



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



Featured Stories

- It Came Down to One Marine 34
- The CID Man 36
- LCpl Joseph M Pignato 40
- Tanks for the Memories 43

As a follow up to the story that was in the most recent issue of the Sponson Box, *We Lost Some Brave Men That Day* by Ted Hildebrand that was about the 1st Tanks Reactionary Platoon of which several members were mowed down by a VC machine gun in February 1968...

Below is a page from the memorial program that was held at 1st Tank Bn. The original document is archived in the Al Grey Memorial Library at the Marine Corps University at MCB Quantico, VA.

IN MEMORIAM

Corporal James Lee FUCHS, USMC 2535 3254
Vermillion, South Dakota

Sergeant James SAFRHANS, USMC 217 9094
Chicago, Illinois

Lance Corporal Wayne S GREER, USMC 228 0996
Trafford, Pennsylvania

Corporal Michael Wayne JOHNS, USMC 214 7162
Andalusia, Alabama

Corporal Gregory H LUNDE, USMC 231 3777
Westhope, North Dakota

On the afternoon of 6 February 1968 these men of
Headquarters and Service Company, FIRST TANK BATTALION,
gave their lives while serving their country.

The Greatest Tank Battles - Vietnam

Editor's Note: As many of the attendees of the 2011 San Diego reunion know, a Canadian television production company from the Military History Channel was in attendance taping interviews with our members for a planned series called, "The Greatest Tank Battles, Vietnam." This past October, I asked the production company for an update on the television program. Here is their reply:

"Yes, we've got 2 episodes out of the 6 we're doing that focus on Vietnam. Still working out which stories go in which episode, so I don't really have any synopses to offer yet, but once I do (probably later in November), I'll send them to you. I can tell you that, right now, it looks like we're doing scenes about Starlite, Buffalo, Hue, Lang Vei, Allen Brook, Task Force Robbie, Ben Het and probably a couple others.

The broadcast situation, however, is that so far (the United States) Military Channel has not picked up the 3rd season of the series for air. It will air in Canada in the spring and in most other countries in Europe, etc, sometime around then as well. I'll let you know if/when we have any movement with a US broadcast. Of course, I'll also have DVDs for all of you guys who were generous with giving us an interview!"

There was an entry in the Guest book of our website that was from a young man looking for someone who may have known his recently departed father...

"My dad rarely spoke about his time in Vietnam and my mom only shared a few stories with me from letters he had written to her while he was there. My dad passed in '97 and my mom passed in '00 so I'd like to connect with anyone who knew him and can tell me more. The main reason for this request is that I have a son who just turned two years old and we have another child due to arrive next month. I'd like to tell them about their grandfather's service in the Marine Corps when they are old enough to ask questions about him and about his sword that hangs over the fire place, and about the Eagle Globe and Anchor that hangs on the wall."

My immediate reply to this young father was that we will post his request and make an attempt to help him in his search to find more about his father's service to our country. Then I got to thinking about what this young man is trying to accomplish and how simple it would have been if his own father had not been so reluctant and had been a bit more giving by retelling his family some of his wartime experiences when he was still alive.

Personally, I think that it is so wrong for us to leave Mother Earth without detailing one of the most important times in a military veteran's life. I do think that some of our story might be a bit painful for us to recall, and it does take a lot of emotionally-charged work to dig up the ghosts of our past, to dust them off and to make the supreme effort to write them down. It is not that difficult, but the effort simply has to be made. Deluding yourself by saying, "Maybe one day..." will eventually give you the result that Roger J. Berger gave his son...a big fat zero. What a crying shame that turned out to be.

Semper Fidelis,

John

"Old breed? New breed? There's not a damn bit of difference so long as it's the Marine breed."

Lt. Gen. "Chesty" Puller.



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New Members for 2013 – 1st Sponson Box

Buttstadt, Karl G.

125 Serenity Drive
Boerne, TX 78006
Phone: (830) 331-9119
B & C Co’s, 1st Tanks, ‘69 – ‘70
MOS: 1811
DOB: 9/23/48
Wife: Mary Jo
Recruited by: Harold Riensche

Hermes, Michael R

3176 Atwell Ave
The Villages, FL 32163
Phone: (352) 350-6330
H&S Co, 1st Tanks, ‘66 – ‘67
MOS: 0141 / 0300
DOB: 10/11/46
Wife: Susan
Recruited by: Joe Vernon

Hughes, Merritt “Duke” G.

7031 SE Tuscany Way
Portland, OR 97267
Phone: (503) 513-0621
A Co, 3rd Tanks, ‘68
MOS: 1811
DOB: 2/22/48
Wife: Patti
Recruited by: Fred Kellogg, Jr.

Maddox, Gerald W.

3120 Oak Ridge Court
Montgomery, AL 36109
Phone: (334) 396-4055
C Co, 3rd Tanks, ‘66 – ‘67
MOS: 1811
DOB: 1/15/46
Wife: Linda
Recruited by: Wally Young

Raby, Howard A.

2633 Vernon Street
North Kansas City, MO 64116
Phone: (816) 221-6281
C Co, 3rd ATs, ‘65
MOS: 0353
DOB: 3/22/45
Wife: Sharon
Recruited by: Returning member

Sanders, Joe P.

4007 Gyrfalcon Dr
Norman, OK 73072-8185
Phone: (405) 294-0033
C Co, 3rd Tanks, ‘64 – ‘65
MOS: 1802
DOB: 3/1/34
Wife: Beverly
Recruited by: John Wear

Schossow, Harold A.

46502 – 525th Ave
Perham, MN 56573
Phone: (218) 346-3469
A Co, 3rd Tanks, ‘67 – ‘69
MOS: 1811
DOB: 7/10/49
Wife: Bonnie
Recruited by: Tom “Sparrow” Moad

Tannehill, Lee G.

1616 Montin Court
Walnut Creek, CA 94957
Phone: (925) 930-9389
H&S and A Co’s, 3rd Tanks, ‘65 – ‘66
MOS: 1811
DOB: 2/28/46
Wife: Candy
Recruited by: Harold Riensche

Thomas, James A.

1208 – 28th SE
Auburn, WA 98002
Phone: (253) 833-6125
B & C Co’s, 5th Tanks, ‘67 – ‘69
MOS: 1811
DOB: 9/11/46
Wife: Anita
Recruited by: John Wear

Turner, David C.

848 Hartzell Ave
Redlands, CA 92374
Phone: (909) 725-7491
A Co, 3rd Tanks, 1968
MOS: 1811
DOB:
Wife: Gayle
Recruited by: Website

Vernon, Joe

22828 W Sierra Ridge Way
Wittmann, AZ 85361
Phone: (530) 320-3601
H&S Co, 1st Tanks, ‘66
MOS: 0121
DOB: 9/18/46
Wife: Mary Ann
Recruited by: Bob Skeels and James Hutton

Whaley, Raymond C.


14733 Catlin Road
Orlando, FL 32838
Phone: (407) 282-1758
H&S and A Co’s, 1st ATs, 1968
MOS: 0353
DOB: 2/6/48
Wife: Charlotte
Recruited by: Returning member

Please note: Most of these new members were recruited through a joint effort. The recruiters called or emailed John Wear or “Robbie” Robinson and the perspective member had a membership packet sent to them. The packet that was mailed included a sample of the Sponson Box news magazine, a membership application and a letter asking them to join. Anyone who knows a perspective member, please alert either Robbie or John.

ON THE COVER:

“We are on-loadingw tanks of the 1st Tank Battalion in the harbor in Okinawa. This photo was taken in May or June of 1965 just prior to our deployment to Vietnam. The ship that we came over on was the LSD 33 - USS Alamo.”

Photos taken by and submitted by Lee Tannehill



Letter to the Editor

An apology to Terry Hunter

In the first issue of the Sponson Box for 2012 there was an article, “Conversations about Operation Buffalo.” In one of those conversations was an email exchange between Hank Brightwell and me. We were joking back and forth and I think that the email was inadvertently published. In the email I said to Hank, “Terry was in his driver’s seat licking his wounds.”

I have to say that this was not (and will never be) my opinion of Terry. I had no intention of embarrassing him in public. Terry is a fine Marine and a very good friend. All three of us (Hank, Terry and I) were outside of our tank in a very hostile situation, loading wounded and dead Marines onto our tank and connecting the one and only tow cable to our broken down tank so we could be pulled out of the DMZ. With all of my heart, I offer my apology to Terry for the gaff in the article and for taking so long to get this into the Sponson Box.

Greg Martin
Olympia, WA
Phone: (360) 480-1206

Found on Facebook

My moment was in 2007. While I was working at the parts counter at McGuire’s Harley Davidson in Walnut Creek (CA). I had just finished ringing out a customer when he asked me if I had been in Vietnam. I said, “Yes.” He then told me, “Welcome Home.” I was stunned. I managed to thank him for his service as well. As in the video clip, it took another vet to recognize my service. Whether or not the situation in Viet Nam was to prop up a U.S.-approved despot or to prevent all of Southeast Asia to fall to communism is for others to decide. Right or wrong, America called and we answered. Some of us came home in a flag draped casket. Some were MIA and we may never know their end. Some of us are still fighting the demons that haunt us. Some of us control the demons but they make their presence known constantly. We came home from the horrors of war to be called “Baby Killers” and to be spat on. The Veteran’s Administration, who should have been supportive, ignored us. Do I sound angry? I have forgiven but I will never forget. Since my moment I thank EVERY vet for their service.

David Lowery, a friend of VTA member Dennis Brummitt

An Interesting Phone Conversation

I am in the process of helping Clyde Hoch, a brother Vietnam Marine tanker, with a book project where he is seeking “war stories” from Marine tankers from WW2 up until today

I recall hearing at the 2003 Seattle reunion that some of the Marine reserve tank companies had done a bang up job during “Desert Storm.” So, I put in a call to the 4th Tank Bn. HQS in San Diego to speak to the CO and/or the Sgt. Major (both of whom I met during our 2011 reunion in San Diego). During

my phone call I discovered that the CO had been transferred to a new command and that the Sgt. Major was TAD until the following Tuesday.

I did, however, get to speak to a Master Gunnery Sergeant who said that he had been a buck sergeant tank commander during “Desert Storm.” One of the references that the Master Guns sited was a book titled, “Dial 9-1-1 Marines.” He said that this book has a lot of really great accounts about Marine tanks during “Desert Storm.” When the conversation got to Afghanistan, I told him about a personal experience that I recently had with the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. About two months ago, I was attending a memorial service here in PA that had a large contingent of active duty Marines as well as many Marine veterans. I was wearing a USMC Vietnam Tanker cover and a VTA golf shirt, and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps actually walked right up to me, shook my hand and said, “You’re a Marine tanker? Our tanks in Afghanistan are kicking some serious butt!”

Yesterday, after I told the Master Guns about my experience in PA, he then told me about how for the longest time the USMC begged the brass in the Pentagon for permission to deploy tanks in Afghanistan, but I believe that he said that it was Gen. McCrystal who fought the USMC request tooth and nail. The Commanding General’s point of view was that, in order to combat an insurgency, you did not deploy tanks and other heavy weapons, but you followed “The USMC Small Wars Manual” and dedicated all of your resources to working directly with the civilians to purge the bad guys through civil action and not through heavy combat. As an aside, I truly wonder where the heck we got such ill-advised general officers who did not believe in winning a war at all costs. Anyway, the Master Guns said that when the POTUS finally fired Gen. McCrystal, the new command in-country said, “You want tanks? Bring ‘em on!” And he echoed the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps’ view that our tanks are kicking some serious butt. The Master Guns also claimed that he was the SNCO in charge of the effort to get the tanks in-country. Ooo-Rah!!!

John Wear
New Hope, PA
Phone: (215) 794-9052

Another Shitfister Tale of Woe

Some time in 1969 on Hill 10, Bravo Company, 1st Tanks Maintenance Shop had a tank red-lined since it wouldn’t start. We figured that it was due to low batteries. The tank’s crew had all gone out for the day and we needed to get a jump start for the downed tank. Luckily, amtracs were right next to where we were so I went down to see if I could get help with our jump start. The mechanic for amtracs said, “No problem.” He fired up an amtrac and drove it over to give me a hand. He had to make a

4 Sponson Box / USMC Vietnam Tankers Association 2013 January • February • March

2013 January • February • March Sponson Box / USMC Vietnam Tankers Association 5

180 degree turn around to align the receptacles to start the tank. While making the turn around, his engine died and his amtrac started rolling down hill towards my platoon’s hooches. I started screaming for him to stop, but he told me he didn’t have any brakes!!! When his vehicle finally stopped, he had demolished three of our hooches. Needless to say, I caught hell when the boys came back.

Ira “Buck” McQuade
Bravo “1-45” 1st Tk. Bn.
R.V.N. 1968/1969
Indianapolis, IN
Phone: (317) 356-2158

“Hell Is Upon Us”

It is an excellent book, John. Thanks for recommending it.
Bruce & Nancy Van Apeldoorn
73 Stanton Street
Rochester, NY 14611
Phone: (585) 613-6564

Apricots Anyone?

In a past issue of the Sponson Box, you asked if any of us had any stories about apricots. Well I remember one and it really hammered home the “bad luck” tag that apricots had. So here goes:
We were sitting up at Con Thien one hot and dusty day during the summer of ‘67 when two of our tanks were called out (probably a road sweep). One of the grunts going along was a “new guy” and was just opening a can of apricots when I and a couple of others told him to stop, and tried to explain to him that eating apricots was very bad luck. I think his reaction was something like “bullshit...I don’t believe in fucking superstitions!” He went on and ate the apricots, then jumped up onto the rear of the tank and they proceeded out. They didn’t even make it off the hill when a mortar round landed right on the poor son of a bitch and blew him to pieces. The story quickly spread over the hill.

I remember my thoughts at the time. To that point I had believed in this superstition, but occasionally thought it might be bunk. After that poor grunt was taken out, I really became a total believer!

I wonder if anyone else who reads this was up there at that time and remembers this incident. Anyway, it’s the God’s honest truth.
Greg Kelley
Alpha 24, 3rd Tanks
Groveland, MA
Phone: (978) 521-1392

Editor’s Note: If you have a personal story about apricots, please submit it to me.

A Tanker Found!

My son, Fred Jr., was on a radio call a couple of days ago and was dispatched to this address. During my son’s time there, the man of the house happened to see my son’s name tag and asked:
“Do you know Fred Kellogg?” - Yes.
“Fred Kellogg from the Marines?” - Yes

“Fred Kellogg from tanks?” - Yes
“Fred Kellogg who was in Vietnam?” - Yes
After a while my son began to wonder who this guy was and the conversation began. The man is Duke Hughes and we were in Schools BN. together, Vietnam, 3rd Tanks, at the same time, etc. His home mailing address is: 7031 SE Tuscany Way, Portland, OR 97267

Fred Jr. really took a liking to the guy and told him about the USMCVTA, fired up the guy’s home computer to show him the website, and told him all about us. Duke had no idea the organization existed and would love a packet sent to his home so he could join. He said he’s never had anyone to talk to from tanks and is quite excited.

Fred Kellogg, Sr
Vancouver, WA
Phone: (360) 609-3404

Editor’s note: Duke is now a proud member of the VTA!

Memories of Vietnam

Ed’s Note: I have a good buddy who was a grunt with both the 26th and then the 5th Marines in-country in 1969. He is also a recently retired middle school teacher. He sent this Nam tale to me.

Banh xeo is a traditional Vietnamese crepe that is made with chicken, pork, or shrimp and vegetables. When I was in Vietnam, there was this older woman who looked about 80 years old, even though she was probably only 50. Her teeth were all gone from chewing beetle nut and her gums were black. She had a little roadside stand on Highway 1 just south of Da Nang where she would turn out these crepes by the hundreds everyday. When I became an NCO, I would have to take frag orders, money orders, personal effects and various other documents back and forth to 1st Marine Division HQ. We would always jump off the truck, give her a big kiss, tell her she was “Numba 1”, and then give her a few extra MPC (military payment certificates). She in turn would fill our crepes up. Other guys who were waiting in line would be yelling, “WTF?” We would start laughing and tell them that we were better looking and that were going to marry her daughters. The father of one of my recent former students owns a Vietnamese restaurant not far from me. The daughter, Hanna, is always there. My wife and I ate at the restaurant this past Friday night. Guess what I had? I also had a leftover crepe for breakfast today. They are so good! I do not have many great memories from the “Nama Rama” but this is certainly one of them.

Jim McPeak
0311 with 2/26 and 3/5
Newtown, PA

From Sgt Grit’s

My first tour in-country was with 11th Marines, May of ‘66 - July ‘67; we were part of 11th Provisional Gun Battery. We had two 8” and two 155 guns as we pulled out of Chu Lai to An Hoa. Then, just after Tet, we became “Roving Guns” made up of one 8”, one 155, two M-60 tanks, a platoon of grunts from 5th Marines, a couple of squads of ARVN’s and two Kit Carson scouts. We

roamed the Nan Song coal mines and through Elephant Valley. We had some hairy times that were made better by some of the shit we pulled off... to break the tension.

Capt. T. L. Johnson, Jr.
United States Marine Corps (Ret.)

Editor’s note: It appears to me that the good captain does not know his tanks from a hole in the ground!!!

Another From Sgt Grit’s

In response to Michael Bolenbaugh’s newsletter concerning flame tanks in Viet Nam, I was in flame tanks sent from Camp Hansen in Okinawa and landed in Chu Lai, Viet Nam in May of 1965. As I recall, the flame tank had a .50 cal. cupola mounted, a .30 cal. turret mounted, and the main flame tube. It was very similar to the M-48A3 gun tanks.

The flame tank had a crew of three. One of the interesting things about flame tanks is loading the napalm gas mixture into the main tank. In Viet Nam as in Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune, and Camp Hansen, we had a machine that would mix napalm and gas and pump it into the main tank. In Viet Nam, however, because of the heat, that machine usually never lasted long, so we had to mix it by hand in a 50 gal. drum with a paddle, and then load the mixture into the main tank using 5 gal. buckets. Quite an operation, plus the fact we smoked all the while doing this operation.

Cpl. Andre
USMC Flame Platoon
1962-1966

Another Great Issue of the Sponson Box

I just got back from salmon fishing and found my Sponson Box waiting for me. What a great issue! I really liked the “Looking For” section. This I feel goes to the heart of what we as this organization is all about. Keep up the good work. See you on the flight to San Antonio.

