



River Currents

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THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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Hoping and wishing each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful and happy New Year from the Officers and Board Members of the MRFA.

FROM THE GALLEY

The Christmas Tree

The Christmas Tree originated in Germany in the 16th century. It was common for the Germanic people to decorate fir trees, both inside and out, with roses, apples, and colored paper. It is believed that Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, was the first to light a Christmas tree with candles. While coming home one dark winter's night near Christmas, he was struck with the beauty of the starlight shining through the branches of a small fir tree outside his home. He duplicated the starlight by using candles attached to the branches of his indoor Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was not widely used in Britain until the 19th century. It was brought to America by the Pennsylvania Germans in the 1820s.

Christmas Packages Sent to RivRon-Two in Iraq

A month after the reunion, Board Member Rich Corrick brought it to my attention that it would be nice if we could send some Christmas gifts to the new Riverine Group in Iraq from the Army and Navy members of the MRFA. We know the guys in Iraq are more up-to-date on news and have Internet access and



and can stay in touch with their families and loved ones more so now than we were able to in Vietnam. But everyone loves a gift of some kind on Christmas and the young men and women who are now serving in Iraq need our support. We contacted the Command Master Chief Norman J. Giroux to make sure it could be done and if so what would be appropriate to send. After we were given the okay and other info needed from Command Master Chief Giroux, we

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In Retrospect

By Russell Vibberts

The Way It Was

It was May 9, 1968, when the 2nd Mechanized Battalion 47th Infantry moved through Saigon with a column of Armored Personnel Carriers. The streets were littered and crowded with rickshaws, motor bikes, and people babbling in their native tongue as the unit moved toward the Y-Bridge. The Battle of the Y-Bridge in Cholon (Chinese District of Saigon) or as some called it, the revisit of the TeT Offense or TeT II will forever impact my feelings on the Vietnam War. I reflect on the politically unpopular war, the corporate greed, and a war used for the advancement of military careers at the expense of good young men.

On the bridge, my Carrier was halted at the summit as we waited in anticipation of battle. F-100s bombed the shoreline of the canal and buildings with Napalm and strafed with 20-mm cannons. I can still see the writing on the Napalm Bombs as they flipped over my head. The shock of explosion that followed was horrifying as the



buildings were engulfed in the intense inferno at 5,000 that left nothing in its wake.

The bombing mission completed, we continued moving and emerged on the west side of the canal in Cholon. S-3 Major William Jones "Panther 3" (tactical operations) made contact by ground-to-air radio with "Panther 6" Col. John Tower. An obvious disagreement ensued. Jones was told to hold his position. In total dismay, he threw the radio hand set against the inside of the Armored Personnel Carrier and walked off into the village. Upset and concerned, Specialist Fourth Class Robert Dorshimer, with M-16 in hand, started toward the village to retrieve Jones. Sgt. Holt gave him an order to stop. Dorshimer, defiant tears welling in

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Remembering Barry Barber

The Vietnam jargon for the U.S. Navy was "chopped." If one or more riverine assault craft were placed at a remote location, they were considered chopped away from the main River Assault Squadrons 9, 11, 13 or 15. This happened on many occasions during the approximate 4-year tenure of the Mobile Riverine Force-Task Force 117 and Task Force 194.

Vice Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., was appointed Commander Naval Forces Vietnam (COMNAVFORV) in September 1968. He launched Operation SEALORDS in October 1968. The primary thrust was "to cut enemy supply lines from Cambodia and disrupt operations at his base areas deep in the Delta¹." The campaign included designated operations from the tip of the Ca Mau Peninsula in the south to Tay Ninh city in the north.

River Assault Squadrons 13 and 15 were called upon to make a large push down into Kien Giang and Chuong Thien Provinces near Rach Gia and Vi Thanh where River Assault Squadron 9 had penetrated in July-August of 1968 with heavy resistance. The battles were fierce, but the squadrons tallied high numbers of enemy casualties. RAS 13 and 15 sailors were awarded the Navy Unit Commendation-Rach Gia Interdiction Group (Task Group 194.7) for their heroic efforts from November 7 to December 17, 1968. The units remained in the region until early January 1969.

In mid-November 1968, T-152-1 and T-152-10 were chopped to the small Vietnamese Naval Base at Rach Soi 5 km south

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RivRon Two

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hashed it over and said why not. We sent out notices to our different e-mail lists asking for donations. Our newsletter was at the printers being printed so we were unable to post requests for donation's in the fall issue of *River Currents*. Within a 3-week period, we had over \$7,000 in donations; more than enough to purchase gifts for the group.

Once the donations came in, Rich and his wife Patty took charge and Rich went shopping. We had a total of 22 boxes and each box weighed between 42 and 50 lbs. for a total of 1,001 lbs. with a whole lot of goodies. Everything from specialty coffees (requested), hot chocolate, beef jerky, cheese crackers, hard candies, of course fruit cake, board games, puzzles, books, calendars, phone cards, and a few disposable cameras (with return envelopes to send photos so we could enjoy their pleasure). Santa even sent a couple of wreaths with lights.

This could not have been done without you the members and your donations. Last, but not least, we thank Rich and Patty Corrick for putting this all together, doing the shopping, boxing up all the gifts and taking everything to the post office for shipping. We were told the boxes will be there before Christmas; it takes about 45 days or less to



get mail into Iraq and up the river to where RivRon-Two is stationed.

Let's all thank Rich and Patty for making this work and again to you the members who made the great donations and sent notes, etc. with your donations. All notes were forwarded with the boxes. If we are still in Iraq next year, we will ask you the members to help send Christmas gifts to another unit in-country in Iraq. Here is a list of those who made donations. Thank you all. It was a great idea and a great gift to those serving.

Merry Christmas Everyone! Albert

MRFA Christmas Fund Donations. A Big Thanks to All.

Robert Barnhill
John & Catherine Rubin
Jeffie & Hazel Hanks
Williams Diggins
John & Grace Svandrik
James & Carol Patin
Jimmy & Terry Toney
Edward & Virginia Rafferty
Richard Turner
Micheal & Patricia Burns
Joseph & Patricia Ashworth
Gene & Barbara Cooper
Joseph & Bonita Rosner
Stephen Clark
Mario Vargas
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Stephen & Lynne Sager
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Edward Brennan
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David & Doris Elcess
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Edward & Reginia Gooden
Thomas & Jayne Wynne
Jack & Barbara Rauscher
John & Cathy Alphin
Mir & Am Brown
A.M. Jaeger
Harley & Sue Timmerman
Don Mc Grogan
Don Morin
Leanne Meyer
Sgt. Fisher A Co 3rd/60th 9th Div
Andrew & Patricia Jancosek
Larry Wright
Lawrence & Catherine Shallue
Dennis & Sara Meyer
William. & Linda Carlson
Micheal & Cindy Jasper
Dave Desiderio
Miriam Brown
Kenneth & Juanita Brown

Medal of Honor Recipient Thomas G. Kelley

Rank and organization: Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy, River Assault Division 152

Place and date: Ong Muong Canal, Kien Hoa Province, Republic of Vietnam, 15 June 1969

Entered service at: Boston, Massachusetts
Born: 13 May 1939, Boston, Massachusetts
Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in the afternoon while serving as Commander of River Assault Division 152 during combat operations against enemy aggressor forces. Lieutenant Commander (then Lieutenant) Kelley was in charge of a column of eight river assault craft that were extracting one company of U.S. Army infantry troops on the east bank of the Ong Muong Canal in Kien Hoa Province, when one of the armored troop carriers reported a mechanical failure of a loading ramp. At approximately the same time, Viet Cong forces opened fire from the opposite bank of the canal. After issuing orders for the crippled troop carrier to raise its ramp manually and for the remaining boats to form a protective cordon around the disabled craft, Lieutenant Commander Kelley, realizing the extreme danger to his column and its inability to clear the ambush site until the crippled unit was repaired, boldly maneuvered the monitor in which he was embarked to the exposed side of the protective cordon in direct line with the enemy's fire and ordered the monitor to commence firing. Suddenly, an enemy rocket scored a direct hit on the coxswain's flat, the shell penetrating the thick armor plate, and the explosion spraying shrapnel in all directions. Sustaining serious head wounds from the blast, which hurled him to the deck of the monitor, Lieutenant Commander Kelley disregarded his severe injuries and attempted to continue directing the other boats. Although unable to move from the deck or to speak clearly into the radio, he succeeded in relaying his commands through one of his men until the enemy attack was silenced and the boats were able to move to an area of safety. Lieutenant Commander Kelley's brilliant leadership, bold initiative, and resolute determination served to inspire his men and provide the impetus needed to carry out the mission after he was medically evacuated by helicopter. His extraordinary courage under fire and his selfless devotion to duty sustain and enhance the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.



We Need Your Assistance

At our wonderful reunion in Indianapolis, a number of our members commented that they believe there are errors in KIAs listed on the Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry Division Vietnam Memorial and Museum trailer (i.e., missing names, wrong unit, etc.).

Before the names were added to the trailer, Dave Argabright and a few others members of the 2nd/60th and Ralph Fries of the MRFA spent about 2 years exhaustively researching Government databases to ensure a high degree of accuracy. However, it has been proven that there are some errors in the Government's data.

If you noticed what you believe to be an error, please send the name of the individual you believe is missing or incorrectly listed, their unit, date KIA, etc., to Bob Pries, 9702 Friar Tuck Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069 or email rpries@cinci.rr.com by February 1, 2008. Once a list is developed, we will research the names to verify accuracy and make modifications where appropriate.

In brotherhood,
Bob



USS Colleton (APB-36) in Vietnam

USS Colleton's keel was laid on 9 June 1945. She was launched on 30 July 1945 and completed in September 1945.

The concept of riverine warfare in the Mekong Delta renewed the need for USS Colleton. Having a shallow draft and flat bottom, She was well suited for the riverine environment. After extensive conversion, She was commissioned at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on 28 January 1967 under the command of LCDR F. R. Banbury. The first order of business after the commissioning was an extensive preparation for the transit to Vietnam.

On 6 February 1967, USS Colleton got underway for Norfolk, Virginia, to complete her fitting out by taking advantage of the logistic and training of that area. On 8 March, she got underway for Vung Tau, Republic of Vietnam. The first leg of the trip from Norfolk to the Panama Canal was utilized trying to fashion her crew into a team and getting them used to working together.

USS Colleton arrived at the Panama Canal during the afternoon of the 15th and began a night transit of the Canal. After a brief stay of a few hours, at the Naval Station at Rodman, she got underway to continue on her journey.

The second leg of her journey—Panama Canal to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii—began by "chopping" to the U.S. Pacific Fleet and was filled with drills and training. Oahu, Hawaii, finally came into sight on the morning of 4 April and USS Colleton entered Pearl Harbor. She got underway 8 April for the final portion of her transit to Vung Tau. Upon arrival in Vung Tau, She was "chopped" to Commander Naval Forces Vietnam and came under the operational control of Commander Riverine Flotilla One, embarked on USS Benewah (APB-35). USS Benewah and USS Askari (ARL-30) had arrived earlier forming the nucleus of the growing Mobile Riverine Force (MRF). After a complete paint job (green Army olive drab), several hundred square feet of bar-armor was fabricated to cover the bridge and operations area. This had to be constructed entirely by ships company from angle iron and one-half inch steel bars. The month of May also

saw the installation of 8 50 caliber and 12 7.62-mm machine guns to the armament of the ship. She also acquired three ammo pontoons to be used as a mooring place for the small boats of the River Assault Squadrons and as assembling points for troops about to be embarked in the Armored Troop Carriers (Tangos).

On 12 May, the first Army unit was em-



barked. The unit was the 4th/47th (riverine infantry) of the 2nd Brigade 9th Infantry Division. Five days later, River Assault Squadron 11 was also embarked. On 1 June, USS Colleton transported the embarked units up the Song Tien Giang to Dong Tam (30 miles southwest of Saigon). This was USS Colleton's first penetration of the Delta. Four days later, the 4th/47th and units of River Assault Squadron 11 departed Colleton for combat operations. USS Colleton had no difficulty keeping up with the Army's tempo of operations when on 12 June the Mobile Riverine Force was shifted to the Vicinity of Nha Be (5 miles southeast of Saigon) on the Song Soi Rap. A week after beginning operations in this area, USS Colleton experienced the first anguish of war when the 4th/47th's A Company suffered heavy casualties. A helicopter made a total of 19 landings, each time unloading an average of five casualties onto the flight deck.

On 27 July, USS Colleton returned to Dong Tam for a week of combat operations, then departed for Vung Tau. The main purpose in returning to Vung Tau was to concentrate the efforts of the Mobile Riverine

Force in the Rung Sat Special Zone. After a week's stay, She shifted to Song Soi Rap and Song Van Co. Ambushes from the heavily foliated banks were frequent and casualties to men and craft were common. Other operations took the ship deeper into the Delta, such as Sa Dec, Song Ham Long, and Song Co Chien. On 18 December, all embarked units left the ship as She prepared for the transit to Subic Bay, arriving 24 December.

In December 1967, USS Colleton proceeded to Subic Bay for modernization of her sick bay. The area under the flight deck was gutted and converted into a triage area for the wounded. A ramp was installed for transporting the wounded into the triage area for treatment and disposition. Another ramp was built outside the ship's port side for transporting the wounded directly into the medical department. Two more operating rooms plus recovery rooms were added while in Subic Bay.

