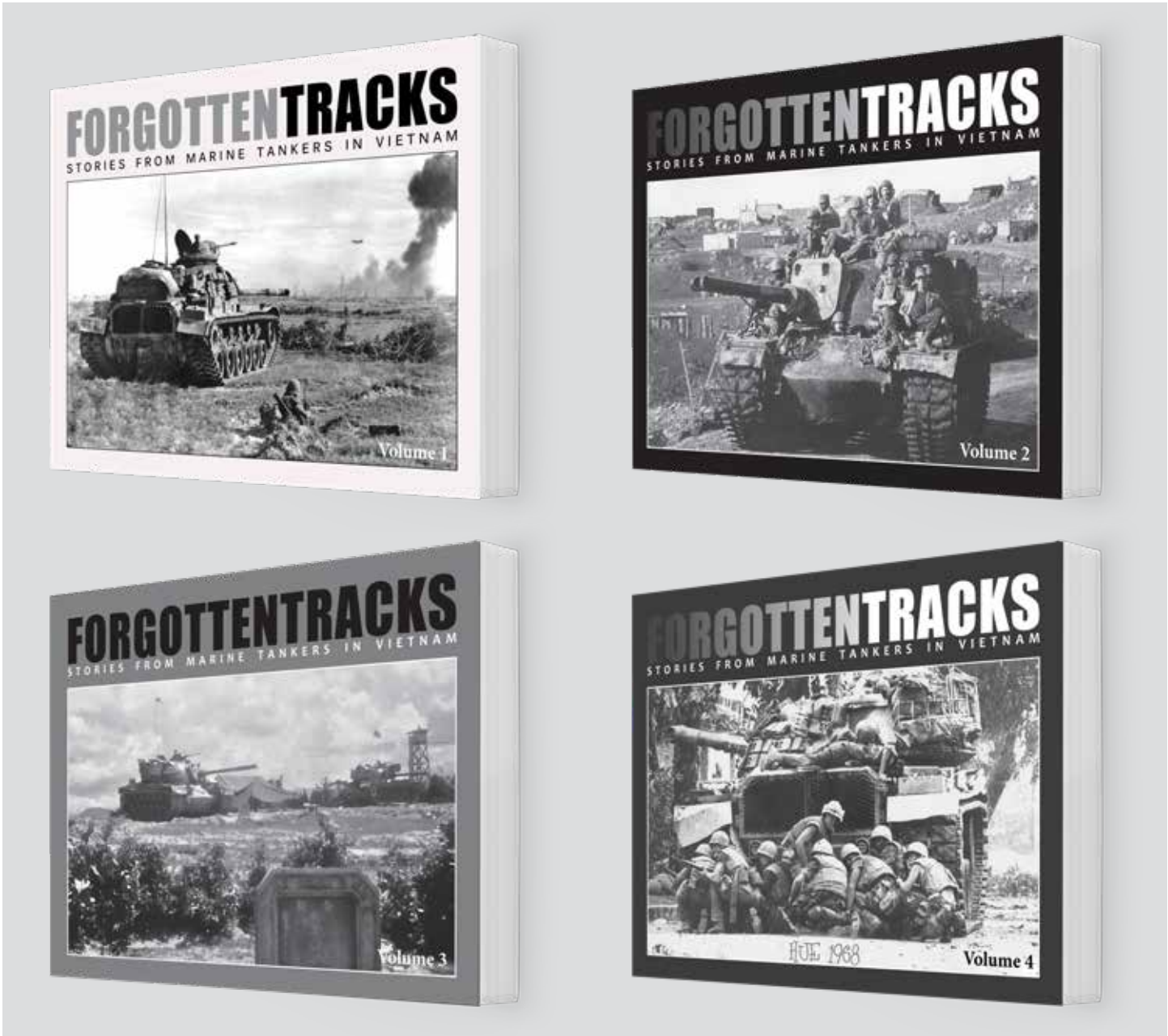
We recently reprinted both Vol. 1 and 2 after we sold out of them. We wanted to be able to offer our membership the complete assortment. Each volume is a large collection of USMC VTA members' stories that includes many photos. And just so you note that copies of these editions have been sent to the Archives of the USMC Museum and Library at Quantico, to the Library of Congress "Voices of Veterans Project" and to the Texas Tech University Vietnam Archives. Our goal is to preserve our heritage.

- Vol. 1 is 229 pages and is \$40 including shipping
- Vol. 2 is 215 pages and is \$35 including shipping
- Vol. 3 is 199 pages and is \$35 including shipping
- Vol. 4 is 175 pages and is \$30 including shipping

SPECIAL: Buy any two volumes and save \$10 from the regular delivered price...  
Buy all four volumes and save \$20!!!

This special offer expires in 60 Days...on June 1, 2024.

Please see the enclosed business reply card for ordering the books



Letter from the President

In the end PLEASE PAY YOUR ANNUAL DUES OR YOUR LIFE ASSESSMENT: We included a self-addressed reply envelope in the most recent past issue of our magazine for you to remit you payment. Also please note that if you do not have a valid email address, please fill out a family member's email address so that we can contact you through them.

2024 MINI-REUNION: It is just six months until we meet and greet at Fort Benning (Ft Moore) in Georgia for our 3rd ever mini-reunion. Unlike our regular biennial reunions, this one will be just three days. As discussed in previous issues of our magazine, we will be spending time visiting both the (yet to be open to the public) Armor Collection and the ongoing Tank Restoration Project. Please take note of the VTA-paid meals. We know that those who attend will have one heck of a good time.

YOUR STORIES: At our business meeting during our reunion in Colorado Springs, I had made a suggestion that some of you might make an attempt to contact one or some of the men who were either on your tank or were members of your tank platoon. The motivation would be for you and them to spend some time to discuss some common events that you experienced and to possibly get the experience(s) written down in order to publish them in our magazine. I know that it might be an arduous task but your children, your grandchildren and anyone with a modicum of interest in the history of US Marine tanks in Vietnam would truly love to read them. And wouldn't you know it? One of our tank platoon leaders called me a few days later and said that he was going to contact some of his tank platoon in order to fulfill his self-assumed obligation to preserve our history. Right on!!!

A SAD FACT: I fairly recently received the 1/5 Vietnam Veterans of America newsletter. The organization conducts a reunion every single year...but they normally reunite in conjunction with another US Marine veterans' organization and those gatherings are normally (very large) division reunions. Their 2023 reunion was in Las Vegas in conjunction with the annual reunion of the 1st Marine Division Association. Their 2024 gathering will be in San Antonio in conjunction with the 2nd Marine Division Association reunion. What is sad is that these Vietnam veteran grunts now realize that so many of their members are passing away that they will soon have to change their name and membership criteria to the "1/5 Veterans of America" and to include any Marine who served in 1/5 at any time. We are not getting any younger. We also are not finding many new members to bolster our numbers. Can any of you help find our long-lost brothers and get them to join our brotherhood?

AN INTERESTING READ: I recently finished a book about the shortest soldier to have ever served in the US Army. The title of the book is "The Giant Killer" by David Yuzuk. The author spent three years finding and interviewing veterans who had served with this dwarf-like officer during the Vietnam War. The authors concluded the book with these words: "My journey took me all over the country. It opened my eyes even more to the tragedy of our nation turning its back on its returning soldiers. The pain that I saw in those men's eyes close to fifty years later will continue to haunt me."

His last line reads: "He would always challenge me to think about my legacy and ask – "What do you want to leave the world when it's your time to go?"

And so, I ask each of you: What do YOU want to leave when it's your time to go?

*John*

"As I get older, I am becoming more selective of who I consider a friend.  
I find that I would rather have 4 quarters than 100 pennies."  
--- Steve Maraboli





Executive Directors

John Wear, President

16605 Forest Green Terrace, Elbert, CO 80106  
719.495.5998 · E-mail: johnwear2@verizon.net

1st Sgt. Richard "Rick" Lewis, Vice President

4904 Mt. Hay Dr, San Diego, CA 92117-4820  
858.735.1772 Email: ricklent@aol.com

MSgt Bruce Van Apeldoorn, USMC (Ret.) Treasurer

99 Shoreline Drive, New Bern, NC 28562-9550  
585.613.6564 Email: bvanapeldoornsr@gmail.com

Ronald C. Knight, Secretary

6665 Burnt Hickory Drive, Hoschton, GA 30548  
678.828.7197 Email: rckusmcvta@att.net

Directors

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

16331 Ashington Park Drive; Tampa, FL 33647  
E-mail: mrsteele46@aol.com

Fred Kellogg

15013 NE 16th St.; Vancouver, WA 98684-3605  
360.609.3404 E-mail: kelloggfr@comcast.net

Greg Martin

21420 N Verde Ridge Drive, Sun City West, AZ 85375  
Phone: (360) 480-1206 Email: usmctanker@comcast.net

Col. William (Bill) J. Davis, USMC (ret)

518 Mowbray Arch, Norfolk, VA 23507  
Phone: 757.622.6973 Email: billandjandavis@gmail.com

Jim Raasch

3116 1st Avenue NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405  
Phone: 319.551.1675 Email: jraasch47@gmail.com

Committees & Chairmen

SgtMajor Bill "JJ" Carroll

Nominating Chair & CRCS/  
CR Representative Phone  
651.342.0913 CST

Bruce Van Apeldoorn

Audit & Finance  
Phone 585.613.6564 EST

Joe LiuJ

erry Clark Memorial Buddy Fund  
Phone 801.643.4027  
Email: pjliu@hotmail.com

1st Sgt. Rick Lewis

VA Information VTA History Project  
Phone 858.735.1772 PST

Greg Martin

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

Bob Peavey

Fallen Heroes  
Phone 770.365.3711 EST

Garry Hall

Last Man Standing Award  
Phone: 812.882.1190

Fred Kellogg

VTA Challenge Coin Project  
Phone: 360.509.3404

Ron Knight

Member Data Integrity  
Phone 678.828.7197 EST

Web Site: www.usmcvta.org

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

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

Proof reading – Craig Newberry

Tuyen Pham – Layout and Design

Printed in the USA

New Membership

John T Mabe

5217 Wolf Run Drive  
Columbus, OH 43230-1553  
Home Phone: 614.475.7347

No Cell Phone

No Email

A Co, 3rd Tanks '66-'67

MOS: 3516

DOB: 06/17/43

Wife: Rebecca

Recruited by: UNK

Gary Songrant

120 Wood Creek Blvd  
Wallbridge, OH 43465  
Phone: 419.666.0385

Email isoncrant@aol.com

C Co, 1st Tanks, '66 – '67

MOS: UNK

DOB: UNK

Wife: UNK

Recruited by: Rick Lewis

Floyd E Vandiver

9112 FM 2005  
Hamilton, TX 76531  
Cell Phone: 254.688.0942

Email: Ellisvandiver@

redwingdove.com

B Co, 1st Tanks, 1962

MOS: 1811 / 5711

DOB: 06/05/41

Wife: Susan

Recruited by: UNK

Membership Information Change

Cole Morton

Email: bcolemorton@gmail.com

Tim Nicols

Home Phone: 760.807.3926

Irvin L Dale

10311 Epiphyte Road  
Mims, FL 32754-6219

Our Readers Write

(Formally known as "Letters to the Editor")

Remembering Chet Ruby

Ed Hiltz writes: I was saddened to hear about Chet's passing. I would have never known about his death if it wasn't for the VTA Sponson Box. Chet and I grew up in the same neighborhood in Baltimore City. We both went to the same elementary and junior high schools but we went to different high schools. Shortly after high school, we both enlisted in the Marines. I believe Chet went in several months ahead of me. Ironically, we had the same MOS and were both in Bravo Company, 1st Tank Battalion but in different platoons. After our tours in Vietnam, we were both stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. On many a weekend we'd "swooped" home together back to Baltimore and after our weekend, we would wait until the last minute on Sunday night at 12 o'clock midnight for the six-hour drive back to Camp Lejeune and make it just in time for morning formation. After our discharge from the Marines, we lost contact for several years but many years later we reconnected. Chet, his wife, me and my wife would occasionally get together and meet someplace for dinner or lunch to reminisce and to share stories about our lives and families. Over the years, we kept in touch either by texting or phone call. He'll be remembered by me as a good Marine buddy, a good friend and family man. He'll certainly be missed by all who knew him. As an aside, I believe we got in touch again after I saw Chet's name in one of the early publications of the Sponson Box.

Ed continues with his story: When the weekends came at Camp Lejeune, Chet and I, along with other Marines would all meet at what we called the "Swoop Circle" and pick up anybody going north to Virginia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, etc. It was five dollars per person for gas. Sometimes we didn't need gas money because we would "borrow" gas from the motor pool. My father's 1963 Chevy II, 4-door, six-cylinder would almost bottom out when we filled it with five or six people. It took around six hours, more or less, from Baltimore to Camp Lejeune. You also have to remember that Interstate 95 was not completed then and we had to use all the smaller and slower roads, highways and byways. One time while a passenger in someone else's car, we were stopped by the Virginia State Police for speeding. In those days you had to pay your fine right then and there. We would be escorted to the magistrate's house somewhere close by in Virginia, no matter what time, and pay up. If you couldn't pay the fine, they would detain you. It happened to the driver/owner of the car I was in and I ended up having to hitchhike back to Baltimore. But in those days, if they knew you were a service man or if you had your Marine "ditty bag" with you, it was fairly easy to get a ride. Many

Marines from the Baltimore area knew that you could go to the Greyhound bus station in Baltimore City late Sunday night, you could probably get a ride back to base with another Marine going back to base. That's where we all knew to meet. Chet and I did this on many weekends.

Now getting back on base at Camp Lejeune was another story. Your car had to have a jack, a spare tire and the red base sticker on your rear bumper and you could not be wearing any jeans or they wouldn't let you on base.

Best regards reading the Sponson Box ... it's jogging my memory!!!

A Young Marine Grunt Writes

My name is Eirik Gohl. I just wanted to say thank you for creating the Podcast on your website! I found out about your organization recently because I just started reading a book titled "Marine Corps Tanks in Vietnam" by Oscar Gilbert where you-all are mentioned. I've always loved tanks, and since I've been reading a lot of Vietnam history as of late, I wanted to figure out how tanks were employed during the war.

I attached a few photos of when I got to work with 1st Tanks in 29 Palms back in early 2017. I am a US Marine 0311 veteran from Fox Co, 2/1 from 2012-2017 and was fortunate to work with tanks many times. Thank you all for everything past and present.

\*\*\*The VTA sent Eirik a copy of our book Forgotten Tracks...and he ordered and paid for an M-48A3 tank model that we have available on our website store.

RPG!!!

This is an RPG that Alpha Co, 3rd Tanks platoon leader Ron Hecox found in 1967 while working with the 9th Marines. He then had it de-milled and brought home. He donated it to a military museum in Hastings, Nebraska.



>>



The Last issue of Our Magazine

Robert Skeels writes: Great issue (Jan. Feb. Mar. 2024) of the Sponson Box! No other magazine has had a dynasty run like this one. It must be great leadership at the helm

Jim "Sause" Sausman writes: I just got my copy and I noticed you included an article from "Lurch" Lochridge. That brought a flood of memories. I served with Mattingly and Lurch. I even extended my first tour to serve with Mattingly and transferred to his Civil Affairs. That was in Sept 1966. I tried to extend once more, but couldn't get my transfer with Mattingly again. That is when "Lurch" took over, so I stayed



and worked for him until returning to CONUS Jan 1967. Just some of my keepsakes below.

Glenn Hopman writes: Received my latest edition of the Sponson Box yesterday and just started reading it. Not finished yet, but did notice that everyone expressed their deep appreciation in how well planned & executed the VTA Reunion was in CO. Springs, Sept. 2023! All those involved did a superb Job!

As I read the 4th paragraph down on Page 3, I noticed where you stated that you went to a DOD school in Japan in 1959-60. What a coincident. My dad was in the Air Force at that time & was first assigned to Johnson AFB until it closed (It was turned over to the Japanese Forces) & then they transferred their Squadron to Yokota AFB. I attended elementary school at the Former POW Camp (Humora SP.) & then rode buses to school at Johnson AFB. Does any of that sound familiar to you? My dad eventually retired from the Air Force after 30 yrs. when I was serving in Vietnam. What a "Small World"! Both of my parents have since passed.

I'd like to Thank You again, for having printed that article about Paul Dolle & sending a copy of this Sponson Box to him!

Special Stories

USMC VTA History Project is Heading to the Library of Congress

ENSURING OUR LEGACY: As some of you know, during the past six or seven biennial reunions, we have been video recording many individual member's histories. Those 84 completed videos are presented on YouTube and have so far generated 87,000 total hours of viewing time. We understand that our video viewing time is something that most YouTube video producers would give an intimate part of their bodies to accomplish. Hooray for the VTA History Project!!!

