



River Currents



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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SPRING 2012

From the Galley

Just a few short notes, we have lots of great info as usual in the newsletter and I don't want to take up much of it. We will have an off-year reunion in San Diego, September 6-9, 2012. The info is below. Our 2013 reunion will be held at the Marriott East, in Indy; a few of our board members have checked it out and gave it ****. There's also two hotels close enough to be attached to the Marriott East for our overflow. We will have a cook-out of some kind for the members and their guests. No golf under the MRFA banner. Nancy Baker wife of CWO-5 Bosun Baker has accepted the task along

with the hotel to provide a trip to the local casino. The hotel will furnish free transportation to and from the airport and also transportation to and from downtown; something they have never done before. If you remember at the last reunion we had out West, the hotel had hamburgers and hot dogs and other goodies grilled poolside around lunch time. We hope to do the same at the Marriott East; it will be pay for your own meal. We will post more as we go along. Take care and take care of one another.

Albert

'Gathering of the Troops' Set for September 6-9, 2012, in San Diego, CA

Reunion dates are from September 6 to 9, 2012. Room rates are \$99 a night plus tax with a maximum of four persons per room. Check-in time is 4 p.m. and check-out time is 12 p.m. This rate is good for 3 days prior to the Gathering and 3 days following the Gathering. Reservations can be made immediately either register online (<https://resweb.passkey.com/go/MobileRiverineForceAssociation>) or call the toll-free number 1-888-233-9527 between the hours of 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., 7 days a week EST time. Be sure to mention the Mobile Riverine Force Association for the group rate. Note: There will be a \$35 charge for any early departures that are not considered emergencies.

Shuttle Service

There is no airport shuttle available to the hotel. It is recommended that hotel customers can (1) contact Cloud 9/Super Shuttle to make an advanced reservation (<http://www.supershuttle.com>), use 7J379 as the "Group/Discount Code" or call their 24-hour reservation line at 1-800-974-8885 and provide the "Group/Discount Code" 7J379. Our group can save \$3 to \$6 off the regular price of \$12 each way from the airport. The rate is lowered to \$9 one way or \$18 round trip or (2) Taxi--The going rate from the airport to the Crowne Plaza Hotel is \$22. If four people share a cab, the price for a one way fare is \$5.50 per person.

Parking

The hotel has agreed to free parking for everyone who registers and occupies a room.

RV Parking

RV parking is extremely limited. The hotel requires that anyone who parks an RV on the premises must stay in a hotel room and NOT in the RV.

Hotel Features

All rooms have balconies or lanais overlooking the adjacent golf course or swimming pool area. The hotel has (13) handicapped rooms. If you need one, be sure to register early to secure it. Room Wi-Fi service will be complimentary to the MRFA. Usually the hotel charges a fee for this service.

- Islands Restaurant
- Islands Sushi and Pupu Bar
- Outdoor heated pool
- Fitness room



Marion "Butch" Eatkins

A Nightmare of Death, Sacrifice and Gallantry

July 11, 1967

Written by Bill Reynolds, 2nd Platoon,
Charlie Company, 4th/47th

It's been 44 years since that terrible day when we lost Sergeant George E. Smith, Phillip A. Ferro, Marion "Butch" Eakins, Harold W. King, and Elmer F. "Coolwig" Kenney, yet I remember it like it was yesterday. Throughout all these years, I have never forgotten our battle against a concealed Viet Cong force that were dug in and waiting for our unit to cross a large dry rice paddy on the morning of July 11, 1967.

The day started out like so many other days—another "search & destroy" mission. We were dropped off by Navy Tangos very early that morning and for several hours, it seemed like we were on another long, boring, hot and sweaty hike from one dry rice paddy to the next. Each rice paddy was bordered by a tree line. Lt. Jack Benedick directed each squad to take turns going recon across each rice paddy towards the next tree line. The idea being that if we encountered VC in the next tree line then the whole platoon would avoid ambush. My squad had just completed a recon and then it was Sergeant Smith's squad that ventured into the next rice paddy towards another tree line. To that point, it was just another tedious patrol.

When Sergeant Smith, Harold King, Phil Ferro, Butch Eakins, and the others reached more than halfway across that open rice paddy, the rest of our 2nd Platoon advanced from the trees. They were almost across that paddy and the rest of us were well out there when all hell broke loose. The whole platoon was immediately pinned down. The Viet Cong had been lying in wait for us and they patiently waited to open fire until Smith's squad was really close. At first, we didn't know what happened to our recon guys; we were forced to lay low and we tried desperately to crawl out to them.

Everyone was firing like crazy and bullets were flying all over the place. You could barely lift your head without bullets

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NIGHTMARE JULY 11, 1967
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zinging by. I was carrying a radio that day and I stayed in contact with Lt. Benedick and the other radio men—there were no messages coming from Smith's recon squad. Lt. Benedick really wanted us to reach Smith's squad out there, but it was just impossible—suicidal. Benedick called in "Willy-Peter" artillery for a smoke screen so that we could reach them, but it was too windy. I can remember when those shells started dropping in thinking that we were all going to be blown to smithereens, but as usual Lt. Benedick had pinpointed artillery perfectly between the enemy and Smith's squad.

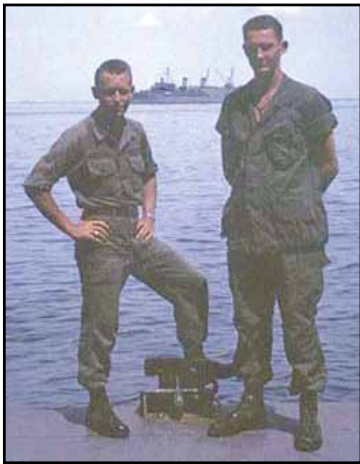
We laid out there behind small rice paddy dikes for hours and tried to crawl out there to reach those guys the rest of that day, but when darkness came Lt. Benedick ordered us to pull back to the last tree line; he didn't want to jeopardize his troopers more than we already were. None of us slept that night, but we could see some red nighttime map lights moving about out there in the paddy. We were tempted to fire but we couldn't because our guys were out there.

At the break of dawn, the next morning when we could barely see, all of sudden here came Henry Hubbard half carrying a shirtless Frank Schwan back towards our position. Henry was unscathed, but Frank had a bullet hole in his mid-section and he was wounded in his arm. Those guys stayed alive that night concealed by a low rice paddy dike and they had pulled the pins on several grenades in case the VC discovered them. The VC took all the belongings of our fallen soldiers.

*Phil Ferro*

After calling in a med-evac chopper for Frank, we went across the rice paddy to find Ferro, Smith, Eakins, and King lying next to each other face up. There were spent bullets lying all around, and it was clear that they had fought back valiantly.

Phil Ferro was a fellow graduate (Class of 1964) of Grover Cleveland HS in Reseda, California, and an outstanding athlete—1964 Los Angeles City High Hurdles Champion. But on the morning of July 11, 1967, I am certain that Phil never knew what hit him. Phil had been shot in the head.

*Harold Wayne King (at right)*

When the chopper came in for our dead, myself and a few others were told to place them on the chopper. That's when I broke down and I just could not help it—these were my friends and it was too painful to see my friends disfigured, bloated, and reeking with the stench of death. One of our Platoon Sergeants (who will remain nameless) bitterly chewed me out claiming I disrespected our brave soldiers. Well, I carried that guilt for over 30 years and when I finally met my ole Platoon Leader, Lt. Jack Benedick, many years later I told him that story. Lt. Jack said he would have shot him. Jack's comments instantly relieved my burden and I will never forget Jack for his kind words to me.

As for the Viet Cong, they cleared out during the night except for one with an AK47 who apparently didn't have time to diddy mau—Lt. Jack immediately shot him dead and took his AK47.

*Elmer "Cool Wig" Kenney**Sergeant George E. Smith*

“ ... on this July 11th skirmish we were beginning to wonder if any of us would get out of the Mekong alive

during that same action. He was a really decent guy from Canoga Park and I remember that he was married and had a baby boy who was born after he left for Viet Nam. I cannot even imagine the pain that was felt by all of his family members.