From February 1968 to October 1968, USS Colleton conducted operations in Vinh Long, Dong Tam, and all along the Mekong Delta, with another run in December, embarking Alfa and Bravo Companies of the 4th/47th Infantry. USS Colleton remained in the Mekong Delta until 1969 supporting the Mobile Riverine Force TF-117 and the Riverine Infantry of the 9th Infantry Division. She returned to the states in 1969 and was decommissioned in December 1969. From what records we can find, USS Colleton was only in commission once and this was for her service in Vietnam. USS Colleton was sold to the American Ship Dismantler's, Inc. of Portland, Oregon, for the sum of \$172,226.62. She was a good ship and will always be remembered by all who served and lived on her in Vietnam, Navy and Army alike.

USS Colleton earned the following awards for service during the Vietnam War: Combat Action Ribbon, (2) Presidential Unit Citations, (2) Navy Unit Commendations, the RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm, RVN Civil Action Medal, First Class, with Palm, RVN Campaign Medal with 60's device, and the Vietnam Service Medal with (7) Battle Stars.

Additional history courtesy of HMC Norman Chatman USN (Ret.)



The parade along Constitution Avenue was an awe-inspiring sight. Welcome home brothers, and a long overdue thank you for your service.



In Retrospect

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his eyes, his concern and respect for this officer paramount, continued on to the village. Jones, who was on his third tour of duty in Vietnam, was fluent in Vietnamese and loved conversing with the natives. He was found talking with a group of Vietnamese children.

One could only imagine reasons for denying this experienced officer involvement in the Battle of the Y-Bridge. To me, it had to be purely political and detrimental to our forces and the Vietnamese civilians. It had been decided that Col. John Tower would control the fighting from his helicopter. The way I viewed it, the glory would be Tower's, even though he ignored the resources that were available to him.

The thoughts that haunted me for more than 30 years were recently confirmed by the Battalion Forward Observer, Sgt. Tim Burke, at my first ever Unit Reunion in July of this year. In the midst of the battle, he found that the Four-duce Mortar Platoon was no longer monitoring his frequency. The Colonel changed the radio frequency and was controlling the entire battle. Major Jones, the offensive coordinator of the battlefield was told to hold his position. Sgt. Tim Burke was cut off the airwaves. A mortar round fell short of its target, killing an American soldier sitting on an Armor Personnel Carrier manning a .50-cal machine gun. It was Burke's assessment that as a forward observer a short round should never happen. He would always, always call for a marking round first and that didn't happen. Instead, because of the lack of military procedure, a short round exploded, killing an American.

The fighting had eased a little and Burke noticed a tall building to his rear. People standing on balconies were viewing the battle through binoculars. The question came to mind, were these enemy officers directing the Battle? Ultimately, it turned out the large building was the Carrville Hotel Saigon, where newspaper and TV personnel stayed. This time they had box seats and Tower was center stage.

In time, we moved to a location north of the Y-Bridge and joined units of the 2nd/47th that were bogged down in a rice paddy. Just across the paddy, a few hundred yards was a row of buildings from which we were receiving enemy fire. Air strikes were called in on the buildings and helicopter gunships were firing rockets.

The F-100s dropped 200- and 500-lb. bombs and strafed the buildings for what seemed like a few hours. First, there were the bombing runs followed by strafing. The jets in a direct dive released their ordnance

with relentless precision and timing. Each exploding bomb seemed to suck the atmosphere away and then returned it in a violent wave of pressure as the jets screamed away. Large pieces of shrapnel whistled over our heads as we took cover in and behind our Armored Personal Carriers. In the strafing runs, the jets approached from the west appearing like little dots in the sky. The firing of the 20-mm cannons created small organized puffs of smoke off either wing. The cannons let out a defined ripping sound and in an instant we were inundated with hundreds of explosions from projectiles tearing at the buildings. Then in the final pass, the jets tipped their wings in a salute.

When the bombing had ceased, about 30 children emerged from the buildings waving the South Vietnamese Flag and the Stars and Stripes. The Viet Cong, in a political move, had entrenched themselves in the building complex that we now realized was a South Vietnamese orphanage. It's hard to image the devastation that the bombing, strafing, and the rockets from gunships inflicted

on the buildings and the orphans. The Viet Cong had succeeded in making us look as though we were bombing children. To this day, I often wonder how many little bodies lie in the buildings and what kind of human being could inflict that hell on them. I just wonder had Colonel Tower employed all his resources would the outcome have been the same? Major Jones would not have called for air strikes from ground level realizing that it was a children's orphanage. Perhaps, this was a show for those in the box seats.

The 2nd/47th remained in Cholon for about another week. I remember the stench and the smell of death and the body snatchers in their little red pickup trucks carrying piles of bloated dead bodies. The death and carnage brought with it disease and the fear of the Black Plague.

I remember a wonderful young Vietnamese girl about 5 years old who clung to my jungle fatigue pants pocket and followed me for days. She had in her own way adopted me and I had adopted her as well. One day I took the time to bring her family a case of chocolate milk and apples. Together, the little girl and I walked down through the village, a primitive setting, and a dwelling place for peasants that had lived the same way for thousands of years. When I entered the family hooch, what a surprise! A dog skin out and hung from the rafters like prime beef. A wooden bowl filled with greens and a rat with its entrails was on the dirt floor. So be it for chocolate milk and apples.

Imagine the carnage and devastation in Cholon, the smell of death and in the midst

of it all a stretch limo pulls up to Command Headquarters. The visitor is a U.S. envoy to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, McNamara's right-hand man. The door of the limo opened and four beautiful Australian women stepped out to see, smell, and feel the waste of war. Col. John Tower, Bunker, and the ladies then left and returned the next day. The rewards of war and a job well done, I guess.

It was mid-May and I was closing on 30 days short, the pain of going home was beginning to renew itself. A few days before leaving Cholon, a Duce and a Half (2 1/2 ton truck) pulled into Command Headquarters. I was standing by the tailgate and helped let it down. A dozen new recruits with new green fatigues, clean black boots, duffel bags, weapons, and a blank look on their faces jumped off the truck. I only wish they could feel what I felt in my heart for them. I knew what they were feeling and thinking, scared, confused, with no idea what the next year would bring. I remember my first days in the country, seeing the yellow orange fatigues, the tan faces, and the tired look on the guys who were about to finish their tour of duty. I admired them for what they must have endured.

Today when I think of Vietnam and those years, I reflect on how young and naïve I was. I and all the guys I was with believed in Mom and Pop, Apple Pie, the Flag, and all the things good red-blooded American boys believe in, Duty, Honor, and Country.

It's my understanding Colonel Tower died of a heart attack jogging around the Pentagon. Major Jones retired "Bird" Colonel and in 1989 was inducted in the Infantry "Hall of Honor" a prestigious award for an outstanding Military Officer. As for myself, I'm proud to have served with dignity as a "Vietnam Vet."

Sgt. Russell Vibberts "Panther 33"
Sgt. Tim Burke Battalion FO
SP4 Robert Dorshimer S-3
SP4 Richard Ulrich S-3



We met on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Sunday morning for the wreath laying ceremonies at the Wall.

Barry Barber

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of Rach Gia. We came under the command of Task Force 194.6 while operating with PBRs from River Divisions 531 and 514. Our objective was to patrol the Long Xuyen Rach Gia Canal (Charlie Canal) as well as rivers and canals.

T-1 and T-10 alternated night patrols every other day. We patrolled well into the night and early morning hours. The days would be spent sleeping, cleaning weapons, and gearing up for the next patrol. It was strange being so distant from our primary squadron, but we knew that we had a mission and we carried it out well.

It didn't take long for the PBR crews to determine that our riverine craft were way too slow for them. Soon our solo tango boat was transiting approximately 8 km to the patrol launching point where the PBRs would meet up with us for the operation. In retrospect, this was not very wise as the enemy could have assaulted a single tango boat creating serious damage before help could have arrived. They also could have attacked our crew while we were tied to the riverbank awaiting the arrival of the PBRs.

Days turned into weeks. Contact with the enemy was not very frequent, but when they attacked it was with full force. MM1 Cecil Martin, a Boat Captain with RivDiv

531, received the Navy Cross Medal for actions on November 21, 1968. Sadly, Oliver E. Durham, YN1 on PBR-29, was KIA on November 26 of that same year. All of our boats performed well while thwarting enemy interdiction during the months of November and December 1968.

Late one night on December 26, our T-1 boat came into hard contact with the riverbank while turning around in the darkness. One screw and shaft were severely dam-



aged so we had to limp back to the VNN Base at Rach Soi. Later that day, sailors from T-10 asked us to patrol that evening because they had a hole in one of their fuel tanks. We informed them that we could not due to the damage from the previous night. They then proceeded to plug the hole with a wooden wedge and rags.

While monitoring the radio in the early morning hours, we heard T-10 crewmembers as they were being ambushed. The patrol had come under heavy automatic weapons and B-40 rocket fire. We listened as chaos reigned in the night. After clearing the ambush, it was reported that T-10 had one KIA and several WIA. We awaited the

next transmission with great anticipation since our crews had become close during our stay at Rach Soi. It was finally reported that SN Barry Barber had been killed.

After an hour, T-10 and the other craft arrived back at Rach Soi. I will never forget the smell of cordite and blood mixed together. It was a terrible scene. Barry's body had been medevaced along with the other seriously wounded sailors. I seem to recall that crewmembers from other boats had to steer T-10 back to the base.

The next day our T-1 crew began cleaning up the aftermath. It was an extremely difficult task for a group of young 18- to 20-year-old men. Thorough cleanup was impossible so we did the best that we could. Afterwards, we gathered for an informal ceremony for Barry. There was no Chaplain present. We were just a small group of sailors honoring their fallen comrade.

The official report states that T-10 was hit by two rockets, but I personally believe there were four direct rocket hits. It doesn't matter now as the damage was done so many years ago on Charlie Canal.

At every MRFA Reunion, there is a Memorial Service remembering our sailors and soldiers who were lost during the war. The recent 2007 ceremony was very powerful. I sat quietly while pondering Barry Barber and all of the other Navy men who lost their lives on those rivers and canals so far away from home. They were young men who fought in their riverine craft with heroic honor and dignity. Their lives were forever frozen in time, never to grow old. We who survived shall never forget them.

Michael A. Harris, RM2, T-152-1-7/68 to 7/69
1 From Edward J. Marolda's "By Air, Sea, and Land"

Can White Ducks Fly?

One Sergeant was from Tennessee, the other was from Texas, and both were as stubborn as mules. Neither was likely to concede an argument to the other, and they had apparently found a subject worthy of their debating skills: Can white ducks fly?

We had just done a sweep through a small village without results and had stopped for our lunch of C-rations and kool-aid. I was setting up my stove, which was an old "tuna fish size" tin can with a few church key holes punched in its sides for ventilation. It was fueled by that marvel of modern technology: C-4 plastic explosive. (Interesting stuff, that plastic explosive. You can take a brick of it and slam it around like a salami and nothing happens. Or, you can break off a piece, light it with a match, and use it to cook up what the Army considers to be a meal. Neither pressure, nor heat would cause a problem. Pressure AND heat, however, was a different story.)

Anyway, my platoon had just settled



down to our lunch "Al Fresco," as the argument slipped into high gear. It was acknowledged that domesticated brown or gray ducks could fly, but no ground would be given on whether their white cousins still had this capacity. Unfortunately, for one white duck in particular, a method of putting the matter to the test was readily available—helicopters.

As we finished our meal and prepared to "saddle-up," one of the sergeants snuck over to a little hootch in the village and grabbed a white duck from the nearby pen. With his prize and the hope of providing a posteriori evidence ("Wait a gawdamn minute, and I'll PROVE it to ya!") that white ducks could fly, he scrambled into the waiting chopper. The debate, as well as the betting on the outcome, now spread to the rest of the platoon. No one could ever remember seeing a white duck fly, but aside from their color they seemed exactly like other, flying ducks. As the helicopters rose above the village in a wide, spiraling ascent, the bird was ceremoniously tossed out the chopper door.

It reached terminal velocity almost instantly.

Not only didn't it fly, that bird dropped

faster than any of us had ever seen anything fall before. It went straight down, trailing feathers and duck shit until it crashed through the roof of the same hootch from which it had been pilfered. The argument was closed and all bets settled. White ducks don't fly!

Now, at this point in my military career I was only a lowly PFC and I knew enough not to involve myself in debates between lordly sergeants. I had, however, noticed a factor that seemingly no one else had--the downwash generated by the blades of a Huey helicopter is strong enough to blow a falcon out of the sky.

I still don't know if white ducks can fly.

Edward G. Sanicki, SGT, E-5
1st Platoon, Delta Company-March '69-Jan. '70

GET WELL WISHES

John J. Gallo was in the hospital for minor surgery that turned into John being put on a respirator. It was touch-and-go for awhile and John is now home and doing much better. John served in D Co 3rd/60th (4/68-4/69). You may contact John at 1530 Lakewood Dr., Manasquan, New Jersey 08736 or by email jdggallo@yahoo.com.

MRFA and 9th Infantry Division Vets Gather for Veterans Day 2007

The gathering of the Mobile Riverine Force/9th Infantry Division Association in Washington, DC, was a great success. There were about 98 members and families who attended and everyone seemed to have a great time. We also had a few new folks join us in the hospitality room. We're hoping they'll become part of the Association before long!

The gathering's great success was due in no small part to the work and efforts of Bob "Doc" Pries and Quin Sommer. Bob, as always, was a great host and made sure everything went smoothly and on schedule. He always makes organizing this crowd and keeping things moving smoothly look



Charles Ardinger and Tom Paquette lay the MRF wreath.

so easy! Thanks so much Bob, your efforts were much appreciated by all.

On Friday evening, most of the members stopped in at the hospitality room, sharing laughs, and introductions. Many more



Ken Hudson and General Doug Smith, placing the 47th Infantry wreath at the Wall.

folks arrived on Saturday and things really got busy then. It was a cold day for the parade, but everyone who was able was there and participated. Leading the group were Ken Hudson and Artie Krumm with the 9th Infantry Division banner; Charles Ardinger and James Stone followed with the Mobile Riverine Force Association flag; still others carried flags and banners that represented individual units.