A question recently came up as to how the VTA plans to archive and/or preserve our large collection of videos so that after all of us have all passed on to the "Great Tank Park in the Sky," what will happen to our recorded history? One very sure-fire and safe repository is to have the Library of Congress take them in, catalog them and preserve them for eternity. As of this most recent September, we have begun that process. Of course, just like anything that the federal government does, it is a bit complicated and is filled with paperwork. Anyone who has already been recorded on our History Project video interviews will soon be contacted by one of our board members seeking background informa-

tion and to be mailed a form to have you grant permission for the Library of Congress the right to share your story. We need for all of you to fill out and return the form. You will be retaining all copy rights and legal possession of your own personal history. We just want to have the video interviews kept in a safe place for future generations to view and to learn of our legacy.

The other thing that the Library of Congress is interested in is your written stories. The minimum requirement for their acceptance is a 20-page document. Virtually any written story that we have featured in the Sponson Box will not qualify because twenty pages is nearly half of one issue of our magazine and we do not normally dedicate that amount of space to any one story. But if you have a 20+ page story that you'd like to have archived at the Library of Congress, please contact John Wear to start the process.

John's phone number is 719.495.5998 and his email is: johnwear2@verizon.net ■

CAR TANKS

Editor's note: I found a photo website that is filled with Russian cars that have been made into tank-like vehicles. ■



Bruce Van Apeldoorn writes: The Commanding Officer, BLT1/8, Lt Col Larry Gerlach talks to his Marines who survived the Beirut Bombing and to the families of those Marines lost. On his left, Secretary of the Navy and on his right, the Commandant of the Marine Corps. All provided insight of the courage and resolve demonstrated by the survivors to ensure that their fellow Marines were returned home.

Several thousand attended this year's observance on October 23, 2023 the fortieth anniversary of the bombing at the Lejeune Memorial Gardens in Jacksonville, NC.

Just a note that the Commandant spoke mostly of the grit of the survivors and encouraged all of the current 1/8 Marines in attendance to engage with the surviving Marines to gain insight from their stories. He seemed to focus on the benefits of learning from the experience of those Marines who have come prior to today's Marines. ■





244 pages - 197 images - 176 Color Profiles

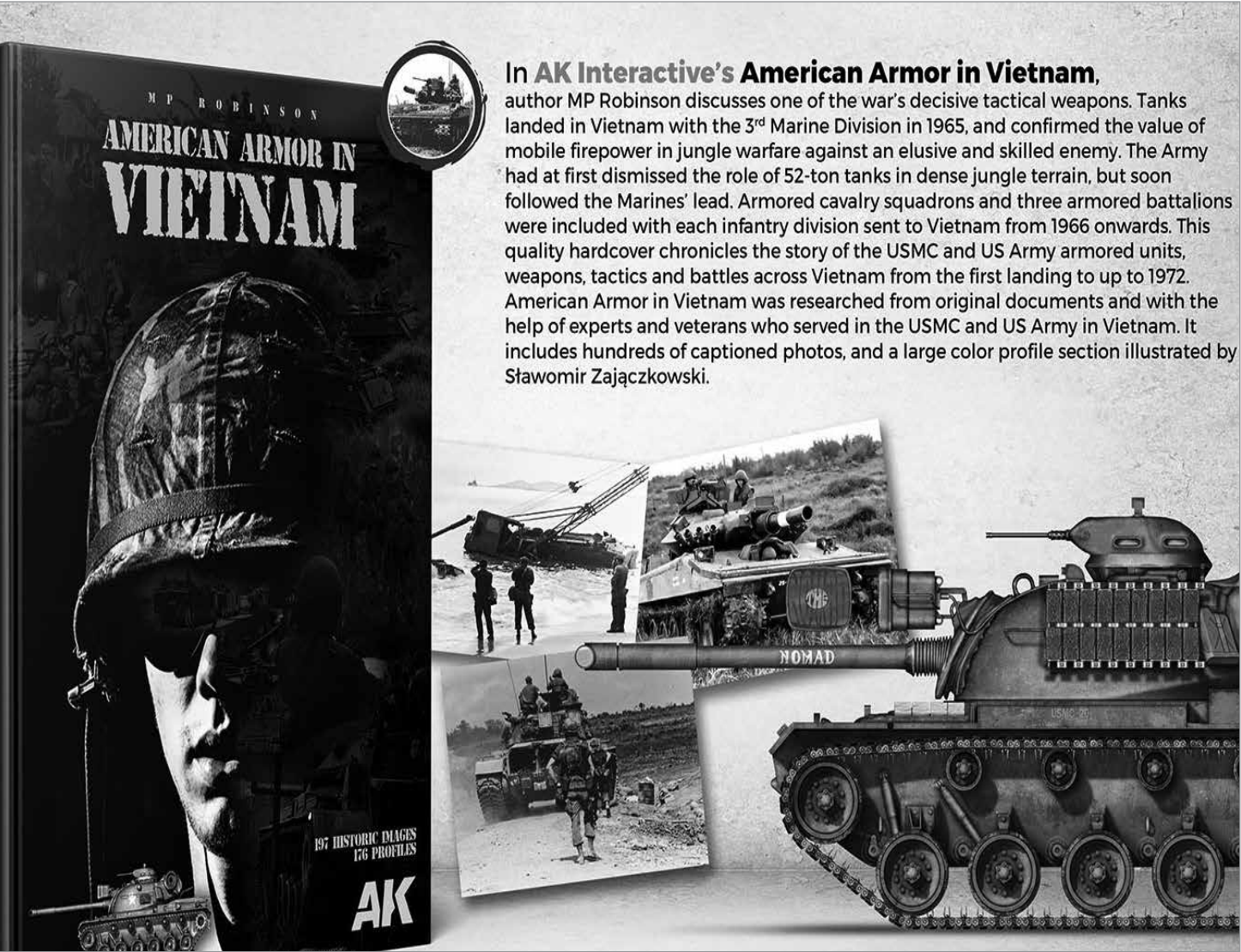
YOU CAN PROCURE THIS BOOK ON LINE AT:

Amazon.com

RZM.com

Michtoy.com

Lastcavalry.com



**Who Has Got The Ballistic Computer?**

Way back in 2005, when we held our biennial reunion in Philadelphia, one of our members who lived near Fort Riley in Kansas, brought with him an M-48 tank's ballistic computer to donate for the money-making "Live Auction." The winning bid was from Bob Haller. In the following few years, Bob spent countless hours and drove countless miles looking for and finding replacement parts in order to make his prize a fully functioning tank gunnery computer.

Then in mid-2009, Bob contacted Bruce "Boston" Manns, who was going to drive from his home in New Hampshire to the 2009 VTA reunion in Charleston, SC. Bruce stopped by Bob's home and picked up the ballistic computer in order to offer it for the

"Live Auction" at the reunion. And that is where we lost track of the prize.

Fast forward to this year. Dan Starks, the owner and CEO of the National Museum of Military Vehicles in Wyoming was fairly recently conversing with Rick Lewis and commented that he would love to find an M-48 tank's ballistic computer in order to display it in his most outstanding museum.

**QUESTION:** Who has the ballistic computer and would you consider donating it to the museum?

Please contact John Wear at 719.495.5998 if you have it ... or might have a lead on it.

Someone posted the following several years ago: I'm looking for other Alpha Co, 3rd Tanks crewmen

who might have been out with us that day/night. One squad of Marine infantry got cut-off and as nightfall had already occurred, the chore was to locate and extract them. Well, two of the Marine grunts who were there tell me that what they did was call up a Marine tank with a searchlight. The tank turned on the spotlight and slowly cut a large azimuth until the beam was over the cut-off squad. The cut-off squad then radioed in that the beam was over them and that's how they located them and then extracted them. Pretty clever idea—I would never have thought of that. Anyway, it would be cool to locate the tankers who shot the spotlight azimuth that night.

If you have any further detail about this event, please give John Wear a call at 719.495.5998. ■

**Photo Identification**

Can anyone identify this tank? And where it is located today?





Guest Opinion

Editorial comments in the following article represent the views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Marine Corp or the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. We’d like to ask that anyone who thinks that they may be offended by what is written in this article, please skip over it and do not read it. The article is intended to be thought provoking and is not intended to be dogma.

Retired Marine Generals:  
‘Our Concerns with Force Design 2030’

WE BELIEVE THE PATH CURRENTLY CHARTED BY THE MARINE CORPS  
POSES A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO NATIONAL SECURITY

BY JOHN J. SHEEHAN AND JAMES AMOS

The unnecessary and unwise reductions in needed force structure and equipment were not made to make the Marine Corps more combat-ready. They were made to self-fund unproven, experimental capabilities that will not be fully operational until 2030 or beyond. Rather than making the Marine Corps more relevant for twenty-first-century warfare, the stripping away of proven and necessary capabilities will make the Marine Corps less capable of responding to global crises and contingencies, which poses a significant risk to national security. The Marine Corps is less capable today to fight the Nation’s wars than it was four years ago.

Extremely troubling is the "divest to invest" approach to modernization where the Marine Corps continues to eliminate or reduce current structures and systems to fund future ones. In the process, it is creating gaps of two to seven or more years where there will be insufficient means to field three robust division-wing-logistics teams. In fact, the Marine Corps would be unable to field a single traditional, warfighting Marine Expeditionary Force without globally sourcing essential capabilities and appealing to the U.S. Army for tanks and likely additional cannon artillery. This creates considerable risk to our national security. One infantry regiment (3rd Marines) with its supporting artillery is already gone; its replacement will not achieve full operating capability until 2030 and that capability has yet to be fully tested. A second infantry regiment (8th Marines) and its supporting artillery were deactivated in 2021 as a billpayer for ongoing force design efforts.

The conflict in Ukraine shows the confluence of current capabilities and new technological advances. The premise that technology is "changing the character of war" is far from certain. One thing is certain: the divestiture of proven and necessary capabilities before new technologies are fielded

will make the Marine Corps less capable of responding quickly and decisively to global crises and contingencies.

Failure to Use the Combat Development Process

For nearly thirty years the Marine Corps has relied on its robust combat development process to determine how to arm and equip its operating forces. The process moves from emerging ideas to full-blown operating concepts that are thoroughly tested and evaluated before decisions are made to modify, create, or eliminate force structure or to commence acquisition of new weapons and equipment.

Fielding decisions are made to avoid gaps in capabilities. Divestures are concurrent with the fielding of the new equipment. As an example, the need for the increased speed and range of tilt-rotor aircraft became apparent when the Corps recognized that the rising threat of modern coastal artillery and missiles would force amphibious ships to operate from far over the horizon. Thus, vertical lift assets needed greater speed and range. The process to develop and acquire the V-22 Osprey was long and arduous. It was only after the aircraft was in production and the first airframes became available that Marine Medium Helicopters Squadrons began to transition from the CH-46 Sea Knight to the V-22. Gaps were short and risk-limited.

In failing to use this well-understood and highly regarded process in the same manner as it has been used in the past, the Marine Corps has yet to effectively address one of the fatal flaws of Stand-in Forces, the inability to sustain and move them once hostilities commence. This vital combat service support function was not tested in the wargames that supposedly validated the Stand-in Force concept. Yet irreversible decisions were made with the divesture of weapons and equipment and the cutting of force structure.

Having taken actions before truly understanding if the concept was viable, the Corps finds itself in an awkward position, half in and half out of the "airplane" as it begins to take off.

For reasons that we find hard to understand, many officers assigned to the small groups working outside of the formal combat development process were required to sign non-disclosure agreements as they sought to create Force Design 2030 and Talent Management 2030. Such a lack of respect for "the special trust and confidence" instilled in every Marine officer before commissioning is not something we experienced while on active service. It is deeply troubling.

Erode the Customs, Tradition, and Ethos of the Marine Corps

Were these operational combat development process considerations not bad enough, the customs, traditions, and warfighting ethos of the Marine Corps are being seriously eroded by the unintended consequences of divesting needed force structure and equipment

coupled with personnel policies best suited for a business, not for a force whose culture is "first to fight" and whose ethos is characterized by service and sacrifice. Examples include policies such as deemphasizing the importance of infantry, promotion board opt-outs, encouraging officers to pursue paths other than command, maturing the force, and lateral entry. Such policies risk undermining the attributes that make Marines different from other Services. The unique attributes that define Marines are the underpinnings of Marine Corps combat effectiveness and must be preserved. A business model approach in how we recruit, train, and retain Marines and an institutional shift from focusing on Marine infantry and close combat are recipes for long-term disaster. The new focus is on specialists who watch computer screens and push buttons that fire rockets and missiles in the deep fight. This is not who we are.

To summarize, we believe the path currently charted by the Marine Corps poses a significant risk to national security. We believe the Marine Corps

must embrace an operating concept that regains maneuver in the age of precision munitions and use its proven combat development process to field a force that remains capable of responding quickly and effectively to global crises and contingencies. Having now spelled out our concerns, we believe it incumbent upon Chowder II to offer a potential solution that will alleviate or eliminate those concerns. Thus, we follow this article with two articles that explain how to place the Marine Corps on a better path to the future, a path that reduces risk and restores the balance between fires and maneuver.

General John J. Sheehan USMC (Ret) is a career infantry officer. His last assignment was Commander, United States Atlantic Command/Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic.

General James Amos USMC (Ret) is a career aviation officer. His last assignment was Commandant of the Marine Corps. ■

Photo  
from  
Vietnam



1/9 Marines moving West of Da Nang, June 1965.



What Members Are Doing

John Wayne's Photo

Most of us know about the photo on the left. It is Doc Hackemack (left) The Duke (middle) and Rick Lewis (right) in Vietnam. Recently Doc and Rick signed a copy of the photo and a few weeks later Doc presented the framed and signed photo to US Marine Gen. Joe Webber with Texas Gov. Abbott is on the right.



GUESS WHO Photo Contest

Can you guess the name and origin of the tracked vehicle is in this photo?

The first person to contact John Wear at 719-495-5998 with the right answer will have his name entered in a contest for a chance to win a yet un-named mediocre prize.



Manistique Mich  
Pioneer Tribune

News and  
Page A2 11/9/2023 Pioneer T

### The opportunity to reminisce

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. - Former Manistique resident, Jim Cowman, recently attended a United States Marine Corps Tankers Reunion in Colorado Springs, Colo.

After 57 years, Cowman was reunited with U.S. Navy Corpsman, Gene "Doc" Hackemack. Cowman and Hackemack shared some difficult and exciting times while stationed in the Chu Lai and DaNang areas with 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division.

Doc has attended numerous reunions with VTA but mentioned this was the best seeing Cowman at his first Tankers Reunion!

"Our USMC Vietnam Tankers Association reunions have always been filled with one amazing experience after another, but this one in September has got to be amongst the top," said Gene Hackemack. "Meeting my Capt. Jim Cowman for the first time since 1966. We worked closely together providing MedCap - medical care for Vietnamese civilians, he pro-

Courtesy photo

In September, former Manistique resident, Jim Cowman attended a United States Marine Corps Tankers Reunion and had the opportunity to visit with Gene "Doc" Hackemack who he hadn't seen in 57 years. From left to right is, Gene Hackemack and Jim Cowman.

vided me with security and other support as our medical team went into the village of Tic Tay, South Vietnam. This is our first meeting in 57 years. Semper Fi."

Another highlight of the reunion was a visit to Pikes Peak, America's Mountain, and the Cog Railroad ride. Cowman was accompanied

by his friend and photographer, Rita Lowell, and his granddaughter, Molly and her husband, Victor Marez.

At the closing banquet for the reunion, they had a moving recognition ceremony. It honored 160 Tank Battalion personnel and the 93 Ontos Battalion Marines who were killed in Vietnam.

Last Issue Winner

Last issue's winner was Jim Sausman who emailed at 1:58 PM on Saturday, Jan, 6th to identify Harold Riensche (on the left) ... he neglected to identify and Jim Jewell (right).

And not five minutes later, Jim Jewell called but unfortunately, he missed the boat.

