



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

President's Report by Michael Timmerman

We have rescheduled the 196th LIB reunion at Gettysburg for this year. It was postponed from 2021 due to the Covid pandemic. Two hotels are available for reunion attendees. They are the Wyndham and the Courtyard by Marriott. The hotels are next to each other on Presidential Circle in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. This is near the intersection of Highway 15 and Highway 30. Gettysburg is approximately 60 miles northwest of Baltimore, Maryland.

The reunion will be held beginning Wednesday, July 21, and complete on Sunday, July 25. The hotel lodging rate is \$132 per night plus taxes. Arrangements are being made in association with Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. Complete details and a registration form may be found on pages six and seven of this magazine.

Vice-President's Report by Don DeGain

I know how much we all look forward to meeting at the dedication in Fort Benning and the reunion at Gettysburg. This extra year of not meeting makes getting together all the more important to us. A number wish we could meet on an annual basis but the planning makes that difficult at this point in our lives. I see the emotion in the lobby on Sunday mornings as we part company and fly or drive off to all points of this great country. When we meet in groups on the battlefields of Gettysburg it will have a feelings like our meeting at the Wall in Washington. Our connection with the men honored at both locations will be felt as few can feel. Veterans flocked to Gettysburg 50, 60 and 75 years later in July to be together from each side. We are so similar and it is my hope we can continue to gather much as they did. I made a comment at one reunion we shall gather until the last man is standing and so it shall be. So looking forward to being together soon

with each of you, My Brothers. It's an honor to serve with and for you in this highly decorated United States Army 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

Chaplain's Message by Chaplain Ed Griffin, (Ret) (COL)

Dealing with Sadness, Loneliness, and Depression

As the U.S. looks back on a bitter election season, political unrest and violence, a shaky economy, and a soaring death toll due to COVID-19, 84% of U.S. adults say the country has serious societal issues that we need to address, according to a new poll. The majority of adults, reported that the future of our nation (81%), the Coronavirus pandemic (80%), and political unrest around the country (74%) as significant sources of stress and depression.

Perhaps, you find yourself in the midst of these statistics. If so, Psalm 22 is a good place to go. This psalm is a lament, which can be a complaint, a prayer for relief, uncertainty over what was and what is and why, a prayer for relief, and assurance of deliverance.

Psalm 22 (NIV): 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? 2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.


Then in verse 3: 3 But you are holy, you who inhabit the praises of Israel. 4 Our ancestors trusted in you. They trusted, and you delivered them.

In verse 30 and 31, hope is restored: 30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. 31 They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

Treasurer's Report by David Eichhorn

Major expenditures: \$28,800 final payment for statues at US Army Infantry Museum, \$5,000 unit plaque at US Army Museum, \$12,008 March 2021 newsletter

Memorial donations of \$100 or more: Ronald Standiford \$100; Paul Friedman \$100; William Pelch \$196; Lynn Kahalewai \$200 in memory of her husband Edward Kahalewai; Marshall L. Hinton \$200; Sammy Ely \$250; Richard J. Rinaldo \$500 in honor of Tom McMahan, MOH.



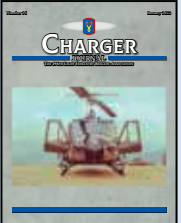
CHARGER

JOURNAL

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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Cover: Charger Six, brigade commander's command and control helicopter, stands by for its next mission in support of the 196th LIB.
Photo by Eric S. Hillyer.

Appalachian Trail Adventure

By Dave Eichhorn

I did it, all 2,193 miles! I started on the approach trail at Amacalola Falls State Park, Georgia, on 28 February 2020, stopping for the night after five miles. The 7.8-mile approach trail does not count as part of the A T, Springer Mountain is the official southern start of the A T.

The A T stretches across 14 states from Springer Mountain, Georgia to Mount Katahdin, Maine. It's the longest hiking-only trail in the world and ranges in elevation from 6,625 feet, (Clingmans Dome, Tennessee) to 124 feet (Bear Mountain State Park, New York). The total climbing for the trail is an estimated 515,000 feet, equivalent to climbing Mount Everest 17 Times.

Technically, it was not a thru hike. To be considered a thru hike it must be done within a twelve month period. I finished before the next 29th of February, so it's a thru hike to me. This hike has been on my bucket list for 20-plus years. Finally at the age of 71, I was able to cross it off the list. Now on to the Major League Baseball parks, I have 19 down and eleven to go.

The A T was proposed by Benton MacKaye in 1921. The first section of the trail was completed in 1923 in New York. The trail was fully completed in 1937, with over 50% of it being on private land. Today roughly 0.5% of the A T is on private land. Along with the 14 states, it crosses through eight National Forests, six National Parks, six Inventory and Monitoring networks, a National Wildlife Refuge, three Tennessee Valley Authority properties, one Smithsonian Institute property, and over 280 local jurisdictions. The trail is managed in partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its 30 affiliated trail-maintaining clubs. This is under an extraordinary cooperative management system that provides for an annual contribution of nearly 200,000 hours by more than 5,000 volunteers.

Earl Shaffer, a WWII veteran of the South Pacific Theater, is credited with being the first person to thru hike the A T in 1948. He started in Georgia and finished in 124 days. (I was on the trail for 179 days). "I wanted to walk the war out of my system," he once said. (PTSD?)

I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in 1992, I wanted the hike to be part of my therapy. My motivation was

to honor the guys that I served with that didn't come home. I had a lot of time to talk with them and walk and think. It was a spiritual walk for me. I also meet a couple of fellow Vietnam vets and several Iraq/Afghanistan vets.

It is traditional to have a trail name when thru hiking the A T, one that fellow hikers give you, or one of your choosing. I was given the trail name of Father Time on the second day on the trail. (I was usually the oldest person around.) Some of my fellow hiker s names were Juke Box, Babyface, John Wayne, Walmart, Wizard, Smokey Bear (he smoked like a train and snored like a bear), Sassy, and many more.

The scenery was awesome, but it was the people that made it, especially the "Trail Angels" who helped hikers with food, water or transportation to towns or shelters. Along the way I visited a couple fellow chargers. Jim Simms treated me for dinner in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Ken McKenzie picked me up at Pinkham Notch, New Hampshire and put me up for the night at his house. I had a wonderful visit and toured his cabin and wild blueberry patch in the woods. Ken was a most gracious host.

The trail was a lot more rock scramble than I thought it would be. I fell at least 50 times, got knocked flat on my back by a tree that was leaning at a 45-degree angle over the trail. I had to keep my eyes looking down for rocks and roots that I would stumble on. Also got knocked down and washed down stream a little bit when crossing the Pleasant Pond Stream in Maine, the water was higher than normal after heavy rain (I lost my crocs off my feet). The Mahoosuc Notch in Maine was the roughest, I only saw two people that day. Some days I would see hundreds of people, especially at Springer Mountain, GA, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia and Mount Moosilauke, New Hampshire.

The adventure was way more than I thought it would be. I think that by not having a smartphone or GPS app added a lot to the experience besides the extra miles that I had to backtrack to get back on the trail. I quickly learned to back track to the last white blaze that I had seen. I did get off trail a few times, some places white blazes were numerous, other places not so much.

Even with the times that I was tired, cold, wet, and hungry, I never had the thought of giving up and not finishing. I did find peace in the woods.



196 LIB Memorial Dedication Planned

David Eichhorn, Memorial Chairman



Dedication of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade memorial statue at the National Infantry Museum's Walk of Honor will take place on the morning of March 29, 2022. The site is near the museum's location at the visitors' gate to Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia. The museum can be reached by taking Ft. Benning Road southward from its intersection with U.S. Highway 280.

An informal hospitality room and breakfast will begin at 9:00 AM at the National Infantry Museum meeting room. If you wish to have breakfast please make a reservation with Dave Eichhorn in advance. He may be contacted at 328 Deming Rd., Fleming, OH, 45729-5019; 740-678-2001; de332435@frontier.com.

The dedication of the memorial will follow with an inside ceremony at 10:30 AM. At the conclusion of the inside ceremony an unveiling of the statue will take place at the Walk of Honor.

Efforts to install the memorial began at the association reunion in the Chicago area in 2018. Funds came from the generous donations of association members and friends. The Americal Legacy Foundation provided a grant of \$10,000. The remaining funds came from the association treasury.

Total cost of the memorial is \$90,806. This includes a payment of \$2,000 to the National Infantry Museum for the memorial location. The cost of the bronze statue was \$86,600 and an associated bronze plaque was \$2,260. Donations are still being accepted and will cover the contribution made from the association treasury.

The larger-than-life depicts two 196th LIB soldiers on the battlefield in Vietnam. The battle has been won and a weary soldier helps a wounded brother to medical care. The theme of the statue is, "We take care of our own."

The statue was created by Sarah E. Hahn of Columbus, Ohio. She also coordinated the casting of the statue at the foundry and its transportation and installation at the Walk of Honor. Smaller bronze statues are available for purchase from Hahn at a price of \$2,800. Hahn names the replica statues, "Brothers...Alone." More information is available at seahnstudio.com.

Members are invited to attend the dedication ceremony. Limited lodging rooms at a rate of \$119 per night plus taxes have been set aside at the Hampton Inn (Phenix City) and Holiday Inn Express (Phenix City). Phenix City is located on the Alabama side of the Chattahoochee River. The hotels are on Highway 280 and about eight miles from the National Infantry Museum.

Two other veterans events are tentatively scheduled to coincide with the 196th LIB memorial dedication. The FSB Mary Ann annual reunion and memorial service is usually held on March 27-28 at the Uchee Creek Campground. A dedication of the Americal Division aviation monument at Ft. Rucker, Alabama, is set for the mid-afternoon of March 28. Ft. Rucker is approximately two hours from Columbus, Georgia. More information on the Ft. Rucker event may be obtained at americalfoundation.org and americal.org.

For more information contact Dave Eichhorn. He may be contacted at 328 Deming Rd., Fleming, OH, 45729-5019; phone 740-678-2001; email to de332435@frontier.com.



196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE ASSOCIATION 2022 REUNION JULY 17-26, 2022

Hotel Reservations: WYNDHAM GETTYSBURG; 717-339-0020; 95 Presidential Circle, Gettysburg, PA 17325. Reservation Information: Please call the number above and reference the 196th LIB or please visit www.afr-reg.com/196LIB2022 and click on the reservation link at the top of the page Group Name: 196th Light Infantry Brigade Association. Reunion Dates: July 17-26, 2022. Rate: \$132 (plus 13% tax, currently). Cut-off Date: 6/20/22 Late reservations will be processed based on space availability at a higher rate.

Hotel Cancellation Policy: Cancellation must be received 24 hours prior to arrival date or there will be a charge of one night's room plus tax. *Once the above room block is full, there is an overflow block at the nearby Courtyard by Marriott located at 115 Presidential Circle. To make reservations, please call 717-334-5600 and reference the 196th LIB. Please do not book reservations at the Courtyard unless the Wyndham block is full. Parking & Shuttle Information: Self-parking at both hotels is on-site and complimentary. The hotel does not offer shuttle service.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 20 – EARLY BIRD ARRIVALS

1400 - 1900 Reunion Registration Open
1200 - 0000 Hospitality Room Opens

THURSDAY, JULY 21

0730 - 0830 Reunion Registration Open
1200 - 0000 Hospitality Room Opens
0945 - 1600 Gettysburg
1300 - 1800 Reunion Registration Open

FRIDAY, JULY 22

0800 - 0930 Reunion Registration Open
0830 - 1600 The Pennsylvania Capitol/National Civil War Museum
1200 - 0000 Hospitality Room Opens
1400 - 1800 Reunion Registration Open

1700 - 1800 Banquet Seating Reservations Deadline
(instructions will be in your registration packet).

SATURDAY, JULY 23

0900 - 1100 General Meeting
1130 - 1230 Memorial Service
1200 - 1700 Hospitality Room Opens
1300 - 1700 Group Photos (more information provided at reunion)
1700 - 1800 Cash Bar/Social Hour
1800 - 2100 Banquet Dinner
2100 - 000 Music and Dancing

SUNDAY, JULY 24

0900 - 1000 Church Service
Farewells and Departures

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

Gettysburg; Thursday, July 21, 2022

Historic Gettysburg is your destination. Start with a two-hour battlefield tour as you step out onto hallowed ground and enrich your experience as your bus makes stops at some of the battlefield's most iconic locations. Once you arrive at the Visitor's Center, enjoy a buffet with soup and sandwiches. View the war and its aftermath through authentic artifacts and interactive exhibits in the Gettysburg Museum of the Civil War Then follow the events from the war's first shots to the Battle of Gettysburg to Lincoln's immortal address with the film, A New Birth of Freedom. Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of Pickett's Charge in the iconic Cyclorama. 945am board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel. \$84/Person includes bus, guide, admission and Lunch.

The Pennsylvania Capitol/The National Civil War Museum; Friday, July 2, 2022

Proclaimed as "the handsomest building" by President Theodore Roosevelt during the dedication of the building in 1906. In addition to visiting the Interactive Welcome Center and Capitol Gift Shop, enjoy a 30-minute guided tour. The seat of Pennsylvania's government continues to inspire visitors with its wealth of art, its outstanding architecture, and its strong connection to the vision of the Commonwealth's founder, William Penn, who sought to establish a land that would be governed by just laws and tolerant of all religious faiths. Grab a box lunch from the Capitol Restaurant to enjoy on the way to the National Civil War Museum. This unique educational and entertainment facility caters to the history enthusiast, the Civil War buff, those who are proud to be Americans and those who want to know more about America's greatest tragedy. 8:30am board bus, 4pm back at the hotel Monday – Friday: \$68.00/Person includes bus, admission, box lunch and guide.

