



River Currents

A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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FALL 2012



*Hilton Garden Inn Arlington/Courthouse
Plaza, Arlington, VA*

Veterans Day 2012 Washington, D.C.

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will be placing wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day, Sunday, November 11, 2012. We will be gathering at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at 8:30 a.m. on the 11th and proceed to The Wall at 9:00 a.m.

We have blocked 40 rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn Arlington/Courthouse Plaza in Arlington, Virginia, for November 8 to 11 (check out on 11/12). Room rates are \$119 (plus tax) per night. For reservations, call 1-703-528-4444 and refer to our group reservation code "MRF." Reservations may also be made online at www.arlingtoncourthouse.gardeninn.com. Be sure to enter the online reservation code "MRF" in the booking box labeled Group/Convention code. Reservations under these group codes must be made before the cutoff date of October 18, 2012, so make your reservations soon.

The Hilton Garden Inn Arlington/Courthouse Plaza is located at 1333 North Courthouse Road, Arlington, Virginia 22201. The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will have a hospitality room available on November 9, 10, and 11. Come join us as we honor our fallen Brothers on Veterans Day 2012.

We look forward to seeing you in DC. For more information, contact Board Member Bob (Doc), 533-659-4974, priesrl@att.net ♦

Indianapolis Marriott East Welcomes MRFA

Lisa Howe,
Director of Sales

Many of you would be interested to know that your new host hotel, for the 2013 Indianapolis meeting of the Mobile Riverine Force Association, has completed a \$30 Million Dollar renovation! We are the Indianapolis Marriott East and we look forward to welcoming you here August 28-September 1, 2013. Our spectacular new lobby and great room space energize and satisfy with ever-changing natural lighting and rich natural textures and space. With the addition of 23,000 square feet, we now have 75,000 square feet of meeting and event space (all column free and on the same level) offering nearly unlimited flexibility to customize room size and shape to create the perfect mood and setting for any event. Our facility has also gained high praise for an enhanced patio area located within the center of the three-hotel campus. Our "Outdoor Oasis" features water features and lush

landscaping—A perfect place to gather, connect, and relax. The Marriott has also launched an elegant new restaurant. The Skylight Bistro and Wine Bar serves a "fresh to table" menu using Indiana ingredients by day and becomes an upscale wine bar by night. Sixty-six skylights create a spectacular, ever-changing play of light to make your dining experience memorable. The meeting space is technologically advanced featuring redundant high-capacity, high-speed internet connections to ensure reliability and easy access. In addition to the Marriott Hotel,



the campus features a Fairfield Inn & Suites and a LaQuinta Inn & Suites. The Fairfield offers 63 guest rooms including 4 Whirlpool Suites, 10 Spa Kings, and 4 Executive Suites. A heated indoor pool, whirlpool, exercise room, and business center are also featured. The LaQuinta offers 123 spacious standard double and king guest rooms. In addition to a heated outdoor pool, the facility also provides guest laundry facilities. Our campus offers something for everyone. We

are honored to have been chosen as the host hotel for your future meetings and will do whatever it takes to make you feel welcome and accommodated.

Within the Indianapolis Marriott East courtyard, a special fountain was erected to honor all five divisions of the Armed Forces. Each step within the fountain represents a conflict the United States has been in. The water flowing down over the steps represents our country's fallen soldiers. Three large torches are lit every night above the water representing "life, liberty, and

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Member Reviews Site for 2013 Reunion

Frank Jones Board Member Tango-48 (1969-70)

My wife Linda and I paid a visit to this hotel last September and immediately knew this was a fantastic place for our reunion. This hotel caters to military groups and larger groups like ours. The staff was friendly and helpful and the facilities are nice. The hotel has a large courtyard area that honors all branches of the military. The hotel was recently renovated with a large dining room and bar area. Everything we have eaten at the hotel has been good. There are two other hotels adjacent to the Marriott for our overflow group that are owned by the Indianapolis Marriott East Hotel—a La Quinta and Fairfield Inn & Suites—that are also available to our group. We recently visited the hotel again with a few of our board members and I believe they were all happy with the hotel.

From the Galley will appear in the next *River Currents*.

Reunion Dates and Reservations Aug. 28 to Sept. 1, 2013

You can start making reservations on October 1, 2012. The cut-off date for making reservations is July 28, 2013. The in-house reservation department phone number is 317-352-1231, ext. 1114. When making the reservation through the reservation department, all you have to do is mention that you are with the Mobile Riverine Force. Prior to the start date for making reservations, an online account will be set-up with your group code with the special guestroom rate. The ability to set-up reservations online will be available once the Director of Revenue sets up the online reservation account (end of September of 2012). Room rates are \$79.00 per night. These rates are good 3 days prior to the reunion and 3 days following the reunion.

Journey to the Carbon Cemetery

It was a cold clear day in the rolling hills of central Oklahoma on February 15, 2010, when I turned off the pavement onto a barely improved gravel road. A small, crudely painted sign hung on a fence at the road junction was my only clue that I was on the right track. A friendly Okie had given me instructions that had brought me this far. I was almost at the end of a trip that had started 41 years and 12,000 miles ago.

April 17, 1968, started out as just another day in the life of an infantry platoon leader in the Delta. It was the peak of the dry season and temperatures were high. Silently, the men of A Company, 4th of the 47th gathered their meager possessions, shook the bugs out of their jungle fatigues, and wiped the sleep out of their eyes—if they had slept at all. Although it started as any other, it was a day that would change my life forever.

The fighting started about 9 a.m.; it was dark, maybe around 7 p.m., when I finally got back to the company command post badly dehydrated and with a gaping bullet hole in my leg. About an hour later, I heard Mittler's voice on the company radio net, "Chambers and Hubbard are dead." I was devastated. Two men in the prime of life who depended on me to keep them safe were dead! Captain Robert Bischoff, the Company Commander, was consoling but unfazed. Fearless and battle-hardened this was not Captain Bischoff's first fight. He had seen much worse. I had not.

The road to recovery from the gunshot wound took me first to the battalion aid station on the Benewah, then the 90th Evac Hospital in Tan Son Nhut, and finally Camp Oji, Japan. The emotional wounds took longer to heal. First came the guilt of survivorship. Why them and not me? Next was the grief that comes with the realization that one's best efforts were not enough to protect two brave men. I had no second thoughts about my actions that day. There were no "I should have..." moments. Captain Bischoff



“ I thought I had missed a turn until I noticed a small moss covered rock on the side of the road bearing the inscription “Carbon Cemetery.” I was shocked at the abject poverty that the cemetery represented but the worst shock was yet to come.

was kind enough to put me in for a Silver Star. It was the grief that comes with the burden of leadership, at times overwhelming and then in remission.

The passage of time eroded the sharper edges of the grief but then came the little voice saying that I had not fulfilled my duties as the first officer in the chain of command of Hubbard and Chambers. I had returned to Vietnam after the surgery in Japan but with a bad limp. I never returned to the 9th Division but instead took an assignment with the 1st Aviation Brigade initially as the security officer at Can Tho Army Airfield and then as a commander of a Pathfinder Detachment. I never wrote a letter of condolence to the families of Chambers and Hubbard and certainly never attended a memorial service. Every year on April 17th, the little voice reminded me of the unfinished business. It was 2009 when the little voice

could no longer be silenced. I had been in the work force for 50 years and it was time to enjoy the fruits of my labor and live out the rest of my days in middle-class bliss. First on the bucket list was to pay my respects to Chambers and Hubbard, even if it meant traveling to the ends of the Earth.