Bob “Vax” Vaxter
Belleville, MI
Phone: (734) 385-6395

And Another Great Issue of the Sponson Box

Even though you are an official senior now (Happy Belated Birthday, and would you like to borrow my Guide to Medicare?), you still put out an outstanding magazine. I wanted to especially complement you on the “Band of Brothers” article. Captain Root’s prayer was especially moving. His article told us facts that many of us may never have thought about. I scanned the article into my computer so I could share it with friends who were not tankers (and those who we are still trying to get to join the USMCVTA who I will mail the article to).

The other day, Harold and I were talking about the past, and we were trying to remember back about 44 years. Sgt. Jim Jewell’s name was mentioned when we talked to Al Soto on the phone last year, shortly after the reunion. Al Soto lives in San Antonio now but trying to find an anonymous “Soto” in San Antonio is like finding a needle in a hay stack. He said he lived in San Francisco for many years, but following his wife’s

death, he moved back to his hometown, San Antonio. We didn’t think to get his phone number and I see his name isn’t on the USMCVTA roster. Al Soto thought he knew where Jim Jewell lived, and he was going to try to locate him. Chris Vargo sent us a disk a few years ago with some photos, and I’ll attach two that show Al Soto and Jim Jewell. It would be great if someone could locate both of them.

Laura Riensche, proud wife of Harold Riensche
Reed Point, MT
Phone: (406) 326-2363



(L to R :) Mendez (his back is showing), Jewell, Darwin, Soto, Marrale, Gribble, Sanifer



TC “El Supremo” Soto and Unknown (loader)
Editor’s Note: Al Soto was a VTA member back in 2003 & 2004 when he worked for the U.S. Post Office in the San Francisco Bay Area. He was fairly active on email for awhile and then for one reason or another he just “fell off the face of the earth.” Another VTA member, who was living in South SF, was asked to go over to Soto’s home to see if he was okay. The next day the member reported back that Soto’s house was empty and there was no sign of him anywhere. We do not recall who it was that discovered Soto was living in Texas, but several attempts to contact him have failed. If you know how to get in touch with “El Supremo,” please let us

know. We’d love to see him in San Antonio.
Newsflash! Pete Ritch reports the he and his buddies have located Soto and he may be back in the ranks sooner than later!

TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN

I was talking to John Wear on the phone the other day and I mentioned that VTA member Greg Kelly was sick. He then asked me the nature of his illness and I was unable to answer his question as I had only talked to Greg’s wife and our conversation was brief. The reason for his inquiry was to send get well flowers from our Association. John later found out the situation was not really serious and all is well.

Several weeks later our organization mailed out a postcard informing us of VTA member Tom Clary’s devastating house fire that burned his house to the ground and destroyed everything that he and his wife, Nancy, owned...except the clothes on their backs. John followed up with an e-mail shortly after the postcard was mailed.

I want to tell everyone that I am a member of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Marine Division Associations, the Marine Corps League, Viet Now, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps Motor Transport Association, Marine Corps Tankers Association and, last but not least, our own USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. Out of all these Associations to the best of my knowledge, throughout the 20 years I have been an active member, I cannot recall any type of help like the USMCVTA does for one of our own.

Please be proud of our Association and its Board of Directors,

our President and all the people who work tirelessly to make our Association what it is today. Hand salute to you all and Semper Fi.

Ron Dudek
Lake Geneva, WI
Phone: (262) 275-5427

Tom Glisch in the Hospital

It’s been a long few days. Tom’s surgery went well. His cardiac surgeon was able to complete the by-pass, implant a new defibrillator/pacemaker, close a hole that he found and complete the maze surgery (including making one of the chambers smaller). The surgery took approximately 8.5 hours. Due to the length of the surgery, he is slightly behind schedule on what is planned for each day following. Yesterday A.M. they removed the breathing tube and gave Tom two units of blood. He was still very groggy yesterday, but they had him sitting up twice (once for an hour and a half) and they had him standing up but not walking. He also was started on soft foods.

Today, they plan is to remove the drainage tubes and have him up walking. He will probably be in ICU until Friday or Saturday. I will send you an e-mail when he is in a regular room and is able to get phone calls. We both appreciate everyone’s thoughts, prayers and support.

Jackie Glisch – The wife of Tom Glisch
Franklin, WI
Phone: (414) 421-3312
Email: j_glisch@yahoo.com

News flash! As of December 7th, Tom is now home & resting. Jackie asks that anyone who wants to speak to Tom please wait for Tom to call you. She says that he needs to get his strength back. ■

VIETNAM
SHORT ROUNDS

July 27, 1964: Pentagon announces 5,000 more troops to Vietnam

This brings the total number of U.S. forces in Vietnam to 21,000. Military spokesmen and Washington officials insisted that this did not represent any change in policy, and that new troops would only intensify existing U.S. efforts. However, the situation changed in August, 1964, when North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked U.S. destroyers off the coast of North Vietnam. What became known as the Tonkin Gulf Incident led to the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which passed unanimously in the House and 88 to 2 in the Senate. The resolution gave the president approval to “take all necessary measures to repel an armed

attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” Using the resolution, Johnson ordered the bombing of North Vietnam in retaliation for the Tonkin Gulf incident.

January 28, 1972: Nixon announces draftees will not go to Vietnam.

No more draftees will be sent to Vietnam unless they volunteer for such duty. He also announced that the forces of 10,000 troops would be withdrawn by September 1, which would leave a total of 39,000 in Vietnam.

August 20 1974: Military aid to Saigon slashed

In the wake of Nixon’s resignation, Congress reduces military aid to South

Vietnam from \$1 billion to \$700 million. This was one of several actions that signaled the North Vietnamese that the United States was backing away from its commitment to South Vietnam.

September 18, 1969: “March Against Death” to be held in Washington

Antiwar protestors announced that they will organize a 36-hour “March Against Death” to take place in Washington in November. There will be a simultaneous rally in San Francisco. This effort was led by Dr. Benjamin Spock and 10 other representatives of the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. ■

Above & Beyond 2012

We are extremely grateful to the following members who reached deep into their pockets and made an over and above financial contribution to the USMC VTA. Thank you very much. If we inadvertently missed someone who also participated in the financial well being of our organization, we humbly apologize for the omission and ask you to please notify us of our oversight.

Anderson, Andy
Anderson, Mark
Arena, Jack
Baccarie, John
Baldwin, Kent
Balleweg, Joe
Beirne, Richard
Bell, Donald
Belmessieri, Mike
Binion, Sammy
Bisbee, Bill
Blanchette, Eddie
Bonderud, Robert
Box, Frank
Brazeau, Max
Bruscha, Joe
Buttstadt, Karl
Byrne, John
Cassidy, Tom
Chinnis, Robert
Christy, Al
Clock, Darrell
Colucci, Ron
Cotton, Bill
Cox, John
Cummings, “Corky”
Curti, Steve
Dahl, Ken
Damschen, Mark
Davidson, Ron
DeRoma, Florindino
Donnelly, Justin
Duck, Eli
English, RB
Evans, Edgar
Everest, Guy
Farrell, Dan
Ferguson, Sid
Fischer, James
Fischer, Charles
Galusha, Danial
Gates, Robert
Gehrman, David

Goger, Fred
Griffith, Jeff
Gulbranson, Robert
Hackemack, Gene
Hall, Garry
Harper, John
Hefferman, John
Henderson, Rod
Hoekstra, Bev
Hollister, Gordon
Hunter, Dana
Hutchins, Glen
Jarnot, Fid
Jefferies, Brian
Jaurez, John
Kelley, Greg
Kellogg, Fred
Kilgore, Wes
Knox, Clyde
Kopf, Francis
Kues, Ed
Langford, Jim
Langley, Ric
Langlitz, Harlan
Lewis, Rick
Limanek, Pete
Littman, Jim
Lyon, Steve
Maddox, Gerald
Manson, James
Martin, Greg
Martin, Otis
Mattingly, Robert
McCabe, Mike
McCleery, Geary
Mefford, Gary
Monahan, Terry
Moreno, Armando
Nichols, Tim
Oswood, Rick
Owen, David
Parshall, Larry
Peksens, Richard

Peterson, Gary
Porier, Johnny
Raasch, Jim
Ralston, Dave
Remkiewicz, Frank
Riensche, Harold
Ritch, Peter
Roberts, Tom
Ruby, Chester
Russell, Dickie
Sanders, Joe
Santos, Landis
Sausoman, Jim
Schwartz, Ralph
Scrivner, Doug
Search, George
Sezar, Jerry
Sgt Grits
Shaw, Mike
Skinner, Steve
Stayton, Jim
Stokes, Robert
Summerlot, Terry
Thomas, Jim
Thompson, Dave
Tierney, Ed
Trower, John
Tunget, Ev
Turner, David
Tyson, Joe
Van Apeldoorn, Bruce
Vaughn, Michael
Venturi, Sonny
Wallace, Terry
Walters, David
West, Charles
Whitehead, Ken
Whittington, Herb
Williams, Stan
Wokaty, Dan
Anonymous
Zitz, Ken
Zoltek, Adam

William C. Bird

Home of record: Benton, Louisiana



Awards and Citations

Navy Cross

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to Private First Class William C. Bird (MCSN: 2449630), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism while serving as a Rifleman with Company E, Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, FIRST Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in the Republic of Vietnam on 15 May 1969. The First Platoon of Company E was assigned the mission of relieving a friendly unit heavily engaged in combat with a North Vietnamese Army battalion near An Hoa in Quang Nam Province. As the point squad of Company E crossed an open field, it came under a heavy volume of rocket and automatic weapons fire from a large hostile unit occupying well-camouflaged bunkers. Alertly observing two wounded Marines lying dangerously exposed to the enemy fire, Private First Class Bird, despite the intense volume of hostile rounds impacting near him, pulled his comrades to a position of relative safety. Reacting instantly, he fearlessly stood up and, effectively firing his M-16 rifle, provided enough covering fire to enable a Corpsman to reach the wounded Marines. Continuing to expose himself to the intense hostile fire, he delivered accurate covering fire for the Corpsman as he moved throughout the hazardous area and administered emergency medical treatment to all the wounded. At dusk, another reaction force and two supporting tanks were deployed from the company command post. Alertly

observing that the tank commanders were having difficulty discerning the enemy targets because of the approaching darkness, Private First Class Bird unhesitatingly climbed aboard the lead tank, despite the intense volume of enemy fire directed at him and, skillfully pointing out the hostile positions to the tank commander, was instrumental in bringing devastating fire to bear upon the enemy. As the platoon withdrew to a night defensive position, Private First Class Bird personally carried two wounded Marines to the friendly perimeter and subsequently assisted in loading the remainder of the casualties aboard the tanks for rapid evacuation. When an enemy rocket impacted on one of the tanks, seriously wounding the driver, Private First Class Bird positioned himself between the tank and the nearby hostile emplacement and, accurately firing his rifle, suppressed the enemy fire while the tank crew reorganized and continued firing. Private First Class Bird was directly responsible for saving the lives of six Marines. His courage, aggressive fighting spirit and unwavering devotion to duty upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service. **Action Date:** 15-May-69 **Service:** Marine Corps **Rank:** Private First Class **Company:** Company E **Battalion:** 2d Battalion **Regiment:** 5th Marines **Division:** 1st Marine Division (Rein.) FMF

ATTENTION GOLFERS!!!

We are considering running a "golf day" on the first day our reunion in San Antonio... on Thursday, October 31 with a tee time of noon (sharp).

Grab three of your buddies and please let us know right away if you are interested. There will be limited foursomes available... However, singles will be welcome... as well as wives and girlfriends. We want to make it a fun filled day.

Rental golf clubs will be available to save you the airlines checked baggage fees.

If there is enough interest then transportation will be provided to a local San Antonio golf course. You might even find the beverage of your choice provided as well. But we have to know today since planning starts now for this one-day event / tournament with prizes.

Please contact:

Joe Vernon
Phone: (530) 320-3601
Email: j4343vernon@cox.Net

Or

Mike Hermes
Phone: (352) 350-6330
Email: michaelrhermes1@gmail.Com

Our next reunion will be on

October 31 – November 4, 2013

in San Antonio, Texas

Below is a list of activities that you may want to check out...

One of America's oldest cities, San Antonio, was colonized by the Spanish Empire in the early 1700s. Rich layers of this and other cultures give the city its distinction. Some of the history itineraries are broad strokes and hit the high points. Others delve deeply into one subject like the River Walk or the Alamo.

San Antonio Nightlife

When the stars come out over the South Texas Plains, it's time to head to the nightclubs and dance halls. Check out Main Plaza, in the heart of downtown, which has live music all year long. You can two-step to a country-western band at the Cowboys Dance Hall, or soak up Tejano's Latin rhythms at Graham Central Station. San Antonio is home to the revered Jim Cullum Jazz Band (you may have heard their weekly radio show on NPR) and they play live at The Landing on the River Walk. Whatever you're in the mood for, San Antonio offers a wide range of entertainment options when the sun goes down.

El Dia de los Muertos

Translated literally as "the Day of the Dead," this Mexican cultural tradition is a celebration in which the family welcomes back departed loved ones, sharing the joys of life with them as their memories live on. Creative and respectful altars are set up around town at galleries, cultural centers, cemeteries and restaurants to commemorate loved ones who have passed on. Poetry readings, and calavera processions (participants dress as skeletons) are typical events as well. Some events have an admission charge.

Wurstfest

A unique celebration rich in German culture and full of Texas fun! During this 10-day salute to sausage,

you'll find a variety of entertainment options including a polka contest, games, rides, food and drinks on the Wurstfest Grounds in Landa Park, as well as special events throughout New Braunfels and Comal County.

Diwali San Antonio; Festival of Lights

Diwali is one of the biggest festivals largely celebrated in India, and for the second year is being celebrated in the Alamo City. Event starts at 5:00 p.m. Experience this colorful event filled with Indian music, dance, food and a special lighting ceremony as a thousand tea lights are released into the fountains at HemisFair Park.

SeaWorld San Antonio

10500 Sea World Dr, San Antonio, TX 78251
Phone: (210) 523-3000 / Fax: (210) 523-3199 / Toll Free: (210) 800-7786

A trip to SeaWorld to see the awe-inspiring Shamu show, One Ocean, is a must-do while in the Alamo City. Enjoy Sesame Street Bay of Play, an attraction for families featuring Elmo, Big Bird and all...

Six Flags San Antonio

17000 IH 10 West, San Antonio, TX 78257
Phone: (210) 697-5050 / Fax: (210) 697-5265 / Toll Free: (800) 473-4378

Six Flags Fiesta Texas offers an array of award-winning shows, a complement of thrill and family rides, and excitement for the whole family with a free water-park in the summer. Come see why Six Flags...

Splashtown

3600 IH 35 North, San Antonio, TX 78219
Phone: (210) 227-1400
With 20 landscaped acres of cool, clean water

excitement, this family water-park has something fun for every age - from Kids Kove to the Siesta del Rio offering a relaxing ride down a lazy river.

San Antonio Museum of Art

200 W. Jones Avenue, San Antonio, TX 78215
Phone: (210) 978-8100 / Fax: (210) 978-8101

The San Antonio Museum of Art reclaimed the historic Lone Star Brewery, built in 1884, and turned the immense building into one of the most impressive art museums in Texas. Its permanent collection spans the continents. Asian art, European and American paintings, and antiquities from Greek and Roman eras attract art aficionados of all ages. The Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art houses the museum's extensive collections of pre-Colombian art, Latin American folk art, Spanish Colonial art and contemporary Latin American art.

Fort Sam Houston

2330 Stanley Rd., Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234
Phone: (210) 221-1211

Fort Sam Houston was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1975. As one of the Army's oldest installations and now part of Joint Base San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston boasts the largest collection of historic structures -- more than 900 buildings. Even more consequential than the numbers is the historical integrity of the post's different sections which represent different eras of construction. Careful preservation of these areas allows the post to live with its history, surrounded by

existence of the traditions of excellence established when the first soldier arrived here in 1845.

Lackland Air Force Base

2051 George Ave, Bldg 5206, Lackland AFB, San Antonio, TX 78236
Phone: (210) 671-1110 / Fax: (210) 671-1053

Lackland is the basic military center for Air Force recruits, one of four training centers nationwide, as well as the site of the Defense Language Institute English Language Center and Inter-American Air Forces Academy for international students. The Gateway Historical Collection is the repository for photos and documents pertaining to both Kelly and Lackland AFBs and early military aviation in San Antonio. Base tours for general public guests are offered on the second Tuesday of each month.

Randolph Air Force Base

550 C. Street West, San Antonio, TX 78150-4573
Phone: (210) 652-1110

Randolph is home to the 12th Flying Training Wing, the only unit in the Air Force conducting both pilot instructor training and combat systems officer training. In addition, the 12th FTW provides host-base support to more than 30 Department of Defense units, including HQ Air Education and Training Command, Air Force Personnel Center and Air Force Recruiting Service.