To All:

I continue to be very proud to be associated with all of you--and the Saturday March and the Sunday Wreath Laying are simply examples of why the MRFA is the best association I know of. What a great group of "soldiers all!" and families. Best regards to all of you for a Happy Thanksgiving!

*Pat Hughes Lt/General US Army Ret.
Plt/Ldr 4th/39th (1969)*

We had a large crowd in the hospitality room Saturday evening, with Quin acting as the perfect MC and musical host, complete with comedy. Heartfelt thanks goes to Quin, especially for the "I kill you" routine! The video was great and the music com-

plimented it perfectly.

Early on Sunday morning, we all met at the Lincoln Memorial for the wreath laying ceremony at the Wall. The wreaths were

Seems like a good time to offer that I feel the same way. To all of you who went, took pics, shared, and continue to share from wherever you are over the past and will do so in the future....

Thanks

*Bruce Doc Wolfson,
3rd/39th CRIP 3rd/Bde Hq.
3.67-3.68*

placed by Charlie Ardinger and Tom Paquette in honor of fallen Brothers from the MRF, then Ken Hudson and General Douglas Smith placed a wreath for the 47th Infantry Regiment. Finally, Andy Brigante (with his grandson Dominic) and Lt/General Patrick Hughes placed the 9th Infantry Division wreath. Lt/General Hughes and General Smith each gave very moving speeches. The memorial



Andy Brigante, General Patrick Hughes and Dominic Brigante lay the memorial wreath for the 9th Infantry Division.

ceremony held later in the day was especially nice, with speaker Colin Powell making an impression on everyone.

I'm sure that I don't have all the names of those who also volunteered and helped out, but this event would not have been the same without you, and our thanks goes out to you as well. The hotel staff was helpful and courteous. We look forward to joining them again next year.

Cal Meyer, Secretary, MRFA

Duty Honor Sacrifice

Bill Reynolds 3rd/47th 9thInfDiv

Sunday November 11, 2007

Vietnam War veteran Bill Reynolds stood in a rice paddy on June 19, 2007, holding a piece of paper with the names of fallen American soldiers.

His hands shook and his voice flattened as he steadied himself, ready to read the names after 40 years.

He stood in front of a small group of Vietnamese villagers who didn't understand English, but some were old enough to understand why he was unable to speak. Some listened and understood his silence.

For Reynolds, it wasn't as easy as he had planned, having convinced four fellow Vietnam War vets to return with him to Southeast Asia and confront not only the past, but one of the fiercest battles in Vietnam. Reynolds, however, pressed on with his plan to read each and every name of the men who died June 19, 1967, as his son, Mike, stood by his side.

"I couldn't even start," Reynolds said from his home in Valencia. "I had to stop

and gather myself. I'd be doing fine and then I'd come to a name and I'd stop and think 'Man, I remember this guy.'

"It was hard," he said proudly. "I read their hometown and their age."

When he was done reading, Reynolds had done exactly what he said he was going to do — return to Vietnam and stand in the same swampy water of the very same rice paddy on the 40th anniversary of the day he almost died, the day he watched 11 of his fellow servicemen, his friends, cut down by the Viet Cong in one of the bloodiest days of the Vietnam War.

For years, since his return from the war, he and other vets met and talked about returning to Vietnam.

On Veteran's Day 2006, Reynolds threw down the gauntlet.

"Finally, at our last reunion in Washington, I stood up and said 'You know what? I'm going. Anybody who wants to go let me know, but I'm going back.'"

For Reynolds and four other Vietnam vets, the June 2007 journey halfway around the world was the beginning of a return to a strange place from a strange time.

When Vietnam War veteran Tim Howard heard of Reynolds' plan to return, he

jumped at the chance.

"It meant a lot," he said when reached by phone at his home Saturday in suburban Ohio, 30 miles south of Cleveland. "It was emotional, far more emotional than I thought it would be. I dreamed of the chance to go back there a few times.

"When we got there, right in that area, nothing had changed," Howard said. "The only change was they had electricity. That was it. The smell, the mud, everything was exactly as I remembered it after 40 strange years. I don't know what it was, the mud or what, but I haven't smelled that smell in 40 years. It all came back.

"I caught myself saying 'Oh, my God, I really am here.'"

Howard said the trip changed him for the better.

"I had a lot of bitter feelings before the trip," he explained. "When I got there, one of the days we took a trip to Toi San, we called it Cong Island, and we encountered the daughter of a man who fought with the Viet Cong. His daughter translated.

"At first, I thought 'I'm not so sure about this.' But, when it was all over, that bitter feeling went away. He did a little crying, we did a little crying.

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Mobile Riverine Force Summary

ComRivFlotOne/ComRiv-Supprn-Seven Command History November 1967



MRF operation CORONADO IX commenced 2 November with a 1-day search and destroy operation in southwestern Giao Duc District (My Luong Peninsula) of Dinh Tuong Province. The area was initially targeted by ComNavForV due to attacks on PBRs in the area. Additionally, enemy harassment in the form of the mortarings, attacks on RF/PF outposts, and road interdiction had been stepped up in the 2 weeks previous to the operation.

MRF Operation Coronado IX (4-6 November) terminated during the reporting period. In early morning of 5 November, five separate areas in Dinh Tuong Province, including Dong Tam and My Tho, came under VC mortar attack. The heaviest attack was directed at the village of Cai Lai (vic XS 230502) that sustained 120 casualties, including 18 friendly KIAs. Based on intelligence that the VC 261st Main Force Battalion was responsible for this attack, the MRF area of operation was shifted northwest to an area bounded by N/S Gridlines XS 22/31 and E/W gridlines 50/60.

During the reporting period, MRF operation CORONADO IX (9-11 November) terminated. This operation was conducted in the Cam Son and Ban Long Secret Zones of Dinh Tuong Province to locate and destroy elements of the VC 263rd Main Force Battalion, 514 Provincial Mobile Battalion, and VC local forces and installations. The operation marked the initial employment of the 5th BN Vietnamese Marine Corps as the third maneuver battalion of the Mobile Riverine Force. This battalion, staging from its base camp on the north side of the My Tho River just south of Dong Tam, was supported by RAD 112 throughout the operation. This joining of the Vietnamese Marines with the TF-117 "combat sailor" in operations against the common enemy represents a milestone in Vietnamese/U.S. cooperation.

On 14 November, the MRF conducted a 1-day two battalion riverine and airmobile saturation patrolling and search operation in Dinh Tuong Province to enhance the security of Highway 4 and the Dong Tam Base. TF-117 provided close support to 4th/47th Infantry Battalion and the 5th Infantry Battalion, VNMC. The 5th Infantry Battalion, VNMC now functions as a maneuver battalion operating in close cooperation and coordination with the MRF. The 5th Infantry Battalion, VNMC, is integrating very smoothly into MRF operations. The battalion, supported by River Assault Division 112, has quickly adapted to riverine warfare.

During the reporting period, the Mobile Riverine Force conducted MRF phased operation Coronado IX (18-24 November) in

VC base areas 470/471 in western Dinh Tuong/eastern Kien Phong Provinces. This operation, part of a joint US/ARVN Operation Kien Giang 9-1, was conducted in coordination with the 7th and 9th ARVN Divisions. The initial phase of MRF participation involved transit of a riverine assault unit, with 5th VNMC Battalion embarked, from the MRB at Dong Tam to the AO, a distance of 32 miles. This marks the furthest extension of the MRF strike capability to date. Later in the day, the MRB itself relocated to the vicinity of Sa Dec (vic WS 9138), successfully demonstrating the capability of the MRB to relocate to "where the action is." Since this was the deepest penetration the MRB has made into the heart of the Delta, DEFCON II was set, and one infantry company deployed on the land mass about the MRF for added security.

During the reporting period, the Mobile Riverine Force conducted MRF Phased Operation CORONADO IX (27-30 Nov.) in Cai Lay and Long Dinh Districts of Ding Tuong Province. This operation was conducted with the primary mission of clearing the Xang Canal (Canal Commercial) of obstructions from Dong Tam to vicinity XS 2060. This canal has been closed since 1964 by a series of barriers constructed by the VC.

Early on 27 November, two infantry companies were lifted to Dong Tam for airlift and surface moves to fire support bases in the objective area. At 0800 h, one infantry battalion was lifted from the MRB by CTU 117.1.2 to various locations along the Xang Canal to provide security for Army Engineers, who were assisted by EOD Team 26 and Harbor Clearance Team THREE detachment, began clearing the water barriers while river assault craft provided security in the waterway.

In the afternoon, the two companies were back loaded and returned to the vicinity of Long Dinh for the night. Water blocks were established in the area by CTU 117.1.2. During the night, T-92-4 and Army LCM-8 were hit by one B-40 round each and T-92-10 received small arms fire. Damage to the boats was minor. Effective fires could not be returned due to the proximity of a friendly village.

The VNMC battalion and 3rd/47th Infantry Battalion were committed on 28 November and the barge mounted artillery was deployed into the AO with CTU 117.2.2, CTU 117.1.1, and CTU 117.2.1 in close support.

The Engineers, Infantry and Navy supporting units worked deeper into the previously VC-dominated canals during the 28th and 29th, removing bridge wreckage, two massive earthen barriers and two extensive stake barriers; along with other obstructions to waterborne traffic. This successful operation provided a clear demonstration of the MRF's ability to carry out its mission, an important aspect of which is to regain control of the Delta waterways, making these avenues of commerce available once

again to the Vietnamese people for peaceful transportation of goods and produce. Another important objective gained was opening the remaining waterways which encircled the Cam Son/Ban Long areas. This will allow further avenues of approach for riverine strike operations from the north as well as south in these areas. The operation was terminated on 30 November.

Bill Reynolds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

"When we got back to the hotel room, (fellow vet) J.R. (Johnson) looked at me and said 'now that was a healing experience,' Howard said. "He was right."

Other vets who joined Reynolds, Howard and Johnson were Idoluis Casares and George Gadsden.

The five brothers in arms made the personal journey together, some with family and friends, revisiting one of the most horrific days of their tours in Vietnam.

It was June 19, 1967, a steamy sweltering hot day in the Mekong Delta, when Reynolds and the others in Charlie Company 4th of the 47th Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, received orders to search and destroy enemy posts located up the Mekong River, from Ap Bac, in what was then South Vietnam.



"Our intelligence unit reported this particular area is where the Viet Cong 5th Nha Be Battalion was located," Reynolds said, pointing to a laminated copy of the Los Angeles Times with a front page banner story on the devastation that day.

"The battalion was known to be occupying that area. And that was our job," he said about the young men in his division. "To go and find them. We were part of this mobile riverine force."

In all, four companies (Alpha, Charlie and two Bravo units) were dispatched up the Mekong for what was going to be, undeniably, a confrontation with the enemy.

"So, we went up there searching for these guys," Reynolds said, recalling that trek up river in front-loading Tango boats when the intelligence units reported a last minute change to the location of the enemy.

"They picked us up by boat and dropped

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Jim Stone, Reaches Out Again

Hello,

My husband's cousin, Ronald Lee Muehlberg with A Company 4th/39th Infantry, was KIA, August 12, 1968. He was serving with C Company 4th/47th MRF along the Mekong Delta in the Long An Province. We are looking for information about the battle August 12-13, 1968, in which he and several others were killed. We realize information doesn't contain names of KIA. We want to know where this 2-day battle took place and any other information surrounding it. Do you know the history of these two particular days you could share with us? We would greatly appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

Jeff and Sarah Muehlberg
sc-tico@nightowl.net

Jeff and Sarah:

Albert Moore of the MRFA passed your request for information along to me. Here is what I have found so far.

It appears that PFC Ronald Lee Muehlberg was one of three men from the 4th BN 39th INF who were KIA on 12 August 68 in Long An province. The other two were PFC David Alton Price of A 4th/39th (an infantryman from Minerva, Ohio) and PFC Stephen Michael Carnine of HHC 4th/39th (a HQ Company medic from Indianapolis, Indiana). I found that there were five men from C Company 4th BN 47th INF and one from HHC 5th BN 60th INF (all infantrymen) killed in action in that area on 12 August 68. In addition, there are five other infantrymen from C Company 4th BN 47th INF that I found listed as KIA on the next day, 13 August 68. All 14 of these men are listed with the notation "NORTHEAST END OF CHO GAO CANAL 19680812-13." All of this information comes from the 7 May 2007 version of the Coffelt Vietnam KIA Database. There is no guarantee that this information is complete and fully accurate, but it is the best source that I have available.

I found a couple of articles on the front page of the 4 Sept 68 issue of the Old Reliable newspaper at this Web link

<http://9thinfdvdivsociety.org/newspaper/or4sep68pg1.gif>. I have also attached a copy of that GIF file for your use... just download it to your hard drive and use your browser to view and magnify it. The quality of the copy is not good, but I believe you will be able to read much of it. The main article to look at is the one headed "1st BDE kills 66 in 2-day battle" with the dateline TAN AN. There is also a story about another combat action that the 4th/39th was involved in on 12 August 68 beneath that one with the caption "Routine recon cuts down 41" with the dateline DONG TAM. I am pretty sure that the first article deals with the events surrounding Ronald's death. Apparently, A Company 4th/39th was attached to or working with C Company 4th/47th in their operation, while the other rifle companies from the 4th/39th were engaged in another action that occurred just south of Saigon.

As for the location of that particular battle...the "NORTHEAST END OF CHO GAO CANAL" is in southern Long An province south of the series of bends in the West Vam Co River, which was sometimes referred to as the "Mouse Ears" by the "brass" and the press. But since you have to turn the map upside down to see the resemblance to Mickey Mouse's Ears.. us lowly grunts usually used the more irreverent term..."The Testicles" in reference to this area. I have attached a copy of a map of the 9th ID Area of Operations that shows this. The attached map file is called 9th ID AO pc original.JPG. Again, download that file and view it with your browser.

Once the map is on your screen, look for the label "TAN TRU" in a box in the middle of the screen...immediately below that is the series of bends in the West Vam Co River. South of that area is a smaller stream with a bend in it...that is the Tra River. Not seen on this map is the Cho Gao Canal that runs NE from the north branch of the Mekong River (a/k/a My Tho River) from a point east of the city of MY THO to join with the Tra River, to the east-southeast of BINH PHUOC, which is also labeled on this map. Somewhere north of the point where the Cho Gao Canal meets the Tra River and the series of bends in the West Vam Co River is

the area where the 12 August 68 battle took place. If I had an after-action report, daily report or other official army report for that day or period, I might be able to find the grid coordinates and give you a more exact location.

This is a lot of information for you to digest, so look through it and get back to me at the above email address. I should have more to add by then.

Jim Stone, Echo 2/39 Recon, 1st BDE-9th ID, RVN: 2/68-2/69

Dear Albert,

Yes, Jim sent us the information we have been looking for surrounding where Ron was when he was killed. Jeff and I were extremely happy and immediately delved into the Web sites and other information Jim forwarded. We are very grateful for his research and time spent. I sent him an email back thanking him, most likely Jeff will also, in the near future, be asking questions and advice. Thank you so much for your assistance, it feels good, for the lack of a better word, to know the area Ron experienced and like thousands of others, lived his last days until his tragic death in Vietnam.

I wrote Jim a bit of personal information regarding Ron, Jeff, and the family. Ron's death emotionally tore apart the family, to this day, his mother Aunt Chris cannot talk about it, like many other families. Even though on Ron's military records say he was from Selena, Kansas, that was a temporary move. Originally, his family is from St. Louis, Missouri. Ron is buried in the Sunset Memorial Garden Cemetery in St. Louis where other family members lay. Ron's father now lays on Ron's right side and Aunt Chris will some day be on his left. A beautiful headstone made of a reddish granite is erected, engraved below his name, birth, and death date is "Killed in Vietnam."

Jeff truly appreciates your help, Jim and others we aren't aware of. If you happen to come across anything regarding Ron, please send it to us. Saying thank you doesn't relay our deepest gratitude.

Sincerely,
Sarah and Jeff

Bill Reynolds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

us off again. Everybody was repositioned. It was one heck of a deal, shifting at the last minute. It was around 10 o'clock in the morning. I happened to be the point man - the guy furthest out, patrolling this small creek.

"In mere moments, it was crazy. Bullets were everywhere."

When the first shots were fired, Reynolds and the others in Charlie Company were completely exposed. The Viet Cong, hidden in bunkers, waited for the Americans to walk toward them across the rice paddy.

Reynolds said he and the others were in an open rice field when the Viet Cong start-

ed shooting at them. They ran to a small raised berm a little bigger than a speed bump in an otherwise flat rice field. They jumped behind it and hid as bullets struck the berm and passed over their heads.

Eleven guys never made it to the berm.

Farther up the river, at about the same time, members of Alpha Company found themselves in a similar rice field, only they had no berm to run to. Twenty-seven American soldiers were killed in that confrontation. In all, 48 Americans died that day.

For Reynolds, the encounter was sudden and overwhelming.

"We were in the middle of a rice paddy," he said. "I scrambled to this berm and then everybody was scrambling to this berm. It

was so noisy. It was hair-raising. So, there we were pinned down behind this berm. A company, about 800 meters to the north, were caught in a similar situation. They lost almost 30 guys. They had nowhere to hide."

For Bill Reynolds, June 19, 1967, became one of the longest days of his life, huddled down behind the berm for more than six hours as an aerial assault rained overhead the entire day.

The Viet Cong remained in bunkers just 30 feet from Reynolds and the others hunkered down behind the small embankment.

"We had artillery coming in, jets coming

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CCB-18 Working Party Update

The Association thanks Chuck Campbell and Everett Jones, for a job well done. They have long been the mainstay in the refurbishment and maintenance of CCB-18. They have led the volunteer teams in regular work sessions on the boat since its arrival in San Diego. Without their guidance and leadership, the CCB-18 would not be the show boat it is today; they have put many hours of hard work and labor in maintaining the boat. Chuck and Everett aren't the only members of the working party: there's Robert Coombs, Bernie Howlett, Dutch Hearne, Doug Meeks, Ben Cueva, Don Blankenship, and Everett's son Ray Jones and grandson Chris Carrera, all part of the volunteer working parties. CS1 James Ferguson U.S. Navy active has volunteered to be a CCB-18 working party member. James is the son of MRFA member Paul Ferguson who was Ops Officer on the USS Benewah 11/68-11/69.

We have a number of members within the association that live in the area, but only a few have volunteered for the working parties. So the upkeep on the boat has been left up to a few people. I'm not sure why some of the younger members in the area will not step forward and assist, it's only a few hours once a month and the help would be appreciated. As you all know, as Vietnam veterans, we are not getting any younger so it's not as easy on the working party as it once was, but like most soldiers and sailors they still give it their all!

At our past reunion, I spoke with Rear Admiral Bullard and asked if the Navy would assist in the upkeep since the Navy uses the CCB for a back drop for ceremonies and there have been a few reenlistments on the boat. The Admiral was good as his word, this past month seven active duty sailors helped with the upkeep of the boat--CCB-18 is no small boat and it takes a couple of working parties to do the job. Even with the Navy's help, it would be nice to have a few more Association members to assist. The Navy's help comes from the local Naval Spec Warfare Center Combatant Craft Crewman School at Coronado but are not always available, but the young sailors who help are appreciated and they enjoy helping when they can.

A typical work day starts at 0900 to have coffee and a donut than to commence a clean water sweep down topside, fore, and aft. The boat gets dusty and birds leave a lot of droppings on the boat. Than the chipping and painting of any rust begins inside and out. Recently, they had to paint the new gun covers with two coats of paint

and had to secure them so they couldn't be taken off topside so they purchased a small chain and turnbuckles to hold them down. Right now all topside areas are in the process of being painted; it takes a few working parties to do this. They also open the boat up to members who contact them while in the area and want to see the boat. So both Chuck and Everett and the others who work on the boat should be recognized for a job well done!

Not only does the working party need to be recognized but Mrs. Irene Campbell and Mrs. Ben Cueva provide a cookout for the working party that usually consists of hamburgers, hot dogs, or cold cuts with chips or potato salad, soft drinks, and water. A big Bravo Zulu to the ladies...and a big Thank You!