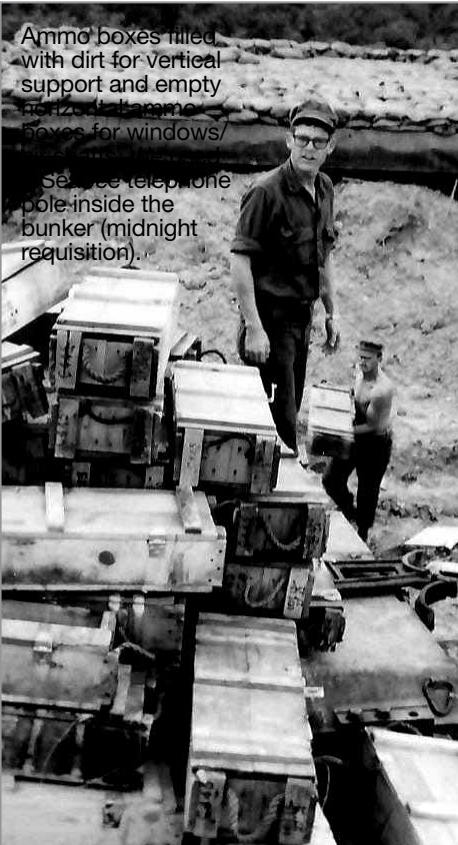
By the by, the photo was submitted by Harold's wife, Laura who said that the photo was taken on the day the Harold rotated back to the World.





Howard Blum Remembers "The Washout"

It's been many years but the recent comments/writings about The Washout brought back some interesting memories (hopefully accurate). I am sharing the photos (not very good quality) relating to that outpost.



Ammo boxes filled with dirt for vertical support and empty ammo boxes for windows. See telephone pole inside the bunker (midnight requisition).



My small/cozy bunker spot.



Shower worked well. Diesel fuel in metal ammo cans heated water.



Latrine was made from ammo boxes. Originally no door but added later with hasp to protect.



Dug out remaining rocket pieces and displayed on a board in front of our Washout residence.



After bunker built, 122mm rocket landed about 10 yards away and malfunctioned (caused) minimal damage. Had been shaving in front of bunker when blast blew me inside. Lucky for me, was wearing flak jacket (not normal/usual) and only received a few scratches. Another crew member was working on our Flame tank, the Cremator and had a couple of tiny pieces of shrapnel hit him.



As we previously discussed, only name of the "Cremator" crew I remember for sure is David Isaacs (left). McConnell/McDonald (center) and Sully/Sullivan (right) with me behind Sully

The Journey Home is For Our Veterans



By Rev. Dr. Justin Cohen

The Journey Home is a feature-length documentary film created with one primary goal in mind: to save veteran and active duty lives from being lost to trauma-driven suicide. A short clip of the film can be viewed at: TheJourneyHome.video

The film speaks directly to veterans, active duty service members, their families, those who serve them, policy-makers, veteran organizations and the community at large who wish to better understand what our service members face and how to support them as they struggle with trauma-related illnesses such as PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury(TBI).

Told in the words of those who have served, their families and support personnel, The Journey Home authentically

explores the experiences of service members of both genders and multiple ethnicities from Vietnam to Afghanistan, of how they suffered and recover from trauma to return to normal lives.

The film also follows and explores how both traditional and grassroots veteran service organizations can take on the mission of directly helping to take and keep veterans off the street and out of prison, while providing a sense of purpose and mission for those veterans who get involved in reaching back to their brother and sisters who served.

The film is made available to individual veterans at no cost, as needed. The cost of this is defrayed by holding screenings at which only goodwill donations are accepted. The films's sponsor,

The Veterans Brotherhood, is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) charity organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extend allowed by law.

To sponsor or host a screening, to volunteer to help with distribution and marketing or for further information, please contact the filmmaker, Gary Chilutti, at: gary@films-4-good.com or Clyde Hoch, President of the Veterans Brotherhood at: hochclyde@yahoo.com.

Rev. Dr. Justin Cohen is a Home Missionary Chaplain to Veterans in Delaware County.

He can be reached at 610-931-7182 and chaplaincohen@gmail.com



Rev. Justin Cohen, Ph.D.



Mobility & Shock Effect

BY ROBERT E. PEAVEY

We hated the place so much we had an expression for it, "Why blow your nose when you can Pickett?"

Camp Pickett was an Army base in Virginia where we had rail-shipped our tanks from Lejeune in April of 1969. Bravo Company, 2nd Tanks, had been assigned to play war-games with Army Reservists or "weekend warriors." It was like the Bears playing football with a Pop Warner team. Evidently, we hadn't had enough of the real thing in Vietnam and needed more training.

The first four days had seen numerous run-ins at the base's Slop Chute between the Doggies and Marines. We were lean and mean; they fat and soft and never going to the Nam. We hated them as much as they hated the swaggering cockiness that only a bunch of combat veterans could exude. This was worse than your normal Army – Marine rivalry because what irked us so much was that next week they would be back at some cushy job in civilian life— and we mounting out for Gitmo or rotating back to the Nam. Where was the justice?

It was an ugly incident on the fifth day that got our blood up. That afternoon our platoon was to play the role of escort for a truck convoy and the Army was to choose the time and place for an ambush. During the smoke and noise of the play ambush, some Doggie threw a CS grenade into an open driver's hatch seriously burning one of our driver's legs. After the word got around, we all wanted retribution. Some took it with them to the EM Club that night while two of us decided to use brains over brawn. It is still questionable who had the brains between the two groups.

We had been using smoke and CS grenades throughout the week to simulate someone's idea of combat. We had managed to squirrel away an extra CS grenade behind the radios of my tank. I was saving it, for what I didn't know, but was determined to use it before we departed Camp "Don't blow your nose, Pickett". The idea came that night between two veteran TCs who were looking for payback for the day's earlier transgression against us professional warriors. We considered these part-time soldiers to be nothing more than, "Cub Scouts with artillery".

After unscrewing the grenade's fuse assembly, we cut the body of the can open wearing our gas masks. We dug out the chalk-like chunks of agent and rolled them up in many layers of cellophane. It was then we set out for the Doggies' Motor Pool carrying our little presents and a roll of tape. No one was around, not even a sentry. We sought out the line of Jeeps, opened a couple of hoods and taped the wraps to the vehicles' engine exhaust manifolds. We were setting the ultimate practical joke— an improved version of leaving a dead fish under the seat of a friend's car. We were so damned smart we thought.

The next morning, we were on the ramp. Our platoon

leader said there would be a change of plans after yesterday's incident. He gave us instructions for what to do at the next ambush site. It was satisfying to know that even he was looking for some form of revenge, albeit tame in our eyes. We suspected our plan would upstage anything he could come up with. In hindsight, I now know why he was the officer and I the enlisted man.

Jeeps were running all over the place shuffling Army officers, umpires and VIPs from one spot to another getting ready for the morning's first ambush. Some Jeeps stayed with our column while others were running all over the sprawling base. While I didn't witness the accident, it was a story that quickly made the rounds during noon chow. Evidently smoke suddenly billowed from out of a Jeep's engine compartment overcoming its occupants with a heavy dose of teargas! Imagine that?! I smiled and caught the grin of my partner in crime.

Unfortunately, our little package caught fire when the Jeep was on a narrow dirt road cut into the side of a hill and it suddenly went airborne! The driver and his VIP passengers were thrown out like dolls as the vehicle rolled side over side down the embankment!

I looked over at my future prison mate who was locked in on my eyeballs. I could see he was thinking the same thing as me— "Holly shit!" We were certain we had killed somebody. Luckily there were only a couple of broken bones, but what about the other jeeps? What do we do? Do we tell someone? We decided to do the safe thing— play dumb. It was when the second Jeep suddenly went up in smoke and rear-ended another Jeep in our column that the Army got wise. War games were halted. All vehicles were ordered to stop and inspect their engine compartments. My crew went through the motions of pulling our grill doors and playing the part— laughing the whole time. I was certain they would give me away.

However, it was the LT's plan that worked even better. The Weekend Weenies sprang an L-shaped ambush at the bend in a road from a thickly wooded area. We waited for the lieutenant's prearranged signal. His plan called for all tanks to turn into the ambush and drive straight for the attackers. "Now!" came the LT's voice over the radio. Every tank did a hard ninety-degree left turn that brought us all on line. Five tanks flooded it, winding up their engines and turbochargers and ultimately their tracks as well. Over the banks of the road we went, engines roaring, crashing through trees of all sizes and making all sorts of cracking and crashing sounds as they snapped in half. The Doggies were now running before us, many having dropped their weapons, as the tops of falling 3 and 4-inch diameter trees brushed their backs. We continued the pursuit, each tank instinctively picking out one individual and giving chase;

most surrendered to the tree-crushing beasts behind them. I had one standing in front of my tank crying with his hands in the air, absolutely terrified! That was a day that a bunch of civilians learned what mobility and shock effect was all

about— and how fuckin' crazy those Marines were!

Editor's Note: This story first appeared in the #3 – 2014 issue of our magazine. The thought that it bears repeating

WARNING: The following story that contains some "salt language" may be "offensive" to some folks, please skip over it if you are sensitive!!!

How to Communicate in the New Marine Corps?

From: Commanding Officer  
To: All Gunnery Sergeants  
Subject: Sensitivity Training.

It has been brought to the Executive Officer's attention that some Gunnery Sergeants and above throughout the command have been using foul language during the course of normal conversation with their Division Officers.

Due to complaints received from some Division Officers who may be easily offended, this type of language will no longer be tolerated. We do however, realize the critical importance of being able to accurately express your feelings when communicating with Officers.

Therefore, a list of "TRY SAYING" new phrases has been provided from the officer's mess so that proper exchange of ideas and information can continue in an effective manner:

**TRY SAYING:** Perhaps I can work late.  
**INSTEAD OF:** And when the fuck do you expect me to do this?  
**TRY SAYING:** I'm certain that isn't feasible.  
**INSTEAD OF:** No fucking way.  
**TRY SAYING:** Really?  
**INSTEAD OF:** You've got to be shitting me!  
**TRY SAYING:** Perhaps you should check with...  
**INSTEAD OF:** Tell someone who gives a shit.  
**TRY SAYING:** I wasn't involved in the project.  
**INSTEAD OF:** It's not my fucking problem.  
**TRY SAYING:** That's interesting.  
**INSTEAD OF:** What the fuck?  
**TRY SAYING:** I'm not sure this can be implemented.  
**INSTEAD OF:** This shit won't work.  
**TRY SAYING:** I'll try to schedule that.  
**INSTEAD OF:** Why the hell didn't you tell me sooner?  
**TRY SAYING:** He's not familiar with the issues.  
**INSTEAD OF:** He's got his head up his ass.  
**TRY SAYING:** Excuse me, sir?  
**INSTEAD OF:** Eat shit and die.

**TRY SAYING:** So you weren't happy with it?  
**INSTEAD OF:** Kiss my ass.  
**TRY SAYING:** I'm a bit overloaded at the moment.  
**INSTEAD OF:** Fuck it, I'm going to the Chief's Club.  
**TRY SAYING:** I don't think you understand.  
**INSTEAD OF:** Shove it up your ass.  
**TRY SAYING:** I love a challenge.  
**INSTEAD OF:** This job sucks.  
**TRY SAYING:** You want me to take care of that?  
**INSTEAD OF:** Who the hell died and made your boss?  
**TRY SAYING:** I see.  
**INSTEAD OF:** Blow me.  
**TRY SAYING:** He's somewhat insensitive.  
**INSTEAD OF:** He's a fucking prick.  
**TRY SAYING:** I think you could use more training.  
**INSTEAD OF:** You don't know what the fuck you're doing.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter, and with a little work I believe that we can all communicate with each other more effectively in the near future.

LEAVING VIETNAM

ANTHONY F. MILAVIC

Major, United States Marine Corps (Retired)

In May 1969, I was standing on the tarmac in Da Nang, Vietnam with some hundred other Marines waiting to board an airplane to Okinawa. The group was made up of those who had served in the First and Third Marine Divisions and the First Marine Aircraft Wing. This was to be the first leg of our journey back to the place young Marines called, "The World." Standing there, thoughts ran to: 13 months had passed since we first landed here; 13 months

had passed in combat at places known as Khe Sanh, Dai Do, DMZ, Ashau Valley, Dodge City, Anh Hoa, Arizona Territory, etc.; 13 months had passed anticipating this day, and now we stood silently, cautiously aware that it had arrived. Finally, on order, we shuffled aboard a chartered civilian airliner and took our seats.

Rolling down the runway, the anticipation in the cabin rose with the plane's increasing speed to become >>



airborne. When its wheels freed themselves and us from "Nam," a spontaneous round of applause broke out followed by a shouted chorus from a popular song of the day:

*We gotta get out of this place  
If it's the last thing we ever do  
We gotta get out of this place  
'Cause girl, there's a better life for me and you*

Seemingly, everyone started talking to each other and the American stewardesses—especially the American stewardesses. As Okinawa drew ever closer, the excitement grew over what they were going to do when we got there: a hot bath, a girl, get drunk, a girl, a meal on dishes in an air-conditioned restaurant, a girl, use a flush toilet, a girl, sleep in a bed with sheets, a girl, and GIRLS. With months of back pay coming, all wrestled with the decision: What to do first on this island stopover back to "The World"?

It was early evening when we landed at Kadena Air Force Base. Some in our group immediately mounted waiting

ground transportation and sped off to an out-processing location. The rest of us went into the air terminal to wait for a ride to Camp Hansen, Marine Corps Base. After picking up a coke and a sandwich at the snack bar, I wandered about the terminal and then went outside. The cool night air was tranquilizing, causing me to pay little attention to the passing time. Suddenly, I sensed that I was alone. Fearing the buses had come and left without me, I hurried back inside to search for the others on my flight. After several frantic moments, I found them all jammed into the TV lounge. The scene bordered on the poetic: The first thing these Marines did after spending 13 months in the combat environment of Vietnam was to watch an episode of the World War II television series, "Combat" starring Vic Morrow.

Copyright 2021. Maj Anthony F. Milavic, USCM (ret)  
All rights reserve

General Dynamics: Back in the Tank Business Again

BY RICH SMITH

General Dynamics' (NYSE: GD) tank plant in Lima, Ohio—and the jobs of 900 workers—at risk. Israel had just cut short a supply contract for hundreds of armored personnel carriers to be produced at the plant and, combined Early last decade, worries over slackening demand for armored tanks put the fate of with declining demand for main battle tanks for the U.S. Army, the Lima factory looked set for mothballing. No longer.

From 2015 through 2019, a windfall of contracts from the U.S. Army, as well as from allies in the Middle East—Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait—provided a lifeline to keep Lima open, but these were just stopgap measures with limited production numbers. More long-lasting good news for Lima and General Dynamics arrived last month when the U.S. Army announced it had awarded General Dynamics \$1.14 billion to develop a new light tank under the latter's Mobile Protected Firepower (MPF) program.

The MPF diesel tank, says General Dynamics, will be a "highly lethal, survivable and mobile direct-fire combat vehicle" featuring a lightweight hull, carrying a large-caliber cannon, and guided by an enhanced thermal viewer. It will be deployed to add punch to Army Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), rather than (as you might expect) the Army's Armored BCTs.



General Dynamics Artist's depiction of the General Dynamics MPF light tank.

Tanks for all the money

As BreakingDefense.com points out, the MPF light tank "will be the Army's first new designed vehicle in over 40 years." Winning the competition to build it (Britain's BAE Systems had also submitted a bid) will therefore mean years of new business for General Dynamics as it first develops the product, then

builds out hundreds of units of the new tank over time.

How many hundreds? The initial low-rate production contract for \$1.14 billion hires GD to build 96 MPF light tanks, with the first one due by the end of next year. By 2030, GD is supposed to have built enough tanks to outfit four battalions (168 tanks)—and even then, the contract will only be one-third complete.

Ultimately, the Army says it will need 504 MPF light tanks, and it plans to spend \$17 billion on the program over its 30-year lifespan.

Now, that sounds like a lot of money—and it is. In fact, dividing 504 tanks into a \$17 billion cost seems to imply that each tank will cost taxpayers as much as \$33.7 million—several times more than the purchase cost of a larger M1A2 Abrams main battle tank (also built by GD). That \$17 billion figure, however, probably encompasses everything from developing and building to maintaining and servicing the tanks. Actual purchase costs are expected to

be a more reasonable \$12.7 million per unit for the initial lot of 28 light tanks that will begin arriving next year, reports BreakingDefense.

Editor's Note: Since this original article came out, the US Army as approved the design and has designated it the "M-10 Booker Armored Fighting Vehicle."

A Marine

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



To most, a Marine is a young handsome son in uniform serving his country, but there is a far greater depth to be what is called a Marine.

There are many who desire the title of Marine, but few that are able to give themselves to this calling.

It takes a great inner strength and fortitude to even complete the training that is required of a Marine.

A transformation of one's self takes place and a lifetime brotherhood bond is established between each and every Marine.

A Marine is a different breed of character and only their own understand this tie to one another.

A Marine is the first one on the battle field, eye to eye with the enemy, knocking down doors and removing threats.

They will go days without hot meals or showers. Their beds will be shoveled out dirt holes that fill with water and mud.

They are exposed to the elements of heat and cold, with only their fellow Marine to keep them warm or care to their wounds.

A Marine may be wounded from blasts or explosions, run on broken limbs, but will continue on until the mission is complete.

They will risk everything to save one another. They will retrieve their brother's bodies from the battlefield, as no man is left behind.

But the battle does not end here, it continues on in every Marine's memory, all for the sake of freedom so that we, as civilians may speak our minds, go to a McDonald's or grab

a cup of moxie.

The Marine continues to bear this burden for us. He trembles inside at loud noises, his heartbeat races in crowds of people, he continues on high alert to ensure his safety.

He sometimes attempts to silence this burden with alcohol, pills, and drugs. His home life is often damaged with anger because he cannot speak of what he feels.

My friend, this is the price of our freedom. The reason we can take a walk on safe ground, have good food and clean

water, raise our children and send them to school so their lives may be better than our own.

The sacrifices made by these men are daunting.

The United States Marine Corps took my son Joe and returned to me a warrior, Chango. The good Lord took Chango, but returned to me hundreds of sons in the United States Marine Corps.

Their love for their fellow Marine, brother and family is overwhelming.

I am privileged that God would entrust me with such an honor as to give birth to a Marine.

Although Chango now guards the gates of heaven, he continues to live on through each and every United States Marine.

May God send his angels of peace to touch each Marine and may every United States citizen take the time to truly understand that your freedom is not free.

God love the Marines

The NVA Bush

BY JIM COAN

In September, 1967, I was the new platoon leader of 1st Platoon, Alpha Co., attached to the 3rd Bn., 9th Marines holding Con Thien, a much-contested firebase only two miles from the Demilitarized Zone. The Hill had been under siege by the North Vietnamese since the end of August, shelling us daily with mortars, rockets and artillery.

My tank, A-11, was stationed on the western portion of the perimeter. One dark, overcast, moonless night, PFC Minch woke me up for my 0400–0600 watch and informed me to keep an eye on a lone, dense bush about 100 meters to our left front. He swore that he had observed the

bush creeping towards our perimeter during his watch.

In the shimmering light from another flare fired by an 81mm mortar crew, Minch pointed out the suspect bush. We deduced that it had to be an NVA sapper trying to creep up closer to the perimeter wire. I told him to sack out and I would keep a watchful eye on it. Later, when another flare burst over our section of the perimeter, I realized that the bush had moved. It was closer than before. "Maybe it's a sapper planning to toss a satchel charge at my tank," I worried.

I got on the tank radio and called the battalion CP to report an NVA sapper creeping closer to the perimeter >>



and requested permission to open fire. By now, my entire crew was wide awake. After a few minutes, the CP response was to go ahead; no friendlies were out there. I swiveled the turret until our 90mm main gun was pointed at the lone bush. I considered turning on the tank searchlight, but was advised not to by the other crewmen—"The grunts don't want us to pinpoint their location." I was too new in country to know for sure one way or the other, so I agreed.

"Be ready," I told the crew. Moments later, another flare went up and there was that bush, even closer than before. "Fire!" I shouted. We sprayed the bush with the tank's .30 cal. co-axial machine gun until I was certain nothing could

still be alive out there.

At first light, I focused my binoculars on the NVA bush, expecting to see a body lying next to it. To my chagrin, what I saw instead was a denuded bush, totally shredded of foliage, only a stump remaining. I heard about it for days afterwards: "Thanks a lot, Lieutenant, for takin' care of that bush creepin' around out there." And the Army "Duster" crew next to us was especially tickled. I sure hated those doggies for a while.

This story first appeared in the #2 – 2016 issue of our magazine and we felt that I rated a repeat.

## 'Till Death Do Us Part

BY MATTHEW BOGDANOS

Washington Post–August 16, 2001

"Any man in combat who lacks comrades who will die for him, or for whom he is willing to die," William Manchester wrote of his time as a Marine in World War II, "is not a man at all. He is truly damned."

A century earlier, Robert E. Lee famously remarked that it was good that, "War is so terrible, that we should grow too fond of it." Neither was glorifying war—they hated its carnage. They were, rather, paying homage to the unique bonds forged in war, especially the one that enables so many to risk their lives, not only for friends but also for those they might have just met or have nothing in common with back home.

This extraordinary feature of combat is depicted in movies in bold, heroic colors, without depth or explanation. Most leaders in the military, however, spend a lifetime trying to understand its complexity. Our pursuit usually starts at Thermopylae, a mountain pass in northern Greece where, in 480 B.C., 300 Spartans faced the entire Persian army. Leonidas, the Spartan king, had a choice: retreat, and live to fight another day, or stand. When the Persian king offered, "We do not want your lives, only your arms," Leonidas answered, "Molon labe"—come and get them. They held out for seven days, fighting until their weapons broke and then, Herodotus says, "with bare hands and teeth." Their spirit lives whenever wounded soldiers ask to return to their units rather than rotate home, or sentries rest their chins on the point of a bayonet to stay awake so others sleep safely.

Before going into harm's way, we reflect on this remarkable aspect of combat. Using its history as a source of pride and inspiration, we make this bond part of our ethos. We are humbled to follow, yet hopeful to live up to, those who have gone before—as at Belleau Wood in 1918. When his men were being cut to pieces by German machine guns, Marine 1st Sgt. Dan Daly, already the recipient of two Medals of Honor, charged the guns shouting, "Come on, you sons-o'-bitches! Do you want to live forever?" More than just history, this retelling to each new generation becomes a pledge: Although some will die, those who follow will keep the

faith by keeping our memory—a promise of immortality that asks, instead, "Don't you want to live forever?"

Post-deployment, we are also engaged. Despite countless other tasks after a combat tour and the need to begin preparing for the next mission, we pause to value what has occurred, trying—not always successfully—to reconcile the horrors of combat with the bond created during those horrors. Perhaps it is the dimly perceived recognition that together we are better than any one of us had ever been before—better maybe than we ever would be again. Or the dawning awareness that if we store up enough memories, these might someday be a source of strength, comfort or even our salvation.

Take the simple act of goodbye, of wishing comrades in arms fair winds and following seas. Those who have seen action together are not morbid about it. Just serious. It is, after all, the nature of the profession of arms that goodbyes are frequent and often final. But there is also the recognition that each of us has our own life and family to go back to in the "world." And even if we do "keep in touch," it will never be with the same intensity, never again as pure as it was when I had your "six," (your back) and you had mine.

We examine as well the many contradictions of life in a combat zone. Our eyesight and hearing are sharp, our other senses keen. The water always quenches our thirst. The sky is bluer than we thought possible. And we're with the best friends we'll ever have. The good gets better, but the bad gets worse. We always have some minor eye or ear infection, our feet hurt all the time, and sleep is sporadic at best. The heat is sweltering, the cold bone-chilling. We're constantly tense to the breaking point. And lonelier than we ever imagined.

Once you've experienced it, the memory never leaves—even after those fair winds and following seas have taken you as far as they did Sen. Mike Mansfield. After serving two years in the Marines as a teenager, he spent 34 years in Congress (the longest-serving majority leader ever) and 11 years as ambassador to Japan. He died in 2001 at age 98.

His tombstone in Arlington National Cemetery bears only seven words:

**"Michael Joseph Mansfield, PVT, US Marine Corps."**

Ultimately, because of the business we are in, expected to fight, suffer and die without complaint, we also cultivate this bond to call on when needed. At times, it means being ruthlessly hard, as at Balaclava in 1854. When the "thin red line" of the 93rd Highlanders were all that stood between the Russian onslaught and the British camp, Sir Colin Campbell commanded the regiment he loved, "there is no retreat from here, men—you must die where you stand." At times, it means having compassion, as on Tulagi Island in the South Pacific in 1942. After an all-night attack, Marine Pfc. Edward "Johnny" Ahrens lay quietly in his foxhole. He'd been shot twice in the chest, and blood bubbled slowly from three deep bayonet wounds. Thirteen dead Japanese soldiers lay nearby; two others were draped over his legs. Legendarily tough Lewis Walt—later assistant comman-

## SENIORS

SUBMITTED BY RICHARD CARMER

### Nine Important Facts to Remember as We Grow Older:

- #9 Death is the number 1 killer in the world.w
- #8 Life is sexually transmitted.
- #7 Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.
- #6 Men have two motivations: hunger and sex, and they can't tell them apart. If you see a gleam in his eyes, make him a sandwich.
- #5 Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to use the Internet and they won't bother you for weeks, months, maybe they won't bother you for years.

- #4 Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in the hospital, dying of nothing.
- #3 All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.
- #2 In the 60's, people took LSD to make the world weird. Now the world is weird, and people take Prozac to make it normal.
- #1 Life is like a jar of jalapeno peppers. What you do today may be a burning issue tomorrow.

## War of the Dragons

THE SINO-VIETNAMESE WAR, 1979

China determined that Vietnam, heady with its victory in the "American War," must be taught a lesson. Deng Xiaoping, China's diminutive leader, had good reason by late 1978 to view Vietnam's victory in the American War (1959–75) as a threat to China's security. Vietnam had clearly chosen the Soviet Union – China's main enemy – as its patron, was actively oppressing Vietnam's Chinese minority, had committed violent border provocations, and in November had invaded Cambodia to eradicate China's Khmer Rouge clients. Meanwhile the USSR was massively building up forces on China's northern border.

For Deng, this situation – although ominous – was ripe with opportunities. A punitive strike against Vietnam would make the Vietnamese more reasonable, show Soviet patronage to be worthless, and expose the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) leadership as hopelessly inadequate. Deng's well-reasoned strategy to modernize

dant of the Marine Corps—gently gathered the dying man in his arms. Ahrens whispered, "Captain, they tried to come over me last night, but I don't think they made it." Choking back tears, Walt replied softly, "They didn't, Johnny. They didn't."

Being effectively ruthless and genuinely caring are each manifestation of courage. The ability to affect their integration and foster the bond between leader and led can spell the difference between defeat and victory, because wars—fought with weapons—are won by people. Your sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers. We are honored to lead them.

Matthew Bogdanos, a colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves, who has served tours in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, is an assistant district attorney for New York City and the author of "Thieves of Baghdad."

China required the removal of obstructionist Maoist PLA cadres. He scandalized the Maoists by asking, "What does a dead 19th-century German Jew [Karl Marx] have to teach China?" Combat with the Vietnamese would be the PLA's blood test.

In early January 1979 Deng visited the United States, verifying that the Americans would stand aside in case of a Sino-Vietnamese conflict. Events in Cambodia dictated the timing. The Vietnamese took Phnom Pen on January 7, and on January 14 they reached the Thai border. On February 15 China abrogated its 30-year alliance with Vietnam and announced its intention "to teach Vietnam a lesson." Two days later the PLA poured across Vietnam's northern border.

The timing of the attack favored China: It was just before the rainy season blanketed the Vietnamese border, and

*(Continued on page 28)*



# A Self-Imposed Charter

## Marines Take the Initiative to Record their Own Histories

By Kyle Watts

**M**arines bear the responsibility of honoring and preserving our heritage. We are instilled with the significance of our history from the moment we set foot on the yellow footprints. The qualities that define Marines and differentiate us from the rest of the military are derived from many timeless examples set across the past 250 years.

To capture the spirit of this heritage, organizations like the USMC History Division are charged with recording, preserving, safeguarding, and disseminating volumes on the cumulative experience of Marines. While these official histories magnificently document the Corps' achievements, the sheer volume of information available leaves the work incomplete.

Every Marine possesses a story worth telling. Individuals from each Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) create a unique slice of Marine Corps history, in many cases known only to those involved in that community. The stories from these niches energize and animate the details of an official history, describing not only what happened, but illuminating what it was like to be there. As time progresses, much of this history will only be passed on through individuals or groups who take it upon themselves to do so.

For one group of Marines representing an eliminated MOS, this self-imposed charter is not taken lightly. The veterans of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association (VTA) are setting the example for other groups or individuals exploring options to preserve their own history.

The VTA launched its historical preservation efforts in 1998, even before the organization's incorporation. Volume one, issue one of the VTA's signature publication, "Sponson Box," was mailed out as a one-page document advertising an upcoming reunion for the 30th anniversary of the Tet Offensive. It listed the names of the tank officers killed in action in Vietnam from 1st and 3rd Tank Battalions.

The VTA began as a chapter of a broader organization, the Marine Corps



Members of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association gathered for their most recent reunion in Colorado Springs, Colo., in September 2023. One hundred and sixty-two people attended the event. (Photo by Clayton Price)



Tankers Association (MCTA). At the time of the newsletter's publication, World War II or Korean War tankers filled out the MCTA. As the veterans from Vietnam neared retirement and watched their children grow families of their own, many found a renewed desire to connect with their buddies from the war. The first "Sponson Box" call went out and the group planted roots. In 1999, the USMC VTA was established as a non-profit organization.

The VTA eventually separated from

the MCTA as its own entity, allowing it the freedom to financially support its own activities and priorities. While many of the veterans retained membership with the MCTA, the new association flourished. Any Marine of any MOS who served with a tank or Ontos battalion in Vietnam was eligible to join. Membership peaked at over 500 members around 10 years after the association was established. Today, some 400 veterans retain VTA membership. These include tankers, mechanics, various support MOSs, and even several infantry Marines who did not serve directly under a tank battalion, but credit tanks with keeping them alive through their time in country.

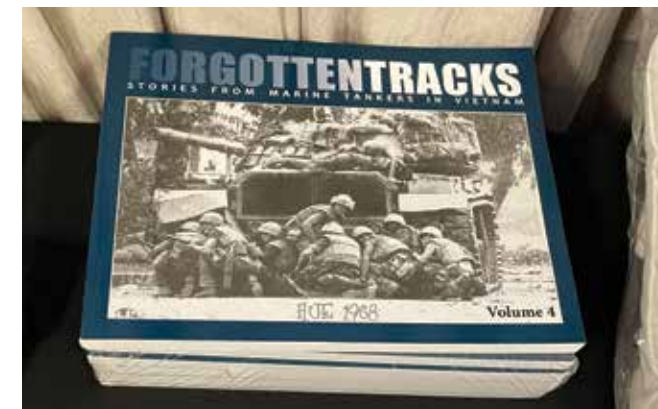
VTA events focus on a structured effort and purpose, described in the association's motto: "Ensuring our legacy through reunion, renewal, and remembrance." Individual members passionately carry out the spirit of this creed through their financial support and avid participation in the group's events and historical programs. The VTA's methods of ensuring that legacy and preserving their history evolved significantly since the first

volume of the "Sponson Box" was mailed out 25 years ago.

"Sponson Box" remains the flagship publication of the VTA, and a hallmark of their historical program. Published four times a year, the magazine spans 48 pages with history, humor, association news and upcoming events. Individual Marines share their stories from Vietnam within its pages, affording them both a lasting place to see their work printed,

and an audience that will understand and respond to them in the following issue. Hundreds of stories, otherwise told only in conversation around a reunion table, have been recorded and are publicly available through the VTA website. Some Marines like Ben Cole have written numerous times for the "Sponson Box." Cole served with Company A, 3rd Tank Battalion in Vietnam. He carried a camera throughout his time in combat and

**Member stories from the VTA's newsletter, the "Sponson Box," are compiled into four volumes titled "Forgotten Tracks." These books are currently housed in various collections, such as the Library of Congress.**



**USMC VTA President John Wear, right, inspects an M48 "Patton" tank at Fort Benning, Ga., in 2018. (Photo courtesy of USMC VTA)**

captured many stunning images. The newsletter provided a space for Cole to share some of his photographs with the people who would best relate to them, and explain the background stories.

Member stories from the "Sponson Box" were eventually clipped from the publication and reproduced as stand-alone books. So many writings existed from past issues that four full volumes were necessary to house them. Titled, "Forgotten Tracks: Stories from Marine Tankers in Vietnam," each of the four books are currently included in the Library of Congress, the Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archive, and the Alfred M. Gray Marine Corps Research Center.

In 2014, the VTA added one of its most popular and widely recognized historical programs. A local news







Above: Wally Young, center, and other VTA members had the opportunity to drive their beloved tanks once again in 2022 at the National Museum of Military Vehicles in Dubois, Wyo.

COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY VEHICLES



Above: Peter Ritch, left, and John Wear at the 2015 reunion in Washington, D.C. Ritch served as a board member for the VTA and played a critical role in its history program. Ritch passed away in September 2021. (Photo by Richard Carmer)

Below left: Young Marines from the local Pikes Peak region joined VTA members at multiple points throughout the 2023 reunion, including serving as the honor guard at the farewell banquet on the final night of the gathering.