PLEASE NOTE: The best way to plan your free time during the reunion is to go on line to: <http://www.visitsanantonio.com/index.aspx>

VIETNAM SHORT ROUNDS

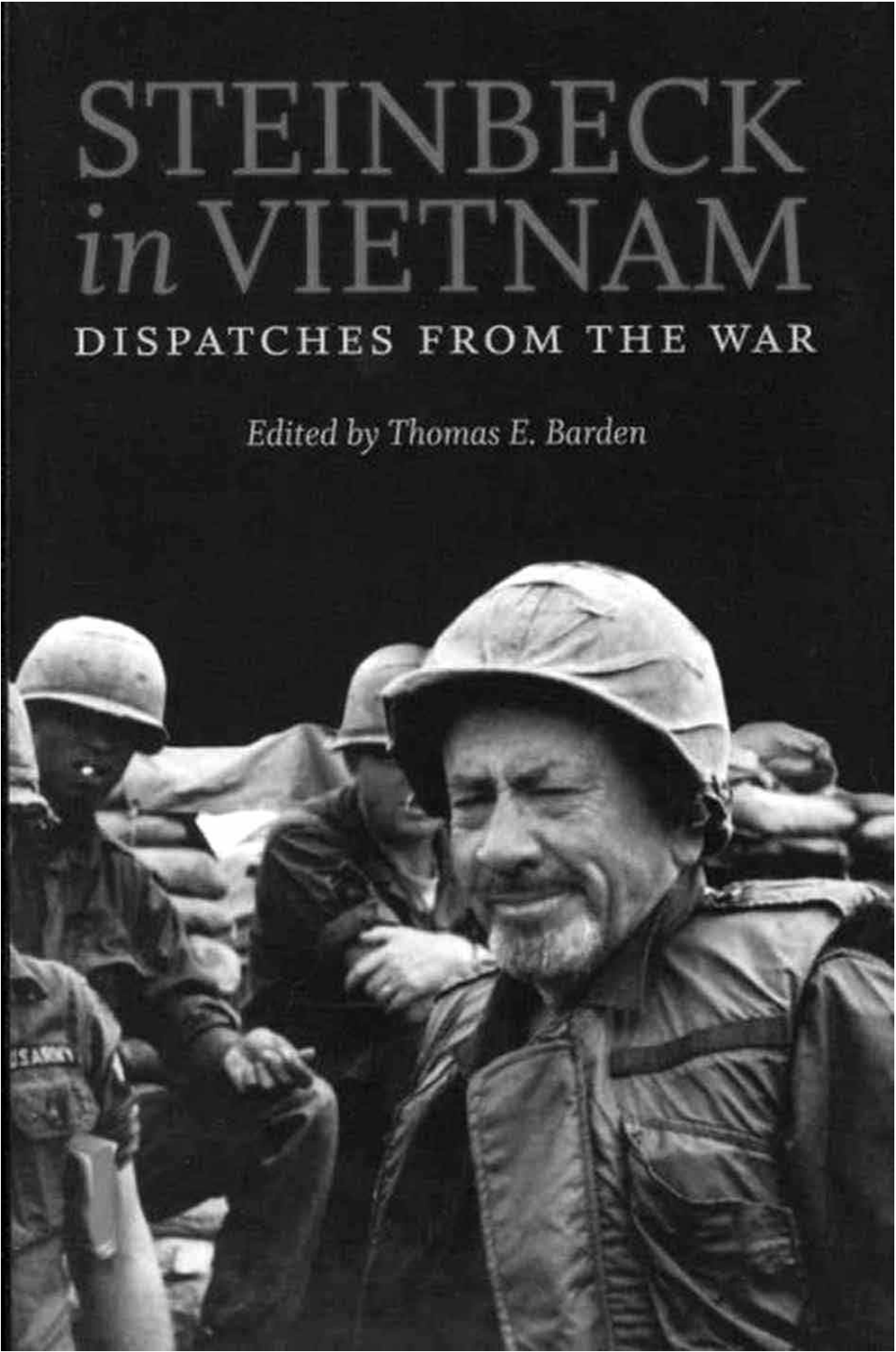
Most people in the US forgot about this in the '70's. --John Lange

SEATO established - 1954

Having been directed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to put together an alliance to contain any communist aggression in the free territories of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, or Southeast Asia in general, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles forges an agreement establishing a military alliance that becomes the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

Signatories, including France, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand, and the United States, pledged themselves to "act to meet the common danger" in the event of aggression against any signatory state. A separate protocol to SEATO designated Laos, Cambodia, and "the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam [South Vietnam]" as also being areas subject to the provisions of the treaty. The language of the treaty did not go as far as the absolute mutual defense

commitments and force structure of the NATO alliance; instead providing only for consultations in case of aggression against a signatory or protocol state before any combined actions were initiated. This lack of an agreement that would have compelled a combined military response to aggression significantly weakened SEATO as a military alliance. It was, however, used as legal basis for U.S. involvement in South Vietnam. SEATO expired on June 30, 1977.



**Madeleine Crum of
The Huffington Post wrote:**

Though John Steinbeck is best known for chronicling the woes of The Great Depression, his raw, journalistic accounts of later human tragedies are written with the same poignancy as *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*. In *Steinbeck in Vietnam*, University of Virginia Press, we are offered glimpses of the author's last works. "I am writing this in a comfortable hotel room in Saigon," he pens in the below excerpt, "which was once a beautiful city and now has a worn and sagging look like a worn-out suit that once was well tailored."

**John Steinbeck on his
jealously to be a pilot in
Vietnam**

Only a handful of people have won both the Nobel and Pulitzer prizes in literature. One of them was iconic American novelist John Steinbeck. His incredible body of work stretched from *Tortilla Flat* to *Of Mice and Men*, from *Grapes of Wrath* to *Cannery Row* to *East of Eden*. He had a gift for the language that few, before or since, have possessed.

Not widely known is the fact that in 1966-67, a year before his death,

Steinbeck went to Vietnam at the request of his friend Harry F. Guggenheim, publisher of *Newsday* magazine, to do a series of reports on the war. The reports took the form of letters to his dear friend Alicia Patterson, *Newsday's* first editor and publisher. Those letters have been recently published in a book edited by Thomas E. Barden, Vietnam veteran and Professor of English at the University of Toledo. The brand new book is entitled, *Steinbeck on Vietnam: Dispatches from the War*, published by the University of Virginia Press, 2012.

The following passages are relevant to our experience in Vietnam, and his ability to weave a vision is just magical.

On January 7, 1967, Steinbeck was in Pleiku, flying with Shamrock Flight, "D" Troop, 10th Cavalry. He writes, "...We are to move to the Huey of Major James Patrick Thomas of whom it is said that he has changed the classic sophist's question to how many choppers could Thomas sit on the point of a pin. Alicia, I wish I could tell you about these pilots. They make me sick with envy. They ride their vehicles the way a man controls a fine, well-trained quarter

horse. They weave along stream beds, rise like swallows to clear trees, they turn and twist and dip like swifts in the evening. I watch their hands and feet on the controls, the delicacy of the coordination reminds me of the sure and seeming slow hands of [Pablo] Casals on the cello. They are truly musician's hands, and they play their controls like music, and they dance them like ballerinas, and they make me jealous because I want so much to do it. Remember your child night dream of perfect flight free and wonderful? It's like that, and sadly I know I never can. My hands are too old and forgetful to take orders from the command center, which speaks of updrafts and side winds, of drift and shift, or ground fire indicated by a tiny puff or flash, or a hit, and all these commands must be obeyed by the musician's hands instantly and automatically. I must take my longing out in admiration and the joy of seeing it. Sorry about that leak of ecstasy, Alicia, but I had to get it out or burst."

The man just had a way with words ... no?

Looking For

CALL OFF THE AIR STRIKE!!!

Back in late '68, while serving as the Company 1st Sgt. with Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks, I sent out a foot patrol of my intrepid tankers from our position at Mai Xa Tai – An Loc, on the north bank of the Cua Viet River. At about the same time, I was informed that III MAF was inserting a Force Recon team into our TAOR. As the first sergeant, whose MOS had been 0369 for almost 20 years, I was about the only one amongst all these 1800's who had any infantry experience. My tankers took to patrolling like a duck to water and performed superbly. Our uniforms, however, were not up to the usual spit and polish of garrison and, I admit, we looked a little raggedy.

On this occasion, they inserted the Force Recon team of four men into their position while my patrol of tanker-grunts was operating to the east. Upon the patrol's attempt to return to our position, they came under fire. Of course, they reacted with return fire and then called me to report. I told them about Force Recon being somewhere near them and to be careful they didn't hit them with their fire.

Meanwhile, the Force Recon called in to their headquarters and requested an air strike on an “enemy patrol.” Right away I knew what had happened: the Force Recon had seen our patrol and, with their raggedy-ass appearance, it made them look like VC.

I was desperate to stop the impending air strike on our Marines but communications were complicated at best. Charlie Company was op-conned to 1st Amtracks, who were under 3rd MARDIV, while Force Recon was under III MAF. We went through more than a few minutes of harrowing time while trying to straighten things out, but, by the skin of our teeth, we made it. The aircraft were actually in the air about to fire their ordnance!

I am looking for any members of that patrol who wouldn't mind contacting an old man who would like to say, "Hi." Also, does anyone remember my pet hawk?

James L. Langford
First Sergeant USMC (Ret.)
4878 Park Drive
Carlsbad, CA 92008-3811
Phone: 760-729-1933
TheBedouin@roadrunner.com

DONALD C. MAY

I served with Donald C. May in 2nd Tank Battalion in Camp LeJeune and on a Med. cruise. We were together for about a year and a half. Unfortunately, I lost track of him when we got individual orders to Vietnam. The last I heard he was in Charlie Co., 3rd Tanks. I have subsequently learned that he passed away while he was on a fishing trip in the 1990s. I am searching

for anyone who knew him or of him. I would appreciate any information on him that you can provide me.

Clyde Hoch
313 - 4th St.
Pennsburg, PA. 18073
Phone: (215) 679-9580
Email: hochclyde@yahoo,.com

Can anyone identify either of these two tank crewmen?



If so, please contact John Wear at (215) 794-9052
LOUIE CRISWELL

For close to 40 years I've been looking for Louie Criswell who was a tank mechanic with me and my best friend, Larry Cooley. Louie spent some time working with me on Hill #10 and then in late March or early April of 1968 he was sent to An Hoa to work with Larry Cooley. My call sign was “Bravo 1-45”, and Larry's was “Bravo 2-45.” These were the handles that the 1st Tank Battalion had for tank mechanics. Louie, Larry and I were in-country from 1968 to 1969. Larry Cooley was originally from Charleston, West Virginia, and Louie Criswell was from Texas...but I can't remember if it was Dallas or San Antonio. I do vividly recall that Louie was a good old Texas boy. I was (and still am) from Indianapolis, Indiana. I am not completely sure if the spelling is Criswell or Chriswell or Crisswell. I've tried looking for him on the Internet with no

luck. After Vietnam we were reunited for a brief time in 1970 at Camp LeJeune. I got out in late 1970 and found Larry Cooley a few years later, but I have never been able to find Louie. All three of us were with Bravo Co., 1st Tank Bn. I was 1st Platoon and Cooley 2nd Platoon, Criswell was a Bravo Co. “floating” mechanic. Any leads that any member of the VTA has would be greatly appreciated.

P.S. Louie liked his beer! He always ran over a \$100.00 beer tab of 15 cent beer every month!

Ira B. McQuade
1706 Pasadena Street
Indianapolis, IN 46219
Phone: (317) 356-2158
Email: buc1tkbco@yahoo.com

R. H. WOODRUFF

I am looking for L/Cpl R. H. Woodruff, who was in Vietnam during 1969. The story that I know is that “R. H.” served in the Marine Corps and was honorably discharged prior to the start of the Vietnam War. To prove how badly he wanted to re-enlist and get into the fight, he walked (on foot all of the way!) from Oklahoma to Camp Pendleton, California, and was sworn in at the front gate. He went on a cruise prior to receiving orders for Vietnam and to 1st Tanks (I think). Attached is a picture from his cruise album. There is also a picture from the Indianapolis News dated July 1969, showing him being carried to a bunker after being wounded. If anyone has contact information on R. H. Woodruff, please let me know. I'd like to contact him and develop his story for the Sponson Box.

Pete Ritch,
833 East Gulf Beach Drive
Eastpoint, FL 32328
Phone: 850-734-0014

ED MELZ

For years I have been trying to track down Ed Melz, who was the Platoon Commander of the 3rd Platoon, Alpha Co., 3rd Tanks in Viet Nam in 1965. There is a picture of him on the bottom of Page 128 in O.E. Gilbert's book on Marine tanks in Vietnam. Ed was already a sergeant on the San Jose [California] police force when he enlisted and reported to The Basic School in 1963. He went to 3rd Tanks in early 1964 and, after his in-country time, he returned to CONUS around the same time that I started my own journey with the USMC. In any event, now I know why he never joined the Vietnam Tankers Association. The sad result of my search is that I have learned that he lost his life in a tragic accident in 1986. He had returned to San Jose and became a Lt. in the police again, but I have no idea if he was retired or still working when he left us. I just wanted to let you know about my research, since Ed is a bit of our Viet Nam tanker history.

Justin Donnelly
Suffield, CT
Phone: (203) 574-6731
Email: jdonnelly@waterburyct.org

Editor's note: I got the following email from Justin about two weeks after receiving the above “Looking For”:

This came from Ed's widow,
Christine Melz Trussler:

EDWARD THOMAS MELZ, JR.

Lieutenant, San Jose (CA) Police Department, 1961-1986

Edward Thomas Melz, Jr. was born June 16, 1940, in Torrance, California, the only child of Edward T. Melz, Sr., a California State Correctional Sergeant, and Myrtle Perkin Melz. Ed grew up in Chino, California, and throughout elementary school and into high school was an enthusiastic member of the Boy Scouts of America, earning the rank of Eagle Scout in 1955. He graduated from Chino High School in 1958 with both academic and athletic honors. He played varsity football all four years of high school.

During his years at San Jose State University, Ed was known for his leadership in the Police Cadet program while earning a degree in Administration of Justice. On October 15, 1961, Ed joined the San Jose (CA) Police Department as a Patrol Officer. On August 18, 1962, he married Christine Erickson. During his college years, he participated in the United States Marine Corps Platoon Leaders Course, through which he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve in 1963. He requested and was granted a 3-year leave of absence from the San Jose Police Department to serve his active duty as a Marine officer beginning in June, 1963. He entered the Marine Officers Basic Course (The Basic School) at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, on June 20, 1963, where he served as a member of Third Platoon, Company C, Basic Class 1-64. Upon graduation on December 19, 1963, Ed was assigned to the 3d Marine Division based at Camp Hansen, Okinawa. In preparation for that assignment he was ordered to attend Marine Corps Tank Officer Training at Camp Pendleton, CA, where he earned the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of Tank Officer in March, 1964.

In March 1964, Ed was transferred to the island of Okinawa, where he assumed his first Marine Corps command as Tank Platoon Commander, Company A, 3d Tank Battalion, 3d Marine Division, and was promoted to 1st Lt. on August 28, 1964. Soon after his promotion, Ed moved up to assume command of a Tank Company, and in that capacity he commanded the first Marine tanks to land in Viet Nam at Da Nang on March 18, 1965. When his 13-month overseas tour time expired in May, 1965, Ed returned to Camp Pendleton where he spent the next year with the 2d Infantry Training Regiment. He was released from active duty in the Marine Corps Reserve on June 15, 1966. At that time he ended his Leave of Absence and returned to active service with the San Jose Police Department.

(Continued on page 18)

Ironically, Ed served as a uniformed member of the San Jose Police Department's response team on the campuses of UC Berkeley, Stanford University, San Francisco State, and San Jose State, when the student anti-war movement dissolved into riots in 1967 and 1968. Ed and Christine's son Stephen was born in 1967 and their daughter Catherine Ellen was born in 1972. With the San Jose Police Department, Ed rose through the ranks to become a lieutenant in 1974. In his career, as in his personal life, Ed was well known for his focus on precision and detail, as well as for his commitment to achieve the results that were needed. As some have said, "Ed was intense and took control to get the job done. For this, some loved him and some did not." Over time, Ed became more and more involved in his avocation of fishing, and in 1978, as he began to prepare for his eventual retirement from the Police Department, he started a commercial fishing enterprise. In 1979, he designed and bought his own commercial fishing boat, the "Sunrise," which he berthed in the Santa Cruz (CA) small craft and commercial fishing harbor. In order to carry out some required maintenance, Ed had the boat pulled out of the water in 1986, where it stood high above the ground. On March 22, 1986, when he was working on the outside of the boat from a ladder, Ed unfortunately fell backwards from high on the ladder and incurred a fatal and tragic head injury. After emergency surgery he was on life support for two days and was declared dead on March 24, 1986, at the age of 45.

At that time, his son Stephen was 18 and had become quite familiar with the commercial fishing enterprise while working with his father. Soon after Ed's sudden death, the young son took over the boat and made commercial fishing his own career. Over the years, Stephen married Jacqueline Austin and they have two sons, Jason Edward and Aaron Thomas. Ed's daughter Catherine married Trever Roddick and they have a daughter, Rebecca Irene, born in 2009. Unfortunately, Ed never met his three grandchildren. Following Ed's death, his wife of 26 years, Christine, eventually married John E. Trussler, who had been a good friend of Ed's for many years before Ed's death.

While on active duty in the Marine Corps, 1st Lt. Melz was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, National Defense Service Medal, Viet Nam Campaign Medal, and the Republic of Viet Nam Service Medal with Device.

Semper Fidelis,

from Larry's fellow members of Third Platoon,
"C" Company,
The Basic School Class 1-64,
September 27, 2010.

Capt Roy Lee "Butch" Griffin, Jr.



Birth: June 20, 1939 in Greensboro, NC.

Death: March 30, 1968 in Quang Tri, Vietnam

Does anyone remember this Marine tank officer? If so, please contact John Wear at (215) 794-9052

TC: "GUNNER – TARGET!"

GUNNER: "IDENTIFIED!"

The photo on page 12, under "LOOKING FOR..." in the most recent magazine, I don't know if you have found an answer but I will make a guess. The tank is



either B-33 or B-35. B-33 was called "Dragon Wagon." That is why there is a dragon on the search light cover. When B-33 got the fancy new Xenon light, B-35 got the old one with the dragon painted on it. To me it looks like **Richard Willoughby** is in the loader's hatch. I don't remember if he was on B-33 or if he was on B-35

(Continued on page 25)

To the Great Tank Park in the Sky



I got a phone call from VTA member and our Chaplain's Assistant, Terry Bocchino, telling me that VTA member, John Gardner, of San Diego, CA, had passed away on September 29th. John was born on June 21, 1946, and he had been with Bravo Co., 1st Tanks in 1968. No further details were available for this notice.

Editor's Note: The following death notice may cause a few raised eyebrows but I felt that this particular death has a lot to do with both the story of tanks and with the legacy of the war in Vietnam.

Col. Bui Quang Than, 64, the North Vietnamese tank driver who broke through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon on April 30, 1975, just moments after American personnel had been evacuated by helicopter, died on June 24, 2012. Than hoisted the flag of the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam over the palace, an action that marked the end of the war. (Source: Vietnam magazine, October 2012)

What Members Are Doing

ARIZONA GET TOGETHER

On March 31, 2012, a mini-reunion took place at Ken Zebal's home in Saddle Brooke, AZ. True to form, they drank all of Ken's beer while catching up on the past and telling sea stories. The below photo shows four "geriatric" Marine tankers.



(From left to right): Tony Pinetti (Tarpon Springs, FL), Jim Thompson (Mesa, AZ), Milo Plank, Jr. (Boise, ID) and Ken Zebal (Tucson, AZ).

