

Number 39

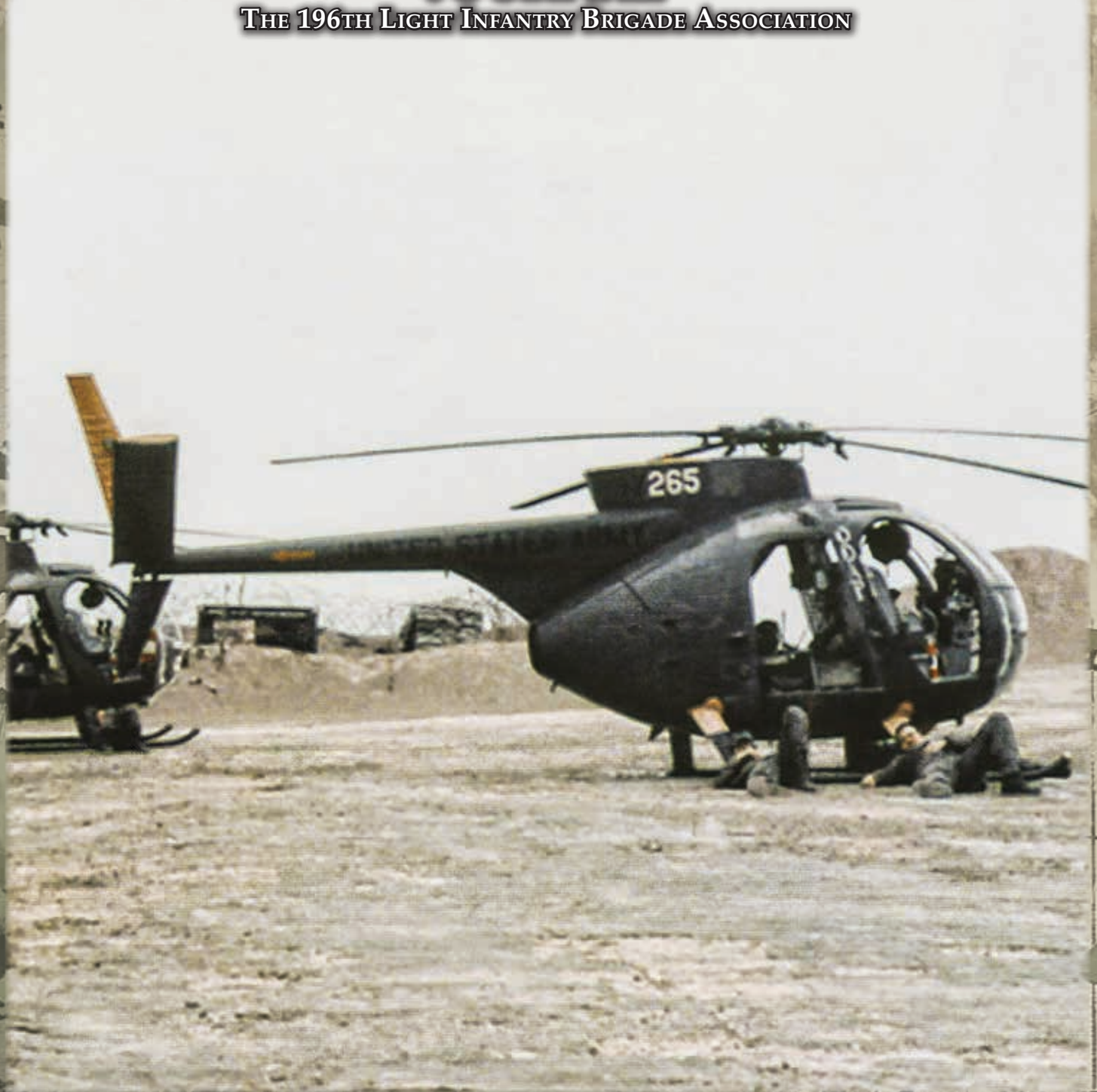
April 2025



CHARGER

JOURNAL

THE 196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE ASSOCIATION



196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

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196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

_____ Membership Application (or) _____ Address Change

Please make sure to fill out the application or address change completely and legibly. There are several members with similar names on our mailing list. Please inform us of any change in address to include both the old address and the new address.

ANNUAL DUES - \$20

LIFE DUES - \$196

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Birthdate: _____

Email: _____

DATES SERVED IN THE 196TH: FROM _____ To _____ UNIT BM/REGT _____ Co/BTRY _____ PLT _____

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL _____ NEW MEMBER _____ LIFE MEMBER _____

DONATION \$ _____ ENCLOSED \$ _____

Make check payable to: 196th LIB Association

Mail completed form and dues to Dave Eichhorn - 328 Deming Road, Fleming, OH, 45729-5019

Treasurer Report

By Dave Eichhorn

Checking - \$40,352.91. Investments - \$73,501.67. Total - \$113,854.58. Withdrew \$8,000 from the Edward Jones Investment Account.

We need to start planning on how we sunset our organization, I'm sure our average age is close to 80. Please let the officers know how and when you would like this to happen.

Managing Editor's Commentary

By Gary L. Noller

VA offers care in the community

On February 5, Douglas A. Collins assumed the position of Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Nominated by President Trump and approved by the U.S. Senate, Collins is the twelfth person to hold this cabinet level responsibility.

After a stint in the U.S. Navy, Collins joined the U.S. Air Force Reserve. He now has the rank of colonel and serves as a chaplain. He is an ordained minister, a lawyer, and a former U.S. representative from Georgia.

Collins delivered a message to veterans and to VA employees. One of the points he made stated, "We're going to provide Veterans with the health care choices they have earned while maintaining and improving VA's direct health care capabilities."

It is important to note that Collins refers to the health care "choices" veterans earned through their honorable service. This usually comes down to two main choices: direct care within a VA medical facility or care from a community provider paid for by the VA.

Veterans can utilize both direct VA care and VA community care at the same time. But the choice is dependent on a number of factors.

The VA says, "Community care is available to Veterans based on certain conditions and eligibility requirements, and in consideration of a Veteran's specific needs and circumstances. Community care must be first authorized by VA before a Veteran can receive care from a community provider."

A veteran living close to a VA facility that can provide timely service will have a much harder time obtaining community care authorization than a veteran living far

away from a VA facility or who has a long wait for VA direct care service.

Veterans must be enrolled in VA health care to get almost all VA paid health care benefits. This is true for VA community care. A veteran cannot receive treatment from the family doctor and simply ask the doctor to send the bill to the VA.

I can give an example from a recent personal experience. I have received health care from the Kerrville, Texas VA Medical Center for over 20 years, Fortunately, my needs have not been extensive and most of my health care comes from the staff at the Kerrville location.


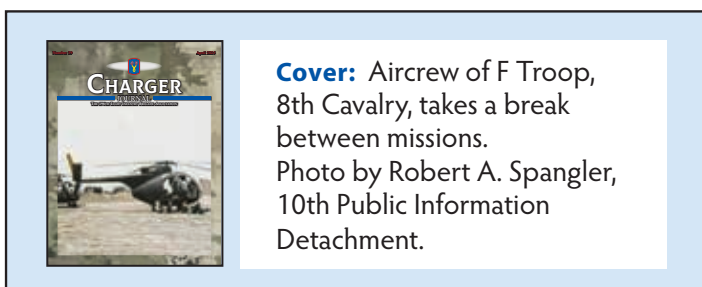
However, I recently came in need of a total knee joint replacement. This service is not offered at the Kerrville VA. I could have gone to the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Hospital in San Antonio for the procedure. But I did not want to do that due to the distance and travel involved.

I requested and received VA authorization to have a knee replacement through community care. I did not find an orthopedic surgeon in Kerrville in the VA community care network. A VA network orthopedic surgeon in nearby Fredericksburg performed the surgery.

The VA authorization also included home care and outpatient physical therapy with a Kerrville provider. It will also cover follow-up visits with the Fredericksburg surgeon. But it does not include a replacement of the left knee if that need should ever arise. A new authorization will be needed for that.

Veterans need to be aware of the fact that VA community care is available to them and that it is up to them to request it and to gain authorization. Veterans also need to know that this process takes time and to be prepared for the wait needed for the system to do its work. In my case it was about three months from the time I made an authorization request until I was able to schedule the procedure.

I look forward to the improvements that Secretary Collins will bring to VA health care. Above all, veterans do need to have a choice in their care.



The Charger Journal is the official publication of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade Association.

- Managing Editor: Gary L. Noller
- Creative Director: Lisa Anderson

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**196th LIB Assn.
New Life Members**

Raul Aguilera

HHC 4/31
66-67

David R. Bollinger

D 3/21
68-69

Thomas Brown

C 1/46
69-70

Marc E. Carr

B 3/82
1972

Mike Coffey

A 3/16
70-71

Jack Ciccarelli

D 3/82
68-69

Virgilio V. Flores

A 1/46
69-70

Jim Friedrich

B 2/1
69-70

John P. Grosskopf

HHC 196th
67-68

Joseph M. Guevara

C 4/31
70-71

Willis Gene Hart

B 2/1
1969

John J Hazucha

B 3/21
71-72

Paul E. Lathrop

F-Troop
65-67

MG (ret) Curtis Loop

A 4/31
67-68

Richard D. Klein

C 2/1
68-69

**Thomas Gerald
McCauley**

C 4/31
69-70

John K. Miller

D&E 3/21
70-71

Charles W. Newman

C 4/31
65-67

Stanley Pijor

HHC 23MP
71-72

William B Quinn

C 2/1

Dennis D. Sebring

D 4/31
70-71

Norman Summers

E 1/46
69-70

Harold Titus

D 1/46
70-71

**Col (ret) Richard
Windsor**

A 2/1
1969

Russel J. Wright

C 2/1
70-71

Darwin L. Babcock

Rolling Prairie, IN
A 3/82 1968-69
2/19/2023

Gary L. Baxter

Columbus Grove, OH
D 3/21 1966-67
6/6/2024
LIFE MEMBER

**TAPS LISTING;
MAY THEY REST IN
PEACE**

Earnest L. Bess

Norfolk, VA
HHC 1966-67
6/17/2024

Kenneth L. Bolten

Council Bluffs, Iowa
B 3/21 1967-68
11/10/2023

Steven P. Brooks

Columbus, NE
C 1/46 1971-72
7/29/2023

Robert B. Coon

Janesville, WI
D 2/1 1965-67
12/29/2023

Charles Corbett

Sand Springs, OK
C 2/1 1971
2/14/2022

Andrew P. Doro

Millbrook, NY
C 3/21 1967
4/11/2024
LIFE MEMBER

Glen E. Ehlers

Montgomery, TX
HHC 2/1 1968-69
5/10/2023
LIFE MEMBER

William Fenner

Wausaukee, WI
F-Troop 1965-67
12/28/2024

James W. Gales

Glendale, WI
B 2/1 1971-72
9/24/2024
LIFE MEMBER

Dr. Jan Hildebrand

(Battalion Surgeon)
Canon City, CO
HHC 3/21 1967-68
1/20/2024
LIFE MEMBER

Andrew Kapustiak

Philadelphia, PA
F-Troop 1965-67
12/25/2023
LIFE MEMBER

George D. Lenhart

Moraga, CA
HHC 1/46 1970-71
10-2-2024

Larry D. Meyer

Decator, IN
D 2/1 1967-68
3/16/2024

Ronnie Pettit

Sapula, OK
B 2/1 1968-69
4/5/2024

Sammy J. Petty

Copperas Cove, TX
F-Troop
5/25/2022

William A. Russell

Norman, OK
HHB 3/82 1967-68
10/8/2023
LIFE MEMBER

Charles R. Schleyer

Palos Heights, IL
A 2/1 1970
3/18/2019
LIFE MEMBER

Donald R. Smith

Nashua, NH
B 3/21 1965-67
6/10/2024

Mike Sofge

Eureka, CA
A 3/21 1969
5/18/2024

Gary Syfrett

Asheville, NC
D 2/1 1968-69
10/16/2024

Charge of the Light Brigade

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1854)

Editor's comment: This poem is about the charge of English cavalry against Russian artillery during the Crimean War of 1853-1855. It illustrates the bravery of the cavalymen against a much superior force. The cavalymen conducted the charge even though they knew it was suicidal. Theirs was to do or die, not question why. This is true of every war.