The last 25 years of my working life had been spent as a private investigator so locating living people was no problem. Locating dead people presented more of a challenge. I determined that by 2009 neither Hubbard nor Chambers had living children, spouses, or parents. The obvious avenues of enquiry regarding their gravesites were soon exhausted so, out of ideas, I sent in a Freedom of Information Act request to the Army Personnel Center asking for the location of the graves of Hubbard and Chambers. Because both of these men were listed on the Vietnam Memorial web site I had their service numbers and hometowns—Fort Worth for Chambers and Choteau, Oklahoma, for Hubbard. The Army sent me more than I bargained for. Taking a broad view of my rather limited request, the Army sent me the whole “Individual Deceased Personnel File.” It made for reading that only a funeral director could enjoy. And yet in its own macabre way, it was very impressive. There laid out on impersonal forms in terse military prose were all the actions taken by the morticians in handling the bodies. Fingerprints were taken, wounds were documented, and the bodies prepared for shipment. It was all there in the Individual Deceased Personnel File down to the coordinates of the action and the reports of the

escort NCOs who accompanied the caskets from Travis Air Force Base. I had the information I needed. Chambers was buried at Cedar Hill Cemetery south of Fort Worth; Hubbard was buried at the Carbon Cemetery in Richville, Oklahoma. It would not exactly be a trip to the end of the Earth from my home near San Antonio.

Cedar Hill Cemetery is a sprawling, old, well laid out facility for blacks on the Mansfield Highway. I went to the office to make enquiries about the location of Chamber's grave. The secretary asked me what relation I was to the deceased. “We served together,” I murmured. A friendly sexton guided me to a site underneath a giant live oak and then left me to talk to the headstone of a man I had last seen on April 17, 1968. The grief welled up again, but I fought it off and finished my one-sided conversation and said a prayer before heading to my next stop: the Carbon Cemetery.

The Individual Deceased Personnel Record referred to the Carbon Cemetery in Richville, Oklahoma. My map program gave Richville the smallest of dots and I soon learned why. Arriving at the dot on the map, I found nothing but fields and forests for miles around—not so much as a shuttered gas station or post office confirmed that Richville had ever existed. My years as a PI had taught me the value of seeking local knowledge. I found a propane truck driver refilling his tank. He wasn't sure about the name, but he recalled seeing a sign nearby pointing to a cemetery. His directions were good. I turned off the pavement at the crudely lettered

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

CARBON CEMETERY CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

sign. The road went from bad to worse until after several miles it abruptly ended in a clearing of about 6 acres. I thought I had missed a turn until I noticed a small moss covered rock on the side of the road bearing the inscription "Carbon Cemetery." I was shocked at the abject poverty that the cemetery represented but the worst shock was yet to come. Here were no neat rows of markers like at Cedar Hill. Only where the ground had caved in forming a small depression could one identify a gravesite. Only a handful of the graves had store-bought markers. If there was a marker, it was a small boulder with initials of the deceased scratched on it and there were a lot more depressions than markers. I knew from the record that Hubbard had a military marker. Crisscrossing the field multiple times failed to turn up the grave I was looking for. I had been searching for over an hour; long shadows from the surrounding pine trees were starting to encroach on the Carbon Cemetery. I was on the verge of giving up when I saw an area on the margin of the field that I had not searched. It looked like there was an ancient wrought iron fence around a tumbledown marker. And there was Hubbard, just outside the wrought iron fence with a nice military



Chambers

marker—one of the best in the cemetery. But it was with horror that I saw something else next to the grave: two other markers told the story of a family's tragic history. Hubbard had a brother and sister who had predeceased him. Hubbard's parents had outlived three children!

I was dumfounded. My grief was immense but it paled to insignificance compared to what Hubbard's parents must have felt when the death of their son was announced. I had my one-sided conversation with Hubbard. It was almost dark and a chill wind had sprung up. I headed for the car overwhelmed by the revelations at Hubbard's gravesite but glad that the



Hubbard

journey that had begun on April 17, 1968, was over.

Rest in peace, my friends. You were brave men and true.

Stephen Spence, First Lieutenant, platoon leader, 3rd Platoon, A Co. 4/47th (04/68-07/68), 328 4th Street, Comfort, TX 78013, 210-413-0271, saspence@hctc.net.

Anyone who lives close to Carbon Cemetery, Richville, Oklahoma, please contact Stephen or Albert Moore mrfa@bellsouth.net. We need to make sure our brother's grave site is checked on every so often. It breaks one's heart to read this article. ♦

History of the 39th Infantry Regiment

The 39th Infantry Regiment was organized at Camp Syracuse, New York, on 1 June 1917, by transfer of veteran troops from the 30th Infantry Regiment. In December, the 39th was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division and in the spring of 1918, sailed for France as part of the American Expeditionary Force in World War I. The regiment fought with such valor and distinction during this war that it earned its famous nickname "Fighting Falcons."

During the lull between wars, the regimental crest was designed and approved. Each of the devices in the crest holds significant meaning for the regiment. The shield is blue for infantry. The fleur-de-lis is from the coat of arms of Soissons, a town in France recaptured by the 39th Regiment in 1918. The two trees represent the Groves of Cresnes, the sight of the regiment's first military success in France during World War I. The boar's head on the canton is taken from the crest of the 30th Infantry

Regiment and indicates the 39th was organized with personnel from the 30th Infantry Regiment. The crest is a falcon's head, for Mount Faucon in Muesse-Argonne. The falcon holds, in its bill, an ivy leaf, from the shoulder sleeve insignia of the 4th Infantry Division to which the regiment was assigned during World War I. The motto "D'une Vaillance Admirable" is a quotation from the French citation that awarded the Croix De Guerre with Gilt Star to the regiment for its distinguished service in World War I. The motto best translates - "With a Military Courage Worthy of Admiration."

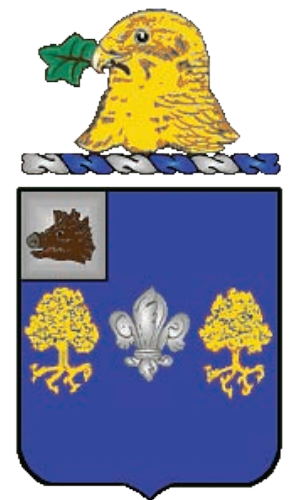
During World War II, the regiment fought as part of the 9th Infantry Division. The Fighting Falcons of the 39th became the first unit of United States combat troops to set foot on foreign soil when they stormed the beaches of Algiers in November 1942. During fighting in Sicily, Italy, the regiment came under the command of the legendary Colonel Harry A. "Paddy" Flint who gave the

regiment its triple A- Bar Nothing slogan ...Anything, Anywhere, Anytime - Bar Nothing. The regiment took great pride in the AAA-O slogan, displaying it on their helmets and vehicles, even in combat. When questioned about the soundness of the practice, Colonel Flint confidently declared, "The enemy who sees our regiment in combat, if they live through the battle, will know to run the next time they see us coming." Later in the war, the 39th landed at Utah Beach and fought through France. The Fighting Falcons joined the 47th Infantry Regiment in capturing Roetgen, the first German town to fall in World War II. The 39th fought valiantly through the Battle of the Bulge, helped secure the Remagen bridgehead and roared across Germany as the Allied Forces finished off the last of the German resistance. When the dust settled following VE day, the 39th Regiment held campaign streamers from some of the bloodiest and most hard fought battles of



the war—Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily, Normandy, Northern France, The Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe. It was cited twice by the Belgians for valorous actions and awarded the Belgian Fourageré. It also received two French Croix de Guerre with Palm, the French Fourageré, and three Presidential Unit Citations.