Milo had been visiting Ken each year for the past few years, and then Jim showed up last year – but this was the first year for Tony. The old Vietnam Marine veteran buddies had not seen

Tony since 1966 when he rotated back to the world 45 years ago.

Tony, Jim and Ken were in 2nd Platoon, Charlie Co, 2nd Tanks in 1963, '64, and '65, while Tony (loader) and Ken (gunner) were both on C-23. Those were M-103 – 120 mm gun tanks – that shows how old these guys really are!

You may be able to identify them in the above photo of the 1965 Christmas party. Remember, drinking in the barracks is strictly prohibited! Tony Pinnetti is third from the left. Jim Thompson is in the towel. Ken Zebal is second from the right.



They made a Caribbean cruise (to Gitmo, Vieques & San Juan) and then to STEELPIKE (to Spain & Portugal) in '64,

which was just before catching a draft to the 3rd MARDIV in early '65. The three-some then sailed from San Diego's 'B' Street Pier on USNS Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey where they enjoyed liberty in Honolulu and Yokohama before disembarking in Okinawa. Although he was not on the Naha Pier dancing with the geishas who greeted the ship, Milo was already a well-established member of 3rd Plt, Alpha Company, 3rd Tanks when the group arrived at Camp Hansen. Capt. Ed Cercione was CO, 1st/Lt. Ken Zitz was Platoon Leader, and Sgt. D.J. Clark was Platoon Sergeant.

Milo (driver), Tony (loader), and Ken (gunner) were on A-32 with Sgt. Sam Kaleleiki as TC. Jim was assigned to A-34 (gunner) with Sgt. Ed Sipel (TC).

After constant and seemingly endless field training with 3/3 on Okinawa, they embarked on LSD 28 (USS Thomaston) from White Beach and set sail for Chu Lai with BLT 3/3 in May '65.

Tony (WIA), Milo, and Jim (WIA) fought during Operation STARLITE while Ken was on R&R in Hong Kong. The iconic photo (below) of A-32 is from STARLITE and shows Bill Laidlaw (KIA) in the TC's hatch. A-34 sustained multiple penetrations and



was blown in place. 2d/Lt. Ky Thompson (WIA) was Platoon Leader.

These days, things are a bit quieter and slower too. Tony had a successful career in construction, was an active sailor and motorcycle rider. He currently enjoys a mellow retirement by fishing, playing guitar, and hanging out with his girlfriend "Little Bit" and two dogs. Jim was successful in two careers (education and information technology) and is retired except for some consulting here and there. He's happily married to Ellie, quite actively involved with his church, and growing a lot of really good, really big vegetables. Ken's goal in life is getting Jim to join the VTA and getting him to our next reunion in San Antonio. Milo retired from his long and successful career in machine technology and is now a very active sportsman. Milo enjoys horseback riding, ATV riding, hunting and fishing in and around the mountains and valleys of Idaho. Ken tried retirement but dropped out and currently works in the space (GPS) industry.

WELL I'VE BEEN TO OKLAHOMA...

I wanted to tell you that I recently attended a three-man reunion in Tulsa, Oklahoma. There was Rick Smith, Richard Tilden and me (John Hunter).



The picture above was in Pawnee, OK in front of Richard's childhood home. I know...I am not in the picture! I should have had Sarah take one of the three of us. Not too smart!

The three of us were all part of 3rd Platoon, Bravo Co., 1st Tank Battalion. We mounted out as a unit from Camp Pendleton in May of 1965 and boarded the USS Alamo (LSD 33) and, after transferring to the USS Point Defiance (LSD 31) in Okinawa, we ended up in Chu Lai. Because Richard was an "old salt" he got to go home at the end of 1965. "Smitty" and I were transferred to 3rd Tanks in March of 1966. Then, later that same year, Smitty and I ended up at 2nd Tanks in Camp LeJeune in 1966, and we went on a 5-month Carib. cruise.



I was originally going to drive from my home in Southern California to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where Richard Tilden lives. He had invited me to see the powwow in Tulsa, and I was going to drive to Rick Smith's home in Missouri afterward. Rick came up with the idea that I should drive to his house and then the two of us could drive down to Tulsa and visit Tilden. Richard is a Council Member of the Pawnee Nation. He took us on a tour of Tulsa and Pawnee City. We also visited "Stone Wolf," the two Pawnee-owned casinos. We ended up "donating" to the tribe!

The only bad thing was that the temperature was over 100 degrees every day that we were there. One thing I noted about Oklahoma >>

is that they are incredibly friendly to servicemen and vets. It's a great state. Richard gave me a card that reads: "I've never been to Heaven, but I've been to Oklahoma".

On our drive back to Missouri, being good tankers, Rick and I were able to find a tank!



And this is Rick with his post-USMC uniform. Look at the "hash marks"!!! He ended up with 43 total years. He had four in the Marines, some in the National Guard, and then some active duty Army. I don't know the exact number of active Army, but I think it was close to 20 years.

While I was in Missouri, Rick and I went to Branson and hit a lot of wine tasting rooms...and even some bars. We had a great time talking about old and new times.

John Hunter
Torrance, CA

Phone: (310) 530-3123

Email: j.hunter5773@sbcglobal.net

HEY! I FOUND A NEW PLAY TOY!!!

A couple of Sundays ago, the local VFW asked our Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America to provide a color guard for the dedication of a plaque listing the 25 servicemen from the Town of Greece, NY, who died during the Vietnam War. A couple of us on



the color guard are from that area so it was a recognition we really wanted to participate in. It just so happens that the M-60 was parked in front of the VFW, so I had my wife, Nancy, take my picture.

Bruce Van Apeldoorn
Rochester, NY

Phone: (585) 613-6564

VIETNAM POW RECEIVES AN HONOR

Last August, my wife Sandra and I attended a Town Hall Meeting in Sierra Vista, Arizona. After Senator John McCain



finished speaking, I presented him with a signed copy of my book, Con Thien: The Hill of Angels. The senator praised the Marine Corps, especially the Marine pilots he had met over the years. Just as he joked that I did not look old enough to be a Vietnam Vet, Sandra took this picture.

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

THIRTEEN OVER?

The article in the last Sponson Box that was written by Robert E. Hays entitled "What's That Tag?" caught my eye. I had a nearly identical incident happen to me in New Braunfels, TX, on my recent RV trip through the Texas Hill Country. I must add that before going on this long trip, I plastered the rear of my truck and travel trailer with bumper stickers that I purchased from Sgt. Grit's PX during our last reunion in San Diego. Among the stickers were the EGA, Vietnam Veteran, our USMC VTA logo, "The Best part of the Marine Corps is the Corpsman" and a Texas Sheriff's Association sticker.

Having parked my travel trailer at the local VFW Post in New Braunfels, TX, I was returning to it one night when those flashing lights came on behind me. After pulling me over, the trooper said, "Sir, you were doing 43 in a 30 zone going down that hill. What outfit were you with?"

My answer was almost identical to Doc Hays' when I replied, "I was a Navy Corpsman with First Tank Battalion in Vietnam."

I knew he was a Marine when he replied, "I won't hold that against you, Doc." Then he asked me if I needed a copy of the warning ticket.

I replied "NO SIR!"

"Doc" Gene Hackmack
Brenham, TX

Phone: (979) 551-0581

A NEW BUSINESS

It has taken me awhile to get my new company, Armed Response Gun Signs, up and running. I now have a website which I hope

you will check out. <http://www.argungsigns.com>

I have been to gun shows with my products and have gotten some very good sales. But I have had a couple of people say, "I don't want anyone to know I have a gun in the house because it may cause them to want to break-in." To which I reply, "Hey, this is Georgia! Who doesn't have a gun in the house?"

I expect my market to be in the South, Southwest & Mountain States.

I hope my police friends agree with my approach. See "About Us" on the website once you get off the Home Page.

Bob Peavey
Canton, GA

Phone: (770) 365-3711

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARINES!

It was the evening of November 8, 2012, at the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 20, Rochester, NY monthly meeting. We Marines wanted to celebrate the 237th anniversary of the birth of our Corps. Of the nearly one hundred members who regularly attend our meetings, about 15 are Marines. We had our cake and sang the Marines Hymn while following the Marine Corps' Bulletin about how to celebrate a birthday. I brought my NCO sword to cut the cake.



Semper Fi

Bruce Van Apeldoorn
Rochester, NY

Phone: (585) 613-6564

AN INVASION IN DC

(Left to right: Jimmy Wendling, Jan "Turtle" Wendling, Sgt Maj of the MC Barrett, Clyde Hoch and Todd Phillips)

On November 9, 2012, several of USMC Vietnam Tankers converged on Washington, DC. Jan Wendling, John Wear, Rick Bayshore (an Army neighbor of mine) and I read The Names on The Wall to help celebrate the 30th Anniversary. The hotel

where we stayed at was overrun with old drunk Marines.

On November 10th we watched a very impressive Birthday



(Left to right: Jimmy Wendling, Jan "Turtle" Wendling, Sgt Maj of the MC Barrett, Clyde Hoch and Todd Phillips)

parade & program put on by the USMC at the Iwo Jima monument. Immediately after the ceremony we corralled the Commandant for photos and then we found the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps which is the photo above.

After the ceremony we walked around Arlington Cemetery where we watched a wreath lying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, we visited John F Kennedy's grave and the Lee's mansion. It was a nice warm day for the long walk. Later in the day Ralph & Duanne Swartz, Rick & Ruth Bayshore and my wife (Deb) and I did a Segway tour of some of the monuments around DC. After a shaky start it was fun. And later in the evening some of us gathered to toast our departed buddy, Jerry Holly, a crew member on Todd Phillips and my tank in Vietnam. Jerry passed away November 10th 2006. Todd Phillips, Jerry widow Linda Hilly and I do a toast to Jerry every year. Unfortunately it didn't end with just one the toast. USMC Vietnam Tankers who were present were Jan Wendling, his brother Jimmy, Ralph Schwartz, Todd Phillips John Wear and I plus our wives and girlfriends.

Please keep a look out for my new book on tanks in combat that should be coming out soon. It will give a short description of the type of tank that was involved with the battle and then follow up with a story of a person who served in that type of tank...starting with WWI and working up to Iraq. I also had military artist Mark Churms make a painting of my tank in Vietnam for the cover. He will also offer the painting as a print for sale.

Clyde Hoch
Pennsburg, PA
Phone: (215) 679-9580

It is with great pleasure that we announce that **Joe Liu** has stepped up and volunteered to take over the post of chairman of the **Jerry Clark Memorial Buddy Fund**. In case any VTA member does not know about this program, as far back as our founding in 1999 the Marine who is the namesake of the fund felt that it was imperative that the organization have a program where we are able to send flowers with get well

wishes to sick or infirm members and/or notes of sympathy to the families of recently passed away members. If in the future you know of a member who may be in need of this heart-felt service, please contact Joe directly at:

Phone: (801) 731-7591
Email: pjliu@hotmail.com

Can you guess who the person is in this photo? The first person to contact John Wear with the right answer will receive a yet unnamed mediocre prize.



GUESS WHO

Photo Contest

Last Issue's Photo ID Winner

Last issue's "Guess Who" contest had no winner. No one offered to identify **Garry Hall** and **Roger "Blues" Unland**. The photo was taken by John Wear at the 3rd Tank Bn. Maintenance ramp at Dong Ha, Vietnam, in the summer of 1968.



Looking For (Continued from page 18)

after I went to Da Nang in early 1966.
P.S. I will be in San Antonio.

John Hunter
Bravo Company, 1st Tank Bn,
Chu Lai, RVN 1965-66.
Torrance, CA
Phone: (310) 530-3123

FROM THE USMC VTA WEBSITE GUESTBOOK

I'm 28 years old and never knew much about my dad's life in the military. For some reason today, of all days, he started talking. I went from knowing that he was a Marine to learning he was a radio operator who served with the 3rd Anti-Tank Battalion. He told me of a few rituals the guys he knew had to get through things, such as burying a candle for those they lost. It just got me wondering if there are any of his old buddies out there. His name is **Kermit "Kit" Graham**. He was a skinny red-headed guy with black thick glasses and a smart ass attitude. Thanks.

Patty Graham
dascia@gmail.com

MORE FROM THE USMC VTA WEBSITE GUESTBOOK

I'm looking for anyone who knew or served with my dad, **1st Lt. Roger J. Berger**, Platoon Commander, Company C, 3rd Anti-Tank Battalion, from '67 to '68. He was involved in Operations Hickory and Kingfisher.

My dad rarely spoke about his time in Vietnam and my mom only shared a few stories with me from letters he had written to her while he was there. My dad passed in '97 and my mom passed in '00, so I'd like to connect with anyone who knew him and can tell me more. The main reason for this request is that I have a son who just turned two years old and we have another child due to arrive next month. I'd like to tell them about their grandfather's service in the Marine Corps when they are old enough to ask questions about him and about his sword that hangs over the fire place and about the Eagle Globe and Anchor that hangs on the wall.

Brian Berger
119 Erika Dr.
Lafayette, LA 70506
Cell Number: (337) 781-8850
Email: bnut@lusfiber.net

I have some additional information that I recently found for my father:

His service number was 095430 and his MOS was 0302.
Information I from his Assignment / Orders paperwork:
October 28, 1966 he attended "Basic Course 3-67, Company F" at Quantico and completed his training around March 30,

1967. Current rank was 2nd Lt. and MOS was 9901.
March 30, 1967 he was assigned to FMF WESPAC Ground Forces (MCC 159). His MOS was changed to 0301 at this time.
May 1967 he was assigned to the 3rd Marine Division (MCC 159).
Oct 16, 1967 he was reassigned to Company "C" with orders to "Report to CO H&S Co for duty as S2/S5 vice 1st Lt ROBERTS det". His Rank was 1st Lt. and his MOS was changed to 0302.
Dec 5, 1967 he was reassigned to 3rd AT Bn to report to CO HQ BN with remarks as "For du w/ G-2".
May 22, 1968 he was ordered to report MCB Camp LeJeune.
Oct 18, 1968 he completed training for "Summary and Special Courts-Martial"
Aug 1, 1969 he was promoted to Capt and attended "Air Intelligence Officer Course" training. He continued to serve in various roles in the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Photo Interpretation) until 1971 at which point I believe he was honorably discharged. At some point he was stationed at a base on Okinawa, Japan.
From pictures he sent my Mom I found the following names mentioned.
Inspecting a Marine's M-14 rifle while standing at attention:
S Sgt Jones
L/Cpl Rainford
Picture of two men boxing:
Bradley (no rank mentioned)
Watson (no rank mentioned)
Picture of 3 men fixing an Ontos track:
L/Cpl Bradley
PFC Browning
Sgt Stadyro or Stackyro (This was my father's Plt Sgt)
Another picture of 3 men fixing an Ontos track:
L/Cpl Baily
L/Cpl Barry
Sgt Ratliff (spoke very highly of this Sgt)
I also found a book called "War Without Heroes" by David Douglas Duncan with handwritten notes from my Dad on the following pages:
Pg 60 - 'Good friend of mine, "Mike" - can't remember his last name - from GA' with an arrow pointing Marine holding a shotgun
Pg 74 - 'This bunker was ~20' from mine!'
Pg 78 - 'Me' With an arrow pointing to Marine the right.
Pg 113 - 'Me' With an arrow point to lower middle picture of a Marine playing cards with a cigarette in his mouth.
Pg 195 - 'My "boss" later @ Dong Ha' (I believe this is Major Jerry Hudson)
Pg 216 - 'I was on this!' Arrow pointing to a burning C-130 ■

V. A. News & Updates

Go to our website for more health related info.
www.USMCVTA.org

VA Health Care Access Update 03: You probably qualify for VA Health Care if any of the below statements are true:

You served in the active military, naval, or air service and were honorably discharged or released; or

You were/are a Reservist or National Guard member and you were called to active duty by a Federal Order (for other than training purposes) and you completed the full call-up period.

AND

You were discharged or separated for medical reasons, early out, or hardship

You served in theater of combat operations within the past 5 years

You were discharged from the military because of a disability (not pre-existing)

You are a former Prisoner of War

You received a Purple Heart Medal

You receive VA pension or disability benefits

You receive state Medicaid benefits

Your eligibility for VA health care benefits may be based on special factors such as service in Vietnam, other military history factors or even household income. All veterans are encouraged to apply now for VA health care benefits before they encounter a medical issue that requires medical attention

and compensation. Submitting an application is the best way to find out if they qualify. Plus, if in the future new regulations take effect, VA will automatically reassess your application to determine if you qualify. With an application on file, VA will be able to notify you if new rules make you qualified for health benefits in the future. The fastest and easiest way to apply or update your information is online at <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/>. Other ways to apply or UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION are:

- **By Phone** - You can apply for enrollment of your benefits or update your information by phone by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM (Eastern Time). A VA representative will have your completed form sent to you for verification and signature.

- **By Mail** - Print the 10-10EZ form: <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/Form/1010EZ-fillable.pdf> or 10-10EZR form <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/Form/1010EZR-fillable.pdf>, or call to have the form mailed to you. Complete and sign the application, then mail it to your local VA Medical Center or clinic whose address can be found at <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>.

- **In Person** - Visit a VA Medical Center or clinic nearest you to apply for enrollment; or, if you are already enrolled, to update your information in person.

If you do not have an ID card, another way you can get logged into the VA system would be by requesting to be screened for Agent Orange effects or getting an annual physical. There is no charge for the screening, but depending upon your annual income and status, you may have to pay a small co-pay for the physical. Then, to stay within the active VA database, continue to get the annual checkup. The backlog can be 6 to 8 months long for case reviews, so position yourself for faster processing, should you need it. If you need help call at 1-877-222-8387, M-F between the hours of 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM EST. [Source: <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/> Jun 2012 ++]

VA Grave Marker Medallion Update 01: The Department of Veterans Affairs has streamlined the process for families of deceased veterans to receive a medallion which can be affixed to grave markers at private cemeteries and indicates the veteran status of the deceased. “This new form streamlines the ordering process, making it easier for families to order the medallion,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The families want everyone to know that their loved one was a veteran. We should help them do that in any way we can.” Previously, families ordered the medallion using the form to order a government headstone or marker. VA has introduced a new form, VA Form 40-1330M, for use solely to order a medallion. The older form, VA Form 40-1330, remains in place to order a traditional government headstone or marker.