Driver and Staff gratuities are not included in the tour prices. Please be at the bus boarding area at least fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled time. All tours require a minimum of thirty-five people, unless otherwise noted. NOTE: There is a limit of one hydraulically lifted scooter or wheelchair per handicap accessible bus. If you use a scooter but can climb the steps to board the bus, either you and/or a person traveling with you must be able to put the scooter in the bus's luggage compartment. Due to liability issues, drivers and tour guides cannot assist with scooters. Looking for something to do during your free time? Check out these options: Amish Country – Visit the Farm House and see a typical Pennsylvania Dutch Farm in operation, enjoy authentic Dutch cooking at Good "n" Plenty restaurant or explore Kitchen.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable AFR registration fee (\$7.00 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 AFR registration fee.

196th LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE ASSOCIATION REUNION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATION WITH THE WYNDHAM FIRST. You may call them at (717) 339-0020 and be sure to reference the 196th LIB. Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. If a valid email address is provided, a receipt will be sent electronically. Otherwise, your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/196LIB2022. Credit card transactions will be charged a 3.5% processing fee. **All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before June 20, 2022.** After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

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

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Check # _____	Date Received _____
Inputted _____	New <input type="checkbox"/> Revision/Addition <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>CUT-OFF DATE IS 6/20/22</i>	Price Per	# of People	Total
<u>TOURS</u>			
Thursday 7/21: Gettysburg	\$ 84.00		\$
Friday, 7/22: The Pennsylvania Captiol/The National Civil War Mus.	\$ 66.00		\$
<u>HOTEL EVENTS</u>			
Saturday 7/23: Banquet dinner <i>(please select your entrée below)</i>			
Roasted Airline Breast of Chicken with Pan Juices	\$ 51.00		\$
Grilled Flat Iron Steak with Chimichurri Sauce	\$ 51.00		\$
Chef's Selection of Vegetarian Entrée	\$48.00		\$
REGISTRATION FEE – Mandatory per person to cover administrative expenses	\$ 20.00		\$
<i>WANT TO PAY YOUR DUES?</i> Annual \$20, Lifetime \$196			\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WOULD LIKE IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR NAMETAG

FIRST _____ LAST _____

UNIT _____ YEARS WITH UNIT 19____ - 19____

SPOUSE NAME (IF ATTENDING) _____ EMAIL _____

GUEST NAMES _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, ST, ZIP _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? YES NO **(PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).**

Mail Call

Dear editor,

I just received the latest 196th Light Infantry Brigade magazine (Number 35, March 2021 issue) and congratulate you on another terrific magazine.

Thanks, especially, for including General (Retired) Fred Kroesen in the magazine's 'TAPS' section (pp. 11-14). He was a great soldier. I met him once, in December 1971, when he was commander of XXIV Corps and made a surprise visit to our 3/82nd Field Artillery rear base at Camp Redhorse (a former Marine base) in Da Nang. This was about a month after I'd arrived in 196th LIB at Da Nang as a young Captain (6 months in grade). I was serving as an assistant battalion S-3 for a few weeks before I took command of Charlie Battery, 3/82nd on FSB Maude (Hill 350).

Since our 3/82nd battalion commander, Major Jim Broadus*, and all the battalion staff were temporarily absent, I reported to then Major General. Kroesen when I saw him walking up to the battalion command post. I explained that the commander and staff were not around, and then led him on an informal 'tour' of the battalion rear base. He asked a few questions, seemed pleased at the 'tour,' and left – I believe! – satisfied.

I have, during my 36 year Army career after graduating from West Point in 1969, met and worked for many general officers (including Colin Powell, Barry McCaffrey, Maxwell Thurman, John Shalikashvili, and Crosbie Saint). But NONE of them looked or acted more like a 'real general' than Fred Kroesen. His 'command presence' was palpable; his handsome, chiseled features literally demanded respect and obedience; his manner and personality was what any soldier would want of a general officer. We need more like him today! Thanks so much for featuring his bio in TAPS.

I'd like to submit a fallen former 196th LIB soldier for inclusion in the next issue's TAPS section. On February 5, 2021, one of my oldest and best friends passed away in a nursing home in Orlando, Florida. Staff Sergeant, (Retired) Earl Joseph McWilliams served as a combat medic in 196th Light Infantry Brigade in 1966 (sorry, but I do not know which battalion he served in) as a Specialist Four. During his Vietnam tour in the 196th, Earl won a Silver Star (and two Purple Hearts) for rescuing fellow soldiers under intense enemy fire. He succumbed to cancer on Feb. 5 this year. Please add his name to your next TAPS list in an upcoming issue, thanks. Coincidentally, Earl's son, Captain Sean McWilliams, earned his own Purple Heart while commanding an infantry company in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 – like father, like son, as they say.

* (Yes, a major in command of, then, the largest field artillery battalion in the US Army – 3XM102 105mm howitzer batteries, 1X155mm M114 battery and attached 1X8-inch/175mm battery, all supporting 196th LIB in/around Da Nang.)

Thanks for all you do to keep alive the memory of all of us who served in the 196th LIB! Much appreciated!

Jerry Morelock, PhD, Colonel, US Army, ret.
Jerry907@charter.net

Dear editor,

I am seeking anyone attached to A/3/21, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, on LZ Center from September 1970 through February 1971. I need any information about a squad member named Richard Ochoa, WIA, early Feb 1971, went to 91st Evac., Chu Lai. He was from Los Angeles, CA.

Johanna Koss; yankeejr49@yahoo.com

196th LIB Assn. New Life Members:

Charles R. Anderson
A 1/46 69-70

Vic Bandini
71 AVN 68-69

Larry W Baxter
D 3/21 70-71

Brian W. Campbell
B 4/31 69-70

Jack A. Chandler
B 2/1 67-68

Paul J. Cote
175-Eng 65-67

Paul C. Cote
B&HHC 2/1 71-72

Richard E. Darcy
8th-Sup 71-72

Jerry C. DePoe
HHC-196th 65-66

Johnny W. England Jr.
D 3/21 70-71

Bill Gerber
C 3-21 67-68

Jerry G. Gouge
A 2/1 68-69

Ronald A. Guns
HHC 3/21 69-70

Cyril E. Hassell
A 4/31 68-69

Harry Krumlauf
B 8th Sup 65-67

Robert D. Lambert
C 3/21 70-71

Reginald Long
8th Sup 65-67

Richard Manzo
C 1/46 69-70

Daniel J. McGowan
C 4/31 65-67

Jeffery Mendez
B 3/82 67-68

Charles S. Murrell
C 2/1 65-66

Dennis R. Powell
B 1/46 1970

Gary W. Pymer
D 4/31 69-70

Stephen F. Russell Sr.
HHC 3/21 1968

Michael D. Stewart
HHC 3/21 69-70

Rick Stubeck
D 2/1 70-71

**Col (Ret) Leslie D
Thatcher**
B 3/82 66-67

Harold W. Thomas
A 4/31 1969

Ben B. Walton
196-AVN 67-68

Harry Wheatley
HHC 156-SIG 66-67

Randolph M. Wright
C 3/21 70-71

TAPS

VETERANS OF THE 196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE

“He who has gone, so we but cherish his memory, abides with us, more potent, nay, more present than the living man.” — Antoine de Saint-Exupery, 1900-1944, French writer.

Bartlett, Terry - 10-Jul-21, D, 4/31, 1970-71, LEESBURG, FL,
Blais, James K. - 04-Jul-45, 30-Jun-18, D, 2/1, 1965-67, WATERTOWN, CT,
Brooks, Jesse - 01-Jul-21, C, 3/21, 1968-69, CLEAR SPRING, MD,
Chapman, Clyde - 20-Dec-20, D, 2/1, 1966, APPLETON, WI,
Davidson, Dwain - 3-Dec-21, D, 2/1, 1967-68, BREOMOND, TX,
Dill, James Collier - 30 Oct 2018, 196 LIB 1968-69, NEW PHILADELPHIA, OH
Dustin, Gordon - 18-Mar-30, 21-Jul-19, C, 3/21, 1965-67, WOODLAND PARK, CO,
Eagle, Francis - Unk, WAUBAY, SD,
Gazzo, Philip - 09 Sep 2021, A/2/1 1967-68, FORD CITY, PA
Haithcoat, John - 18-Jun-21, A, 3/21, 1968-69, FERNDALE, MI,
Harner, Alfred R. - 26-Mar-45, 24-May-21, C, 4/31, 1965-67, ASHLAND, PA,
Houchins III, John A. - 01-Jan-19, Unk, TAMPA, FL,
Jimenez-Cerna, Dr. Angel - 01-Oct-42, 07-Apr-19, C, 8-SUP, 1967-68, SAN ANTONIO, TX, LIFE MEMBER,
Johns, Enoch - 20-Sep-51, 16-Jun-20, C, 3/21, 1970-71, NAYLOR, GA, LIFE MEMBER,
Larson, Charles D - 29-Nov-18, A, 2/1, 1965-67, ORLAND HILLS, IL,
Larson, Chester P. - 03-Mar-46, 18-Nov-21, A, 4/31, 1967-68, BREWSTER, OH, LIFE MEMBER,
Laurence, Paul - 14-Jul-45, 07-Apr-21, B, 4/31, 1965-67, FORT MYERS, FL, LIFE MEMBER,
Miller, Daniel W. - 19 Apr 2021, LIFE MEMBER
Maple, Jesse - 30-May-21, D, 4/31, 1967-68, WEST LAFAYETTE, OH,
McGuire, Thomas D. - 29-Jul-45, B&D, 3/21, 1965-67, LEXINGTON, OH, LIFE MEMBER,
Moreno, Juan - 17-Nov-21, D, 4/31, 1969-70, AQUADA, PR,
Newton, MSGT(Ret) Malcolm E. - 20-Sep-32, 18-Dec-20, A, 2/1, 1966, CLEVELAND, SC,
Patrick, Gerald - 26-May-07, C, 4/31, 1968-69,
Pettengill, Allen - 05-May-21, D, 4/31, 1968-69, SPRINGFIELD, MA,
Rhodes, David A. - 15-Dec-44, 26-Apr-21, A, 4/31, 1965-67, THOMAS, WV,
Rogers, CSM(Ret) George C. - 26-Mar-29, 25-Apr-21, HHC, 2/1, 1965-67, LAWTON, OK, LIFE MEMBER,
Russell, Ronald - F-TRP, 1969-70, BATTLE CREEK, MI,
Savoca, Peter J. - 29-Oct-46, 13-Jun-19, A, 3/21, 1967, TAMARAC, FL, LIFE MEMBER,
Shull Jr., Robert - 01-Dec-12, C, 4/31, 1968-70, CHERRYVILLE, NC,
Smith, George W. - 30 Nov 2021, GRANBURY, TX, LIFE MEMBER
Snyder, COL (Ret) William P. - 30-Aug-28, 12-Sep-21, HQ, 3/21, 1967-68, LANCASTER, PA,
Sokolowski, Steve - 29-Aug-51, A, 3/21, 1971-72, UNION GROVE, WI,
Thomas, Donald - 25-Feb-21, B, 3/21, 1968-69, Millersville, MD, LIFE MEMBER,
Tipton, Herbert F. - 03-Jan-46, 01-Jan-21, B, 4/31, 1965-67, DELAND, FL, LIFE MEMBER,
Tolbert, Joseph A - 09 Dec 2019, VASHON, WA, LIFE MEMBER
Vaughn, Aubrey W. - 26-Mar-32, 27-Dec-20, A, 3/21, 1967-68, LOUISVILLE, KY,
Welch, Joe - 04-Jul-21, A, 2/1, 1967-68, KINGSVILLE, MO,
Widstrom, Ken - 17-Jun-46, 05-Mar-21, D, 4/31, 1968, COON RAPIDS, MN, LIFE MEMBER,
Yost, Robert - 03-Aug-13, D, 4/31, 1969-70, HARRISON, AR,

Words spoken upon the presentation of the flag of the United States of America as part of the final military honors ceremony for a departed U.S. Army veteran: “On behalf of the President of the United States, the Department of the Army, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one’s honorable and faithful service.



**Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery,
San Antonio, Texas.**

Tribute to Nolan Bingham

By Gary L. Noller

In late June 1970, U.S. Army helicopters transported about 100 Americal soldiers to the top of a remote jungle hilltop. The soldiers quickly exited the choppers and dispersed in all directions.

Once on the ground, a staff sergeant pointed to two green troops and shouted, "You two, go down the side of the hill and dig in. That is where you will spend the night."

I was one of the two new soldiers. The other was Nolan Bingham. We arrived in Vietnam just two weeks prior and received assignments to Co. B, 1/46 Infantry, 196 Light Infantry Brigade.

Nolan, who usually went by the nickname "Bing", and I were already familiar with each other. Earlier in 1970 we trained together at Ft. Knox, Kentucky.