After a series of inactivations and activations spanning a 20-year period, the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment was reactivated on 1 February 1966 as part of the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas. The 39th answered the call to duty once again in late 1966 when it deployed with the 9th Infantry Division for combat in the Republic of Vietnam. The regiment participated in operation Palm Tree, the 1968 TET battle, and the Battle of the Plain of Reeds. When the 2nd Battalion returned to Hawaii and deactivated in September, 1969, its battle streamers now included



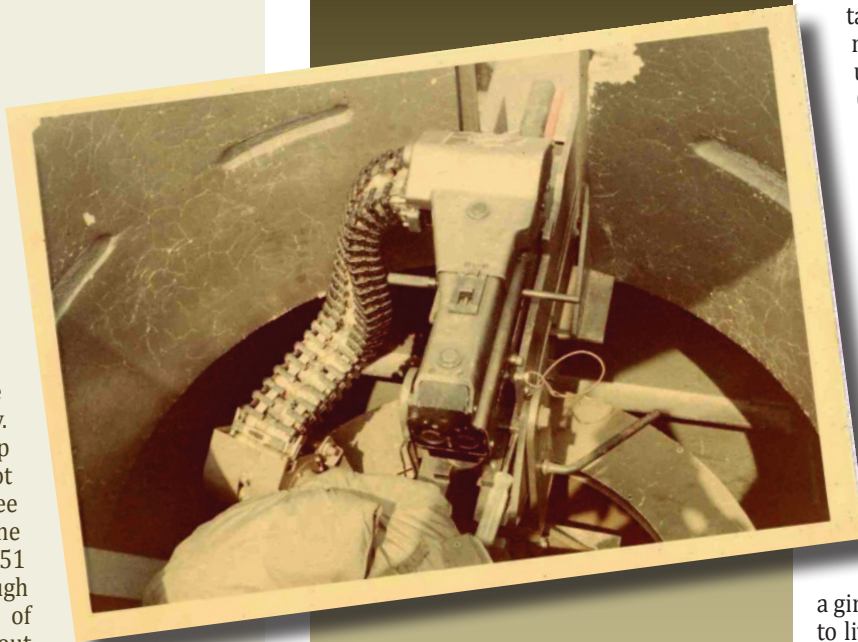
Counteroffensive Phase II, Counteroffensive Phase III, TET Counteroffensive, Counteroffensive Phase IV, Counteroffensive Phase V, Counteroffensive Phase VI, TET 69 Counteroffensive, and Summer-Fall 1969. The battalion had also garnered three Republic of Vietnam Crosses of Gallantry with Palm, The Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Medal, First Class, two Valorous Unit Awards, and its fourth Presidential Unit Citation.

For its part in World Wars I, II, and the Vietnam Conflict, the 39th Infantry

I was in class 32-R the first all ALFA crew class, but when we got in-country we found that our new boats had been given to the VN Navy so I never got to sit in a MK-48 turret with the nice glass panoramic view. Instead I ended up on T-112-12 and got to stand up and see the war through the 8-inch slit of a MK-51 gun tub, just enough room for the barrel of my MK-19 to stick out, but not much of a view.

The MK 51 had slots cut around it but was way too low for me to see out of without squatting down. So there I'd stand in my little round isolated world getting an 8-inch view of all hell going on around me. Tracer fire was good; you could see where it came from and where it was going and had time to lock on and fire back. Rockets were different; you only saw the ones coming straight at you, praying they'd hit high or low, before passing out of your field of view. I once talked to an Infantryman who said how much he hated being trapped on the boats. He wanted the safety of open space where he could move as he wanted. I on the other hand felt totally secure in my floating home.

EN3 Rowland Fletcher
T 112-12 and T 152-10



DOWN A CANAL at 8 knots

in their own words

(continued from Summer 2012 edition)

After reading "Down a Canal at 8 Knots in River Currents," I decided to pass on a little known piece of information about the river squadrons. I was a 20-mm machine gunner on Monitor-92-1. Our primary job was to protect the troop laden tangers by slugging it out with the enemy along the canals. Also several monitor crews had the unfortunate task of belonging to a team called "RARE" (River Armored Reconnaissance Element). The theory behind it was this: the enemy would rather attack 2 or 3 boats instead of 15 or 20. So during an operation when no contact has been made, the Navy sends the RARE team deeper into the canal "alone" in the hope that they would be attacked; therefore, exposing the location or position of the bad guys, "I'm not joking."

On March 14, 1968, Squadron 92 unloaded the 3/60 infantry 3 miles west of Dong Tam on the Sam Giang Canal. Several hours later no contact with the enemy had been made. (Guess what?) The RARE team was sent into action. Alpha-92-7, Tango-92-5, and Monitor-92-1, a total of about 20 sailors, was sent miles deeper into the canal searching for a Battalion of VCs. Now I'm not good in math, but it didn't take a

rocket scientist to know that there was something wrong with these odds. To say we were scared %^&*#@! was an understatement, the Crews Pucker factor was off the charts. After about 30 minutes, we found them or they found us. The three boats had stumbled right into a hornet's nest. The intense 20-minute battle can best be described as a "violent %^&*# storm." If it hadn't been for an Army helicopter fire team flying above us, we would have been in serious trouble. The helicopters were firing rockets and mini-guns in such close support that dirt and palm tree limbs were covering our boats.

Three boats went up the canal, only two came out. Alpha-92-7 was sunk and totally destroyed in this RARE operation. Monitor-92-1 would participate in several RARE throughout 1968.

Ron McAbee M-92-1

We're on an op at "Snoopy's Nose," one of the worst spots in the Delta. On the 10th, we had BID patrol, and the next morning, we left on the op. The crew volunteered for this op. Last night the boats took sniper fire. This morning it "hit the fan." We were on our way out of "Snoopy's

Nose" (a "U" shaped river bend) and started taking automatic weapons fire. We had the monitor and two Alpha boats ahead of us. Then rockets (RPG-7s) started flying. One fell just short of our stern, and we took heavy shrapnel. The end of a 30-cal barrel was shot off, and five straight legs took shrapnel here in the well deck. One guy had the 30 right next to me and fell from getting it in the ear. Tango 5 is operating on half their crew. They took two rockets, one at the water line and one in the Mark 19 mount. You can't recognize the 19 gunner. He got it in the face so bad. The 20 gunner got it in the leg and side.

We are back at the ship, now. We are refueled and are getting our port 20 and Mark 19 repaired. We are back on the line. I remember seeing the Mark 19 gunner on Tango 5 now. He is a tall blond guy, good looking, and has a girl stateside. Now they say he's not expected to live. Cooper, who is on the same boat, went into shock, but he's OK, now. Tangos 13 and 8 hit mines, and have holes in their well decks.

Everybody is on edge; unnerved. Everybody knows it could be his turn next time. A guy on Tango 5 refused to go out on the boats again. The sky is gray, overcast. There is a cool wind blowing. It fits the mood after a battle. Charlie knew we were coming. We got hit just as we were getting to the exit. He had 2 days to get ready for us. I can still remember it like it was seconds ago, the sound of Charlie's AK-47 Chicom rifle.

July 13th..... a bleak day for RivRon 13.

Diary, Saturday, July 13, 1968 by Patrick Kelly
C-151-1 (07/68-06/69)

LtJG Robert B. Conaty's Journal Referencing
July 13, 1968

"...Snoopy's Nose—the Rach Ba Rai. The operation lasted 5 days. One night we had VC between the army on the beach and our boats. The tide dropped 11 feet one night." Assault craft of Riverine Group Bravo had a busy day on the Rach Ba Rai, Saturday, reporting 16 U.S. personnel injured in an ambush and two boats moderately damaged by underwater explosions that were possible mines. The ambush occurred at 0810..., coming out of Snoopy's Nose... Barrage of small arms automatic weapons and rocket fire in a 1,500-meter attack. Two of my men were wounded seriously enough that they will not return to action. One lost an eye and one had injuries to leg and foot. The sailor who lost an eye had a rocket go through his mount and is fortunate to be alive.

"Snoopy's Nose" was a popular ambush site for the VC because of its shape. With the boats in a "U" shaped column, it was difficult to fire into the banks without risking hitting our own boats on the other side of "Snoopy's Nose." We were always at our guns and alert when we went through this area. On July 13th, the VC waited until we were leaving the nose. As we were leaving it, we started relaxing, taking off

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

USS Tutuila ARG-4



*USS Tutuila
ARG-4 Nha Be
1969*

Albert: Although the TUT has been gone for a long time now, I for one would like to think she has not been forgotten. Here is an excerpt from the USS TUTUILA cruise book 1968-1969.