Charge of the Light Brigade

I

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

II

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

DoubleTree by Hilton Pittsburgh – Green Tree

Location

500 Mansfield Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Reservation Information

To make reservations by phone – reference the 196th Light Infantry Brigade and dial:
1-800-222-8733

OR

You may click on the link below to make your reservations online

<https://group.doubletree.com/rt2zda>

Group Name: 196th Light Infantry Brigade

Reunion Rates Available: Monday, July 21 – Monday, July 28, 2025 – dates include pre and post reunion dates.

Room Rate: Starting at \$149.00 plus applicable taxes (Currently 14%) per night

Restaurants: A full hot buffet is available at Champions Restaurant. They are open 6:00am – 10:00am weekdays and 6:00am – 11:00am on weekends. ***Breakfast is not included with your room rate.***

The Bistro & Marketplace is open 7:00am – 11:00am daily and serves coffee, breakfast sandwiches, pizza, burgers and sandwiches.

Cut-Off Date: 7/4/25.

Cancellation Policy: Cancellation must be received 48 hours prior to arrival date or there will be a charge of one night's room plus tax.

Early Departure Fees: All sleeping rooms shall be subject to an Early Departure Charge equal to one night's room rate plus applicable taxes and fees. This fee will be WAIVED if due to family or medical emergency.

Parking & Shuttle Information: Self-Parking is Complimentary. Shuttle service is not available.

Wheelchair Accessible Rooms: If you need a handicapped accessible guestroom, please call the hotel directly for assistance.

Wheelchair Rental: Scoot Around rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call (888) 441-7575 or visit www.scootaround.com for details and to make reservations.

Reunion Registration: To register for the reunion online please visit:
<https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/196LIB2025>

196th Light Infantry Brigade Association Reunion
July 23 - 27, 2025
DoubleTree by Hilton Pittsburgh – Green Tree

Schedule of Events

Bold = Ticketed Event

Wednesday, July 23

Time	Event	Room Name
1400 -	Hospitality Room Open	Oakmont Jr. Ballroom
1400 – 1900	Reunion Registration Open	Foyer – Oakmont Jr. Ballroom

Thursday, July 24

0800 – 0900	Reunion Registration Open	Foyer – Oakmont Jr. Ballroom
0900 – 1400	City Tour of Pittsburgh	
1200 -	Hospitality Room Open	Oakmont Jr. Ballroom
1400 – 1900	Reunion Registration Open with Banquet Seating Reservations	Foyer – Oakmont Jr. Ballroom

Friday, July 25

0900 – 1100	Reunion Registration Open	Foyer – Oakmont Jr. Ballroom
1200 -	Hospitality Room Open	Oakmont Jr. Ballroom
1200 – 1630	Reunion Registration Open with Banquet Seating Reservations	Foyer – Oakmont Jr. Ballroom
1730 – 2200	Pirates Baseball Game vs Diamondbacks	

Saturday, July 26

0830 - 0930	General Meeting	Salons D-E
0930-1030	Memorial Service	Salons D-E
1100 – 1500	National American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Museum	
1200 – 1700	Hospitality Room Open	Oakmont Jr. Ballroom
	Group Photos (Information to be provided on-site)	Courtyard
1700 – 1800	Social Hour with Cash Bar	Salon Foyer
1800 – 2100	Banquet Dinner Featuring Keynote Speaker – 4-time Super Bowl Champion, Rocky Bleier	Salons C-D-E
2100 – 2400	Music and Dancing	Salons C-D-E

Sunday, July 27

0900 – 1000	Church Service	Duquesne Room
	Farewells and Goodbyes	

TOUR BUSES WILL LOAD AND UNLOAD AT THE MAIN ENTRANCE – PLEASE GATHER IN THE LOBBY 15 MINUTES PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date of June 23 Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable Group registration fee (\$20 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable Group registration fee. For addition mistakes by the user that incur charges above the intended amount that require a refund, user will be responsible for additional credit card fees. Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9am until 5pm Eastern Time, excluding holidays. Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities. Refunds will be processed 4-6 weeks after the reunion. Canceling your hotel reservations does not cancel your reunion activities.

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

Driver and Guide gratuities are not included in the tour price and are at the discretion of the individual

Thursday, July 24

CITY TOUR

Pittsburgh is a city known for its blend of rich ethnic culture and traditions as well as its cosmopolitan appearance. On this tour discover why Pittsburgh is known as "the only city with a front door," as you approach the downtown area through the Fort Pitt Tunnel. Pittsburgh's compact eleven square block downtown district is home to numerous Fortune 500 companies and two of the nation's largest banks. See Point State Park, the city's birthplace, located at the confluence of Pittsburgh's three great rivers and the mouth of the Ohio River. Enjoy highlights from the city's surrounding neighborhoods, such as the view atop Mt. Washington and the thirty-foot Tiffany windows in the Calvary Methodist Church in Northside. Make a stop to tour Saint Anthony's Chapel which overlooks the Allegheny River and houses the largest collection of Catholic outside of the Vatican, including a piece from the table of the Last Supper. Included is a stop at the Duquesne Incline which was voted one of the Top 10 sites in the world for viewing a cityscape by USA Today. Take a step back in time on a century-old cable car and see the best views of downtown Pittsburgh while riding one of the few remaining inclines in the country. The Upper Station houses a museum of Pittsburgh history, including photos and a storehouse of information on inclines from around the world. Unusual Pittsburgh souvenirs, maps and photos can be found at the gift shop. Enjoy lunch on your own at the Strip District. Known as "the Strip", with converted warehouses, it has a vibrant mix of old-style grocers and gourmet food shops, street stands selling produce and t-shirts, plus upbeat bars, classic Italian eateries and sandwich places.

9:00am board bus, 2:00pm back at hotel

Thursday: \$60/Person includes bus, guide, round trip on the incline and tour of Saint Anthony's. Lunch on your own.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE ARE NO RESTROOMS AVAILABLE AT THE INCLINE

Friday, July 25:

PITTSBURGH PIRATES

It's game time! Enjoy a night of baseball as the Pirates take on the Arizona Diamondback. Head to PNC Park, located on the banks of the Allegheny River in Pittsburgh's North Side neighborhood. The park was built as a replacement for the aging Three Rivers Stadium, a dual-purpose stadium that had been designed for functionality rather than aesthetics. The Pirates have won five World Series championships, nine National League pennants, nine National League East division titles and made three appearances in the Wild Card Game. The Pirates were among the best teams in baseball at the start of the 20th century, playing in the inaugural World Series in 1903 and winning their first title in 1909 behind Honus Wagner. The Pirates took part in arguably the most famous World Series ending, winning the 1960 World Series against the New York Yankees on a walk-off home run by Bill Mazeroski, the only time that Game 7 of the World Series has ever ended with a home run. Root for the home team while enjoying park classics like hot dogs, popcorn and more!

5:30pm board bus, 10:00pm back at hotel

Friday: \$95/Person includes bus, bus escort, and game ticket. All food and beverage purchases are on your own.

Saturday, July 26:

The National American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Museum, Education and Research Center

Dedicated to those who served our country and those who were held as prisoners of war by the Japanese for three-and one-half years during World War II the National American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Museum, Education and Research Center was founded in 2002 when a former POW Sgt. Ed Jackfert, US Army Air Corps gave his collection of documents, photographs and 3-D objects to the Brooke County Library Foundation for display in the Brooke County Public Library. In the coming years Sgt. Abie Abraham, US Army and Pfc. Joe Vater, US Army both from the Pittsburgh area added to the collection. In 2009 the American Defenders of the Philippines disbanded and made the Brooke County Library Foundation the official depository of all artifacts relating to the Bataan Death March and the start of World War II in the Philippines. Since 2009 the Foundation has preserved over 1.5 million pages of documents, 1500 POW diaries, 30,000 photographs, 10,000 3-D objects and 1200 books on various subjects from the POW experience, the Korean War and Vietnam. Other collections include Normandy invasion maps, Eisenhower's papers, Hitler's silverware along with his daggers and numerous local veterans' collection.

11:00am board bus, 3:00pm back at hotel

Saturday: \$72/Person includes bus and bus escort. Light lunch is included.

There is a limit of one hydraulically lifted scooter or wheelchair per handicap accessible bus. Please note the combined weight of the passenger and motorized wheelchair or scooter may not exceed 500lb due to lift limitations. If you use a scooter or motorized wheelchair but can climb the steps to board the bus, either you and/or a person travelling with you must be able to put the scooter or wheelchair in the bus's luggage compartment. Due to liability issues, drivers and tour guides cannot assist with scooters or motorized wheelchairs.

196th Light Infantry Brigade Reunion Registration Form

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter a quantity for each event you and your guests wish to participate in. Then total your costs and send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of a check or money order. You may also register online and pay by credit card at <https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/196LIB2025> (online registrations have a convenience fee of 4%). Registration forms and payment must be received on or before June 23. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of your complete form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form. (Returned checks will incur a \$20 fee)

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
322 Madison Mews
Norfolk, VA 23510
ATTN: 196th Light Infantry Brigade

OFFICE USE ONLY Check # _____
Received _____ Inputted _____

Don't forget CUT-OFF date is 6/23/25

	Price	# of Ppl	Total
MANDATORY REGISTRATION FEE PER PERSON			
Registration Fee	\$20		\$
Want to Pay Annual Dues? Annual - \$20 OR Lifetime - \$196	\$		\$
Total number in your party (including member, spouse, and guests)	-----		-----
TOURS			
Thursday, July 24: City Tour of Pittsburgh	\$60		\$
Friday, July 25: Pirates Baseball Game vs Diamondbacks	\$95		\$
Saturday, July 26: the National American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Museum	\$72		\$
MEALS			
Saturday, July 26 – Banquet with Keynote Speaker, 4-Time Super Bowl Champion, Rocky Bleier (<i>Please provide entrée selections</i>):			
Flat Iron Steak with Shallots and Cabernet Demi Glaze	\$59		\$
Chicken Calabrese with Fresh Mozzarella, Prosciutto and Basil Pesto	\$48		\$
Seared Salmon with Lemon Dill	\$50		\$
Vegetarian Lasagna	\$41		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. -----			\$

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME AND SPOUSE/GUEST NAMES AS YOU WISH THEM TO APPEAR ON THE NAMETAG:

FIRST _____ LAST _____

FIRST TIME ATTENDEE? YES NO UNIT _____ YEARS WITH UNIT 19____ - 19____

(IF ATTENDING) SPOUSE / GUEST NAME(S) _____

EMAIL _____ PH. # _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, ST, ZIP _____

DISABILITY / DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME _____ PH. # _____

DO YOU NEED TO BE HYDRAULICALLY LIFTED ONTO THE BUS IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN TOURS? YES NO
(PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

(Special hotel room requirements must be conveyed by attendee directly to the hotel staff upon reservation)

REGISTER ONLINE AT: <https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/196LIB2025>

Letters to the Editor

Dear readers,

The following is a correction to a previous listing in the TAPS section.

Bernard C. (Gus) Hunter
1/A/3/21 1967-68
Kimball Township, MI
10/19/1944 to 7/2/2021

Editor

Dear editor,

All four members of my family served in the U.S. military at the same time.

