

# River Currents



A PUBLICATION OF  
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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FALL 2006

## MEDICAL SUPPORT OF THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE

The mission of America's first Mobile Riverine Force was to penetrate the delta stronghold of a determined enemy. The Navy's first hospital ship, the USS Red Rover, was part of that historical Mississippi River squadron. That vessel was refitted to provide the medical support required by the soldiers of the Civil War. In the next century, a similar situation came about; our Nation's second Mobile Riverine Force (MRF). Once more, close medical support was provided by men who faced the task and developed their own special vessels. From the first MRF in 1863 to the second in 1967, many changes had oc-

curred in the conduct of warfare. The Army Medical Department had kept pace and continued its mission to preserve the fighting strength of its units.

### Force Composition

The Mobile Riverine Force in Southeast Asian was a joint operation composed of the US Army's 2nd Brigade 9th Infantry Division and the US Navy's River Assault Flotilla One Task Force 117. The transportation of this joint force was accomplished by using two principal types of vessels: the type of ships for housing and berthing of the troops for long moves on the rivers, and the smaller craft for assault landings and security missions. The larger ships were designated Self-propelled Barracks Ships (APBs). These were reconstructed

Landing Ship Tank (LST) class ships. The assault craft were reconstructed mechanized Landing Craft (LCM-6) boats. After the addition of armor plate and various weapons, one of the boat's types was referred to as an Armored Troop Carrier (ATC). Several of the ATCs were fitted with Helicopter landing pads. The ATC (H)s with the landing pads



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## Veteran's Day 2006, Washington, D.C.

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will be placing wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Veteran's Day, Saturday, November 11, 2006. We will be gathering on 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 25 rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn Arlington/Courthouse Plaza located at 1333 North Courthouse Road, Arlington, VA 22201 for November 9-12. Room rates are \$119 (plus tax) per night. For reservations, call 703-528-4444 and refer to our group code "Mobile Riverine Force Association." Reservations may also be made online by visiting [www.arlingtoncourthouse.gardeninn.com](http://www.arlingtoncourthouse.gardeninn.com) and be sure to enter your group code "MRF." Reservations under these group codes must be made before the cut-off date of October 19, 2006, so make your reservations soon.

We look forward to seeing you in D.C. Come join us as we honor our fallen Brothers on Veterans Day 2006.

For more information, you may contact Board Member Bob (Doc) Pries at 9702 Friar Tuck Drive, West Chester, OH 45096. Phone: (513) 755-1223 or email: [rpries@cinci.rr.com](mailto:rpries@cinci.rr.com).

## FROM THE GALLEY

ALBERT MOORE, MRFA PRESIDENT

### Reunion 2007

Reunion 2007 will be held at the Adams Mark by the Airport, 2544 Executive Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46241, Thursday, August 30 until Sunday, September 2. Members can make reservations starting September 6, 2006. Room rates will be \$79 a night. To make your own reservations, call the hotel at 317-248-2481. Be sure to mention you're making your reservations under the Mobile Riverine Force Association. For more information on the hotel, contact Angela Jordan, Convention Services Mgr. at 317-381-6107 or you may e-mail [ajordan@adamsmark.com](mailto:ajordan@adamsmark.com). Check their web site out at [www.adamsmark.com](http://www.adamsmark.com). *Be sure to click on the Indianapolis Adams Mark.*

### Reunion 2007 Hospitality Rooms

If you want more info on booking an individual hospitality room, contact Angela Jordan, Convention Services Mgr. at 317-381-6107 or e-mail [ajordan@adamsmark.com](mailto:ajordan@adamsmark.com). If Angela is unavail-

able, you may contact Reggie Vaughn, Sales Manager at 317-381-6127; or via e-mail at [rvaughn@adamsmark.com](mailto:rvaughn@adamsmark.com).

### Adams Mark Free Shuttle Service

The Adams Mark has free shuttle service to and from the airport. To phone the hotel for shuttle service, look for the bank of phones in the baggage area.

The Adams Mark also has shuttle service to and from

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### 2007 Events

Registration starts at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, August 30th and 9:30 a.m. Friday, Aug. 31st.

Large Hospitality Room with snacks, beverages 9:30 a.m. daily.

Product Sales Large Hospitality Room 9:30 a.m. daily.

Golf at Winding River Golf Course Friday morning, Aug. 31st.

Pig Out Friday at 1700 August 31st.

Guest Speakers after Pig Out.

Memorial Service at 9:00 a.m. Sept. 1st.

From the Delta to the DMZ Dance with DJ from 2000 until ?? Sept. 1st.

Raffles Daily

More on these events in upcoming issues of

# Vietnam War America's Secret Army

In the early 1960s, the long struggle in Southeast Asia between capitalist in the South and communist interest in the North once again erupted in Vietnam. At that time, the 600-year-old Kingdom of Laos, the homeland of the Hmong who have immigrated to America and which borders Vietnam on the west, was a neutral country by degree of the latest Geneva peace conference. But still, the Lao people were divided, and the struggle in Vietnam was mirrored in Laos as the Royal Lao Army trained and supported by the United States and the Pathet Lao, backed by the Soviet Union, fought to control just as the North and South fought for control of Vietnam.

American forces were soon fully involved in Vietnam, though with the main American battleground established in the south. In order to sustain troops in that area, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong had to move arms and food along the Ho Chi Minh Trail directly through the Laotian Mountains that were home to 300,000 Hmong. It was an area the Royal Lao Army could not control, and since the US had promised to honor Laos' neutrality, they could only fly bombing missions into the area, not deploy ground troops. So the CIA secretly initiated "Operation Momentum." The first step was to send word to the people in the mountains (many tribes, but most notably the Hmong) that the Vietnamese wanted to take Hmong land and that the Americans would help stop them. Although the Hmong had a reputation as fierce fighters, they also had a passion for independence from the Lao, from communists, from the Americans. But the threat of invasion by an army much more powerful than any they could muster made the elders seriously consider the Americans' offer of weapons and training.

At the same time, the CIA also secretly contacted famous Hmong military leader Vang Pao, who had risen to Major General in the Royal Lao Army. They promised the weapons and training his troops would need if he would recruit young men from the Hmong villages to form a guerilla army that would fight off the Vietnamese. Vang Pao accepted and made countless personal visits to the tribal villages to convince the clan elders and village leaders to join with the Americans and fight to save their land. Not all of the 300,000 Hmong people were convinced, however. Some took up arms with the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao; others simply tried to stay out of harms way and survive. But 60% (including Cher Yang Vang) joined Vang Pao or

Zak Pov (pronounced Va Poe) as he was affectionately known. His famous "Armee Clandestine" was born.

Now referred to as the U.S. "secret army," it numbered perhaps 7,000 at the beginning, but grew to at least 30,000 during the peak fighting years; a number that was first made up of mature men. Then as the death toll of younger and younger boys (some 10 years old) mounted, still they quickly gained recognition as the most efficient fighting force in the war. Under Vang Pao's masterful leadership, their mission was threefold; to cut-off North Vietnamese supply lines along the Ho Chi Minh Trail; to guide U.S. bombing missions; and to rescue downed U.S. pilots. They were invaluable to American efforts



in all three areas and are known to have saved hundreds of U.S. pilots whose planes were shot down. They saved thousands of lives of other Americans too, and sacrificed thousands of their own.

The world never heard about what they were doing until many years after the war ended. It would have been seen as illegal at that time or at least immoral in the eyes of the world community for Americans to have ground troops in Laos. So, their close ties to the "Armee Clandestine" was kept a closely guarded secret.

Then after the Americans tired of the war in 1973, they agreed to a series of terms that would drive the Hmong people, who had been their allies from their land, a cease fire in Vietnam, the establishment of a "coalition" government, a puppet government of the North Vietnamese for Laos, the withdrawal of all troops from Southeast Asia and an end to supplying any resisting army; the "Armee Clandestine" included. Hmong soldiers who had survived the brutal war were left without air support to fight not only the Vietnamese, but also the army of Laos' new communist government, the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Their rifles were no match for the enemy's planes, tanks, and heavy artillery. Many Hmong were slaughtered; some in their villages, some at airfields waiting for evacuation planes that never came. A few were able to fight their way, foot-by-foot across the Mekong River into refugee camps in Thailand. And while the new Lao government officially encouraged the Hmong people to stay in the country, the newspaper, Khaosane Pathet Lao, wrote openly in 1975, "We must eradicate the Hmong minority completely."

