



# River Currents

Under water

River Raiders in the Mekong Delta mud

A PUBLICATION OF  
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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## Veterans Day 2015 Washington, DC

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will be placing wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day, Wednesday, November 11, 2015. We will be gathering at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at 8:30 a.m. and proceed to The Wall at 9:00 a.m. on November 11.

We have blocked 40 rooms at the Arlington Court Suites, a Clarion Collection Hotel, in Arlington, Virginia, from November 8 to 11 (check out on 11/12). Room rates are \$119 (plus tax) per night.

For reservations, call 1-703-524-4000 ext. "0." Please state our group name "MRFA" and give your dates of arrival and departure. If you plan to attend, you must make your reservations under our group code prior to the cutoff date of October 15, 2015.

The Arlington Court Suites is located at 1200 N Courthouse Rd, Arlington, Virginia 22201. More information on this hotel is available at <http://www.arlingtoncourthotel.com/>.

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will have a hospitality room available November 8 to 11. Come join us as we honor our fallen Brothers on Veterans Day 2015. We look forward to seeing you in DC.

For more information, contact Board Member Bob (Doc) Pries, (513) 659-4974, [priesrl@att.net](mailto:priesrl@att.net). ★

## MRFA Memorial & Museum Trailer

The MRFA Memorial and Museum Trailer will be at the Viet Nam Vet Thank You Weekend at Forest City, IA, Wednesday August 27 through Sunday August 30, 2015, and at Fountain, MN, Saturday, October 3, 2015.

## From the Galley

Will return in the winter issue

## The Picture

In 2014 Dennis Bieak was asked by Janet Helenthal if he knew someone who could place her painting at the Vietnam Memorial. Since Dennis knew the MRFA and 9th Inf Div place wreaths at Vietnam Memorial every Veterans Day since 1992, he contacted Doc Bob Pries and the story is below. Just shows how folks can get things done. **Albert**

From: Janet Helenthal <[re-guthal70@yahoo.com](mailto:re-guthal70@yahoo.com)>

Subject: The Picture

Dear Denny and Bob:

I hope this email finds you both in good health and looking forward to warmer weather. All is well here and I am hoping to come out of hibernation soon.

I am writing to share some interesting news. A small local newspaper wants to interview me regarding the art work you helped me with last year. Here is the back story: A woman whose son served in Iraq saw the piece at a friend's place and wanted a print to give to her son for Christmas. In addition, she wanted me to write the story of how the picture came to be and how you both played a role in getting it to DC.

So I wrote a brief summary and gave it to her along with the print. Well, she shared the story with friends who shared it with friends and here we are so to speak.

The interview takes place on April 15. I am to bring the original art, a

copy of the "story" and the pictures Bob sent from DC. I am attaching a copy of the story so you can peruse it. I am writing to ask what you would prefer I do if she asks for your contact information, i.e., your email addresses. I will do whatever you think best.

You both are "legends" around here and anyone who has heard the story of how the art made it to the Wall will often ask about "Denny and Doc."

Below is the story.

With Warm Regards and a Grateful Heart, **Janet Helenthal**

**Last Night... Tonight...**

**Tomorrow... A Trip to The Wall**

Last May a friend and Vietnam war veteran, Micky, approached me with an idea for a work of art. He wanted people to see and understand what day-to-day life after war was like for many veterans. For inspiration, he gave me an old fatigue cap with a Special Forces insignia attached to it with a safety pin. I pulled together some ideas and presented them to him.

"No, no, no," he said, "that's cliché! I want you to show the reality."

I told Micky to show me what he meant—and he did—a tabletop arrangement of liquor bottles and prescription drugs, a scope, knife, uniform covers, and an old photo. Then we spent time talking. Well, Micky talked and I listened. I listened and



the rest of the elements of the picture came to light. The calendar filled with appointments and interviews; the job searches, the jobs found and lost; the mounting bills, the red tape letters; and the endless stream of haunting memories. I went back to the drawing board and drew, erased, trashed, and drew again. Along the way, I consulted with my artist friend Petra Radcliffe for technical and artistic feedback. The composition gradually took form. FYI: There was still a lot of drawing, erasing, and trashing.