Bing and I did not hesitate to complete our task. We began digging and were happy to find that the ground was easy to excavate. We quickly completed a two-man foxhole that was knee deep. But we did not stop there. After a few more hours the foxhole was waist deep. We decided to stop there.

That night we slept in the open next to our foxhole. We took turns standing guard. Thankfully the night was quiet and we did not need to use our foxhole.

The next morning the staff sergeant came by and said, "Come with me, I am moving you to a different spot." We shook our heads but quickly gathered our gear, left our well constructed foxhole, and moved to a new position.

Over the next months Nolan and I would become good friends. We were both radio-telephone operators in the command platoon. Months later we both received promotions to handle the radios at the battalion tactical operations center on Fire Support Base Mary Ann.

One night we established a night laager in a very small area that provided few sleeping positions. Bing tied his hammock between two trees and covered it with a tent made from his poncho. I always slept on the ground and asked him if I could sleep under his hammock. He agreed.

About midnight we heard a loud explosion just outside our perimeter. Everyone immediately jumped on guard. Nolan whispered, "Noller, is it okay if I come down there with you?" "Yeah, that's okay," I replied. He slid out of his hammock and we both spent the rest of

the night on my twenty-four inch wide air mattress. We never found out what the explosion was about but no one was hurt.

A few weeks later we went on patrol to look for an enemy base camp. We were told to take a light load as we did not expect to be away from our laager very long. But we did not find any signs of the enemy until late afternoon. We quickly went on line and swept through an enemy hootch area.

As we moved out I quickly lost track of Bingham. He had been behind me but as we spread out but he went a different direction. I did not know the guys to my right and left. I felt unprotected and very ill at ease. I asked one of the others, "Did you see which way Bingham went? He said, "He is up ahead to the right."

I quickly moved up and found Bing. I felt relief to be back alongside someone I knew very well and trusted without hesitation. I knew he would protect me with his life.

It began to get dark. The captain told us it was too late to move back to our laager. We received orders to move down the trail a short distance and sit down for the night. We had not prepared for this. We had no sleeping gear. Many in the group, including me, did not bring food for the night.

Nolan and I clustered together with Sonny Crowder, another RTO. He also went through training at Ft. Knox with us. Sonny opened a can of cheese and crackers. Nolan opened a can of pork slices and heated them over a heat tab. I just sat and watched.

The sky was dark as the two began to eat their sparse meal. Sonny said, "Noller, are you going to eat tonight?" I told them I had not brought anything more than an afternoon meal. Sonny and Nolan both pointed to their food. Sonny said, "You can have part of ours."

I declined. I did not feel like I should eat their food after they had carried it all day. I could do without. I said, "No, I will be okay."

Nolan lowered his food and said, "Noller, if you don't eat something then I am going to dump mine on the ground." I looked at Sonny. He shook his head in the

affirmative. I felt perplexed.

I did not want to take their food but I also did not want them to throw it away if I did not eat with them. So I took a cracker and a pork slice and we dined in the dark.

The last time I saw Bing in Vietnam was the afternoon of March 27, 1971. I was leaving FSB Mary Ann to go to LZ Mildred to establish a battalion radio position. As I prepared to leave he came by and said, "Hey Noller, since you are leaving, can I have your sleeping bunker?" I replied, "Sure, I am not coming back here."

A few hours later he received severe wounds as an enemy sapper attack inflicted massive damage to the firebase. He was eventually evacuated to the United States.

I was able to catch up with him a couple of months later. He was in Muncie, Indiana beginning a school term at Ball State University. He became an architect and returned to his hometown of Columbus, Indiana to serve the needs of his community.

About six years ago Nolan informed his family and friends that he was battling cancer. He fought with courage. There were many ups and downs but he never gave up his spirit. He was continually thankful for what he had enjoyed in life. He never complained about his severe illness.

In May of this year we learned that Bing only had a matter of days left to live. Sonny and I, joined by our former squad leader, Tommy Poppell, paid a visit to Nolan at his home in Indiana. It was a great reunion and we shared many memories. Nolan passed to his eternal reward ten days later.

I am glad that I was able to serve with Nolan. He helped take care of me in Vietnam. He will not be forgotten.



Nolan "Bing" Bingham (facing camera) and Gary Noller hitch a ride to the PX at Chu Lai, October, 1970.

Saint of a Chaplain

By Gary L. Noller



On June 27, 1950, President Harry S Truman ordered American military forces into the Korean War. Americans fought on the side of South Korea and saw initial success in pushing enemy forces back towards the Chinese border.

By November it appeared that Americans would be home for Christmas. But unexpectedly, a large force of Chinese soldiers entered the war on the side of North Korea.

The enemy forced American troops into a hasty retreat. Chinese and North Korean forces blocked roads and trapped large numbers of Americans behind enemy lines. The losses were extreme. Along with the intense fighting, Americans dealt with bitter winter weather and a shortage of food, ammunition, and medical supplies.

Emil Kapaun was born on April 20, 1916 in Pilsen, Kansas. He recognized his vocation for priesthood in the Roman Catholic church and was ordained in the Diocese of Wichita on June 9, 1940.

In World War II, Fr. Kapaun volunteered to be a U.S. Army chaplain and received an assignment in Burma. His official title was U.S. Army Chaplain (Captain) Emil J. Kapaun. The troops knew him simply as "padre".

After the war, Fr. Kapaun pursued higher education at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He still felt his true calling was that of a chaplain. In 1948 he received permission to again Army.

Fr. Kapaun served in Korea with 3/8th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division. On November 1-2, 1950, enemy

forces opened a viscous attack near Unsan. Enemy troops eventually wore down the outnumbered Americans. The dire situation caused many Americans to evade and escape in any manner they could.

Fr. Kapaun decided to stay behind and administer aid and Last Rites to the remaining sick and dying Americans. In the final hours of the battle, he encouraged the stranded Americans to rally and to protect one another. Fr. Kapaun continually exposed himself to enemy fire and personally rescued downed Americans and brought them back to safety.

As the dismal outcome became apparent, Fr. Kapaun assisted in the negotiations for a safe surrender to the enemy. In the end, he and many other Americans became prisoners and forced to move to Prison Camp #5 at Pyoktong, North Korea.

It is estimated that as many as 5,000 Americans withstood extremely harsh



conditions in the squalor of Korean prison camps. Some reports state that close to 40% of American prisoners died while in captivity.

Food and medicine was in short supply at Camp #5. Fr. Kapaun risked severe punishment to find means to steal food and medicine from the captors. He often gave his small bit of food to other soldiers. In addition to providing food and medical care, he also administered to the spiritual needs of his fellow soldiers and encouraged them to never give up hope.

Fr. Kapaun was soon struck down by pneumonia and dysentery. He developed a blood clot in his leg. The enemy sent him to the "death house". He expired on May 23, 1951, at age 35. His comrades buried him in a common grave outside the prison camp. In August 1951, Fr.

Kapaun received the posthumous award of the Distinguished Service Cross.

The Korean War essentially ended with the signing of an armistice on July 23, 1953. Fr. Kapaun's remains and those of others in the common grave were recovered and moved to the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. For decades they rested there, "known but to God".

Soldiers returning from Camp #5 told of the heroism and selflessness of Fr. Kapaun. In 1993, Pope John Paul II raised Fr. Kapaun to the status of Servant of God. This is the first step in the process of determining sainthood.

For decades, Fr. Kapaun's comrades lobbied Congress to upgrade his valor award. On April 23, 2013, President Barack Obama announced the award of the Medal of Honor to Fr. Kapaun. Members of Fr. Kapaun's family and veterans he served with attended the special White House ceremony.

In March 2021, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency identified Fr. Kapaun's remains. In September, the residents of Pilsen, Kansas, turned out in droves to see their prayers finally answered. After 70 years, Fr. Kapaun returned to St. John Nepomucene, his hometown church.

On September 21, military and religious officials conducted a formal funeral for Fr. Kapaun in Wichita, Kansas. After the ceremony, Fr. Kapaun was laid to rest in a tomb inside the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1953, I began first grade at Sacred Heart Cathedral School in Dodge City, Kansas. I really did not know much about Fr. Kapaun at that time. But I remember the nuns leading us in prayer for him every day. May he Rest in Peace. It is well deserved.



Bad Day Off 251

By Charles Gill

PREFACE

There are some people who want to hear about Vietnam. If they haven't been there, I generally don't want to tell them about it. I guess there are a lot of reasons for that. Usually, I don't want to bore them with another old "war story". But many times, I don't want them to know. My wife used to say I'm too private about things like that. She thought I'm not proud of my service. Indeed, I am proud, but I figure most people don't give a damn because it was only Vietnam, and today most people don't know or can't remember what our objectives were in Vietnam, or the sacrifices that were made there.

I've thought about it off and on now for 51 years. Sometimes I think about it and about what happened and about the men I was with at the time. Usually, I don't like to think about it because it's pretty much "old news", and it has little or no bearing on the present. There are only a few people with whom I am willing to share it. My wife, Sherry, was one, and her brother Joe, is also one. He was 11B; I was too. But the real reason I'm writing this at all is because of my daughters: Lisa, Angie, and Katie. They're the ones who should know what happened. Maybe they'll tell their children.

BACKGROUND

I was assigned to Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division from 1 November 1969 to 30 March 1970, or as we used to say, "B Co, 2/1, 196th LIB, Americal". It wasn't really a very long time, certainly not as long as most men who "served" in Vietnam. I don't know too many who actually "served", most of us were just there. We were trying to stay alive for the duration of the infamous "tour of duty" which was 12 months long. We just wanted to get back to our block, our neighborhood, our friends, our Nova, college, wife, or home. We thought about things like that a lot over there. Between contacts with our Viet Cong brethren, we talked about it with whomever would listen. It's funny how when you're in a large group of people you gravitate to people who have similar interests, backgrounds, and outlooks as your own. Not unlike it is in a college dormitory or a Boy Scout Troop. That's the way it was over there.

By the time I got to Vietnam, there almost seemed to be a lull in the major fighting. The Tet Offensives of 1968 and 1969 had come and gone. In late 1969, the North Vietnamese Army, which had taken some hits down south, was pulling back, leaving the local Viet Cong guerrillas to do battle with the Americans. Most of the encounters with the VC were either with snipers or booby traps. Those damn booby traps.

Company B operated out of Landing Zone Hawk Hill or Hill 29 on the map. LZ Hawk Hill was located about seven or eight miles south of Da Nang, just west of Highway 1. Bravo Company patrolled the coastal plains and foothills west of Hawk Hill. In my experience, we rarely went up into the real mountains. Most of the hills we climbed were no more than 300 meters in height. Still, it's a pretty good struggle if you're carrying a fully-loaded rucksack. In our area of operations and at the request of our battalion, we built Observation Post Legionnaire on Hill 251. We were camping on Hill 251 from late January 1970 through the day I was hurt, March 25. Actually, life on 251 wasn't too bad. We had hot breakfasts, lots of rations, water, and mail. We occasionally received incoming fire, but it was when we went hiking *off* 251; well, that's when we really had problems.

The Viet Cong were very intelligent, and very observant. We were in their backyard. They knew the neighborhood; they knew the shortcuts, the back alleys. We were just trying to follow the main thoroughfares without getting lost or hurt. The VC always knew where an infantry company of 166 loud, raucous "men" and boys were located.¹

The VC often made our daily hikes down the hill and into the valley very dangerous. The common practice was to booby trap the trails we walked down each morning. Our platoon usually started out by 7:00 am so we became very predictable. The booby traps were rarely fatal, but could easily blow off a leg or a foot, an awful price to pay just to get home. The explosives were usually of U.S. origin, something we or another company may have dropped along a trail, or left behind after a sit-down break. It was easy to do. Most often, we'd find that the VC had used a 40mm M-79 round, or one of several varieties of mortar rounds, or a grenade, which was a most lethal booby trap.²

PRELUDE

Starting sometime in January 1970, Bravo Company along with some artillery forward observers moved up onto Hill 251 and the Army promptly renamed it "OP Legionnaire". We spent several days digging foxholes and sleeping positions and clearing lines of fire and generally making ourselves at home. But we soon began our daily patrols and occasional night ambushes down off the hill in an effort to become more familiar with the surrounding terrain and to see if we could meet the local VC. Our patrols were usually platoon-size, that is, we generally had three squads of about eight or nine men each along with the platoon leader, his RTO³, and the medic. A typical day patrol would usually consist of about 27 men in all. Each squad would leave one man back on 251 to perform work details and to guard the squads' equipment.

The booby traps were becoming more than a daily nuisance. By March it was not uncommon for one of the three platoons to hit one. And when your platoon did hit one, everybody became a little more afraid and a little more irritable. No one would volunteer to walk the first position in the column. This position was called "point". My point man quit unless we were following some other group in the platoon. The squad leader couldn't force someone to walk point, no matter what the officers say today. Nobody wanted to get hurt, and nobody wanted anyone else to get hurt.

So, there we were that morning of March 25, 1970 having breakfast on Hill 251. My point man just informed me that since my squad would be leading the platoon that morning, he wouldn't be on point. No body else wanted it. I trusted only one or two of the other guys to walk point because as squad leader, I walked behind the point man. And my safety depended upon how alert he was.