By that time, the remnants of an army had disappeared. Vang Pao had escaped to Thailand, and surviving soldiers had re-joined what was left of their families. Most simply sought refuge from the forces of the Lao regime, some continued to resist as best they could, and some sought in vain to reestablish a way of life that the war and their participation in it had destroyed forever.

The Pathet Lao proceeded to purge the country of Vang Pao's supporters and anyone else they saw as unfriendly to the new Lao People's Republic. In doing so, they used not only conventional military weapons to attack unarmed Hmongs civilians, they also used chemical and biological weapons. Many Hmong living in the U.S. today still talk of the "yellow rain."

When it was finished, some 17,000 Hmong soldiers were dead. So were thousands of Hmong civilians. Of the 300,000 in Laos at the start of the war, 30,000 died as a direct result of the fighting. Many thousands of Hmong were executed for their involvement in the war. Even today, prominent Hmong people, especially those who associated with Vang Pao, are known to disappear.

William E. Colby, former director of the CIA, talked of the "heroism and the effectiveness of the Hmong struggle" and the critical role and sacrifice of the Secret Army. In part Colby said, "For 10 years, Vang Pao's soldiers held the growing North Vietnamese forces to approximately the same battle lines they held in 1962. And significantly for America, the 70,000 North Vietnamese engaged in Laos were not available to add to forces fighting Americans and South Vietnamese in South Vietnam."

Beautiful in its simplicity, the Memorial Monument reads:

**In Memory Of The Hmong And Lao  
Combat Veterans And Their American  
Advisors Who Served Freedom's  
Cause In Southeast Asia. Their Patriotic  
Valor And Loyalty In The Defense Of  
Liberty And Democracy Will Never Be  
Forgotten**

**Arlington, National Cemetery  
Lao Veterans of America**

On May 15, 1997, some 3,000 Veterans of General Vang Pao's army assembled at the Arlington National Cemetery for a Memorial Monument dedication, a small stone topped with a copper plaque acknowledging the "secret war" in Laos and the Hmong and American Advisors who valiantly served freedom's cause in the jungles of Southeast Asia and, in doing so, died in the Lao Theater in the Vietnam War. They will now be forever known and remembered.



## Secret Army

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May 16, 1997, General Vang Pao and the remnants of his Army, again wearing camouflage fatigues, assembled at Arlington National Cemetery. Six deep, they stood at attention for the Memorial Monument.

In Memory of Legions Lost and the Soldiers of the Secret War in Laos.

We stand in tribute of forgotten men ... for their sacrifice, courage, valor, and honor. We honor them by this living memorial ... starkly, for it stands defiantly alone, as did those soldiers in their seasons of death. It will serve as a poignant reminder of our battlefield allies and is a tribute long overdue to proud Human endeavor ... courage and valor in a long war lost in the unfulfilled hopes for Southeast Asia.

*As the fallen leaves of Autumn  
In unregimented ranks,  
Countless unremembered  
soldiers rest...eternally  
Let us now praise forgotten  
men... And some there be,  
Which have no memorial?  
Who have perished, as though  
They had never been.  
But they served, they died;  
For cause and by happenstance ...  
Expend in the hopes for  
Southeast Asia,  
And will ever be remembered  
Mourned for their sacrifice.  
If by weeping I could change  
The course of events,  
My tears would pour down  
ceaselessly  
For a thousand Autumns*

By Albert Moore

## From the Chairman

*A note from Membership Chairman  
Concerning Veteran's Day in Minneapolis*

Due to a low turnout on Veteran's Day in Minneapolis in 2005, we decided not to have another gathering for a few years or so. We appreciate everyone's support and hope to have another ceremony there soon.

## Indianapolis Convention Bureau

For more info on the Indianapolis area, please feel free to contact Paul Williams, Meeting and Sales Manager at the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Bureau by calling 800-956-INDY, or e-mail: [pwilliams@indianapolis.org](mailto:pwilliams@indianapolis.org); or visit [www.indy.org](http://www.indy.org).

# EXCERPTS FROM SURPRISED AT TET: U.S. Naval Forces in Vietnam - 1968

by Glenn E. Helm, Reference Librarian,  
Navy Department Library, Naval Historical Center

Glenn's research interests include intelligence, surprise attack, and the history of Indochina. He is currently writing a book on the intelligence and operational history of the TET Offensive.

Awaking to the sound of explosions, Rear Admiral Kenneth K. Veth, Commander U.S. Naval Forces Vietnam (COMNAVFORV), moved to the rooftop of his rented house to witness a dazzling display of rockets and flares lighting the Saigon night sky. All around, the sound of battle during the early hours of 31 January 1968 heralded the arrival of the 1968 Tet Offensive. Armed with automatic weapons and hand grenades, the Admiral and his housemates waited for a ground assault which fortunately never came. During the remaining hours of darkness, Veth kept informed of events by listening to military police and other tactical communications on the radio. Since he spent the night on the roof of his house, he was unable to direct operations from his headquarters.

Despite numerous warnings, the intensity, coordination and timing of the Tet Offensive surprised the allied intelligence community, including naval Intelligence. In addition to a flawed intelligence collection effort, naval Intelligence, and COMNAVFORV misunderstood critical information, resulting in American Naval Forces being improperly deployed and surprised when Saigon and numerous other targets were attacked on 31 January 1968.

During the Tet truce, Task Force (TF) 117 (Riverine Force) was scheduled to deploy into western Dinh Tuong and eastern Kien Phong provinces, where it was expected to interdict intensified enemy resupply efforts. Captain Robert S. Salzer, the commander of the Riverine Force, later called it a "show and tell" operation, remarking, "there was no reason whatsoever to be there. We went up there along the skinniest canal we could, till we ran out of water completely, then we ploughed through the mud, nothing much happened. There was no reason for anything to happen. The Vietcong were all the way to the east of us

by this time. So much for what [American intelligence] thought they knew." On the morning of 30 January, the task force received word that the Tet truce was canceled. Offensive operations resumed, but infantry units remained near canals for rapid redeployment. The situation in the Delta deteriorated quickly the next morning as enemy forces attacked My Tho, Ben Tre, Cai Lay, Cai Be and Vinh Long. Salzer recalled: "We began to hear rumors that things weren't going quite so well in our splendid isolation. Bill Knowlton, who was a Brigadier General then flew in, saying 'My God, it's Pearl Harbor over again.'" A Riverine Army company was airlifted to Vinh Long to support ARVN forces at 1810 on the 31st. Another company was flown to reinforce the defenses of the permanent Riverine base at Dong Tam, near My Tho. During the night, the majority of the task force withdrew to Dong Tam, where they arrived before dawn despite enemy harassment (including an ineffective ambush). In the fiery glow of nearby fighting, the Riverine force was resupplied and moved out at daybreak. At 1550 on 1 February, these forces were hurled into battle in My Tho and, subsequently at Vinh Long and Ben Tre. During the fighting, as normal sources of intelligence temporarily dried up, the Riverine Force became heavily dependant on Air Force-supplied radio-direction-finding fixes for information on enemy unit locations. In the end, the Riverine Task Force was credited with saving the Delta.

In anticipation of increased enemy infiltration of supplies from Cambodia, TF 116 (River Patrol Force or Game Warden), commanded by Captain Paul N. Gray, had deployed nine PBRs (patrol boats, river) to the Cambodian border region. Four PBRs were based at the US Army Special Forces camp at Chau Doc on the upper Bassac River in the northwest of the Mekong Delta. To the immediate east of Chau Doc, five PBRs were deployed to the Special Forces camp at Thuong Thoi in Kien Phong Province to patrol the upper Mekong River. The repositioning of PBRs to Chau Doc may have had little impact on infiltration, but the vessels proved crucial in repelling a major ground attack on the city during Tet. Elsewhere during Tet, TF 116 units engaged enemy forces at My Tho, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, Sa Dec, the Saigon area and the LCU (landing craft, utility) ramp at Hue. Remarking on the enemy's ability to prepare for these attacks without detection, Captain Gray admitted that "...I have no concrete knowledge of how such a logistics miracle was accomplished by the VC in the Delta."