"1968 began with USS TUTUILA (ARG-4) anchored in Vung Tau Harbor, Vung Tau, RVN, which has been for all practical purposes, her home port since arriving in Viet Nam in July of 1966. While at Vung Tau, TUTUILA operated as the primary repair facility for American and Allied units engaged in patrolling the coast and rivers in the Mekong Delta area. In January 1968 TUTUILA received an official notification that she had won the Merit Meritorious Unit Commendation for the period 17 July 1966-1 September 1967.

TUTUILA had her first underway period for the year on 22nd and 23rd of January with independent ship's exercises that included gunnery exercises, damage control and engineering casualty drills, and OOD maneuvering drills. The ship remained in Vung Tau until 9 April, 1968.

9-12 April was another ISE period for TUTUILA, enroute from Vung Tau to AN Thoi, RVN, where she provided vital support to Coastal Division area of Hull Repair on the PCFs, since it is the only ship in the area with a capability for lifting these boats. During her stay at An Thoi, TUTUILA also functioned as a modified "training command"-training Vietnamese to the Republic of Viet Nam in August.

During 1968 TUTUILA has accomplished many tasks of which her crew is

rightly proud. In the 9 month period from January through September 1968, TUTUILA's crew completed 3,575 job orders and expended an impressive 17,352.4 man days (121,466.8 man hours) in repair work for the units she supports. Some of the major accomplishments during this period included extensive upkeep of PCFs in Coastal Division 11, bringing them to their highest peak of combat readiness; the activation of 4 PCFs for the Republic of Viet Nam, including the training RVN personnel in maintenance, enabling them to patrol sectors previously patrolled by American Forces; repairing of battle damage to various units; installation of 3 Ship's Service Generators in USS BENEWAH (APB-35), an unprecedented feat; installation of Ship's Service Generator and the rewiring of the switchboard in APL-21; and the complete rebuilding of Ship's Service Generator engine for USS MARK (AKL-28) Additionally, TUTUILA personnel converted three Quonset huts at An Thoi for use at EM Clubs. This job, done largely by volunteers on their own time, included complete installation of wiring, head and washroom facilities and septic tanks, a fresh water system, and the manufacture and installation of furniture.

Specific units on TUTUILA's "regular customers" list includes PCF Squadrons 11 and 13, Coast Guard Squadrons 11 and 13, Harbor Clearance Unit One, Harbor Patrol Element One, MSTs Ships, Naval support Activity Saigon Units, Mine PAC Ships, Seventh Fleet Units, SERVPAC Ships and

many others. In addition to the US Navy and Coast Guard Ships and boats, she looks after the repair needs of units of the Vietnamese, Republic of South Korea, Thailand, and Australian Navies engaged in the Viet Nam Conflict.

On 30 September 1968 TUTUILA returned to Vung Tau. On 18 November CDR L.P. BAUERLEIN, USN, relieved, CDR E.C. CASTLE, USN, as Commanding Officer USS TUTUILA (ARG-4) in ceremonies at Vung Tau. On 19 November the ship got underway for Yokosuka, Japan, for a long awaited Shipyard Overhaul. A proposed visit to Keelung, Taiwan, was canceled because of an encounter with Typhoon Mamie and several days of high winds, heavy seas and little headway. After that, plus a few more anxious days of trying to stand clear of Typhoon Ora, the ship arrived in Yokosuka on 6 December to await the commencement of her overhaul.

1968 was a rewarding year for TUTUILA. It is fitting that the year should end as it did. In 31 December REAR ADMIRAL LONG, Commander Service Group Three presented TUTUILA with the Battle Efficiency Plaque for Fiscal Year 1968. This award was the Third Consecutive "E" for TUTUILA and symbolizes the hard work, dedication, and pride displayed by her crew."

G Freeland SFM, Weld Shop, MRFA, 10 year member

[Note From Albert—the Tutuila was what we use to call in the Navy a work horse; she was an outstanding Ship and was always ready and available when called upon.]♦

REUNION
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the pursuit of happiness." A flag for each division of the Armed Forces flies above the fountain. The fountain is located inside our outdoor Oasis. This space features outdoor fireplaces and large patio that connects to an indoor pool enclosed with glass doors. The doors can be opened to create an outdoor entrance to the pool. This tranquil space, located at the heart of our campus makes our property unique and enhances the overall experience for our Marriott guests.

You may want to access the hotel's web site to see a photo gallery of the hotel. www.indianapolis.marriott.com. ♦



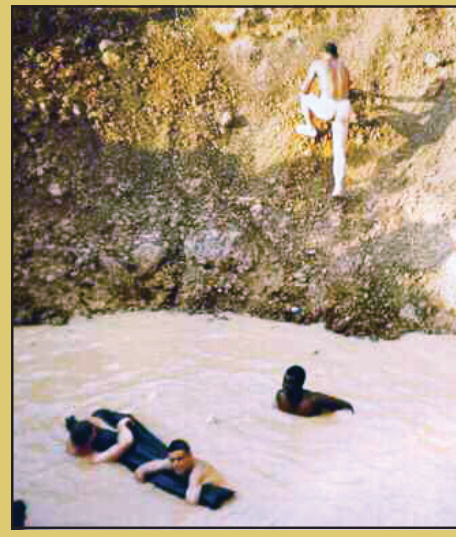
What Do You Do With A 1,000-lb. Bomb Crater?

By Jim Radetzky HHQ 2nd/47th Infantry
(05/66-02/68), jimrad@hotmail.com

Near Tay Ninh (1967)

To paraphrase Jim "....The guy almost in the center of the picture is Sp4 George Speckman, directly across at the 3 o'clock position is Sp4 Ed Nolan, the black guy is Pvt. Ellis (?), and the guy at the 1 o'clock position is SSGT Joe Oblinger." Recognize anyone? Write us!

Below: Ever wary of possible chemical contamination, one poor soldier shows the effects of what looks like skin bleaching on his lower half after swimming.



DOWN A CANAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

our flak jackets and helmets. Not alert. That's when they hit us.

The reason "the guy" on Tango 5 refused to go out is that a rocket grenade hit his boat in the cox's flat. He was below in the well deck. The rocket grenade burned through the armor plating of the cox's flat, hit the opposite bulkhead, and dropped through a hatch, hitting him on top of his helmet, landing at his feet. It was a dud. He felt that he had used up all of his good luck in that moment. He would never go into combat again. Our Lt. "J.G." begged him to go back out, because if he didn't, he would face court martial. He steadfastly refused to get back on the boat. He was taken away. I never saw him again.

Operations Report, Saturday, July 13, 1968

This report indicated that the 4/39th infantry was back loaded with intentions of proceeding to a PZ VIC for an air mobile lift; however, as RAC transited down the Rach Ba Rai enemy fire was received from both banks. Fire was returned and suppressed. Company 3rd BDE and CIG 117.2 made the decision to land the 4/39 infantry on both sides of the entrance to the Ba Rai. After beach prep, C Company was landed at 0945. As a Company made beaching approach, fire was received from the beach. The task unit withdrew, the beach was repped, and A Company was beached. As Tango T-131-8 was beaching, an underwater explosion blew an 18" hole in its deck. Salvage ops began and both boats remained beached.

4/39 infantry swept the beach and adjacent areas and established a defense perimeter. Several boats beached in the vicinity of Tangos 8 and 13. All boats remained inside of the perimeter throughout the night while salvage operations continued. Battle damage included:

T-131-5 Heat round through Mk 19 mount. Weapon damaged beyond repair. Heat round through starboard side under 20-mm mount—minor damage.

T-131-13 Underwater explosion caused 18-inch hole in hull under starboard fuel tank. Engine room flooded. Will require lift.

T-131-2 Port engine has broken crankshaft.

A-111-3 contaminated fuel system.

T-131-6 Port engine still inoperative.

Casualties from this morning's action were as follows:

7 USA WIAs, 2 Dustoff

9 USN WIAs, 2 Dustoff, one of which remained in Dong Tam, the other flown to Long Binh.

After landing 4/39 infantry battalion, the troops sweep through the ambush area discovered 2 VC KIAs (one floating and one in small bunker). The KIAs were credited to CTU 117.3 by the Army. Several blood trails were also noted.