I remember one day, my point man raised his rifle to fire at a VC running through a rice paddy, and his weapon failed. I was surprised and angry when I realized that this guy was giving me no protection whatsoever. I asked when was the last time he'd opened the bolt and resealed the round in the chamber on his weapon. I don't remember what his exact reply was but it was less frequent than the once a day recommend to prevent such problems.

What does a conscientious squad leader do after everyone refuses to be "point man for a day"? Well, that March morning, I walked it myself with one of my most trusted soldiers behind me. The second position in the column and just behind "point" is referred to as the "slack" position. That fateful day, I was on point and on slack was Robert Duane Tatum from Blue Grass, Iowa. We called Bob "Doc" because he held a degree in chiropractic from Palmer College.

That morning we were to go off the south side of Hill 251, across the valley, and up onto two smaller hills just south of 251. These two hills were connected by a saddle, or a lower ridge, which ran between them in an east-west line. We had camped on the eastern-most hill a few months earlier, but had only stayed there a night or two. So, I was familiar with that area somewhat. What I wasn't familiar with was going off the south side of Hill 251. We had taken most of our hikes off the north side and I knew that side pretty well. But I can only remember being on the south side trail once, and that was to come up the trail. In addition, that day we were to follow a slightly different route down than the other platoons had been using.

All this foretold problems I couldn't even think about that morning.

INTO THE VALLEY

Doc and I started off down Hill 251 trying to stay off the regular trails. Staying off the trails was relatively easy in clear terrain, but became very difficult when moving through thick underbrush or over very uneven ground. I remember that 251 was grass-covered near the peak and down most of the sides, but about one-third of its base was covered in thick brush and jungle before it opened up into the rice paddies on level ground in the valley. In order to get the column through that dense thicket, I chose to follow one of the established paths. Entering the bushes, we found an empty GI combat boot, which had been cut off of its previous owner. It appeared to be maybe a day or two old. Next to it was a place on the trail where an explosion had taken place. I put two-and-two together and realized that we'd better get the hell out of there.

As we came out of the thicket and into the knee-high grass, I didn't notice

anything different or unusual. But behind me Doc called to "Hold up". I turned around in time to see him pulling at something, which had caught on his boot or pants leg. As he removed the vine or whatever it was, he noticed that it came from the side of the trail at the very point where we left the thicket and walked into the grass. I heard him exclaim "sonafabitch" or a similar epithet. I walked back to see what he'd discovered. Lying in the grass was what looked like an 82mm mortar round! It had a trip wire sticking out of the nose. The VC had put the booby trap at the exact spot where a GI would be least careful as he stepped out of the thicket into the clearing.

I'll never know how I had stepped over that trip line and how Doc had found it without it detonating the mortar round. God had sent one of his angels to walk in the column with us that morning.

We quickly told our platoon leader, a sergeant first-class by the name of "Mason", that we'd found a little problem. He was what we referred to as a "lifer" which meant that he had made the Army his career. Most GIs berated "lifera", but actually they had a lot of good, practical experiences, which usually kept people from getting hurt. We decided to get everyone away from the trap and to blow it up where it lay. And that's what we did.

After all the excitement we were ready to get the platoon moving. Again, I was on the point as we move slowly along the well-worn path in the knee-high grass. I don't know why I followed the path. Probably because I thought I could see any obstacles easier than if we were all tromping through the grass.

I was moving very slowly as we were leaving the thicket where Doc had found our first booby trap of the day. Not more than 100 feet from that spot, I saw out of the corner of my eye, the grass on the *side* of the trail move as I brought

my right foot forward! Looking down at my feet I spotted a thin line running across the path. As I stood there dumbfounded, I noticed that my foot was still pulling the line from parallel. Slowly, oh so slowly, I moved my foot back and reached down and parted the grass next to my right foot. Hidden in the weeds was yet another big mortar round just waiting to ruin the whole day. Our angel was sure doing his (or her) job!

Now it was my opportunity to turn white. I stopped the column of troops, whom by now were becoming a little agitated at being held up again just after resuming our morning walk. Again, we brought Sergeant Mason forward. Again, we blew the mortar round in place. All of this sounds easy and expeditious, but moving 35 young Army privates and specialists back a safe distance, and finding someone who will blow this thing up so we can get moving, takes a lot of time. And time can make a soldier in the jungle vulnerable. We were getting tired of being vulnerable that morning and just wanted to get to a safer, more defensible location.

We removed that obstacle and continued on our journey. Slowly we moved off the hillside and down into the valley advancing toward the two smaller hills south of Hill 251. The valley had been rice paddies years earlier, but these were dry now and covered in ankle-high grass. Going through the valleys was always precarious because you can be seen from a long way off. And a column of American soldiers is an easy target for a young VC soldier with a rifle. Usually, the snipers would shoot at us from long-range, maybe 300 yards or more. I'm sure it was fun to watch us duck and run for cover at the sound of one or two shots from an AK-47. But it sure wasn't fun on our end. I hated being sniped at because you never knew when some guy might get lucky. We were normally able to return fire and move quickly out of the shooting zone.

But this morning we met no snipers. They were probably sleeping after having spent the night before placing the two booby traps that Doc and I had just found. They would probably be disappointed when they realized that we made it safely down 251. They didn't know about that little angel helping me and Doc.

I don't think that we had much to do that day. I know we were all a bit unnerved after the bobby trap incidents. So, Sergeant Mason directed me to move our platoon toward the closest of the two hills in front of us, the eastern-most hill, the one on which we'd camped a few months earlier. I'm sure he just wanted to get us some place where we could sit down and catch our breath after escaping injury. After all, he could've been hurt also because it was common for the platoon leader to walk behind the slack man. That makes him third in the column, and that's too close for an exploding 82mm mortar.

I remember walking up the eastern hill and looking at a few of the old foxholes that we'd dug during an earlier camp-out. The bottom part of the hill was

like Hill 251 in that it was covered in brush, but the top portion of the hill was grass covered with paths through the grass where GIs and VC had walked. We led the platoon over the top of that hill and then down through the saddle and up the western hill. I suppose the hills were only 100 yards apart from peak to peak through the saddle.

I had never been on the western hill, which we were approaching. I knew that GIs had been there because it also had old foxholes and trash lying about. It was somewhat open on top of the hill with overhead brush and trees covering the bottom half. As hills go, these two hills were nothing like humping up 251. These hills were less than 100 meters high, and once we got up one hill it was an easy walk over the saddle to the next hill. We were beginning to feel a little safer getting off the valley floor.

At the hilltop, Sergeant Mason had us disperse our men in a perimeter around the very top of the hill. Just below the top of the hill was another plateau with foxholes where GIs had been camped earlier. The drop between the two levels was somewhat steep, probably about five feet in height. There were several worn paths, or "cuts" between the two levels, which provided easier access than trying to climb up one of the steep banks between levels. After I got my squad settled down and resting, and looking outward, I decided to go down to the lower level and check things out. It must have been pretty warm that March afternoon in 1970 because I had taken my shirt off and was bare-chested as I walked down a well-worn "cut" between the two levels. Half-way down and through the cut, I felt something on my chest. I hadn't seen anything as I entered the cut, but I sure felt something now. "What the hell is this?" I thought.

Stretched across my breast was a thin nylon line. By that time of day, I knew what it was. Carefully I retreated, releasing the tension on the line. I could see that on the left the line was tied around nothing more than a handful of grass. I couldn't see what was holding the line on the right side. Carefully, I pushed aside the grass where the line entered the grass at a point that was about "head-high" with me. I found that the line was connected to the nose of yet another mortar round! This time it was a smaller round than the two 82mm rounds that Doc and I had found earlier in the day coming off of Hill 251. This one must have been about a 60mm round. Nonchalantly, I took out the pocketknife that Bobby, my nephew had sent me, and cautiously cut the nylon line on both ends. A good souvenir, I thought. I had something to take back to the World. If I had tripped that one, I'd be dead. No helmet; no flack jacket. An explosion occurring three feet from my right ear would have been the worst.

I got my line and reported my new find to Sergeant Mason. He was stunned when I told him about yet another booby trap. I remember that by that time we

were all out of C4 explosive having used what we had been carrying to detonate the two booby traps we'd found earlier. So, somebody suggested that we use a grenade to blow the newest one I'd just found. The problem is that a grenade has only a 4-5 second time delay before it explodes. And four seconds is just not quite enough time to get safely away from an exploding grenade and an exploding 60mm mortar round. But in every group, there's a hero. And we were no exception.

Fortunately, it wasn't me. We had picked up a replacement soldier a day or two earlier. He wasn't in my squad. I think he was assigned to second squad, Paul Thomas' squad. Apparently, he was a former Marine because we called him "Jarhead" instead of his real name. Well, Jarhead said he would pull the pin on the grenade, place it next to the mortar round, release the handle and run like hell. And that's what he did, but he wasn't fast enough. Before he could reach cover the whole mess exploded. He wasn't hurt badly, but he received a slight wound to his right side below one of his armpits. It looked like a small puncture wound, and I was sure he'd been hit by a piece of wire fragment from the grenade. He was alert and not in much pain, but we had to call in a Medevac⁴ to take him back to Hawk Hill. And all this was going to take time and would certainly reveal our exact position to anyone who happened to be interested. I hated delays of this type, but this kind of immediate medical attention kept everyone's morale up.

Our platoon had a medic attached to us. We always had a medic with us when we went out for our walks. Our medic's name that day was Leland Reed. There wasn't much he had to do for Jarhead because he was awake and the wound bled very little. So, Doc Reed put one of the GI bandages on Jarhead's small puncture wound just to keep the dirt out. The medics were pretty good guys. Sometimes they'd carry a rifle, but usually not. But they didn't have a big red and white cross on their helmet either. Can't say I blame them. I didn't know Doc Reed very well, but he was a likable guy. I remember I took his picture one morning after breakfast. I'm glad I did because I have fond memories of him.

Sergeant Mason got on the radio and called in the Medevac for Jarhead. I remember that Doc Reed classified his condition as less than "urgent", probably something like "important", but certainly above "routine" which was reserved for toothaches and athlete's foot. So, we had to wait for a chopper⁵ a little longer than normal because they would pick up all the "urgents" first, then all the "important". And when that chopper arrived there had be no doubt where we were.

While we waited, one of the guys in my squad called me over to his position on the perimeter. I think it might have been Doc Tatum. He had been listening

to some noise or something moving in the brush down the hill in front of our position. It's funny how quiet 25 soldiers can be when they want to be. And we could hear some slight movement in the trees and bushes out in front of where we were laying. Why we didn't open up with all our firepower and see what happened, I'll never know. Thinking back, I imagine that Sergeant Mason didn't want us to open fire while waiting for a Medevac for Jarhead, thinking the pilot wouldn't land if we had a hot LZ. So, we didn't, but we kept hearing that movement. Couldn't see anything; we would've fired if we'd seen somebody.

Soon, we got word on the radio that our chopper was inbound. The pilot asked that we put out a colored smoke grenade to identify. Somebody popped a smoke grenade and the pilot correctly identified the color, and he landed the helicopter nearby. I helped put Jarhead on the chopper and wished him well. He was getting a free ride out of the woods, and would be sleeping on sheets and a mattress that evening – and he didn't look too worse for wear!

After the Jarhead's chopper took off, Sergeant Mason told me to get us back to camp. Everybody was ready to move, me included. We hadn't had much fun that day and we were beginning to get a little weary. I imagine it was about 1:30 in the afternoon when Mason had us "saddle up" and get ready to move. I wanted to get us back to 251 as soon as possible, and we decided to go back on the same trail on which we'd arrived. That turned out to be a big mistake. Doc Tatum and I were on point as we began to move steadily off the top and down to the saddle between the two hills. All of a sudden there was a loud siren going off in my right ear, and I was lying on the ground and people were yelling. I remember hearing the first half of an explosion and then the siren. My right buttock felt like it was on fire and it really burned. I was lying face down with my head turned to the right. That's when I closed my eyes.

Well, I was hurting, and somehow, I knew that Doc was hurt also. We weren't dead, but I didn't know how bad we were hurt. I couldn't tell much because I had my eyes closed. Truthfully, I didn't think about too much except how I was doing, and my butt burned like hell. I asked Doc Reed to check my butt and that's when he said he wanted to work on the *head* wound first! I didn't feel the head wound, but apparently, I had one just behind my right ear. I also remember calling out for Jackie Thomas. Jack answered and I told him to dig my billfold out of my fatigue pants because I had over \$400 on me and I was afraid I might "lose" that somewhere between the Medevac helicopter and Ireland Army Hospital at Ft. Knox. Jack retrieved my wallet and told me that he'd give it to Lt. Rodman, the company's executive officer. I remember that I briefly opened my eyes as I talked to Jack and again as they lifted Doc Tatum and me onto the chopper. We were

getting a ride out of the war, but I was still scared. I can't begin to recall the fusillade of thoughts, concerns, and worries that must have been going through my mind. I didn't talk to Doc on the ride into LZ Hawk Hill. I had my eyes closed.

I briefly remember getting back to Hawk Hill and being taken into the hospital. There were numerous people around. I remember that the Catholic chaplain was there. I remember that another medic we'd worked with before, Doug Alridge was there too. I remember asking them to pray for me. I was pretty scared. I remember that a man asked me if I could breathe. I said yes, I could. He asked me to breathe deeply. I did so with no undue effort or pain except for that in my butt. I later learned that I had a wound in my back, which the doctors feared might have punctured my lung. But luckily, it hadn't. I guess my angel had gotten in the way.