CLAYTON PRICE

agency attended the reunion that year in San Antonio, Texas, to record the stories of veterans from the area. The recordings grew in popularity and the agency included association members from other locations. From then on, the VTA hired a professional videographer to attend each reunion and expand their video library. At their most recent reunion in Colorado Springs, Colo., during September 2023, VTA members recorded an additional 17 interviews to be added to the collection. These included tankers and other Marines such as infantryman

Gil Hernandez. Hernandez served in Vietnam with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines. He suffered severe wounds and was nearly killed while riding on a tank, and credits the tankers with saving his life. He is an active VTA member and has attended three reunions.

Even before the addition of interviews recorded in Colorado, the VTA YouTube channel boasts impressive numbers. As of September 2023, the channel contained 91 videos with more than 1,100 subscribers. Over 400,000 viewers from 40 different countries have spent more than

85,000 hours watching the interviews. The videos offer a unique glimpse inside the stories, allowing viewers to see the veteran in action, and hear the candid stories in his own words.

For the veterans who have no desire to write and do not wish to be on camera, VTA member Frank “Tree” Remkiewicz created a third venue for capturing their stories. In 2020, Remkiewicz recorded the first episode of the podcast, “Tracking Our History.”

“We’ve got over 30 podcast episodes now, and almost every one of these guys has never written a story or recorded a video,” said John Wear, the VTA president for the last 18 years. “Frank figured out that these guys know they can’t write or don’t want to, and that they don’t want to go on camera. But you get them on the telephone, and they can’t shut their mouth. All they need to do is talk.”

The expansive historical program maintained and operated by the VTA came about over a long period of time and through the tireless efforts of many VTA leaders. The commitment of one man, however, helped the project progress to its current extent. Peter Ritch, a former



Above: VTA members and other reunion guests ride an M48 “Patton” tank at the National Museum of Military Vehicles in 2022.

COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY VEHICLES



Peter Ritch, far left, served as the interviewer behind the camera on numerous occasions, helping develop the impressive library of oral histories created and maintained by the VTA.

RICHARD CARMER

platoon commander with Company B, 3rd Tank Battalion during 1968 and 1969, took the lead for the VTA in organizing the historical program. He played a key role in curating “Sponson Box” stories for the four volumes of “Forgotten Tracks.” He initiated the video oral history program and coordinated its execution at each reunion. Sadly, Ritch passed away

in September 2021, but his impact on the program endures. His voice is heard from behind the camera as the interviewer in many videos, and he took part in a group recording in 2015, sharing his experience in a larger event.

An important piece of the legacy to be preserved by the VTA comes not just from being tankers, but from being Ma-

rines. Like many USMC veterans, VTA members hold their time in the Corps as a defining feature of their lives, and share that passion with younger generations. At the most recent reunion in Colorado, for example, youths from the local Young Marines organization joined in at numerous points. One evening, 15 Young Marines, ranging in age from 10 to 18, spent





RICHARD CARMER

Above: VTA member Bob Peavey conducts the “Fallen Heroes” presentation at the 2019 reunion in Seattle, Wash. At every reunion, Peavey creates a presentation detailing the life of a tanker killed in action in Vietnam. These stories include commentary from surviving family members, when possible, and leave a profound impression on the viewers at each occasion.



COURTESY OF USMC VTA

From left to right: Peter Ritch, Robert Skeels, Harold Riensche, and Mike Bolenbaugh discuss their viewpoints on the tank retriever ambush of March 24, 1969. For his heroic actions that day, Riensche received the Navy Cross.



COURTESY OF USMC VTA

The VTA reunion group gathered at the National Museum of Military Vehicles in Dubois, Wyo., in 2022.

several hours at the hotel reception area with VTA members asking what it was like to be a tanker and fight in Vietnam. The older veterans explained in many different ways what it meant to them to be a tanker, but more importantly, what it meant to wear the uniform of a United States Marine.

In 2018, the VTA held a small reunion at Fort Benning, Ga. (now Fort Moore), where the leadership sought ways to further preserve their legacy by giving back directly to the active-duty community. They met with staff members from the Marine Corps’ armor schools and the leadership of the Marine detachment on the base. The groups combined efforts and set in motion a series of awards sponsored by the VTA. Honor graduates from the different schools would receive a formal recognition, named in honor of a decorated VTA member who served in the graduate’s specific MOS. The staff of Tank System Mechanic class 2-19 presented the first of these awards on March 14, 2019. The honor graduate received the inaugural Master Gunnery Sergeant Harold A. Riensche Award. Riensche, a VTA member who served as a tank mechanic, received the Navy Cross for his heroic actions in March 1969. His incredible one-man stand is told in detail in the September 2019 issue of *Leatherneck*. By applying names like

Riensche’s to awards for the young graduates, the VTA hoped to cultivate a lasting relationship with the schoolhouse and set the stage for the future continuation of Marine tanker history. Regrettably, this line of effort came to



CLAYTON PRICE

John Wear, left, and Bruce Van Apeldoorn Sr., an executive director on the VTA board, at the 2023 reunion in Colorado Springs, Colo.

an abrupt and definitive halt with the deactivation of all tank-related MOSs from the Marine Corps the following year.

With the removal of tanks from the Corps, an end date now exists in the lineage of Marine tankers. For the veterans of the VTA, the change highlights the significance of their work and the

importance of passing the torch onto the generation of tankers who came after them.

“Most of the younger tanker veterans from Desert Storm or the Global War on Terror are still at the age where they are highly interested in their families and their careers,” said John Wear. “The MCTA is recruiting and trying to get more interest in attending their reunions, but it is a struggle.”

As younger veterans reach the age where reflection and communion take on a greater importance, groups like the MCTA will be present to give them a forum to reconnect. Hopefully, the path laid down by the VTA will both inspire these Marines to share their own stories, and show them how to successfully do so. For other groups of Marines who feel their stories have not been adequately told, the VTA’s example proves that, while it may be tough, and it may take time and prodding, recording your own history will have a lasting impact.

*Author’s bio: Kyle Watts is the staff writer for Leatherneck. He served on active duty in the Marine Corps as a communications officer from 2009-2013. He is the 2019 winner of the Colonel Robert Debs Heintz Jr. Award for Marine Corps History. He lives in Richmond, Va., with his wife and three children.*



nearly coincident with the spring thaw in China's north that mired Soviet mechanized armies massed there. Deng had balanced the PLA's infirmities against the fact that most of Vietnam's field army, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), was in Cambodia. Only 70,000 soldiers in a few regular and border guard divisions remained in Vietnam; however, as many as 100,000 troops in 3,500-man reconstruction divisions were also in the country, and these were toughened combat veterans.

In the pre-dawn hours of February 17, the spearheads of a PLA force of 200,000 men in 20 divisions supported by 400 tanks and 1,500 artillery pieces attacked in the direction of five regional capitals. Fully aware of Vietnam's combat experienced modern air defense system, the PLA kept its aircraft grounded.

It was very much a conventional operation, with the Chinese attacking down major roads, overrunning population centers, and seizing the controlling high ground. The PLA relied on human wave attacks, likely losing 3,000 men in the first few days as the Vietnamese infiltrated and raided behind PLA lines. In one example of the deadliness of these tactics, a Vietnamese female sniper killed eight PLA tank commanders. When the commanders' outraged crewmen caught her, they pinned her to the ground and crushed her beneath the treads of their tanks.

Chinese artillery was outranged and outfought by the more modern and experienced (Soviet manufactured) Vietnamese guns that pounded PLA troop concentrations and slow-moving columns. The PLA lost at least 100 tanks to the enemy's advanced Sager antitank guided missiles. As if the attacking Chinese did not have enough problems with outmoded equipment, tactics and doctrines, they also suffered great friction caused by the absence of a clearly identified rank structure – a holdover of Maoist People's War doctrine.

The PLA modified its operational goals to concentrate 70,000 men against the regional capital of Long Son, a strategic point controlling access to the Red River Delta

and Hanoi. (See–62–"History's Top 10 Forgotten Victories," March 2010 ACG.) Defending Long Son was the Vietnamese 3d Gold Star Division. The PLA drove the division back toward the city, which had been fortified for just such an event. On February 27 the PLA seized the dominant terrain north of Long Son with a tank-infantry assault preceded by a massive artillery strike. Within a few days the Vietnamese were surrounded, and on March 2 the PLA closed in for the kill. During three days of ruthless house-to-house fighting, the Chinese wiped out the Gold Star Division and reduced Long Son to rubble. On March 5 the capture of the high ground south of the city opened up the vital Red River Delta to invasion. Beijing, however, then announced that enough punishment had been administered and ordered a withdrawal that was completed in 10 days.

Neither side advertised its casualties. The PLA admitted to 7,000 dead and 15,000 wounded, but Western estimates ran as high as 28,000 Chinese dead and 43,000 wounded. Vietnam did not release casualty figures other than widely publicizing 100,000 Vietnamese civilian deaths. The PLA's "scorched-earth" campaign that left a swath of destruction in its path gave some credence to Vietnam's claimed civilian toll. Although the Vietnamese remained pugnacious – a national trait – the war made clear that their Soviet patron would not fight to defend them. The USSR's only contribution to the conflict was a supply airlift. Deng had bluffed and called, and the Soviets folded.

Obviously, the PLA accomplished its mission, but the Vietnamese had taught the Chinese a lesson on the battlefield – one that Deng used for his own larger purpose. The lessons of the war allowed Deng to sweep out the ossified Maoist old guard and embark on the modernization and professionalization of the PLA. The result today is technologically advanced, operationally sound and strategically sophisticated Chinese armed forces to match the country's emergence as an economic giant

[Source: HISTORYNET | Peter Tsouras | February 2022 ++]

The following story first appeared in the Sgt Grit's monthly newsletter quite a few years ago. After seeing that the author mentioned that he had been a member of one of the Marine tank battalions in Vietnam, I contacted Sgt Grit and asked him to forward my email to the author. The next day he & I made contact. I soon discovered that he is a former VTA member who somehow had his membership lapse back in 2009. Here is an update for "Dick" Dickerson:

My reunion schedule is pretty full up...I am pretty tied to the K/3/5 and BLT 3/5 events but I sometimes make it to 1st Mar Div. Anniversary events at Pendleton.

I did manage to serve a full tour with tanks. I was the Bn Maintenance Officer for a year (76–77) at Camp Schwab. We had two companies of tanks and two of amtracs. We put the M-60's into service there in Oki and the platoon at Camp Fuji, Japan. We used to say it was easy to tell the

troops apart as they headed to the ramp in the morning for PM while tankers had 8# sledges over their shoulders (for end connectors) while the "bilge rats" would have a garden hose in one hand, a fire hose in the other and a white paint brush in their teeth.

One of those long, convoluted stories...but left ITR as an 1800 (in 1957) and got off the bus at Camp Horno (1st AT Bn) when they weren't really sure what an Ontos was

yet. I then volunteered for Maintenance School since back then you had to have 6 months OJT to receive the MOS after school. The USMC brass had decided that the Ontos was really an infantry weapon and we got our SRBs "rubber-stamped." as infantry. I then did a tour with Marine Barracks at Naha after 15 months with 2/9 on Oki. I then did four years on the Drill Field. Then I went with 3/5...the temporary commissioning board decided my eyes were too

bad for me to be in infantry...which is how I went from 3/5 to 1st Tanks at Chu Lai...H&S Company moved up to Da Nang in late '66 or early '67

Dick Dickerson  
1001 Devon Court  
Hendersonville, TN 37075  
ddickusmc@aol.com

## "Oh? Ven vas you Dere?"

BY DICK DICKERSON

Full disclosure... spent first tour '66-'67 split between K/3/5 (Platoon Sgt) and 1st Tanks (Assistant Maintenance Officer ... long story) and second tour with Fork Lift Command... last six, seven months running LSU 1 at An Hoa, rotated home August of '70...

So, anyway, having acquired sufficient years to become a suspect for prostate cancer, I was visiting my friendly local urologist in Fremont, CA... Dr. Assali (just nothing like having a Greek urologist... good man, actually... Harvard Med, three years in the Navy at Balboa Hospital) ... he had an Office Nurse, name of Helga, who had an accent, and quite a few miles on her, not all on paved roads.

Doc had determined that a prostate biopsy was in order, and that it was something that could be done 'in office'. Now, this involves some longish stainless-steel things with nippers of some sort on the end, and these are introduced at an after orifice usually involved with things passing the other way... So, as they say, there I was... left side recumbent, best side exposed, (think 'full moon, here) on a cold steel table, staring at files filed with medical records (arranged in alphabetical order... good idea...), and Doc is behind me, getting his pound of flesh with

his stainless-steel sample- getters (four times, as I recall...) Helga is in attendance as well.

As they must be taught at Harvard Med, the Doc felt obligated to enquire my status while doing whatever it was that he was doing back there, with a "How ya doin?" (Probably in more cultured tones than that, but that was the basic question...)

My reply was: "Doc... I been shot at with real bullets, and this is just a medical procedure, so let's get on with it"

This prompted Helga to ask "Oh? vere vas dat???"

Refraining from some snarky comment about from my age you couldn't tell? I just replied "Viet Nam"

This brings the next question: "Oh? ven vas you dere?"

This led to the usual recitation, not that I thought this Brunhilda would have the slightest notion about any of this... as it turned out, she had also been at An Hoa, working with a German medical mission, and we probably had not been more than 500 meters apart at the time... big difference was: she was outside the wire... and I was inside. Doc finally said "You two can tell your war stories later, I need to get this procedure done"

Reprinted with permission from the Sgt Grit Newsletter.

## The Nightmare in a VA hospital

Where's Rambo ...when you need him?

BY DAVE STORMIER

Echo 2/1 '68–69

This was going to be a story of my battles over the last thirty years with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). After looking back at all the month's, I spent on the Flight Deck (Nut Ward) and all the different meds they tried on me before I was even treated for PTSD, I have decided to stay away from delving back into such an awful nightmare. PTSD is so disabling and can be very fatal to some vets like me.

For ten years before I went to my first PTSD program, I was just another nut case from Nam. I hurt so many people, family, and friends, anyone who got close to me. Then the next ten years while being treated for PTSD I turned all my anger inwards. Three very serious car wrecks, two roll overs,

and a head on. Four States and two suicide attempts (Cries for help) later. I found myself locked up, only to be released to the Veterans Hospital. I went through and graduated the first ever three-month PTSD inpatient program at American Lake, VA Hospital in Tacoma. Then fell on my face and tried it again with the 6th group. I graduated again and thought I was cured.

What a joke. So, I moved in an apartment two blocks from the hospital to do groups. They were OK, except I had to go back to my apartment and spend the night alone when the groups were over, looking at four walls and trying to figure out what just happened. >>



I really get too depressed to try and write about it. My doctor is going to retire in March of 2005. I have seen him off and on for over 25 years. The last two years, without missing one appointment. That is a big accomplishment for me. On my last appointment, I wanted to bring my whole family to see him. To show how important family support is, while going through the treatment phase.

I wanted to write my story, in hope of helping or letting others know that you are not alone! I want others to know, even though PTSD is real and very disabling that I take full responsibility for all the pain, I have caused to so many who loved me. I am very sorry for the scars and even giving PTSD to others. Including, my Wife and Kids. If it were possible, I would take it all back on myself.

I also think it is very important for people who don't know about this pain. That being a Nam Vet with PTSD, does not mean you are a Rambo. I saw less action and trauma than most combat vets. I wish it was as easy as the way Rambo was portrayed. Then I would know what and how to cure myself.

So, any of you Vets who are having trouble and just can't put a finger on it. I urge you to get to a VA Hospital. Don't worry about going through what I did. They don't do that stuff anymore? They have really got an idea on treating, not curing PTSD. Most Vets won't even have to spend one night in the Hospital. I guess I am one of many who blazed a trail back in the late 70s and early 80s. They now recognize PTSD, and really want to help. But for any of you Rambo's, who just want to claim PTSD for compensation. One word of warning. If you are a poser. You will get

caught. Or worse, PTSD will get you more then you could ever imagine.

When I was in groups, I had a very good sense of who was real and who was not. When someone would start telling Rambo war stories. I would tell them; I will wait for the movie to come out.

I have said enough, except for the fact. I will not make the same mistake LT. Puller made, and say I am cured. I was very sad when I read Lt. Puller's book. (The Fortunate Son). Because even though Lt. Puller really believed he had overcome PTSD, I was not convinced. I never thought he would go as far as to take his own life. But I knew by his words just how bad PTSD had taken him over. Because I have lost too many brothers to this awful disease, I will always have PTSD. We all need to know it's real and very scary. But now, I have a wonderful Wife and Kids and most of all, my FAITH back. I know the little things I need to do to keep from letting depression over take me. So, I do them or my Wife is all over me. Over the last 15 years of our marriage, she has become very sensitive to the battles our Warriors continue to face. I wish she could work at a Vet center.

Maybe someday I can write a story about PTSD. But not now, not today. I am also very concerned for our Warriors coming home today. I can see it's the same thing just a different war. Also, for so many of you Vets who have come home and been very successful in life, I salute you. Because, you have taken your battle scars of war and turned them into a positive thing. Semper Fi, Marines and all Vets. Get help if you need it.

And Good Night RAMBO where ever you are?

# Navy to Name Amphibious Assault Ship After Battle of Fallujah, Among the Deadliest of the Iraq War

MILITARY.COM | BY KONSTANTIN TOROPIN

The Navy's civilian leader has announced that one of the future America-class amphibious assault ships will be named USS Fallujah—an honor that has been quietly discussed in Navy circles for years.

"The future USS Fallujah will commemorate the First and Second Battles of Fallujah, American-led offensives during the Iraq War," Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro announced Tuesday in a press release. He noted that the name "follows the tradition of naming amphibious assault ships after the U.S. Marine Corps' battles."

The pair of battles, fought in the spring and winter of 2004, are considered the bloodiest engagements of the Iraq War, with more than 100 coalition forces killed and over 600 wounded. The battle also led to the emergence of heroes like Maj. Douglas Zembiec, who would become known as "The Lion of Fallujah," and Sgt. Rafael Peralta, who absorbed a grenade blast with his body, saving nearby Marines. Peralta would be hon-

ored with a posthumous Navy Cross and a destroyer named in his honor.

The (former) Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. David Berger, said that the battle "is, and will remain, imprinted in the minds of all Marines and serves as a reminder to our Nation, and its foes, why our Marines call themselves the world's finest" in the Navy's statement.

Berger's wife, Donna, was named as the ship's sponsor—an honorary position that affords her the opportunity to be present at all major construction milestones for the ship and, according to the Navy, "will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew."

The ship will be the ninth "landing helicopter assault," or LHA, ship to be built. Though the first ship of the class went into service in 1976, the Navy modernized and changed the design with the USS America, LHA-6, which was commissioned in 2014.

The push to name a ship for the now-iconic battle goes

back years. In 2011, a Twitter account was created with the username "USS Fallujah." The account's biography says it belongs to "a group dedicated to naming LHA-9 for the Marines who fought there, [and] gripe about DoD ship naming policy." One of the account's first tweets, made in November 2011, was to note that "7 years ago the hardest fight of OIF was raging in Fallujah" and call for a LHA to be named in their honor.

In 2012, a retired Navy officer and respected military blogger who goes by the pseudonym CDR Salamander, proposed a USS Fallujah as well. By 2016, other retired Navy officers had joined the chorus of supporters clamoring for such an honor. Military.com reported that Jerry Hendrix, a retired Navy captain and former director of naval history for the service, submitted Fallujah as a ship name twice—including for the 7th LHA, which would ultimately be christened USS Tripoli.

Hendrix told Military.com in a phone call Wednesday that, in the early 2010s, "There was some question, since

the wars were still waging, whether we ought to be naming ships after battles in campaigns that were still ongoing. "But obviously, that time has passed ... and it's great to see this most immediate, past generation of Marines be honored for their sacrifices in the Wars on Terror."

While the choice has been a long time coming, Hendrix noted that "it's been very clear from the beginning that this battle was the battle that would need to be remembered."

Huntington Ingalls Industries announced in October 2022 that it had won a \$2.4 billion contract to build the future LHA-9, adding that construction was scheduled to begin in December 2022. The company is also building Fallujah's predecessor, the future USS Bougainville, or LHA-8.

Editor's Note: Thanks to US Marine Vietnam veteran and former Secy. of the Navy, Jim Webb, the one and only US Navy ship to be named for a battle during the Vietnam War, the USS HUE CITY, and sadly the ship was decommissioned in 2022. ■

## B-52 STRATOFORTRESS



Of course, you recognize this - it's the Boeing B-52 Stratofortress. This subsonic, jet-powered strategic/nuclear bomber was first produced in 1952 (that's 72 years ago!) and was just approved to continue to fly until 2050. Some key features that make this aircraft stand out are its ability to carry 70,000 pounds of ordnance, its combat range of 8,800 miles without aerial refueling at a maximum speed of 650 miles per hour. The B-52 proved lethal to group troops and targets as well with conventional bombs & cruise missiles in both the Vietnam and Gulf Wars.

What Vietnam veteran does not recall the "Arclight" raids where a flight of three B-52's flew at altitudes where you could not see them; then hearing the bombs flying toward Earth and having the fillings in your teeth rattle as the up to seventy-five 500-pound bombs exploded a mile in the distance.



Below is an interesting photo of a "BUFF" (a.k.a. a "Big Ugly Fat F\*cker.")



# Doc Hackemack's Story about Meeting John Wayne at Hill 55 near Danang, South Vietnam, 1966:

"John Wayne? You're shitting me – No F\*\*king Way!!" Those were some of the words spoken when we – Bravo Co. 1st Tank Bn., 1st Marine Div. based at Chu Lai found out that John Wayne was very close to us, hanging out with 7th Marines just "over the hill". It was rumored that they were going to bring him over to our area in the afternoon. Somewhere in between that



Doc Hackemack, John Wayne, Rick Lewis

time, our hopes were dashed, when it was reported that John Wayne had been "drinking all day" at 7th Marines Officers' Club and that he was too drunk to come over and visit Bravo Co. At that point we were dismayed to say the least. A few of us were mulling around "The Club," a bamboo/grass hooch where we would go to drink Japanese "Kirin" beer whenever we got the chance. Just as I was cracking another beer, suddenly a jeep pulls up with this big dude in it, plus the driver and an officer, a Colonel, I think. Just imagine our sheer delight when we all started hollering, "It's JOHN WAYNE!"

If John Wayne was drunk, you could have fooled me! As we followed him into the "Club", someone handed him a Kirin beer. Then he leaned back against a table in a very relaxed manor, and began answering dozens of questions that the Marine tankers were throwing at him. One question I remember him answering, was when a Marine asked him, "How many movies have you made up to now?" His answer was "about three hundred." I would guess that he visited with us about 45 minutes to an hour. The picture of us that I gave (a copy of) to Lt Gen Joe Weber was taken with a LOT OF LUCK on my side. As I was standing next to John Wayne, I suddenly realized, "Damn – I need to get a picture of this!" I was holding my old Minolta camera and saw a Marine buddy, so I pitched my camera about 30 ft to him, he made a lucky catch, quickly snapping the photo. Just THINK about it – these cameras were MANUAL focus. For this camera to just happen to be at the correct setting was nothing short of a miracle! Later I returned to my FIRST AID HOOCH up the hill from the 'club'.

Rick Lewis adds: How did John Wayne wind up at the tankers' Enlisted Club in Chi Lai 1966? At the time 2nd Platoon, Charlie Co. was attached to Bravo Co. 1st Tanks in Chi Lai in support of 7th Marine Regiment which filled the whole valley at the time. The platoon was busy doing

PM on the tanks when we were told to "Mount up!" and off we go with all five tanks. My TC says, "We're picking up some dignitaries at the air field."

When we came to a halt at the air field, I could hear all this hollering and our loader gets out of the tank and then this big body is sliding into the loaders seat He leans down, looks me in the face and says, "Ma-

rine, can you use a cold beer?"

"It's John Wayne in the flesh! Holy \$hit!" I say to myself! He hands me a cold Pabst Blue Ribbon beer. Cold beer in the Nam? Hell yes! John Wayne and Ann Margret were here for a USO Show along with some go-go dancers to back up Ann Margret. And by the way, Ann and the go-go dancer's all rode in the other tanks and we got John Wayne and cold beers!!!

Later we got the word that John Wayne was headed to our club to thank the tankers for the ride and that's when Doc and I wound up getting this picture with John Wayne. About two months later, 7th Marines and 1st Tanks back loaded and headed to Da Nang. The 2nd, Platoon of Charlie Co. would join the rest of Charlie at Marble Mountain which is 3rd Tanks old CP as they moved north.

Doc continues: Little did I know that many years later, I would run into a Marine at one of our USMC VTA Reunions by the name of RICK LEWIS. Much to my surprise, in the photo he is the Marine next to John Wayne opposite me! Then at our Seattle Reunion in 2019 where Lt Gen Joe Weber, USMC (ret) was our guest speaker, he mentioned to Rick that he would like a copy of the John Wayne photo with it signed by both of us. Well, about six years went by when Rick & I both finally signed a copy of that photo in Colorado Springs in September 2023! I then brought it home to Texas with me and contacted Lt General Weber, only telling him I had a "delicate item" to give him, since I framed it.

On Tuesday, January 23rd, I drove over to his house that is just off Hackemack Road near Round Top, Texas. Remembering I had promised John Wear that I would get a photo of me giving USMC Lt Gen Joe Weber the John Wayne pic, we realized his wife was not at home and needed a 'photographer.'

He said, "I'll just call my neighbor Rick." Right here – like a good ole Texas boy – I'm gonna tell you, "You ain't gonna believe this sh\*\*." So, WHO is his NEIGHBOR? Texas' Governor Rick Perry (from 2000 to 2010)! So, here comes Rick Perry thru the door and before you know it, the three of us sat there about three hours drinking Salvatore Lager, which is some very good German beer. With both of them living off Hackemack Road, they soon learned about my Grandpa Hackemack, whom the road was named after. We talked about farming and ranching in Texas, and compared many military experiences. As Rick was taking photos of Joe and me, he said, I'll get a selfie of the three of us, and I included that one also.

One last caveat – in the 1980's, 1990's my wife and I owned "Hackemack's Hofbräuhaus" restaurant near New Ulm Texas. One day a customer saw the picture of John Wayne hanging on our wall. He said, "I'm the Marine who brought John Wayne over to you guys!"



Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, "Doc" and General Joe Weber



## Stories from Jim Cowman

### The Old Man and the Frag

The major I relieved as liaison officer to CG III MAF in early '71 was Tim Ginty (later the Marine colonel involved with the Beirut bombing), he thought it a good idea to take me on a quick tour of the area. It had been three years since my first tour in Vietnam, as away we went. We were billeted at the Air Wing facility at Da Nang, where we could "swing with the Wing." Col. "Smiling" Jack Armstrong was the CO of the Wing.

The major and I exited the main gate and turned north on the road that parallels the great Da Nang to Hue railroad. A shambles of a railroad if there ever was one. We had gone less than a block when a explosion behind us indicated that something was not right. We agreed the explosion was a frag (hand grenade) so we returned to see what had scared the hell out of us.

Several locals were severely injured, some were dead and the MP's related what had happened. Someone had stolen or found a frag grenade and the group of sensitive Orientals (dumb gooks) were not sure what to do with it. As they passed it from person to person, one of the more intelligent



(L to R) Jim Cowman and John Wear

ones managed to "pull the pin." As he di so, the handle flew off as he passed the grenade to the next elderly gentleman (old gook). Now they knew they were in trouble, so the old man carrying the grenade shuffled (or was pushed) towards the hatch (door). He did not make it. The resulting ex- >>



plosion made a shambles of the folks and the hut involved. And perhaps a lesson was learned: Don't screw around with live ordinance.

**The Stoner**

In the last 60's, the Marine Corps was testing the Stoner weapons system. It was a good weapon and the armed forces made a mistake by not taking a better look at it. The Stoner was really the AR-15 (cal. .22) which the Army screwed up by modifying modifications and making it the M-16. MCDEC was evaluating the Stoner and being attached to the command it caused my familiarity with the weapon.

In early '71, I returned to Vietnam and during a visit to the 1st Marines, a Stoner was located hanging on the armory wall. I questioned where it had come from. No one knew. I talked to the Executive Officer about the weapon and he indicated he would be most happy if, when he turned his back, I would depart with the weapon, no questions asked! I did so. I repaired the weapon and used it in firing demos with the XM174.

When my replacement arrived "in country," I had already packed up the Stoner and intended to mail it to myself as a keepsake. I later thought better of the idea and turned the Stoner over to my replacement. I returned to Quantico for duty and forgot about the Stoner. Several months later a box arrived in the mail. My replacement wanting the Stoner "off his back" had mailed it to me.

An unaccounted for, serialized automatic machinegun, is not what you want in your home. The Corps, as well as local law enforcement officers, would frown on such a possession. As much as I liked the weapon, and with tears in my eyes, I reluctantly turned the weapon into the MCDEC armory, where it probably still is.

Songs by Major Karr

Also, in early '71, after returning to Viet Nam and represented the Marine Corps Development Center (MCDEC). One of the projects I monitored concerned the XM174, an automatic grenade launcher the Corps was interested in. Teaching the weapon brought me in contact with most Marine Corps units still in RVN. Col. PX Kelly, later the Commandant of the Corps, was CO of the 1st Marines and I conducted firing demonstrations for the officers and staff of that regiment.

The demonstrations went well, and PX Kelly showed up and fired the weapon. Someone took an excellent photo of Maj. Karr and me firing the weapon. The photo was published stateside. Maj. Karr invited me to a steak and beer party that evening. Of course, I attended and it was a wild affair before it secured. Two songs that were popular at the time were a version of the "1st Marine Division" song and the Marine Corps rendition of the "Green Beret" tune. I noticed that as Karr and his gang sang, an effort was being made to tape the results. I requested a copy of the tape and he mailed it to me.

Four years later, Maj. Karr mailed me a copy. I still have

it! The quality of the tape is not the best, nor is it intended for mixed company. But I would not part with it at any cost.

**The Casket**

The 1st Tank Battalion moved north from Chu Lai in late 1966. The battalion Civic Action team had a decent reputation resulting from their work with a small village named Tich Tay that was located near Chu Lai. When the tank battalion arrived in Da Nang, they were assigned to the village of Hoi An that was near the 1st Mar Div headquarters CP. The civic action team worked in Hoi An, as the BN OIC, I would accompany them, as would Dr. Laurence, the squid doctor attached to the BN.

One day the team reported to me that one of the village elders, a most important person, was very ill. Dr. Laurence and I made our plans to visit the elder the next day. During our visit, it was quite obvious that he elder was dying. His leg was infected with gangrene and unless the leg was amputated, the end was near. While the Dr was explaining that the amputation would save the elder's life, I noticed a long, narrow, red paper-lined wooden box next to the rack that the elder was suffering on. I inquired about the box and was told that it was the elder's coffin. His funeral was already planned and the coffin was ready. No amputation was going to interfere with the pre-programmed event.

So, Doc and I returned to the tank BN, pondering the ways of the East. Several days later, as I recall, we attended a funeral we could have prevented.

**Three Purple Hearts**

One of the rules which governed the Vietnam conflict concerned the Purple Heart medal. When a Marine was wounded for the third time, we literally had to stop the war and get him out of the area and start him on his trip home. While serving with Hotel Company, 2nd Bn, 5th Marines, this "third heart" rule sent quite a few deserving Marines home early. One particular story deserves to be told.

In July of 1967, Hotel Company was sent in on a hill somewhere between An Hoa and the Liberty Bridge. We had been there several days. As CO, I would walk the perimeter several times a day to check on things. The young Marine machine gunner featured in this story (I've forgotten his name) manned his position on the northwest area of the small hill. I checked the position, made small talk with the machinegun team and started walking back to the company CP. I had not gone more than 20 yards when an explosion blasted the machinegun position that I had just left! Such booby trap devices were all too common in the area. The gunny came running down the path to see how bad it was. I followed him when my head cleared.

What had happened follows: When I left the position, the Marine with two Purple Hearts had left the hole to take a leak. He tripped a bobby trap as he walked by. When I got there, he was paralyzed from the waist down and had shrapnel in his back. No other Marines were injured. A medevac chopper was called in and the company corpsman did what

he could do for the injured Marine. To everyone's surprise, the wounded Marine was not hurt badly, he could move his legs. He knew that he was going home and was smiling. He had a camera and his buddies were taking his picture. As I recall, he even sat up and posed. The chopper arrived and was photographed as it came in. The wounded Marne was photographed as he was loaded aboard. His camera was the last item thrown on board.

As far as I know, he made it and has a most unusual photographic record of his third Heart. Before he left, he promised to mail us some photographs of the event but we never heard from him again.

**The Sliding Door**

Late in 1966, after 1st Tank Battalion relocated from Chu Lai to the Da Nang area, we had two sergeants (Keyser and Cheney) assigned to the S-5 section. Together we planned several patrols to get familiar with the new area. Maybe we wanted to play "grunt" as well.