The medallion is a device furnished in lieu of a traditional government headstone or grave marker for veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. Under federal law, eligible veterans buried in a private cemetery are entitled to either a government-furnished grave marker or the medallion, but not both. The medallion is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches and 1 ½ inches in width. Each bronze medallion features the image of a folded burial flag adorned with laurels and is inscribed with the word “Veteran” at the top and the veteran’s branch of service at the bottom.

Next of kin receive the medallion, along with a kit that allows the family or the staff of a private cemetery to affix the medallion to a headstone, grave marker, mausoleum or columbarium niche cover. The medallion is available only to veterans buried in private cemeteries without a government headstone or marker. Families of eligible decedents may also order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment. More information about the medallion or headstones and markers can be found at <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm/hmorder.asp> . To download the VA Form 40-1330M, Claim for Government Medallion, go to <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-1330M.pdf>

The VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Nearly four million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict -- from the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan -- are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 19,000 acres. Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses, and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone, grave marker or medallion. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the VA web site on the internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov> or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. [Source: VA News Release 22 May 2012 ++]

Notes of Interest:

100% DAV - All veterans that are determined to be unemployable by the VA shall be enrolled as 100% DAV even if the letter shows a lower disability rating. Terminology used by the VA that your VSO may see in the field are 100-percent disabled from a service-connected injury or disease | 100% disabled | unemployable | individually unemployable.

Vet Hearing Aids If you are a veteran enrolled in Priority Groups 1 - 5 for VA medical care, you are eligible to receive hearing aids, if needed. You do not need to establish service connection for hearing loss. If you are a veteran enrolled in Priority Groups 6 – 8, you MAY be eligible. To find out if you qualify, you must first have a hearing aid evaluation.

VA Rural Access Update 13: The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced it is launching a nationwide specialty health-care program for veterans in rural areas, based on the Project Echo pilot program currently operating at eleven VA medical centers. The new program, Specialty Care Access Network-Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (SCAN-ECHO), will give training, advice, and support to primary care providers (PCPs) so they can deliver specialty care to VA patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hepatitis “C” and congestive heart failure. "The SCAN-ECHO model allows the VA medical community to treat a greater number of patients than the current structure," said Jacob Gadd, deputy director of health for The American Legion. "In a sense, it takes a primary care provider from saying to the patient, ‘Let me refer you to a specialist,’ to saying ‘I can diagnose and treat your condition.’ It is going to help increase the confidence and competence of PCPs by teaching them best practices for specialty care."

The effectiveness of the Project Echo/SCAN-ECHO model has been supported by multiple research trials, Gadd said, as well as articles published in "Health Affairs" and "The New England Journal of Medicine." Not only will the expanded program improve the continuity of care, it will also:

1. Reduce wait times at specialty clinics,
2. Mitigate difficulties in recruiting specialists for rural areas,
3. Increase certifications for the delivery of specialized medicines,
4. Improve the professional development and satisfaction of PCPs, and
5. Build local, sustainable centers of medical excellence.

Brian Bertges, the American Legion’s Assistant Director of Policy Research, said that SCAN-ECHO may also produce some indirect savings. "Since the program targets access for rural veterans, VA may see a decrease in mileage reimbursements because veterans’ travel time will be reduced. VA may also see more savings in the area of fee-based services. Instead of referring veterans to specialists in their local communities, more PCPs in the VA system will be able to provide that kind of care," Bertges said. Project Echo has been supported by a three-year, \$5 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. [Source: American Legion Online Update 19 Jul 2012 ++]

ALL VIETNAM VETERANS SHOULD GET AGENT ORANGE TESTS

It may sound like a broken record by mentioning over and over to Vietnam veterans that if you served in Vietnam then go to the VA hospital and take the test. The Veterans Administration offers compensation and benefits for Vietnam veterans suffering from diseases considered to have been caused by Agent Orange exposure. Recently three more diseases qualify as service-connected conditions from Agent Orange. This totals 14 diseases related to Agent Orange.

The Agent Orange test consists of an X-ray, EKG and blood work. Of course, you have to prove you're a Vietnam veteran. We cannot figure out why anyone would put off finding out if that ailment you have may be caused by Agent Orange.

On Jan. 25, 2011, the VA announced that it now presumes that veterans who served along the DMZ between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971, were exposed to the herbicide.

READ MORE: http://www.dailyworld.com/article/20120726/NEWS01/207260304/Vietnam-veterans-should-get-Agent-Orange-tests?ncllick_check=1

Lowes and Home Depot Veterans' Discount Revisited

The Paycheck Chronicles - January 22, 2012

Still confused about Lowes’ and Home Depot’s military and veteran’s discount policies? I’ll restate the policies again here for anyone who managed to miss all the previous debate. However, for the most part, the policies aren’t being properly interpreted by the individual stores, so your results may vary. Both stores have basically the same policies, and offer two different, but related, discounts.

*The military discount is supposed to be for active duty military, retirees, disabled veterans and their families. It gives a 10% discount to eligible patrons every day.

*The veterans’ discount is for any and all veterans. It gives a 10% discount to eligible patrons on selected patriotic holiday weekends such as Independence Day, Memorial Day and Veterans’ Day.

Read more: <http://paycheck-chronicles.military.com/2012/01/22/lowes-and-home-depot-revisited/#ixzz25o24OcFr>

VA Diabetes Mellitus Care Update 09: Health officials at the Veterans Administration unveiled a pilot program 5 OCT aimed at reducing the rate of diabetes among military veterans. The 16-week program for overweight or obese people with pre-diabetes helps them get more exercise, improve their eating habits and lose weight. The program is expanding to include VA medical centers across the country. Vietnam veteran Jon Soder, who has diabetes, says the program helped him lose 85 pounds and improve his health. Before he participated in the program, Soder said he was unable to walk. Now he walks on his own. "I used to take three different kinds of diabetes medicine, and now I only take one," he said. "And I used to take two kinds of cholesterol medicine and now I don't take any, so there was a real benefit from it." When the program was tested at YMCAs in St. Paul and Indianapolis, it reduced the diabetes rate among participants by 58 percent. U.S. Sen. Al Franken, (D-MN), who participated in the announcement, said helping the clients improve their health also leads to dramatically lower medical costs. "To put someone through this program costs \$300. Fifty-eight percent fewer become diabetic and save \$6,200 a year. That is what prevention is about," Franken said. About one-fourth of the nation's veterans have type 2 diabetes. [Source: MPR News | Jessica Mador | 5 Oct 2012 ++]

For more VA information please go to our website

<http://www.usmcvta.org>



We Few Who Chose the Difficult Road

By: Jim Coan

As my memories of the past grow fainter with each passing year, one question still lingers in the back of my mind. With lots of safer, less-challenging options open to me after college, why did I choose to go the hard way, pursuing a commission as an Officer of Marines when a war was being fought in Vietnam?

No one laid out a road map and said this is what you must do. I chose this path. Perhaps it was decided at age four, when my older step-brother came home from World War II, a decorated Marine veteran of the Pacific Island fighting. He had gone from private to gunnery sergeant in four years. He was then, and always would be, someone I admired and looked up to.

I knew that I could not travel the paved,

level road while our country was at war.

I had to see for myself what Vietnam was all about, and I would choose the bad road full of ruts and blind curves. To this day I am thankful for that choice. I’m a better man for it.

I don’t know what sustained me through all of the sweating, cursing, and pain of OCS, except that I wanted it badly, too badly to quit. Others fell by the wayside, their resolve weakened under the stress. Of the fifty candidates initially assigned to my OCS platoon, only 29 were still standing in formation at graduation. I survived the cut and went on to The Basic School as a boot lieutenant, an Officer of Marines. Then came the fork in the road when we put in our choices for M.O.S. I put in for infantry, artillery, and tanks, and was one of the lucky ones selected for tank school.

Then it was off to Nam where danger lay ahead at every turn. We Marines never faltered in carrying out our missions, despite the loss of comrades who gave

up all of their tomorrows. Many times it could have been me lying on that stretcher, a poncho covering my head, boot toes pointing skyward.

We kept “short timer” calendars, counting the days until our tour ended, praying we would still be in one piece. A few extended their tour, having a score to settle. Most of us went home, glad to be done with that place, but our memories remained behind, forever haunted by what we went through, and seething with anger at the homecoming reception we received; name calling, insults, and even worse . . . indifference.

Some continued on down that rocky road, making the Marine Corps a career.

I take my cover off to all career Marines; but, no matter how we all arrived here today, we are secure in the knowledge that we chose the hard way, persevered, and ultimately succeeded. No one can ever take that from us. We truly are the few, the proud, the United States Marines.

Semper Fidelis!



Assault On The Tank

I never thought I would ever be considered one of the “Old Breed.” My 1545938 serial number was way boot, especially when in the day there were still a lot of six-digit serial numbers around back then. By the time my serial numbers were getting salty, they changed to Social Security numbers. With many WWII and Korean vets running the show, we wandered around in awe of the stories that they told when sipping some brews...which is why we joined the Corps. As the saying goes, "Time goes by so fast" and, before you know it, not everyone knows there were Fuji Camps. I joined the Corps in '56 and went through Parris Island that summer. By November of '56, I arrived at South Camp Fuji, Japan, as my first duty station. There were three camps, North, Middle & South, and they were located just south of Mt. Fujiyama. They were the home camps of the 3rd MARDIV. I joined 2nd Platoon, A/1/3 and was generously made a

BAR man in the second fire team, second squad. I carried the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) for about six months; then I became the scout (point man) and, finally, a fire team leader. Believe me, I was one happy camper giving up the heavy (19.5 lbs) BAR and making a trade for a 9.5 lb. M-1. Along with our 782 gear issue, we were also issued leggings. At that time, the Corps issued one set of boots and one set of boondockers. And yes, the shoes were brown, but we dyed them black. Shoes, boots, and boondockers were spit-shined. We also had liberty cards and Geneva Convention cards.

Now, a story that I want to relate to you happened during a training exercise in the training area at the base of Mt. Fuji. We were running squad formations against dug-in aggressors. We had moved within about 200 yards of the aggressors’ position, when a tank came up to re-inforce the enemy’s position. Our platoon leader,

a young Lt., gathered us around to give the final battle order. Our platoon would be the assault platoon; the first platoon would lay down the base of fire with the third platoon being held in reserve. Now our squad was given the order to assault the tank. The third fire team was laying down a base of fire and our team was to assault the tank with fixed bayonets. After the lieutenant absented himself, our platoon sergeant, who was a S/Sgt. and a Korean Vet, shook his head and made one classic remark that I haven't forgotten to this day.

He said, "What the f&*# does he think our M-1's are, can openers?!!!"

The S/Sgt.'s name will remain anonymous.

Semper Fi

Ed Emanuel

USMC (Ret.) 1956 – 1985

Reprinted with permission from the Sgt Grit’s Newsletter



What Vietnam Taught Me

Editor’s Note: We have asked the VTA membership to help us by participating in writing a story of “What I Learned from the War in Vietnam.” For this edition of the Sponson Box, we have not one single offering from our over 500 members. If we cannot get anyone to help us, then we will have to discontinue this feature due to lack of interest.

What I’ve Learned

Esquire Magazine’s monthly column ‘What I’ve Learned’ is an excellently composed editorial on the meaning of life from the perspective of some of the world’s most intriguing statesmen, artists, and philosophers. I am neither statesman, nor artist, nor philosopher (and if you ask any woman who has ever dated me, hardly intriguing) but I am a Marine who just left active duty service. After 11 years since having first raised my right hand, and in the spirit of Esquire’s eminent feature, I spent the first day of my terminal leave reflecting...on what it is I’ve learned.

On Life (in general):

Life’s much easier when you read wonderful books and stare at inconceivable art and listen to transcendent music and watch inspiring movies. When you allow great authors and poets and filmmakers and musicians and artists to help sort things out for you, life just becomes easier, I think. Perhaps this is because you realize you are not the first person that has ever felt that he had no clue what’s going on, or what’s to come. You realize you are not alone. And you say to yourself humble things like, “how small I am.” And you become stronger.

But even with the nod of the greats, it’s important we each tell our own story in our own way. It’s therapy, for one. But it

also preserves the memory. I never want to forget any of the Marines I ever walked alongside. They are my heroes.

Chapters (...and why a father is always right):

On the last afternoon of my active duty service, I met my old man for a drink. We sat in deep couches in a familiar bar and ordered the old fashioned. We first toasted the great naval service of which we had both served, and next the adventure that I had just lived. We sat in that bar for hours and told stories of the great men we knew back then and how I wish the VA would cover the Propecia prescription for my hair loss, and finally did what it is a father and a son do after one has come back from war and the other had already been, which is change the subject and talk about mom.

And at some point that afternoon, I can’t be sure exactly at which time, I looked at my dad, who had flown three tours in Vietnam and whose one Marine son had fought in Afghanistan and whose other in Iraq, and asked him what he was thinking about just then. He told me he was thinking about life’s chapters and how important it is to recognize when they start and when they finish. He told me to enjoy this moment.

And that was all he said.

My dad’s lesson was simple that

afternoon: It’s essential to sincerely differentiate between “time” and “moments” because life’s shade, import and value are defined by moments and time is just what we have left.

My father, the Scotsman, was right. But then again, it’s been my experience that a father is always right.

On Love (...swimming in the ocean, Shakespeare, and everything else):

Pool workouts are straightforward, comfortable and humdrum. But working out in the water is about heart, and when you swim in the ocean you have the environment to compete with and the climate and God. And so I prefer to do my swim workouts in the open ocean. This weekend I did my usual La Jolla Cove to La Jolla Shores and back swim. The water was cold and the sand sharks off the Shores, harmless though they are, did their best to frighten me (but how I love that they take 30 seconds off my 500 meter split). The only difference between this swim and the countless others I’ve done these past few years is that this was the first ocean swim I’d done since being off active duty.

For the first time this workout was about me wanting to look and feel good, instead of about preparation for training (or not wanting to fall behind my Force Recon Marines during a swim exercise)

and, quite frankly, I hated that feeling.

My mind was everywhere during the swim. But at around the 1,000 meter mark it settled on one thing: how much I love the Marine Corps.

It came to me out there that my experience in the Marine Corps was the most wonderful, transformative, rich experience a man could ever hope to have.

And this is what I learned:

The Marine Corps taught me the sort of practical things that all men should know, but don’t these days like how to shoot a weapon, survive in the wilderness, navigate by compass and map, and take care of your feet.

The Marine Corps taught me the true meaning of words I had only before read about in Shakespeare: honor, obligation, courage, fidelity and sacrifice. These were no longer merely a part of some story from an epic script on war, but real memories about real men in war.

In the Marine Corps, I learned what it means to be truly happy and what it feels like to be truly sad. And I realized neither had anything to do with me but both had everything to do with the unit and the definition of a meaningful life.

In my travels, I learned that life isn’t very easy for most people in this world. And that we are blessed to have won life’s lottery and to have been born in this country.

I learned that freedom is impossible without sacrifice and neither matters very much without love.

I learned that it’s not what’s on your

chest that counts, but what’s in your chest.

I learned that standards matter. I was taught the importance of discipline. And of letting go from time to time.

I learned that all it takes is all you got. I learned a good NCO is worth his weight in gold...a good Staff NCO is absolutely priceless.

I learned it is important to write letters to yourself along the way because the details will escape you.

I learned there is a difference between regret and remorse.

Phase lines help you eat an elephant. Which is true with so much in life, I suppose.

I learned that apathy is the evil cousin of delegation.

The Marine Corps taught me about physical courage, team work, the absolute virtue of a human being’s great adventure, and that all men fall.

With respect to tactics, I’ve found it most critical to never say, “Never”, and never say, “Always.”

I learned the importance of a good story shared among friends. Or a good glass of scotch enjoyed in solitude. Or of the importance of sailing away until you cannot see the coastline anymore...and then coming home, a better man.

I learned that faith matters. And that aside from the importance of believing the universe is so much bigger than any one man could ever comprehend, and I learned that I truly believe in the power of a great bottle of wine, the courage of

the enlisted Marine, and the tenets of maneuver warfare.

I discovered my morality.

I learned how to fight in the Marine Corps... and my time in bars with my brother-Marines has taught me that contrary to our own self-perpetuated mythology, not all blood that Marines shed together is on the battlefield.

The Marine Corps taught me how to think aggressively. How to respond under pressure? How to perform? How to live excellently and that nothing is more important than the mission or the Marine.

The Marine Corps taught me how to laugh – deeper than I ever thought imaginable – and how to cry. And that a warrior’s tears reflect his soul.

Finally, the Marine Corps did more for me than I could have ever done for it... it gave me an extraordinary adventure to live that is mine and that I will never for the rest of my life forget.

And then there’s this last irony...

That I would have the honor of spending these years studying and practicing the discipline of war fighting alongside the wonderful, modern Marine-hoplite only to realize that what I learned had so much less to do with war and so much more to do with love.

How do I feel in the 72 hours since I’ve left the Marine Corps?

I miss it already. How about you?

Published April 2011

Author unknown.

■

[Editor’s note: The following highly edited (by me) article was published on a military blog. The author is a German journalist with either a total lack of proper history or an axe to grind with Americans in general. The responses at the end of the article were published on the blog the next day.]

09/05/2012

Russian Arms Legend in Trouble

Bankrupt AK-47 Maker Puts Hope in New Guns

By Christian Neef

The Spiegel (magazine) - Online

The Russian company that manufactures the legendary Kalashnikov assault rifle has fallen on hard times. A halt in orders from the Russian military and a flood of cheaper knockoffs have driven it into bankruptcy. But the firm

hopes to revive its fortunes with new models and a global branding campaign...

...This automatic weapon, known in Russian simply as an "avtomat," even receives the highest praise from Americans; Rogozin reported elite US

military units use it, he added, even though the U.S. Congress generally prefers to purchase only American-made weapons. Private collectors have also come to embrace this assault rifle, he continued, noting that U.S. sales of the weapon jumped by 50 percent last year. He also mentioned how Afghanistan is still asking Moscow for Kalashnikovs "even though they have 140,000 well-armed NATO

(Continued on page 45)

Poems

THEY DON'T WEAR PURPLE HEARTS IN HEAVEN

By Joseph L. Melnick

I lost my brother to a foreign land;
I was too young to even understand.
There came a knock at the front door,
Then momma wasn't smiling anymore.
The man at the door was a Marine;
The first I'd ever seen.
Momma told me to go out and play,
Then the preacher came and they started to pray.
Tears ran down from momma's eyes,
And I heard her say, "Why, Lord, why?"
Father stood there seemingly mindless,
All he said was, "We've lost another of America's finest."
The Marine handed momma a small velvet case,
Inside was a purple ribbon, attached to a gold heart with Washington's face.
I asked momma if it were mine,
But she said, "It's your brother's, Sunshine."
"Momma, can we send it to Kevin?"
She answered, "They don't wear Purple Hearts in heaven."