We had been real lucky, Doc and me. Several weeks before, the battalion commanding officer had issued an order that all combat personnel walking out in the woods were to wear flack jackets. Well, those damn things were thick and heavy and hot. We hated wearing them because they were very uncomfortable and they were just one more thing to carry. And we already had enough to carry. But that day, true to form, Doc and I had our flack jackets on as I tripped that damn booby trap — probably another 60mm mortar round like the one I'd found on top of the hill. They had to throw those flack vests away. I'm sure that had I not been wearing it, that the wound I received in the back would have torn a hole the size of a silver dollar in my lung, and that could have changed everything. As it was, I wished I'd been wearing flack *pants!*

Doc wasn't as lucky as me. The explosion had cost him the sight in his left eye. Surprisingly, he told me later it really didn't hurt at the time. I still feel bad about being the cause of that even though I know that he's forgiven me. Doc also happened to be wearing a belt of M-60 machine gun ammunition around his waist. A piece of the exploding shrapnel was stopped short of his abdomen by one of the rounds of ammo. Doc still has the bullet from that round. It has a cavity more than half way through where it stopped the shrapnel.

Well, I don't think we stayed too long at LZ Hawk Hill. I remember that they flew us down to the Americal Division hospital at Chu Lai, probably late that afternoon. I think I slept a little in flight, but I had my eyes closed. I don't remember too much at all. I know they took us back into surgery to examine and clean our wounds. We were sedated at the time. I woke up in the recover room later with a man looking over me. I opened my eyes.

"Are you a doctor?", I asked.

"Yes, I'm the doctor who took care of you; you're

going to be fine".

"What time is it?"

"It's about 11:00 in the evening".

"Is there a guy named Tatum in here?". I wanted to know where Doc was.

"Yes, he's just across the aisle; he's going to be fine too".

"Tell him I said he's a damn good man".

With that he left my bedside and I watched him walk across the room to another bed and talk to someone laying there. I could hear him talking, but I couldn't understand what he said as he looked down at the person in the bed.

I called out, "Doc!".

A hand went up from the bed as if to say, "here I am".

"You're a damn good man!"

We spent five more days in Chu Lai, and then we were transported to Camp Zama outside of Tokyo. Camp Zama was doing a big business with all the wounded soldiers coming out of Vietnam. I lost track of Robert Tatum at Camp Zama because they put us in different wards. And I started feeling sorry for myself. I wasn't walking yet because of the wounds to my buttocks, upper leg, and behind my knee. Finally, one afternoon at Camp Zama, I got so mad I got out of bed and began to shuffle behind a wheelchair trying to get my step back. Well, I got it, but I continued to limp for about a year afterwards.

One evening in the hospital ward at Camp Zama, several young women who were dispensing cookies and punch and conversation visited us. One pretty girl came by my bed and as we talked, I boasted that I had graduated from Notre Dame. She was nice and polite, but she obviously didn't believe me. I was somewhat surprised and mentioned some of the ND guys names whom I knew in college. I mentioned John Kukankous, John McGrath, Mike Bresnahan, and for some reason I mentioned a guy I knew, but never did anything with: Frank Mashuda. Her mouth dropped open. I had just named her husband! I don't know why I said Frank's name. It must have been that the angel on 251 had followed me all the way to Japan. Anyway, we had a very nice talk for the next half hour and she told me that after graduating from Notre Dame, that she and Frank had married and since he was in Navy ROTC, that he had to fulfill his four-year commitment to the Navy. And Tokyo is where they were currently stationed. She told me that one of my old roommates in Howard Hall Annex, Mike Bresnahan, and his wife were also in Tokyo. I told her to tell Mike hello for me. The next evening Mike and his wife made the two-hour trip out to Camp Zama to see me. What a neat occasion that was.

I spent a couple of weeks at Camp Zama where they sewed up my wounds and changed my bandages everyday. By the middle of April 1970, I was on my

way home. I remember arriving at Scott AFB just south of St. Louis. My first night back in the World, my wife and her parents came from Vincennes, Indiana to see me. What a sight for sore eyes! I can never forget seeing her again after the six months of separation. Our emotions were cascading; we were so relieved to see one another and to know that we were both safe. Now, we could begin our lives together again.

I didn't talk to Bob Tatum again for 17 years. I knew that he lived in Iowa someplace. I was going to be in Rock Island, Illinois on business and decided that would be a good time to contact Bob. In October 1987 I reached Bob on the phone and the first thing he said to me was "We should've fired into the brush and killed that SOB". No "hello", no "how're you doing"; no other greeting, no anything except to exclaim how we should've shot and kept that VC off the path on which we were going to exit. It was as if we hadn't spoken to each other for 15 minutes after the explosion. But we spent a couple of evenings that week catching up on each other. It was a very memorable occasion.

POSTSCRIPT

My story pales in comparison to the sacrifices of many other men and women who went to Vietnam. It is only one short story among all the stories from soldiers, marines, sailors, and nurses who got to make that trip. Each of us who went to Vietnam experienced a different view of the war. It's like blind men touching different parts of the elephant. None of us touched it all. But all of us who went touched part of the elephant, and the elephant touched us in ways you can never imagine if you didn't serve.

I didn't like leaving wife and home and family for the US Army and ultimately, for Vietnam. But I and many like me did leave because we were expected to do so. I am proud of the fact that we went. It was our contribution for living in a free republic. We learned many lessons from our time in the service and from our tour in Vietnam. Some of us never came home from that trip. As has been said before, they are the ones who gave the most. Our deepest respect and gratitude go out to them and those we left behind. We will never forget them.

1. I know I put "men" in quotes. That's not to demean the valor or courage of the individuals who were there, but most were a hell of a lot younger than most men. I had two 18-year-old boys in my squad. They were Glen Chastain and Jesse Ortez. They needed help and leadership, hated being in Vietnam, and they hated to listen to anybody in authority, especially Jesse. I often wonder whatever became of him. I know he re-enlisted just to get out of the field in Vietnam.

2. In one of the other platoons, a guy I remember from NCO School at Ft. Benning, Roger Ferland, tripped a booby trap consisting of a 105mm artillery round. Roger lost both legs in that explosion. Later, sometime in the mid-1970's, Dean Gowin of Effingham, Illinois told me Roger had been to see him. Dean said Roger was doing pretty well for a guy who'd lost both legs.

3. Radio-Telephone Operator. This man carried a backpack radio communications unit. We had a second radio in my squad.

4. Medical Evacuation helicopter.

5. Helicopter

From the Managing Editor

Gary L. Noller

This is the initial issue of the *Charger Journal*—the official publication of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade Association. This carries on the work of previous editors and is the 36th issue. It is the continuation of the publication that was created in the 1980s and carried forward by Bill Knight and Ken McKenzie.

I have chosen to name the publication *Charger Journal* to more adequately reflect the purpose of the magazine. While it is a newsletter it is also much more than that. It is the opportunity to publish original writings and photographs of veterans of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. This will help provide the true history of the brigade's participation in the Vietnam War and will be a valuable research tool for future historians and authors.

Members are encouraged to submit their original content for consideration for publication. It is best to submit via email to gnoller@aol.com but paper copy can also be submitted. Mail to P.O. Box 294314, Kerrville, TX, 78029.

It is best if text and photographs are sent as separate file. No special format is required. Photos should be sent individually and at a resolution of 300 dpi or better. One page of the magazine is approximately 1,000 words and can also have a small photograph.

Submit content of any length. It can be a manuscript, short story, essay, letter to the editor, or short clip. Original writings are most valuable. In most cases reprints of previously published material will be secondary in interest. Please contact me with your questions.

Tribute to Doc Riley

By Edward C. Gittens

Michael Philip Riley enlisted for three years in the US Army on November 1, 1969. He was 17 years old at the time. He trained to be a medical specialist (91B20) for ten weeks at Fort Sam Houston. Mike started his tour in Vietnam in July 1970 at the age of 18.

He was assigned to A Co., 1/46th Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division. This unit was based in I Corps of South Viet Nam. Mike was a conscientious objector at the onset of his tour. He was then combat medic for the first platoon of Alpha Company ('Alpha One'). That is where we met and served side by side until I was wounded.

I wish to give an account of 'Doc' Riley's performance. During January and February 1971, I served as an M-60 gunner with 1st squad of 'Alpha One' at the time the following events occurred. I would like to bear witness to his bravery and competence performing under extreme duress and adverse circumstances.

To start things out, on the night of January 25, 1971, Alpha Company received small arms fire on their Night Defensive Position (NDP). Artillery was processed from nearby L.Z. Young and three 105 Howitzer rounds impacted near the perimeter, wounding two A Company grunts.

Doc had to low crawl with a lieutenant (F.O.) who had a flashlight to locate and render aid to PFC E. Severns. He was the most seriously wounded, with a sizable chunk of shrapnel in his jugular vein. "Doc" performed the necessary aid under a poncho and with the aid of a flashlight under a poncho. Both casualties were removed by jungle penetrators just over an hour after the rounds impacted! Both men survived, they were in good hands...

The following day, things went from bad to worse. At 3:45 PM, January 26, a booby trap was detonated, instantly killing SSgt George Robertson. Captain Paul Spilberg as well as privates Rodgers, Harkness and Don Counter were injured in the blast. Doc had his hands full in the greatest sense of the words.

The explosion blew SSgt Robertson to pieces, hurling him some 30 feet into deep brush. After the immediate care of the wounded, 'Doc' Riley and Lt. Bob Noonan were assigned the task of retrieving Robertson's body. The two gathered together, in a poncho, all they could of his mutilated remains. Some parts were never recovered in the dwindling light.

Our squad was involved with the retrieval and extraction of the bloody mess in the poncho that was George Robertson. Captain Spilberg carefully conducted a step-by-step withdrawal from the booby-trapped area. He and the other casualties were dusted off with 'Robbies' remains. It was another tough day for Alpha Company, and 'Doc' Riley was in the thick of it all.

The next day the company dispersed, sending our

platoon, Alpha One, to a separate NDP. On the night of January 27 we were probed unsuccessfully by a lone sapper with a satchel charge.

On the morning of January 28, Alpha One, led by Lt. Robert Noonan, set out to reconnect with the rest of the company, now commanded by Lt. Scott Bell. Lt. Noonan told the point man, Bill Pfau, to take a well used trail skirting a manioc field at the bottom of a valley. Being near 'LT' in the point element, I questioned the sanity of his decision. "Gittens shut the fuck up! I'm running this platoon!" was his reply.

I was still fuming and 'biting my tongue' when moments later Bill Pfau stepped on a bear trap. Fortunately, his rifle stock was on his foot, and the trap shattered the stock instead of his leg. Still, it took a small crew to free Bill's leg from the bear trap. 'LT' conceded to my firm request that the rest of the platoon take cover in the meantime. Meanwhile, Lt. Noonan and Sgt. Concepcion remained in the wide open, looking over their map.

We started taking sniper fire and soon Sgt. Frank Concepcion was down with a wound through his neck and shoulder. He was paralyzed from the neck down, and unable to speak. Doc initially thought that he was already dead, but suddenly noticed his hand move, and called for help. He and Sgt. Foir pulled Frank to the meager safety of a low stone wall. Blood was gurgling in his throat, pouring into his lungs. Doc then administered and coordinated the medical end of the life saving procedures that followed. With incoming sniper rounds between his legs, Doc dressed Frank's wounds, and initiated and coordinated CPR.

I must say it was a team effort and all involved should share the pride in getting Sgt. Concepcion out alive. Frank was in deep shock, and his lungs were filling with blood, but he was in good hands. Frank remained paralyzed from the neck down for six months, but would fully recover his mobility in three years!

Lt. Noonan also took an AK47 round in his shoulder. While loading the medevac bird, one more of Alpha One's NCOs was wounded by sniper fire, Sgt. Strickland was shot in the hand. The bird departed taking rounds as it left the landing zone, and the three casualties were safely extracted.

All in all, A Company suffered 10 casualties in four days, one dead and nine injured. But I thank God that 'Doc' Michael Riley was there with us, doing his job the way he did. Too often, we dwell upon our losses and fail to see our blessings. I salute you, Doc, and all the combat medics who saved what they could from the wastelands of war. God has a special place for you. And I know for a fact that Frank Concepcion shares my sentiments!

In a postscript to these aforementioned episodes, I'd like to share the ironic events that unfolded shortly thereafter. Alpha Company spent the first few days of February, 1971, regrouping and recovering from our losses in January. During that month alone, A Company had two KIAs and 13

WIAs. There were two officers and four NCOs among the casualties. Alpha One alone had seven wounded and one killed in action during this time frame.

Before we fully regrouped, we were airlifted to the Firebase Mary Ann area of operations. Our battalion made steady contact and numerous weapons were captured in early February.

Alpha One got a 'Shake n Bake' NCO as a replacement at this time. His cowardice nearly got me and my assistant gunner killed during a close encounter on February 11th. The "shook up" Shake n Bake was removed from the field shortly thereafter.

A few days later, February 14, Cpt. Spilberg ordered us to patrol the same trail. We made contact twice that day, ending with me being wounded as we fired up a small enemy element. I caught a fragment from a deflected M-79 grenade in my left shoulder. At least three inches of my shirt was twirled into my shoulder. 'Doc' Riley, who had spotted the enemy, cut my sleeve off and pulled out the embedded shirt from the wound entry. That hurt!

Doc dressed my shoulder quickly, so we could rejoin the company. We exchanged fire briefly on the last leg of our return to Alpha Company's NDP. I was medevaced from there, and after a brief stay in hospital, was assigned to battalion headquarters as a mail courier. Valentine's Day yielded me a Purple Heart and a rear job. This was my best and worst Valentine's Day.

Captain Paul Spilberg resumed command of Alpha Company in early February, 1971, after being wounded on January 26. He had deep issues with Robbins death, considering it his biggest mistake. The PTSD manifested itself in the form of terrible nightmares in the field. I was out there during an episode one night. It disturbed the whole company for the remainder of the night.

On February 22, Alpha Company was scheduled to be airlifted on a 'suicide mission', with Alpha One spearheading a combat assault on an NVA enclave. Doc Riley, Carl Cleek and Bob Osborn refused to go. "Doc Riley, you're a good soldier, you're in for the Silver Star," said Spilberg. "No, sir, I'm not going," Riley replied. Shortly thereafter, when Alpha Company made contact, the three were on the next resupply bird to rejoin their buddies in the bush, for the duration of their tours. Captain Spilberg's last action with the company was on February 26, when Sgt. Silvester Joseph killed an NVA south of Mary Ann. Paul went on leave during the mission. LTC Doyle, battalion commander, reassigned him to headquarters when he came back.

For refusing to go on a suicide mission with an undersized, understaffed company, Doc Riley's award was downgraded to a Bronze Star w/Vdevice. His actions definitely merited the Silver Star, from my point of view, as well as Paul Spilberg's. We were expected to achieve what the Special Forces and Marines failed to accomplish with peak troop strength and support. We were already trying to cover all bases with a fraction of the manpower.

These factors would eventually play out in the

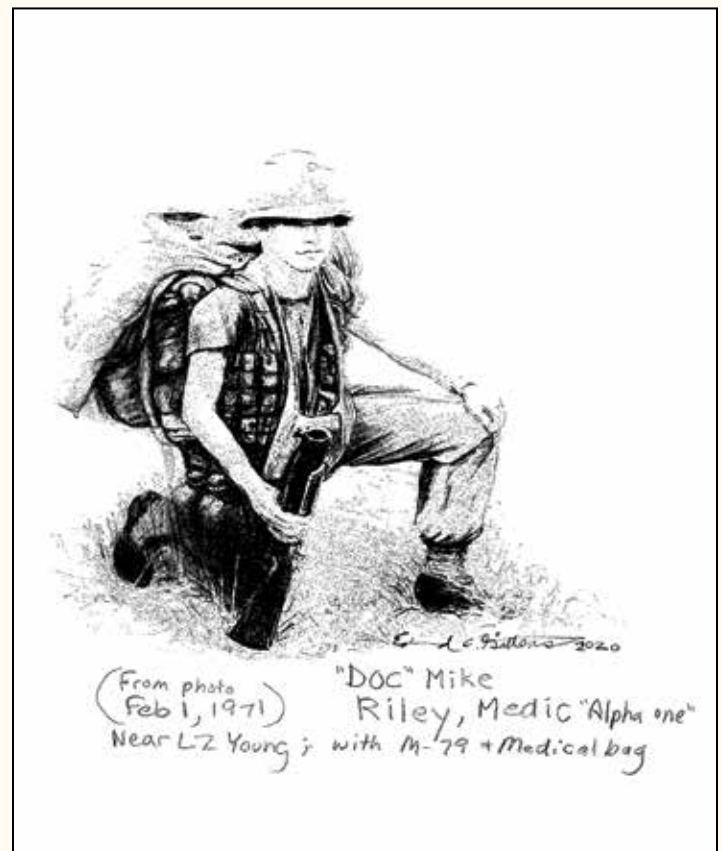
"Massacre at Firebase Mary Ann" on March 28, 1971. But that's definitely another story. One thing is for sure, all three proved to be brave soldiers. Carl Cleek earned a Bronze Star w/Vdevice when he saved Ed Voros, who hit a landmine. Carl, the squad leader, did lifesaving first aid. Ed lived, despite losing both legs, Bob Osborn was wounded on January 13, 1971. He had a sizable chunk of shrapnel lodged near his spine. He was subsequently given a rear job. When Alpha made contact in late January, Bob gave up his rear job to rejoin Alpha during four days of our heaviest contact. No coward here.

Sometimes it takes more guts to say "NO sir" or even "Fuck you, Sir" than to go along with something you KNOW AIN'T RIGHT! The real bottom line of this is that these are the kind of guys you want at your back when the shit hits the fan. When you served with people like Bob Osborn, Carl Cleek and Mike Riley, we knew we were IN GOOD HANDS.

I've had the pleasure and privilege of reuniting and staying in touch with such individuals that I had the honor to serve with. Doc Riley passed away on August 31, 2020, of Agent Orange induced lung cancer. We had our last conversation two days before he died. We discussed the content of this story, confirming details not covered.

I'm proud to count myself as his friend; and he as my loyal friend. For he was a brave soldier and devoted family man. My heart goes out to his widow Barb, son Michael and daughter Lisa, who miss him immensely. May he rest in the peace all honorable combat veterans deserve.

God Bless the Infantry



Vietnam, My Story

By Jim Dowling

During college at the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 1966-69, I worked at nights at the Kitchi Gammi Club (an old historic men's club) as a waiter and bar tender. The 6 P.M. TV news showed the Huntly-Brinkley News Hour. Every night there was footage of combat in Vietnam. I was an Air Force military brat, so war genes were in my blood; however, from seeing the news, I felt that history was being made and I wanted to experience it. Considering a military career I felt that the Army offered the most advancement potential, especially during a war. I volunteered for infantry and passed the OCS tests. I don't remembering telling my family or their reaction; typically stoic military.

I did Basic Combat Training (BCT) and Advance Infantry Training (AIT) at Ft Ord, California. While waiting for OCS I was put as an assistant at the induction center. Once a week the induction center received new recruits from LA and from North California. The LA bunch were a rag tag group of every kind of person. Northern California recruits were more main stream, nice guys. I would meet them as they arrived at night



Descending mountain to coastal plain

and get them up to the barrack with a lot of yelling and shit. They would be frozen at attention at the foot of their bunks. I would say "at ease", then I would tell them, "relax, what you are going to go through is a bunch of bull shit, go with it, it's ok".

OCS was six months of bullshit, so I just relaxed and went with it. (Interesting, 50 years later, our OCS class has a reunion every 1 ½ yrs. I am hosting ours this year in San Francisco). I went to Airborne Training and then to Ft Hood, Texas, the armpit of the army. Someone gave me the phone number of officer's assignment at the Pentagon. I called and by noon that day I had orders for Vietnam via the way of Special Forces Officers Course at Ft Bragg.

I was expecting to be assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam but these units were being turned over to ARVN Rangers. I ended up as an infantry platoon leader with the 3rd/21st Infantry, 196th Brigade, 23th Infantry Division (Americal). I was soon promoted to platoon leader of the battalion reconnaissance platoon- a group of about 12 personnel. It was difficult to get volunteers to join recon so when not able to get enough the battalion would put out a draft to the companies for recon replacements. The makeup was usually 18 and 19 year old soldiers. Some of our men were told by the judge to "go to jail or go into the army". This made for a young aggressive platoon.

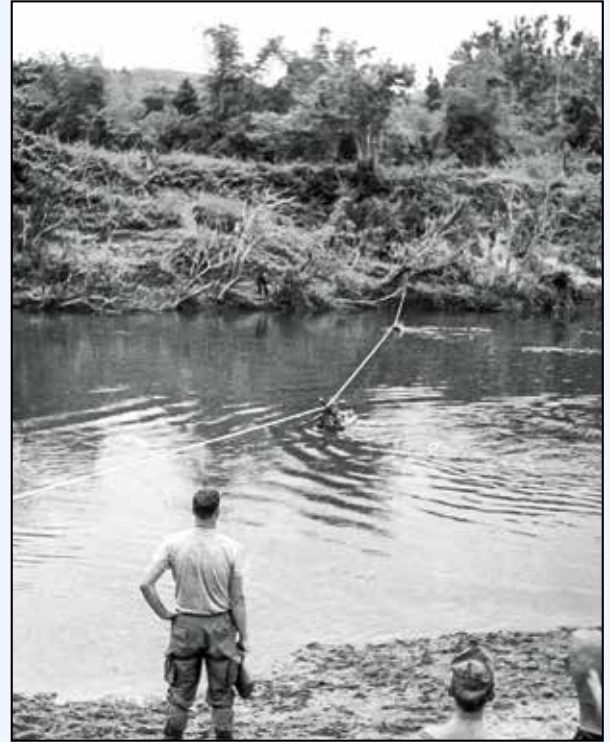
Not much exciting happened when I was with Co B. But one of the wonderful, memorable periods of that time was with Platoon Sergeant Bob Sturgill. We would bring out a bottle of scotch at the beginning of a twelve-day mission and nurse it as long as we could. At night we would each take two slugs of scotch, hold it in our mouth and slowly swallow it, feeling the heat go down our throat and the our bodies relax. I can still taste it and have never had a better straight shot of scotch.

With recon, our mission was to go where the line company could not go without all kinds of fanfare and commotion. We would slip into an area and observe and then engage at the appropriate time; body count. We had a high enemy kill count and a low casualty rate, mostly by booby traps.

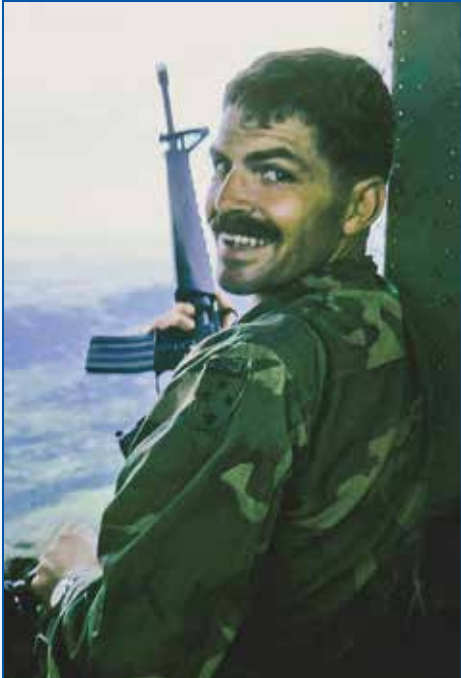
One of my early missions with recon was off of LZ Center. We found a covered pit with a cache of multiple munitions which we blew up. A day or so later we lost a man in a skirmish. Again, a day or two later we were back in the same area where we found the cache. We set up our night position there.

Sometime in the night we saw flash lights coming down the mountain to our south. I called in artillery but the lights kept coming then disappeared into a ravine. A while later we heard the clanging of equipment and movement of people with flash lights coming in our direction. I called in artillery but was refused as the ARVN command said it was too close to the "no fire zone". These guys were literally on our door step but they didn't know it. The twelve of us knew if we were discovered it would be a mess.

Down in the coastal plains there was a PF camp (Popular Force camp- like



Making a hazardous river crossing



Dowling in chopper returning from Antenna Valley

the National Guard). About 3:00 AM all hell broke loose on the camp as the NVA attacked. All kinds of stuff was going back and forth. I often wondered if the cache we found and destroyed had a bearing on the outcome of the attack.

The next day very near to our location we found a four-foot deep trench that was dug from the high vegetation of the mountain through the low brush of the

coastal plain. It was to conceal troop movement into the flats - so well thought out by the enemy.

A day or two later we bumped into an NVA patrol - got one of them. This NVA had an M203 (M16 with a M79 grenade launcher attached). I spotted a NVA lookout about 200 yards up the side of the mountain. I shot the captured M203 at him and hit close enough to blow him off the rock; a great shot.

The next day a six man patrol went out in the morning. I was back with the other men. The patrol was skirting a rice patty on one side and a jungle on the other. The point man, Art Lerma of Texas, saw a break in the wood line and turned into it instead of taking the path around the rice paddy. He walked right into the flank of an NVA "L" shaped ambush. All hell opened up.

I was at another location. I radioed back to battalion and then ran to the action. Battalion had called in a "Blue Ghost" team. This is an aviation group that stays in the air waiting to be called into action. It consists of a utility helicopter (Huey slick) with a six-man squad of troops aboard, a command ship, a two-man light observation helicopter (LOH), and two gunships. By this time, the bad guys had retreated up the mountain.

The LOH flew above the hill and received hits in its belly from a burst of AK fire. It spiraled down like a rock. The slick dropped the troops near the action and they came under suppressing fire. The slick then ferried six of us to support the men up the hill.

Once there, I took two of my men and moved forward into the enemy lines toward the LOH. The chopper was on its side with two dazed out crew. We pulled them out. Two of us stayed behind and fought to secure their retreat and the area. When it was all over there were dead on both sides.

Reinforcements came to relieve us. As we walked back to the location we were at the night before I became aware of the adrenaline high I was feeling. My whole body was alive without limits.