One of those patrols took us south to the river, up the river towards the Ontos Battalion compound and then back to our area. Not a great distance, but through an area of interest. We usually left before light. Our route also took us through several villages. It was raining very hard. Keyser and I were standing in a village, it was just getting light, we were armed the way we thought grunts should be. We were standing very close to one of the village huts. With no

warning, the hut's sliding door opened! The sudden movement scared the hell out of us! The man of the house was standing there with his "tool" in his hand, ready to empty his bladder into the rain.

Jumpy as we were, we made a movement and our movement scared the hell out of the man of the house. His facial expression changed from one enjoying his morning urination to one of sheer terror. The sliding door closed with his efforts in full stream. Once we calmed down, we could not help but chuckle as we continued on our patrol. Later that summer I saw villages destroyed for less.

**The 48 Second Interview**

General Cushman's staff conducted interviews for "perspective general's aide." My diary indicates these interviews took place around April 1, 1967 (a most appropriate date for these interviews). I had just returned from R&R in Hawaii and was on my way back to A Co, 1st Tanks, when Col. "Roughhouse" Taylor informed me that I had no choice. I was to be interviewed for the aide position. Col. Taylor would have done most anything to get rid of me.

I reported for the interview. One of the senior officers conducting the interview knew me. He said, "What are you doing here?"

"Reporting to be interviewed, Sir!" I replied.  
"Get the hell out of here!" he said. And I did. I was back in my jeep and on my way in less than 49 seconds.

**SHOCK EFFECT!**

BY ROBERT PEAVEY



I had just completed my 30-day leave after returning from Vietnam; it was early April, 1969. I reported in to Second Tanks at Camp LeJeune with 22-months in grade as a corporal and was immediately promoted to sergeant by the CO. It was an unexpected surprise since I had come with a new wife in tow and could surely use the money. My platoon leader was a butter bar LT and he assigned me as the heavy section leader, staff NCOs being a rare commodity in this unit; about half the enlisted men were straight out of tank school. It was when I first met the LT that I learned our company would be shipping its tanks to Camp Pickett, a U.S. Army >>



Reserve training base in Virginia. After the first two days the name of the base changed from "Shit Hole" to a more ear friendly, "Camp, don't blow your nose, Pickett". It was an awful place.

If you recall back in the 60s and 70s, U.S. Army Reserve units were a joke, nothing like the finely trained combat units of today. They were made up of draft dodgers and rich kids who only met one weekend a month and two weeks a year for field training. These, "Cub Scouts with artillery", as we called them, were about to get a rude awakening, for we Marines were coming to play war games with them for two weeks.

Upon unloading our tanks off the railcars, we learned that the next day we would be going to a gun range to live fire and zero-in all our guns. The following morning 15 tanks were lined up waiting for someone to unlock the range gates when, from a side road, we were approached by a number of Army M-51 Retrievers, each towing an old tank. We soon learned these were to be our targets! Unbelievable! The only stateside tank range shooting I was ever involved with took place at Camp Pendleton in 1967. Every Quarter we went to the range to shoot at dirt piles, large boulders and paper targets. God, the Corps was so cheap! But one Quarter in California we thought we made it to heaven when we had five old cars to shoot at, which didn't last very long against a company of tanks. And here we were about to shoot up half-a-dozen old tanks . . . unheard of in the Marine Corps! But these were not ordinary tanks, they were M48A2s! We were dumbfounded! Our own tanks were the targets!

I jumped down off my tank and ran over to the LT & CO who were talking with an Army officer. Waiting for my chance, I saluted and politely asked my LT, with my CO in earshot, if we could delay the target vehicles for 30-minutes so we could strip them of parts we needed. Soon 60 men were running around the targets, tools in hand, grabbing what they could find. Driver escape hatches were a real find! Later that day I was given a, "Good thinking, Sergeant" by the CO. . . not realizing I would cash in on that gradation later.

The next week at, "Don't blow your nose, Pickett", quickly became routine as we were continually used as the Red Force and were repeatedly ambushed by the amateur soldiers. Our platoon would be assigned a dirt road to travel on and tool along waiting to be ambushed. We had been supplied with blank machine gun ammunition and a few 90mm blank rounds to add realism. The Army drove around in Jeeps with "umpires" to designate who was dead or not and what tanks were knocked out. There was always a jeep trailing our column of tanks. Day after day we were the bait and day after day, we took a beating according to the umpires. It got to be very frustrating not being allowed to maneuver off the road or do more than just shoot machine gun blanks at the Blue Force. We complained and the Army umpires had to keep reminding us that these were basically

civilians learning how to conduct an ambush. Okay, we will play, I thought to myself.

The third day they introduced CS (tear gas) grenades to the Blue Force to liven up the ambushes. The last "ambush" of the day went wrong when some "Cub Scout" threw a CS grenade into one of our driver's compartments burning the driver's legs. We were totally fried and fed up playing "war games". The driver incident was the final straw.

At the E-Club that night I got together with the other four Tank Commanders of my tank platoon. Lucky for us, our LT had become equally as bored with the routine and was often seen traveling with the umpires in the Jeeps. This made it easier to pull off what I had in mind. I decided, if this really was a "training exercise" for the Army, then let's teach them how tanks really react in an ambush. So, I laid out a plan with my four fellow TCs, which took advantage of the third and the least known advantage of a tank: Shock Effect. Until you are in the path of a 52-ton beast, relentlessly coming at you, you have no understanding what is meant by, Shock Effect. And we were about to introduce the concept to the weekend warriors. After all, isn't that what we were here for?

The previous ambush sites had all taken place in obvious areas like a bend in the road, a tree-lined trail or a piece of elevated ground. They had always picked terrain they thought we couldn't cross like a road with raised berms on the sides. They weren't smart enough to pick spots we could not traverse. It simply meant they knew nothing of our capabilities. School would start today.

That morning we were assigned a road we were well familiar with. It was perfect terrain for my plan. It was a dirt road lined with young trees and a lot of saplings closer to the road; there was no undergrowth. The road was sunken about three feet lower than the surrounding terrain. Someone obviously thought we would be channeled in and be an easy target. . . instead they picked the perfect spot.

We drove in column down the road spaced about 10-yards apart. The lead tank's gun tube faced ahead and the rear tank's turret faced to the rear, the middle tanks alternated their guns to the left and right. I was in the third tank and the road we were given was straight, meaning the ambush would be spread down the road to try and engage the entire platoon. . . just what we had hoped for.

Suddenly, from the left side of the road they opened up on us. I couldn't have asked for a better site; we were all engaged. I got on the radio, "Left Flank!!", I yelled! All five tanks immediately did a hard left steer and gunned the engines so we were all on line, advancing, never stopping, never slowing. All the turrets were now facing forward as five V-12, turbocharged, engines roared to life. The beasts easily climbed the three-foot berm and then came crashing down to the ground ... all five tanks still perfectly on line as if we had rehearsed it. We now hit the outer line of smaller trees and they went down with their tops slapping the ground

20 feet ahead of each tank; bigger trees were just ahead. Engines were at full roar and now the tracks made their distinct sound as they began crushing everything in their path. From the moment we had all turned left, each tank fired their one blank 90mm shell, "Kaboom!" and then laid on their machine guns firing up all their blank ammo. We made a lot of noise! The boom of the five main guns and the crashing trees and machine guns made for a terrifying cacophony unheard on Camp Pickett since we arrived.

We had gone about 50 feet into the trees before we hit bigger stuff which also went over, again, slapping the ground way in front of the tanks. The "Cub Scouts" jumped up running, some of them grazed by the light tree limbs crashing down on and around them. Many dropped their weapons,

a few surrendered to the beasts with their hands over their heads, and, believe it or not, a few, honest to God, were crying. The panicked weekend warriors ran for their lives. Several turned with their hands up yelling, "Stop! Stop!" And of course, we just went around them.

I was hoping these toadies knew we were regular Marines and that we were done fucking around! It was one of the most thrilling and satisfying moments of my career in the Corps. Yes, we got yelled at and reminded that we could have killed somebody. . . but they all said it was very impressive and how terrifying it had been to be on the other side of a charging tank.

Shock Effect, baby! Shock Effect!

# Some of My Stories

BY JOHN "HUGHIE" HUGHES

## MOS Day

On or about September 7, 1966, SSgt Dobie, Sr DI for Platoon 3053, MCRD Parris Island, calls a School Circle before evening chow and he announced our MOSs. A large number of our platoon were New York City reservists as were some of the Midwesterners. One of the Ohio reservists became the platoon Honor Man because he went regular for 4 years. Dumb ass!

Jimmy Hood and Dan Chamberlin got Super Radio School at San Diego. Steve Wilder (our platoon's only KIA as far as we can determine) got Field Radio School at Pendleton. A guy named Melcher, who had an infantry guarantee even though he had some sort of asthmatic condition that saw him pass out every time we ran more than a mile. Another guy named Titke was also 0311 but he went to Sea School even though he's was a non-qual on the rifle range. Perhaps they felt that he could be more accurate with a battleship's 16" gun.

Then SSgt Dobie says, "Hughes and Dougherty, 1811." He adds, "You shit birds think that you got it made, don't ya? Well, those slant-eyed little shits got RPGs, they got recoilless rifles and they got AT mines. You f\*ckers come riding by and ... BOOM!!! Good-bye Hughes. Good-by Dougherty."

Such a sweet man...and that was our introduction to tanks.

## Service at Camp Pendleton before Tank School

### An Inspection in Camp Del Mar

### Walking guard duty at Area 17

After Bootcamp, ITR and Boot leave, I was sent to Camp Pendleton for Tank School. Like all Marine Corps ways of doing things, screw with the troops was the order of the day. For the first several weeks, I was at Area 17 assigned to a casual company policing butts (cigarettes) and standing guard duty. As a matter of fact, I had the noon to 1600 walking my post on Thanksgiving so that when I got to the mess hall

there was one turkey wing and a spoonful of green beans left for my dinner.

So, I was then sent to Camp Del Mar but Tank School was not to be quite yet. First there was the great hospital scare which saw the whole barracks quarantined for a long weekend. Then some hotdog OD decided to call for a locker and barracks inspection on the one Saturday just before liberty call. I am a well-known bibliophile (a guy that collects books) though my ex-wife believes that the correct term is "bibliomaniac." Anyway, I had a number of paperback books in my foot locker (10 – 15) mostly of a military nature but some by Eskin Caldwell, a popular author from earlier decades. His stuff was still being published but in paperback so lurid drawings made up covers. The writing was not pornographic nor for that matter, was it even slightly titillating. My bunkie (whose name I have long forgotten) asked to borrow some of my books to round out his footlocker display. I said, "Sure. Go ahead." He took 3 or 4 of the military type books and we awaited the inspection.

A newly minted 2nd Lt was the OD and inspector. He looked in our footlockers and started chewing my ass about morals (obviously he got his degree off the back of a cereal box) and tells me I ought to be reading the kind of material my obviously superior bunk mate read!

I said nothing about the books being mine since it might have embarrassed all concerned and possibly get me thrown in the brig. At this point, I was beginning to learn that some superior officers were only that because of Congress which was made up of a large number of idiots just like themselves. The following week I was in Tank School.

## The Gunner

Before we went to Nam, we were required to go through Staging Battalion, which to me was "ITR redux." The only dif

>>



ference was that we were entertained by getting to watch a white rabbit get murdered (we didn't even get to eat him) and play prison camp. We were encouraged to escape but not allowed to. We got to eat unseasoned white rice (with no rabbit) and listen to some NCO attempting to interrogate us into becoming good communists. Such fun! But the thing I remember most was the Gunner.

When the training platoon formed up, the senior man became the CO. The Gunner was our senior man. Our first formation, he tells us a little about himself. He had been in the Corps awhile. He'd been a para-Marine and made a landing on Tulagi Island during the Guadalcanal campaign. He came down from the Chosin Reservoir in Korea and now was on his way to his third war.

He advised us that he had no problem with us doing what we wanted on our own time, but if we screwed up in any way or fashion on his time, our asses would be his. Now the thing that truly amazed me was, in spite of his advanced years (he had to be at least 40 years old), he was extremely fit. His utility uniform was always starched, though two shades of green lighter than ours. His brass was well polished and his boots spit shined to perfection. His hair was in a permeant crew cut that he had worn since bootcamp in 1941. A prefect Marine. Except for one oddball thing: He had the hairiest ears I have ever seen on a human being. At least 2 inches long on both inside and out (ears that is). I've never seen any grooming regs that cover ears so I assume that this was OK. Of course, the only people who might call him on this might be some old generals who we still had in the Corps and who had served in WW2. Any other officer, he's have taken to the woodshed.

As it was, us young enlisted men were in awe of him. As I remember, he was a combat engineer so the poem I heard when I was a kid may have been written for him:

*The engineers have hairy ears.  
They live in caves and ditches.  
They knock their jocks  
Against the rocks.  
Them hearty sons of bitches.*

Wasn't the Marine Corps great fun?

### The Christmas Patrol 1967

The light section of 2nd Platoon, Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks had been at "C-4" for about a month. The combat base was brand new and we had spent most of the time digging two enfilade positions by hand and filling the sand into sandbags.

The Christmas Truce was in effect when some enemy activity was noted north of C-4, up near what was called "Oceanview." Several amtracs from Cu Viet came up the beach and mounted up with C Co, 1/3 (or infantry at C-4) and our two tanks.

I've already written the story of trying to swim a tank with the driver's hatch open and I won't repeat it as it still a bit embarrassing. Suffice it to say that I drove this "combat" patrol soaking wet, with the escape hatch sitting on the right fender and my ass hanging out in the breeze.

We moved north with a lot of stop and go. A lot of radio traffic about this and that, and one of the Piper Cub spotter planes flying up and down the line of vehicles as we moved north. Now here is the weird thing about the plane, every so often he threw out some "Chui Hoi" pamphlets and the whole time, playing the Christmas carol, "The First Noel" on his external loudspeaker. To me it was something like the movie, "Apocalypse Now." I don't think that there are many of us whose PTSD can be triggered by a Christmas carol, but there are some from this patrol.

Well, it didn't take long before some of the amtracs found a mine (one of several billion) and blew his track and wounded a couple of grunts. They were medevacked and the rest of us waited while the wounded track was taken in tow. Then we turned around and returned back to C-4.

Now the whole time that we had been at C-4, we lived on C-rats. But when we got back, there was a whole Christmas dinner waiting for us! Amazing! Even some mail! Santa Clause had arrived? Of course, I spent the next day pulling and cleaning the batteries and drying all the water that was left.

# A Marine and His Rifle

THOUGHTS FROM 1966 - 2023  
BY THEODORE HILDABRAND



The Marine as a rifleman is an axiom. That is our primary MOS. Marines develop a close relationship to their rifle. That is engrained in Basics and in all facets of ITR and similar training for combat. Considering all the above then that is what motivates me to express my opinion and experiences from my history via this writing.

Obviously to a great degree venting!

M1 Garand aka the Magnificent One

General George Patton called it "one of the greatest battle implements ever devised." I have a significant story line to the Garand and its sibling M14. I was introduced to the Garand in August of 66 right out of Marine bootcamp during ITR (Infantry Training Regiment). We spent an entire 12 weeks training, shooting, cleaning and disassembling / assembling that great rifle the M14, Sib of the Garand, in basic training. In ITR we used the Garand as the M14s were all extensively engaged in Vietnam. It had that lovely heft and feel as the M14. Both used great 30 caliber cartridges the 30-06 and the 7.62 NATO / 308 W.

It is just this old Marine's humble opinion the M1 / Magnificent One is America's Rifle. Mostly as this is the historical rifle that helped us win WW2 against the Axis Powers of Germany / Japan. Then again providing magnificent service in Korea. Some could make a strong argument that the Springfield 03 and its variants are also America's Rifle. It came out in WW1 and served admirably in WW2. Versions of that rifle in a sniper platform were still in use in 1966 in Vietnam. That is a long and great historical military service precedent.

The media idiot working for Senator Feinstein that took the "AR" acronym from the Stoner Rifle tied to ArmaLite Rifle (AR) into Assault Rifle is probably still patting their self on the back. A very similar labeling was done by a similar media idiot from the NRA calling it America's Rifle.

Absolutely no good tie to American history but media and politics. We don't casually give that label "America", but it was done. It is now etched into media BS history.