Of particular importance to the issue of whether the Navy had sufficient warning

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## NEW HOTEL POLICY

Since we visited the Adams Mark last year, the city or county has passed a no smoking law in hotels, lounges, and restaurants. For you that smoke, the hotel will have a couple smoking areas posted around the hotel. We're sorry for this inconvenience, but it's a local law and something we have no control over. It seems there's not too many hotels you'll find in any state that allows smoking anymore.

# Annual Historical Report ~ 14 April 1968

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

## Reporting Period 1 April 1968 to 31 January 1969 ... Major Activities

During the period 1 April 1968 to 1 June 1968, the 3rd Bn 34th Artillery provided close and continuous fire support to elements of the 2nd Brigade's Mobile Riverine Force. In fifteen major operations that ranged into Kien Hoa, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, and Vinh Long Provinces, the barge mounted elements, (Btry B and Btr C), and the airmobile guns of Battery A, occupied numerous fire support bases well forward in 2nd Brigades area of operations, in order to deliver timely and accurate artillery fire. These operations along both sides of the My Tho River added immeasurably to the security of this important delta communication artery.

On June 1968, the MRF moved into a series of long range strike operations that began in Long An province below Saigon and ended with the penetration of the U-Minh Forest of the Vietnam War. Wherever the 2nd Brigade moved the 34th Artillery was close by providing the fire support required to assure destruction of the enemy. During this period, Btry A moved on to the artillery barges making all the batteries water mobile for the first time. Each firing battery participated in air-mobile operations during the month of August 1968, howitzers were air lifted directly off the barges to inland fire support bases, adding a new page to the lengthening list of battalion's accomplishments. During the week of 4 August Btry B and C occupied four different fire support bases separated by 150 kilometers of waterways varying in width from 50 meters. The occupation of FSB Winchester, located 15 miles southeast of the Gulf of Thailand and 43 miles southwest of Can Tho, was the deepest penetration of the area by US Forces in Vietnam. The battalion supported elements of the 2nd Brigade, 5th VNMC and local GVN District forces on this operation. The 3rd/34th Artillery proved to everyone, during the month of August, that barge mounted Artillery loses none of its mobility. The batteries moved into every conceivable way during the month by water, by road, and by air lift. On 24 August, all three batteries and the batteries of GP were airlifted from their boats and barges and placed in three different FSPBs to support a combined 7th ARVN Div and the 2nd Brigade operations.

On 9 September 1968, the 2nd Brigade and the MRF began the accelerated pacification campaign in Kien Hoa Province. One infantry battalion moved in the semi-permanent base areas in the enemy infested areas of central Giong Trom District. Battery A tied up near the newly established Fire Support Base David and pro-

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

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

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

The Gordon and search operation entered the 34th Artillery's list of accomplishments in early December 1968. This type of activity was to become prevalent as the intensified pacification efforts in pivotal

Kien Hoa continued. Battery 4 made the always dangerous canal passage to Mo Cay again and again, and by the end of December it was a routine activity of the battalion. 2nd brigade operations picked up speed and became even more widely separated with the insertion of the U.S. Infantry into Mo Cay Town. From My Tho to the lower Ham Luong Rivers, the 3rd/34th Artillery was hard pressed to keep up the fast moving 2nd Bde strike forces. Out with split batteries echelon moves, and indomitable spirit all critical battle areas were covered. On 20 December, Btry A displayed the flexibility that had become the watch word of the 3rd/34th Artillery. The unit was alerted for movement to Can Tho in the deep Delta region, resupplied with rations and fuel and water, they departed for extended duty all in the space of 3 hours. As the dry season descended on the Mekong Delta in earnest, the land mobility of Btry C was displayed by two split operations featuring a platoon of howitzers towed of the paddy platforms and road marched to fire bases in the Giong Trom town.

Late December 1968 and early January 1969 saw the 2nd Bde moving into Mo Cay and Don Nhon districts, both lone VC controlled. Gordon and search operations were again prevalent as the real business of pacification continued. The 3rd/34th Artillery displayed the ingenuity and resourcefulness that have marked the Riverine Field Artillery unit since inception, placed a FPS-5 surveillance radar on a LCM-Boat. Detailed surveillance of river activity proved entirely feasible under this technique. The first 4 months of the Mobile Riverine Forces operation in support of the GVN accelerated pacification campaign in Kien Hoa province has resulted in over 1500 Viet Cong KIA and 100% increase in the Chieu Hoi rate. Throughout the campaign to date, the 3rd/34th Artillery, has on every occasion, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, provided the close and continued artillery support essential to successful prosecution of United States goals in Vietnam.

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

In the way of civic action programs, the Battalion has initiated an aggressive ICAP/MEDCAP program, using all modes of insertion, air, water, and road. The battalion since 1 November, has conducted 30 MEDCAPS and 20 ICAPS, treating 4534 patients and distributing commodities to 5 times that number. In addition to

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## Surprised at TET

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of Tet was all-source intelligence available to Admiral Veth and his intelligence organization on 27 January. This information painted a dramatic picture of enemy activity and indicated that a major enemy offensive was imminent. It should have produced a maximum state of American vigilance as Tet approached. Widespread communist attacks in the northern portion of the Republic of Vietnam during the night of 29-30 January could have provided 24 hours warning, yet NAVFORV was still unprepared.

COMNAVFORV and his intelligence organization were surprised by the intensity, coordination and timing of the Tet Offensive, as evidenced by Admiral Veth's presence at his residence during the first wave of attacks on Saigon. Of the many factors that led to the intelligence community's surprise at the offensive, the misguided belief that enemy forces would not run the risk of attacking the cities and towns of the RVN is paramount. The belief that an attack during the most important Vietnamese holiday was an almost unthinkable enemy option was similarly misguided. Had the allied intelligence community placed greater emphasis on intelligence collection and acted properly on the intelligence that they did receive, the Tet Offensive may never have found its way into the history books as one of the greatest intelligence lapses in the post-World War II era.

*"Hard pressed on my right; my left is in retreat. My center is yielding. Impossible to maneuver.*

*Situation excellent.*

*I am attacking. Attaquez!"*

General Ferdinand Foch  
(to General Joffre during the Battle of the Marne)

## Historical Report

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ICAP/MEDCAPS, the battalion has provided materials for construction of a Pagoda in Giong Trom District and is gathering material for construction of a school and church in Ham Luong District. C battery makes a monthly contribution of \$590.00 to the My Tho leper colony.

For the Commander: Norman L. King, CPT, Field Artillery, Adjutant

**Note: The 34th Field Artillery "We Support" Cross Rifles Have Been the Insignia of the US Field Artillery since 1834. The 3rd/34th Artillery served in Vietnam with the 9th Infantry Division from December 1966 till July 1968.**

## Tango Boat

I was in my first month in-country. As a new guy, I was expendable and therefore "walked point." Walking point puts your senses on a level of awareness akin to having your skin flayed. I have never, before nor since, been so conscious.

It was okay during the days. They did give the new guy a few weeks to acclimate before sticking them out front, and I got a chance to see how point men handled day-time operations. But on night ops, I had no chance to see whatever was going on up there, so my first night "on the point" was bound to be a learning experience.

Night operations often involved tango boat insertions; big, flat, rectangular boats churning through the brown delta water. We'd get these platoons loaded onto the landing craft and head up river. Of course the boat noise could be heard for miles so the tactic was to cruise back and forth a few times in the general area of the insertion point, then suddenly swing into jungle-lined shore and drop the gate (ramp).

Now I had followed others off the boats in similar ops, but this time I had to lead. What's the frame of reference? Tango boat operations were unique to this one part of Vietnam, so they weren't covered in our training back stateside. How do you lead a platoon off the boat in complete and total darkness? Of course, like every American male of my generation, I had seen this type of craft before in movies about World War II. So taking my cue from memories issuing out of the darkness of the Capitol Theater in Passaic, New Jersey, I hunched over and charged off the gate (ramp) and instantly sank.