After our huge June 19th Battle when 47 troopers gave the ultimate sacrifice and scores wounded and now this July 11th skirmish we were beginning to wonder if any of us would get out of the Mekong alive.

I only hope that this article serves to honor these brave men for if it were not for them being out there in front, there's no telling how many more of us would have perished that day. Charlie Company troopers who served with these true American heroes will forever remember them. ♦

” One positive aspect of July 11th occurred early that day... at one point, we paused in a rice paddy for a short break and out of the clear blue Idoluis Casares was hit in his leg by an apparent stray bullet. He was lifted out by a med-evac chopper. Casares was in Sergeant Smith's squad so that leg wound likely saved his life that day!

After the mission ended and back at our barracks ship, we learned that another buddy from the San Fernando Valley, Elmer Kenney, 3rd Platoon, was killed

Arm, Prayer, Save Four Men from Rocket

Article submitted by Tony Garvey, C Co. 4th/47th Inf (1968)

Aboard the Benewah—An arm and a prayer saved four 9th Division soldiers recently, when a B-40 rocket ripped into their position.

The men, from the 4th Battalion, 47th Infantry, were on a Mobile Riverine Force operation three miles southeast of Dong Tam in the Mekong Delta. Suddenly, they were pinned down by enemy fire in an open field.

Private First Class Roscoe E. Nowlin, 20, of Texarkana, Ark., heard PFC Michael A. Bailey, 20, of Westminster, Colo., yell, and then felt a sharp blow on his left arm.

“I looked up and saw Nowlin jumping on me and yelling for me to say my prayers,” said PFC Anthony Garvey, 20, of New York City. Nowlin had been hit by a B-40 rocket.

The two men froze and waited for the explosion. When nothing happened, Nowlin rolled off his buddy and said, “Thanks, Garvey, your prayers were answered.”

The rocket had glanced off Nowlin and landed in some soft mud next to PFC Henry Gregory, 22, of Boydton, Va., who said, “My heart stopped!”

Bailey had seen the rocket bounce off Nowlin and miss his leg by inches.

“I heard the thump, watched it hit and then

just buried my head in the ground to pray,” Bailey said.

The rocket was not a dud. Neither Nowlin's arm nor the soft mud appeared hard enough to detonate the shell.

“Those prayers and Nowlin's fat arm saved us,” Garvey said. ♦

Note: All four Mobile Riverine Infantry men returned safely home after their tour of duty. All four served with 1st VP Roy Moseman, who was a great soldier and natural leader, even then, more than 40 years ago.

The library was unable to verify that this article was from a Stars and Stripes article some time in 1968.

About the Vietnamese Marine Corps

By Michael A. Harris (RM2), T-152-1
(7/68-7/69), www.riverinesailor.com

The Mobile Riverine Force worked jointly with the Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC) in ferreting the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army from their prized sanctuaries in the IV Corps Mekong Delta Region of Vietnam. For their efforts, some units were awarded the highest U.S. military unit citations.

The U.S. Army Presidential Unit Citation, instituted for "Extraordinary Heroism" in action beginning on December 7, 1941, requires the unit to have displayed "such gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions so as to set it apart from and above other units participating in the same campaign. The degree of heroism required is the same as that which would warrant award of the Distinguished Service Cross to an individual."

The U.S. Army Valorous Unit Award originated on 7 January 1966 and was then adopted by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel on January 12, 1966. It signified "unit gallantry in combat to a degree equivalent to that required for award of a Silver Star Medal to an individual."

These brave fighting men will always have a special place in the hearts of the U.S. military personnel who served side by side with them.

The Mobile Riverine Force Task Force 117 was initially designed to have U.S. Naval and U.S. Army

forces working jointly against the communist oppressors. River Assault Squadrons 9 and 11 had arrived in-country beginning in January 1967. They were tasked with primarily transporting U.S. 9th Infantry Division "Riverine Battalions" around in the northern regions of the Mekong Delta.

Later River Assault Squadrons 13 and 15 arrived in-country. Having served on T-152-1, I can only recall transporting U.S. infantry "grunts" on approximately six occasions. The rest of the time we moved Vietnamese Marines, Army Vietnam (ARVN), and Regional/Popular Forces (RF/PF or Ruff Puffs). Therefore, most of us who served in River Assault Squadrons 13 and 15 worked directly with our Vietnamese counterparts throughout our tour of duty.

The Vietnamese Marines were generally a step above the rest in my eyes. When our boats were ambushed, they were often ready and willing to be inserted right onto the ambush site so they could assault the enemy forces from where they had attacked. The



Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers did not like to tangle with the VNMC.

When the Viet Minh succeeded in thwarting the French occupation of Vietnam in the early '50s, many Catholic families moved from the north down into the Mekong Delta region in the south. They set up sanctuaries there in order to protect and preserve their religious beliefs. Many of them joined the Vietnamese Marine Corps in an attempt to keep the region secure. In the end, these units virtually fought until the communists took over the south on April 30, 1975. Many languished in "Re-education Camps" for years following the war.

These brave fighting men earned many individual and unit awards from their own government. Here are a few awards provided them by the United States Government:



Marine Division
Valorous Unit Award - 26 to 31 January 1973
Task Force
Valorous Unit Award - 26 to 31 January 1973
Vietnamese Marine Task Force
Presidential Unit Citation - 13 to 25 February 1968
1st Vietnamese Marine Corps
Presidential Unit Citation - 13 to 25 February 1968
2d Marine Infantry Battalion, Vietnamese Corps
Valorous Unit Award - 26 to 31 January 1973
4th Marine Infantry Battalion, Vietnamese Marine Corps
Valorous Unit Award - 26 to 31 January 1973
4th Vietnamese Marine Corps
Presidential Unit Citation - 13 to 25 February 1968
5th Vietnamese Marine Corps
Valorous Unit Award - 13 to 25 February 1968
9th Marine Infantry Battalion, Vietnamese Marine Corps
Valorous Unit Award ~ 26 to 31 January 1973
When we were in transit, we would offload the Vietnamese

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VA Benefits: Part II • Additional Benefits When Rated 100%

by VA Composed by Michael A. Harris
(VSR/VVA, mekong152@charter.net)

Note: Some may apply for lesser ratings of 30% or more. This volunteer listing is not fully comprehensive so be sure to check things out with the VA.

A veteran can be rated 100% "Total and Permanent" (T&P). This usually happens when VA considers a disability may improve. You can tell if a 100% grant is Total and Permanent as the decision will approve "Dependents Educational Assistance" and "Chapter 35 Benefits."

1. VA Co-Pay reimbursement

If you have been paying Co-Pays and your new Rating Decision is retroactive, then you can ask VA to reimburse you for those payments back to the date of the rating.

2. Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA)

This first proves that VA has deemed your disabilities to be "Total and Permanent" (T&P). It allows your spouse and children to be eligible for certain educational benefits.

A child is authorized 45 months of accredited schooling. VA presently pays a monthly stipend of around \$805 for a full-time student. They can receive guidance counseling, tutors, etc.

If VA deems it needful, a student may receive an extension on the initial 45 months.

A qualified student is usually 18 to 26 years of age, but I have seen some using the benefit up to 32. Usually the latter is based on a large retroactive benefit granted to the veteran.

If a child has been in school and then the veteran receives a retroactive benefit that includes that school dates, the student can file for reimbursement for the months that he/she qualified on the retroactive date.

A spouse can also qualify for schooling.

Keep in mind that this is the student's or spouse's benefit drawn on the veteran's grant. The student/spouse must handle all of the paperwork.

3. ChampVA Health Insurance for the Spouse and Dependent Children

This is an excellent benefit for the spouse/children. Veterans must receive our care at the VA,

but our dependents can receive their care in the private sector. Please DO NOT delay on applying.

ChampVA is located in Denver, Colorado, and they are very easy to work with. ChampVA is the spouse's benefit so she will have to coordinate with them.

Of course any parent can coordinate for dependent children. The spouse will use the veteran's claims file number (in upper right hand corner of the VA Rating Decision letter) in order to make the initial ChampVA application request.

Very Important: If a spouse/children have had any out-of-pocket medical expenses during the time of the veteran's retroactive grant period, they can submit them to ChampVA after being approved, and ChampVA will reimburse the expenses. This can be a substantial amount if there have been health issues with the spouse and/or children.

Note: ChampVA does not cover dental, eyeglasses, and electives.

VA Health Administration Center
CHAMPVA

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MRFA Summary Report: May 1967

MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE SUMMARY ComRivFlotOne/ComRivSuppron Seven Command History May 1967

On **2 May**, the USS Colleton (APB-36) arrived at Vung Tau. On **5-7 May**, RivRon 11 Staff, RivDiv 112, and units of the 4th/47th infantry embarked on the Colleton.

With the arrival of the Colleton, a minor odyssey in naval annals came to pass. Benewah and Colleton departed Norfolk, Virginia, USA, and sailed halfway around the world—each with sustained speed of between ten and eleven knots—each with an untried crew and untested ship—each proceeding to an uncertain future about which they had little knowledge. Suffice it is to say, many dire predictions were made concerning their lonely passage. Happy to say Benewah arrived ready for whatever lies ahead some six days ahead of the most optimistic predicted arrival. Colleton, likewise ready, arrived some ten days ahead.

The advent of the Southwest Monsoon has resulted in rapid deterioration of Vung Tau harbor water surface conditions in late afternoon. On several nights, riverine assault craft were sorted from alongside ships to proceed to sheltered anchorage at Cat Lo. USS Snohomish County (LST-1126) arrived in Vung Tau on **1 May** and will perform duties as the first MRF resupply ship.

The need for an administrative detachment staff ashore, both as a personnel processing center and to provide much needed storage space has become increasingly apparent. The entire personnel section of the Flotilla will be moved ashore to Dong Tam, RVN. This will free much needed space aboard the Benewah and permit the setting up of a central personnel processing area for the handling of all personnel. It has been requested that four Quonset huts be made available to be used as office

space and as a stowage area for personal gear that cannot be stowed aboard the Benewah or Colleton. All receipts and transfers of personnel will be affected at this location and it will function as a funneling point for R&R departures of personnel assigned to CTF-117 units.

The Naval Research and Development Unit, Vietnam, provided ComRivFlot One with five experimental buoyant flak jackets for evaluation. A buoyancy test was performed by one of the RivFlot One officers on **12 May**. He was dressed in full combat gear including field shoes. The buoyant qualities were excellent. Afloat ten minutes in the water he could not pull himself under the water with the jacket on. A test of the regular flak vest and the CO₂-type life jacket was also conducted. Sufficient positive buoyancy for a fair swimmer was obtained by the discharge of one CO cartridge. With two cartridges even the poorest of swimmers should have little difficulty remaining afloat. The five buoyant flak jackets have been turned over to a boat crew for evaluation. After a period of operation, they will be interviewed and their comments on the suitability of the jacket will be forwarded to Chief, Naval Research and Development, Vietnam.

During **May**, River Assault Flotilla One was visited by camera teams from NBC and CBS. Both covered the concept and general operations of the Flotilla at Vung Tau and their support of the embarked Army units. Both networks also went out on ATCs and were put ashore. NBC came back to cover the return of the troops to the Mobile Riverine Base and also interviewed CTF-117. SecNav Guest Artist Larry Zabel spent four days with TF-117, two of which he spent aboard an ATC on patrol. Raymond Burr and an NBC camera team visited RivRon NINE units at Dong Tam and filmed an operation for use on an NBC Vietnam special.

Concern over YRBM-17 to perform effectively still exists. During the **10 May** conference

at NavForV, it was determined that it would not be possible for YRBM-17 to overhaul the engines of all boats cycling through Dong Tam for overhaul. This resulted in the decision to pre-position additional engines at Dong Tam, have YRBM-17 conduct engine changes, and move the replaced engines to Askari for overhaul. ComNavForV will attempt to augment the capabilities of YRBM-17 in order to support the mission assigned.

After 4 months of constant operations, our boat crews ran into their first real test on **15 May** in a multi-battalion operation west of Dong Tam. Both performed in the highest tradition of the U.S. Navy. The morale of our crew is as high as can be imagined. Details were submitted to ComNavForV by CTF 117, 211300Z May 67.

On **20 May**, ComRivFlot One gave ADM U.S.G. Sharp, USN, CINCPAC, an update briefing on the Riverine Assault Force at ComNavForV headquarters. Topics covered were present status of arrival in-country of ships and craft, future plans, and highlights of several recent operations.

A test of the feasibility of employing a 4.2-inch mortar aboard an ATC was conducted by the heavy weapons platoon of the 3rd/47th Infantry Battalion and was supervised by the Fire Support Coordinator of the 3rd/47th. During the test, the ATC was beached with steadying lines out to port and starboard from the stern of the beach. The ramp was down and the awning removed. As a base for the mortar, four rows of sandbags were placed forward of the well deck of the ATC with backing support to hold the sandbags in position. The mortar was centered on the sandbags and secured by the use of additional sandbags. Twenty rounds were fired conducting three call fire missions. During the fire for effect phase, maximum dispersion of shot was plus 25 minus 25 meters. No structural deformation of the ATC

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Headquarters 3rd Battalion, 34th Artillery

14 April 1969

AVDE-AD

**Subject: Annual
Historical Report**

**Chief of Military History
Department of the Army
Washington, DC. 20315**

1. Reporting Period 1 April 1968 to 31 January 1969

2. Major Activities

a. During the period 1 April 1968 to 1 June 1968, the 3rd Bn 34th Artillery provided close and continuous fire support to elements of the 2nd Brigade's Mobile Riverine Force. In 15 major operations that ranged into Kien Hoa, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, and Vinh Long Provinces, the barge mounted elements, (Btry B and Btry C), and the airmobile guns of Battery A, occupied numerous

fire support bases well forward in 2nd Brigades area of operation, in order to deliver timely and accurate artillery fire. These operations along both sides of the My Tho River added immeasurably to the security of this important delta communications artery.

b. On 2 June 1968, the Mobile Riverine Force moved into a series of long range strike operations that began in Long An Province below Saigon and ended with the first penetration of the U-Minh Forest of the Vietnam War. Wherever the 2nd Brigade moved, the 34th Artillery was close by providing the fire support required to assure destruction of the enemy. During this period, Btry A moved onto the artillery barges making all three batteries water mobile for the first time. Each firing battery participated in air-mobile operations during

the month of August 1968; howitzers were air lifted directly off the barges to inland fire support bases, adding a new page to the lengthening list of the battalion's accomplishments. During the week of 4 August, Btry B and C occupied four different fire support bases separated by 150 km of waterways varying in width from 50 to 1,000 m. The occupation of FSB Winchester, located 15 miles southeast of the Gulf of Thailand and 43 miles southwest of Can Tho, was the deepest penetration of the area by U.S. Forces in Vietnam. The Battalion supported elements of the 2nd Brigade, 5th VNMC, and local GVN District forces on this operation. The 3rd/34th Artillery proved to everyone, during the month of August, that barge mounted Artillery loses none of its mobility. The batteries moved

in every conceivable way during the month by water, by road, and by air lift. On 24 August, all three batteries and the battalion GP were airlifted from their boats and barges and placed in three different FSPBs to support a combined 7th ARVN Div and the 2nd Brigade operations.

c. On 9 September 1968, the 2nd Brigade and the Mobile Riverine Force began the accelerated pacification campaign in Kien Hoa Province. One infantry battalion moved in the semi-permanent base areas in the enemy-infested areas of central Giong Trom District. Battery A tied up near the newly established Fire Support Base David and provided fire support for the incipient campaign activities. The remainder of the

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VIETNAMESE MARINES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Marines in the afternoon so that they could set up a perimeter in front of our boats to protect us from frontal assault. This afforded the Marines the opportunity to prepare meals and stretch out for the night.

I acquired the "Captured" photo under unique circumstances while on a return trip to Vietnam in August 1994. God only knows what happened to these men.

Thousands upon thousands of our Allies were tortured and died in communist "Re-education Camps" after the fall of the South on April 30, 1975. Multitudes of others have been scarred for life. During my five trips back to Vietnam in the 1990s, I have found that most of the former soldiers that I encountered still welcome the American veteran back with open arms. As strange as it may seem, the camaraderie of a shared experience is what continues to bind we veterans together.

One time I conversed with a former retired Viet Cong colonel who told me that, if he had to do it all over again, he would join the fight against the North. For his years of servitude to the communist regime, all he has to show for it is a \$5 a



month retirement check.

In 2002, I was contacted by a former Vietnamese Marine who was living in Australia. He informed me that he had seen my "Riverine Sailor" web site and learned that his unit had earned the coveted U.S. Army Presidential Unit Citation. Since he could not locate one in Australia, he asked if I would be kind enough to send him one. I did so and later we lost contact with one another. A few weeks ago, I received another email from him. Here is a portion of what he had to say:

"Nine years ago (in 2002) you sent me a ribbon 'U.S. Army Presidential Unit Citation.' I still keep it with me, and every year when I go marching on ANZAC day, I always wear this ribbon (and I always remember you)."

On my most recent return trip to Vietnam in April 2010, it was obvious that capitalism has taken over in the south. This has allowed the poorer Vietnamese to climb the proverbial "ladder," which has led to a more comfortable existence.

I continue to trust that many former Vietnamese Marines made it through not only the war, but also the tragic aftermath. They have, and always will have, my greatest respect as warriors and men. ♦



SUMMARY REPORT MAY '67
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

was noted. The results of the test were considered to be excellent.

Plastic turret covers on LCM conversions do not stand up to the tropical heat. The covers became concave and thus of reduced value as grenade trap protection. A wire stiffening is being developed to provide a quick fix but future covers should be made from stronger plastic or wire reinforcement.

Combat operations on 15 May adequately demonstrated the effectiveness of the bar armor—XAR30 plate combination against the 57-mm recoilless rifle HEAT round. Although there was damage to the armor itself, there was only one case of penetration—believed to be a projectile larger than 57 mm—causing four casualties.

Reports on 19 May indicate the VC are now using an 82-mm

recoilless rifle HEAT round. This penetrated the ballistic armor on one shot, causing a small fire in an ammunition locker within the armor shield. It has been proposed that Styrofoam or polyurethane blocks, if placed behind the bar armor, may reduce the jet formation on the HEAT round and also absorb some of the fragments produced by the shell. Experiments are being conducted with Navy standard shaped charges to determine the effectiveness of a plastic block over the XAR30 armor. Preliminary tests look very good.

As of 31 May, all Riverine Assault Craft have arrived in-country except two CCBs due to arrive on the USS Oak Hill on 6 June. Two monitors are due to arrive on the Hawaiian Retailer on 12 June, and two monitors are due to arrive on the Manketo Victory on 2 June. ♦

GATHERING THE TROOPS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Be Good to Yourself Massage Company on site
Business Center
Oversized guest rooms
Hospitality Room
The Paradise Cove (2,380 sq ft) will be available for MRFA use from 8:00 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily, September 6-8.

Lanai Suites
Two poolside complimentary suites will be provided by the hotel. The MRFA will be allowed to purchase snack food and beverages and serve them from these suites, September 6-8.

Dining

The Crowne Plaza is providing a complimentary 10% discount in all food outlets at the hotel. On September 7 and 8, luncheon food will be provided by the hotel on a "Cash & Carry" basis. This means that our reunion personnel will pay for their own lunches.

Local Attractions

SeaWorld Adventure Park, USS Midway, B Street Pier, Balboa Park, Belmont Park, The Big Bag, Gaslamp Quarter, Maritime Museum, Mission Bay, Old Town San Diego, San Diego Zoo, Seaport Village, and Whale Watching. ♦

**Mobile Riverine Force Association
Gathering of The Troops**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2270 Hotel Circle North,
San Diego, California 92108 • September 6-9, 2012**

Name _____

Unit in Vietnam _____ Dates _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ or Cell _____

E-mail _____

Spouse, Family, and/or (Guest[s]): (1) Check here if none _____

(2) If so, please list name[s] w/city and state:

Member or member and spouse/guest \$35 \$ _____

Total number of other guest(s) _____ x \$15 ea. = _____

Nonmember (\$50) = _____

Late registration (\$45) = _____

Grand total enclosed \$ _____

Please send this form with your check or money order (payable to MRFA or Mobile Riverine Force Association) before August 3, 2012, to MRFA Gathering of The Troops, 1857 County Road A14, Decorah, IA 52101.

If you wait and pay your registration fee at the Gathering, the cost of late registration will be \$45. Register early and help the MRFA as we utilize your fees to purchase food, beverages, and other items.

The Registration Fee DOES NOT INCLUDE any meals, bus trips, shuttles, rides, etc.

When filling out the form, please do so as accurately and clearly as possible. Your Unit/Dates of Service information is very important as they will be placed on your name tag when you check-in.

At past reunions, some have questioned our Reunion staff on their Name Tag information. We simply use the data that you send us. You may have served in more than one unit. We can only place one unit on a Name Tag, so please be clear on what you want displayed.

To those few who always try and get by without paying the Registration Fee and want a free ride, this is not honoring your fellow members and their spouses.

There will be NO Products sold at the Gathering of the Troops in San Diego. If you want to wear Gear Locker items, you will need to order them before the Gathering and have them delivered to your home.

If you have any questions, contact Mike Harris at mekong152@charter.net or Charlie Ar-dinger at mrfamembership@mabeltel.coop.

Thanks for your support in our great association.
Albert Moore, MRFA President

Thank God for Kitty

By Roger (Grossie) Grossinger, D Co. 3rd/47th 1st Platoon

Since my Vietnam days, I often wondered what happened to the men I served with. One day while on the computer, I e-mailed one of the guys from the Mobile Riverine Force asking him if he could help me. He stated that he like me was not very computer savvy. This guy hooked me up with a lady named Kitty Millard that had helped him find some of his Vietnam buddies. I e-mailed her and about 20 minutes later she called me long distance and asked me how many guys I would be looking for and then asked me for my information—name, home address, phone number, unit I served with, and if I had a nickname, etc. She then told me to e-mail the names to her and she would start looking for them. The first day I mailed her six names and by the next morning she had found four of the six. From that day, low and behold in about 2 months' time Kitty found over 100 guys. She was a God sent!

I started getting in touch with them by computer or on the phone. Wow, I just loved it! Finding out how their lives were since our Vietnam days. Each one had a different story—some happy and some not doing so well, but sure glad to be found after all these years. It was great to talk with each and every one, as we all had a great bond 40 years ago. Most of them were very surprised to hear from me because they often wondered too what happened to the men they were with. I knew that a reunion was coming up in Indianapolis, Indiana, and through a lot of organization I was able to get 12 guys to attend just from my platoon. Every one had a great time talking about our days together and catching up on every one's lives now.

Some of the guys I talk to each week, others every couple of weeks. We also have sent pictures to one another from our time together then and now. A few of the guys have had and still are



1st Platoon D Co 3rd/47th: Back row: J. Uhrich, V. Ingie, J. Shulda, W. Sadowski, B. Welsch, D. Hojnacki, H. Aubie, J. Hayes, and P. Baird; Front row: R. Grossinger, D. Barns, and C. McLaughlin

having some health issues related to Agent Orange and I have been able to help them to some extent by getting them to contact their Veteran Service Officer or the DAV. Since 2009 when Kitty started finding all of my buddies from 40 years ago, it has given me a new lease on life. Every one of the guys from our 1st platoon owes a lot to two men. If not for these two men, a number of us would not be here today—one was our point man Johnny Hayes. He walked point for

8 months, never tripped a booby trap. The other was Bi, our Tiger Scout. Bi was a North Vietnamese officer and came over to our side. He knew all the signs of the booby traps and was able to disarm them. These two men together, I know, is the reason I'm here today.

In closing, I just would like to say a BIG Thank You to Kitty Millard for finding these men and being able to renew a bond that will last the rest of my life! God bless you Kitty. ♦

VA BENEFITS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

PO Box 65023
Denver, CO 80206-9023
800-733-8387, Fax:303-331-7804
E-mail: hac.inq@med.va.gov
www.va.gov/hac

ChampVA has a "Meds by Mail" program that is very good.

A new law was passed awhile back that gives the spouse "ChampVA for Life." There are stipulations if a divorce is involved.

4. Dental Coverage

All 100% service-connected veterans are allowed dental care. Note: Veterans going through Vocational Rehabilitation are also eligible for some dental care.

5. VA Insurance

When a veteran is deemed 100% Scheduler or TDIU, then VA will grant a \$10,000 insurance policy and "waive" the premiums. VA criteria states that you must have been granted a "NEW" service-connected condition in the past 2 years to qualify. It cannot be an increase of an existing condition. You have only 2 years from the time of the decision to apply. Note: VA is now offering this to 70% veterans. The VA insurance division will determine if you qualify.

The key on the application is to write "WAIVED" in the monthly premium amount box when applying for the 10 K amount. VA also offers other small policies, but I hear they are not very competitive.

Call this number (in Philadelphia, 800-669-8477) and tell them your new rating and that you would like to file for the insurance.

You can file online (www.insurance.va.gov).

6. Uniformed Services Identification Cards

The veteran, spouse, and children can apply for this card. They are very similar to our old military

ID cards. They are issued by the Department of Defense and allow you to access military facilities.

If VA did not attach a letter/application, call your VA Regional Office (800-827-1000) and ask them to send you a Cover Letter stating simply that you are "100% Total or Total and Permanent." Be sure they understand that it cannot say anything less than 100%. At the same time, ask them for the "Uniformed Services ID Card Application." I would suggest that you do not try filling the application out as it's one of the most complex one I have ever seen. Just take it with you when you apply.

Once the application and Cover Letter arrive make copies of it so that you will have some extras to provide for other benefits.

Call the administrative department at your nearest Military Base and ask when they do the ID cards. I recommend not filling out the application that is provided. It is very complex. Simply take the application and your DD-214 (You), Marriage License (Spouse), and Birth Certificates (Dependent Children). They will make the ID cards.

The veteran is "PERM" and is for life. The spouse/children IDs are "TEMP" and must be renewed every 5 years.

These cards will say "MWR" on them. This means "Morale, Welfare, and Recreation." You can use facilities at military bases to include Exchanges, Commissaries, and Recreation facilities. The latter can include tickets for concerts, boating, weight room, etc. You can even rent items like boats, BBQs, lawn mowers, etc.

To find lots of information on MWR, go to www.google.com and type in MWR.

You can also use the card for hotels/motels. I usually ask them what the rate is for AARP, AAA, etc. When they commit, then I ask them for the "Government Rate." It's usually a few dollars less.

We are authorized to fly "Space A" on USCG transportation. There are Bills in Congress to authorize all services, but it cannot seem to receive enough sponsorship to pass.

You can stay at "Bachelors Enlisted/Officer Quarters" (BEQ/BOQ) on military bases for \$15 to \$30 a night or you can use their "Lodging" that can run \$45 to \$75. They are nice facilities.

7. Free or discounted Hunting and Fishing License/Tags

Check your state using the link <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>.

8. Property Tax Break

Check your state using the link <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>.

9. Golden Access Passport

The name of this pass has been changed, but the benefits are very similar. If you have the old pass then you can use it as the Federal Government will not give you a new one.

The new pass is called "America the Beautiful—National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass". The pass allows for 50% off camping/recreation in Federal Parks. Some State and County Parks will honor it. Be sure to take your Rating Decision letter. Below is the link.

www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm

Oregon allows disabled veterans (10) free days per month at our State Parks. Some counties have chosen to do the same. Check with your State to see if this is offered.

10. To check for additional State benefits where you live, click on this link: www.va.gov/statedva.htm

11. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

The DIC "Clock starts Ticking" once a veteran is rated 100% "Total" or "Total and Permanent." This

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

From the Membership

Dear MRF

Just wanted you to know you are doing a great job. What a joy it is to keep up with the old unit...That's all due to your hard work. Thank you so much.

David Czech, B-3 4th/47th Infantry (04/68-09/68)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Some of you have inquired on Albert's health since he has been pretty quiet on the Internet. After the reunion, Albert had computer problems and lost all of his data and it has taken him awhile to catch up. During this time, Albert came down with a virus of some kind and was bedridden for a few weeks. He also came down with

leg ulcers and has been under a doctor's care ever since. This is a slow process and has kept Albert off the computer and he has to take a lot of bed rest. He's still not up to par but stays in daily touch with what's going on and gives advice when needed. He hopes to be up and on the computer again in a few weeks. He's okay; he just got hit with a few health issues all at once. The Association was set up for this and everything is running smoothly and no one should be concerned. Albert said to tell everyone to take care and right now he is overloaded with e-mails. Later.

River Currents Staff

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Sir:

I have enclosed what I consider a small check to add to the MRFA treasury, as I know that even small dues often cannot be met by today's Viet Nam veterans. Use this as you wish, but apply it if you can, to those who want to stay, but cannot afford it. If it is not sufficient, please contact me.

Now at the magic lucky 77, I am a member of many organizations that have, because of their structure, limited lifetimes ... the lifetimes of their members who are not getting younger anymore.

At some point, there comes a day, well known to those of us who wore the uniform, when there is "a last man standing." It has almost come to the University of

California Surgical Society, in my Dartmouth College Class of 1955 and of course, your beloved MRFA. Disengagement, as in combat, is never pleasant, but is on the horizon for all us, and for many of the great institutions we have cherished as America has changed dramatically, and we with it.

I will send two-hundred dollars a year as long as I am breathing to the MRFA, or more, and if I, or you are the "last man standing" promise to be sure that the memory of your heroism and sacrifice is never forgotten.

Jeannie and I salute you and our brotherhood.

Very Sincerely,

John and Jeannie Baldwin (DOC)

3RD BDE, 34TH ARTILLERY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

battalion moved to the mouth of the Ham Long River to support the first of a series of MRF strike operations on the periphery of VC-dominated Kien Hoa Province. Three mortar attacks, a mining incident, and an ambush, all delivered against units of the 3rd/34th Artillery, highlighted this problem. All units reacted in a professional and disciplined manner and continued their mission of close and continuous support by artillery fires to the 2nd Brigade.

d. Btry C was lifted off the barges in early October 1969 and set up in a land fire base at Giong Trom Town, the waterborne elements moved to the eastern extremes of the Kien Hoa to the Binh Dai secret zone of the VC. Working in close operations with a Navy Destroyer, the guns of Btry A and B helped account for over 300 enemy bunkers and structures destroyed in this traditional enemy stronghold. The 3rd Bn VNMC joined the 2nd Brigade on 18 October 1968, 34th Artillery Liaison and forward observer parties helped provide this outstanding unit with the close and timely fires. B-52 strikes follow-up missions became common place as the 2nd Bde hammered at the pivotal central Giong Trom region. By early November, Btry C was established on the field artillery firing platforms at FSB KLAU. This unit lent close support to the 3rd/37th Infantry's continuing patrol base construction program. By mid-month, the crucial TL 26 Highway had been opened on a regular

basis and security upgrading of central Giong Trom was a reality.

e. Btry A and B steamed into the enemy's Thanh Phu secret zone to establish two fire support bases in this traditionally VC-dominated region. A highlight of this coastal sweep by the MRF coordination of naval gunfire by the 34th Artillery control center. On November 23, Btry A made the first artillery transit of the Mo Cay District Town. Btry C on their paddy platforms in Giong Trom, suffered 1 KIA and 6 WIAs in two enemy mortar attacks during the month. Btry C, continued their mission in a truly outstanding manner through all these actions. The attacks were evidence of the effectiveness of the type operation being conducted by the 3rd/47th Infantry in the area. The Viet Cong had been hurt and had to strike back. The battalion supported eight major operations during November. The newly established "Eagle Prep" technique gained maturity as the units of the 3rd/34th Artillery smothered helicopter landing zones with deadly prep fire.

f. The Gordon and search operation entered the 34th Artillery's list of accomplishments in early December 1968. This type of activity was to become more prevalent as the intensified pacification efforts in pivotal Kien Hoa continued. Battery 4 made the always dangerous canal passage to Mo Cay again and again, and by the end of December it was a routine activity of the battalion. Second brigade operations picked up speed and became even more widely separated with the insertion of the U.S.

Infantry into Mo Cay Town, from My Tho to the lower Ham Luong Rivers, the 3rd/34th Artillery was hard pressed to keep up with the fast moving 2nd Bde strike forces. Out with split batteries echelon moves, and indomitable spirit all critical battle areas were covered. On 20 December, Btry A displayed the flexibility that has become the watch word of the 3rd/34th Artillery. The unit was alerted for movement to Can Tho in the deep Delta region, re-supplied with rations and fuel and water, they departed for extended duty all in the space of 3 hours. As the dry season descended on the Mekong Delta in earnest, the land mobility of Btry C was displayed by two split operations featuring a platoon of howitzers being towed off the paddy platforms and road marched to fire bases in Giong Trom Town.

g. Late December 1968 and early January 1969 saw the 2nd Bde moving into Mo Cay and And Don Nhon Districts, both lone VC controlled. Gordon and search operations were again prevalent as the real business of pacification continued. The 3rd/34th Artillery, displayed the ingenuity and resourcefulness that have marked the Riverine Field artillery unit since inception, placed a FPS-5 surveillance radar on a LCM-8 boat. Detailed surveillance of river activity proved entirely feasible under this technique. The first 4 months of the Mobile Riverine Forces operation in support of the GVN accelerated pacification campaign in Kien Hoa province has resulted in over 1,500 Viet Cong KIA and

a 100% increase in the Chieu Hoi rate. Throughout the campaign to date, the 3rd/34th Artillery, has on every occasion, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, provided the close and continued artillery support essential to successful prosecution of United States goals in Vietnam.

h. During the period of 1 May to 31 January, the headquarters and service Battery has become fully entrenched in Dong Tam Base. Using limited resources, an outstanding base camp area has been constructed, including the mess hall, three troop billets, a BOQ a BEQ Headquarters building and an S-4 shop. The area has been further enhanced by addition of a network of sidewalks. Construction has also included two personnel bunkers and a bunkered aid station.

i. In the way of civic action programs, the Battalion has initiated an aggressive ICAP/MEDCAP program, using all modes of insertion, air, water, and road. The battalion since 1 November has conducted 30 MEDCAPS and 20 ICAPS, treating 4,534 patients and distributing commodities to five times that number. In addition to ICAP/MEDCAPS, the Battalion has provided materials for construction of a Pagoda in Giong Trom District and is gathering material for construction of a school and church in Ham Luong District. C Battery makes a monthly contribution of \$90 to the My Tho leper colony.

For the Commander: Norman L. King CPT, Field Artillery Adjutant stooogie536@aol.com ♦

River Assault Squadron NINE – Operations Summary 1966-67

1966

On 3 October 1966, members of the newly formed River Assault Squadron NINE reported to Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, California, to commence training. After a week of classes concerned with introducing the personnel to the Mobile Riverine concept, a 1-week school of counter insurgency was completed. The next phase of training was conducted at Whidbey Island, Washington, where squadron personnel went through intensive survival, escape, and evasion training tailored to meet the demands of survival situations in Southeast Asia.

On 1 November 1966, River Assault Squadron NINE was commissioned at the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado, California. San Diego would serve as the Squadron's home port. The new squadron had a complement of eight (8) officers and nine (9) enlisted staff members with a programmed complement of three hundred and fifty-five (355) men assigned to fifty (50) boats. The original squadron organization was set up in the following manner:

Squadron Commander LCDR C. L. Horowitz, USN Chief of Staff LT. M.R. Willenbacher, USN Communications Officer ENS W. A. Mackay, USN	
Commander River Assault Division 91 LT C. H. Sibley II, USN	Commander River Assault Division 92 LT A. H. Dinge, USN
Chief of Staff RAD 91 LTJG A. F. Breininger, USN	Chief of Staff RAD 92 LTJG R. A. Colombo, USN
ASPB-8 ATC-13 CCB-1 MONITORS-3	ASPB-8 REFUELER-1 ATC-13 CCB-1 MONITORS-2

The squadron proceeded to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, California, for training. The training consisted of small boat handling and proved to be very effective. Training was conducted in waterways very similar to those in the Mekong Delta of the Republic of Vietnam where the squadron would soon conduct combat operations. Formal training at Vallejo ended on 16 December 1966 and squadron personnel began preparations for their deployment to combat operations in the Republic of Vietnam on 4 January 1967.

1967

On 4 January 1967, River Assault Squadron NINE deployed for Combat Operations in the Republic of Vietnam. The newly formed squadron was under the command of LCDR C. L. Horowitz who had a staff of three (3) officers and nine (9) enlisted men. In the first month of combat operations, the squadron was to utilize only one of the two River Assault Divisions that made up the squadron. River Assault Division NINETY-ONE, composed of two (2) officers and one hundred and thirty-five (135) enlisted men, would conduct operations in Vietnamese Navy boats until their complement of 25 assault

craft arrived in-country. River Assault Division NINETY-TWO would bring the squadron to full strength with its arrival two months later.

The squadron established its base onboard the USS Whitfield County (LST-1169) after its arrival in the Republic of Vietnam's Mekong Delta. Serving as a temporary support ship, Whitfield County was anchored in Vung Tau Harbor one mile from the city of Vung Tau.

During the training period, the squadron was divided into two segments. The first segment commenced training with the U.S. Army's 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, utilizing Vietnamese Navy assault craft. Simultaneously, the second segment underwent training as observers aboard Vietnamese Navy RAG boats at Can Tho and My Tho. This training would soon pay dividends as the squadron reassembled to conduct its first combat operation.

Acting in support of the 3rd Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, River Assault Squadron NINE prepared to go into combat at 0800, 16 February 1967. Operation River Raider ONE in the Rung Sat Special Zone marked the first Army/Navy riverine assault operation since the Civil War campaigns in the Mississippi Valley. This operation failed to produce any significant contact with the enemy but it did establish the fact that the navigable waterways in the Republic of Vietnam had changed from an enemy resupply asset to an Allied avenue of attack.

The arrival of River Assault Division NINETY-TWO on 28 February paved the way for more extensive combat operations. The planning for these operations was conducted in a series of joint meetings by Army and Naval officers. The Riverine Force was scheduled to make a series of strike operations in the Mekong Delta's Rung Sat Special Zone during the month of March. Although these operations would fail to gain any decisive victory over the communist insurgents, the end of March would find the Army/Navy team welded into a hard-hitting riverine strike force.

The operations in March also marked the first test of the squadron's first shipment of assault boats. They participated in their first combat operations on 18 March 1967. The new craft proved to be better armored and armed with a wider assortment of weapons than the older Vietnamese Navy RAG boats.

The squadron, along with 10 of the new assault craft shifted its base of operations to Dong Tam on 10 April 1967. Initial operations from Dong Tam commenced on 12 April in support of 3rd Battalion, 47th Infantry and 3rd Battalion, 60th Infantry. Squadron operations were primarily of the quick reaction type. Taking advantage of hard intelligence gained from agent reports, elements of the squadron embarked company-sized reaction forces at Dong Tam and transported them to various locations along the My Tho River and connected waterways. The assault craft conducting these operations provided resupply and both direct and indirect fire support to the infantry units.

After about four months of constant operations, squadron boats ran into their first real test on 15 May in a multi-battalion operation

west of Dong Tam in the Cai Nay and Cai Be districts of Dinh Tuong Province. The River Assault Squadron NINE craft in support of the Army units were utilized primarily in preventing Viet Cong from evading Army search and destroy drives by depriving them of the use of the narrow waterways of the province. The continuous patrols instigated by the boats along strategic canals proved to be of great detriment to the Viet Cong. To regain the canals they launched a series of rocket attacks against the boats. The assault craft withstood each attack and in each instance suppressed the enemy fire. It was a satisfying operation for the squadron and resulted in a decisive victory over elements of the Viet Cong 514th Local Force Battalion.

This major contact was but a promise of things to come as the squadron commenced operations in the Viet Cong-infested Long An Province in early June. Again acting on agent reports, River Assault Squadron NINE, operating in conjunction with other elements of Task Force 117, commenced an operation into eastern Can Giouc district of the province. River Assault Squadron NINE was acting in support of 3/47th Infantry and 4/47th Infantry. Soon after the insertions of these units at their designated beaches on 19 June 1967 the assault craft began to receive light to moderate small arms and automatic weapons fire. The craft returned this fire and managed to relieve pressure both from themselves and the Army units they were supporting.

At about 191430 H, LT A. C. Marano, Commander River Assault Division 92, reported that his monitor had been hit by a B-40 rocket, his 40-mm gun was damaged, and that he and three members of his crew were wounded. CCB 92-1, the squadron's communications and command boat, went to the aid of the disabled monitor. After the two assault craft had established fire superiority in the area, Armored Troop Carriers 92-7 and 112-8 were beached near the Army units' position and members of these two boats went into the field to aid and evacuate wounded even though the area was still under heavy enemy fire.

After ensuring that all the wounded personnel were removed from the area, LCDR C. L. Horowitz continued coordinating units in the battle area to ensure proper utilization of the assault crafts' weapons. At about 1800 H, he was wounded while scouting the narrow stream for night stations. LCDR Horowitz completed his coordination efforts and then turned the squadron over to LT A. C. Marano before being medevac'd from the area. LT Marano directed the squadron in effective and deadly fire support of the Army units throughout the night.

During the period of this operation, there were 15 U.S. Navy personnel wounded in action. However, this action again served to prove both the ruggedness and reliability of the boats and the men of River Assault Squadron NINE. The direct hit of enemy rockets, small arms, and automatic weapons did not stop units from completing assigned missions.

The next major encounter with the Viet Cong occurred during Operation Coronado V. Prior

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

CAPS



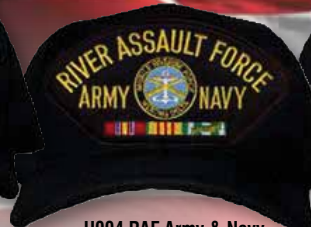
H001 MRFA Vietnam



H002 9th Inf Div Vietnam



H003 RAF TF-117



H004 RAF Army & Navy



H005 Old Reliables
9th Inf Div Vietnam

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COTTON CAP WITH 6"X3" PATCH



H006 USS Benewah Patch



H007 USS Benewah APB-35



H008 USS Colleton APB-36



H009 39th Infantry Regiment w/black patch on black cap (covers 2nd/39th, 3rd/39th, and 4th/39th 9th Inf Div)



H010 47th Inf Regiment w/black patch on black cap (covers 2nd/47th, 3rd/47th, and 4th/47th 9th Inf Div)



H011 60th Infantry Regiment w/black patch on black cap (covers 2nd/60th, 3rd/60th, and 5th/60th 9th Inf Div)

MESH-BACK CAPS

Perfect for any occasion. All are dark navy blue with pewter finish clasp with high-quality gold embroidered text and are made of comfortable, long wearing cotton.

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Service Award hats are available in five styles on an olive drab base. All cotton, washable with pewter finish clasp.



H015 9th Inf. Div. Vietnam
SVC Ribbon



H017 CIB Infantryman



H019 9th Med Bn Dong Tam Vietnam



H012 MRF PUC



H014 9th Inf. Div. PUC



H020 Combat Medic Vietnam



H013 MRF Svc Ribbon



H016 MRF CAR Vietnam



H018 Purple Heart



H021 U.S. Navy Corpsman Vietnam

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Ordering is as easy as 1-2-3.

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2. Make your check or money order payable to the MRFA. We do not take credit cards.
3. Mail Gear Order Form and check to Products Chairman, Chet Stanley Jr., 205 Carolina Ave., Easley, SC 29640-1409; 864-306-8400; gunnerstan@aol.com.

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NOTES:			
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		Grand Total	\$

**Mobile Riverine Force Association
Membership Application Form**

- New Member Associate Member Renewal Sponsor
 Donation CCB-18 Mobile Museum
 Change of address below.

NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

- Postal Delivery Go Green with Email

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 Cell _____
 E-mail _____

- WW-II Korea Vietnam

- Army Member*
 Unit (Division, Brigade, Battalion, Company, Platoon, Battery)

- Navy Member*
 Unit (Ship, Boat Hull Numbers, Navy Activity/Detachment, etc.)

Dates Served in Unit (mm/yr - mm/yr) _____ to _____

MEMBERSHIP RATES

- 1 Year \$20 3 Years \$50

DONATION

To become a member, mail your check or money order (payable To MRFA) to Charlie Ardinger, MRFA Membership Chairman, 1857 County Road, A14, Decorah, IA 52101-7448.

VA BENEFITS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

allows his spouse and dependent children under 18 years of age to receive a monthly benefit if

- a. The veteran passes of a "service-connected" disability within the first 10 years of being rated 100%, and
- b. If the veteran lives the full 10 years, then he can pass of any disability.

Currently, the monthly payment for DIC is approximately \$1,275, so this gives the spouse about one-half of the veteran's paycheck when he was alive.

12. Travel Pay (41.5 cents per mile)

All veterans are allowed travel reimbursement for scheduled VA appointments if they are rated 30% service-connected or higher.

VA will also pay travel pay on a "needs basis." This means if a veteran is under a certain income level then he/she will be paid for scheduled visits.

VA will pay for travel to "Claims and Pension" (C&P) examinations.

As I said, this is not exhaustive. Do your best to not only acquire the benefits that are due you, but also to pass along the benefits to other fellow veterans who may not be in the know because VA is not forthcoming.

13. There is a little known benefit called the "Independent Living Services Program" (ILSP, <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/ilp.htm>). This program is design to assist any disabled veteran to live a better quality of life despite their service-connected disabilities.

The Independent Living Program is to make sure that each eligible veteran is able, to the maximum extent possible, to live independently and participate in family and community life increasing their potential to return to work. Services may include the following:

- Assistive technology
- Specialized medical, health, and/or rehabilitation services
- Services to address any personal and/or family adjustment issues
- Independent living skills training
- Connection with community-based support services

The program shows up briefly on the Vocational Rehabilitation Form 28-1900 (<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-28-1900-ARE.pdf>).

I believe that the VA has changed the wording on the form to further disguise the program. In fact, they changed the name to "Independent Living Program."

You will note on the instructions under "Rehabilitation Services" states the following:

*"If training is appropriate, VA will provide medical and dental care treatment, employment assistance to get and keep a suitable job, and other services you may need. **If a vocational goal is not currently feasible for you, VA may provide services and assistance to improve your capacity for living independently.**"*

The key sentence is in **bold** and *italics*. There used to be more references, but VA has removed them from the form. ♦



**RIVER ASSAULT
SQUADRON NINE**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

to this operation, captured papers and statements by prisoners of war indicated that the 261, 263, and 514 Viet Cong Battalions were in the area of southern Dinh Tuong Province. The enemy strength was established at approximately 1,500 men. The task of reducing this enemy force was assigned to Task Force 117.

River Assault Squadron NINE acted in support of 3/47th Infantry and landed the units at its assigned beaches on 28 July 1967. After inserting their troops, the assault craft quickly established blocking stations. These patrols continued throughout the night and into the next day with only sporadic sniper fire being received by the boats.

The curtailment of river traffic by the assault craft reduced the combat effectiveness of the Viet Cong battalions to such a degree that they were forced to launch an attack in the early hours of 29 July. Monitors 91-1 and 91-3, while providing direct support to the Army units from their blocking stations, were hit repeatedly by rocket, recoilless rifle, and automatic weapons fire. Monitor 91-3 suffered nine personnel casualties and Monitor 91-1 suffered

eleven. The seriously wounded were medevac'd using the newly installed helicopter platform mounted on Armored Troop Carrier 92-4. This speedy evacuation played a direct role in the wounded personnel's recovery and subsequent return to duty.

LT C. H. Sibley, Commander River Assault Division NINETY-ONE, directed more assault craft into the battle zone to come to the assistance of the beleaguered monitors. Monitor 91-2 and ATC 91-10, part of the relieving force, received direct rocket hits after arriving at the scene of action. Despite these new casualties, the assault craft soon forced the silencing of enemy weapons. This forced cessation of enemy fire lasted until the following day. Small arms fire and one recoilless rifle round were directed at the boats on their transit back to the Mobile Riverine Base.

The heavy enemy fire had accounted for 22 men of the squadron being wounded but once again River Assault Squadron NINE had overcome all obstacles and completed a successful mission. Approximately 300 detainees were picked up by River Assault Squadron NINE units and unknown but probably high number of enemy could be attributed to the guns of the Squadron.

The steadily increasing pace of combat operations continued into the month of September. On 15 September 1967, units in River Assault Squadron NINE, acting in support of 3/47th Infantry, participated in Operation Coronado V in Long An Province. Although this operation was conducted in a similar manner to those previous months, troop insertions, blocking stations and gun fire support, its success was spectacular. During this engagement approximately 210 insurgents were killed, 150 wounded, and over 1,000 of their weapons captured.

Moving into the month of October, the Mobile Riverine Force marked another first. A M-132-A1 flame configured armored personnel carrier was shoe-horned into an ATC of River Assault Division NINETY-TWO. Tests were initiated and the results were excellent. This weapon would prove to be a great asset in future combat operations. It would give yeoman service as a destroyer of offensive bunkers.

This weapon was first put into play on Operation Coronado VII (21-23 October) in the Rung Sat Special Zone. This operation was conducted to provide security to the Republic of Vietnam Lower House election conducted 22 October. The security provided by

units of River Assault Squadron NINE and other elements of River Assault Flotilla ONE allowed 83.2 percent of all registered voters to move to the polls without incident. Numerous civilians reported that the presence of U.S. boats on the waterways of the district was a significant factor in providing reassurance to the voters. This indicates that extensive operations conducted by the Mobile Riverine Force in the district during the month were very successful in undermining the Viet Cong influence in the area.

In November, plans were made for Operation Coronado IX in the Viet Cong base areas 470/471 in western Dinh Tuong/eastern Kien Phong provinces. This operation area was initially targeted because of attack on PBRs (Patrol Boat River) in the area.

In order to implement all phases of Coronado IX, the Mobile Riverine Base—composed of three shallow draft barracks ships, one support ship, and one repair ship—had to be relocated to the vicinity of Sa Dec. This marked the deepest penetration the Mobile Riverine Base had made into the heart of the Delta.

A series of two-day strike operations were initiated from

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

In Memory Of

This section is for members who wish to sponsor the MRFA by placing a notice in memory of one of their fallen comrades. In some instances, the name of the sponsor will precede the name of the person who was KIA, or has passed on since Vietnam. It's \$25 for four issues.

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 Regina Gooden for Sgt Lloyd Earl Valentine B Co. 3rd/47th KIA 09/05/68
 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 19, 1967, from A Co. 4th/47th 9th in
 AP BAC.
 Joe Hilliard for Joe Benack from Florida and Donald Hartzell from
 Pennsylvania
 Alexander Kaufbusch for John B. Titus and Steve Mirick A Co. 3/60 Inf
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 KIA 03/19/69
 David Lynn for Howard Burns (QM2), Robert Bouchet (SM2), and Her-
 man Miller (GM3) IUWG 1-3 Qui Nion 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"
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 B-2 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)
 Dennis Sawlsville for brother Richard Falda A-112-6, passed away
 10/29/10. "Lucky" may you have peaches and pound cake for eternity.
 Chet "Gunner" Stanley for all the USN and USA KIA's of the MRFA
 (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
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 4th/47th KIA 09/21/67

Member **Teddy M. Underwood** passed away February 1, 2001. Teddy was residing in Woodstock, Georgia, at the time of his passing.

Grover L. Trew passed away December 2, 2007. Grover served in the 9th S&T/9th Avn (02/68-08/69). Grover was residing in Russellville, Arkansas, at the time of his passing.

Member **Donald D. Warren** passed away May 16, 2005. Donald served in T-91-2 (06/67-06/68). Donald was residing in Saint Joseph, Missouri, at the time of his passing.

Member **Lee H. Mathers** passed away September 13, 2011. Lee served on M-112-1 (01/68-01/69). You may contact the family c/o PO Box 1764, West Dover, VT 05356-1764.

Member **James B. Johnson** passed away September 21, 2011. James served in A Co. 1st Plt of the 4th/47th Inf (01/67-01/68). James was residing in Scandia, Minnesota, at the time of his passing.

Former member **Robin E. Lee** (EN3) passed away from a sudden heart attack on January 3, 2012. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 15 River Assault Division 152 onboard T-152-1 as an Engineman and 20-mm Gunner (06/66-08/69). You may contact the family c/o 160 Kahana Ridge Dr, Lahaina, HI 96761-8314.



Robin Edmund Lee

Member **Jack Collier** passed away October 10, 2011. Jack served with C Co. 47th Inf Regiment in WW II (1944). You may contact

Nadine Collier c/o 126 Saint John Ave, Saint Louis, MO 63119-2335.

Plankowner member **William Rodman** passed away December 5, 2011. William served on the USS Askari ARL-30 (05/67-6/67). You may contact the family c/o 3240 Cross Bill Rd, Louisville, KY 40213.1208; 502-636-2978; amyshumate@juno.com.

Member **Barney R. Shirey** passed away January 21, 2012. Barney served on the USS Harnett County LST-821 (03/69-02/70). You may contact Margie Shirey, 7646 Western Oak Ln, Houston, TX 77040-2621; 713-320-5721; mshirey22@comcast.net.

Member QMCS (SS) **Clarence Cooper** US Navy (Ret.) passed away January 29, 2012. Senior Chief Clarence was a plankowner member of the MRFA and past president of Gamewardens TF-116. Clarence served in River Section 511 (3/68-3/69). Some of you may remember Clarence when he attended the MRFA reunions; he always brought Billy the Rat. Clarence was an all-around great guy who was always reaching out to his fellow shipmates who needed a helping hand. He was a very large part of the original folks who started the Gamewarden association. Senior Chief will really be missed by all hands; he's one of the last of a dying breed of sailors of yester year. May he rest in peace... Cookie



Clarence Cooper

RIVER ASSAULT SQUADRON NINE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

the Mobile Riverine Base into the nearby enemy infested waterways and then discontinued as the enemy showed a marked desire to avoid contact with the riverine force. The Mobile Riverine Base relocated to Dong Tam at the close of the strike missions and River Assault Squadron NINE was soon teamed with units of River Assault Squadron ELEVEN and deployed on the last phase of Coronado IX. The primary mission of this operation was to clear the Xang Canal of obstructions; this canal had been closed since 1964 by a series of barriers constructed by the Viet Cong.

The plan of action was to insert one infantry battalion at strategic points along the canal to provide security for demolition experts as they destroyed the obstructions. The assault craft would once more establish blocking stations and control all water traffic. During the night, the patrols received enemy fire as ATC 92-10 and an Army LCM-8 were hit by rocket and small arms fire.

Shortly after completing Coronado IX, the

MRB relocated for operations in the vicinity of Sa Dec. On the afternoon of 4 December, a detachment of River Assault Division NINETY-ONE craft under the command of LTJG A. F. Breininger, Chief Staff Officer of the Division, encountered heavy ambush on the Rach Rong. Although several River Assault Division NINETY-ONE sailors were wounded in the battle, the boats suppressed enemy fire and decimated the Viet Cong 502 Local Force Battalion.

Elements of the squadron continued to provide support to Army units engaging in two-day search and destroy missions in the Cam Son Secret Zone of Dinh Toung Province for the remainder of the month.

The first year of combat operations for the unique river squadron came to a close with change of command ceremonies conducted onboard the squadron's Command Communications Boat. On 29 December 1967, CDR. L. H. Hamel relieved LCDR C. L. Horowitz and assumed command of River Assault Squadron NINE. It is perhaps indicative, and in keeping with the squadron's spirit, that the change of command ceremonies occurred while on combat operations. ♦



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

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