From all indications, damage sustained by T-131-8 and T-131-13 was from contact mines. Trip wires activated mines that detonated as boats beached.

Operation Report, Sunday, July 14, 1968

All elements of Task Force Group Bravo returned to Dong

Tam Sunday, including ATC-131-8, which was damaged late Saturday morning by an underway explosion believed to be a small water mine.

Divers flown to the scene from the Sphinx and those on the combat salvage boat completed temporary repairs on the ATC Sunday morning, permitting it to make the transit from the mouth of Snoopy's Nose to the YRBM-17 at Dong Tam.

The first four ATCs of River Division 132 joined Task Group Bravo at Dong Tam Sunday afternoon. The boats completed the 2-day transit from Vung Tau at 1445.

A typical operation, for me, began around 2:00 a.m. on the USS Benewah. We dressed, ate breakfast (Navy chow...yum!), and then assembled on a large floating pontoon attached to the side of the ship. We picked up weapons, ammunition, rations, water, bug spray, and any other equipment we would need for the operation. I carried extra smoke grenades because I humped a radio on my back.

Loading into the ATCs was a dangerous part of the mission. Moving from the pontoon with a full combat load into the landing craft was not easy. As the boats filled up, they cast off and began to circle the barracks ship until everyone was embarked for the mission. An ATC carried our whole rifle platoon, between 25 to 30 heavily armed teenagers and had a crew of 6 sailors.

At this point, the ATCs would meet up with ASPBs and Monitors as we headed toward our insertion zone. We were often ambushed on smaller tributaries and canals. One such place was called "The Crossroads." I remember sitting on the well deck, trying to relax or catch a nap. It didn't work for me, but some slept the entire trip.

It took a lot of courage to attack an armada of heavily armed and armored boats covered by artillery, accompanied by helicopter gunships and ground attack aircraft. Even when we were not ambushed we went ashore to face booby traps, snipers, drowning, heat stroke, "friendly fire," snakes, and other dangers of the jungle, canals, and rice paddies.

I was the 3rd platoon RTO for Company E (later D) most of my time in combat. We usually had 25-30 grunts in the platoon. According to records compiled by

the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, May 1968 was the deadliest month of the entire war. During that month all but 12 of us in 3rd platoon were killed or wounded. We joked about being "The Dirty Dozen." We received replacements during June and July while still taking some casualties. I tried not to remember their names. On August 18, 1968, we were ambushed on Hai Muoi Tam Canal and all but four of my platoon were killed or badly wounded. I was lightly wounded but completed the mission with my three men. We were attached to 2nd platoon for that operation. After only 5 months in-country, I was the highest rank (E-5) and had the most combat time in my platoon. I cannot remember anyone completing a tour of duty in my unit without becoming a casualty in one way or another. Wendell Affield has written the story of that 8/18/68 ambush in a book titled, "Muddy Jungle Rivers." Thank you Wendell.

My Platoon Leader was badly wounded that day. When he returned, he was put in charge of the Brigade Intelligence Office (Army). He asked if I would like to be his assistant and saved my life by getting me out of the rifle platoon. I searched for him for years after returning home, but during our last conversation (a decade or two ago), he stated that he did not want me to contact him again. I understand.

I was in combat from April through October 1968. We also moved to and from the ships of the MRF. My land base at this time was Ben Tre. This was the place (during the Tet Offensive 1968) famously referenced in the quote, "We had to destroy the village in order to save it." Typical military "logic."

There were many days when I was sure I would not survive. I was young and stupid, so I turned to prayer. I was shocked to discover that the best soldier in our platoon was a damn Yankee atheist. I had been told there were no atheists in foxholes. It took me years to grow up and realize he was right and I was full of it. I am more at peace now than ever in my life and wish to thank SSgt. Stafford Cowles for his courageous leadership. He led by example, took care of his men and was fearless in battle. That is the truth.

My best wishes to all who survived. We are brothers in my heart.

Larry "Nashville Cat" Reid, Co D, 4/47th Bn, 2nd Bde, 9th Inf Div (1968-69)



Larry Reid (red flower) August 18, 1968, before the ambush

15th Engineer Battalion Combat Engineers

9th Inf Div Vietnam "Drive On"

The 15th Engineer Battalion was first constituted on 1 July 1916, in the Enlisted Reserve Corps as an Engineer regiment and organized on 5 May 1917 at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as the 5th Reserve Engineers. It was ordered into active military service between 21 May and 6 June 1917 at Oakmont, Pennsylvania. The unit was redesignated on 9 June 1917 as the 5th Regiment of Engineers. It was redesignated again on 8 August 1917 as the 15th Engineers and allotted to the National Army. The battle record of the unit began during World War I, when it was awarded campaign streamers for the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne campaigns. After service in World War I, the unit was demobilized on 15 May 1919 at Camp Sherman, Ohio.

In the interwar period, the unit was reconstituted on 25 August 1921 in the Regular Army as the 15th Engineers and assigned on 24 March 1923 to the 9th Division (later redesignated as the 9th Infantry Division). The unit was redesignated on 1 July 1940 as the 15th Engineer Battalion and activated on 1 August 1940 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The Battalion was reorganized and redesignated on 1 August 1942 as the 15th Engineer Combat Battalion. The 15th Combat Engineer Battalion landed on the shores of North Africa in September 1942 to provide combat support to the 9th Infantry Division in its drive to disable the German Afrika Korps. There the unit held US Forces beat and disorganize the German Armies. It subsequently moved on to Sicily, assisting in operations there. From Sicily, the battle weary troops were transported to England where they underwent a rigorous training program in preparation for Operation Overlord, better known as D-Day, the invasion of France.

The day the Battalion had been training for came on 14 June 1944 as they swarmed onto the beaches of Normandy. Their assignment was to clear minefields and build bridges as the infantry pushed the enemy forces out of France and Belgium. They shared the glory of the 9th Infantry Division, as it became the first unit to cross the Seine River and begin the liberation of conquered Belgium, then moving to Aachen and later the Monschau Forest where the Battle of the Bulge saw Germany's final winter offensive of the war fail.

In March of 1945, the Battalion was supporting the 9th Infantry Division as it snuffed out resistance in Bonn. Later that month the Battalion crossed the Ludendorff Bridge and established the Remagen Bridgehead for which Company B was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation. After the end of the Second World War, the 15th Engineer Battalion remained in Germany until it was inactivated on 30 November 1946 in Germany.

The Battalion was reactivated along with other elements of the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Dix, New Jersey, on 12 July 1948 to become part of the training center at that base. The Battalion was reorganized and redesignated on 25 May 1954 as the 15th Engineer Battalion and inactivated on 31 January 1962 at Fort Carson, Colorado.

A growing commitment of American forces to the war in Vietnam made it necessary to once again to call upon the "Old Reliables," a nickname that had been given to the unit after action around Schwammanuel Dam during World War II. Fort Riley, Kansas, was selected as the training center, where the engineers successfully completed a rigorous training cycle to prepare for the new duties they had been chosen to perform. There the unit was activated on 1 February 1966. Leaving San Francisco, California, on 1 October 1966 aboard the USS Sultan, the Battalion spent 20 days at sea and arrived near Vung Tau, Vietnam, on 20 October 1966.

Assigned the task of preparing Camp Martin Cox in Long Thanh Province, they set about the job with a determined, aggressive and mission oriented attitude. Working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the Camp was ready for the arrival of the 9th Infantry Division on 29 December 1966. In the short period of 2 months, a determined engineer unit had cleared 720 acres of jungle, built 110,648 feet of road with associated drainage, built 97 latrines, 89 showers and 28 mess halls. The first element to be assigned to a combat mission was the Armored Vehicle Launched Brigade (AVLB) Platoon from E Company, which was deployed in support of the 25th Infantry Division on operation Attleboro beginning in November of 1966.