In 1989, I served as a property book officer with the Army Reserve's 1209th U.S. Army Garrison Detachment at Fort Drum, New York. I was a warrant officer. My wife, Genevieve, a staff sergeant, served in the 359th Signal Brigade at an Army Reserve Center at Liverpool, New York. My oldest son, Michael, held the rank of PFC, and performed duties as a reconnaissance scout for the 1st Bn., 4th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. My other son, Mark, a private, took an assignment with the Army Reserve's 392nd Field Artillery in Dayton, Ohio. I take a sense of pride in the fact all four of us were in the Army.

It all began in 1956. I began my Army days with the 98th Division (Training). I completed several enlistments to include the 205th Signal Battalion and the 144th Signal Battalion at Ft. Polk, Louisiana. I then went to Germany to serve with the 1st Armored Division. I received an honorable discharge in 1959. I went back into the Army five years later. I spent 18 months helping the Army test clothing and equipment at Fort Greeley, Alaska. I then received an assignment as a supply specialist with the 196th Separate Infantry Brigade at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. After four months training at Fort Drum, New York, for counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare, we shipped out to Vietnam. The 196th operated near the Parrot's Beak close to the Cambodian border. After returning from Vietnam I received another honorable discharge. In 1974, I joined the Army once again. I enlisted in the 1209th U. S. Army Garrison. I did so because I a second job. My wife mentioned I should try the reserves because she knew I liked the Army.

CW4 Gerald Davies, U.S. Army (Retired)

Dear editor,

Colonel Francis "Si" Nerone's funeral service was held at

the Arlington National cemetery on 24 June 2024. Colonel Nerone led the project to obtain the Medal of Honor for Donald Sloat in 2012-14. He had served as Asst. Chief of Staff G2 for the Americal Division from 6 July 1969 until he assumed command of the 2/1st Inf. Bn. on 24 Nov 69. He was relieved of command by Col. Alton H. Coleman on 10 May 1970. Colonel Nerone was a West Point graduate. After Vietnam he commanded a unit that wrote and updated the training courses taught at Ft. Benning, GA.

Les Hines

Dear editor,

I am sending you a copy of the obituary for James W. Gales. I was Jim's Weapons Platoon Sergeant on my second tour in RVN. We were with B Co., 2/1st Inf., 196th LIB, during 1971-1972. He was my No.1 gunner. Sadly, he passed away Sept 24, 2024. His obituary begins with the following sentences:

With profound sadness, we say goodbye to James W. Gales (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), whose vibrant spirit touched the lives of many. James left this world on September 24, 2024 at the age of 73, leaving a void in the lives of so many people.

Larry Tallacus

Locator Requests

Looking for: Jim (Doc) Rosen, who was medic with D Co., 1/46 Inf. 67-68, formerly from Bay City, MI area. I was FO with B Battery 1/14 Arty attached to B, D, Recon of 1/46. Contact: Doug Lay; doug.lay198@yahoo.com.

Looking for: Lt. Rodney Shortell, 3rd Platoon, Charlie Co., 2/1st Infantry,, 196th LIB. Vietnam circa 1970-71. He was a classmate of mine in Basic, AIT, and 50th Company OCS Ft Benning in 1969. I believe he was recycled as he contracted an illness halfway thru the program. Do not know his final class. Would appreciate any info you can give. Contact: Scott Davis; scottodavis@icloud.com.

Looking for: Joe Daley. In 1971 was TOC Sgt for Col Clyde J.Tate, 1/46th Infantry, on LZ LINDA, Hill 270, and in 1972 on LZ Maude, Hill 350. He is a friend of mine and I need his testimony to gain access the Army failed to forward back to the USA for me; the Army needs a witness. Contact: Kenneth W Olsen; godstool@hotmail.com.

Looking for: Fellow comrades who served with me in Alpha Co., 4/31st, 196th LIB during 1968 to 1969. Especially interested in sharing memories of Sgt. Donald Wilder who was a terrific leader who always tried his best to keep us alive. Contact: Joe Zunno: jmzunno@gmail.com.

Remembering Soldiers Who Served in the 1st Infantry Regiment

By Rich Heroux [Noller edit]

The 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment Chapter of the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA) is collecting funds to construct a First Infantry Regiment monument at the National Infantry Museum, Fort Moore, Georgia. Fort Moore was previously named Fort Benning, and is the Home of the Infantry. Fort Moore is situated near the city of Columbus and is home for 120,000 soldiers and civilians.

The monument will be placed on the "Walk of Honor". It will be located near the existing monuments honoring the service of soldiers who served in the 2nd and 4th Regiments of the United States Army. The photo shows the monument for the 24th Infantry Regiment.

The origin of this effort came about when several members of the 2/1st Infantry Chapter attended the dedication of the 196th LIB monument in September 2021. The members observed with great pride the monuments of the Americal Division, the 196th LIB, and many more unit monuments. Absent was a fitting memorial to the soldiers who served in the U.S. Army 1st Infantry Regiment.

A little history will help to understand this project. Shortly following the American Revolution, the US Congress had no standing Army. Soldiers for the most part were volunteers and were released from service following the British surrender. The nation did not have the capacity to resolve even the slightest conflict. So, the Congress established the first of a standing army with the establishment of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Infantry Regiments. For the most part, the regiments have been in service of the United States ever since.

John Woyansky and I are both Vietnam veterans of the 2nd/1st Infantry. I serve as Senior Vice Commander, and John Woyansky, Secretary/Treasurer, of the 2nd/1st Infantry Chapter ADVA. Our two-man team decided to take steps to rectify the situation. Upon reflection of the potential complications of finding soldiers who served in the 1st Infantry Regiment, we brought a proposal to the members of the 2nd/1st Chapter. The number of members of the chapter, approximately 100 in strength, were called upon to attend the 2022 annual ADVA Reunion in Washington, DC. Without having a firm number of members that would attend the reunion, and with the concurrence from Dwight Sypolt, Chapter Commander, a plan of action was initiated. It sought to seek approval of a series of tasks that were formulated to commence immediately and accomplish two important plan actions. The first was to incorporate and secure federal status as a non-profit; the second to purchase a plot of land for the monument on the Walk of Honor.

We are delighted to report the success of the first two actions. The Board of Directors of the Americal Legacy Foundation offered to assist in this endeavor. The chapter could not offer tax benefits to those who donated funds for the monument. The Americal Legacy Foundation does have IRS non-profit tax exemption. Joining with the Legacy Foundation cuts out bureaucratic paperwork and allows 2nd/1st memorial donations to be tax free. A memorandum of understanding was executed and 2nd/1st collected funds will be deposited in the Legacy account and supervised by the Legacy finance officer.

Finding the right people at the National Infantry Museum was easy enough. The museum staff were very helpful to identify a proposed site and prepare the documents required to obtain the rights to a plot of land for the monument.

The First Infantry Regiment was constituted with three infantry battalions, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. Our task is to locate the three battalions and seek their assistance in collecting information and assistance to design and construct a fitting monument that would represent the soldiers who served in the regiment. The three battalions have been disbursed throughout the Army as part of reorganizations, consolidations and tactical redesignations.

We are conducting research to locate soldiers, past and present, who have served in the regiment. Finding the members of the 2nd Battalion is fairly easy because of the data already available in the ADVA records. Also, the battalion is still actively serving in the Army and is spread out throughout the Pacific and the West Coast of the United States.

The soldiers who served in the 1st Battalion also are fairly easy to contact because that organization is still active supporting the activities of the U.S. Military Academy

at West Point. The Third battalion is a little more complicated because that unit is no longer active. Also making the chore more complicated was its assignment to the 11th Brigade which has been inactive for over 30 years.

We are determining an approach to contact veterans and soldiers and explaining the necessity for this project. It is so important for those living service members to have a living memorial to soldiers who served so gallantly and courageously since the formation of these United States.

It is realized the responsibility to make this intention a reality is complicated and far reaching. If those living veterans and currently serving service members do not take up the banner to see the mission to its realization, who will? It is realized that the mission is clear and fund raising has started. We are estimating the cost of this project could reach \$50,000, depending upon the monument's design. Photos provided show what a monument looks like.

The three people directing this effort have no preconceived notion of the finished project. We are just trying to encourage participation in the project. If you want to become involved in this enterprise, please contact one of us for more details because we need more participation from us all.

Because we are using the Americal Legacy Foundation as the repository for the project, make donations payable to Americal Legacy Foundation with the note **1st Inf Regt**. Send to: ALF, C/O Roger Gilmore, P.O. Box 364, Rowlett, TX 75030.



2nd U.S. Infantry Regiment

Just an Old Sheath Knife

Jim "Doc" Kaiser

It was just an old sheath knife that rested on top of the refrigerator in the house where I grew up in Wichita, Kansas. It was a Kinfolks, probably made in the hundreds of thousands in Little Valley, New York. The handle snap on the scabbard was nearly worn in two. What made it special was that it was the knife my Father had carried throughout the South Pacific during World War II.

I arrived in Vietnam just before Christmas 1968. I served with A Co., 2/1 Inf., 196 LIB. I was the medic in second platoon commanded by Lt. Alan Ostrow. Our AO was the Que Son valley anchored by LZ Ross.

Shortly after joining Co. A, a letter from my Dad concluded with asking if I needed anything. I quickly wrote back that I could use a good sheath knife. In, what seemed like an unusually short time frame, a package arrived with his sheath knife from WWII. He even had a leather shop fabricate a brand new leather scabbard.

In March 1969 we received a three-day stand-down at the Charger Hilton in Chu Lai. It was three days of grilled steaks, cold beer, showers, a Philippine band that spoke no English save the songs they had memorized, and actual porcelain toilets. Some of the guys just stood there admiring and flushing them over and over. There were a few fights and Doc McMahon, our senior medic, and I took one guy to the aid station for stitches after he had suffered a whiskey bottle smashed over his head.

On the walk back, Doc McMahon intimated that something was brewing and that we may be tasked to a different AO. Since he stayed close to the company commander and his RTOs, he was usually privy to the scuttlebutt. He seemed worried and I had begun to know him well enough that he did not worry easily.



"Doc" Kaiser in the bush.

When stand down was over, everyone was quite surprised that we were not going back to Que Son valley but instead, taken by Chinooks to a crude airstrip next to the village of Tien Phouc. On the third day, we moved out into the bush and, after an unusually long march, ended up at the top of Hill 187 for our night laager. Just before sunset, we watched several Marine F4 Phantoms plaster the base of one side of the hill with napalm. The jets dropped so low we could look down into the cockpits.

On 19 March 1969, in thick fog, we moved down the hill in a long column. Around 0800 we walked into an NVA ambush. What happened is a story for another time. But the senior medic of Co. A, Thomas J. McMahon, my boss, was KIA, and subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor.

I survived a gunshot wound above the right hip that exited an inch from my spine. I remember in the Dustoff chopper, stripped of all my gear and weapon, suddenly noticing my watch was gone. I reached down to find my sheath knife still on my belt. They took us to the 312 Evac Hospital in Chu Lai. Of course, the first thing they do is cut off the jungle fatigues. Then they cut between the two bullet holes for cleaning and debridement of the tissue. It had become a policy to leave wounds open unless absolutely necessary until removed from Vietnam due to the high rates of infection in country.

Once I was settled in a ward, they brought me the personal items. There wasn't much there. My wallet, Instamatic camera, yellow plastic cigarette box that I'd kept from a Red Cross Christmas package, some wadded up MPC, a spent .50 round, all in a drawstring ditty bag. To my pleasant surprise, down in the bottom of the bag was my sheath knife. I would have bet money that someone would have pilfered it.

My first night in the hospital, Chu Lai came under a rocket attack alert. The nurses were absolute angels. They covered the patients that couldn't move with mattresses and stayed with us until the all clear. Less than three months later, Lt. Sharon Lane was killed at the 312 during a rocket attack.