JOKES

Marine Corps Sensitivity

A young Naval Officer was in a terrible car accident, but due to the heroics of the hospital staff, the only permanent injury was the loss of one ear. Since he wasn't physically impaired, he remained in the military and eventually became an Admiral. However, during his career he was always sensitive about his appearance.

One day the Admiral was interviewing two Navy Master Chiefs and a Marine Sergeant Major for his personal staff.

The first Master Chief was a Surface Navy type and it was a great

interview. At the end of the interview the Admiral asked him, "Do you notice anything different about me?"

The Master Chief answered, "Why yes, sir. I couldn't help but notice you are missing your starboard ear, so I don't know whether this impacts your hearing on that side."

The Admiral got very angry at this lack of tact and threw him out of his office.

The next candidate, an Aviation Master Chief, when asked this same question,

answered, "Well yes, you seem to be short one ear, sir."

The Admiral threw him out also.

The third interview was with the Marine Sergeant Major. He was articulate, extremely sharp, and seemed to know more than the two Master Chiefs put together. The Admiral wanted this guy, but went ahead with the same question.

"Do you notice anything different about me?"

To his surprise the Sergeant Major said, "Yes sir. You wear contact lenses."

The Admiral was impressed and thought to himself, what an incredibly tactful Marine. "And how do you know that?" the Admiral asked.

The Sergeant Major replied, "Well sir, it's pretty hard to wear glasses with only one fuckin' ear."

"A U.S. Marine rescued a boy who fell into the lion cage at the National Zoo in Washington, DC. He jumped over the fence, punched the lion and snatched away

the boy. The next day the Washington Post newspaper reported that a Marine attacked an African immigrant and stole his lunch." --comedian Argus Hamilton

A Gunny makes it to Heaven

The Pope died of old age and found himself at the gates of Heaven at 0300.

He knocks on the gate and a very sleepy Duty NCO opens the gate and says "Waddyah want?"

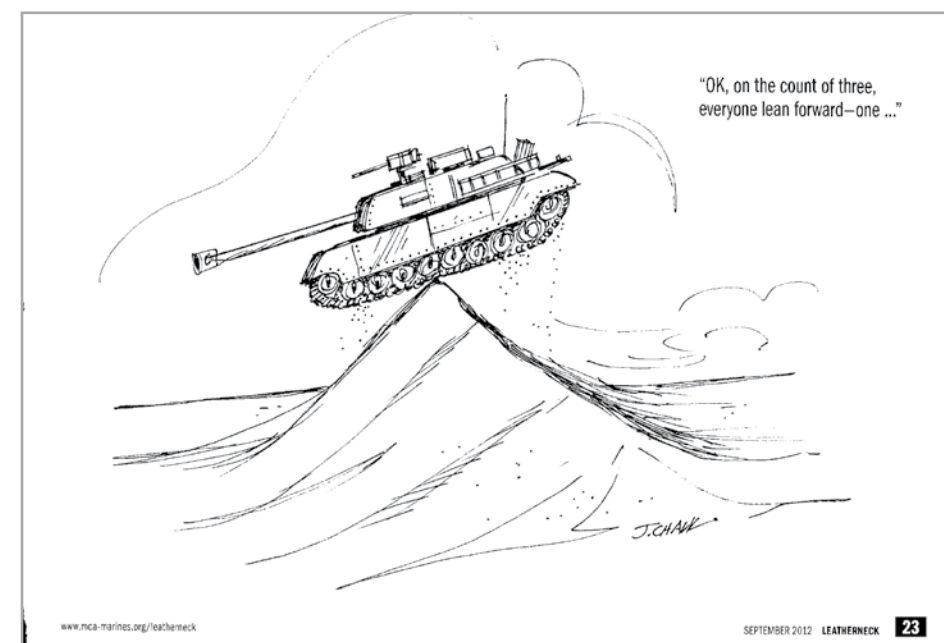
"I'm the recently deceased Pope and have done 68 years of godly works and thought I should check in here."

The Duty checked his roster and says, "I ain't got no orders for you here. Just bring your gear in and we'll sort this out in the morning." They go to an old WWII style barracks, 3rd floor, open bay. The Pope stows his gear under a rack and climbs in to an upper bunk.

The next morning he awakens to sounds of cheering and clapping. He goes to the window and sees a flashy Jaguar convertible parading down the clouds from the golden HQ building. The cloud walks are lined with saints and angels cheering and tossing confetti. In the back seat sits a Marine Gunny with a cigar in his mouth and a can of San Magoo in one hand, and his other arm around a voluptuous blonde angel with magnificent halos.

The Pope is disturbed by this and runs downstairs to the Duty Shack and says "Hey, what gives? You put me, the Pope, with 68 years of godly deeds, in an open squad bay while this Gunny, who must have committed every sin known and unknown to man is staying in a mansion on the hill and getting a hero's welcome. How can this be?"

The Duty NCO calmly looks up and says, "Hey, we get a Pope up here every 20 or 30 years, but we've NEVER had a Marine Gunny before."



It Came Down to One Marine

A little Marine Corps trivia for you....

by Vin Suprynowicz

On Nov. 15, 2003, an 85-year-old retired Marine Corps Colonel died of congestive heart failure at his home in La Quinta, Calif., southeast of Palm Springs. He was a combat veteran of World War II which was reason enough to honor him, but this Marine was a little different. This Marine was Mitchell Paige.

On Guadalcanal, the Marines struggled to complete an airfield. Japanese general Yamamoto knew what that meant. No effort would be spared to dislodge these upstart Yanks from a position that could endanger his ships. Before long, relentless Japanese naval counterattacks had driven supporting U.S. Navy from in-shore waters and the Marines were left on their own.

As Platoon Sgt. Mitchell Paige and his 33 riflemen set about carefully emplacing their four water-cooled 30-caliber Brownings, manning their section of the thin khaki line, which was expected to defend Henderson Field against the assault of the night of Oct. 25, 1942, it's unlikely anyone thought they were about to provide the definitive answer to that most desperate of questions, "How many able-bodied U.S. Marines does it take to hold a hill against 2,000 desperate and motivated attackers?"

But, by the time the night was over, "The 29th (Japanese) Infantry Regiment has lost 553 killed or missing and 479 wounded among its 2,554 men," historian Lippman reports. "The 16th (Japanese) Regiment's losses are uncounted, but the 164th's burial parties handled 975 Japanese bodies.... The American estimate of 2,200 Japanese dead is probably too low."

You've already figured out where the Japanese focused their attack, haven't

you? Among the 90 American dead and seriously wounded that night were all the men in Mitchell Paige's platoon--every one. As the night of endless attacks wore on, Paige moved up and down his line, pulling his dead and wounded comrades back into their foxholes and firing a few bursts from each of the four Brownings in turn, convincing the Japanese forces down the hill that the positions were still manned.

The citation for Paige's Medal of Honor picks up the tale. "When the enemy broke through the line directly in front of his position, Platoon Sgt. Paige, commanding a machine gun section with fearless determination, continued to direct the fire of his gunners until all his men were either killed or wounded. Alone against the deadly hail of Japanese shells, he fought with his gun and, when it was destroyed, took over another, moving from gun to gun, never ceasing his withering fire."

In the end, Sgt. Paige picked up the last of the 40-pound, belt-fed Brownings, the same design which John Moses Browning famously fired for a continuous 25 minutes until it ran out of ammunition, glowing cherry red, at its first U.S. Army trial, did something for which the weapon was never designed. Sgt. Paige walked down the hill toward the place where he could hear the last Japanese survivors rallying to move around his flank, the belt-fed gun cradled under his arm, firing as he went.

And the weapon did not fail.

Coming up at dawn, battalion executive officer Major Odell M. Conoley was first to discover the answer to our question, "How many able-bodied Marines does it take to hold a hill against two regiments of motivated, combat-

hardened infantrymen who have never known defeat?"

On a hill where the bodies were piled like cordwood, Mitchell Paige alone sat upright behind his 30-caliber Browning, waiting to see what the dawn would bring.

One hill, one Marine.

But, "In the early morning light, the enemy could be seen a few yards off, and vapor from the barrels of their machine guns was clearly visible," reports historian Lippman. "It was decided to try to rush the position."

For the task, Major Conoley gathered together "three enlisted communication personnel, several riflemen, a few company runners who were at the point, together with a cook and a few messmen who had brought food to the position the evening before."

Joined by Paige, this ad hoc force of 17 Marines counterattacked at 5:40 a.m., discovering that "the extremely short range allowed the optimum use of grenades." They cleared the ridge.

And that's where the unstoppable wave of Japanese conquest finally crested, broke, and began to recede. On an unnamed jungle ridge, on an insignificant island no one had ever heard of called Guadalcanal.

But, who remembers, today, how close-run a thing it was -- the ridge held by a single Marine, in the autumn of 1942?

When the Hasbro Toy Co. called some years back, asking permission to put the retired colonel's face on some kid's doll, Mitchell Paige thought they must be joking.

But they weren't. That's his mug on the little Marine they call "G.I. Joe."

And now you know... ■

One Marine's View

You failed – but then what did you do?

By Sam Sanford

Regardless of what profession you are in or the level you are at, no one is perfect, and if you stay at something long enough you will fail some time. Some will fail bigger than others. Some will get back on the horse. Some won't ever see the light of day.

Regardless if you're a multi-million dollar quarterback in the NFL or a mortar man that ends up with the base plate each time on the movement to contact foot march; as in life, you will have your highs and lows. What matters the most is what you do next after your failure. You have to get back on the horse, as it goes with the saying, "when you get bucked off, you got to get back on." You could mope around, hang your head, think "boohoo, woe is me", or you can man the "F" up and kick some ass. It takes heart, it takes courage.

In some professions, failure, screw ups, brain farts, whatever you want to call them, can have different results. In some professions, it may not be a first down; in some professions people may die. Leaders are that. They lead. They aren't afraid to screw up but they minimize their screw ups by being a leader and a professional. If they do a "punt one in the stands" screw up or fail, they man up to it, take responsibility for it, fall on their sword, take their punishment like a man if it's coming and soldier on....or Marine on.

There is nothing like failing, letting your team down, or just simply dropping the ball when the stakes are high. No one is perfect. Did you hear me? No one is perfect and a zero mistake mentality is crap and unrealistic. People will make mistakes. The question is: Did they learn from them and more importantly, what did they do next?

That warrior "leader" is more likely gearing up an old fashioned ass chewing aimed at you to make sure you know where

and why you screwed up. Ass chewing's can really humble a person. One time I was so frustrated at this Marine that I wanted to blow him in place about a mistake he routinely made over and over. However, I didn't and for whatever reason I took a deep breath, pulled the lad aside, and simply did the big brother, coach to player talk with him. Everyone responds differently to criticism. This doesn't mean you baby "professionals," it means you, as a leader, need to know how to find out why they failed and mentor them back. If he failed, did you also fail as his mentor?

"My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure." – Abraham Lincoln

Failing sucks until good comes out of it. I had another Marine who had an "awe shit" and did something he shouldn't have. It could have cost him his career in the military. However, after weighing through all the bullshit, did it warrant crushing him and his double digit years in the Corps? No, we hammered him and made it hurt in other ways and guess what? That warrior became a sergeant major one day, and a great one, from screwing up an event and learning from it. In my view he was over all a more experienced leader that learned from his mistakes because of the actions he conducted following his failure. More importantly he was a role model showing warriors what can happen if you rebound yourself, and he could make that connection with younger warriors because he had been there himself.

You can really screw up something, think there is no hope and that you will never be able to recover. Then we get to see how much heart you really have because what happens next following that failure defines a man's character. You can roll over and quit or you can take the more difficult path and recover. It's not going to be a cake walk, especially if your failure was a big one; but, crazy as it seems, a long way down the road you may even look back at that failure and think it was the best thing that happened to you. You might even laugh about it one day. Not right after the failure, but maybe a ways down the road.

So you so just had a failure--now what are you going to do? Regardless if you think you can fix it or not, you're right. It's all up to you. I bet when you start getting yourself un-assed there will be a couple of "leaders" who come from nowhere and help you. The good ones will. Thankfully, I'm not the only one who thinks this.

So you just had a failure; what you do next will define your character.

Time for a C-Gar!

Reprinted with permission from Sam Sanford ■



THE C.I.D. MAN

By Bob Vaxter
Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks

If memory serves me correctly, it was either late July or early August 1968 when the stranger wearing stateside utilities showed up at the Charlie Company rear in Quang Tri. At first, he appeared to be just like every other FNG wearing stateside utilities, stateside boots, and had a stateside haircut. The utilities were cleaned and starched, a true new guy.

At first, no one paid any attention to the guy; after all, he was just another new guy. But then a strange thing was noticed about the new guy. He had been with Charlie Company for about a week and he was still wearing clean and starched stateside utilities and stateside boots. Every other new guy (FNG) was now wearing jungle utilities and jungle boots.

One other thing was noticed about this strange new guy. He was always clean and he never seemed to do anything.

Things became really strange one day after the new guy had been around for a couple of weeks. The crew of Charlie-32 were working on their tank, getting ready to go back into the bush. The new guy, still wearing stateside utilities and boots came over to the tank and began talking about different ways that we could perform the field maintenance on the tank that would save us a lot of time and work. He told us that he was a tank mechanic and that was the reason that he knew how to perform different types of field maintenance.

A couple of days later, one of the third

platoon tankers asked, "Has anyone seen that new guy that wears the stateside utilities?" The response was that no one had seen him for a couple of days. It seems he was there and then he was gone.

About a week later, we had just finished running a convoy from Dong

it; this guy shows up dressed like he just came from the states, never seems to do anything, never gets dirty, and disappears from time to time and no one knows where he goes!" Well, this got us all thinking; he says he's a tank mechanic, but he never works on tanks. He says he's a tank mechanic, but he never gets dirty. Besides that, no one knows his name.

A few days later, late August, I think, we got back to Quang Tri and we started talking with some of the other Charlie Company third platoon tank crews. None of them knew his name or what he did. We all kind of came to the conclusion that he was CID.

Well, the days stretched into months

and it came time for yours truly to rotate back to the world. When I was back in the rear with a tank, sometimes CID was there, sometimes he was not. I rotated back to the states, finished my four years in the Marine Corps, was discharged and went on with my life.

In 2009, I was able to make contact with an old platoon buddy, Michael Curtis. He, I, and fellow third platoon member, Glenn Hutchins, made arrangements to visit with Mike in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 2010, Glenn and I drove out to Tulsa and spent two weeks visiting Mike.

One afternoon a couple of days after we

(Continued on page 45)



Photo: Bobby Joe Blyth on far left wearing clean stateside "utes"!

Ha to Cam Lo, and we were sitting on the tank alongside of Highway 1 waiting for another convoy to form up to return Dong Ha. When, who should come walking up to the tank but the FNG dressed in stateside utilities and stateside boots and as clean as a whistle. We all made small talk for a few minutes and then the convoy was ready to leave. The FNG said that he would see us later and he walked away.

Now, we are all beginning to wonder about this guy. He's been in country for just over a month and he is still dressed like he was pulling duty at Camp Pendleton. Donnie Bell made the comment, "I'll bet he's a CID!" Donnie said, "Think about

No Cover? No Problem!

By Cpl John Wear
3rd Tanks, '68 – '69

BACKGROUND: I am the gunner on a flame-thrower tank (CRISPY CRITTERS) that was assigned to Task Force Robbie, situated at Cam Lo Hill in Northern I Corps, Vietnam, in the spring of 1968. I was ordered to report to our Company Commanding Officer who was in "The Rear" at Quang Tri.

THE STORY: When our truck arrives at the Quang Tri Combat Base, we pass through the main gate and, in no time, we pull up to the entrance of the 3rd Tank Battalion HQ. The driver applies the brakes, pauses a moment and then shouts, "All ashore that are going ashore." What a goof ball! He thinks he's on a boat pulling up to the dock. Oh hell, I won't rain on his parade.

As I'm jumping off the truck, I yell to the driver, "Thanks buddy! Hey! Don't forget me when you are heading back to Cam Lo Hill, okay?" He waves to me, puts the big truck in gear, and heads off in a cloud of dust for the 3rdMARDIV mail room.

As the dust clears, I take a look around and see the two H&S Company gun tanks parked next to a big tent to the far left of the dozen or so "hardback" hooches that make up the 3rd Tank Battalion rear area. These are the same tanks that were in Hue City with me during the Tet Offensive fighting to free the city just a few months ago. As I am walking over towards the tanker's tent, a huge master gunnery sergeant strides up to me and he holds out his hand like a traffic cop indicating me to stop. Of course, I stop dead in my tracks. He then puts his face almost nose to nose with me and says in the most menacing



voice (through clenched teeth), "Marine, where is your fuckin' cover?"

I come to a slack form of attention and say, "It blew off my head on the truck from Cam Lo Hill, Gunny."

"That's MASTER Gunny to you, Marine."

"Aye-aye, Master Gunny."

"Now, why are you in MY fuckin' battalion area without a fuckin' proper United States Marine Corps-issued cover, Marine?" He hisses at me, again through seething clenched teeth, toes to toes and nose to nose.

"Give me some slack will you? I just got out of the fighting in Hue, my tank just hit a mine at Cam Vu and I lost my cover about five minutes ago."

"Don't speak to me like that Marine or I

will have your ass thrown in the fuckin' brig."

"What do you want me to do, Master Gunny?"

"Get a fuckin' cover on your fuckin' head or get out of my fuckin' battalion area, most riki-tick!"

"Aye-aye, Master Gunny."

I turn and practically run for the H&S Company tank crew's tent and I don't look back until I get to the doorway. As I enter the tent, I see sitting on their racks "Marty" Martinez, "Willy" Williams, Mike Andregg, and some of the other guys who fought the NVA in Hue with me. Sitting just outside of the ring of "salty" tankers is a new guy named Esquivel. As it turns out, he is a Mexican-American from

(Continued on page 44)

Gary Young

By Clyde Hoch

Four of us came out of Marine boot camp and infantry training and were assigned to 2nd Tank Battalion at Camp LeJeune, NC. We ended up all in the same platoon in Bravo Company. We were all bottom-of-the-barrel privates. Donald May from Buffalo, NY; Robert Lee Alexander of



(Left to right) Terry Hunter, Dickey Russell and Gary Young

Ohio; Gary Young, and me. May was a good guy, while Alexander was always getting us into trouble. He had a knack for making everything seem funny...so, he got away with most of his crimes.