Along with the expansion of Camp Martin Cox came the planning and construction of a brigade size base camp in the Mekong Delta called Dong Tam. To accomplish this project, Task Force Ripsaw was formed. It consisted of B and D Companies, a detachment from Headquarters Company, an infantry and signal company, and a medical and logistical element. They moved to Dong Tam on 10 January 1967. The 15th Engineer Battalion was again the first in the 9th Infantry Division to move to a new area of operations. They were also the first American forces to move permanently into the Mekong Delta. They accomplished a seemingly impossible task by having Dong Tam ready for the arrival of elements of the 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division on 25 January 1967.

The 15th Engineer Battalion has been involved in every major operation undertaken by the 9th Infantry Division after it deployed to the Republic of Vietnam. They have provided demolition teams to destroy enemy tunnel complexes and bunkers, mine sweeping teams and road building teams to keep vital roads open and built fire support bases.

The first year in Vietnam was a bountiful one for the Reliable Engineers, with 850,000 man-hours logged during this period. The men built 11 permanent base camps, 2 airfields, 40 fixed bridges, numerous fire support bases and landing zones. An immeasurable contribution was made to the Vietnamese Pacification/Civic Action program with approximately 4,000 civilians treated in MEDCAP operations. Footbridges, playgrounds, and roads were also constructed in an effort to win the hearts of the people.



Between March and August 1968, the Battalion was primarily engaged in Operation People's Road, an operation undertaken by 9th Infantry Division units and, in particular the 15th Engineers, shortly after the 1968 Tet Offensive. Operation People's Road consisted of the upgrading, repair and maintenance of Highway QL4 west from My Tho to Cai Lay including some lesser access routes. This valuable stretch of over 30 km of road was the main supply route between the fertile rice paddies of the Mekong Delta and Saigon. The Viet Cong had been successful in disrupting the flow produce and people by blocking, mining, and cratering the Delta roads.

Through the efforts of the 15th Engineer Battalion, principally Companies A and B, and with the coordinated effort of the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) and other non-divisional engineers, these roads were mine swept, cleared and repaired on a daily basis. In addition, the roads were shaped and resurfaced to handle heavier traffic. Valuable civic action was also made possible as a result of military operations in this area and the ARVN engineers, as well as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

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Engineering Officer of the USS Benewah APB-35 Sets the Record Straight

I can see by the list of “info addressees” that this is getting almost viral. So it is time to set the record straight.

I was the Engineering Officer of the Benewah during the first half of 1969 and we did indeed change a complete generator and alternator unit while afloat and anchored out. As I recall, it was off Dong Tam and probably between the Dong Tam harbor mouth and the free fire zone.

I do not have the date. We were not supposed to keep diaries that could contain sensitive or classified information. I suspect it was early in the summer of 1969.

Changing the engine and alternator was one of the most interesting and satisfying days of my life. I recall it well and a lot of the details.

A Warrant Officer and two or more men from the USS Askari (ARL30) were onboard to lend technical assistance and helping hands during the process.

A ceremony of some sort was held on the flight deck of the Benewah early in the morning of the changeover. Meanwhile, we were completing final details in the forward alternating current generator compartment on the port side of Benewah. As soon as the ceremony was completed, I had water and fuel pumped to starboard, giving the ship about a 10 degree or more list to starboard. The list raised the compartment level well above the water line level.

A floating crane on a barge was brought in to help and the crane lifted the old engine out, set it on the barge and hoisted the new engine up for us to manhandle in.

Snipers had discovered us and the base defense boats were laying down covering fire for a while if my memory is correct. They did a good job.

After a large hole had been cut in the side of the ship and the piece cut out carefully saved from dropping into the water, a steel I beam was welded to the floor of the

compartment and ran 8 or 10 feet out the side of the Benewah. The oil pans were removed from the old and new engines exposing the engine blocks.

The crane’s cable was attached to the old engine, it was manually slid outside the ship on the I beam and hoisted away by the crane. The new engine unit was then lifted up, jockeyed into position on the I beam and hauled in as we slid it into the ship. Once inside, we got it off the I beam and the I beam was cut free from the deck and removed. The crane then lifted the “doorway” from the hull back into place and it was welded into place again. We then started to remove the list as the crane was taken away.

Inside the compartment, we were manhandling the unit into place and starting to bolt it down and secure the motor mounts to the proper cradle. The exterior work was all completed in less than a day. The preparations and final mounting, electrical connections, etc., to place the new unit into service took some time.

The dedication, commitment, and technical expertise of the men in my department and the tech help from the Askari are almost beyond belief. To accomplish such a mission without dockage, shore services, or the time to do the job leisurely in a safe environment is a testimony to their outstanding abilities. It is an honor to have known those men.

The rest is my opinion and should be taken as such. I do not purport to be more knowledgeable than Buships or anyone else, but I have an unshakeable opinion of this issue.

Unfortunately, the changing of the engine did not solve the problem. I was discouraged when I saw they had shipped us the same engine and alternator unit as the one being replaced. I had wished for any other make of engine than the original equipment. My heart just sank when the engine was delivered.

Those engines, the “prime movers” for the alternating current generators were not suited for the task in a jungle environment. They were the wrong engine.

The engine was a Detroit Diesel V16 model 1671. It consisted of two V8 engines bolted together with one common crankshaft. It was a two-cycle engine, meant to turn at 3,600 RPMs to hold 60 cycles AC and ran hot. The cylinder sleeves of the engines expanded too much and they bound the pistons when they expanded. The pistons froze to the sleeves and the force on the crankshaft produced some strange forces throughout the engine blocks. The main thrust bearing in the rear of the after block consisted of separate pieces of bearing material set on small pins. The forces on the crankshafts caused these thrust bearings to fail and to turn, normally causing the engine block to fail and be ruined when the piston failed. We were continually “casrepping” an engine or two at a time and always short on parts.

I had a team of machinist’s mates working on those engines nonstop for their tour. 12 hours on, 12 hours off rebuilding those engines which were always down. In a hot, cramped space where one could not always stand up straight.

The average water temperature of the river in the Mekong Delta where we were was 93 degrees F. The water was not only hot but full of alluvial soil that rapidly caked the inside of anything it was pumped into. I complained and complained to Buships and the Type Commander and anyone else who was an info addressee on the Casrep messages. When we went to the yards in Japan, they sent a team of engineers to assess the situation—take all sorts of air flow, temperature, RPM, voltage/amp output, and all other types of readings and record the data. The conclusion was there was nothing wrong with the engines. They were wrong. It was winter in Japan and

cooling an engine under test with 35 degree clean salt water and cold air entering the compartment is a lot different than cooling an engine under actual use with 93 degree mud flow and hot air entering it.

One time a team of engineers and tech reps came out from Subic to show us how to do it right. They rebuilt one engine carefully and deliberately, taking weeks to do it and completely “blueprinting” the engine. That engine ran a total of 12 hours after it was put into service before it failed. I wrote a message about that in the Casrep that I am still surprised that the XO and Captain initialed and let off the ship.

To add to the troubles, the thermostat housing on this engine assembly sat on the top of the rear of the engine. It was a weak casting held together by three bolts. The casting failed occasionally because of metal fatigue and, when it did, it shot water into the alternator causing an extremely dangerous electrical short and a ruined alternator at the same time as a failed engine. We wasted untold hours “baking them out” to restore some of the alternator’s abilities. Parts like that were doled out sparingly.

I can go on and on about this and will be happy to discuss it in September at the reunion. I intend to be there. I have owned small power pleasure craft since 1970 and have had some good and some bad engines. However, everyone knows much better than to mention Detroit Diesels around me.

Somewhere in this house exists a picture of me standing on the I beam outside the skin of the Benewah before or after the process. I will enlist the aid of my wife to turn this place upside down and produce that image at the reunion in September. It is vividly in my mind.