Not more than two days later, a group of us were taken to the airstrip at Chu Lai and loaded on a C-130 Hercules for a flight to the Cam Rahn Bay hospital. I was able to walk, after a fashion, but they insisted on keeping me on a stretcher. I can vividly recall, after the ramp door closed, engines started, and the air conditioning came on, there were torrents of mist coming down from the ceiling, condensation from that awful humidity. I don't know how many stops we made on the way to Cam Rahn. It seemed like we landed every time they saw a runway and added more wounded.

The Air Force evac hospital at Cam Rahn was every bit the equivalent to a stateside hospital. I had convinced them that I could handle the short walk to the mess hall and wasn't prepared for what I saw. Glass, stainless steel, polished floors, spotless tables was quite a shock after the bush. Army types are usually snubbed in Air Force mess halls but, in our blue hospital PJs, we were treated like gold. Things didn't go so well the next day.

Shortly after breakfast, a young airman with a clipboard showed up. He was verifying information for the next day's flight to Japan. When he got to me, everything was in order, and he finished by questioning if I had any weapons. Like a fool, I said I

had a sheath knife. I instantly regretted it. He reached for my ditty bag but I grabbed it first, clutching it to my chest. He informed me in no uncertain terms that I could not take that on an Air Force aircraft. Just as emphatically, I said he's not taking it. This went back and forth several times with increasing volume and others in the ward were starting to take notice. Two Air Force NCOs showed up at the foot of the bed demanding the knife.

Oddly enough, clipboard boy had disappeared. I would soon find out why as two air policeman, with side arms, showed up with an officer. The officer seemed to calm things down, especially after I told him exactly why this particular knife had such special meaning to me. He sympathized with my plight, but reinstated that there could be no exception to the rule. I begged him to allow me to mail it back to Kansas to my parents. He shook his head and said he could not allow a weapon to be mailed out of country.

I was out of ideas. In desperation, I asked him if it would be against any regulation if I mailed it to someone IN country. They all looked at each other, mumbling among themselves, and finally admitted that, as far as they knew, there was no rule against it. A very large master sergeant announced he would mail it for me. I wrote down my unit and told him to address it to Lt. Alan Ostrow, my platoon leader.

I fished the knife out of the ditty bag. It still had bloodstains on it from cutting off PFC. Richard Durbin's pant leg to dress shrapnel wounds in his knee. The sergeant promptly left the ward, followed by the rest of them. As I watched him disappear through the double doors, holding the knife up high, I thought that's the last I'll ever see of it.

The next day, we flew to Yokota AFB in a C-141 Starlifter. I convinced them to let me ride in a passenger seat instead of a litter. From Yokota, we were taken by Huey to Tachikawa AFB and bused to the 249 General Hospital. The ward I was in was huge and filled to capacity, beds against all four walls, and two rows of beds down the middle. It wasn't long before they wheeled me into my final surgery and closed up the wound.

Within a day after surgery, I was walking again and thoroughly depressed. Not just because of losing my Dad's knife, but I felt I had let my platoon down. When a doctor made his rounds, I asked him how long it would be before I could return to my unit. Instead of looking at me like I was insane, he simply told me, "It will be a long time before you can carry a rucksack again, you're going home."

A few days later, I shuffled down to the mess hall. A couple of busses filled with newly arrived patients passed by and several guys were hanging part-way out of the windows.

They yelled, "DOC..DOC..HEY DOC!" They were from Co. A, some from second platoon. I kept track of the ward they were being taken to and caught up to some of them later in the day. They told me that Co. A, about three days after the ambush, had taken many more casualties assaulting a hill. They told me Lt. Ostrow was wounded, on the flight to Japan, and assigned to the hospital at Camp Zama. I don't recall if he called me or I called him, but we ended up on the phone with each other the next day. Phone calls in Japan were not easily accomplished and this was long before cell phones. When I told him the story about my



Medical evacuation aircraft at Chu Lai.

knife, he told me that, as far as he knew, any packages mailed to him at his APO address would be forwarded to his parents in Santa Ana, California. I made sure that I had his parents address. Now, if only that master sergeant was true to his word.

Two weeks to the day after arriving in Japan, I was on another C-141 headed back to the world. The flight from Yokota to Travis AFB, outside San Francisco, was only a little over ten hours. I spent one night at Letterman Army Hospital and then back out to Travis the next day for the odyssey to get to my final assigned hospital. They put several of us on a C-9 Nightingale, similar to the civilian DC-9 except for a unique boarding ramp that facilitated the loading of stretchers. I felt privileged taking one of the rear facing seats. We made several stops while heading eastbound, dropping off patients along the way, and ending the day at Kelly AFB Texas. One more stop, the next day, at Killeen, Texas, and the hospital at Ft. Hood. I received 30 days convalescent leave.

I cannot say enough good things about the way we were handled by the Air Force personnel. They treated us with near reverence.

I can't recall if it was shortly before or after I left the Army, at the end of 1969, that Lt. Ostrow let me know that he had my knife. It had been forwarded to his parent's home. I made a trip out to Santa Ana and we got together, turning the reunion into a blurry memory due to the consumption of large quantities of alcohol. That master sergeant was an honest man and true to his word. I wish I had recorded his name.

When I returned, I immediately stopped at my Dad's house in Wichita, Kansas, and placed the knife back in its spot on top of the refrigerator. My Dad merely nodded an acknowledgment. We didn't need to say a word.

My father passed away, many years ago, but I now have his knife in a cabinet above the driver's seat of our motor home. In whatever time I have left, it will always be a connection between my Dad and me. I've never used it for anything since that day, March 19, 1969. It still has faint blood stains.

Memories of a Combat Correspondent

By Robert A. Spangler

In the summer of 1969, I received a letter from Uncle Sam inviting me to Dallas, Texas, to undergo a physical exam. I knew what was coming if I passed that exam. I thought surely it would be a breeze for someone who had flunked out of North Texas State University to fail a simple military physical exam, but no such luck!

When I returned to Denton, Texas, after passing the physical, I went to the local military recruiting station and met with the Army recruiter. I told him I wanted to join the Army and work on military newspapers. I informed him that I had experience working on college newspapers and had taken both journalism and photography courses in college.

I was then enlisted with a 71Q20 M.O.S. (Military Occupational Skill, 71Q covered all journalistic positions, still don't know what the "20" meant.)

I received my orders and reported to the induction center in Dallas, Texas where they took us by bus to Dallas Love Field. We flew to El Paso, Texas where we went through boot camp in the 100 degrees plus August heat, marching through the desert sands.



Office hootch for 10th Public Information Office at Hawk Hill

At the end of boot camp, we were all lined up to be sent to A.I.T. (advanced individual training). There were a number of buses lined up, and as your name was read out, you were to board the designated bus. Well, my name was read out to board a bus for Fort Huachuca, Arizona, for clerk typist school. I approached the sergeant and told him that a mistake had been made, I already knew how to type and I was supposed to be working on military newspapers. He promptly told me to shut up and get on the bus.

Clerk typist school was a three-week course, but since I could already type, I finished the school in three days and was assigned to a holding company awaiting orders to my next duty station. I knew if I didn't do something quickly, I was going to end up being a clerk typist somewhere.

After breakfast each morning, the holding company assigned us "keep busy" projects. One morning after I finished my first project, I slipped off and caught the fort's bus and went to the fort's Public Information Office. The commanding officer was a full-bird WAC (Women's Army Corps) colonel. Miraculously, I got to speak to her and tell her my story. She agreed to put



Uniform, cameras, film, belonging to Robert A. Spangler

in paperwork to get me assigned as a permanent party at Fort Huachuca, working on the post newspaper.

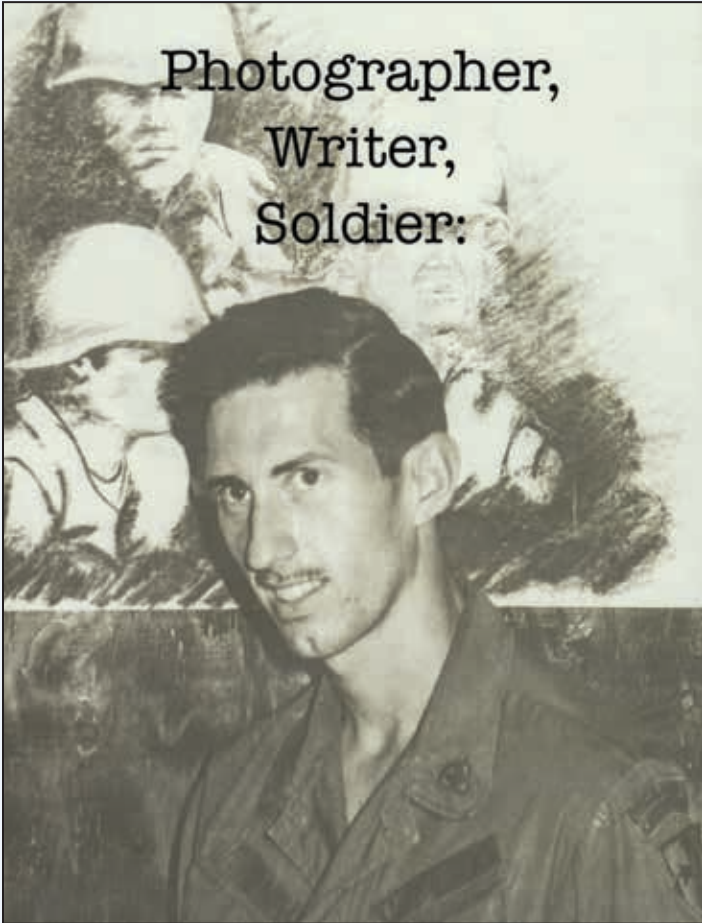
All seemed well until my fellow soldiers in headquarters company started getting orders for Vietnam. One of the "wise guys" in the company told me that if I went to the personnel office and volunteered for European duty, I would be too "short" after that tour to go to Vietnam. Like a fool, I went to the personnel office and signed up for European service. Within a few weeks, I got orders for Vietnam!

After landing in Vietnam, I was sent to Chu Lai and once again put in a holding company awaiting orders to be a company clerk typist. Once again, I slipped out and went to the American Public Information Office in Chu Lai and told the commanding officer my story. I was then assigned to the 10th Public Information Detachment, which was assigned to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade at Hawk Hill.

Upon arrival at Hawk Hill, I reported to the 10th Public Information Detachment office. They were housed in a sea hut. It was a sheet metal roof on top of a plywood structure with screen wire for windows and sandbags to hold the roof on when hit with the prop blast of wind from the nearby helicopters. The choppers landed and took off from the V.I.P. pad for the BTOC (Brigade Tactical Operations Center) next to the sea huts.

After I entered the building and introduced myself, a captain, the commanding officer of the 10th P.I.D., began to introduce everyone in the detachment to me. The first enlisted man was a graduate of the Columbia School of Journalism, the second had worked for the Kansas City Star newspaper, and so on and so on.

The captain then asked about my background. I felt about one inch tall as I said, one semester of Introductory Journalism and one semester of Introduction to Photography.



Photographer,
Writer,
Soldier:

Robert A. Spangler

The captain seemed excited as he asked, "You know how to process film and print photos?". When I replied "Yes, sir", he said, "Great, you're the brigade photographer!". I felt relieved after hearing the qualifications of the others.

I asked the captain where the photo lab was and he laughingly answered, "Whichever corner you would like." I then became an Army scrounger. I snagged an empty plywood shipping container and put it in the corner with an army blanket hung over the opened end for a door.

The captain told me that the chemical detachment on the hill had an old rusty enlarger. They willingly gave it up and some developing chemicals.

I soon realized that there weren't enough supplies to set up a photo lab. I got a photography magazine in the PX and ordered a bulk film loader, 100-foot roll of Kodak 35mm Tri-X, black and white film, plastic developing trays, plastic tongs, and a film development tank from a New York photo supply company.