Gary was a very nice, easy-going country boy from Kentucky. I remember asking him many times what time it was and he would always look at the sun and, somehow, he'd be very close to the actual time. I remember people would say, "Young, where are you from?" His reply was always "Tucky!" He was always pleasant and most of the time he'd have a little grin on his face.

The four of us did a Mediterranean cruise together. When we returned, we spent a total of about a year-and-a-half as a hapless group. Then, one day, Alexander and I were told we were going on another Mediterranean cruise. I don't know what happened to May, because I never heard

from him again. And Young was headed for Nam.

Quite some time later, I heard that Young was killed in Nam. I heard bits and pieces, but I never knew the whole story. Not that long ago, I had the opportunity to talk to Gary's brother, Lynn. By the way, Lynn is also a Vietnam Marine tanker veteran. He told me to call Louis Ryle, because Louis was the driver on Gary's tank the day he was wounded.

When I spoke to Louis, he told me that their tank was hit with an RPG. It penetrated the turret and seriously wounded Gary Young, the gunner, immediately.

The RPG also struck a white phosphorus round inside of the tank and set it off. The exploding tank shell hit Louis in the back

and his helmet was blown off. Now, he couldn't communicate with the rest of his crew and he didn't know what was going on. To make matters worse, the NVA had on USMC flak jackets and uniforms, so no one could recognize friend from foe.

Louis climbed out of his driver's compartment and pulled Gary out of the tank with the help of some grunts. They then pulled out the tank commander, Gunnery Sergeant Tatum. As the tank was smoldering, the grunts worried about all the other 90mm ammunition in the tank going off. Louis climbed back in the

driver's seat and backed the burning tank off the berm.

The brave Louis Ryle stayed with Gary and Gunny Tatum all night. He said, "They were hurting." The grunts couldn't get a medevac chopper in that night. Louis felt that both WIA tankers would pass away the next day. The medevac chopper finally arrived and, ten days later, Gary died from his horrific wounds. The following day, Gunny Tatum died. Gary's friend at the time, Terry Hunter, said the company held a memorial service for the Gunny and Gary. He said, "It was the only memorial service that the company ever held." All received Purple Hearts. Much later, Gunny Tatum received a Silver Star for this incident.

Not long after this series of events took place, Lynn Young, Gary's little brother, arrived in Vietnam. He was assigned to B-25, which was the tank that replaced the original B-25 that was destroyed in this incident. I was proud to serve with



and be a good friend of Gary Young. And I will never forget him!

This story an excerpt from a book Clyde Hoch is in the process of writing and editing. The book will be about Marine tanks and tankers, written by tankers of all wars from WWI to the present time. ■

Third Tanks Maintenance Facility at Dong Ha, Vietnam



Number One is of Ricky Sermons working under a tank and Harold Riensche asking him what he sees.



Number Two is Ricky Sermons, Harold Riensche (mitten der hands in der pockets, ach der lieber!) and John Harper.



Number Three is with parts everywhere is (Left to right:) ____? (Larry can't remember him either)...then Larry Parshall, Harold Riensche and an unknown someone in a squared away cover.

Laura Riensche - The good wife of Harold Riensche
Reed Point, MT
Phone: (406) 326-2363

Below is Ann Sermon's email about Ricky Sermons.

Hello there. Sorry it's been a while but the net was down and I just got your message. I am glad to hear from you both.

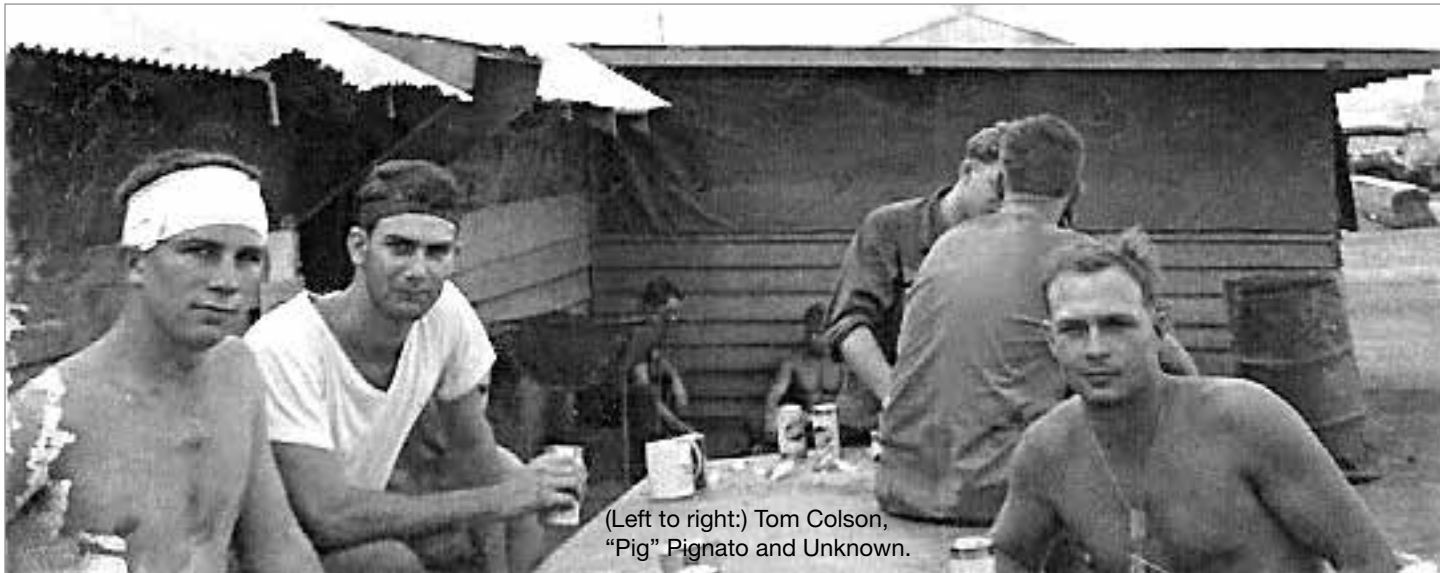
Our address is:

Ricky Sermons
134 Carutha Barnard Rd
Claxton, Georgia 30417
Phone: (912) 334 2281.

Rick is doing better now since the cancer is gone in left lung but his right lung is still clearing up. He has two cysts on his kidneys now. Dr. said not to worry since some people have them. We have a new grandson, Aiden James. He is 14 months old.

L/Cpl Joseph Michael Pignato

By Tom Colson



(Left to right:) Tom Colson, "Pig" Pignato and Unknown.

This picture was taken at the end of June 1968 in front of Alpha Company, 3rd Tanks EM Club at the Dong Ha Combat Base in Vietnam. The person I want to concentrate on is L/Cpl. Joseph M. Pignato, who was KIA on my tank on November 6, 1968. In the above picture seated on the far left is me, L/Cpl. Thomas L. Colson, with the bandaged head. I was healing from just another night on the DMZ when four RPG's hit A-51, the tank that I served on as a crewman. To my left is L/Cpl. Pignato or, as we used to call him, "Pig." Maybe the other Marines can be identified by one of the readers of this story... but I have pulled a brain fart.

After this photo was taken, it was another five months before "Pig" was assigned to my new tank, which was around the first of November 1968. By then I was the tank commander of A-53, "Little Irritation." We were considered to be with H&S Co. on a "float." We were on a joint operation with the 26th Marines south of Da Nang by the leper colony. We had been on the USS Duluth and, after several days of operating, our unit pulled into a village area and I saw three ARVN soldiers run out of a thatched-hooch and boldly stole a case of C-rations off the left fender of my tank. After they ran back into the hooch, I got really mad and wanted my driver

to drive my tank over the hooch. I keyed on my comm. helmet to tell Stroll, my driver, to give me a hard left and to run them over, but I keyed the switch forward to transmit (instead of back for intercom). When my Lt. heard me over the radio, he jumped down from his tank and came over to stand in front of my tank. He shouted up to me that he was standing there because I hadn't answered him on the radio when he told me to stand down from squashing the good hooch. Eventually I cooled down and we sat there waiting for what seemed like hours to pull into our night position. This is where all of our tanks would be set up on a perimeter surrounding the so-called "friendly" village. We finally got the word to move and our tanks and the grunts got in position and settled in for the night.

My driver, L/Cpl. Stroll, stood first watch; I was to be second watch and L/Cpl. Pignato, the gunner, was third watch. Shortly after "Pig's" watch was over and he had bedded back down on the armor plate after turning the watch over to my loader, there was a loud thud and a horrific explosion. I was blown off the tank and ended up on the ground to the right side of the rear sprocket. I stood up and did a quick check with my loader to see what happened. He said that he didn't know, except that he heard something hit the tank

and then came the blast. I checked the rest of the crew and found "Pig" on the back of the tank, not moving, so I shouted at the top of my lungs, "Corpsmen up!" Stroll's back was hurting, because he had been sleeping in the gypsy rack when the blast came up from under him, which, he said, had thrown him up in the air a couple of feet. I had a few pieces of small shrapnel on my right arm and, luckily, the loader who had been on watch had no injuries at all. The corpsmen worked on "Pig", who was lying on the back of the armor plate next to the travel lock.

We determined that we had been attacked from our rear from the so-called "friendly" village.

I couldn't move the turret, because the corpsman was working on Pignato and we did not want to cause a stir getting the driver to move the tank to face the village, so I had my loader throw me the grease gun and I stood on the sponson boxes by the rear sprocket watching for movement.

I told the loader to stay on the sky-mounted 50 and aim it at the village. Stroll was hurting badly and was pretty disorientated, so I told him to stay put so that the corpsman could take a look at him next.

Oh, how I wanted to blow away the entire village! Luckily, circumstances kept me from

doing what I wanted to do, and that probably kept me out of the brig. After what seemed like hours, the corpsman finally said (of Pignato), "This Marine didn't make it." My stomach dropped to the ground. My next emotion was that I got really pissed off... and now I REALLY wanted to blow up the village. The corpsman and two tankers from other tanks bagged "Pig" and we left him on the armor plating until morning. I think they left him on the armor plate so I wouldn't charge my tank through the village.

The next morning, in came two helicopters loaded with a large group of South Vietnamese Military Police. Some of them were in their class "A" uniforms with white leggings, while most of them were wearing jungle utilities. There was one man that seemed to be the leader, who was in regular civilian clothes. He had all the villagers herded into a large (150 foot) circle located behind my tank. He would walk through the seated villagers and point at one. Then, the men in jungle utilities would grab that villager and take them aside for interrogation. After they left with the villager, they'd walk into the jungle and then they'd return to the circle empty-handed. The next thing they did was to bring a woman villager to a tree that was about 50 feet behind my tank and they tied her up. They started torturing her in ways I can't even repeat. Then some of the other MPs brought a male villager over to the ground next to the right rear sprocket of my tank. They had him dig a shallow hole in which they spread a Marine poncho. They then looked up at me and asked for some water. I handed them a five-gallon Jerry can and they filled a piss pot and started a fire. They heated the water in the helmet and put what looked like old lye soap in the water, mixing it up into lather. I had no idea what they were doing, but then I found out.

The police took a black pajama-clad and blind-folded male villager and laid him in the pit. They held him down with his head held low and poured the remainder of the five gallons over his face. After the water was poured out, two of the police sat on his chest holding him down even harder while another policeman took a rag and pulled it hard over his face, holding his head under the water. They then let the man's head up just a little and a fourth policeman poured some of that hot soapy water over the rag and in the man's

face. As the man tried to breath, they started slapping his nose and mouth. I watched this torture of the villager as his legs got stiff and he tried to lift up with the two policemen sitting on him. Then, the policeman who had poured the soapy water started screaming at the villager in Vietnamese, dunking him again, pouring the soap water over his mouth and noise. They repeated this process over and over until finally the policemen pulled the man up and they walked him off into the jungle. A few minutes later the policemen returned with the villager and started the process all over again.

After the third time, when the group returned from the jungle, a different policeman was carrying an extra rifle. Finally the torture process of the male villager stopped and the police lead him away. I signaled to the policeman who had gotten the water from me and I asked him what was going on. He said that the man was a VC sniper who had been placed in this village to blend in and to kill GI soldiers and Marines. He also told me that the last time they went out into the jungle with the VC sniper, he had taken them to his hidden sniper rifle. He noted that the rifle had 13 notches on the stock. I asked if the sniper had admitted throwing the grenade on my tank that had killed Pignato. The policeman said that they first thought this, but now they think it was one of the village women that they had pulled aside and tied to the tree.

The next thing that happened was that the entire group of police, along with their prisoners, loaded onto the two helicopters and they just flew away. Some of the grunts who had relocated their fighting holes next to my tank last night told me that the prisoners wouldn't make it back to Da Nang. The grunts said they had seen this same group of police before and they had heard that the cops liked to send their prisoners out the door of the airborne chopper without a parachute. That's the last I heard of any of the group.

I was still pissed off, upset, and really mad with the villagers for allowing the VC sniper to stay in their village. I knew that I had felt something was wrong when we pulled into our perimeter the night before, but I did not know what I was feeling or how it would turn out. Neither I nor my crew were used to working in the VC-controlled countryside, because we had always operated "up north",

mostly along the DMZ, and we fought with the NVA regulars in full uniform. Now, we were "down south" where we were protecting a village in our CP area, and these ungrateful gooks come over and stab you in your back? So we couldn't trust anyone. And I kept asking myself, "Why are we here risking our lives for these people who hate us?"

Later that morning, our company's acting first sergeant, GySgt. Rowe, came driving out in a jeep and asked me what happened. I told him the whole story and how I watched the torture of two of the VC. I told him about what the two engineers had found and how they decided on the kind of explosive device that killed Pignato. It seems that the Marine engineers had determined it was a homemade explosive device of some sort. Gunny Rowe knew I was ready to take on the whole village with my tank, so he said, "Colson, have you been on R&R yet?"

When I replied, "No," he said, "You've been here for over eight months...right?" I told the Gunny that I had been waiting for an opening at Australia...where I was told that there's ten women to every man.

The Gunny then radioed back to our unit. After he got a reply, he said, "Colson, get your gear because you're going on R&R tonight. You will be leaving and going to Japan before you explode!" I left with the gunny in his jeep and we went to Da Nang, while L/Cpl. Pignato's body left in a chopper heading home in a bag.

I was sick over the whole deal, mostly because Pignato was the only man that I had lost as a tank commander and he, along with the rest of the crew, was my responsibility. A couple of weeks later, I finally got back to my tank and resumed command, but L/Cpl. Stroll had been sent to Okinawa. I don't know where my loader went, but I had a whole new crew. I stayed on as tank commander of A-53, "Little Irritation", until I was ready to rotate home. I sure liked it better when I was with Alpha Co, 3rd Tanks "up north" based out of Dong Ha. At least there I knew who we were fighting. If it was any comfort, I sincerely feel that Pignato saved my life, because he took the full force of the blast which helped to protect me.

S/Sgt. Tom Colson

Tucson, AZ

Phone: (520) 382-7268

The Marble Mountain “Mad Dog” Caper

By Lt. Col. Ev. Tungent, USMC (Ret.)

When I assumed command of “B” Co., 3rd Tank Bn. in the spring of 1966, the Company CP was located just north of Marble Mountain. Two of my platoons were supporting 9th Marine battalions in the general area of Hill 55. My 2nd Platoon, under the leadership of 2ndLt. Bill “Lurch” Lochridge, was supporting the 1st Bn., 1st Marines in the area south of Marble Mountain; 1/1 had built a large “fort-like” command post from which it conducted company operations in the coastal area.

Following one company search and clear operation, the grunts found a young calf wandering loose and brought it back to the Bn. CP area. Since it was so young, it required hand feeding with milk and other “nutrients”, a job which the grunts willingly shared. While trying to come up with a mascot name, someone suggested the name “Shits”, since that was what the calf did a lot of.

In the same company area, other grunts had “adopted” a dog, which became very territorial and unfriendly to anyone or anything that invaded his TAOR. Because of his nasty nature, he was named “Ass Hole”. One day, “Ass Hole” took exception to “Shits” being in his TAOR and bit him. Several days later, it became obvious that “Ass Hole” was rabid and he was put down.

Seems like that should have been the end of a sad story, but it gets much worse!

The several Marines who could be identified as having had contact with “Shits” following the biting by “Ass Hole” were immediately evacuated to the hospital in Da Nang and given the series of rabies shots. Because it was uncertain how many more could be infected, the entire battalion was taken off the line and quarantined in a Division rear area to see if other cases would emerge. I’m sure this did not result in a favorable fitness report for the battalion CO!

Soon after the Marble Mountain “Mad Dog” caper, Division published an order that all dogs within unit perimeters be vaccinated against rabies if they were to be retained as “mascots”. There was to be a \$3.00 fee for the shots to be paid by anyone assuming ownership of the dogs. If no one assumed this obligation, the dogs were to be humanely destroyed or otherwise removed from unit perimeters.

Within my CP area, we had a number of dogs which all of a sudden didn’t belong to anyone in particular, for some strange reason, after I announced the \$3.00 fee for keeping them around. Now I was faced with the decision on how to humanely dispose of the dogs. My company gunny said he had a .22 cal. pistol and could take

the dogs to the rear wire of the compound and solve the problem. Somehow, that didn’t seem to fit the definition of “humane disposition” to me.

Our company Corpsman said he could go up the road to the Sea Bee’s compound and get sodium pentathol from the medical section and put the dogs to sleep with a simple injection. That sounded to me like the humane way to solve the problem. It turned out that, while my Corpsman knew how to give shots to people, he didn’t have the foggiest notion how to properly put an animal to sleep. He didn’t get the injection directly into the blood stream and that poor animal screamed and writhed for several minutes before finally succumbing. I said that was the end of that solution.