One last word of apology again to the men of the 9th Infantry Division we supported and I will end this tome. These guys came to us for respite from the misery of

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

HISTORY OF THE 39TH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Regiment possesses 21 battle streamers. Its decorations include four Presidential Unit Citations, four French Croix de Guerre (two with Palm and one with Gilt Star), and the Belgian Fourageré. Following reactivation and transfer to the Training and Doctrine Command, the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment departed Fort Dix, New Jersey, for Fort Jackson, South Carolina, arriving on 22 August 1990. The battalion is justifiably proud of its historic past and today continues to uphold these same high standards of excellence in Basic Combat Training as it prepares young men and women for service to their nation. Anything, Anywhere, Anytime . . . Bar Nothing! ♦

STREAMERS

World War I	World War II	Vietnam
Aisne-Marne	Algeria-French Morocco	Counteroffensive, Phase II
St. Mihiel	Tunisia	Counteroffensive, Phase III
Meuse-Argonne	Sicily	Tet Counteroffensive
Champagne 1918	Normandy	Counteroffensive, Phase IV
Lorraine 1918	Northern France	Counteroffensive, Phase V
	Rhineland	Counteroffensive, Phase VI
	Ardenne-Alsace	Tet 69/Counteroffensive
	Central Europe	Summer-Fall 1969

BENEWAH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

the jungles and we tried our best to give them hot showers, a place to shave and relax, a clean bunk, and Albert's chow. We succeeded pretty well considering.

One place we failed was in the berthing compartments through which we accessed the AC generator rooms. We were forced to keep the doors propped open to those spaces allowing us to draw in "cooled" air to help the engines run a little cooler by sucking cooler air than from ambient. Those berthing compartments were

loud and noisy from the engines and had a wind tunnel effect as the engines and fans sucked air to "breathe." I am sure those guys did not get the rest they desperately needed and hated being sent to those compartments. I hope none of them got sick because of it.

To the men of the 9th, I'll be there to listen in September. Give me an earful if you wish to unload after all this time but leave my guys alone. They are "The Best" and tried beyond the abilities of most people.

**Bob Roth USS Benewah
APB-35 (08/68-08/69)**

Commander Naval Forces, Vietnam, COMNAVFORV "Monthly Summaries" and other Naval Archives

Below are two locations for viewing the Original Declassified Documents.

(1) Ed Moise's Vietnam Bibliography at Clemson University <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/FacultyPages/EdMoise/naval.html#docs>

[Summaries are about halfway down the page. When you click on a file, you will be taken to the "The Vietnam Center and Archive" section at Texas Tech University. Because of their size, the file loads slowly.]

(2) The Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) <http://www.history.navy.mil/branches/org10-8.htm>

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Thanks to Webmaster Mike Harris (mekong152@charter.net) for posting the above information on our web site (www.mrfa.org). ♦

15TH ENGINEER BATTALION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

the local RF/PF (Regional Forces/Popular Forces) acquired important training and experience in dealing with VC interdictions. The 15th Engineer Battalion also built several fire support bases and outposts in conjunction with this operation.

Of all the operations undertaken after being deployed to Vietnam, undoubtedly the most extensive was the development of the Dong Tam base camp, the final base camp used as a division headquarters in Vietnam. Begun in January 1967, work continued through 1968 utilizing the expertise of the 15th Engineers and two other non-divisional engineer units.

The fourth largest dredge in the world, the Jamaica Bay, was brought to Dong Tam and anchored in the My Tho tributary of the Mekong River. It was placed, in 1967, only a few hundred meters from the 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division's Dong Tam base camp of concertina wire and tents. The Battalion coupled huge sections of pipe together so the dredge could begin its task of pumping sand into the area behind the small 3rd Brigade camp. The sand was pumped into the area north of the base camp and left to dry, forming the area that would eventually be the home of the 9th Infantry Division.

Disaster struck on 10 January 1968 when a saboteur climbed along the pipeline and eventually place a satchel charge on the Jamaica Bay. The resulting explosion sent the vessel to the bottom of the river and halted the work on the new base camp. In March 1968, two dredges, the Hung Dai from Korea,

and the New Jersey from the United States arrived to continue preparing Dong Tam.

Dong Tam, for a time referred to as "tent city," gradually became the home of the 9th Infantry Division. With additional elements arriving as the base camp was extended, the move was nearly complete with the arrival of the 9th Infantry Division Headquarters in August 1968. E Company, 15th Engineers was one of the last units to arrive, having stayed behind at Camp Martin Cox as a rear detachment and using its 5-ton bridge trucks for hauling equipment for some of the other battalions.

During the 1968 wet season, generally between May and November, the main engineer effort was directed towards the following: Maintaining passable roads, keeping water from inundating fire support bases and completing the base camp at Dong Tam. Once the wet season started to ease, the Battalion started opening roads, which had become inaccessible during the wet season. Some were opened easily, but for the majority, the Viet Cong made the Battalion earn each mile. Access to more roads gave all units of the 9th Infantry Division quicker land access to all areas of the Delta and aided in the rapid Vietnamese resettlement of the Delta.

Earthen work was the prime means of building fire support bases. As the rice paddies dried and the water level lowered, fill was bulldozed into base camps and fire support bases. Berms of earth were built high enough to limit small arms, RPG and B-40 rounds from entering the bases. Earthen pads for artillery, helo-pads, bunkers,

and interior roads had to be built and stabilized. Living quarters, bunkers, and permanent fighting positions had to be constructed. Accommodations were provided for the 2nd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division as they left the ships positioned in the My Tho segment of the Mekong River.

During the 1969 dry season, the 15th Engineer Battalion constructed 7 fire support bases, repaired 4 bridges, cleared 2,050 acres of jungle, and repaired 88 km of previously impassible roads. This was in addition to providing combat support for the infantry brigades. That support was comprised of detecting mines and booby traps, destroying enemy bunkers and arms caches.

Several new concepts were introduced through an engineer airmobile effort. Personnel bunkers and guard towers were built in relatively secure areas and transported by helicopter to new fire support bases; thereby, providing timely security to those bases. Similarly, bridges were constructed and quickly moved into areas that were inaccessible to heavy vehicles.

One of many of the important tasks performed on a year-round basis was the daily mine sweep conducted to, and along, Highway QL4, TL22, TL212 east and west, TL210 and TL175. Using hand-held mine detectors, each morning those roads were swept for mines and booby traps.

On 25 September 1969, after returning from service in Vietnam, the 15th Engineer Battalion was inactivated in Hawaii. The Battalion was reactivated on 21 June 1972 at Fort Lewis, Washington.

In 1983, D Company was reorganized as a General Support Heavy Engineer Company, and the Bridge Company became E Company. On 1 April 1984, E Company, 15th Engineer Battalion was reflagged as the 73rd Engineer Company (Assault Ribbon Bridge), which was concurrently activated. Part of I Corps, the 73rd Engineer Company was attached to the 15th Engineer Battalion.

In January 1990, the Army ordered the 9th Infantry Division to inactivate. C Company, 15th Engineer Battalion cased its guidon on 1 October 1990. D Company, 15th Engineer Battalion was inactivated on 14 February 1991, when it reorganized to form the nucleus of the 102nd Engineer Company, 199th Infantry Brigade (Motorized). Soldiers and equipment from across the 15th Engineer Battalion were used to fill the new company. The 73rd Engineer Company, after its 3-month combat tour in Operation Desert Storm, returned to I Corps control and was attached to 3rd Battalion, 2nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment on 1 July 1991. The remaining companies and the 15th Engineer Battalion Headquarters began to be inactivated on 1 August 1991. The Battalion was inactivated on 15 April 1991 at Fort Lewis, Washington, and relieved from assignment to the 9th Infantry Division.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company was activated on 16 July 2008 in Germany, with a support company concurrently constituted and activated. There it joined the 18th Engineer Brigade, part of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, US Army Europe. ♦