A rifleman in my unit wore a metal helmet, carried his M-16, about 200 rounds of ammunition in metal clips, two fragmentation grenades, several smoke grenades, a couple parachute flares, two canteens with a quart of water in each, canned C rations for 2 days' meals, a web belt with knapsack, and a few changes of socks. On point, I also was loaded down with a night scope. This was all heavy stuff. As I plummeted below the surface of the tepid water, instantly feeling the tug of the river's current, I had a revelation; I am about to drown.

Unlike the sandy beaches of Iwo Jima, the Mekong River delta is boarded by thick jungle, jungle that extends right out into the water. When the boats swing into shore, they use their great weight to crush back much of the nip-pa-palm growth. When the gate (ramp) swings down, it pushes back even more. But as often as not, it would still be some distance from the edge of the gate to what passes in the delta



for dry land. The proper disembarkment procedure was to gingerly step onto the thickest palm frond you could find, hug the trunk, and then shuffle from one cluster of vegetation to the next until you reached shore. I knew none of this. As I said, the immediacy of my demise came to me in a flash, and just as quickly, I felt a tug on the back of my collar. My squad sergeant, somehow sensing through the dark what was about to happen, dove for the deck and lying on his belly reached down over the ramp's edge. He had just been able to grab onto me. As he pulled my head clear of the water, he whispered into my ear some of the best advice I've ever had: "Don't EVER do that again!"

I never did.

**Ed G. Sanicki.** Ed served with D Co 2nd/60th 9th Inf Div 3/68-1/70. You may contact Ed at 10 Danielle Ct. Lawrenceville, NJ 08648 [esanicki@yahoo.com](mailto:esanicki@yahoo.com).

## SEEKING

Seeking anyone who knew or remembers serving with Army Chaplain Alvin O. Stevens, MRF 9th Inf Div, 1968-69. Please contact his daughter, Beth Wade at 2073 Davis Dr., Fairfield, CA 94533; [quillaine@sbcglobal.net](mailto:quillaine@sbcglobal.net).

## From the Galley

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the downtown area. Scheduled times the shuttle will leave the hotel will be in the upcoming issues of *River Currents*.

## Fishing Trip 07 Reunion

Member Jim Grooms is setting up a day of fishing at one of the local fishing ponds or lake. Jim has found a number of good spots. Now he needs to know how many of you would be interested. You may contact Jim at 3137 Braeburn Pl. Highlands Ranch, CO 80126. 303-683-9224 or e-mail [jimgrms@yahoo.com](mailto:jimgrms@yahoo.com).

## Medical Support

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were used by the medical platoons of the forces infantry battalions as medical aid boats. One ATC(H) was also used by an element of the medical company of the division's medical battalion as a medical aid boat used in support of the joint Army/Navy operations.

### Configuration of the Aid Boat

The medical aid boat used the bunks that were attached to the inside cargo deck hull (well deck). This allowed for the management of five litter cases. Due to the small working area, it was necessary to revolve patients in and out in the shortest time possible. Ambulatory patients had to climb up and out of the well deck or, in the case of litter patients, be handed up in the space between the end of the flight deck and the landing ramp of the boat. The vertical distance from the well deck to the flight deck was 10 feet. The flight deck was constructed from steel runway matting welded over a framework of pipe. The primary drawbacks in using a boat of this type for close medical support were the lack of illumination for night operations and the small size of the pad, which always required the pilot's great skill to affect a safe landing. Some of the medical equipment present on the aid boat included a basic field medical and surgical set, and a whole blood mechanical refrigerator. The medical personnel consisted of one medical corps officer, several enlisted medics, and a radio operator. A 3-day level of supplies were maintained at all times.

### Initial Medical Support Concept

Unit level medical service was furnished by the medical aid boat, manned by the medical platoon from the infantry battalion. This aid boat would accompany the ATCs carrying the assault troops. Under the direction of the battalion surgeon, the aid station was operated at the point where the troops disembarked to start the sweep. It would remain there until the ATCs began to move to the predesignated troop pickup point. At this time, the aid station would close up and return, unless the tactical situation required it to reopen at some other spot.

Division level medical services were provided by a medical aid boat manned with medical personnel from Company D, 9th Medical Battalion. This medical company aid boat was normally positioned in the vicinity of the barge-mounted artillery fire support base, this location provided security, a central location with regard to the area of operation, access to communications, and close liaison with the brigade operating center.

The casualties from the operation could be evacuated to the aid boat or other medical facility either by water or air. The vast majority was handled by air ambulance.

The pilot had the choice of taking the casualty to one of three facilities. These were (1) the forward element of the medical company located at the forward fire support base; (2) the medical company itself; or (3) the surgical hospital. The latter two were at Dong Tam, the MRF base camp. The evacuation decision was made by the



helicopter pilot's consideration of the casualties' condition and the distance to be flown.

### The Improvement of Facilities and Support

As riverine operations moved farther into the delta, time and distance pointed out the need for changes in the concept of medical support from all levels. If a curved line had been drawn, connecting Dong Tam, Saigon, Long Binn, and Vung Tau late in 1967, five American hospitals would have been on or near the line. When the MRF operated east of Dong Tam, inside the area created by the curved line just mentioned, evacuation time to a hospital was short, the main reason being the location of several helicopter ambulances units at Long Binh. Conversely, when operations were conducted west of Dong Tam toward the Cambodian border, or southwest toward the U-Ming Forest, the line of air evacuation was stretched to the limit. The only American ambulance unit in the delta was at Soc Trang. To offset the complete lack of military hospitals and limited air ambulances capabilities deep in the delta, there was a variety of air ambulance shuttle systems, utilizing air ambulances from the units at Long Binh.

The decision that the MRF should have an enlarged medical treatment and holding capacity was the beginning of the solution. Another aspect of the solution was

the deployment of an evacuation hospital at Can Tho. To affect the increased medical mission, many types of boats and ships were considered and, in the end, it was decided to use an APB rather than add another vessel. In December 1967, the USS Colleton APB-36, was sent to Subic Bay Naval Base, in the Philippines, to have her

sick bay enlarged. The ship was back with the flotilla in January 1968. Also in January of that year, the medical brigade assigned three personnel to D Co, 9th Medical Battalion. This consisted of one general surgeon and two male nurses.

### Configuration of the USS Colleton Medical Facility

The USS Colleton now filled an additional role, that of being an afloat medical facility. The sickbay consisted of three separate areas on three levels of the ship to allow for easy movement of personnel and material from one level to another. They were interconnected by ramps. Level one was the flight deck of the ship. It was large enough to allow the landing of any type of helicopter. All approaches were controlled by Navy radio operators, and the landings were made under the direction of the Navy. This, plus the white or red illumination for night landings, provided the helicopter pilots with visual controls and contributed to safer operations. The materials necessary for the direct exchange of litters and blankets were stored on the flight deck.

The triage area was next and was immediately below the flight deck. It was reached via a two-section ramp. This ramp was wide enough for two-way traffic. The ramp's halfway point was large enough to allow litters to be rotated completely,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



## Medical Support

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

without any stopping or shifting. Outside of the entrance to triage, it was slightly lower and wounded soldiers were stripped and washed off with warm water at this point. This prevented debris from collecting in the triage room. It also contributed to easier determination of the extent of the injuries. Near the shower on the weather deck was an electric winch. It was rigged out over the side of the ship. This was used to hoist up casualties that arrived by boat (ATCs) shipside or any other type of vessel. The winch and litter combination made it unnecessary to move casualties through narrow passageways and up steep ladder wells. Inside the triage room, there were six treatment positions always set up. More could be easily erected if needed by using litter stands. Liquids, dressings, and other materials were distributed at each treatment point. Medics and corpsman circulated and replenished supplies as they were consumed. To assist in the rapid diagnosis and treatment of casualties, one 50-mil x-ray unit in a fully shielded enclosure was located in triage. The wide double doors allowed easy entry of litters, and the automatic plate developer provided rapid evaluations. A blood bank and an autoclave were also located here.

The third area was on the covered deck of the ship. This air conditioned area was reached by using a wide single stage ramp attached to the port side of the hull. On this level and grouped about a common passageway were a two-table surgery, the central material section, storage area, ward, pharmacy, and one chair dental clinic. Surgery was provided with its own ventilation system to reduce chances of cross contamination and infection. The central materials section had an autoclave that was operated from the ship's steam system. When the patient load exceeded the 18 beds available in the primary ward area, additional bed space was obtained by using a portion of the Petty Officer's quarters. This area was just aft of the ward. In addition, some patients were sent to convalesce in their own bunk, located in the troop compartments. In essence, the entire bed capacity of the USS Colleton could have been used, which would have been as many as 900 beds or bunks. The only limitations were those regarding the ability of the assigned medical personnel to provide the high-level care expected of the Army and Navy medical departments on the USS Colleton. Any patient sent to the troop compartments were cared for by the battalion medics and returned to sick bay for outpatient treatment and follow-up.

### Joint Force Cooperation

Medical personnel representing unit, division, and level medical service, plus the normal medical complement of the ship were quartered on the USS Colleton.

When the infantry battalion troops were not engaged in combat operations, the battalion surgeon and his medics conducted a daily sick call in the troop compartments. If necessary, a man would be referred to sick bay for more extensive treatment. The Navy doctors did the same for the ship's company and boat crews, during any period when casualties were being received from an area of operations, all medical personnel worked as one team. No distinction was made as to branch of service or unit. In these situations, the required professional guidance was provided by the general surgeon, who was an Army Medical Corps Officer. For each operation, a medical evacuation helicopter was placed in support of the 82 Medical Detachment. The crew stayed on the ship and responded to missions that were handled by the communication section from D Company.

### The Measure of Success

The USS Colleton, with her enlarged sick bay, was back in operation only a few days prior to the 1968 TET Offensive. The capability of its medical facility can be seen in the following statistics. During the 94-day period between 29 January 1968 and May 1968, the USS Colleton handled a total of 890 casualties. This represents only the casualties evacuated to the ship and is exclusive to the daily sick call. Of 890 received, 690 were classified as having received injuries due to hostile action (IRHA). Three hundred forty-five of this group was returned to duty after initial treatment. One hundred thirty-four men were admitted to the ship's ward and completed their entire course of treatment without leaving the MRF. The remaining 411 casualties were evacuated to the next

higher level of medical treatment, after emergency life-saving treatment and stabilization had been received. The evacuation hospital at Long Binh was the usual destination for personnel from the USS Colleton.

### Discussion

From the beginning of MRF operations in the delta, several medical support ideas existed. Those ideas overlapped not only a number of command lines but also normal boundaries of the level of medical services. All were aimed at overcoming a distance factor that was reducing the medical support of the MRF. In the final conclusion, the mission stayed with the division medical battalion, a logical selection. By augmentation with the medical brigade personnel and in the presence of the Navy medical complement, the basic deficiency was corrected; there was immediately available for the combat troops a facility of performing definitive life-saving procedures.

In the evolution of the medical support of the Mobile Riverine Force, we can see that there was no easy solution and that the measures applied were subject to change. The skill which the changes were conceived and executed served to point out the close and meaningful communications that existed between all levels of the medical departments. In the end, the time honored and proven levels of medical service saw the creation of a facility that overlapped the normal parameters in terms of personnel, equipment, and missions. The workable solution, in the form of the USS Colleton medical facility, was important in and of itself, but it also depicts a flexibility on the part of the medical support planners in both the Army and Navy Medical Departments.

*River Currents Staff*

## The Water Fountain: USS Colleton (APB-36)

When I was 19 years old and assigned to the USS Colleton APB-36 as a Radioman, I noticed that when the 9th Infantry Division troops left the ships and got on the boats for a mission that the electrically cooled water fountain on the main mess deck was pumping warm water. It was only one (or maybe one of a few, I can't remember now) of those cold water fountains (Scuttlebutts) on the ship that really made cold water; the kind of fountain you still find today in different places (the kind that either shoot cold water in your face or make you put your mouth on the opening to get a drink). They are rectangular and about 4 feet tall (or at least they used to be).

I still cannot drink from an electrically cooled water fountain without thinking about how warm the water was coming from the one on the USS Colleton's mess deck between March and June 1969. I

know it was from all the canteens the guys were hastily filling before getting on the tango boats and heading off on another mission. I have often wondered how long that cold water lasted in those plastic canteens and how many guys never got to refill them? I still expect warm water to come from those drinking fountains, but I'm always glad when it's cold. If the water is warm, for some reason, I still remember the first time it happened. Funny how something sticks with you, even after all these years. How much water was taken out before it turned warm, did they drink the water on the boat, or did they try to save it, or did they ever even have a chance to drink it?

**Dave McCann served on the USS Colleton and RivRon 15 69-70. Contact him at 1263 Big Horn Rd., Helena, MT 59602; bdalmcc@bresnan.net.**

# Join us at the MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Bi-Annual Golf Tournament

Friday morning, August 31, 2007 at the Winding River Golf Course, Indianapolis, Indiana is being set for the time and place for our first organized MRFA Bi-Annual Golf event.

All members and guests, are invited to join us for 18 holes of golf at Winding River

Golf Course, 8400 South Mann Road, (Highway 31 South); phone (317) 856-7257.

The event should take about 5 hours and have us back at the Adams Mark Hotel in plenty of time for other reunion planned events. A shuttle service can be arranged, for a small fee, from the Adams Mark Hotel, to and from the course. The shuttle can hold up to 12 people at a time and the current price per shuttle is \$50.00, divided 12 ways, that is a good deal.

Foursome Teams will be randomly drawn at the hotel, before the event, and you can sign up at registration. If at all possible, the teams will be made up of two players from each branch of the service. A point system will determine the winning branch of service, Army or Navy, at the end of play. Winners to be announced at the reunion.

The course is very reasonable in price to play. Currently, 18 holes of golf, without a cart, is just \$18.00. Food and drinks at the turn can be arranged, but that will depend on

how many players sign up in advance and want the service. There is no registration fee and the tournament is open to all levels of players. Since it is a public course, and we will be somewhat limited in our time, it is advisable that players have some experience at playing, but all "Duffers" are welcome.

Friday, August 31st will be a full day of events and should be fun for all of us. Who said, "Golf was just for old guys?" (McCann, 1978)

Please let me know if you want to play and if you would be interested in burgers and a beverage for lunch.

Contacts for the event are: David G. McCann (M-6); bdalmcc@bresnan.net; (406) 442-8168; Orville L. Daley (USS Askari); LECOWBOY@aol.com.

Our Tee Times will depend on how many members we have playing. We are hoping for at least 50 players to show interest in the event so we can reserve time at the course. If less than 50 members show interest, we will still golf at Winding River on Friday morning, August 31st. Currently, our Tee Times will be between 0900 and 1000 hrs.



## MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Mobile Museum

The museum will be at our next reunion in '07. Board Member Rick Corrick handles all aspects of the trailer. The trailer will be open from 9 am till 5 pm. If you have never had the opportunity to see the trailer please plan on doing so, it's an awesome display. All the 9th Infantry Division KIAs, Navy Task Forces 117-116-115 KIAs, as well as all in-country Navy Units and Coast Guard KIAs are listed on the outside of the trailer under their respective units. We have pictures of all the different units of the 9th and all Navy units posted behind plexiglass inside. Rich Corrick served on R-112-1, 1966-1967.

## Thanks to Our Members The Memorial Trailer is a Great Success!

The MRFA would like to thank the following members for their generous donations to our memorial trailer. If you would like to make a donation, please make check or money order payable to MRFA. Send to: Charlie Ardinger, 1857 County Rd. A-14, Decorah, IA 52101.

Charles E. Ardinger T-151-11  
Preston Banks HHC 3rd/47th INF  
Gery Benedetti T-112-2 and T-112-6  
Ralph H. Bigelow T-131-8 1968-69  
Jerome H. "Jerry" Bogart USS Tom Green County LST 1159  
MG Lucien Bolduc, Jr. USA (Ret.) CO 3rd/47th Infantry, 2/67-1/68  
John W. Boling IUWG-1 Unit 2  
Al Breninger COS RivDiv-91 1966-67  
Edward T. Brennan E Co 3rd/60th Infantry 02/68-02/69  
The Brothers of 2nd BN 47th Inf Reg 9th Inf Div Vietnam  
Kenneth L. Brown A/CO/3rd/60th Inf  
James Byrnes LCM-P7713 8/61-10/62  
Alfred M. Cady, III USS Benewah  
Rick J. Chapman Z-111-7, 10/68-7/69  
Northern Kentucky Convention Center  
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Richard L. Corrick R-112-1  
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Tom "Doc" Duthie E Co 4th/47th Infantry  
Paul Eastham T-132-11  
Larry C. Ethridge USS Askari  
Terrence Feters HHC 3rd/47th Inf 04/69-07/69  
Ralph J. Fries River Sects. 543 and 535  
Lt Gen William B. Fulton, USA (Ret.) CO 2nd Bde., 9th Inf. Div.