Bill Lochridge’s 2nd Platoon was due to head back down south to coordinate operations with the battalion which had replaced 1/1. I told Bill to load up all the dogs on his tanks and to drop them off in the “villes” as they passed through. I knew that the dogs would be welcomed by the villagers, “one way or another”! This put a humane end to the “Marble Mountain Mad Dog Caper” as far as I was concerned. I also made it clear that any other dogs showing up in my areas of responsibility had better bring their “papers” with them! ■

TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

By: Jim Coan

It’s been discomfoting to admit it, but the passage of time has dulled some memories of my tour in Vietnam as the platoon leader of 1st Platoon, Alpha Company, 3rd Tanks, 1967-68. Of course, I can recall many of the close calls, the fear I felt during incoming, as well as the times I was ready to spit nails when dealing with ignorant grunt officers who neither understood nor appreciated the tankers attached to them. But, what I hang on to the most, and pray they never fade, are my memories of some of the most gregarious, extroverted, one-of-a-kind characters that I had the honor and pleasure to share a cup of C-ration coffee with.

Sgt. Howard always comes to mind first. He had served a hitch in the Marines during the late ‘50s, early ‘60s, then left the Corps to become a construction worker. He decided to rejoin the Marines when the war in Nam was heating up. By 1967, he had worked his way up to sergeant. That Marine loved every day he spent in the Corps. When we were getting mortared, or rockets were hitting our compound at Con Thien, we could always count on Howard to say something to break the tension and get us laughing in the grim reaper’s face. He was the platoon scrounger. Clean cots and new blankets would show up in our bunkers overnight. I asked no questions, because I didn’t want to hear any lies.

Howard’s tank and mine were marooned for a few days at C-2 when a monsoon deluge washed out the MSR between Con Thien and C-2 in September, 1967. One afternoon, Howard and another tanker walked in carrying a crate of apples and some large cans of dehydrated potatoes. Their story was that they had convinced a sympathetic cook that we had nothing to eat and were starving. I suspected that they had filched the food from the mess hall tent, when

the cook was distracted. Again, I asked no questions.

We had rigged up a tent-like tarp between our two tanks to keep us out of the rain. One day, a dozer tank from the Cam Lo Bridge joined us. The TC was L/Cpl. “Charlie” Brown. His tank had been marooned when the bridge flooded, so he was looking for some shelter until the rain subsided. Unbeknownst to me and my little band of orphaned tankers, Brown was a legend in the Marine Corps, having been busted and promoted more times that anyone knew. He was the type of combat Marine you wanted watching your back in a fight, but not someone to go bar hopping with on liberty. When he asked innocently if anyone had a deck of cards, we stacked a few cases of C-rations to make a table and played “tonk”; then we rolled some dice. By the time “Charlie” Brown and his crew left, none of my tankers had any piasters left. We were all cleaned out, having been taken to school by the best in the business.

My first platoon sergeant was Gunny Hopkins, a Korean War vet from West Virginia who only had a few years to go until retirement. He greeted everyone as “old cob.” His dream job upon retirement was to drive a beer truck. He had forgotten more about tanks than I knew, so I depended on his input and experience. Despite his countrified tendencies and me being a city boy from Tucson, we hit it off right away. We shared a Dyemarker bunker at C-2 for a month, and I enjoyed it when he would serenade us with a country song—“Yo-ure cheatin’ heart” He scrounged up ice from somewhere, so we always had cold beer, which was a blessing after 40 days under siege at Con Thien. Of the five platoon sergeants I served with in Nam, Gunny Hopkins is the one who always comes to mind first.

One of the most unforgettable

characters I met was Bert Trevail. He was a 24-year old Lance Corporal who had once served in the Canadian Army. He tried college, but didn’t adapt well to the confines of academia, so he joined the Marine Corps to go to Vietnam. My first day at Con Thien, I ducked into the tanker bunker to say hello. Trevail stabbed a bayonet into a warm can of beer and offered me a swig. He said, “Welcome to the fightin’ first platoon, sir!” I remember thinking, “All right! I’ve found a home here.” Trevail would challenge anyone, enlisted or officer, to a game of chess. He never lost. I wrote him up for a Bronze Star, after we had a tank drive into a 2,000 pound bomb crater in the DMZ during Operation Thor. My platoon was attached to G/2/9 attacking NVA dug into a bunker complex. Ignoring the mortar shells dropping around us, Trevail and another crewman got a tow cable hooked up to the stuck tank, then he stood out in the open to ground-guide the other tank out of the crater. We were then able to resume the attack.

There were some other characters I’ll never forget. We had a Lance Corporal Charlie Coggins with us for awhile. He was from Cullowhee (sp?), North Carolina. He lived so far back in the hills that I doubt he owned a pair of shoes until he joined the Marines. Coggins was assigned to Sgt. Howard’s tank. One night, unbeknownst to Coggins, the scout-sniper team behind us observed him through their night vision scopes sitting atop the turret playing with “Mr. Happy.” The next morning, some smirking scout snipers were asking who had the 0200 to 0400 watch. Coggins just laughed it off like no big deal.

We had some other unforgettable characters in the platoon. I’ll always remember Cpl. Ken “Piggy” Bores. He

(Continued on page 45)

No Cover, No Problem
(Continued from page 37)

Los Angeles, and for some strange reason this dude cannot speak Spanish worth a shit. And “Marty” Martinez is in the process of giving him a ration of shit (he’s unmercifully razzing the hapless new guy).

When Marty sees me he shouts out, “Shit, Esquivál, this white-assed gringo, Wear, can speak better Spanish than you! You’re disgrasiado (disgraceful)! Puto Pendajol!” This exact same row seems to come up every time I see Marty and this new guy all during my time in-country.

As I walk further in to the tent, the group is in a heated discussion over the merits of the rapid deployment of the Israeli tanks that occurred during the recent Seven-Day War with Egypt. Esquivál seems to be an expert in the details of each and every tank battle that went on over there. I have not read one word about this war (other than what I read in Time magazine a few months before). I make a mental note to find time to read more so that I can understand more about this momentous time in tank history. As Mike Andregg said, “Those damn Hebes really kicked those camel jockey’s asses but good.”

Willy says, “Hey, new guy (meaning me), what are you doing down here?”

I explain that for some reason that I do not know, I am in Quang Tri to report to Lt. Georgaklis who is now H&S Company Commanding Officer (our new CO).

Marty says, “I wonder what the Lieutenant has in mind for you, Wherro... (meaning pale guy).”

I come back, “No se, (I don’t know) pincheway (stingy bastard) - but if it’s good, I’ll let you know. Oh! By the way, who is that huge bad assed lifer master gunnery sergeant who just ate my azz out for not having a cover on in HIS battalion area?”

Mike Andregg comes back, “Whew! That was Master Gunnery Sgt. Cornelius, the baldest, meanest and most Gung Ho Marine that ever walked the Earth. What did he say to you?”

“He said that he was going to throw me in the brig if I stayed in HIS battalion area without a cover.”

“He’ll do it just to prove a point.”

“No way! Can he?”

“Yes he can and he will.” Willy says. “We had to endure him in back in Phu Bai for six months. But you know what? He is one of the toughest and most knowledgeable Marines that you will ever know. He is really fair...but let me tell you, brother, he is strictly by The Book. And if The Book says something is supposed to be a certain way, then that is the word of God to Master Gunny Cornelius. If you do good, he’ll tell you that you did good; but, if you fuck up, you’d better look out!”

He then adds, “Here, Wear, take my piss pot (steel helmet) but bring it back when you’re done.”

With the piss pot on my head, I amble over to the H&S Company Office, keeping an eye out for that crazy master gunny. I walk up the hardback hooch’s stairs, knock on the screen door and open it slowly. Inside I see a new office pogue who I haven’t seen before. I tell say to him. “I’m Corporal Wear. The Skipper ordered me to report to him today.”

Lt. Georgaklis is sitting at his desk inside an open door and barks at me, “Wear, get your skinny ass in here on the double!”

My eyes get really big and I utter to myself under my breath, “Oh shit, am I in trouble? What did I do?”

I remove my piss pot, enter his office, and stand at attention in front of his desk. “Corporal Wear reporting as ordered, sir.” By the way, Marines do not salute when not under cover (without a hat on) and we do not wear covers indoors.

He replies, “At ease, Wear. You are not in trouble. In fact, you are about to be rewarded for your knowledge of tanks and for your leadership.”

The Skipper dispenses with the small talk and asks me, “Corporal Wear, if you want to go to a gun tank company, I can get you into any company and any platoon that you want to go to. Once you get there I cannot guarantee that you’ll be made a tank commander right away. The alternative that I am offering you is that, since you have so much time in grade as a corporal, you can take over the entire third flame section if you want to; that’s all three third section flame tanks. Plus, there is a brand new flame tank sitting at Dong Ha with your name on the TC’s cupola.”

Hmmmmm...this is a tough one. I ponder that I know for a fact that being in “garbage burners” (flame tanks) is not too cool. Gun tanks are the place to be anytime, anywhere and anyhow. The sweetener to the Lt.’s deal is that I can go back to Dong Ha right now and claim my brand NEW flame tank. Of course, I take the “easy” way, and stay in flames. Why? It’ll look good on my “resume!”

Now when I reflect back on my decision, I recall that just before I was transferred to Vietnam, I had applied to go to Marine Officer Candidate School (OCS). I stopped that whole process with a letter written to the Commandant of the Marine Corps explaining that, in order to be a more effective Marine officer, that I wanted to get some combat experience as an enlisted man prior to becoming a Marine officer. As you can tell, since I am in Nam as I speak these words, the Commandant of the Marine Corps agreed with me. So this tank section leader job will, in fact, look really good on my resume! In retrospect, I probably should have gone to gun tanks. You can blow away a whole lot more gooks using a 90mm cannon than you can with a “garbage burning zippo” (flame thrower) tank. Oh well. Wadda ya gonna do? But you know? As it turns out, my fellow “zippo” tankers are a special breed.

The skipper offers me his hand as I thank him for his gift and turn to leave the company office. I replace the piss pot on my head and head back to the HQ tank platoon tent. I return Andregg’s helmet, and then I walk out to the main road just as the Task Force Robbie six-by truck comes by. I jump on and we’re out the Quang Tri main gate and heading on back to Cam Lo Hill in the blink of an eye. We pass through the north gate at Dong Ha and out the west gate without stopping and, in no time, we arrive at Cam Lo Hill. As I jump off the back of the truck, I see Goodie and Charlie sitting on the back of CRISPY CRITTERS cleaning the machine guns. I shout over to them, “Hey guess what? Charlie, you were right, I got my own tank!”

Charlie comes back, “That’s just fine. When do you leave?”

“Right now...bye-bye!”

AK-47
(Continued from page 31)

soldiers within their borders."

Russia has never graced the world with either a car or a super jet of its own. But over 60 years after its debut, the Kalashnikov appears to be marching triumphantly on. About 100 million AK-47s have been manufactured around the world. **The weapon helped guerrilla fighters in the jungles of Vietnam defeat their American opponents,** Mozambique's leaders incorporated it into their country's flag, and al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden carried one in his video appearances. To this day, Kalashnikovs are standard equipment for any rebel army in Africa.

The rifle's Russian designers had the principle of simplicity in mind from the very beginning. The Kalashnikov wasn't intended as a rifle for professional soldiers but, rather, as a small firearm for the masses of citizen-soldiers in the communist camp. In his 2010 history of the Kalashnikov entitled simply "The Gun," American journalist Christopher

The CID Man
(Continued from page 36)

had gotten to Tulsa, the three of us were looking at photographs that were taken when we were in Vietnam. It was a case of, do you remember this guy? Yeah, but what was his name? (That kind of thing; just looking at pictures and having old memories pop up.)

We came to one picture where several tank crews were working on a tank trying to remove the right side drive sprocket. Standing just a bit off to the side in the

Tanks for the Memories
(Continued from page 43)

Chivers describes the AK-47 and the nuclear bomb as "a mismatched, but fated, pair," explaining: "The nuclear umbrella froze borders in place and discouraged all-out war between the conventional armies stacked in Europe, helping to create conditions in which the Kalashnikov ... [became] the age's dominant tool for violence in conflict zones."

The Russian rifle, which keeps on shooting even in sandstorms or pouring rain, was a favorite in class struggles from the beginning. **American GIs fighting in the Vietnam War liked to exchange their M-16 rifles for the Kalashnikovs they seized from captured or killed enemy fighters, because the AK-47 would not break down, even in the humid jungle.**

Translated from the German by Ella Ornstein

REPLIES:

"...**The weapon helped guerrilla fighters in the jungles of Vietnam defeat their American opponents...**" – Christian Neff

QUESTION: Is the above completely false statement simply a case of left-wing nut-inspired revisionist history to fit a situation?

picture was the CID man in stateside utilities and stateside boots. And of course he was as clean as a new penny. I pointed him out to Mike and said, "Do you remember this guy, the one we all called the CID man?" Mike started laughing and I thought he was going to hurt himself. He said, “That is Bobby Joe Blyth; he was about as far from being CID as you could get.” Mike went on to tell us how he and Bobby Joe had been on the reactionary force together for a couple of months and had served with each other when Third Tanks went back to Okinawa

timer. I recall the day he got wounded and medevaced from Con Thien. I had mixed feelings--glad he was going home alive, but knowing his loss would leave a void of positive energy in the platoon.

I have lots of fond memories of those Marine tankers that I served with in

FACT: The United States military, during the ten years that our country had personnel in Vietnam, when faced directly with any and all assaults by the Vietnamese communist troops, soundly defeated that enemy (who were sometimes armed with the AK-47 assault rifle) in each and every major battle. The U.S. Congress, (aka the slimy politicians on Capitol Hill) was the sole reason that the war in Vietnam was "lost."

Semper Fidelis,

John Wear
Sgt. 3rd Tanks
RVN '68 - '69

Tanker John, I set out to type practically identical sentiments, but demurred, figured I would be one voice among hundreds with the same response. "The weapon helped guerilla fighters in the jungles of Vietnam defeat their American opponents." Mr. Neff probably believes that most American Vietnam veterans are below the ground and those that are not are senile.

Will Clifford

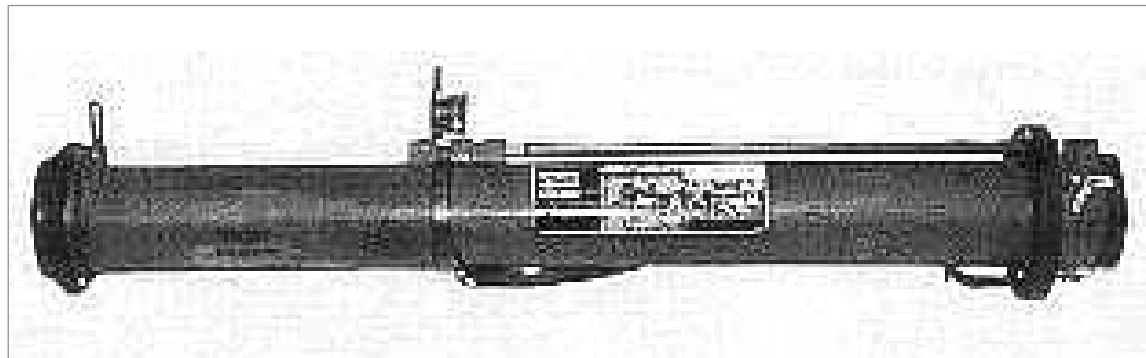
New RPG-29 and RPG-27

New Russian weapons are showing up in Iraq, apparently smuggled across the Syrian border. One of the more dangerous has been the RPG-29. This is a larger version of the widely used RPG-7. With a ten pound launcher firing a 14.7 pound 105mm rocket, the RPG-29 warhead is designed to get past some forms of reactive armor (ERA). The larger weapon (3.3 feet long when carried out, six feet long when ready to fire and 65 percent heavier than the 85mm RPG-7) is more difficult to carry around and fire, but some have been captured, and the damage on some American armored vehicles indicates they were hit by an RPG-29 rocket. The RPG-29 has an effective range of 500 meters. The warhead can also penetrate five feet of reinforced concrete.



RPG-29
Posted 5/4/2006

There is also a one shot version, the RPG-27, which weighs 17 pounds and has an effective range of 200 meters. Some of these have been found in Iraq as well. The RPG-29 and 27 are considered the “third generation” of the RPG family. The “second generation” was a failure with the cheaper and nearly as capable RPG-7.



RPG-27
Posted 5/4/2006

Both RPG-29s and 27s were developed and entered production just before the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. They are available through legitimate or black market arms dealers and are more expensive than the RPG-7 (which is manufactured by many countries.) RPG-29 launchers cost over \$500 each, and the rockets are about \$300 each. The RPG-27s cost over \$500 each. It's known that many of Saddam's higher ranking supporters escaped to Syria with a lot of cash. Apparently some of it is being spent on RPG-27s and 29s.

Submitted by Bob Peavey



12 Nov 2012 “Chesty” Puller statue dedicated at USMC Museum

Today, the bronze statue of Lt. Gen. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller, USMC, was unveiled and dedicated by the Marine Corps League at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Quantico, Va. The statue resides on a hill looking down on and pointing toward the museum

A REMINDER IN HISTORY

General Giap was a brilliant, highly respected leader of the North Vietnam military. The following quote is from his memoirs currently found in the Vietnam War memorial in Hanoi:

“What we still don’t understand is why you Americans stopped the bombing of Hanoi. You had us on the ropes. If you had pressed us a little harder, just for another day or two, we were ready to surrender! It was the same at the battle of TET. You defeated us! We knew it, and we thought you knew it. But we were elated to notice your media was helping us. They were causing more disruption in America than we could in the battlefields. We were ready to surrender. You had won!”



General Vo Nguyen Giap

General Giap has published his memoirs and confirmed what most Americans knew. The Vietnam War was not lost in Vietnam — it was lost at home. The same slippery slope, sponsored by the U.S. media, is currently underway. It exposes the enormous power of a Biased Media to cut out the heart and will of the American public.

A truism worthy of note: “Do not fear the enemy, for they can take only your life. Fear the media, for they will distort your grasp of reality and destroy your honor.”

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

**Please get your 2013 dues paid up! Make your check out to USMC VTA for \$30 and send to:
John Wear, USMC VTA, 5537 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938.
Check the last two digits after your name on the above address label.
If it is a number less than 13, you are behind on your dues.**

HELP THOSE WHO REMEMBER

The background of the central text is a stylized representation of the Vietnam War Memorial, featuring a series of vertical bars of varying heights and widths, creating a sense of depth and perspective.

VIETNAM

TEACH THOSE WHO DON'T