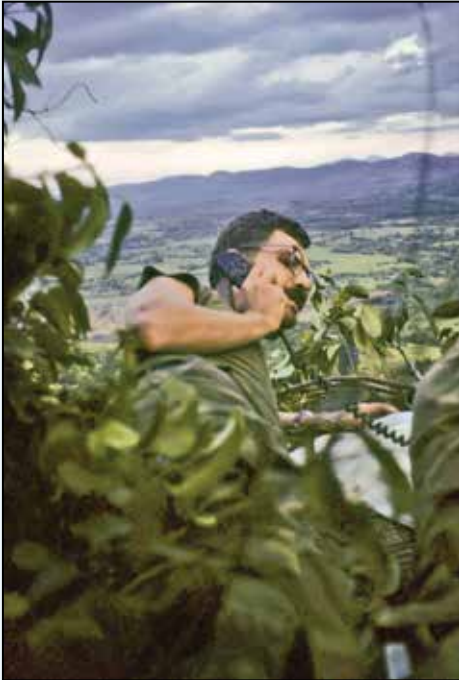
Suddenly there was an explosion back at the crash site. The troops that came in after us were preparing the LOH to be lifted out by the Jolly Green Giant helicopter. They popped smoke for the pilot's reference. The smoke grenade caught the grass on fire which caught the chopper on fire which caught the fuel on fire. That in itself tells the Catch 22 of the American-Vietnam story, all that effort for nothing. The battalion S3 (operations officer) radioed saying "you are way over your head out there". All this contact was with a major NVA unit that had slipped into the area. I totally agreed with the S3.



Enemy weapons found in cache



Soldier displays enemy RPG round from cache



Dowling calls in artillery on enemy supply movement

Reverting back to my experience with Company B, we were assigned to meet up with another unit on the other side of a river. My platoon was looking for a river crossing. The point man opened fire and gave out a scream. I was third in line and then up front in a flash. Point man, Larry Flurry from Tallahassee Alabama, was totally shaken, a creature had attacked him. When he fired it retreated into the grass. I fired into this location and when all the thrashing had finally stopped, I pulled out a 60 pound, 7 foot Asian Monitor Lizard. A photo and story was put in the Star and Strips. A couple of years ago our OCS unit had a reunion in Seattle. I was telling the story of the Lizard. Two guys still remember reading and seeing the photo at that time. Now that is impressive marketing.

The 196th Brigade was based at Chu Lai. When the Marines moved out of Da Nang our battalion took over their AO (area of operation) with the fire base located on Hill 510. Our platoon was assigned to recon the area before line units were introduced. To maintain secrecy, we spent a day on foot moving down into the valley. We found bad guys all over. Once we were exposed, we had contact about every day.

On another mission in the valley, we

were up against a mountain with heavy vegetation and scattered rice fields. On a morning patrol we jumped two enemy soldiers but one got away. We were scheduled to get resupplied that morning but it kept getting delayed and delayed. I was extremely worried as we were stuck in the same spot all day waiting for resupplies. I felt the enemy had a chance to set up on us. We usually walked trails, but not this time. I was so concerned I took the point position and my Kit Carson Scout walked slack.

I cut through the jungle, staying off trails. It started to rain and I had glasses on, so the Kit Carson Scout took point and I took slack. We broke onto a little clearing with a trail through it. The Scout hit a trip wire and gave out a yell and ran forward; I turned and ran, colliding into my RTO (radio operator), thus unable to move in any direction. The blast came and threw me into the jungle. I felt the shrap metal slap against my skin like hot mud and then penetrating into my flesh. I just lay there mentally taking inventory of my body starting with legs and moving up.

They were able to get two of us out in a rain just before dark. I was wounded in the leg and finger. I was sent to Camp Zama, Japan to recuperate as infection was certain if I stayed in country. We were helicoptered from the Air Base across Tokyo to the hospital, put on gurneys, tagged and wheeled off to our assigned wards. Our ward, the orthopedic ward, had rows of occupied beds on each side. As we were going in, someone was playing on their boom box, the theme song to the movie "Mash". I felt like I was in the movies. "Mash" was a hit movie and TV series about war, the music was haunting and identified with the Viet Nam era.

Most of the guys were amputees, I was not. An amputee would spend about two weeks there. The idea was to work out infection from the wound before being sent home. Wound dressing were changed twice a day. As the days went by the dressings came off easier. The dressing would stick to the puss of the infection. To change the dressing it would be ripped from the stump. I helped the orderly on a number of occasions; he would put a stick in the patient's mouth, I would hold the stump down and he would rip the dressing off. This was usually the first couple of days for new patients. For pain, Darvon was the medication of choice. It was non-addictive but not very effective in pain suppression. Doctors would come by in the afternoon; a very hard callus group, in and out, that was it.

After three weeks of treatment I was back with recon. My platoon said they got the guy that got me. They booby trapped the site; curiosity killed the cat. Before being wounded I was 110% into the job. Afterwards I found that I was only 90%. It cost me a man. The rotation for officers was supposed to be six months in the



Sheridan tank encounters difficult movement



Casualty lifted out on Stokes basket

field; I was 10 months.

My parents retired to Hawaii so that is where I went after Vietnam. I joined the Sheraton Hotel chain and spent many good years with them on several of the islands of Hawaii, Hong Kong and San Francisco. I made my own investments in real-estate and rolled them into a small hotel, Gerstle Park Inn in San Rafael.

In reflecting on my experience in Vietnam, two thoughts stand out: on night guard duty I would close my eyes and try to envision what it was like back home with people walking freely conducting their life and consumerism without serious concerns or restrictions. I could not comprehend that picture. It was foreign, unreal to me. When I was back home I would close my eyes and think back to Vietnam. My mind took me right back to Vietnam in a very real way. I related so completely to it, like it was now. The intensity of a conflict can instill a spike in a person's mind that will overpower the norm.

To carry this thought forward, it felt very normal to be a hunter and to be hunted. It was a natural feeling to carry a weapon for survival. It felt like



Recon sniper displays special rifle



Large lizard causes commotion on the trail

the genes of my primitive ancestors were being activated; it was like I was there before.

The second thought that stands out is the power of focus. I had several psychic experiences where I sensed a future event. In Vietnam it is normal for a person to focus on the now, it is intense and by so doing one's mind is open to receive information that is not normal. I knew I would be wounded but not to what extent. Another instance, I overheard my point man speaking of his fear for tomorrow (we were in a safe area); He lost both legs the next day. Another occurrence was when I looked at one of my men and told myself that he should be dead; he was 30 minutes later. It is interesting that it seemed to only come up on life changing event.

Once back in the real world, I found that I was not as tolerant of people as before; it took a year to calm down. I joined the Army reserves and found that was a healthy transition as I had a network of fellow Vietnam veterans who spoke the same language and we would focus on duties as a team. As I have moved on in life I have found that the Army experiences as given me grounding in handling life's challenges. I believe I am far better for it.

[Photos courtesy of the author.]

Photo Album



Change of command ceremony. LTC Hammill (tall man) is leaving. Possible replacement was LTC Mitchell (?).



View from slick that just took off from VIP pad. Note slick on S-4 pad and 3/82d Artillery gun pits.



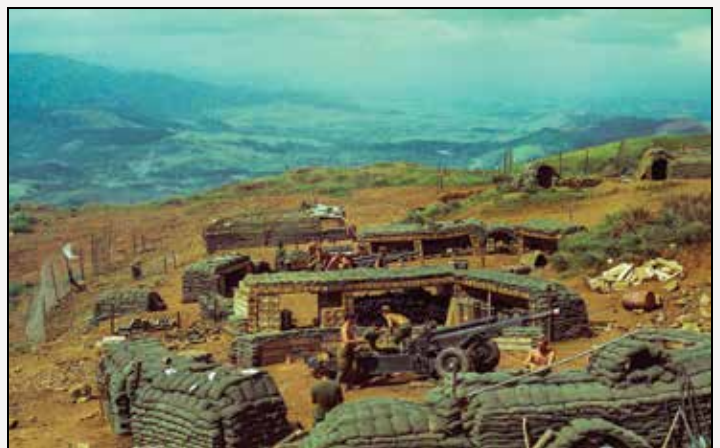
Slick on VIP pad. BTOC under sandbags. 292 antennas for my radios.



Sunrise on LZ West.



Generator man, SP4 Mocano, providing power for my radios.



Gun pits.



Hillyer heating some stateside chow on makeshift stove.



BTOC on LZ West. VIP is out of photo to the left.



VFH antennas.



Radio antennas for BnTOC S-3 radios.

Photos and captions by Eric Hillyer. Photos were taken on or around LZ West. Hillyer served as a radio operator in the Battalion Tactical Operations Center (BnTOC).

A Glimpse of a Unique Lifer

By Don Counter

Sergeant First Class (SFC) Paul E. Davis was a professional soldier who had served in Korea and was on his second combat tour in Vietnam when I became aware of him.

This older veteran served as the First Sergeant for Alpha Company, 1/46th Infantry, and could be seen humping the same I Corps jungle landscape alongside of newly minted (drafted) soldiers 15-17 years younger than him. I was one of those newer soldiers.

He was a seasoned infantryman whose faded tattoos, scarred body and weathered features reflected the many years of enduring the difficult circumstances in soldiering and combat. He was an old school soldier and had a look that he may never have been young.

Despite the gruff facial expression of a hard-ass, he was a remarkably even-tempered man who led for the common good and valued the merits of others.

Before the break of dawn at our jungle encampments he would awaken and conduct his first order of business... making C-ration coffee thickened with multiple packets of creamer. As the platoon stirred awake and shuffled about he would exclaim, "Good Morning Heroes", closely followed with, "I Love This Man's Army."

Many a day, as the platoon rustled along the trails of exhaustion, he would encouragingly announce, "God Bless the Infantry."

Following the catastrophic attack on Fire Support Base Mary Ann, the brigade was moved north to Da Nang to fill-in for the departing 1st Marine Division. It was there atop a lofty boomerang shaped hill which was located eight kilometers SSW of Da Nang, that the 1/46th Infantry Battalion Tactical Operations Center (BnTOC) was subsequently relocated. The location was also identified as Hill 270 and LZ Linda.

The isolated command post was complimented with artillery and mortar crews, two helicopter landing pads, and functioned as the hub of the fighting man's area of operations.

This BnTOC was commanded by LTC Clyde J. Tate, with MAJ Stanley J. Wisniewski as the Operations Officer, and SP4 David J. Tarnay fully immersed in monitoring the brigade wide radio chatter.

SFC Paul Davis was hand-picked to serve as the senior-most ranking, non-commissioned officer (NCO) atop Hill 270 and LZ Linda and he dutifully served as both the Operations NCO and the field first sergeant, despite the absence of a third rocker and a diamond in the center of the stripes on his sleeves. This low-key and highly competent senior sergeant was the perfect soldier for the position.

Being a man of spartan needs he functioned out of a small sandbagged storage shelter that butted up against the exterior of the heavily barricaded BnTOC. In the tightly confined space he protectively stored gear, rations and other items for unit distribution.

At the back of the shelter was a ledge which held his few but always at the ready possessions: rifle, bandoleer, flak vest,

helmet and his esteemed canteen cup and coffee making ingredients. That cup had never been rinsed out and would most certainly have produced coffee by merely adding hot water. Beneath the ledge he somehow devised a constrained sleeping configuration and when intent on catching a few uninterrupted winks of needed rest he simply suspended a poncho liner much like a sleeping curtain. There was absolutely no free space in this cramped, one-man burrow which required a bend and twist to negotiate and was appropriately referred to as "The Squeeze Inn."

He was a field soldier by trade. One of a very few who, without pretense, exuded the courage and intestinal fortitude of a respected and valued leader. He interacted with all ranks equally, effectively, and in a personal way, which engendered a special respect and trust in him. He was a rare commodity indeed, making him a soldier's soldier. His strength of character was profound and the impact on us was manifold.

You found yourself naturally drawn to this experienced infantryman who knew firsthand the raw hardships and sacrifices of war. You just felt a tad safer with his physical presence.

His charismatic below the radar approach to the lower enlisted men was cause for him to be viewed as a father figure or that of a favored and respected uncle. He referred to his young soldiers as "heroes", and coming from him, as if by divine ancestry, made us heroes in our minds. As a complimentary badge-of-honor the junior enlisted grunts referred to him as "**Sergeant Rock.**"

He was respected for his unmatched "under the radar" leadership skills and the officers fondly referred to him as "Old Man Davis." He was insightful, possessed tactical knowledge, and was acknowledged as the trusted "go-to" guy for advice on all matters involving soldiers. Wisdom and maturity were aptly descriptive words for this highly regarded soldier who preferred to lead from the field.