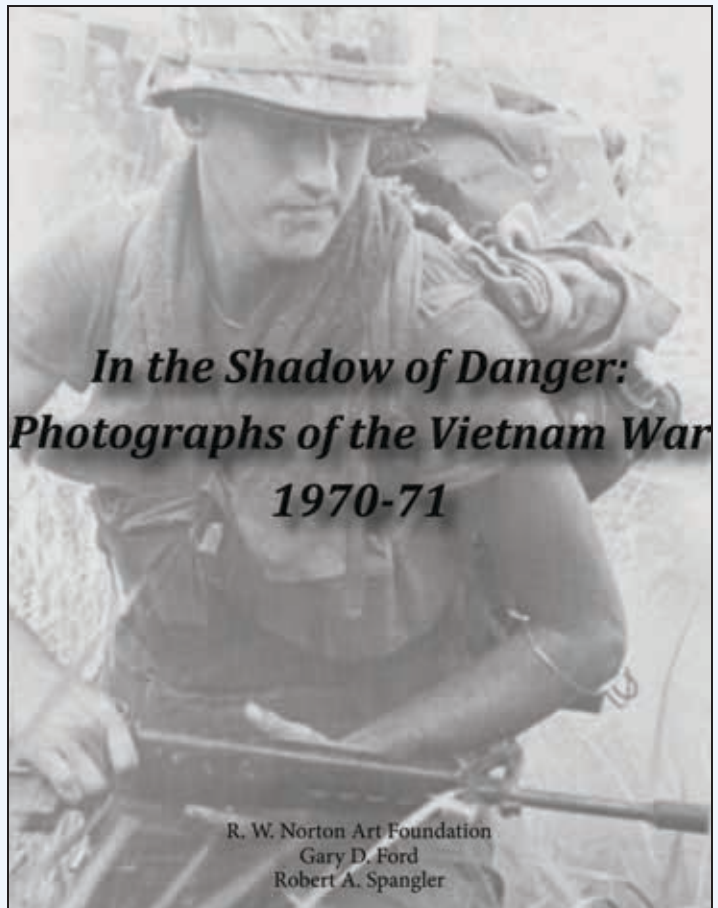
I was able to get a five-gallon Jerry can to carry water, from the tank that supplied our showers, to my makeshift photo lab. I heated the water in a coffee pot and then sometimes had to cool it down with an ice cube to get to the right temperature to mix the photo chemicals. I had to just soak the photos in different trays of water since we didn't have any running water to rinse them. It is really a miracle that the pictures turned out as well as they did.

Now, I was off to the races and happy that I hadn't been charged with being A.W.O.L. (absent without leave) on the two times I slipped away to talk to the public information offices.



Staff of 10th Public Information Office, 1970-71

[The book *In the Shadow of Danger: Photographs of the Vietnam War 1970-71* by Robert A. Spangler and Gary D. Ford is available for sale. It may be purchased from Robert A. Spangler for \$27.00, tax and mail included, at bspangler@genesiscgovt.com. It contains 210 pages of photos and text and was first published in 2012.]



***In the Shadow of Danger:
Photographs of the Vietnam War
1970-71***

R. W. Norton Art Foundation
Gary D. Ford
Robert A. Spangler

Book with photos taken by Robert A. Spangler and narration from Gary D. Ford.

R and R with Mom and Dad and Greg

By Gary L. Noller

The U.S. Army deployed hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the Vietnam War. The soldiers expected to serve a tour of duty of twelve months.

The year-long tour included seven days of leave in a country outside of Vietnam. The purpose of the leave was for rest and recuperation (R and R). The Army allowed soldiers to choose the time and location for their "vacation" from the stress and strain of war duty.

I arrived in Vietnam on June 6, 1971. After a few days of processing in Long Binh, I proceeded to Chu Lai to begin duties with the Americal Division.

The first few days in Chu Lai consisted of in-country training at the Americal Combat Center. Most of the training consisted of a repetition of stateside training such as hand grenades, gas chamber, and first aid.

The Army then assigned me to Company B, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Although I received training as an armor crewman, my duties with Company B was that of an infantryman.

I dropped off my duffel bag at the supply room and checked in with the company clerk. Most of the processing was usual. But it surprised me that I was asked to designate when and where I wanted to go on R and R.

It seemed a bit early to make this choice. I arrived in Vietnam less than two weeks prior. I was not ready to make this decision.

The company clerk pressed me for a choice. He told me of the possible R and R locations. It included Asian cities such as Hong Kong, Bangkok, Taipei, and Manila. Two non-Asian countries on the list were Sydney and Honolulu.

I chose Sydney. I thought that being in Vietnam would provide me with exposure to the Asian culture. Honolulu was an American city. That left Sydney as an exotic place to visit.

The company clerk told me that Sydney was the most popular R and R location. He stated that I would have to wait



Mom and Dad on morning stroll looking for Greg near Waikiki Beach.

at least ten months for this destination. He said that other locations were available at much earlier dates. But I stuck with Sydney although it would come near the end of my tour.

I wrote home and told my parents about my arrival in Vietnam and plans for R and R. A short time later I received a letter from my sister. She had a proposal for my consideration.

My dad, Walter, had always wanted to visit Hawaii. He called it Huh-why-yuh.

Dad retired in 1970 and then worked part-time in a grocery store. He was 65 years old and never had time to travel very far from home. My sister wanted to help him fulfill his wish for a well deserved Hawaiian vacation. She asked me to change my R and R location to Honolulu.

If I did, she would get Mom and Dad and my brother Greg



Gary arriving at R and R center, Honolulu.



Gary calling sisters back home.

on an airplane and send them to Honolulu at the same time. After considerable thought, I decided to make the change. I still wanted to go to Sydney. But family matters came first.

The company clerk was able to schedule my R and R for December. As the time came closer, I was given specifics as to the exact dates. My sister made corresponding arrangements for my parents and brother.

At the appropriate time I left the field, proceeded to Chu Lai, and then to the R and R center in Da Nang. I flew out of Da Nang about December 10. My arrival in Honolulu was several hours later.

My parents and brother arrived in Honolulu shortly before I arrived. They waited at the R and R center along with families of other Americans coming in on the flight.

We checked into quarters at the R and R center. It was operated by the U. S. military and conveniently located on Waikiki Beach. The building appeared to be World War II era one-story wooden buildings. But they were quite comfortable and provided everything we needed.



Louise, Walt, and Greg Noller in lodging room.



View of R and R center grounds, Honolulu.

The next few days went fast. We did all the things that tourists would do on a trip to Hawaii. A highlight was the visit to the Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor.

The trip to the Arizona Memorial included a short trip across the harbor on a tour boat. Mom did not go. Although she agreed to the airplane trip from Kansas to Hawaii, she wanted nothing to do with a much shorter trip by boat.

Mom was not risk-taker. When it came to flying, Mom would say, "If God wanted you to fly, He would have made you a bird." Similarly, she said, "If God wanted you to swim, He would have made you a fish." So she waited on the dock as Dad and Greg and I visited the Arizona Memorial.

We stayed busy. We took the island tour, walked through the Honolulu Zoo, rested on Waikiki Beach, and shopped in the nearby stores. It seemed odd to see Christmas decorations while the temperatures were near 80 degrees every day.

I slept a lot.

I got a haircut from a woman barber.

One evening my brother and I walked downtown. I wanted to get a beer. We found a place and sat down. My brother was almost 18. One could purchase 3.2 beer in Kansas at age

18. So I told him, "I am going to order us both a beer. Don't say anything. Let's see what happens."

It didn't work. The waitress asked for ID. I found that I had left mine at the room. Greg had none. I was 23 years old, an American soldier, but she still demanded my ID. So my brother and I went back and picked up my ID.

I drank a beer. Greg drank a Coke.

I think I left Honolulu first. The return trip took me back to Da Nang for a night and then to Chu Lai. Upon arrival at the company office I was told that Bob Hope was in Da Nang the next day. I was offered a ticket to see him in a Christmas show. But I told the company clerk, "I just got back from R and R. I was in Da Nang last night. I do not want to go anywhere but back to the firebase." So I missed the Bob Hope show.

I also missed a visit to Sydney. But R and R in Honolulu with my parents and brothers has many fine memories.



Gary and Walt pose in front of shiny new car.

The Golden Slippers

By Jerry Hughes

It was a hot, dark, Vietnam night in late 1969, in a small village not far from the mountain firebase our infantry company had established. It was located in a free-fire zone in Quảng Nam Province, I Corps, and known as Hill 251. Our mission that particular evening was a night ambush.

I was new in country and this was my first night ambush as a young first lieutenant infantry platoon leader. We had been through this village in the daytime and I had remembered its layout. My analytical anal-retentive mind recalled each trail entrance and each hooch location. I spent hours rehearsing the “by the book” ambush set-up in my mind and on paper in my patrol book.

My three squad leaders were called together and I briefed them on the entire set-up. This included what LBE (load-bearing equipment) to bring, what claymore minegoes where, where each two-man team would go, and that “no one goes to sleep, we stay up all night.”

As the platoon saddled up, either my pre-game jitters or my malaria pill, told me I needed one last bowel movement. I proceeded to our outside, un-walled latrine trench, overlooking the beautiful South China Sea, ten kilometers distance to the east. Before I sat down, I took off my two bandoliers of M16 automatic rifle ammunition and placed them on the ground nearby. Having enjoyed both the view and my release, I then rejoined the platoon and we moved out.

To reach this particular village we had to descend a high-speed

rock trail that obviously the VC (Vietnamese Communists aka Viet Cong) or the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) used on a regular basis. In fact, I remember on a previous mission into this area when we uncovered jungle classrooms on the same side of the mountain. They were teaching grenades, as we came across fake chicoms (Chinese Communist) grenades made out of solid wood. I still have one in my stateside war mementos collection.

The trail even had a small waterfall on it with a small stream trickling down the mountainside. It was quite beautiful for being out in the middle of the jungle in this God forsaken war. The area may even have been a small enemy R & R (rest and recuperation) location.

As we neared the village area, the trail split with a high road and a low road running parallel to each other. I sent the point man and squad leader on the low road and myself and my RTO (radio telephone operator) took the high road. The following squads fell in behind into the now split two sections.

About fifty feet further down the trail, I came to a small one hooch area that was fenced-in by extremely dry shrubbery. The actual gate opening had very dry and sharp sticker bush branches, known as “wait-a-minute vines” blocking the entrance. I somehow quietly got through a small opening, and as I entered a small boy was hand signaling for someone to get out of the hooch that was now directly about 35 feet in front of me.

The boy somehow disappeared, and out comes running two adult VC. As they run away for the wood line with their AK47 rifles in their hands I’m opening up full automatic. I somehow miss them completely on this initial opening burst. Understand we’re talking microseconds all this is happening; however, to me, it’s all in slow motion.

The M16 rifle magazine holds twenty rounds (full metal jacket), but we put only eighteen rounds in because it tended to jam more often if filled with the twenty.

So here I am out in the middle of this small one hooch village area, and I reach to my chest to grab and insert another magazine from my bandolier. WRONG...my chest is empty. No two strapped bandoliers with eight magazines or so each in them. I’ve left them back at the latrine trench, where right now they ain’t doing me no good.

I turn to see if my RTO is behind me. He’s not. He’s hung up back at the gate on the sticker bushes and can’t get through. He’s blocking the squad behind him and LT Hughes is out here in the middle of nowhere with his head up his ass, trying to make himself “real small, real quick.”

Don’t tell me getting through Vietnam or any war doesn’t involve luck. I don’t care how skilled, well-trained, “squared away” or brave you are, Lady Luck plays her beautiful part. She did for me, for all my running VC had to do was glance back once to see this “Merican dog” standing out there in the open looking a wee bit nervous, and use his AK47 automatic weapon the way Kalashnikov designed it. This boy, yours truly, would own six feet of real estate in downtown Arlington. Cemetery that is. But the war gods were with me. They never



At rest at day laager patrol eating Girl Scout cookies.



Girlsan and babysan with lieutenant's cap.

looked back as they disappeared into the jungle.

So I borrow someone's extra bandolier, reload, and we continue on back down the high road, which eventually hooks up with the low road trail. The platoon is whole again.

A short while later we come to my ambush ville. My point man and squad leader bear right. Through the trees, I see another VC running right to left about 25 feet in front of me. This guy must have been deaf, because how and why he didn't hear my full automatic blast not ten minutes before a little up the trail north of his village is beyond me? He should have been long gone. Anyway, I put 18 rounds full automatic into him and now he is "long gone." When I get to the body, the guy is carrying a few hundred dollars VC Dong money. Maybe he was going on R & R? A few of the bills sit today in one of my Vietnam photo albums, so guess we can retrospectively say he partly made it to the Land of the Big PX.

So here it is, just about to get real dark and we settle in. Two man teams blocking about eight trail entrances. The balance of the platoon settles down in the hooches. Claymores (directional mines) are set out. Our dead R & R buddy is dragged beside one of the hooch's and a large rice basket cover is placed over him.

One of the squad members, a PFC troop from L.A., is freaking out that death has to lay so near him all night. "Hey good buddy, you were a Golden Gloves boxing champion. Punch the guy out if he gets up again."

Before I get into my trail entrance position with my RTO, I'm busy setting up everyone in position and use a large hooch for my "headquarters." A mamasan and her ten-year old daughter live here. Papasan, the adult male father no doubt VC, is wise enough not to be around this evening.

The little girl is beautiful in that long black hair, black eyes, and smooth skin Asian doll kind of way. She brings out of this dusty dirty earthen floor thatched roof hut (hooch) the cleanest, brightest pair of golden slippers I have ever seen. Although I can't speak nor comprehend the Vietnamese language, she is showing her prized possession to me, and of course, I'm admiring same.

I'm thinking, where did she get them out here in the middle of nowhere? Has she been to Saigon with her family? Did her dad or a loving uncle bring them home to her one evening? Or perhaps a passing North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldier using the nearby high speed trail, who thought of his own daughter up north who he hasn't seen for years, and perhaps will never see again.

I do remember being in another dirt hut earlier in my tour, in the middle of a rice paddy, somewhere in I Corp (Northernmost Section of South Vietnam) where we uncovered photos hidden within the hooch wall. They were of a huge family gathering in a restaurant, obviously in some large city or province capital. Everyone was all dressed up to "the nines." Perhaps it was a wedding or family reunion?

It was hard to fathom that these poor peasant farmers, out here in the middle of nowhere, who normally dressed only in black PJ's (pajamas) had a life, a prior existence. That is, prior to us coming to save their ass from communism. Hey, Communism...no more family weddings for you Nguyen. Uncle Ho is not big on that stuff. Come over to our Capitalism side, and in ten years we'll have you paying \$10,000 for that wedding. Oh, you want rice with that? Make that \$15,000.

So my newfound "golden slippers sweetheart" has shown me her most prized possession. She must of known to pick me. I'm an eternal romantic at heart. No one is going to hurt my girl or her Mom now. No one, American or VC. I put the word out just to make sure.

After assuring all the platoon positions, my RTO, and I settle into our two-man team ambush site. It's pitch black. No moon. We're talking so dark you can't see the front of your nose. I put my weapon on semi-automatic mode. A few hours go by. We're in a small natural hollow. I'm looking down the trail in one direction and my RTO is sitting to my right looking past me.

All of a sudden, bright flashes and rounds cook off in front of us. The rounds are mine. I've fallen asleep and my fingers have closed on my weapon, pulling the trigger, sending off three rounds. My M-16 barrel was pointed right across my RTO's face, not two feet directly in front of him. He's thinking (remember micro-seconds), "How did the VC sneak up on us so silently?"

Needless to say, this brand new first time night ambush platoon leader is both one lucky and dumb son of a bitch. Lucky in that he could have blown away his own RTO, and dumb in that I should have said, "one man stays awake, the other man gets some shut eye." Lessons Learned they call it at FT Benning, Georgia, Home of the Infantry.

We recover. No one is laughing. This is serious business. You know, "War is my business and business is good." We both

count our blessings. I quietly apologize for almost killing my friend. What else can you say, other than I won't let it happen again.

So we go back to our inky black lookout, when not more than thirty minutes later, a full automatic burst of 18 goes off from another trail junction.

About 30 feet to my left is another trail entrance to the ville. My second squad leader and his cool point man extraordinaire have set up behind a concrete well just at the front of the trail junction.

His point man has fallen asleep, and the squad leader has heard voices coming up the trail in the darkness. The squad leader is sitting with his feet up on the well and is whispering quietly to his ambush sidekick, "Wake up, wake up."

I told my men not to open fire until you see the "yellow in their eyes." I will say one thing about my men. They listen. The squad leader waits until the NVA point man is right at the well, and opens up full automatic at point blank range. The guy never knew what hit him. As there was more than one enemy soldier in the line of march, he then clicks off his claymore mine. At nighttime in pitch-black silence, it makes a sound and bright flash you don't easily forget. At this moment, his point man calmly wakes up and says, "What's up?" I told you that dude was cool.

I immediately start to crawl from my position towards the well and squad leader. I'm about 15 feet from him and he hears me behind him and says, "Lieutenant, stay where you are. There is someone crawling around out there."

I quietly say, "Throw a hand grenade out there."

The squad leader calls to one of his FNGs (new guy) in his squad, who is located closest to the "crawler," to throw out a grenade. The FNG hollers out "fire in the hole" and tosses the grenade. Crunch!

I'm silently saying to myself, "You 'challenged soldier' (editor note: idiot), you only holler 'fire in the hole' out in training, not in the middle of combat." In training, it warns everyone to get down and out of the way. In combat, it gives your position and the element of surprise away. Plus, the enemy can shoot you.

But unbeknownst to us, the crawling NVA soldier, although hit by the claymore and bleeding profusely, has had his magazine blown out of his weapon by the blast. He's got his AK47 with him as he crawls, but no ammo. His loaded banana clip magazine lies off the trail somewhere. Real bitch, eh! But it's his night to live and go tell another unbelievable bar story someday. He somehow crawls out of the ambush zone and gets away in the darkness.

At the same time, all this is happening or momentarily thereafter, a female NVA nurse starts moaning down in the kill zone. She's struggling to stay alive, moaning out loud for some time, but eventually succumbs to her wounds.

It's too dark to go check the ambush zone safely, as we still don't know for sure the disposition of the crawling NVA soldier, or who else might be out there.

At dawn, we go out to inspect the ambush zone near the well. The NVA point man it turns out is a tax collector with a U.S. ammo can strapped to his back filled with paper tax collection records. We later turn them into battalion intelligence. We find the crawling NVA soldier guard's blood trail and banana clip magazine lying off to the side, but he is gone.

And about 15 feet out is a dead military age female nurse, lying on her back, who had wrapped a cloth around her wounded neck when trying to stop from bleeding to death.

I'm just thinking... what was she thinking about when she lay moaning? About her parents, her brothers and sisters? Perhaps an old boyfriend or lover? Or about her military training or nursing school? Perhaps about her short life? Or maybe, "If I can just stay alive till morning, they will save me and send me to an American Army hospital."

Unfortunately, as we all know, these final thoughts no doubt happened on both sides of the war. It was just her time to die.

So we pack up our gear and return to our Hill 251 mountain firebase by a different route. I take the long way home because I know Sir Charles (the Vietcong) knows



Christmas 1969, distributing stateside sent fruit cake to kids.

where we are, is pissed, and wants to return the favor with a revenge ambush of his own. Most likely they have dug in along the trail route we took to get to the ville yesterday. Not today my worthy friend.

I sometimes think of my "golden slippers" girlfriend. If she survived the next five years of the war, and is still alive today, she must be 53 years old or so. I could still find that little ville even today, off the southern backside of Hill 251. I do think of going back to Vietnam someday. Would she still be there? Would she have her own family, and little daughter? Would the golden slippers and the nightmare of our deadly visit still be there.

God I hope not.

[1 LT Jerry Hughes served with Co. B, 2/1st Infantry, 196 Light Infantry Brigade. He lives in Key West, Florida. This story was written in August 2000.]



On Hill 251, preparing gear to move out.

Boots Like Mine

By Gary L. Noller

The Vietnam War brought new innovations in gear and equipment supplied to American soldiers. This included the UH-1 Iroquois "Huey" helicopter, M-16 automatic rifle, and the M-1966 jungle boot. I saw use of each of these during my tour in Vietnam.

My unit, Company B, 1/46th Infantry, operated from a firebase located in the rugged jungle mountains of South Vietnam. We were about sixty miles south of the city of DaNang and half the way between the coast of the South China Sea and the Laotian border. There were only two ways to get there- walk in by foot or fly in by helicopter.

We spent most of our time on patrol in the dense uninhabited jungles near our firebase. But from time to time, we returned to the firebase to provide security and to carry out a variety of odd jobs. It mostly involved hard labor improving perimeter defensive positions. We called it grunt work.

One day, one of our sister companies became heavily engaged with a determined North Vietnamese Army unit. We listened to the intense radio transmissions that the embattled American unit sent to our battalion headquarters at the firebase. The firefight was at close quarters and very deadly.

The battle did not last very long, probably less than an hour. The enemy decided to break contact and flee the area well before American gunships arrived at the scene. The heavily armed helicopters would tip the balance of the fight in favor of the Americans.

But in the end, unfortunately, four American soldiers lay dead on the ground. They fought for their lives and for the lives of their brothers. They gave all they had to give.

After the battle quieted the first priority became the evacuation of the wounded. Due to the ruggedness of the terrain, there was no place close to land helicopters. The wounded required extraction by an extremely hazardous method.

Huey "Dustoff" helicopters, equipped with rescue gear, hovered over the evacuation site and used a winch and cable to lift the wounded up and out of the jungle. They had to proceed one at a time. Fortunately, there were no additional casualties during this tricky operation.

Next, the dead soldiers needed to be extracted from the battlefield. Again, due to the ruggedness of the terrain and the extreme difficulty in carrying the dead to a helicopter landing zone, an extraction by a helicopter cable was necessary.

Fellow soldiers wrapped the bodies in rubberized ponchos and lashed them together with rope. The rope was attached to the cable suspended by the helicopter. The helicopter then lifted the lifeless bodies from the jungle and immediately proceeded to our firebase.

A call went out for volunteers to assemble at the helipad

to receive the dead soldiers. Several of us were nearby filling sandbags to reinforce a bunker. I joined a small group that quickly arrived at the helicopter landing pad.

We looked up to the sky and observed the approaching helicopter with its precious cargo suspended below. The helicopter closed in to our location ever so slowly.

Once directly above us, the helicopter hovered and began to gently lower the dead soldiers. They came down slowly. Inch by inch, until they were finally within our reach. The others moved forward to handle the bodies. I froze.

The others in our group reached out to steady the swaying bodies. The helicopter continued its slow descent- lower, lower. lower. Finally the four were almost back on ground.

I stood a few feet away. I watched as their boots, exposed under the ponchos, neared the ground.

I felt like shouting to them, "Its okay. You can stand up now. Just a few more inches and you can stand up and it will all be okay. Stand up! Just stand up!"

But they could not stand up.

The four were placed side-by-side on the ground. My gaze fixed on the bottoms of their boots. I saw the familiar design of the cleats on the bottom of their jungle boots. It struck me. Boots like mine. New. Black and green. Tightly bloused. Just like mine.

They- are just like me.

I never learned the names of the four soldiers that died that day. Most likely, I can do a some research today and find out who they were. Nameless or not, I intend to always remember them.

I do not know why the image of the dead soldiers' boots is one that has always stayed with me. We were all American soldiers. We all wore the same black and green jungle boots. Some of us came home. Some of us did not.

We must always remember them. May they Rest in Peace.

To the reader: The incident described above occurred in about August 1970 at Firebase Mary Ann. I could be wrong as to the number of dead Americans extracted out of the jungle. It may have only been three, or it could have been five. I do not remember that detail all that well.

The passing of 54 years has certainly blurred some memories and caused others to be lost entirely. But I have always held on to what happened in this case.

I do not think I have ever told anyone this story. I have surely not ever written it down. I know some others who may have been there at the time. Maybe they will read this and refresh my memory.

I cannot explain why I froze when the helicopter lowered the Americans to the ground. I became a spectator and not an actor. Fortunately, others in the group carried out the task that needed to be done.

We do not have to tell stories like this. Or we can. But I believe we must always honor and remember those who lost their lives in Vietnam. It is the least that we can do.

Lost in the Woods

By Don Counter

Navigation in the United States was easy with well-marked asphalt or concrete paved roadways and named or numbered streets with traffic signals and lights. Major intersections, colorful buildings, and familiar stores served as convenient landmarks. Directions to a specific location amounted to: go down to the 7-11 store, take a right on Centralia Blvd, then hang a left at the Shell gas station and you'll find...

Being drop-kicked some 8,849 miles from the center point of the United States into a foreign country presented new challenges. The transition to a wilderness that straddles a wide range of latitudes north of the equator required new rules and skills to negotiate a land that lacked familiar landmarks.

South Vietnam was a vast tropical landscape with footpaths hidden amid dense vegetation. With no marked trails in the jungle foliage, movement required compass bearings and getting oriented with a topographic map, grid coordinates, terrain features, and (when visible) the position of the sun. Foot travel in the landscape was an unpleasant task and often just an illusion.

Topographic maps and lensatic compasses were a limited resource and highly valued. As a consequence of being in short supply, these items were specifically issued to the select few commissioned officers and *school-trained* non-commissioned officers in the field.

It was standard practice for newly assigned commissioned officers to be attached to a different infantry platoon and shadow an experienced officer in the field before taking command. This brisk immersion was in no way a honeymoon but served as preparation for the reality and responsibilities of the soon to be platoon leader. Formal school training contrasted with the reality of this off the beaten path adventure. The intensity level greatly increased in the jungle. This interactive participation permitted an opportunity to observe, listen, and make a few mistakes before embarking on his upcoming assignment. The new officer became a participant-observer in the timeless truths relative to: Move, Shoot, and Communicate.

Developing a watchful *"jungle eye"* view of the surrounding landscape was critical. Focusing the eyes beyond the forest, not directly at the jungle foliage in front, was key. It required one to look through the density, so as not to lose sight of the forest for the trees.

We were constantly on the move. Climbing up hills consumed a lot of energy and sliding down was a clumsy and muddled mess. Being misoriented (lost) added to this less than joyous long-distance trekking/wandering in I Corp. We night laagered at a different ground space nearly every late afternoon.

The bulk of us were the lower of the enlisted ranks, but had time in service and institutional knowledge. Many of our "grown in the woods" soldiers from the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia were intimately familiar with crooked trails and inherently suited for this hilly terrain. The "islanders" from Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines were another group of naturals attuned to the very principles of navigation. Several of these island soldiers utilized ocean currents and the flight path of birds to navigate back home. Both groups had a keen sense of direction, much like an internal compass, and seemingly navigated instinctively. This unique ability was an extension of their heritage and served as a prideful trait. On clear nights the Big Dipper and North Star (the most predominant constellation

of stars) would be pointed out with a knowing smile.

Navigation capabilities varied and proved to be a shortcoming and a hard-earned skill, if not pure magic, for a batch of these fledglings. Since there were no "You Are Here" signs, it was a steep learning curve to grasp where they were on the map. Some routes and destinations were as elusive as a carnival house of mirrors. It was not a desirable position to be in when somebody had to come get you and lead you out. Studying the map, making calculations, checking and rechecking bearings were constant and exacting tasks. However incredibly challenged, each leader had to learn the skill for himself.

Those who were frequently misoriented, while charting a path, were quietly referred to as "tour guides."

Issue—Problem—Disaster?

LT **H** noticed footprints on the trail and brought the platoon to an immediate halt. He pointed out the impressions to a couple of soldiers to confirm his astute observation. The Southern backwoods fellow casually mentioned that our direction of travel had drifted off course, ultimately causing us to circle back around onto our own tracks. The LT quickly responded, "It is so easy to get lost when relying on these outdated French maps!" Navigation was not his strong point. He was so focused on the destination that he forgot to check where we were on the map. And yes, we would be taken on additional circuitous routes.

There was no briefing providing an overview of the day's plan or route. Each day it was just "saddle-up and move out." Without benefit of a map or compass, we didn't know where we were, or where we were headed. As privates, we were lulled into a false sense of security that our entrusted leaders knew both their and our whereabouts on a map. We just followed along in lockstep silence, behind the guy with the map. Often, in the middle of nowhere, us mushrooms privately questioned, "Are we there yet?"

Land navigation, whether one possesses a natural talent or not, can present challenges. Beneath double or triple canopied jungle, where light barely filters through, it is ever so easy to lose your sense of direction.

According to the schoolhouse adage, there was no such thing as being lost, you were just miss-oriented. In the absence of carefully studying the map, checking bearings, and interpreting the landscape, some tour guides chose to just "wing it." This form of navigation often amounted to more misguided wandering. This guess-timation was the cause of our traveling a long distance but going nowhere and consequently transformed some of our tour guide's into navi-guesser's.

LT **E** didn't have an encouraging reputation with his compass and map skills. With him, we were often adrift, off our intended course. He was visibly uncomfortable with the probability that we had strayed to "whereabouts unknown." We wondered if we were completely off the map or if he simply got the wrong map? Being a little lost may be part of a good adventure, but we were in effect the walking lost and potentially doomed to roam aimlessly. As our day's long journey went into night, it was clear proof that his search had exceeded his grasp. Further back in the trail of infantrymen, a voice with a deep Southern drawl uttered, "That butter bar can't find his ass with a search warrant."

This greenhorn was identified as a member of the infamous Hellawe tribe. A tribe of small men who were known for jumping up and down in the tall jungle grasses shouting, "Wher da Hellawe, Wher da Hellawe?"

LT **L** was another newbie who seemed to meandered

considerably. When he came to the realization that he was at a loss for finding our place on the map. In total frustration he squatted, dropped his ruck, and plopped down on the damp ground. He unfolded his topographic map and unflinchingly stared at it. The struggle to get a grasp of our whereabouts amounted to his limited navigation skills and his hesitancy and/or inability to confer with anyone of lesser rank.

Within the platoon was a cheerful and upbeat Hawaiian nicknamed "Pineapple" who possessed a contagious smile and spirited sense of humor. Often, when things went awry, he was known to smile and say, "It's just another shitty day in paradise."

The LT was absorbed in his map, as if completely mesmerized looking up occasionally with a wide-eyed glare.

"If the bewildered LT continues staring like that he is bound to go cross eyed" said Pineapple, "let him know that I'm going out about 40-meters and I'll shake a tree... hopefully he can see it move on his map."

Our prolonged foot travel along the low points in the dense terrain prevented any possibility of a view. LT P was new at the helm and noticeably distressed by the absence of an elevated lookout point. The novice LT solicited a lean Filipino soldier to climb a tree in hopes of securing a glimpse of the surroundings and "See what you can see." The "happy-go-lucky" islander, with the agility of a monkey, negotiated the 45-plus foot tree. Once atop the leafy lookout and intent on brightening up the greenhorn lieutenant's spirits, the cheerful islander shouted... "No coconuts up here LT."

Adapt-Overcome

Aside from being wet, tired, and frustrated by the weather, terrain, and morale, land navigation was often considered the most challenging aspect of the leadership role.

Nothing substitutes for real experience when determining position by magnetic north and true north, latitude and longitude, and triangulation. Getting a fix on your location required accuracy in charting and plotting.

LT **U's** military issued glasses repeatedly got snagged on vines and pulled off. Several times the platoon would be halted to retrace steps and locate that left lens. It was like looking for a contact lens mid-game on a football field. At one point while trudging through the jungle, the semi-durable hard plastic frame cracked causing the left lens to fall out. Enough was enough. With black electrical tape, the LT repaired the cracked frame and we were back on the move. The tape job effectively held the lens in place although a good portion of the prescription lens was covered, making for an improvised sight for sore eyes. This infantry officer with a strong *Follow Me* work ethic and moral compass refused to use the damaged glasses as a means to tiptoe back to the rear for fitting and replacement, but chose to do "the right thing" and lead from the front.

LT **S** struggled to get his bearings. In frustration, he requested a marking round. Several minutes later the term "shot out" was heard over the radio which announced that the round was blasted out. We watched overhead to a blue sky for the explosive puff of white phosphorous (Willy Pete), or a colored smoke to verify the approximate grid location. Off in the distance, near the mountain across the valley, we saw the poof of a flash and heard a faint boom. "Holy shit!" was the Lieutenant's verbal response, as the air burst confirmed that we were nowhere near the intended path. Only occasionally were we beneath the poof of an artillery navigation round marking center sector. A Southern poet of practicality once said, "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going because you might not get there."

When the graveled voice of the company commander was broadcast over the radio, you could visualize the carotid arteries bulging on both sides of his neck. The directive "**Hold your position! I'm coming out!!!**" clung to the humid air and echoed throughout the jungle.

Higher ups had little tolerance for losing your ass. It was interpreted as a self-inflicted wound because it impacted everybody.

The newly assigned lieutenant immediately envisioned his journey through humiliation starting with something like "LT, Nightmare...you are being removed from the field and reassigned to the rear for the safety of the men."

In time, the seasoned and introspective commander arrived on site, pulled the Lt off to the side, and calmly stated, "Talent is not inborn but developed. Any learning period requires the willingness to suffer embarrassment and uncertainty. I suggest you study the map and rely on the strengths of your team. You are not out here alone. You're going to get to where you need to go because your men will get you there. In

nature, there are neither rewards nor punishments-there are consequences. The real learning of life and death starts here."

The young lieutenant acknowledged that his misreading a map created a difficult situation for everyone and that his grace period was over. This incident was a significant emotional event and served as a lesson learned-the reality of war sucks like quicksand and sets like concrete. Self-reflection took effect. The lieutenant was determined to overcome and get a firm grip on map reading and land navigation. He conferred with team members possessing innate skills; and then poured over the map, analyzing terrain and land features to translate his correct positioning.

A salute goes out to those who, whether by innate skill or acquired by hard work and a bit of good fortune, adapted and attained competency and eventually proficiency in the fine art of navigation. These "salt of the earth" men endured the unforgiving responsibility of leadership in the face of battle and realized that success was ultimately gauged by the minimization of injury and/or loss of their men.

Epilogue

With current day technology, a simple cell phone provides global positioning system (GPS) navigation capabilities with latitude, longitude, and elevation. The GPS coordinates of Latitude 14.0583 N and Longitude 108.2772 E is the dead center of Vietnam (as validated by cartographers Wong Way and Sam Ting Wong) and purportedly marks the former winter hide-out of Uncle Ho Chi Minh. It is now a likely vacation site complete with a Cafe Du Monde offering French influenced beignets dusted with powdered sugar and enjoyed along with New Orleans chicory coffee. Directly across the dusty street is a McDonald's for that tasty Big Mac. A current day Rand McNally Jungle Trail Atlas provides an ease to off road travel.