Gamewarden TF-116 Midatlantic Chapter  
Rebecca Hancock Associate  
Jeffie L. Hanks USS Benewah  
SFC Michael D. Hamner RivRon 13 / RivDiv 153  
Michael A. Harris T-152-1  
Harold Hector B/CO/3rd/60th  
John "Jack" Herrmann ComRivDiv-92 1967-68  
Lucien Hinkle HQC 3rd/60th Infantry 9th Inf Div  
George Frank Humphreys, II E CO 3rd/39th Infantry  
Don P. Jackson IUWG-1 Unit 1, Vung Tau  
Andrew Jancosek USS Benewah APB-35  
Dale S. "Doc" Jones B Co. 4th/47th Infantry  
David R. Jones Zippo 111-7  
Richard T. Kane B-1 4th/47th & D Co 5th/60th Inf.  
Chris R. Knabe M-92-1  
Michael A. Knowlton YRBM-18 1/68-1/69  
George C. Lang A-3 4th/47th Infantry  
Walter F. Lineberger III XO RAD 91 1968-69  
ENT William H. Little RivRon 11  
Ed Lohf C/Co/4th/47th  
Robert Lorman T-152-6 6/68-6/69  
Stephen Luft B Co. 4th/47th Infantry  
David E. Lull B-2 2nd/47th Infantry  
Brian J. Mahoney USS Sphinx ARL-24  
George J. Marthenze T-91-10  
BMC Robert C. Martin, USN (Ret.) USS Benewah  
William McCollum T-111-2  
Bruce McIver T-131-7 RAID-72 3/69-3/70  
Adam Metts T-111-2



John P. Miller C Co 3rd/47th Infantry  
Nicholas Miller COS RIVASTDIV 152 7/68-6/69  
Albert Moore USS Benewah  
Chuck Morgan RivDiv 91 T-91-5  
Roy D. Moseman C-2 4th/47th Infantry  
Richard E. "Doc" Nelson RivRon 15 Staff  
Christopher O. Olsen T-131-8 5/68-5/69  
SFC Claude Onley 3rd/60th Infantry  
Luis F. Peraza Casanova D Co. 3rd/60th Infantry  
Carl Petty A/Co/4th/39th Inf 1967-68  
Bob "Doc" Pries B Co. 2nd/47th Infantry  
Paul A. Ray Monitor 151-5 6/69-7/70  
John J. Read USS Colleton ABP-35 In memory of nieces, Amy J. Gilbert and Kristen Wagner  
Joe Rosner Monitor 6, RivRon 15  
Thomas F. Scheider A Btry 1st/11th Art & B Co 2nd/39th Infantry  
Harry David Schoenian C/CO/4th/47th Inf 67/78  
David M. Smith C/Co/2nd/60th Inf 1969-70  
Chester C. Stanley, Jr. C-111-1  
James E. Steffes COSDIVS 12 and 13  
John F. Stone USS Harnett City LST 821  
Robert J. Stumpf 3rd/60th Infantry  
Ken Sunberg HHC 5th/60th Mech. Infantry  
William E. Tamboer T-151-9  
Charlie E. Taylor C-3 5th/60th Infantry  
Robert (Bob) Thacker D/Co 15th Combat (Eng) 3/68-6/69  
Jimmy Toney 3rd/60th Infantry  
Ralph Tresser USS Benewah  
Erol S. Tuzcu A Co. 3rd/60th Infantry  
David Tyler RivDiv 132 M-3-6 T-24, 1969-70  
Victor E. Unruh T-151-1  
Roger C. Valentine USS Askari ARL-30  
Robert E. Vandruft T-91-5 and T-92-4  
Gen. William C. Westmoreland (COMUSMACV) 64-68  
Gerald Weston C/91/7 A/91/7 1967-68  
William H. Wulff B Co. 3rd/47th Infantry



## ADS IN RIVER CURRENTS

1/35th scale of the Program 5 Command and Communications Boat limited edition. Resin kit is 20" long. Orders usually shipped within 2 to 3 weeks. Shipped by UPS with insurance and confirmation for domestic shipping. Price: \$199.95 plus \$20.00 tax. Grand total \$215.00. Paint and glue not included. To order contact: Masterpiece Models, 7907 NE St. Johns Rd, Vancouver, WA 98665. For credit card and other info, call 360-256-1488. To see photos of the model, please visit [www.masterpiecemodels.com](http://www.masterpiecemodels.com) or email [info@masterpiecemodels.com](mailto:info@masterpiecemodels.com).

McGrogan's Military Patches: 208-762-4481, [macpatch@mcgrogans.com](http://macpatch@mcgrogans.com). McGrogan's patches have one of the largest collections of Vietnam patches available for both Army and Navy.

Military watches (MRFA and 9th Inf): 541-863-3144, [seaweed@frontiernet.net](http://seaweed@frontiernet.net), [www.chiefsquarters.com](http://www.chiefsquarters.com).

Challenge Coins & Military Key Fobs (Frank Gubala): 716-873-4821, [Fgubala@aol.com](mailto:Fgubala@aol.com), or you can visit the website at [www.9thinfantry.bravepages.com](http://www.9thinfantry.bravepages.com).

Seaweeds ship's histories and photos: 1-800-seaweed, [www-uss-seaweed.com](http://www-uss-seaweed.com).

## Get Well Wishes

MSGT Mitch Barden has suffered a stroke and is recovering in an assisted living facility. He's doing okay and his daughter says he expects to make a full recovery. You can contact MSGT Barden at 7318 Pinetree Rd., Toccoa, GA 30577; 706-886-4160.

Lawrence C. Ferguson (Larry) is in a nursing home. Larry served in Tango-92-5 10/67-10/68. If anyone would like to send a card or e-mail to Larry, please do so by contacting his wife Joan Ferguson at 12015 Clear Creek Ct., Silverdale, WA 98383; [joanferguson@wavecable.com](mailto:joanferguson@wavecable.com).

Grey "Doc" Rather (HMCM Ret). has been in the hospital after taking a fall with a nasty bump on his head, he ended up in the Navy's VA Hospital at Great Lakes. He was in ICU for 14 days. Seems that a bump to the head also connects to other organs and his kidneys shut down. Doc is now home waiting to see if his body can reproduce and rejuvenate the lost kidney cells. Doc has been told it will be up to him to regain and recuperate his strength. You can contact Doc Rather at 1725 Nathan Ln., Libertyville, IL 60048; phone 847-549-6369; [wgrather@aol.com](mailto:wgrather@aol.com). Doc served as head Corpsman in RivRons 11-13 (69-70).

Brigadier Doug Smith is in the hospital. He has undergone numerous tests and the doctors have determined that he needs triple by-pass surgery. General Smith was commanding Officer 2nd/47th Mech Infantry 9/68-9-69. Please take a few minutes to send Doug a note/get well card via US Mail as he will not be on the PC for awhile. His address is: 1451 Oakmount Plaza, Niceville, FL 32578-4314. Please keep Doug in your thoughts and prayers.

## Enemy's Tea Time Spoiled

Six enemy soldiers were enjoying their morning tea when surprised by unexpected guests arrived – a platoon of 9th Infantry Division Soldiers. As a result of the get together, the 2nd platoon of CCO 4th/47th confiscated two tons of rice, almost 2,000 rounds of 45 caliber ammo, three cases of AK-47 ammo, and a foot locker of training documents.

One gave detail instructions on how to set up claymore mines. The booty was discovered in one of the largest base camps yet discovered in the mangroves of the Rung Sat. It measured 220 by 440 m.

The camp was laced with a sophisticated system of tunnels and bunkers and included huts for transient housing. The discovery was when the 2nd Plt led by 2nd Lt Jack Benedick set up a silent stake out on one of the many salt rivers of the Rung Sat. The platoon leader sent out one squad to recon the area and almost immediately the sound of automatic weapons fire shattered the silence.

The squad had silenced the tea party of six enemy soldiers. When the rest of the platoon moved up to reinforce the squad, the enemy had fled. "THE TEA POT WAS STILL WARM."

*Article taken from the 4th/47th web site with permission.*

## U.S. Naval Support Activity Qui Nhon

NAVSUPACT DET Qui Nhon was one of the first bases established to support forces Operation Market Time, which began in 1965. Market Time was responsible for patrolling and maintaining surveillance in the coastal zones of South Vietnam. The base was officially titled in May 1966 upon the commissioning of the U.S. Naval Support Activity Saigon. During the years of operation, the command enjoyed a fine reputation for providing the maintenance, administration, and logistical support that was required to keep the operating forces in an outstanding condition of readiness.

NAVSUPACT DET Qui Nhon was located in the northernmost of U.S. Naval Support Activity Saigon's detachments. Qui Nhon is located on the southern end of the Phouc Mai Peninsula across the bay from the city of Qui Nhon and about 250 miles northeast of Saigon.

The primary mission of the detachment was to support the forces that maintain coastal surveillance in waters of II Corps Tactical Zone on the South China Sea. The forces included Inshore Undersea Warfare Group 1, Unit 3, a harbor Defense Command with varied types of boats; and North Central Coastal Surveillance Center.



# 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.

## PLEASE NOTE:

**YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE is printed on the front of your issue of River Currents.**

## Working Party Update

If you live in the San Diego area and would like to assist in the restoration of CCB-18 by being an MRFA volunteer on the working party, Army or Navy, contact Charles Campbell, 677 G St. SP#1, Chula Vista, CA 91910; 619-427-6835 or e-mail: [ccicec@aol.com](mailto:ccicec@aol.com) or Everett Jones at 1947 Gotham St., Chula Vista, CA 91913, 619-421-3721 or by e-mail: [oneerj@pacbel.net](mailto:oneerj@pacbel.net).

**MRFA/9TH WEBSITE: [www.mrfa.org](http://www.mrfa.org)**

Mike Harris is our web master. He does a great job with the web site. There's information on the VA, KIA, about anything you want on the 9th, MRF, and other in-country units, patches, books, and tour info. Mike has it somewhere on the site. You may contact Mike Harris if you want a book, pictures, etc., posted there. Mike makes the final decision on what will be posted. Contact him by e-mail [mekong152@charter.net](mailto:mekong152@charter.net). Mike served on Tango-152-1 (68-69).

# TAPS

*Those gone but not forgotten*

**Harold Foster** passed away from a heart attack June 7, 2006. *Harold was a Sailor's Sailor with whom I had the honor of serving many years ago aboard the USS Guide MSO-447. Harold was just a great person and shipmate; he will be missed by all who knew and served with him. Albert.* You may contact the family c/o Charlotte Foster, 925 Estates Dr., Kerrville, TX 78023; phone 830-895-7752; clfoster@kctc.com.

**Thomas E. Clemens** passed away after a tough battle with cancer. Tom served in the Mobile Riverine Force with the 4th/47th Riverine Infantry 8/68-8/69. Lori, Tom's wife, said Tom enjoyed the outdoors, fishing, hiking and camping. He was an avid sports fan and enjoyed watching all sports especially the Montana Grizzlies. You may contact the family at Lori Clemens, PO Box 5746, Missoula, MT 49606; 406-728-4909; tomclorlem@aol.com. Tom will be buried with full military honors.

**Jon W. Fisher** passed away after fighting lung cancer for 8 months; it finally beat him as it spread to his liver and brain. Jon was a highly decorated soldier who fought and served with honor and distinction while serving with A/CO/3rd/60th 9thInfDiv 10/67-5/68. Jon was awarded the bronze star and two purple hearts. Jon served two tours in-country Vietnam. Jon was buried with full military honors on July 8th. You may contact the family c/o Leanne Fisher, 521 E. Columbia St., Mason, MI 48854; phone 517-676-3811; jonfish@bellsouth.net.



**Freddy Shugart** passed away November 17, 2004. Freddy served in C Co 3rd/47th 1967-68. You may contact the family c/o Ann Shugart, 1654 Resaca Lafayette Rd. NW, Sugar Valley, CA 39764; annshugart32@hotmail.com.



**Larry Hughes** was killed in a car accident on June 28, 2006. He was on his way home to Fullerton, CA from the 9th Inf Div Society reunion in Ft Riley, KS. Larry was a decorated soldier with the 9th Inf Div.

Larry is survived by his wife Peggy, four children, and 10 grandchildren. *May our Brother Rest in Peace.*

**Carl Calvert** passed away July 26, 2006 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Carl served on the USS Luzerne Cty LST 902 1965-1967 during the Vietnam War. You may contact the family c/o Bobbie Calvert, 3010 Delmar Av., Cincinnati, OH 45213; 513-731-5953; Bcalvert11@fuse.net.

**William "Peaches" Fisher** passed away July 28, 2006 from a heart attack. Bill was a

great friend and shipmate and will be missed by all who knew him. Peaches served on Tango-132-3 from June 68 to May 69. You may contact the family c/o Carrie Rudolff, 1414 Fels Rd., Quakertown, PA 18951; carudloff@comcast.net.

**Richard N. Kiesel** recently passed away from a heart attack. Richard served in B Co 3rd/60th 1967-68. Contact the family c/o Eric Keisel, 27385 Schady Rd., Olmsted Falls, OH 44138; 440-235-1045; skiesel@alltel.net.

**Rick Chapman** passed away August 15, 2006 from cancer. Rick had been very ill for several weeks Rick contracted a blood disease while in Florida last winter. Rick and Gloria came home to the Chicago area in the spring time so that he could be treated at Northwestern University Hospital. The deceased was MDS and it is usually caused by exposure to chemicals (Agent Orange) Rick served on a Monitor in RivDiv-111 and on a Zippo boat in 132 Rick served in-country from 10/68-7/69. You may contact the family c/o Gloria Chapman 1839 Prairie Ridge Cir., Lidenhurst, IL 60046; 847-980-1556. *Gloria wanted the members to know that Rick was so proud to belong to the MRFA. Aside from his family, the most memorial thing that Rick accomplished in his lifetime was to serve with you guys. God rest his soul. Rick will be laid to rest in a ceremony Thursday at 12:30 p.m. at Shalom Memorial Park, 1700 West Rand Road, Arlington Heights, IL.*

**Lawrence P. Blumette** passed away August 14, 2006. Lawrence served on the USS Blanco Cty LST-344 and the USS Holmes Cty 836 as the Supply officer 1968-69. You may contact his wife Karen and the family c/o Larry Blumette (son) 395 E. Boot Rd., West Chester, PA 19380; phone 610-431-2595; lpblumette@localnet.com.



Mr. Blumette was a good man. A quiet person, what you may call a loner but he really enjoyed and loved and respected all whom served their country in Vietnam. He enjoyed the e-mails and the newsletter. We were the only Veterans association he belonged to. He was a good shipmate and will be missed.