You don't have to be retired Navy or Army to get on the base either Everett or Chuck can get you on the base. You can also be an Officer as well as an Enlisted—a chipping hammer or paint brush won't know the difference. If you're interested in helping and becoming a working party member, please contact BMCS Everett R. Jones, USN (Ret.), 1947 Gotham St. Chula, Vista, California 91913, 619-421-3721, or email oneerj@pacbell.net. Everett served in Riv-Ron 15 as a Boat Captain 4/69-4/70. Or BM1 Charles "Chuck" Campbell, USN (Ret.) 677 G St SP#-1, Chula Vista, California 91910, 619-427-6835, or email CCICEC@cox.net.



Chuck served as a Boat Captain M-92-2 12/67-12/68.

Don Blankenship, A-111-3 and A-152-21 (69-70), makes a 62-mile roundtrip; Robert Coombs, USS Washtenaw City LST-1166 (68-70), makes a 172-mile roundtrip; Bernie Howlett, USS Carronade IFS-1 (65-67), makes a 172-mile roundtrip; Dutch Hearne, Associate Member, Brother of Deceased Member, makes a 120-mile roundtrip; Doug Meeks, Tango-112-5 (68-69), lives in the area; Ben Cueva, Swiftboats, lives in the area; and Ray Jones and Chris Carrera, Associate members, live in the area, all to work on the boat.

If you cannot assist on the working parties and would like to help by donating to the CCB-18 fund, please make the check or money order payable to the MRFA CCB-18 Fund and send to MRFA, 1857 County Rd. A14, Decorah, Iowa 52101.

We appreciate your support.

Albert

MRFA

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

New MRFA, MRF, and 9th Infantry Division Patches

We now have a 9x9-inch MRFA, MRF, and 9thInf Division patches. They are excellent and sharp-looking patches...with plastic backing. It can be sewed on a denim jacket or a jacket of your choice. You can purchase a jacket or sweatshirt of your choosing at most major department stores. In the past, we have had folks say they would like to

purchase an embroidered jacket but the cost was too high, etc.

So we thought we could help by having a large patch made available for you, the members. The patches can also be used just for display. To order a patch or patches, make your check or money order out to MRFA products and mail to MRFA, 2906 SE Starlite Drive, Topeka, Kansas 66605. The cost is \$23.50 per patch (this includes the S/H cost).

— Albert
mrfa@charter.net



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

TAPS

Those gone, but not forgotten...

Charles Schroeder passed away June 3, 2006. Charles served on the USS Askari ARL-30 (11/50-04/52) (Korean War). You may contact the family at 24270 Parkview Cir., Lanark, Illinois 61046; 815-232-6773.

J.C. Brown passed away suddenly. He suffered from diabetes and other ailments related to service in Vietnam. J.C. served with RAS 13/RAD 131 onboard A-131-5 in 1969-70. He operated on the Vinh Te Canal/Chau Doc area of operation. Contact Information: 577 Cedar Swamp Rd., Kingstree, South Carolina 29556; 843-382-2620.

"J.C. and I have been close for 39 years. I was there when he married and saw his two boys, Charlie and Laddy, born. J.C.'s wife passed away last year. It is a sad day."

Bruce McIver served on T-131-7

Robert F. Smith passed away September 15, 2007. Robert served in HQ 2nd/47th (Mech) Infantry 9thInfDiv 12/66-01/68. You may contact his wife Lois Smith, 802 W Saint James St., Tarboro, North Carolina 27886-4808; 242-641-1273.

LtJg Tom O'Neil passed away recently from cancer. Tom was the Engineer Officer aboard the USS Guide MSO-447 (1955-56). Tom was a fine officer and gentleman. You may contact the family at 137 N. Orange Ave. #207, Brea, California 92821; 714-990-0013 or email o'neillm@issaquah.wednet.edu.

Hans Fredericks recently passed away. Hans was a Plankowner on the USS Askari ARL-30. The USS Askari (ARL-30) was laid down on 8 December 1944 at Seneca, Illinois, by the Chicago Bridge and Iron Co.; launched on 2 March 1945; and sponsored by Mrs. Patricia Ann Jacobsen as LST-1131. She was then ferried down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where the landing craft repair ship was commissioned on 15 March 1945, Lt. Charles L. Haslup in command. On 28 March,

she got underway for Jacksonville, Florida, where she was decommissioned on 9 April 1945 for outfitting for her role by the Merrill-Stevens Dry Dock and Repair Co. The ship was recommissioned as USS Askari on 23 July 1945. As the majority of us know and remember, the USS Askari was a work horse for the MRF TF-117. May Hans Fredericks rest in peace.

1st Sgt (Ret.) Paul A. Sakala passed away November 5, 2007, from cancer. Paul retired in September 1985. His childhood dream was to be a Paratrooper and a 1st Sgt. He made 202 military jumps and was a 1st Sgt for 4 years. Paul served with C Co 3rd/39th Infantry Division 8/68-12/68. Among his numerous awards are the Combat Infantry and Master Parachutist badges and Vietnam service medals and awards. You may contact the family c/o Colleen Sakala, 6508 Williams Rd., Charlotte, North Carolina 28215. 704-536-2559 or email sakspak@aol.com.

Member **Carleton R. Russell, Jr.** passed away November 4, 2007. A committal service was held at the Dallas, Fort Worth National Cemetery, Tuesday, November 13, 2007. Carleton served in-country Vietnam in Harbor Clearance Team-One on YLLC-4 from May 1967 to January 1968. You may contact the family c/o Betty Russell, P.O. Box 389, Purdon, Texas 76669; (903) 673-1617 or email betty@navmills.net.



The MRFA Board of Directors and Staff extend their most sincere sympathies to all the families of our fallen Brothers.

Bill Reynolds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

in, helicopters coming in, firing rockets on the other side. For us, 20-something guys, to see this stuff coming in was amazing."

Reynolds returned to the United States with a Purple Heart medal and a mission: Never to lose focus of what mattered that day — the men who served and died.

From his home office in Valencia, under a mural of wall photos of soldier pals, Reynolds runs a current and constantly-updated Web site devoted to Vietnam vets: <http://www.9thininfantrydivision.com/html/charlie.htm>.

He keeps in touch, not only with the people who served, but with the surviving members of fallen soldiers.

He helps organize reunions.

He made an 88-minute documentary about his return to Vietnam called simply: *Ap Bac Revisited*, completed this past week, just in time for Veterans Day.

On Sept. 21, he stood proudly on the steps of City Hall beneath a flag honoring

servicemen and women believed missing in action. The flag flew high over Santa Clarita for the first time because Bill Reynolds worked to see it done.

The flag flew in honor of the National League of Families' POW/MIA. It was raised in support of National POW/MIA Recognition Day across the United States.

Some days, when it's not Veterans Day or Flag Day or Independence Day, Bill Reynolds simply stands tall by the street with a sign held high: 'Vietnam Vets Support Our Troops.'

On those days, he says he's never surprised when a motorist stops, walks over to him, picks up a sign and introduces himself as a vet.



In Memory Of

This section is for the members who wish to sponsor the MRFA by placing a notice in memory of one their fallen comrades. In some cases 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 4 issues.

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