Post Script

A pseudo-intellectual once proclaimed "It's not the end of the hike but the hike; the most interesting part is the view." An ordained combat infantryman responded noting that the wisdom-less author of the aphorism/quote had most certainly never been a grunt! Remember, "You cannot spell **Lost** without an **Lt.**"

Typhoon Hester Strikes Chu Lai as the Americal Division Departs

By Kim Cantor

In the Chu Lai control tower tracking Typhoon Hester, the last update we received was that the typhoon was going to come ashore near Da Nang. Shortly after that, my wind instruments were picking up wind gusts of 60 to 70 mph.

A C-130 out of Da Nang called for landing instructions. I gave him the wind gusts and he said, "Tower, below my minimums," and he continued south. After that we started getting buffeted by really strong winds and the sky turned black. On October 23, 1971, Chu Lai received a direct hit.

I announced over all radio frequencies that (without coordinating with Base Ops) Chu Lai AAF was now closed to all air traffic. The two other air controllers and I low crawled the 90 feet down to the ground.

After the division stood down, we cleared the commanding general and staff and all other soldiers. They left in two or three USAF C-130s.

There was, as I recall, about twelve or so controllers and maintenance guys left. The air control tower still stood after the typhoon but all the radio equipment was destroyed. We gathered around; the silence was broken by a voice asking, "What about us?"

We only had our M-16s. We knew the airfield commander, a lieutenant colonel, left with the command group. He knew we were still there.

Again, as I recall, we were left there for three or four days. As it was monsoon season, the weather did not improve, and we had no working radar. We began to assemble our tactical tower and put together some PRC radios.

Finally the TANK! Out of the late day mist came the Sheridan tank and two armored personnel carriers (APCs). They pulled in behind the tower and we all had a C-rats party. They had driven down from Danang along Highway 1 in order to provide us some defense.

So, as the last air controller who worked in that tower



Sheridan tank provides last minute security at airfield

when a C-130 came for us and our equipment, I will also claim to be the last Americal soldier to leave Chu Lai when I drove our 1/4 ton up the aircraft's ramp

All of this starts as the FNG who was told not to unpack and the chopper headed up over the mountains to some place called Tien Phouc. In air traffic control school I must of slept past the part that taught another part of the job. At Tien Phouc I was to keep all air operations in my airspace advised of outgoing arty and of course any incoming. I was no better than an RTO as the radio was the only equipment I had.

I spent April through August 1971 at the airfield at Tien Phouc. I was a one-of-a-kind MOS there but still pulled my share of perimeter guard during the night. I learned about fire direction and altitude of the arch of 175 mm and eight inch howitzers shooting at the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This was during Lam Son 719.

I made fast friends with a Sgt. Chavez of Battery B, 3/16th FA. He was a gun crew chief and he taught me all I needed to know and made sure prior to a fire mission I was told the Grids.

This story is part of a presentation I am attempting to put together. Perhaps it will reach some aircrews who will have their own tales about the Americal Division in Vietnam. After 1972, I never saw anybody again from my unit.



Americal command staff departs Chu Lai, late October 1971

First and Lasting Impressions

By Don Counter

It was on my first combat assault mission in the jungles of Vietnam that an enemy sniper shot a soldier standing just yards from me. Following the initial commotion, a soldier wearing a bush hat with a distinctively elongated feather went into the hilly terrain in lone pursuit of the elusive foe. I thought to myself, "what fearless courage and guts."

I would learn that this composed and self-assured squad leader, whose given name was Carlos Maldonado, was simply referred to as "Panama," his country of origin. He was an imposing figure who led from the front and by example.

Sergeants who had worked closely with him related that this muscular figure had been a body builder, a champion boxer, and crowned "Mr. Panama." He was on his third tour in Vietnam, each previous tour cut short because of bouts with malaria.

With life experiences in the Panamanian jungle, this soldier could keenly read the tropical terrain. He stealthily moved about even when carrying a bulky M60 machine gun at port arms. He knew which vegetation was edible, which was not, and could be seen plucking berries, peppers, and other fruit then pop them into his mouth as if eating from a candy jar. Having grown up in Panama, there was no doubt that he had attained his "Jungle Expert" status at a very young age.

The reality is, combat is not for the weak or fainthearted. The jungle was a volatile "life or death" environment that demanded unrelenting vigilance. It was late into the night when a soldier dozed off and fell asleep during his rotational night watch and awoke with a knife at his throat. A voice, with a hint of a Spanish accent, whispered in his ear... "if this happens again, I'll slit your throat." That whisper successfully instilled the fear of God.

During a jungle resupply this powerfully built soldier, in a phenomenal demonstration of agility and upper body strength, bent over at the waist, put one hand on the ground, and went into a one-handed handstand. On another resupply, he placed four cases of C-Rations (each weighing 25 pounds) on the fingertips of his right hand and had team members load another four cases on the fingertips of his left hand. This human dynamo balanced one hundred pounds on the fingertips of each hand.

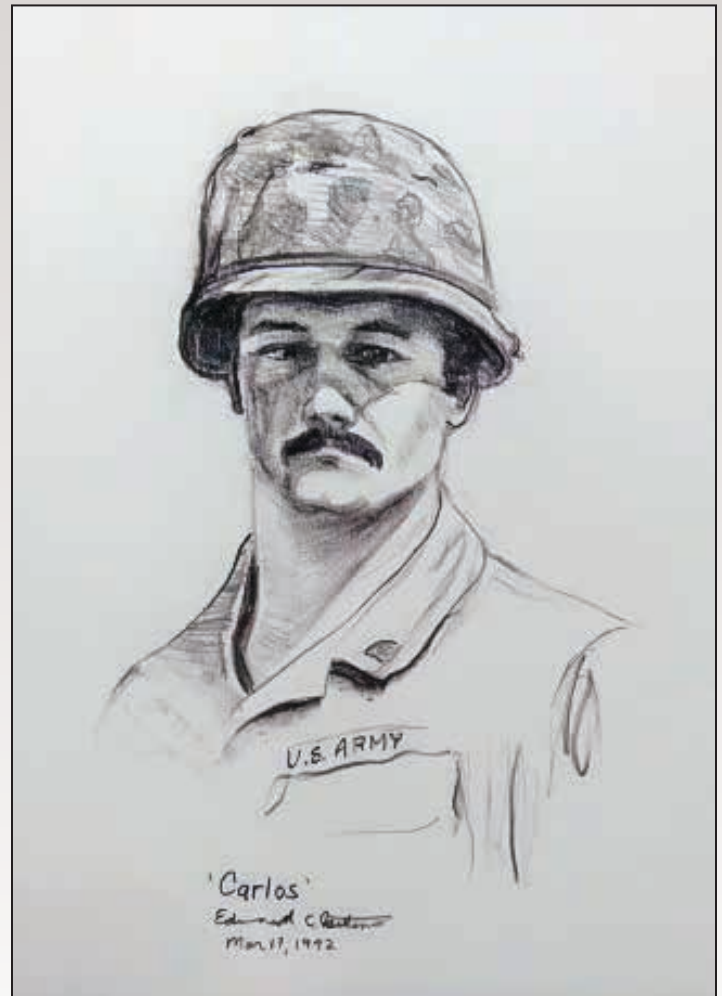
It was with that same powerhouse strength that he would willingly assist a struggling or ailing soldier. He would pick up their rucksack, sling it over his shoulder, and still hump quicker than most others in the formation.

On one dripping wet day, a soldier slipped and fell during a down-hill march. Medics determined that he had

severely sprained his ankle and would require medevac extraction. The immediate area would not accommodate a helicopter. Panama loaded the soldier's rucksack onto his own back, shifted the rucks for suitable weight distribution, then put his arm around the injured soldier's waist and supported him as he hobbled an appreciable distance to a location for evacuation. Here again Panama re-validated his reputation as a workhorse.

Panama was no thrill seeker, but stood out as a leader who would take the greater risks without hesitation. His physical presence inspired confidence and engendered reassurance to the group. He was respected as a team builder and admired as a soldier's soldier. Panama was a battle-tested legend in his own time and left an indelible mark on those around him.

[Editor's comments: Illustration by Ed Gittens. Carlos Maldonado, Don Counter, and Ed Gittens served with Co. A, 1/46 Infantry, 196 LIB in 1970-71. Counter would like to contact Maldonado and share this story with him. If you can help locate Maldonado please notify Don Counter at rehwon49@yahoo.com.]



Carlos Maldonado

The Aborted Mission

By Gerald "Augie" Augustine

"Courage Is Being Scared to Death but Saddling up Anyway"

-John Wayne-

Our battalion set up at a temporary camp for a couple weeks far from Tay Ninh. A planned company-sized search-and-destroy mission left the camp at 1:00 pm. Most patrols left early in the morning to beat the excruciating heat of the day. If the patrol took you through the jungle, the canopy would help by providing shade from the sun. The shade also harnessed the cooler night air that was left over from the evening.

This day we set out across a large rice paddy in the glaring sun. We kept our distance between one another at the usual five to ten meters. The lead command was on the left front flank. My machine gun team was situated toward the center of the right flank. About twenty minutes into the mission, a medivac chopper arrived to extricate a soldier overcome by heat exhaustion. A fellow soldier shouted out that his thermometer read 130 degrees. The reflection off the water that beamed into our faces and bodies was like steam. After about five or six episodes of medivac extractions, the gung-ho commanding officer decided to call off the mission. He sent the company back to the camp. We found out that heat cramps were affecting him and he finally realized that it was a mistake to patrol at that time of day. What was he trying to prove, putting his men in jeopardy like that?

Facing Charlie

The following morning, we headed out early and took a different route. We figured Charlie would've been waiting for us on the other side of the same rice paddy and could have wiped us out. By late morning, we found ourselves deep into VC territory. As we slowly moved along, we began to notice telltale signs of human presence. There were broken branches and twigs here and there, and then the strange smell of smoke permeated all around us. The triple jungle canopy overhead



Search-and-Destroy mission



NVA bicycles along jungle trail

gave the enemy great cover so they couldn't be spotted from the air. The trails that we were finding were freshly matted down by considerable traffic.

All of a sudden, a loud explosion broke the silence. A booby-trap exploded on the left flank. We had just walked into a deserted VC base camp. We were ordered not to touch anything, stay as motionless as possible, and back out exactly the way we came in. Word spread rapidly that SGT Bob Dozer, a squad leader from the first platoon, had taken the full force of a tree-hung booby-trap.

We cautiously continued our search for Charlie. We set up a perimeter around a clearing and Dozer was medevaced back to a hospital. Sad to say, the injuries he received changed his life forever. That evening we set up NDPs quite a distance from the VC base camp. We called in B-52 to obliterate the VC base camp. Too bad for them if they had returned there when we left. We felt the earth tremble when those five-hundred pounders were dropped. Nothing could survive those direct hits.

The Blessed Air Force

On another day, we found ourselves close to the Ho-Chi-Minh trail. Our "B" company was ordered to move rapidly in the direction of a large contingent of VC. A propeller-powered airplane pilot spotted the VC.

As we moved along, that sickening feeling in our stomachs returned, almost like being punched in the gut. The feeling always had a resurgence when there was a good chance we would be facing the enemy in battle, going on an ambush, or just knowing we would soon be in harm's way.

We moved on well-worn paths, our weapons at the ready. We prepared to go into a meat grinder. We noticed large craters all over the area. This was not virgin war-zone territory. All of a sudden, we halted while our platoon leader answered a call on the PRC-25 radio. We were notified to remain at this location and wait while F-4 Phantoms pummeled the spotted VC. We set-up two-man positions and gazed at the distance about a mile away. The tiny spotter plane was doing loops over the intended targets. Then, without warning, out of the clouds, shot F-4 jets firing their rockets and dropping their bombs. What a wonderful site. After about thirty minutes, we were ordered to return to the previous night's camp to await further orders. Our mission was aborted. We loved the Air-Force!



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