Chief **Don Shelton** was killed on August 17, 2006. Don had Alzheimer's and was walking across a 4 lane freeway when he was struck and killed. During the Vietnam War he served on the USS White River (LSMR-536) from 1965-1967. Chief Shelton was a excellent sailor and Chief Petty Officer. He will be missed by all his shipmates. You may contact the family c/o



# 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.

Lloyd W. Austin for Arthur M. Day KIA 5/8/69 D Co 4th/47 Inf

Jack Benedick for C Co 4th/47th 66-68, C Co 3rd/60th 69, and E Co 3rd/60th Inf KIA 4/7/68

Ellen Bergman for Henry Bergman C Co 3rd/34th and 3rd/60th Inf (09/68-05/69)

Bill Brennan for Tom Swanick GMG3 USS White River LSMR-536

Brothers of the 2nd/47th for all Army and Navy KIAs James J. Byrnes for members of the Junk Force, Dung Island

Gene Cooper for Steve Brichford FT2-68/69 and Jerry Roleofs 67-68 USS White River LSMR-536

Ted Fetting B Co 2nd/60th Inf. 10/67-2/68 for all from B Co. 2nd/60th and KIA 2/2/68 Fred Jansonivs (ND), Elroy "Stevie" Le Blanc (CA), and Roy Phillips (IL)

Fred Gottwald for Sgt. Walter J. Garstkiewicz C Co 3rd/60th and C Co 6th/31st KIA 01/09/70

Gerald Johnston USS Nye Cty for James "Willie" Willeford Nye Cty LST-1067 11/28/66, friend, and sailor 19-year-old (RIP Buddy)

James Long Sr. ComRivFlot-One Staff 11/67-11/68 for Carol Ann, beloved wife

David Lynn for Howard Burns (QM2), Robert Bouchet (SM2), and Herman Miller (GM3) 08/11/68 IUWG-1-3

Adam Metts for Donald L. Bruckart KIA 03/31/69 Tango-111-2

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John Philp for LTC William B. Cronin KIA 04/27/67 Co 2nd/47th and for Colonel Arthur D. Moreland USA (Ret.) 2nd/47th 4/67-12/67

Tom Sanborn 4th/47thInf. for Spec4 David Thorton KIA 10/68 on Toi Son (VC) and 1st Lt James L. Tarte KIA 8/24/68 near Kai Lay

Robert Thacker for Earl T. Pelhan, Jr. SSG KIA 15th Combat Engineers

Robert Vargas for Gene Dirita 2nd/60th Inf KIA 10 Dec 67

Gary Williams for Dale Winkel C Co 3rd/60th Inf (01/68-01/69)

Hazel Shelton, 2710 Ike St, Lot-71, Chesapeake, VA 23324; (757) 543-0855.

*The MRFA Board of Directors and Staff would like to extend their most sincere sympathies to all the families of the fallen.*





# MRFA Catalog Products



## T-Shirts

All shirts \$22.50 (Includes S/H)

ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY	SZ
<b>SCREEN PRINTED LOGOS</b>		
Army and Navy River Rat (Tan)		
River Rat Vietnam <b>NEW!</b> (Rat Five Colors on White)		
Vietnam Combatant Craft Crew (VCCC) (Silver Insignia on White) <b>NEW!</b>		
<b>FULLY EMBROIDERED LOGOS</b>		
2nd/47th (Mech) Infantry (Ash)		
9th Infantry Div. Logo (Dk. Blue)		
Army Navy Teamwork		
Brown Water Navy Vietnam (Brown Logo; Dark Blue)		
Combat Action Ribbon (Tan)		
Combat Infantry Badge (Ash)		
MRFA Army and Navy (Ash)		
River Assault Force TF 117 (Ash)		
<b>BOATS (Ash Color)</b>		
ASPB		
Monitor		
Tango		
<b>TOTAL T-SHIRTS x \$22.50 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>	

## High Quality Decals

\$5.00 (includes S/H)

ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY
9th Infantry Div Octofoil (Five Colors)	
MRFA Logo	
<b>TOTAL DECALS x \$5.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>

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\$7.50 (includes S/H)

HIGH QUALITY VINYL, FULL COLOR, 12" x 3"

ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY
MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Logos	
<b>TOTAL BUMPER STICKERS x \$7.50 EA.</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>

## Embroidered Patches

\$5.00 (includes S/H)

ITEM	QTY	ITEM	QTY
<b>Boat Hats (Off White Blue Bill)</b>			
9th Infantry Div.		Brown Wtr Navy	
IUWG		MRFA	
MRFA Mekong Delta		River Raiders	
River Rat		TF 117	
VCCC Brown Water			
VCCC Patch In Five Colors <b>NEW!</b>			
VCCC MRF Silver <b>NEW!</b>			
<b>TOTAL PATCHES x 5.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>		

## Hat Pins

\$5.00 (includes S/H)

ITEM	QTY	ITEM	QTY
3rd/60th Riverine		39th Inf Crest	
47th Inf Crest		60th Inf Crest	
9th Inf Div		Brown Water Navy	
IUWG-1		MRFA	
RivAssault Sqd 15		RivDiv-91	
RivDiv-92		RivDiv-111	
RivDiv-112		RivDiv-131	
RivDiv-132		River Raiders <b>NEW!</b>	
River Rat <b>NEW!</b>		USS Benewah	
USS White River			
<b>TOTAL PINS x \$5.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>		

## VCCC Pin

\$7.50 (includes S/H)

ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY
Vietnam Combatant Crewman Pin	
<b>TOTAL PINS x \$7.50 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>

## MRFA Coffee Mug

\$30.00 (includes S/H)

PERSONALIZED FULL COLOR CERAMIC MUG

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Member's Name (max. 20 characters & spaces)	
Member's Rank or Rate (max. 4 character & spaces)	
Command in Vietnam <input type="checkbox"/> Army <input type="checkbox"/> Navy <input type="checkbox"/> USCG <input type="checkbox"/> Purple Heart	
<b>TOTAL MUGS x \$30.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>

## MRFA & 9th Inf. Poster

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ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY
Beautifully Reproduced in Full Color	
<b>TOTAL POSTERS x \$21.50 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>

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ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY
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## MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Jackets Satin Jackets

NOTE: STRIPED JACKETS ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE (Sizes M through XXXL • Black or Dark Blue Only)

JACKETS REQUIRE 8-10 WEEKS SHIP TIME		
ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY	SZ
<b>SATIN JACKETS - Embroidered Back Side Only</b>		
Embroidered MRFA Logo on BACK ONLY		
Embroidered 9th Infantry Logo on BACK ONLY		
<b>TOTAL JACKETS x \$135.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>	
<b>SATIN JACKETS - Embroidered Front and Back</b>		
Small MRFA Logo on Front Left, Larger on Back Name & Unit on Front Right (please specify)		
Sm. 9th Div. Logo on Front Left, Larger on Back Name & Unit on Front Right (please specify)		
<b>TOTAL JACKETS x \$155.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>	
<b>SATIN JACKETS - Also Available Quilted! Please specify details above and quantity in box below.</b>		
<b>TOTAL QUILTED x \$165.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>	

## Denim Jackets

Denim Jackets Tend to Run Larger • Not Available Quilted

ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY	SZ
<b>DENIM JACKETS - Embroidered Back Side Only</b>		
Embroidered MRFA Logo on BACK ONLY		
Embroidered 9th Infantry Logo on BACK ONLY		
<b>TOTAL JACKETS x \$135.00 EA.</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>	
<b>DENIM JACKETS Embroidered Front and Back</b>		
Small MRFA Logo on Front Left, Larger on Back Name & Unit on Front Right (please specify)		
Sm. 9th Division Logo on Front Left, Larger on Back Name & Unit on Front Right (please specify)		
<b>TOTAL JACKETS x \$155.00 EACH</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>	

## Embroidered Hats

\$21.50 (includes S/H)

ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY
2nd/47th Infantry	
9th Infantry Division Logo (Dark Blue)	
9th Infantry Div with CIB Vietnam (Olive Drab) <b>NEW!</b>	
9th Inf Div with Vietnam Ribbon VN (Olive Drab) <b>NEW!</b>	
CIB (White)	
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9th Medical Battalion (Dong Tam)	
IUWG	
MRF w/Combat Action Ribbon Vietnam (Olive Drab)	
MRF w/Vietnam Ribbon Vietnam (Olive Drab)	
MRFA Logo (Dark Blue)	
US Navy Corpsman Vietnam Vet with Insignia	
<b>Purple Heart (Off White Blue Bill)</b>	
Purple Heart with 9th Infantry Division	
Purple Heart with MRF	
<b>Boat Hats (Off White Blue Bill)</b>	
Tango	
ASPB	
<b>Ship's Hats (Dark Blue) Gold lettering showing ship's name with "Vietnam" text, and USS...</b>	
Askari ARL-30	Brule AKL-28
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	POSTER	\$21.50 EACH	\$
	PRINT	\$150.00 EACH	\$
	SATIN JACKET	\$135.00 EACH	\$
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Everett Wiedersberg Monitor-112-1 (2/68-1/69)  
Stephen G. Wieting USS Benewah APB-35 11/66-2/68  
George Wilfong USA (RET) A Co. 4th/39th Inf  
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