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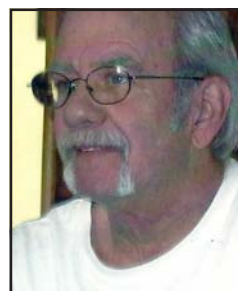
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 James Henke, Tony Spradling, Dave Nelson, James Callan, and the Band
 of Brothers for Sgt Gerald Thurman and Spec James B. Johnson, and all
 our Brothers lost on June 9, 1967, from A Co. 4th/47th 9th in AP BAC.
 Joe Hilliard for Joe Benack from Florida and Donald Hartzell from
 Pennsylvania
 Colleen Huber for Shawn Huber D Co. 3rd/47th Inf (10/68-01/69)
 Harry Kawamura for CPL Terry T. Kawamura MOH 173rd Airborne Bde
 KIA 03/19/69
 John LeBorgne for Luis Mora KIA 02/02/67; Roy Littlehales, Gary
 Richards, Robert Vernes, Charles Lewis KIA's 02/16/67; Gerald Novak
 KIA 03/02/67; James Novotny, Oscar Nicewander, and Dennis Morrell
 KIA's 03/20/67; all from Co A 3rd/39th 9th Inf Div
 David Lynn for Howard Burns (QM2), Robert Bouchet (SM2), and Herman
 Miller (GM3) IUWG 1-3 Qui Nlon KIA 08/11/68
 Men of C Co. 4th/47th 1967 for our Brothers KIA 03/19/67 Benito Alaniz;
 MIA 04/09/67 Ronald P. Schworer; KIA 04/13/67 Charles "Duffy"
 Black; KIA 05/15/67 Donald M. Peterson; KIA 06/19/67 Robert J. Cara,
 Robert J. Jindra, Timothy A. Johnson, Forrest L. Ramos, Cameron A.
 Rice, David A. Robin, Sheldon B. Schulman, Hubert J. Fink, Kenneth D.
 Frakes, William M. Geier, John L. Winters; KIA 07/11/67 Marion "Butch"
 Eakins, Elmer F. Kenney, Harold W. King, Philip A. Ferro, George E.
 Smith; KIA 07/29/67 Cecil B. Bridges; KIA 09/29/67 James M. Sunday;
 KIA 10/06/67 Gale A. Alldridge, Danny D. Burkhead, Charles W. Davis;
 KIA 11/10/67 Charles W. Grizzle; and KIA 05/06/68 John T. Hoskins
 Kenneth R. Marple for brother SSGT Reece L. Marple B Co. 3rd/60th KIA
 05/11/68
 Adam Metts for Donald L. Bruckart T-11-2 KIA 03/31/69
 A R "Monti" Montillo for William "Bulldog" McLaughlin B Co 3rd/60th KIA
 10/03/68 and Barry "Butch" Copp B Co 3rd/60th KIA 10/28/68
 Albert Moore for Ralph Tresser CS3 USS Benewah APB-35 (1966-67)
 Albert Moore for Tom Bityk CS3 IUWG-1 VC-Hill/Ha Tien (1969-70)
 VP Roy Moseman for Oscar Santiago C-2 4th/47th (10/67-10/68)
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 Peterson, Don Pragman, Dennis Price, Larry J. Purcell, Bobby Freeman,
 Harry Hass, Stan Holton, Edmond "Red" Tolar, and SSG James Williams
 from C Co. 4th/47th KIA August 12-13, 1968.
 Jasper Northcutt for SSGT Henry T. Aragon B-2 2nd/47th KIA 08/23/67,
 SGT James E. Boorman B-2 2nd/47th KIA 08/27/67, SP4 James D.
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 2nd/47th KIA 04/27/67, SGT William D. Mize B-2 2nd/47th and 5th/60th
 KIA 10/28/67, CPL Harold K. Southwick B-2 2nd/47th Inf KIA 03/02/67
 (first KIA in B Co. 2nd/47th in Vietnam), and PFC Robert C. Voltz B-1
 2nd/47th Inf (Mech) KIA 03/11/67 (first KIA 1st Platoon B Co. 2nd/47th
 in Vietnam)
 Roy Spivey for my squad leader Charles "Chuck" Cataldo who fought the
 good fight in Vietnam, but lost the battle to cancer in November 2010
 Chet "Gunner" Stanley for all the USN and USA KIA's of the MRF (1967-
 70)
 Ken Sundberg for Michael David Sheahan 5th/60th KIA 02/25/68, Robert
 L. Conley 5th/60th KIA 02/01/68, and Glenn Dean Taylor 5th/60th KIA
 02/01/68
 Robert Sutton for LT James F. Rost Jr. Vin Te Canal Chau Duc KIA 11/69
 USS Guide MSO-447 for Shipmate and Brother Harold Foster
 USS Westchester County sailors and soldiers killed and wounded in the
 mining on November 1, 1968
 Ronald Wallace for all those lost from 3rd/47th Inf
 Grant Wieler for LTC Mercer (Monk) Doty, Battalion Commander, 3rd/60th
 Inf 1967 and SSG Lowell Holden A Co. 3rd/60th Inf KIA 09/15/67
 CPT Steve Williams for 2LT David George Williams Co. A 4th/47th KIA
 09/21/67

TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One

Member **Mike Hermann** passed away from cancer July 7, 2012. Mike served on Tango-111-10 (1968-69). Mike was a plank owner of the MRFA. You may contact the family c/o Noretta A. Kingman, 856 Killdee Ln., Duscon, LA 70529; 337-935-6556. May our brother rest in peace.



Greatbatch

Member **Wayne Allen Turney** passed away May 10, 2012. Wayne served on the USS Guide MSO-447 (12/62-07/66). You may contact the family c/o Darlene C. Turney, PO Box 693, Clinton, IA 52733-06932; 563-243-6452. May our Sweep Brother rest in peace.



Borlek

Member Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman **Dennis E. Borlek** (USN Ret.) passed away following a long battle with lung cancer on June 10, 2012. Dennis served as a Staff Corpsman with River Assault Squadron 12 River Assault Division 112 (01/68-03/69). You may contact the family c/o Veronica Borlek, PO Box 607, Elkton, OR 07436-0607; 541-584-2386; lavenderlady@cascadeaccess.com.

Member **Harry W. Greatbatch** passed away from side effects of Agent Orange poisoning, May 24, 2012. Harry served on A-111-1 (03/67-03/68). You may contact the family c/o Mary Ann Greatbatch, 6908 Oleander Dr, Moss Point, MS 39562; 228-475-5032.

Member **Hollis G. Franks** passed away after a long battle with cancer, June 23, 2012. Hollis served with B Co. 4th/47th 9th Inf Div (12/67-12/68). You may contact the family c/o Mary Bell Franks, 4026 Hillcrest Common, Livermore, CA 94550-3777; 925-373-7095; hgfrank@comcast.net. May our brother rest in peace. Doc Dale Jones

Member **John R. Holland** passed away July 2010. John was in the 4th/39th Inf (10/67-01/69). You may contact the family c/o Patrick Holland, 14175 Brown Road, Moores Hill, IN 47032.

Member **Richard R. Strasser** passed away April 22, 2012. Richard served with E Co. 15th Combat Engineers (09-67-04/68). You may contact the family c/o Dawn Strasser, 319 Costner Rd, Boiling Springs, SC 29316-5318, 864-578-9601.

“What moves through you is a silence, a quiet sadness, a longing for one more day, one more word, one more touch, you may not understand why he left this Earth so soon, or why he left before you were ready to say goodbye, but little by little, you begin to remember not just that he died, but that he lived. And that his life gave you memories too beautiful to forget.”

Remembering Vietnam Veterans

Over 2.6 million served
 Over 58,000 gave their lives

They fought for freedom
 They fought with honor
 In the end, they fought for one another

A Soldier Died Today

From the Membership

Note of Interest

Folks: It is 45 years ago this date July 11, 1967, that M-112-1 went in harm's way in the Mekong Delta. My thoughts today are with my shipmates on that boat and especially the memory of BMC Howard Bannister, our boat captain, who was killed, and his family. The memories I have are vivid, and I guess they always will be. God Bless America and all of

our military folks, past and present.

D. K. Butler BM2 coxswain of M-112-1 and plank-owner of Riv-Ron 11

Hi Albert: The email address you have for me is good. Thank you for your service to the veterans of the Mobile Riverine Force for the last 20 years and your service to our country 40 odd years ago. Welcome home.

Rowland Hill Whitfield County (1968-69)



Your membership expiration date is printed on your
River Currents just above your name and address.

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