The Stoner ArmaLite Rifle / AR should never be called America's rifle because of its horrible historical failure on introduction into combat service in 1967. All based on the pressure by another idiot, Robert S. McNamara / SOD (Secretary of Defense). That man should have never been SOD. He by passed the Joint Chief's and forced the introduction of this rifle prematurely. I'm convinced that money passing through hands was a factor. However, the final blame in history falls on JFK and LBJ. Both tied their administration to McNamara SOD. That is their failure. The cartridge that the M16 used was also a significant compromise. Designed for 300 meters, it was a significant compromise to our historical 30 caliber cartridges. That became readily apparent when we used the M16 in the Middle East. We were engaged in combat at distances well beyond the 223R range of 300 meters. The 223R is a great varmint cartridge, but it was never a good military combat option. Read the history! Even the subsequent 5.56 NATO was a compromise for military ammunition. All the Marine armors and other military branches were scratching to find some M14s. However, McNamara made that a difficult option because he forced the scraping of the majority of those great rifles in 1967-68. What a horrible legacy McNamara has!

"ArmaLite's" Stoner Rifle AR History

I lived that history. It was a shock to us in the Marine Corps in 1967. It still is! We were all dumb struck at the introduction of this rifle. There was no leeway for commentary. That was and is the responsibility of the Senior Commanding Officers. There were some officers that bucked that introduction, but all were severely beaten down by Westmoreland and his immediate subordinates. >>





Some NCOs did express concern but questioning decisions of command under combat operations leaves little and no real room for dissent. Great officers listen to their NCOs and vice versa. So, it is just the same in life!

Marines died in combat for no logical reason due to the failure of that rifle. I have told all of you this history before. However, I read this article in Leatherneck this year. It places the whole subject of this rifle's service and my comments into a better historical perspective.

So please read the attached. There are several salient points: <https://bzohistory.com/knife-in-a-gunfight/>

In the above linked article in early April 1967 a desperate Marine with a failed M16 resorts to the use of a Ka-Bar to defend himself. Hearing and seeing his fellow Marines unmercifully being shot by the enemy. Then he attacks the enemy with his Ka-Bar to rescue his friend and others. A knife in a gun fight!

The salient points are obvious in that the SOD / McNamara ordered a transition of rifles under the stress of combat. That was a crazy and awkward order. The SOD was a mathematician with no real good military experience. JFK / LBJ allowed him to bypass the Joint Chiefs in managing the war in Vietnam. Westmoreland was more focused on politics than military strategy and tactics. The result was dead Marines and other military personnel due to the failure of this M16 rifle. A sad commentary for McNamara / Westmoreland but more so for the families of our dead military personnel.

Another salient point struck immediately when I read this article. The date and timing of the combat activity where the M16 failed Charlie Company 1/9 was in early April 1967. Their rifle transition was in March 1967. Our M14s for M16s were transitioned around late May / June

1967. So, the Post Action Reports for Charlie 1/9 Marines M16 rifle failure had to have reached the US Marine Corps Senior Command before late May. So, despite the proven failure of the M16 in early April the Senior Command was still forcing the rifle transition within combat operations. I subsequently received three M16 rifles before the Marine Corps and our country gave me a rifle that functioned. I had no idea until reading this article with dates and timing that I was issued the M16 rifle after it was proven to fail in early April 67. Nobody can convince me that the word about this rifle's failure was a known factor by the Marine Corps Senior Command in late May 67. Even then there was Scuttle Butt (Marine Corps rumors) about the poor performance and failure of the M16. The word of mouth, aka "Scuttle Butt", is a rapid means of communication. Faster than the written word!

The other obvious salient point was the close tie and friendship that the Marine in this story, James Stogner, had with his senior NCO Elijah Fobbs. All established via training and service history! The US Marine Corps is not perfect, but we bleed green. There is significant respect within the Corps irrespective of your race or culture. There is no room for anything but respect. So even today in 2000 – 2023 when I see and observe bigotry it upsets me. Bigotry whether it be racial, cultural or religious is intolerable in America. Bigotry is just another sophisticated form of Bullying. If you see it, you must force action to stop it. This is America and not the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and other areas where bigotry is even more of a problem. There is no tolerance for bigotry in America. So that salient point really shines through when I read this article. Hopefully you have the same response and recognition.

Semper Fi, Ted

## To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

"They say you die twice. One time when you stop breathing and a second time, a bit later on, when somebody says your name for the last time."—Banksy

### Louis Franklin Ryle Sr 1947– 2024



Louis Franklin Ryle Sr., of Lovelock, passed away on January 28, 2024, after a 1.5-year battle with lung cancer. Louie was born on March 19, 1947, to Russell Sr. and Juanita Ryle in Lovelock, NV. In 1966, he was drafted into the US Marine Corps. After graduating from boot camp, he went to Vietnam, Bravo Company 3rd Tank BN

from 1966–1968. While in Vietnam, his tank B-25 was ambushed and was shoot with an RPG. He was the only survivor of B-25 and received the Purple Heart. The USMC Vietnam Tanker Association has called him a "hero" for

his acts of valor for trying to save is crew and the grunts around him that day.

After coming home from Vietnam and getting discharged from the USMC, he got his first job as a welder and diesel mechanic in Reno, NV and started Cash Welding in Reno 1970. He later moved the business to Lovelock, NV in 1974. He always had a passion for fast cars, diesels and welding. In 1968, he met and fell in love with Leana. They were married in 1969 and were with each other through all of life's ups and downs.

Louie and Leana would go on to have two children, Little Louie, Shannon, and Donnie Brown Jr, that he considered to be his son. Louie was a wonderful and devoted father, husband, and teacher. He always taught us to nothing in life is free, always do the right thing and supported us all throughout the many accomplishments and difficulties of our lives. ■

Photo from  
Vietnam

Grunts move past an abandoned tank



### Your Attention Please!

We would greatly appreciate it that if you recognize a name in the obits that you, please send us an email note or give us a phone call telling us about the recently departed Marine. Anything that you recall might be posted so that others will know that he is remembered by others... plus we will have another record of his memory.



1969—USMC and Army Photos in Random AP News Pics from Flickr



1/1st Cav 1968



Marines leaving Vandegrift in 1969



USMC tank taken with 101st Airborne troops during Operation Apache Snow, 1969



11th ACR during 1969



Same tank, taken with 101st Airborne troops during Operation Apache Snow, 1969



1st Tanks 1969



Looking at the gun tube of the last tank in the column it is an M-67A2 Flame-thrower tank



C Company, 1st Tanks 1969

## What is the Marine's so-called 'Old Corps'?

It's a story as old as the military: someone always had it worse, things were harder, and that never happened back when [insert random old guy on Facebook] was in. That thought process isn't unique to the U.S. Marine Corps, but they labeled Marines who think that way as the 'old corps.'

But what exactly is the old corps? It's a loaded title that can mean a lot of different things, but boiled down to the basics, it's a general distrust of younger generations because they have it easier or the training is soft nowadays.

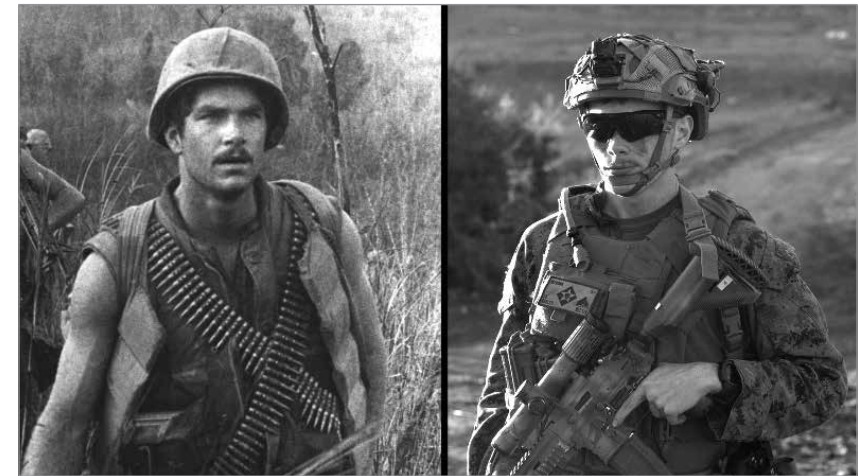
"As far as I can tell, the old corps is anything that happened before today. I think that every Marine seems to think that what they went through was the old corps," said Maximilian Uriarte, creator of the hit webcomic "Terminal Lance." "The nature of the military, it's this cyclical thing where you have new people coming in all the time. Whatever they went through in boot camp is nothing like what you went through when you went to boot camp."

Why? Because they are old corps. Max Uriarte joined the Marine Corps in 2006 with a 0351 MOS and went on to deploy to Iraq twice while assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment out of Hawaii. He, almost by definition, is old corps. His regiment is deactivated, his MOS is no longer active, and he has two combat deployments. Uriarte pointed to one of his webcomics titled "Old Timer" as an example of how some Marines look at other devil dogs as 'old corps.'

The old corps term can be as simple as the spirit behind razzing your fellow Marine, or outside of the Marine Corps, your fellow veterans. Uriarte said there are harmless aspects to the 'old corps' mindset, like a rigid flat top haircut or how new Marines look up to the older, more experienced Marines. The term can be used to describe the appearance of a hard-charging Marine. But, there are more toxic aspects to the old corps mindset as well.

"Personally, I think, in general, it's a toxic thing. It is what it is," Uriarte said. "I don't necessarily think it's like the worst thing in the world. I do think that it tends to come up in toxic discourse more often than not."

An active-duty Marine Corps officer who is not autho-



rized to speak on the record has been around several changes in the Marine Corps, including the integration of women into combat arms. She is an engineer and was one of the first women to work with infantry Marines.

"I got to work in my MOS and blow a lot of things up; I learned a lot there," the Marine

said. "I worked with the infantry really close. I was one of the first females to go there, and I encountered a lot of resistance, a lot of old corps thinking."

She went on to help implement that integration and while leading a training program, she started getting calls from random Marines that questioned her ability to achieve physical training numbers, like 20 pullups.

"These are Marines that would call me. I was a major at the time, and they'd be like, 'Major [name]?' I'd say 'yes, this is her,'" the Marine said. They would say "You don't know me, but I'm staff sergeant or sergeant so and so, and I was just wondering, you know, I read an article that said you could do 20 pull-ups can you do 20 in a row, or is that like five sets of five?"

She was later challenged about being able to do pull-ups based on just being an officer. But she and many other women in the military have proved they are very capable. The Marine said she believes the definition of 'old corps' is "simply a preference for how things used to be done around here."

Maximilian "Max" Uriarte during a 2007 deployment to Iraq. He said it's important to note he's in a flight suit because it was back in the pre-FROG suit days. (Photo courtesy of Maximilian Uriarte).

From moving away from rolled sleeves to campaign covers for female Marine drill instructors or even changing to brown suede boots instead of the traditional black leather boots that required hand polishing. It wasn't just men pushing back, though. Female drill instructors used to have a scarlet cord that signified their role, whereas male drill instructors had a campaign cover. When that was changed, female drill instructors wanted to keep their hard-earned scarlet cords. But, in the end, there's not an old corps, or a new corps, just the Marine Corps.

>>





The Marine said one of her captains recently pointed out to her what they thought was a problem within the ranks. "He said that the problem with Marines is they don't like the status quo, but they also don't like change. I would agree because we'll bitch and bitch and bitch and complain about the status quo, but when it comes time to make a change, we will resist it just as fiercely, if not more, so," the Marine said. "I think part of the reason is we know that, like all progress, requires change, but not all change is progress."

She said the Marine Corps hasn't always been effective in announcing and explaining changes to their Marines. A fear of the unknown and hesitation about change being helpful can lead to Marines resisting it. But, like the removal of tanks and Scout Snipers from the Marine Corps, change

is inevitable and will likely continue as long as the military exists in order to keep pace with the evolution of warfare.

Both Uriarte and the female Marine said the 'old corps' mentality will likely never go away. They pointed out that some traditions, like the Marine Corps birthday celebration, aren't bad and are actually a great way to boost morale.

"I think it's okay to be skeptical but to be outright defiant, to stick your head in the sand, I think it's not helpful," said the Marine. "I think the issue, it really comes down to cohesion. If you don't include and accept all members of your team, train them as a team, develop their weaknesses, and highlight their strengths, you're not going to be as effective, right? So, it's all about cohesion." ■

### Photo from Vietnam

MCB Quantico, Virginia, Fall of 1969. Some of us played the part of VC. Smiling villagers at first and then into tunnels firing at the Marines with blank firing adapters. Vietnamese wives and children of Marines on base volunteered to act as villagers. Realistic training.



USMC VTA 2024 MINI-REUNION

SEPT 13 – 15, 2024

Fort Benning (Fort Moore), GA

Hampton Inn, Columbus, GA

Please Print All

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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.

Please note that this is a mini-reunion for three days. We will not be conducting any special evernts other than visiting the US Army Armor Collection and the US Army Tank Restoration Project and a catered dinner at the Infantry Museum on the last evenings. All other meals will be on your own.

To cover the bus transportation and Slopchute beverages, please pay: \$25 per person.  
Mail completed form and your reunion registration check to:

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



It's Just 6 Months Before We Reunite In Georgia!!!

2024 Mini-Reunion – We are going to (again) visit Columbus, Georgia in September 2024.

We have been invited to visit a brand new (and yet not open to the public) Tank Collection at Ft Benning (aka Fort Moore). If you remember, back in 2018, we conducted our first (ever) mini-reunion where we visited the (now closed) USMC Tank School and a very special Tank Restoration Project located at Ft Benning. While we were there, we learned that the Tank Restoration Project was being conducted with the idea that the US Army would eventually open a massive and all-inclusive Armor Museum. Many of the tanks have now been fully restored and are housed in a very large building on the Army base.

One very interesting point was the fact that the Tank Restoration Project has at least one of every tank that was ever produced at any time, by any nation in the world. The one and only exception is a tank that was produced by the Nazi during WW-2 which is the super-heavy "Panzer VIII Maus" tank. We understand that only five of those German monster tanks were ever produced and only one survived after the war. That one and only model is now housed in the Russian Tank Museum in Kubinka.

This September when we visit Ft Moore, we will see a very impressive collection of international armored vehicles. Another interesting note is that the M-4 Sherman tank had 19 variants built over the years. The collection will have one of each variant. Below is a photo images of some of the restored tanks.

The mini-reunion hotel will be the Hampton Inn (2870 Lumpkin Road, Columbus, GA 31903) where we stayed in 2018. The dates for our gathering are September 12 – 15, 2024. The special hotel room rate is \$139+ tax per night with a free breakfast each morning.

More details on the last pages of this issue...

U.S. Army Armor & Cavalry Collection



2024 Mini Reunion  
Ft Moore, Columbus, GA  
Sept. 12th to 15th

Schedule of Events

Thursday, Sept. 12th

Arrival Day–Dinner on your own.

Friday, Sept. 13th

0700 – Complimentary Breakfast

0900 – Load buses for tour of the Tank Collection

1200 – Lunch on your own at the base PX

1400 – Return to hotel

1800 – Dinner at hotel paid by the VTA

Saturday, Sept 14th

0700 – Complimentary Breakfast

0900 – Load buses for tour of the Tank Restoration Project

1200 – Lunch on your own at the base PX

1400 – Return to hotel

1500 – Tour Infantry Museum on your own.

1800 – Dinner at the Infantry Museum paid by the VTA.

Sunday Sept 15th

Departure Day

Travel Suggestion:

Fly to Atlanta–(ATL) Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

Go on line to arrange for limo / bus to drive the 1–1/2 hours from ATL to Columbus (\$49 each way) from:

Gromme Transportation

2800 Harley Court

Columbus, GA 31909

Phone: 706.324.3939

Email: columbusoffice@groometrans.com

Website: <https://groometransportation.com/>

In order to get the \$49 one-way (\$98 round trip) fair, you have to book on line and not on the telephone.

OR you can possibly book a flight to Columbus, Georgia. You will have a short layover in Atlanta (ATL) and fly on Delta Connector from ATL to Columbus (CSG). There is no hotel shuttle. The hotel is 15 minutes from the airport. Uber or a taxi can be hired to provide transportation.

Lodging:

Hampton Inn – Columbus South – Ft Moore

2870 South Lumpkin Road

Columbus, GA 31903

706.660.5550

Special Room rate: \$139 per night + taxes, etc.

Rate includes:

Two queen beds

Free breakfast- Free Wi Fi–Free Parking

Room reservation cutoff date: 08/10/24

1. You can call the hotel direct at 706.660.5550 to make your room reservation by giving the agent our dates and the code: "USM"

2. Or you can book a room through this website link:  
<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/csgfbhx-usm-f32c51f1-44f3-47f1-bad9-332b724244cc/>

Please note: This mini-reunion requires all attendees to fill out a reunion registration form and to pay a \$25 registration fee per attendee to help defray the cost of the tour bus transportation; the beverages in the Slopchute and the dinner for two evenings.



**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**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 "23" or lower your 2024 membership dues are now past due. .

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.