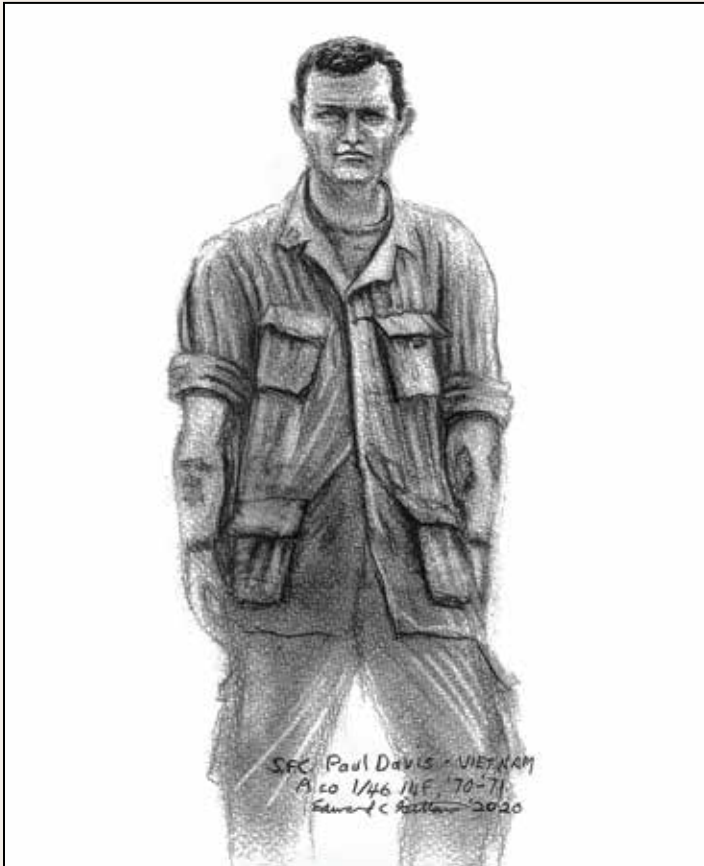
Two of his trademark expressions were: "Hard but fair", (when referring to his dealings with standards of discipline and the basic essentials of right and wrong), and the other saying was, "I ain't been fragged, but... the day ain't over yet!"

Davis was the complete opposite of those referred to as the "charmed princes of Hollywood" who romped around in the rear adorned in crisply starched fatigues. Their attempt to impress with spit and polish had no purpose or utility in the jungle.

With firm but fair guidance and an uncanny knack for working with soldiers, mission discipline and order were effectively maintained, to such a degree that things simply seemed to just fall into place and function well. There was self-discipline and harmony amid the chaos of war on this isolated and towering outpost.

It seems he had been recommended for a position at the safe and secure division headquarters. Despite his current spartan dirt floor lifestyle he declined the comfortable offer of a rear job stating that he "couldn't accept it because he was an ordained field soldier and independent of authority figures." He spoke in a language that did not mask the truth. So... what was there not to love about this guy?

SFC Davis went before a selection board and it was noted that he was not wearing the V device for valor on what he



SFT Paul E. Davis

considered a minimal service ribbon. He just laughed and shrugged it off.

He was a crusty, battle-hardened field soldier who continued to work alongside others in the jungle. This highly competent yet low key professional was a rare breed and admired as such.

With scars and the shrapnel of an AK-47 round embedded in his body, his endurance through difficulties is a reminder that diamonds are made under pressure and oaks grow strong in contrary winds.

Many years after the war and fully into his well-deserved retirement, he would set up camp each September, with his olive drab painted trailer, at the annual Kokomo, Indiana veterans gathering. His trailer served as the collective gathering point for former members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Beneath the canopy he would be seen sipping coffee from his well-worn, metal canteen cup with its distinctively tainted exterior, discolored from years of exposure to heat tab use.

SFC Paul E. Davis is remembered as the venerable patriarch of Hill 270 and LZ Linda. He will forever be revered as the guardian of freshly minted heroes.

Illustrated by Edward C. Gittens, A/1/46, 1970-71.

[Editor's Postscript: The author give a great description and tribute to SFC Paul Davis which I wish to second. On March 27, 1971, I moved from FSB Mary Ann to LZ Mildred to help open a new BnTOC. A few hours later Mary Ann suffered a devastating blow from an intense sapper attack. LZ Mildred

was about five kilometers from Mary Ann and we maintained contact with all elements of the 1/46th Infantry as well as with brigade headquarters at Hawk Hill. Mildred quickly became a hub of activity supporting the recovery of Mary Ann.

Our working area was housed in an 8 by 8 former Conex. We filled it with maps, radios, and a counter with three chairs. For the better part of the next three days, 1LT Tom Schmitz, SFC Paul Davis, and I, in my first week as a sergeant, worked out of this improvised bunker. This is where I got to know the many qualities of Paul Davis as described by the author.

The attack on Mary Ann created an increased sense of dread to soldiers in the field all over Vietnam. Was this just the beginning of a new spring offensive by the enemy that would be carried out across the total of South Vietnam. We did not know. I continued my duties but kept closely tuned to the sound of the first incoming enemy mortar round. Some of the time Davis sat in one of the chairs on either side of me. As the author says, You just felt a tad safer with his physical presence."

Although I did not know the author in Vietnam I did know the people in the BnTOC that he mentions in his story. I left Vietnam just before the move to the Da Nang area. I do not know the status of Paul Davis. If anyone has current information on him please let me know. I may be reached at gnoller@aol.com.]



Don Counter

GI Humor

By Bryne "Buzz" Sherwood

One of the unique features of military service is that it takes individuals from completely different walks of life and throws them together. This creates the possibility for friendships that likely would not have occurred otherwise. Such was the case with Ruben Bugge and Charles Warner.

In physical appearance, Bugge and Warner were as different as day and night. Bugge had bright red hair, a fair complexion and freckles. Warner, on the other hand, had dark, almost black hair, a large moustache and dark eyes. He could have easily played the role of the villain in an old time western movie.

Ruben Bugge, known to his friends as Ben, was an easy-going kid from the middle class suburban city of Novato, California. In 1971, he found himself bored and without direction. So he enlisted in the Army and volunteered for service in Vietnam. His wish was granted. Six months later, he found himself as a grenadier in a rifle platoon in Vietnam.

Then Ruben met Charles Warner. They shared an easy-going nature, but beyond that their backgrounds were quite different. Warner was a wild, cowboy type from somewhere in Colorado. He had been in the Army for a few years. He had risen to the rank of Staff Sergeant but had been busted down to buck private for some unknown offense. He held his cards close to his chest and never spoke of his background. This reticence, combined with the little that was known of him, added to his mystique. He seemed to relish being in Vietnam. On one arm he had the tattooed word 'War' and he wore a medallion that said 'War'. Behind his easy going façade lurked a mischievous mind always on the lookout for a prank.

In spite of their differences, Bugge and Warner quickly became buddies. Besides being squad mates watching each other's back, they ate together, hung out together and shared the same fighting position when in the defense.

In March 1972, Bugge and Warner's company was brought in from combat operations in the mountains to the west and assigned to man static defensive positions on what was known as "The Ridgeline". This was the first line of defense for the city of Da Nang. Unlike normal combat operations, which were characterized by constant patrolling and movement, there was little to do on The Ridgeline other than fill sandbags and stare out at a landscape of rice paddies and rolling hills, devoid of human activity. Even though subject to attack and therefore potentially dangerous, the lack of activity produced acute boredom and, as the old adage goes, "idle hands are the devil's workshop".

In order to relieve the boredom, individual soldiers were rotated to the rear to get a shower and change clothes and maybe even go to the nearby airbase to partake of the good life enjoyed by U.S. Air Force personnel. Another way to provide diversion was to send soldiers on details to the rear to pick up supplies.

One very hot day, Bugge returned from a supply run to the rear. He was tired, hot and sweaty. As he approached the bunker that he and Warner shared, he called out,

"Hey, who wants a cold soda?"

He got no response and, as he got closer, he could see Warner and Sergeant David "Rock" Mixon sitting facing each other, almost knee to knee, just inside the bunker entrance. Closer still, Bugge picked up the sounds and vibes of a heated argument between the two. This struck him as odd because he had never seen Warner get angry at anyone.

In spite of the awkwardness of the situation, Bugge wanted to get into the bunker and away from the sun and heat. In order to do so, he had to slide between the knees of the two belligerents and take a seat near the back wall of the bunker.

Sergeant Mixon, his face flushed with anger and his mouth twisted in a snarl, said, "Warner, I'm gonna kick your goat smellin' ass!"

"I'm ready whenever you are, Mixon."

With that, Sergeant Mixon pulled a .45 out of his waistband, pointing it at the ground but holding it in a menacing manner.

Alarmed, Bugge said, "Dudes, calm down! What the hell's going on?"

Ignoring Bugge as if he wasn't even there, Warner pulled out a hand grenade, staring back at Sergeant Mixon with equal menace.

"Chuck! Whoa. Put that away, man. This shit's getting way out of hand. Calm down."

No sooner were the words out of Bugge's mouth than Warner pulled the pin on the grenade. The spoon came flying off and the primer popped. He let the grenade drop between him and Sergeant Mixon.

As happens in moments of extreme crisis, time slowed as a myriad of thoughts raced through Bugge's mind.

'There's four and a half seconds until it explodes.'

'Surely one of them is going to throw it out of the bunker.'

'Surely they're not going to stay here and get blown up.'

'I'm gettin' the fuck outta here.'

Yelling, "Are you crazy!?! What're you doin'?", Bugge dove over their knees and through the entrance, landed on his belly and low crawled through the blistering hot sand as fast as his knees and elbows would carry him, all the time waiting for the explosion that would kill his two buddies and maybe him. Just at the moment he expected the detonation, he heard, "Ha, ha, ha, ha." Raucous laughter blasting from inside the bunker.

Picking himself up and dusting off his arms which were caked with sand and skinned, Bugge turned back to find Warner and Sergeant Mixon roaring with laughter.

"Oh man, you should have seen yourself. All we could see was assholes and elbows when you di-di'd the bunker. What a trip. You better check your drawers."

Sputtering with rage, all Bugge could manage to say was, "You fuckers, you mother fuckers."

Calming down, Bugge suddenly became fascinated with the mystery of why the grenade didn't explode.

"What happened? How come it didn't go off?"

Experiences of the Vietnam War

By Jim Logue

My best therapy for PTSD from the Vietnam War came through photography, collective memory, and a journey across America and back to Vietnam. The result is the new book, *Rain In Our Hearts*, published in 2020 by Texas Tech University Press. The volume has been nominated for the Indie Book Awards.

I was already a professional photographer when drafted, but the Army sent me to Vietnam where I was assigned as an infantryman in Alpha Co., 4/31st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, in 1969-1970. To take my mind off the war, I took pictures with my Nikonnos 35mm camera, and came home with 2,500 images in black-and-white and color. I stored them away, and tried to forget Vietnam.

I could not. Some 30 years later, a Veterans Administration psychiatrist advised me to face my past



Night Laager, the troops killing time waiting for sundown and nightly guard duty to start. Two ponchos were used to create the sleeping positions.

war will always be with us.

The interviews that hurt most were with mothers, widows and siblings of those who didn't make it home. All welcomed us. All were so kind to share memories of their beloved lost to them forever.

In 20 chapters illustrated with dozens of my photographs, *Rain In Our Hearts* reveals the men of Alpha in base camp, "humping the boonies", in combat, among civilians, and yes, even in those occasional beer-soaked weekends in the rear called "stand-down". Readers will see choppers delivering supplies, landing us in "hot" LZs, and taking away wounded. Gore they will not see. I did not photograph the dead nor the seriously wounded—friendly, enemy, or civilian.

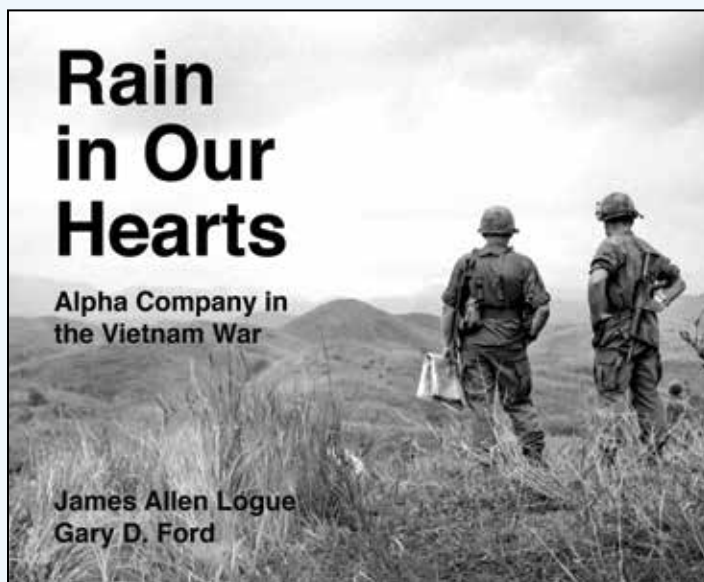
Rain In Our Hearts, we feel, portrays the universal experience of the Vietnam War, told through narrative and in words of those of us who fought it. The book is available through Amazon and Texas Tech University Press.



David Flynn, foreground, and others fly to the field aboard a Chinook on 29 April 1970 to halt the 2nd NVA Division. The flight cut short the company's stand-down in Chu Lai.

in my own images. I spent days and nights looking again at all those young faces, but wanted more: to sit again and speak with these men with whom I shared the horrors of combat.

In 2010, Gary D. Ford, a 30-year magazine editor, and I began traveling the nation to record interviews with men of Alpha Company, many of them beginning with these words: "I never talked about the war". Over coffee at kitchen tables, most sessions lasted hours, some even all day. We pieced together our shared experiences of a year when we grew from boys into men in a war far away, then in distance, now in time. We laughed. We cried. Together, we learned, as did veterans of all conflicts, the





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