Micky wanted his Brothers to help name the art. So that is how I first came in contact with Denny Bieak, a colleague of my brother and a Vietnam veteran. Denny reached

out to his Brothers with the request and the ideas rolled in. Along the way, I read a comment Denny made once about what he says when people ask when he was in Vietnam. His answer is: "Last night." I mentioned the comment to Frank Radcliffe. He looked at the rough draft, then looked at me and said, "Last Night... Tonight... Tomorrow." Now the art had a name.

Micky wanted the art to show loving honor and respect for those who have borne the experience of war. He envisioned many veterans, and hopefully, nonveterans, seeing the art and being touched by its message. The art travelled to any venue I had available to me and then our

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# Heart Operation on Ship— U.S. Doctors Save Tiger Scout

**Army Times March 12, 1969**

WITH THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE, Vietnam—A Vietnamese Tiger Scout is alive today and recovering thanks to emergency heart surgery performed by Army doctors onboard a Navy ship of the Mobile Riverine Force.

Timely evacuation by helicopter from a booby-trapped beach near the city of Ben Tre, the expertise of two Army surgeons and the nearness of medical facilities on the USS Colleton (APB-36), all played a part in saving the life of Le Van Sau, a Scout with Co B, 3/60th, a unit of the 9th Inf Div's 2d Bde.

Le Van Sau and infantrymen from Co B were investigating intelligence reports that a beach area south of Ben Tre had been mined. They arrived by river assault craft from the Mobile Riverine Force and began sweeping a small area, following it back to the jungle line.

SHORTLY after entering the area, the Tiger Scout and the three soldiers accidentally detonated a booby-trapped pressure grenade, buried just back from the beach where the thick jungle growth began. All were injured.

In less than 25 minutes after the mishap, the four were hovering in an Army medical 45th Air Ambulance Co evacuation helicopter over the Colleton's flight deck.

When the four wounded men landed aboard the Colleton, preparations had already begun for their emergency treatment.

AFTER A quick general check the attending doctors, Maj. Richard White and Capt. Robert Weisberg, decided to send the three soldiers, the lesser wounded on to the Army Field Hospital at Dong Tam Base. The 25-year-old Sau was kept onboard the Colleton.

"At first we thought he just had a bad abdominal wound," Dr. Weisberg, of Philadelphia, said.

"His blood pressure was almost gone so we started him on



whole blood," added Dr. White, who is the senior medical officer of the 9th Div's Co, 9th Medical Bn. He is from Pensacola, Fla.

An operation was decided on.

"He had a small hole at the apex of the heart," Dr.

White explained. "About a quarter of an inch," he added, pointing to the tip of his little finger for comparison. The wound extended into the left ventricular cavity, the main pumping chamber of the heart.

The two doctors, working against time, completed the operation successfully.

Dr. White describes Sau's condition as "good." "He's recovering very well," he added.

This was the third heart surgery operation for the field surgical team. The first, a U.S. infantryman, has since returned to the States. The second patient, a critically wounded Vietnamese Marine, was "not so fortunate," Dr. Weisberg said.

According to the doctors, the key to the success they have had is the "flying ambulance." The "choppers"



can land in any small clearing or hover over an area too dense to land.

And Mobile Riverine Force officials have added an additional landing area for quick access to the wounded. Some of the 56-foot Armored Troop Carriers of the force have been reconstructed to include a small helo landing pad—about the size of six ping pong tables. A helo can land on these "mini-carriers" while operating in small streams surrounded by jungle growth too dense to penetrate.

"It's not at all unusual for a man wounded in battle to be in a doctor's care in one of our three ship hospitals in less than 20 minutes from the time he is hit" according to Lt. Comdr. Donald F. Hagen, staff medical officer for River Assault Flotilla One, the Navy component of the joint Army-Navy Mobile Riverine Force.

## Army-Navy Medcap Immunizes Schoolgirls

**Army Times March 12, 1969**

ABOARD THE BENEWAH—More than 3,200 Vietnamese schoolgirls were immunized during a joint Army-Navy MEDCAP held in My Tho Sept. 9.

Elements of the 9th Division's 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry joined with Navy personnel from this Mobile Riverine Force ship to immunize against plague, cholera, diphtheria and typhoid. Since beginning Delta-wide immunization programs, the MRF teams have inoculated over 28,000 civilians.

"I have never seen better coordination on any type of joint service project than I saw on this MEDCAP," said Captain Robert Weisberg, 3d/47th battalion surgeon, of this visit to the all-girl My

Tho School." Lieutenant (JG) Sidney Funk, Navy doctor aboard the Colleton, was enthusiastic about the joint effort and contributed a lot of work."



"It certainly was hectic," said First Lieutenant William S. Minton, Battalion Civic Action Officer. "The classes kept coming up to us one right after another. At times we had six medics giving shots and still couldn't keep up."

The MEDCAP lasted 7 hours. At one time supplies were exhausted and the shot line halted. An ambulance was sent to the MACV advisory team in My Tho and returned shortly with more supplies.

By the end of the day, 3,226 schoolgirls had gone through the line, making it the largest 1-day MEDCAP in the Mekong Delta. ★



## PICTURE

Continued from previous page

journey seemed to lose its momentum. Micky seemed to lose momentum too. I became frustrated because I had promised to help get the art "out there." It was a righteous cause and I wasn't seeing progress! What I lack in other virtues, I more than make up for in my roaring impatience when life moves at a slow pace.

I mentioned my (totally righteous) frustration to my

sister, who is also a Vietnam veteran.

She thought a moment and said, "Take it to The Wall for Veterans Day." She went on to explain that anything left at The Wall is archived and some of the items make their way to The Smithsonian Institute. Either way, the art would be seen by countless people AND saved in The Wall archives. Yes, the clouds did part and I heard angels singing!

Since she was not going to DC this year (2014), I

checked with my brother and Denny Bieak while searching the Internet for trips to The Wall. No luck with my brother or the Internet, but Denny once again leapt into action and started contacting his Brothers in Arms. Within an hour, I heard from Bob "Doc" Pries, a board member of the Mobile Riverine Force Association (MRFA [www.mrfa.org](http://www.mrfa.org)). **Bob wrote:** Dennis, Thank you.

Janet, Thank you for doing this. It will be an honor to

place your picture at the Wall.

What are the measurements of the picture? I am flying to DC so I may have you send the picture to the hotel instead of my home.

Look forward to hearing from you soon. Doc

### Denny wrote:

Janet, Seems like everything is on track. These guys (Brothers) are great. Didn't expect this to happen so fast.

Any more help, you got my email address. Denny

and that was that. My sister came through. Denny came through. Bob came through. The Brothers came through. The picture went to The Wall. I didn't tell Micky until the evening of the 11th. He was left speechless and with tears in his eyes.

As Bob wrote from DC: **Mission accomplished! ★**



## The Big Bang

by 2LT Gary P. Hale, C 3rd/39 Inf

I was stationed at Fort Polk, LA, in February 1969. I was a new 2LT of Infantry and I was a Training Officer. I had just gone through three cycles of training Basic Trainees. Most of these guys were headed to Tiger Land (N. Ft Polk) Advanced Infantry Training and then to Vietnam. Everyone knew where they were going. When my orders came they read: "Jungle Warfare School in Panama, enroute to South Vietnam." It was no surprise when I got the orders as I was expecting them to arrive any day.

After a short leave at home in Austin, TX, I flew to Charleston, SC. I boarded a military aircraft and flew to Howard AFB in Panama. I was now back with 8-10 of my old Infantry OCS classmates that I had not seen in 6 months. We were taken across the Canal Zone to Fort Davis and we completed the 2-week Jungle Warfare course. Finishing up we flew back to Charleston and then to San Francisco, CA, for processing at Oakland Army Base. I ran into one of my OCS buddies, 2LT Jim Gulley who was stationed there. He would follow me to Vietnam a few months later and serve with the 1st Inf. Division.

We were taken to Travis AFB, CA, to fly to Vietnam. Like most of us leaving California, we landed in Hawaii, then Guam, and then Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Shortly thereafter we were off to 90th Replacement Battalion between Bien Hoa and Long Binh. After a few days of in processing we finally walked out to the "Bulletin Board" to look for our names. I finally found my name listed under 9th Inf. Division. I asked where they were and was told "Down in the Mekong Delta south of Saigon." Several more of my buddies were also going to the Delta with me. It was not a highly recommended assignment by the staff at the Replacement Battalion. Everyone said the conditions were muddy, wet, hot, and humid, with lots of VC and lots of booby traps. You know something? Those guys were right on the money!

We were loaded on a C-7 Caribou aircraft and flown to the airfield at Dong Tam near the large

city of My Tho on the northern bank of the Mekong River. This was the HQ of the 9th Infantry Division. We in processed and were taken to a place called "Old Reliable Academy" where we were to spend several days learning how to fight in the Delta, river crossing techniques, avoiding booby traps, zeroing our weapons, throwing hand grenades, etc.

It was at Old Reliable Academy that it happened. One evening, I believe it was 26 March 1969, when we were sleeping in the barracks, the warning sirens started going off. It was close



to midnight if I remember correctly. We grabbed a few clothes and we all ran out and headed to the nearest bunker that we could find. We had no weapons at that time. We just started stuffing in the bunkers until they were pretty full. It was dark, hot, and everyone was getting well acquainted with his buddies, if you know what I mean.

All at once the largest, loudest explosion that you can imagine happened. The first thing that I remember was that the air was sucked out of the bunker, then in just a few seconds the air came rushing back in. With the air came massive amounts of dust and dirt and you almost could not breathe. Everyone was hot, sweating, and covered in dust. It was dark and no one had any idea what was happening. A few guys had flashlights and from what I could see everyone had a look of total fear on their faces. We had only been in-country for about a week and we had just gotten to the Delta. Rumors of being attacked started through the bunker which didn't matter, as we had no weapons anyway.

I do not remember how long we were in the bunker but the explosions went on most of the night. Rumors had it that we were under attack but we did not know if it was true. We could not tell if the rounds were incoming or outgoing. Finally as morning came, the explosions died down a little and we started to emerge, like large dirty rats, from the bunker. All around our area were damaged buildings, artillery rounds lying around, and confused soldiers, no matter the rank.

The word finally reached us that the attack was actually a few enemy mortar or rocket rounds from VC Island, in the Mekong River, that had landed in the main ammo dump for the 9th Division. The explosions that lasted all night were our own rounds going off. Unexploded rounds were scattered all over the area. I do not know how far some of the rounds were blown but it was

a long way. We were later told that somewhere between 500 and 1,000 tons of ammo was blown up during the night. All I could think of at the time was "Welcome to Vietnam," and this is going to be a long year.

When we got back in our barracks, on the second floor, there was a hole in the tin metal roof.



*Pictures courtesy of  
Ralph Bigelow*

One bed had a black mark on the sheet and the pair of boots right next to the bunk had one boot that was completely cut in half. There was a hole in the floor under the boots. We went down to the bottom of the barracks and there on the floor was an unexploded projectile, which appeared to be a 105-mm artillery round or a 4.2" mortar round. There was no fuse in it and it had not gone off. It had blown all the way from the dump to "Old Reliable Academy," which was a pretty good distance.

I believe that most of what was stored in the dump was small arms ammo, grenades, mortar, and artillery rounds. But, it was now scattered all over Dong Tam. We later went down by the Navy Yard close to the ship basin and we saw a massive amount of damage that had been done to many buildings in the area of the dump. This had been a huge explosion and I believe it made the news all over. It was probably just a lucky round that had hit the dump but that is all it took.



**Colonel George  
P. Hale**



**PVT George P. Hale**

I never forgot that night as long as I was in Vietnam and I still remember it well as do many other GIs and Navy personnel that were there. I do not have any details on how many soldiers or sailors were killed or wounded but there must have been a good number of injuries. I left for C Co. 3/39 Infantry Battalion at FSB Moore very shortly after this and was only back at Dong Tam a few times after that. I did get down to the Navy Yard a few times to visit the "O" Club in a Quonset hut. I got caught by the bell a few times and bought several rounds for everyone in the club. The beers were about 15 cents each I think.

Time fades your memory some but 46 years later I still remember "The Big Bang." ★

**"I do not remember how long we were in the bunker but the explosions went on most of the night. Rumors had it that we were under attack but we did not know if it was true."**



# US Army Sniper Program

edited by Ed Eaton B Co 3rd/60th  
SOURCE: globalsecurity.org

In the spring of 1969, 9th Infantry Division's most successful ambush tactic was the sniper mode. This sniper program was initiated in the States and was set in motion as result of a visit to Fort Benning in January 1968. The Army Marksmanship Unit cooperated to the fullest extent, and funds were made available to increase the accuracy of 55 M-14 rifles and to provide sniper-scopes. The idea (initiated by Lt. Gen. Ewell) was to get an outstanding training team from the Marksmanship Unit to train 9th Infantry Division soldiers in sniper tactics.



**Army Sniper Ed Eaton  
B Co 3rd/60th**



The Army Marksmanship Unit Team led by Major Willis L. Powell and consisting of seven non-commissioned officers arrived in Vietnam in June 1968. Upon arrival in the country they re-vamped the M-16 training methods at the 9th Infantry Division training establishment, the Reliable Academy. Subsequently, they supervised the construction of a 900-m range Bear Cat and then later in 1969 another one in Dong Tam. In the early days the Championship Team of Instructors periodically accompanied ambush patrols to assimilate the delta tactics. Progress was slow.

Brigadier General James S. Timothy was given the task of getting the sniper program off the ground in early August. This gave it the needed boost. Eventually, the more accurate M-14/X-21 rifles arrived as well as special national match ammunition. The first hand-picked group of volunteers from each battalion graduated in early November 1968 and the first sniper kill was registered on 19 November 1968 north of Binh Phuoc in Long An Province. The second group of snipers graduated in early December. Approximately 10 snipers would graduate from each class which could start out with as many as 30 hopefuls. There would be (about) one class graduate per month. In 1969 as the 9th started filling their positions, they started taking men from other units such as the Navy. Ron Smith and Ron Santoro from Navy River Divisions were the first two.

Notwithstanding all the personal attention that had been given to the sniper program, the early performance was ragged with only 8 kills in



**Navy Sniper Ron Santoro**

November and 11 in December. This was clearly a dismal performance, considering the large number of men and the effort that had gone into the program.

Therefore, 9th Infantry Division set about analyzing equipment, personnel, methods, and tactics. Once the flaw in the system was found, the solution was extremely simple, and it had an immediate effect. Initially, snipers had been parceled out by the battalions on the basis of two per Line Company. The company commanders, then, had the responsibility for the snipers and most company commanders could not care less. They used snipers just as any other rifleman. This was the reason they were not getting results. Consequently, Division directed assignment of the snipers to the battalion headquarters and held the battalion commanders responsible for their proper utilization and for emphasis on the program.

Once the battalion commanders learned to assign the sniper teams to the companies going on night operations, the problem was solved. