



River Currents



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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SUMMER 2009



MRFA 9th Infantry Division Reunion in Indianapolis, Indiana • September 2–6, 2009

The dates for the reunion are September 2 to checkout on Sunday, September 6. Cost per room per night is \$79. If you have not made your reservations for the 2009 reunion, you may want to do so ASAP. We're close to filling our allotted room count. If you wait much longer, you may be staying at an overflow hotel. To make reservations, call 317-248-2481 and be sure to mention you are making reservations under the Mobile Riverine Force Association and give the dates you plan on staying; you are not required to stay all three nights. If you live in the area and just want to drop in, you are more than welcome. For more information, feel free to contact Reunion Coordinator Michelle Jackson 317-381-6127 or e-mail mxjackson@adamsmark.com, or Cynthia Busboom 317-381-6127 or e-mail cbusboom@adamsmark.com, or Albert at mrfa@bellsouth.net. For individual hospitality rooms, please contact Michelle Jackson. The cost for an individual hospitality room is \$125 a night.

If you are planning on attending the reunion and have not sent in your registration fee, we would appreciate you doing so prior to the reunion, at least by August 22. It will help us with our paperwork as well as help you when you register at the registration desk. Thank you for your support it's greatly appreciated.

The Adam's Mark has been sold to Wyndham Hotel and Conference Center. This will not in any way affect the reunion. The name change should go into effect around August 1, 2009.

The hotel will again have the shuttle service available for anyone who wants to go to downtown Indianapolis and visit some of the local sites. Times vary on when the shuttles leave and return to the hotel so you may want to check with the main desk for their schedule. Schedules will be posted in the main lobby as well. The hotel also supplies a free shuttle van from the airport. You can access them through a phone in the baggage claim area at the airport.

Albert

Important Notice to the Membership

This newsletter is being sent to everyone on our mailing list. For those of you who are members, it's the regular summer issue, with many more to follow. For those of you who have not yet become members, it's a complimentary issue. If you choose not to become a member of the Association, this is the last newsletter you will receive. Some of you have been on our mailing list since 2002 and have never joined. You have been in contact with us by letter or e-mail asking for assistance with rosters, VA assistance, etc. We have tried to be as helpful to you the non-member as we have the member, but all good things must come to an end. It's not fair to those members who pay their dues as well as sponsor the newsletter and make donations for the mobile trailer and CCB. We ask that if you are not a member, consider becoming one; support the Association as we have supported you over the years.



The speedway and downtown bring all the excitement of the city right to your doorstep. Here you will find the warmth and charm of the grand hotels combined with the comfort and efficiency of the most modern accommodations. The staff will provide unrivaled service and attention to detail, taking care of all your needs. Experience Indianapolis' finest hotel and have a truly remarkable stay!

Location: Just one half mile from the Indianapolis International Airport and only 8 minutes to downtown, the Convention Center, RCA Dome, and Circle Centre Mall. Easy access to interstate highways makes the Adam's Mark a convenient destination from any part of the city, state, or country. Address and

phone: 2544 Executive Drive, Indianapolis, Indiana 46241, 317-248-2481. Free shuttle to and from Indianapolis International Airport, accessed by courtesy phones located in baggage claim areas.

Indianapolis transportation and convenient Indianapolis hotel transportation services are available. Complimentary 24-hour shuttle service is available for the Indianapolis Airport.

Guest amenities: Free parking, outdoor pool, health club, gift shop, same day dry cleaning and laundry, express checkout, safe deposit and security storage, shoe shine, room service, and wireless high-speed Internet in lobby area. Our 407 deluxe guest rooms and suites feature large work desk, Herman Miller Ergonomic Desk Chair, complimentary high-speed Internet access, speed dial phone with message alert and modem access, remote control color TV, in-room movies, iron/ironing board, hair dryer, wake up and turn-down service, non-smoking and accessible rooms available. For dining and entertainment they have the Marker Restaurant--Award-winning American and continental cuisine--and the Marker Lounge for quiet moments, featuring large screen TV.



SEE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS ON PAGE 3

DON'T FORGET TO SEND YOUR REGISTRATION AND FEES BY AUGUST 22, 2009

2009 REUNION REGISTRATION FORM Wyndam Hotel and Conference Center (formerly the Adam's Mark by the Airport) Indianapolis, Indiana, September 2-6, 2009

Name: _____

Unit: _____ Dates: in Unit or Units: _____

Name(s) wife and family/guest(s) _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Be sure to enclose your check or money order with this form. Send to address below.

Registration Fee: (Member only, cost includes spouse or girlfriend) _____ x \$35 = \$ _____

Additional Family Members, Children, Friends _____ Total _____ x \$10 each = \$ _____

Registration Fee (Non Members)* _____ Total _____ x \$50 each = \$ _____

Grand Total Enclosed = \$ _____

**Nonmember is defined as a person who is eligible to be a member of the MRFA by having served in the MRF TF117 or TFs115 or 116 or the 9th Infantry Division or any Army/Navy supporting unit who has not joined the MRFA. The registration fee covers the member and/or guest, girlfriend, etc.; all other fees apply to friends and/or children. Please send your check or money order (payable to MRFA) with this form before August 22, 2009, to MRFA Reunion, 106 Bellevue Dr. NE, Conover, NC 28613. There will be a \$25 charge for all returned checks. Cancellations prior to the reunion will be charged a \$10 processing fee.*



The **Indianapolis Medal of Honor Memorial** was unveiled and dedicated May 28, 1999, the last Memorial Day weekend of the 20th Century. Site preparation began in November 1998 and construction began in January 1999. Located on the north bank of the Central Canal in White River State Park in Downtown Indianapolis, the site is adjacent to Military Park. The city's first recorded Fourth of July celebration was held there in 1822. During the Civil War, it was a military camp used for the recruitment and training of troops.

In June 1998, a New York Times reporter attended the annual meeting of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society in upstate New York. He wrote about its members and the courageous acts that earned them our nation's highest award for military valor. Eight hundred miles away, John Hodowal, chairman of the Indianapolis-based energy company IPALCO Enterprises, and his wife, Caroline, read the article. They were so moved by the story that they began thinking of ways to bring broader recognition to these extraordinary individuals. They and the IPALCO staff began doing research on these men and the lack of widespread awareness of their valor. While conducting this research, IPALCO officials learned that no memorial had ever been built to recognize the 3,436 Americans who had received the Medal of Honor. As a result

of this startling discovery, IPALCO decided not only to bring the Medal of Honor recipients to Indianapolis, but also to build them a memorial that would provide lasting recognition. The memorial was dedicated with 96 Medal of Honor recipients present on Memorial Day weekend, 1999.

The memorial is a group of 27 curved glass walls, each between 7 and 10 feet tall. The walls represent the 15 conflicts, dating back to the Civil War, in which acts of bravery resulted in the awarding of the Medal of Honor. Information about the 3,436 medal recipients are etched into the glass walls. Steps, benches and a grassy area provide seating for visitors. Each day at dusk, a sound system will play 30 minutes of recorded war stories about medal recipients and their acts. As each story is told, lights illuminate a portion of the memorial to highlight the war or conflict being discussed. Most of the stories have been recorded by Medal of Honor recipients.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway located in Speedway, Indiana (an enclave of Indianapolis), is the home of the most famous race in the world, the Indianapolis 500.

The **Indianapolis Indians Triple AAA Baseball team** will be in town during our reunion dates. For more information on a group rate or just a single rate, contact AAA affiliate to the Pittsburgh Pirates, Ryan Barrett, Ticket Sales Executive, Indianapolis Indians, 501 W. Maryland St., Indianapolis, IN 46225, work: 317-532-6792 or cell 317-918-1724, or e-mail Rbarrett@indyindians.com.

I received the latest edition of the MRF newsletter. I enjoy reading all the stories and news! Great job to all who work so hard to put it together.

Keston Williams E Co 3rd/60th 1968

MRFA

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Charlie Ardinger

1857 County Rd. A-14 • Decorah, IA 52101

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Donation
☐ Sponsor ☐ **CHANGE OF ADDRESS - Note Below!**

NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

☐ Postal Delivery ☐ **GO GREEN** with Email Delivery!

NAME: _____

STREET: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: (____) _____

E-MAIL: _____

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

☐ WWII ☐ Korea ☐ Vietnam

☐ Army Member: Unit (Division, Brigade, Battalion, Company, Platoon): _____

☐ Navy Member: Ship, Boat Hull Nos. or NavDet: _____

☐ Associate Member

Membership Rates:

☐ 1 Year \$15.00 ☐ 3 Years \$40.00

☐ Donation: \$ _____

☐ To become a member, mail your check or money order (payable to MRFA) to:

Charlie Ardinger • MRFA Membership Chairman

1857 County Rd. A14, Decorah, IA 52101-7448

Please Note: This form may be used for New Memberships, Renewals and Changes of Address. Be sure to check the appropriate box.



Free Trip to Indiana Live! Casino

Mobile Riverine Force Association, September 4, 2009, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Pre-registration: Register by August 24, 2009, at 5 p.m. and receive \$10 free slot play and \$5 Dining!

Registration: Guests who register after August 24 at 5 p.m. will still receive \$5 free slot play!

To register, call Erin Smith at 317-421-8974 or e-mail your first name, last name, phone number, address, and date of birth to erin.smith@indy-live.com. Please be advised that all players must either pre-register by phone or register at the hotel before loading the bus. Must be 21 and have a valid ID.

Bus departs Adam's Mark Hotel at 10:00 a.m., and bus departs Indiana Live! Casino at 2:00 p.m.

Indiana Live! Casino, 4300 N. Michigan Road Shelbyville, Indiana 46176, 877-FUN-4-IND.



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- Registration will be set up outside the main hospitality room "Hall of Champions" beginning at 9:30 a.m. on September 3.
- Product sales will be in the Hall of Champions beginning at 9:30 a.m. on September 3.
- Hospitality room Hall of Champions will be open at 7:00 a.m. daily. Closing time varies. Beverages and snacks will be available in the Hall of Champions.
- Barbecue buffet will be Friday starting around 1700, prior to speakers. We'll have Barbecued Pork or Smoked Chicken Barbecued Smoked Baked Beans Cole Slaw Potato Salad Rolls and Beverages
- Friday evening speakers with Master of Ceremonies **Gunners Chet Stanley and Don Blankenship**
Tony Ey Royal Australian Navy Diver Clearance Diving Team Three Vietnam
Major William Cunningham A Co 3rd/60th 9th Inf Div Vietnam Vets
Captain Stephen Dexter U.S. Navy (Ret) APL-30 Vietnam
LtGen Pat Hughes U.S. Army (Ret) 4th/39th 9th Inf Div Vietnam
Captain Tom Kelley *MOH recipient* RivDiv 152 Vietnam
- Memorial services are Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. conducted by Chaplain LtCol Jim Johnson 3rd/60th U.S. Army (Ret)
- Missing Man Ceremony by Dave Schoenian C Co 4th/47th
- Flags and certificates will be presented to our widows and sons and daughters of our fallen brothers from Vietnam and after Vietnam who attend the reunion. Gunner Stanley assisted by Don Blankenship will do the honors. Bob Nichols will render the playing of Taps.
- The Delta to DMZ dance will be Saturday evening with a DJ playing your favorites of the '60s and '70s music. Board Member Frank Jones and wife Linda will host the dance.

MRFA HOSPITALITY ROOMS 2009 as of March 16, 2009

Contact Name	Hospitality Name	Room Assigned	Arr./Dep.	More Info:
Albert Moore	MRFA	HC 1-3	9/2-9/5	mrfa@bellsouth.net 828-464-7228
Charlie & Georgina Ardinger				mrfamembership@mabetel.coop 563-735-5924
Harry Hahn	RivRon Room RivRon 9-11-13-15 RivRon 1 StabRon-29 PBRs	FS C-D	9/3-9/5	SparksRivRon13@aol.com 847-722-2509
Bill Cunningham	3rd/60th Infantry	GB-1	9/4-9/5	bill@billcher.com 757-229-8781
Bill Manville	USS Benewah APB-35 USS Colleton APB-36 USS Mercer APB-39 USS Nueces APB-40 IUWG-1, APLs/AKLs ARLs LSTs Naval Detachments Etc.	GB 4-5	9/3-9/5	manvilwh@epix.net 570-265-0246
James Lehne	2nd Batt./60th Infantry	DR-3	9/2-9/5	lehne@wamego.net 785-456-9399
John Armstrong	3rd Batt./47th Infantry	GB-3	9/3-9/5	kacker8@sbcglobal.net 918-541-0120/918-542-1316
Don Anderson	15th Combat Eng. Batt.	Suite 519	9/4-9/6	512-756-7960 112 N. River Oaks Drive Burnet, TX 78611-5539
Bill Sinclair	USS White River	GB-2		williamessinclair@hotmail.com 480-332-9539
Roy Moseman	4th Batt/47th Infantry	Suite 562	9/2-9/6	moseman@charter.net
ALL hospitality rooms that are in banquet space will vacate late Saturday night, September 5, 2009.				

2nd Biannual MRFA Golf Tournament "Taking Back the Bluff in 2009"

Join us at the MRFA and 9th Infantry Division Reunion, September 4, 2009.

All members and their guests are invited to join us for 18 holes of golf. Ladies are welcome.

Where: Bluff Creek Golf Course, 2710 S. Old 37, Greenwood, Indiana 46143, 317-422-4736, Fax 317-422-5571, <http://www.bluffcreekgolf.com>.

When: September 4 with a 10 a.m. tee time. Format will be a shotgun start, scramble format, and foursomes, like last time. Players can put together their own foursome or join up with new members or guests. It is an 18-hole event with prizes planned on key holes.

Uniform of the Day: Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts. Cigars are optional. Let's look festive because it will be "5 o'clock somewhere" (Alan Jackson/Jimmy Buffet song).

Food, fun, and another good time are being planned for members and guests at our next full reunion in 2009. Break out those Hawaiian shirts and golf shoes and join up with the rest of the crew heading to the golf outing.

Registration: Lee Daley and Dave McCann will be working with the new management at the Bluff Creek Golf Course to provide a person at the registration desk, like last time, at noon September 2 and 3, Adam's Mark Hotel.

Cost will include 18 holes, cart, food, prizes, and beverages. Please watch our MRFA web site for final details and cost.

Watch for Santa, he will mark the spot out

on the course where "Ground Support" will be located this time. In case the beverage cart is delayed getting to your team on those hot holes, all you need to do is locate Santa and find a cool drink. The cart will also be traveling around to refresh you. Santa will not be moving and he is 8 foot tall.

Logo Golf Balls: Back by popular demand, 9th Infantry Division and MRF logo golf balls are being ordered for the reunion and will be on sale there. We decided to double the order this time so there should be plenty of balls available for anyone wanting to collect them.

Shuttle Service: The shuttle service from the Adam's Mark Hotel and Bluff Creek Golf Course was a popular item at the 2007 reunion. We are happy to include that service again at the 2009 reunion. You will be able to register for the shuttle at the golf registration table at the hotel. It is a separate registration and someone from the hotel will be there to sign you up. We believe the cost will be \$10 per person.

Contacts for the event are David G. McCann (USS Colleton and M-6) bdalmcc@bresnan.net and Orville "Lee" Daley (USS Askari) leethebaker@gmail.com.



Radioman Flushes Away Memories

by Dave McCann (RM-3) USS Colleton APB-36/RivRon-15 1969-70

When I got out of radioman class A school in San Diego in March of 1969, I was pretty good at Morse code (you had to be to graduate). I was never as good as those speed key guys but I liked “sending and receiving” code at school. I had plenty of extra time to practice it while at school because I came equipped with the ability to type 65 words per minute, with five or less mistakes on a timed test. On our first day of school, we had to take a 5-minute typing ability test. As it turned out the typing book (with the tests) and the Royal manual typewriters we had in class, were the very same items I had used for 3 years of high school typing class at Cumberland Valley High School before I graduated in 1968. I liked typing and besides I had a crush on the young typing teacher, just out of college.

I took the test and at the end I found and circled five errors and handed my paper into the typing teacher at the end of the class. The next day in that class the instructor stood up in front of us and demanded to know “Who is David McCann?” At first, I did not answer because I thought I had missed a mistake and thus disqualified my test from the day before! Again and louder this time, the instructor demanded to know “Who is David McCann?” The second time I answered that it was “I” and I prepared myself for a chewing out. The instructor instead said to the class “Anyone who can type this fast on the first day of typing school does not belong in this class” and he basically threw me out and told me to go to the Morse code classroom for an extra hour of practice each day instead of typing. As it turned out, I needed the extra hour of code class.

Imagine how I felt when I reached the MRF sometime in March of 1969, right out of radioman school (top 10 in my original class), and instead of Morse code, my job as the (FNG) was cleaning the Operation’s head, sleeping quarters, and standing next to my urinals each morning for inspections. I tried to clean the head each morning for inspections while some 9th infantry guys who had horrible diarrhea were using them. I often thought they had contacted the germs from the water they waded around in during combat missions! Sometimes in the mornings when I showed up to start to clean the head, I was stunned at some of the messes left in the toilet stalls from all the human activity the day and night before, thank heaven for rubber gloves!

After repeatedly failing my toilet inspections because of the fresh army deposits that blew back up under the lids (huge pressure), I decided to lock the head door until after the morning inspection, so I would not be reported as failing another head-cleaning inspection. At first, I thought it was a good idea but I still remember some poor, young infantry man pounding on the locked head door and begging to “Let me in, I have to really s _ _ t, man!” He sounded so desperate and I

kind of knew what he was going through. I had recently eaten my first and only malaria pill a few days after reporting to the Colleton and I got the “trots” that night pretty bad and they stayed with me all night long. I never ate another one of those little brown pills again, even on my next tour. The only reason I ate the first one was because there were these two very attractive Red Cross ladies up on the mess deck that day, handing them out. I did not care what they were handing out, I just liked being there (remember I was just 19).

I gave in, I could not stand the poor guy’s pounding and pleading at the door and I let him in and as I expected, my fine, just cleaned shitter was soon ruined for another inspection. The officer-in-charge of the morning inspections never understood why at least one my crappers was always filthy for inspection, no matter how I tried to explain it to him. I always left one shitter available (after I cleaned it) for those emergency moments for the 9th Infantry in the Operation’s head in 1969 and took the crap (so to speak) from the inspecting officer each time it happened. My other nine or so shitters, sinks, and pissers were always spotless, and I once remembered an old Elvis movie, when he cleaned heads in the Army, and I too stood the toilet seats straight up (at attention) each morning for the inspection team. A fitting salute from a 19-year-old kid to those morning inspections, I thought!

It was about this time that one of the radioman Larry Jackson RM3 (who I later became best man at his wedding in Seattle, in 1969) showed me a trick to do in the Operation’s head. Just outside our sleeping compartment, straight ahead and through a bulkhead was the Operation’s head. As you stepped into the compartment, on the immediate right side, there were two sinks with a mirror over each of them. If you turned left and took several paces and turned right, you would find on the left side, a long row of sinks and mirrors in the main passageway. The two sinks on the right were the ones we used most often and the area was not well lit. Larry showed me how to take an 8-inch strip of masking tape and loop it backwards onto itself, with the sticky side facing out and place the tape on one of the mirrors above the two sinks. In the mornings after wake up call, we would go to the head to clean up for the day, and we also looked forward to seeing whose tape strip had the most cockroaches stuck to it! You see, the darn bugs were attracted to the glue for some reason and would come out each night and get stuck in the process of eating it! I had no idea we had that many cockroaches on the Colleton. You just did not see them, during the day. Oh, once in a while, you might wake up and find one in your hair at night as you were lying on those canvas bunks, trying to ignore the heat radiating off of some overhead pipe next to the sleeping compartment. Your first instinct at night was to always grab the thing in your

hair, and, of course, it would get squashed in the process and you would just pull it out and go back to sleep.

I must have done something right because at some point in time I was promoted to the Chief’s Mess Cook and removed from my head-cleaning duties. I am not sure how the two actions were connected with Morse code, but frying eggs for the Chiefs on their big griddle was like flipping burgers at my Aunt’s Trailways Bus Terminal in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, my senior high year (1968). There were still messes to clean up for the Chiefs, but those “old guys” were pretty nice to me, especially BMC Starr. I believe he was from the south some place (I always thought it was Texas) because often when I reported for mess duty in the early hours to get the griddle heated up, Chief Starr would be up by himself, listening to country western tapes on his battery-operated tape player. I think he would sit there all night and think about things. Chief Starr was a kind man and helped me to keep what I was currently doing in perspective, it helped.

I often think about that poor young man who beat on the head door and begged to be let in. I took a lot of crap for letting those guys in, but you know it’s kind of funny now. I never did use Morse code during my time in the service and I spent very little time in my rate, but that is another story, and not working in my rate helped me get back to what was left of the MRF in June 1970.

Hi Al,

Please thank your editor and newsletter crew for the great story on the AKLs, it made me homesick. As you know, I was on the Brule from January 1967 to February 1968 and I do remember some of my Vietnam stories. This spring’s article on the AKLs brought back many memories, and it said we made, on an average, three stops a month in Saigon for replenishment and resupplies, although sometimes it seemed like it was every other day we returned to Saigon. I know there was one period of time when we made into the Saigon New Port Piers 7 weeks in a row. During this particular time span, I remember it always was on Sunday--seven Sundays in 7 weeks. The reason this memory stands out so well in my mind is for this particular reason. The Brule did not have enough crew members to warrant having a dispersing officer, so I think it was the Army who paid us, of course with NSA Navy Dispersing Staff oversight. I was young, 19-years old, an E5 Engineman (I think it was when I was at less than 2-year pay status), and every week they paid me over \$200 a week. I just knew there was a mistake, but it never caught up to me, and I thought the Army would come after me for all the extra money they had paid me. I couldn’t believe I was getting so much money, so often, every week. Man was I in hog heaven! Of course, I didn’t have any trouble spending it--a very short visit in a peddy cab to the Army/Navy PX, way out in the Choloïn (sp) district, for smokes, toothpaste, etc., and then to the city, Beer 33 and Saigon tea on Tundo Street. Hell I was living high! We had to be back by 2400, Cinderella Liberty!

Thanks,
Fritz

What To Do If...

It's hard to believe that it has been a year since first starting this column. It has also been over a year since the loss of my own husband to Agent Orange related cancer. During this year, I have had the opportunity to talk with many other spouses and relatives who have also lost a loved one to a service-related disability, other causes, or may soon do so. There has been a common thread in many of these conversations, and that is the lack of preparedness for the event. Not the emotional side--none of us are ready for that--but rather, it is the practical side of losing a significant person in a relationship; the person who has much of the general knowledge of what goes on daily, and the historical knowledge of every day happenings.

So, I asked a number of folks what it was they would have liked to have known before their spouse was gone. I am writing this list in the hopes that it may trigger some action for those of you who have yet to make preparations for those left behind:

Financial Information: Have all your financial information such as banks, stocks, bonds, insurance policies, a Will, last wishes, funeral arrangement desires, plots, Social Security information, military documents (i.e., DD214,

awards, disability award letters, etc.), VA information, retirement information, employment information, etc., listed and together in one place such as a safety deposit box or somewhere known, so that they can be easily accessed when they are needed. If they are in a safety deposit box, make certain that someone else is listed on the box so that they may access it quickly. Also, assure that that person knows the location of the key. A comprehensive list of information that should be available can be found at <http://www.goldstarwives.org/PDFs/ShouldKnow.pdf>, but, beyond the obvious financial data, there are other things, which you may not think about, that are also important.

- Computer passwords and IDs
- List of carpenters, plumbers, lawyers, heating and HVAC companies, etc., who you know can be

trusted, with contacts and phone numbers

- Location of car, boat, and trailer titles and registrations
- Location of house titles, rental agreements, other properties, etc.
- Location of items you may have hidden in the house, such as valuables in fake soup cans or fake wall plugs, under floorboards, etc. Many houses have been sold with hidden valuables unknown to the families selling them.

*Paula,
Thank you for the great job you did for Sandi Gillmartin. Paula is like Mike Harris who can get things done with the VA. John Gillmartin died last year of Agent Orange related cancer and the service rep told Susan she probably wouldn't get anything. Paula stepped up to the plate and got Susan all she is entitled to. Paula, you're a God send.*

James and Carol Patin

- Tax information for current and previous years
- Memberships requiring cancellation
- Licenses for boats, guns, etc.
- Combination for any safes
- Labeling keys, as to what they are for. Nothing is worse than a pile of keys for unknown locations.
- Automatic renewals that need canceling
- Automatic payments that either require canceling or changing
- Any right-of-ways on your property or to which you are entitled
- Credit cards to be canceled. Unpaid fees can incur costly penalties, and death is not an acceptable excuse.
- Organ donation wishes
- Rental contracts requiring change or cancellation
- Business agreements that will need to be changed or given to a lawyer
- Citizenship records
- Divorce documents
- Professional organizational memberships requiring cancellation
- Family tree information
- Adoption papers
- List items in the house that are worth money, but whose value may not be obvious
- Instructions on how to do things that your spouse ordinarily does not do.

Remember, the more information your spouse or family has available, the less likely that they can be taken advantage of. This all seems just too simple, but having spoken to quite a number of survivors, I can tell you that these are some of the details that they wish they had known prior to the loss of their loved one. Not having it caused much frustration, wasted effort, additional sadness, and in some cases, financial loss. The list is not all-inclusive, but hopefully will provoke some thought and hopefully action.

As always, if you have any questions about the above or anything else in prior columns, please feel free to write me.

Paula Wright (Scott)
thewrightthings@verizon.net

VA GIVING YOU THE RUN AROUND!

My name is Timothy S. Goins. I served in Echo Company, 3rd of the 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division (MRF) in 1968-69. In 2002, I was granted 100% disability benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). My award is the typical 70/30% split with Individual Unemployability (IU). Having been banished from the workforce, I volunteered my time (30 hours a week for more than 3 years) at the Santa Fe, New Mexico, Vet Center (RCS) and VA Clinic (CBOC). During that time, I worked all sorts of claims: DICs (Dependent Indemnity Compensation), Aid and Assistance-Homebound, Vocational Rehab, VA Healthcare intakes, tricky PTSD claims, and a host of others. While by no means a VA benefits guru, I came away from that experience with a pretty sound understanding of how the VA works and how (and how not) to prosecute claims.

With Albert Moore's blessing, I will be volunteering my time at the upcoming reunion in Indianapolis to help any and all MRFA members and their spouses who have issues with the VA. I do not plan this as a casual outreach; rather, I plan to have set hours of operation at a specific venue; we will have a table and chairs set up in the registration area. I will

have with me the most typical forms (I will be able to download any unusual items) and the means to print and copy them. If you would like my assistance and advice (or just want to vent), please make sure that you have a copy of your DD214 (spouses, please have with you copies of your husband's DD214, marriage certificate/license, and death certificate, in the unfortunate case such a document is applicable). Please bear in mind that I am currently in no way affiliated with the VA and have no official mandate; any assistance I can provide is entirely pro bono.

I will end this with a note of levity. Some years ago, the VA (touting its new computerized system and its commitment to treat all claims the same--NOT!) came out with the following slogan: There Is Only One VA! Wasn't long before cynical veterans devised a counter-slogan: There Is Only One VA and That's The VA You Happen To Be Talking To At Any Given Moment In Time! The VA quickly withdrew their embarrassing slogan. I look forward to meeting and seeing and helping as many of you, the membership, as possible... Tim

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Paula Scott Wright who's article (What To Do If...) is run in each issue of River Currents will also be on hand with Tim. So you spouses who have any questions or concerns, please stop by and speak with Paula....

May God bless you Albert and all of the volunteers who so unselfishly give their time to make our yesterdays worthwhile! We were part of an era of confusion but now we hold our heads high with pride. We may or may not have agreed with the war, but we served our Country with distinction and honor.

Thank you again for the tireless effort everyone puts in, creating and mailing out the newsletter, making us aware of benefits and legislation for medical help on behalf of soldiers and sailors who served in Vietnam, and last but certainly not least, for organizing the MRFA 2009 reunion.

*Chuck Jackman USS Askari ARL-30
1970-71*

AN UNFORGETTABLE TASTE OF THE VINH TE CANAL

by Joe Rosner, GMG 3, Riv Ron 15, Monitor 6, 1969

As my head and face broke the surface of the brown water, I quickly came to realize the situation. I could see people, but my ears were clogged with the disgusting murky water so I only heard muffled sounds coming from the many smiling faces. Then, it hit me where I was.

It was during the "dry season" of 1969 in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. I was assigned to Monitor 6, a 105-howitzer boat, part of River Assault Squadron 15. Our area of operations at the time was centered in the Châu Doc area along the border of Cambodia. It is a region by the Hâu River (a branch of the Mekong River flowing through Vietnamese territory) and Vinh Te Canal. Châu Doc is situated 250 km west of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City.

Today, Châu Doc is a busy trading center due to its border position with Cambodia, but in the late 1960s the same area was used extensively as a supply route by the Viet Cong, furnishing their insurgency with weapons and supplies.



CHAU DOC, 1969

Chau Doc 1969

To counter the Viet Cong's movement with those weapons and supplies, General Abrams and Admiral Zumwalt worked out a plan to stabilize the situation long enough to allow the struggling South Vietnamese to eradicate waterborne infiltration through the Mekong Delta. Operation SEALORDS, an anti-infiltration strategy, became the Navy's plan to intercept Viet Cong and North Vietnamese logistics networks that operated during the evening shade of the Núi Sam Mountain. "South-East Asian Lake, Ocean, River, and Delta Strategy," or SEALORDS' concept provided an intensive focus on specific canals and rivers.

The U.S. Navy established a combat base in the An Giang province on the Bassac River. American and Vietnamese river forces staged from the base while patrolling the rivers and canals along the Cambodia border. Night after night, the "Ironclad" remnants of the Mobile Riverine Force moved into prearranged waterborne guard posts.

Starlight scopes from every boat were lit every night searching for any and all movement on the river and/or the flat land leading to the mountains of Cambodia just 1 1/2 clicks away. Any movement surely meant destruction (just as soon as we received clearance; you know it seems like we always had some friends operating in the area).

One night (like times previously), we had a distinct sounding helicopter pop out of the mountain area of Cambodia. Boat radios lit up and many machine guns were aimed at the helicopter just waiting for "clearance" to fire. We all knew it wouldn't stand a chance, but the helicopter usually wouldn't stick around long enough to "play" with us. It seemed like every time we would get a clearance, it was too late. Its mission was to spot our boat positions and "di di mao" back to Cambodia. Not long afterwards, our luck changed. The helicopter coming from Cambodia met unexpected company.

Two Seawolf choppers were roughly in the area the same time we had our visitor from Cambodia move toward us and down the canal spotting our boats. This time, instead of our guns trained on the chopper, it was two of our own. This time they got clearance. Unfortunately, just as they started to open up their guns, they got the order to "cease fire" right afterwards. The chopper got too close to the Cambodian border. If the Seawolf choppers shot the enemy chopper up, it would have landed in Cambodian territory causing heartburn.

More heartburn--one night Charlie tried to over run/break through where our command boat was located. My boat was at the other end of our operating area. Needless to say, with a few hundred moving toward our positions, Monitor 6's howitzer was responding in full support. We emptied our 105 magazine--more than 250 rounds. The taste of burnt gunpowder smoke lingered for hours but Charlie didn't break through.

Before we left the Vinh Te Canal, in less than a week, in the middle of November 1969, Monitor 6 was attacked, hit with six rockets on two different occasions within 200 m from the previous attack. What happened to Monitor 6 wasn't unique. Many of our boats experienced the same while they were stationed on the Vinh Te during the Border Interdiction Campaign of late 1969.

Vinh Te Canal

Rocket attacks, mortars, and gunfire weren't the only things we dodged--dysentery was high on the list for many. It was no different



for me. After our crapper was hit by a rocket, needless to say, we lost the use of it immediately. Monitor 6 personnel had a bucket to use

that seemed to be the common "Plan B" for the boats.

My diarrhea problems weren't going away easily. To top things off, I didn't like being in the open air with women and children running around while I'm relieving myself on the fantail of the boat.

As we were pulling into the base camp area, Monitor 6 landed and I spotted a crapper at the end of a short pier. I made a beeline to the crapper that had an enclosed area for some privacy. I was in too much of a hurry to notice that the guys nearby were dropping what they were doing to watch me drop in the canal just as soon as I sat down on the seat. I found out later that a PBR had hit the end of the pier earlier and ruined the crapper. It was reassembled as a set up for one of them, but I got there beforehand. At first as I waded in that disgusting murky brown canal water, I couldn't help noticing the humor of the situation despite my initial resentment.

Although there are many untold stories, for me the taste of the Vinh Te Canal is unforgettable.

MRFA TO HOLD ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

The following positions are open for election on the MRFA Executive Board. Positions will be held for 2 years, with re-election being held at the 2011 reunion. You must be a member of the MRFA and you must vote in person. Elections will be held at the upcoming reunion in Indianapolis.

President
Vice President
Secretary
Products Chairman
Membership Chairman

If you're interested in either position, please contact Association Secretary Cal Meyer, 28457 Norris Rd., Bozeman, MT 59718; 406-585-2638; or email lbambush239@msn.com and let him know. We'll have time and place details posted at the reunion.

The Moving Memorial Mobile Trailer will be on display at the reunion. It will be located at the front of the hotel. Since the past reunion, we have made some name and date KIA corrections and have added more In-country units. Rich will also have some tables and chairs available as well as a coffee pot.



Thanks to Rich Corrick for doing such a fine job with the trailer and thanks goes out to Bob 'Doc' Pries with assisting with corrections, etc.

Riverine Artillery

The terrain of the Mekong Delta was a serious hindrance to fighting forces in Vietnam. The delta is comprised of rivers and canals coupled with swamps and rice paddies. Roads and dry ground are scarce, and hamlets and villages have long since been built on what little dry ground there is. If artillery shared dry ground with a hamlet, the firing unsettled the people whose support the allies were trying so hard to win. Even when field artillery was positioned on dry ground, it was difficult to employ because the high water table made the ground soft. Without a firm firing base, cannons bogged down, were difficult to traverse, and required constant checks for accuracy. All this lessened their responsiveness and effectiveness.

A fighting force in the delta could not rely on ground vehicles for transportation or supply. Vehicles could seldom move the infantry close to the enemy, they were vulnerable to ambush, and the scarcity of dry ground overly cramped and restricted supply operations



CH-47 Emplacing Airmobile Firing Platform

and the activities of control headquarters and supporting field artillery. Helicopters were used successfully to transport troops and artillery to the area of operations. The airborne platform was developed to solve problems of the inadequacy and scarcity of dry ground. The platform, a 22-foot square, was similar to a low table with large footpads on four adjustable legs to distribute its weight. The platform could be lifted by Chinook and placed rapidly in boggy or inundated areas. A second Chinook brought in a 105-mm howitzer M102 and ammunition and placed it on the platform. (The howitzer and platform could be lifted together by a CH-54 Crane.) The platform provided space for the howitzer, the crew, and a limited amount of ammunition and permitted traverse of the howitzer in all directions. If one or more of the legs was mired when the platform was to be moved, the footpad was disconnected and left in place to be recovered separately. A principal disadvantage of the airmobile platform was that the gun crew was overexposed to enemy fire. It was impossible to construct bunkers or overhead cover since the nearest ground was under water, although sandbags positioned around the edge of the platform provided some protection. Another disadvantage was that ammunition resupply and storage were difficult because of limited

space on the platform.

Even more significant than the use of helicopters in the delta was the formation of a riverine task force, which relied on watercraft to provide transportation, fire power, and supply. The task force consisted of the 2d Brigade of the 9th Infantry Division and the U.S. Navy River Assault Flotilla 1.

Field artillery support for the new riverine task force was initially provided from fixed locations, but the support was less than adequate. Field artillery needed to move and position itself to best support the ground action. This need was satisfied by the 1st Battalion,



Riverine Field Artillery Battalion Command Post, with fire direction center on left, helicopter pad in center, and living quarters on right.

7th Artillery, in December 1966 when the battalion first employed the LCM-6 medium-size landing craft as a firing platform for howitzers. The LCM could be moved to a desirable position and secured to the riverbank. Internal modification was required so that the craft could accommodate the M101A1 howitzer, but even then it was not wide enough to permit the howitzer trails to be spread fully. As a result, the on-carriage traverse was limited. Other shortcomings were that the craft did not afford as stable a firing platform as was desired and that excessive time was required to fire.

More successful were floating barges. The concept originated from a conference in the field between Captain John A. Beiler, Commander of Battery B, 3d Battalion, 34th Artillery, and Major Daniel P. Charlton, Battalion Operations Officer. Their ideas prompted a series of experiments to determine the most suitable method of artillery employment with the riverine force.

The first experiment used a floating AMMI



Riverine Battery Position. Six M102 howitzers preparing for an operation (fire direction center in center right barge)

pontoon barge borrowed from the Navy and an M101A1 105-mm howitzer. Although the AMMI barge served its purpose, it was difficult to move and had a draft too deep for the delta area. The barge finally used was constructed of P-1

standard Navy pontoons (each 7 by 5 feet) fastened together into a single barge that was 90 feet long by 28 feet 4 inches wide. Armor plate was installed around its sides for protection of the gun crews. Ammunition storage areas were built on either end and living quarters in the center. This arrangement provided two areas, one on each side of the living quarters, which could be used to position 105-mm howitzers. Initially, the M101A1 howitzer was used, but, as the newer M102 weapon became available in Vietnam, it replaced the older howitzer. A mount for the M102 was made by welding the base plate of the howitzer to a plate welded to the barge deck. This mount permitted the howitzer to be traversed rapidly a full 6,400 mils.

Riverine Battery Position. Six M102 howitzers preparing for an operation (fire direction center in center right barge).

Three barges and five LCM-8s constituted an average floating riverine battery. Three LCMs were used as push boats, one as the fire direction center and command post and one as the ammunition resupply vessel. Batteries could move along the rivers and canals throughout the delta region; they frequently moved with the assault force to a point just short of the objective area. All the weapons had a direct fire capability, a definite asset in the event of an ambush. Then the howitzers often responded with Beehive rounds, which usually broke up, the ambush in short order.

When a location for the battery was selected, the barges were pushed into position along the riverbank. The preferable position was one where the riverbank was clear of heavy vegetation. This facilitated helicopter resupply, which could then be accomplished on the bank as close as possible to the weapons. Clear banks also provided better security for the battery. The barges normally were placed next to the riverbank opposite the primary target area so that the howitzers would fire away from the shoreline in support of the infantry. This served two purposes: weapons could be fired at the lowest angle possible to clear obstructions on the far bank, and the helicopter was not in the likely direction of fire.

The barge was stabilized with grappling hooks, winches, and standoff supports on the bank side of the barge. Mooring lines were secured around the winches and reeled in or out to accommodate tide changes so that the barges would not be caught on either the bank or mudflats at low tide. Equipment to provide directional reference for the weapons including aiming circle, collimator, and aiming posts was emplaced on the banks. Accuracy of fires proved to be comparable to that of ground-mounted howitzers.

Without these new developments in riverine artillery, U.S. maneuver force activities in the delta area would have been seriously curtailed or often would have had to take place out of range of friendly field artillery. Instead, the field artillery was able to provide support when and where it was needed.

Veterans Day 2009, Washington, DC

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will be placing wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day, Wednesday, November 11, 2009. 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. Room rates are \$119 (plus tax) per night. For reservations call 703-528-4444 and refer to our group reservation code "MRF." Reservations may also be made on-line at www.arlingtoncourthouse.gardeninn.com; be sure to enter the on-line reservation code "MRF" in the booking box labeled Group/Convention code. Reservations under these group codes must be made before the cutoff date of September 8, 2009, so make your reservations soon. The Hilton Garden Inn Arlington/Courthouse Plaza is located at 1333 North Courthouse Road, Arlington, VA 22201.

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will have a hospitality room available on November 9 and 10. Come join us as we honor our fallen Brothers on Veterans Day 2009. We look forward to seeing you in DC.

For more information, contact MRFA Board Member Bob Pries at 9702 Friar Tuck Drive, West Chester, OH 45069, 513-755-1223 or e-mail: rpries@cinci.rr.com.

9th Infantry Division Vietnam 1966-1970

The 9th Infantry Division had the dual honor of being the first division since World War II reactivated for direct deployment into combat and the last division sent to Vietnam. The Division had received its colors at Fort Riley, Kansas, on February 1, 1966. Division engineering elements began arriving in Vietnam during October 1966. The first 5,000-troop contingent landed on the beaches of Vinh Long on December 19, 1966. Division headquarters was at Camp Bearcat (formerly Camp Martin Cox) some 20 miles northeast of Saigon. Construction of a permanent base, Camp Dong Tam, in the VC-infested Mekong Delta started in January 1967. Initially, it housed the Division's 3rd Brigade Headquarters and the 3/60 Infantry Battalion.

The Division's first significant contact with the enemy occurred on January 20, 1967, when units of the 1st and 2nd Brigades and the 3/5 Cavalry--participating in Operation COLBY--defeated Main Force VC in the Phuoc Chi Secret Zone (25 miles east of Saigon). On March 10, 1967, the 2nd Brigade moved into Camp Dong Tam and the 3rd Brigade relocated northward to Tan An. To improve Division mobility in the inundated Mekong Delta and Rung Sat Special Zone, two battalions from

2nd Brigade--the 3/47 and 4/47--joined U.S. Navy Task Force 117 afloat in June to establish the Mobile Riverine Force. To bolster armored fire power in I Corps Tactical Zone, the commander of Allied Forces in Vietnam ordered the Division's armor reconnaissance squadron--A, B, and C Troops, 3/5 Black Knights Cavalry--to Wunder Beach (15 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone) in February 1968. This reassignment distinguished the 9th Infantry Division as the most widespread division in Vietnam. In August 1968, the Division relocated its headquarters and colors to Dong Tam (now a division-size base camp).

The 9th Infantry Division was part of Increment I of the U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam. The 1st and 2nd Brigades, along with Division headquarters, departed Vietnam in July and August 1969 leaving the 3rd Brigade at Tan An to operate as an autonomous combat unit under administrative control of the 25th Infantry Division. The 3/60 Infantry had been given the honor of spearheading the Division's withdrawal by departing on July 8, 1969--the first 9th Infantry Division battalion to go home. The lone 3rd Brigade withdrew a year later during October 1970 as part of Increment IV.

Dear Mr. Ardinger,

Thank you for your kind letter and honorary membership to the MRFA. John was very proud to have served our Country. He passed away on January 23, 2009, from a heart attack at the age of 61. His death is considered by the VA to be service-related. I appreciated all the wonderful cards and letters we've received from for-

mer shipmates. He had military honors at the grave site provided by the VFW and it was very moving. I'm not sure what I would have done without Paula Scott Wright whom helped and assisted me in every way possible with my VA claim and understanding what to do when a spouse passes away.

*Sincerely
Sue Gilhooley*

What was Agent Orange?

Agent Orange was a herbicide developed for military use. Chemically, the product was a 50/50 mix of two herbicides, 2,4-D (2,4, dichlorophenoxyacetic acid) and 2,4,5-T (2,4,5 trichlorophenoxyacetic acid). These herbicides were both developed as weed killers in the 1940s and were effective against broad leaf plants and several crops.

Why did the military use herbicides?

Herbicides were developed to be deployed in enemy areas to deny cover and concealment to the enemy. In dense terrain particularly, the use of herbicides to destroy covering vegetation was to protect American and allied troops from ambush or other undetected movement of the enemy.

Prior to its introduction for use in Vietnam, was Agent Orange used in the United States?

Yes. During the testing phase of Agent Orange, use tests were carried out at Fort Detrick, Maryland, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, and Camp Drum in New York. Other testing was also conducted in Thailand in the early 1960s.

Why was it called Agent Orange?

The name signifies orange identifying bands that were used on the fifty-five gallon drums the product was shipped in. Other herbicides were also used in Vietnam and were known by color-coded names too, such as Agent White, Agent Blue, Agent Purple, Agent Pink and Agent Green were also used.

Who were the manufacturers who produced Agent Orange for the military?

Dow, Monsanto, Diamond Shamrock Corporation, Hercules Inc., Uniroyal Inc., T-H Agricultural & Nutrition Company, and Thompson Chemicals Corporation. These companies were subjects of a class action lawsuit filed originally in 1979 and settled out of court in 1987 for \$180 million. The official name of the lawsuit was Multidistrict litigation 381 (MDL 381) and was designated In re Agent Orange Product Liability Litigation.

I want (or I had) an "Agent Orange Test," sometimes thought to be given by the VA--What is this?

There is no such thing as an Agent Orange Test. This is often confused with two things:

1. The Agent Orange screening physical given at VA Medical Centers: This test is nothing

more than a general physical that includes examination, X-rays, and blood work. It does not detect Agent Orange exposure. This physical is useful only as any routine physical is useful in early detection of disease or health problems. The VA does keep these results in a registry.

2. Dioxin analysis of the blood or fatty tissue: There are sophisticated tests that will measure dioxin levels in both blood and fatty tissues. (Dioxin is the unwanted byproduct in Agent Orange.) These tests are research-oriented only and have never been available on a large-scale or clinical basis. The VA does not perform these tests. Only a few laboratories in the world are able to do this testing, and it is usually quite expensive, around \$1,500-\$2,000 per test.

Can I sue the government or the chemical companies?

No. Title 38 of the United States Code prohibits veterans from suing the government for injuries suffered while in the military. A class action suit was filed in behalf of veterans in 1979 against the chemical companies and settled out of court. The final funds in this legal action were distributed by 1992.

The MRFA and Vietnam-Indochina Tours Announce Grand Prize Free 10-day Ground Tour of Saigon and the Mekong Delta

Cost: \$5 a raffle ticket. Tickets can be purchased by making your check or money order out to the MRFA and send to MRFA Raffle, 1857 County Road A14, Decorah, IA 52101-7448. If you order your ticket or tickets prior to the reunion, you will receive your raffle ticket per mail per your request. If you do not attend the reunion and you are the winner, you will be notified by phone or e-mail, etc. Tickets will be sold at the reunion as well. More raffles will be held at the reunion including 50/50 and more. Grand Prize drawing: September 5, 2009 at the (Delta DMZ Dance). Information will also be published in the Fall Issue of the *River Currents*.

The below rules will be and must be followed:

You have to be a MRFA member to participate and you cannot give the ticket to someone else. The winner has to use the ticket.

Ground tour includes tours of: Saigon – Cu Chi – My Tho – Dong Tam – VC Island – Tan An – Ben Luc – Can Tho – Vung Tau

10 single occupancy nights of three-star hotel accommodations (Saigon Kimdo Hotel in the heart of Saigon, Can Tho Golf Can Tho Hotel), all breakfasts, all airport transfers, private air-conditioned ground transportation, all boat, ferry, and train transportation as noted (My Tho Sampan ride, Can Tho Xe Loi cycle ride, Can Tho Private Rivercraft, My Tho My Thuan Bridge, Saigon-V. Tau Hydrofoil ticket, Vung Tau Bach Dinh Villa, V. Tau-Saigon Hydrofoil Ticket); admissions to all noted attractions (Cu Chi Admission, Cu Chi Tunnels); daily English-speaking guides, except where noted; and accommodations for guides and drivers. Costs do not include: visa costs, airport departure taxes, meals other than breakfast, and items of a personal nature. Tour does not include transpacific airline flights. Valid for travel: Departing Los Angeles, November 2, 2009--non-transferable, non-redeemable for cash. Winner may reschedule tour from March 2010 through October 15, 2010, with payment of any additional airline ticket costs.

In lieu of the Mekong Delta tour, \$1,000 towards the cost of a ground tour to I and II Corps can be substituted. Saigon and IV tour can be customized. Contact Trang Frobenius Vietnam-Indochina Tours, info@indochina-tours.com, 360-570-2096, Olympia, WA, for details.

Day 1: Arrive at Tan Son Nhut Airport. Clear customs and immigration, meet guide and driver, and transfer to your hotel. Free balance of the day.

Day 2: Meet guide and driver and transfer to your hotel. Balance of the day Saigon City tour including the fantastically ornate Hotel de Ville serves as Saigon's city hall, the turn-of-the-century Opera House, Dong Khoi Street shopping area of the French colonial period and of today, Notre Dame Cathedral (1880) and the spectacular turn-of-

the-century Colonial French Post Office, the historic Continental, Rex and Majestic Hotels, view Reunification Palace from the outside, the Saigon Riverfront and Dragon House, Binh Tay Market and the Thien Hau Pagoda (Cantonese pagoda) in Cho Lon and the Sri Mariamman (Hindu) Temple and the Saigon Central Mosque. Return to your hotel for a free evening.

Day 3: 8:00 a.m. prompt morning departure for the Cu Chi Tunnels, 30 km from Saigon city center. Tour the tunnels and Ben Duoc Temple dedicated to the nearly 50,000 NLF soldiers who died there. Continue onto the Cao Dai Holy See nearby Cambodian border. Attend the "high-noon" service in the Great Temple. The religion fuses Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, native animistic beliefs into an amalgam of color and splendor.

Day 4: 8:00 a.m. departure for the northern gateway to the Mekong Delta, the city of My Tho. Proceed south through the lush rice fields of Long An Province to My Tho, stopping at Tan An and Ben Luc for visits. Continue onto to My Tho and tour the city followed by a visit to Dong Tam. Return to Saigon for a free evening.

Day 5: 8:00 a.m. departure for My Tho and Thoi San Islands. Upon arrival in My Tho transfer to the My Tho Docks to board your boat to Thoi San Island in the middle of the Song My Tho River, the northernmost distributary river of Mekong's five major distributary rivers. Tour the island, its hamlets, and tropical fruit orchards on foot. Return to My Tho via boat and meet your vehicle and driver. Cross the newly completed My Thuan Bridge, the first bridge to cross any of the Mekong's major distributary rivers and continue onto the Bassac River. Cross the Bassac on a 100-ton ferry and enter Can Tho. Transfer to your hotel and check-in your hotel. Free evening.

Day 6: 7:30 a.m. prompt departure via your personal rivercraft to the Cai Rang Floating Market, a cacophony of chaos with hundreds of boats buying and selling everything from bananas and coconuts to freshly slaughtered pork and sugar cane. Return to Can Tho via boat. Balance of the day Can Tho tour including the Ninh Kieu Wharf the busiest commercial wharf in the Mekong Delta, the Can Tho Market on Hai Ba Trung Street, the Cantonese Congregation Pagoda on the riverfront, and the Munirangsyaram Pagoda, followed by a 1-hour Xe Loi motorized cycle ride in Can Tho and the surrounding area accompanied by your guide on a separate Xe Loi.

Day 7: Free morning until 10:00 a.m. Check out and return to Saigon via vehicle stopping

at places of interest enroute. Arrive Saigon and check in your hotel. Free balance of the day.

Day 8: 8:00 a.m. departure from the Saigon docks via high speed hydrofoil through the Saigon River to the seaside town of Vung Tau. Disembark and meet your driver and proceed on an all day tour of Vung Tau including:

Downtown Vung Tau: Vung Tau's colorful harbor with its fishing fleet at Bai Truoc (Front Beach), the "Chinese" Cathedral, the Central Market, and the Bach Dinh Villa that was built at the end of the 19th century for the Former French Governor, General Paul Doumer.

Nui Nho: Nui Nho, or Small Mountain, is at the southern tip of the Vung Tau Peninsula and its tip is noted by a statue aptly called "Giant Jesus," that at 28 m high towers over the mountain; a journey up the steps for a spectacular vantage point over the South China Sea; Hon Ba Temple rests on a small island off Nui Nho in the South China Sea and can be reached only by foot at low tide. Return to Saigon on the 4:00 p.m. hydrofoil. Arrive Saigon, transfer to your hotel for a free evening.

Day 9: Free day for shopping.

Day 10: Free day until check out and transfer to the Tan Son Nhut Airport to connect with your returning flight home.

Bon Voyage!

GET WELL WISHES

Hey Albert,

I wanted to let you know that my prostate cancer came back a couple of years ago and I have been on antihormonal treatment for the last year. As you remember when I first joined the MRFA, I was at the reunion in San Diego in 1998 when I was first going through treatment and was on radiation therapy. I have had several surgeries to fix my bladder problems from radiation damage. This makes it difficult to travel with this problem, but I am still in contact with some members of the MRFA (i.e., Bruce McIver, both Mikes Harris', Jaan Vari, etc.). Could you put a good word in for me? I am having another surgery next Wednesday the 27th. You may contact Ron c/o 598 NW 94th Ter., Portland, OR 97229, 503-297-8741, rsant26659@aol.com. Ron was one of the few Navy snipers trained at the 9th Inf Div Snipers school.

Thanks

Ron Santoro EN3 (1969-70) Tango-151-3
PCF 87 IUWG-1-Unit III (SNIPER)

The MRFA wishes a speedy recovery to you Ron, and we hope to see you soon!

PLEASE NOTE: YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE is printed on the front of your issue of River Currents.

TAPS *Tribute to a Fallen One*

1st Sgt Geraldo "Jerry" Gapol U.S. Army (Ret.) passed away in his sleep May 23, 2009, after fighting cancer for 16 years. Jerry suffered from pain for all those years. Jerry served in A Co 3rd/39th (7/66-12/67). You may contact the family c/o 1694 Hooheno St., Pearl City, HI 96782, 808-455-2105.

My father valued your friendship and was happy through this you touched his life. Mahalo (thank you) for your friendship throughout the years.

Judy Aranaydo

Geraldo (Jerry) Gapol's daughter

Member **David B. Alderman** passed away April 1, 2009, after a 2-year battle with colon cancer. David served in A Co 3rd/39th 9th Inf Div (9/67-9/68). You may contact the family c/o Laurie E. Alderman, PO Box 760, Westwood, CA 96137, 530-256-2254, Alderman1@citlink.net.



Member **Jon Randall** passed away April 29, 2009, after being ill for several years. While in Vietnam, he served as the coxswain onboard C-112-1 from December 1966 to April 1968. You may contact the family c/o Sara Randall, 277 Covington Dr., Hiram, GA 30141 770-943-4159. "Jon was really looking forward to the next reunion. He will be missed. He was my good friend and fellow boat crew member." Rev. Larry J. Lyons

Member **Robert L. Taylor** recently passed away. Robert served on the USS Washoe County LST-1165 (04/65-04/67). You may contact the family c/o Cindy Taylor, 657 Tawa Ct, Prescott, AZ 86301-5871, 928-443-1670, cinbob@q.com.



Member **Larry "Cookie" Hunter** passed away April 9, 2009 after a long battle with cancer Agent Orange related. Larry served on the USS White River LSMR-536 1966-67 as a CS3 (Ships Cook). Larry was a MRFA board member for many years and was always there

when called upon. Larry also took a lot on his own putting the word out at the local VA hospital and Vet posts about the USS White River and the Mobile Riverine Force Association. He was really a good friend and shipmate and will be missed by all his brothers of the USS White River and the Mobile Riverine Force Association. You may contact the family c/o Ruthie Hunter or son Andrew Hunter, 6363 Winding Way, Maineville, OH 45039, 513-677-2581, Lhunter536@aol.com.

Two weeks ago when I visited Larry, he wrote on a piece of paper how much he enjoyed the cards, letters, e-mails, and phone calls from his shipmates, and when we talked of the White River his eyes lit up. Thanks to

each and every one of you for remembering your shipmate and helping him bring back fond memories and his family is very thankful also.

From White River Shipmate Tim Woolums

Michael E. Schaming, 61, passed away Monday, March 2, 2009, at his residence in Port Richey, Florida. He is survived by his wife Dorothy, currently residing in Cranberry Township. Mike served in Vietnam with the 9th Infantry Division assigned to the Mobile Riverine Force, a specialized unit that joined forces with the U.S. Navy to protect the jungles, waterways, and canals in the Mekong Delta. He served with Bravo Company 3rd of the 60th (1968-69), a very loyal and special group of men. Mike attended the reunions and we all saw the special bond that they had then and that bond continues today. Mike was proud of his Vietnam service and so very proud of the men he served with. You may contact the family c/o Dorothy Schaming, 6738 Old Mars Crieder Rd., Cranberry Township, PA 16066.



Robert G. Agoston passed away in 2008 from complications from a fall he had at his home. Robert served as a RTO for Company Commander Captain Ron Pease E Co 4th/47th. This is the last address we had for Robert 1523 Dille Rd., Euclid, OH 44117.

Member **David W. Larkin** passed away October 8, 2008. David served on Tango-111-1 (04/67-09/67). You may contact the family c/o 345 E 6th St Apt 3, Tracy CA 95375-4248. May our Brother rest in peace.

Member **William Saffell** passed away December 2008. William served in the 335th Radio Research Co (06/68-06/69). You may contact the family c/o Krisnajat Saffell, PO Box 1624, Fredericksburg, VA 22402-1624, 540-371-4403, wsaffell@infli.net.

Member **BM3 Donato Frank Capasso** passed away due to atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, May 17, 2002. Donato served in RivRon-13 on A-132-10 (69-70).



The MRFA welcomes the USS Luzerne City LST-902 into the Association. Many thanks to the Brown Water Workhorse.

In Memory Of

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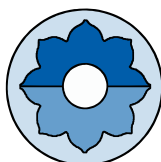
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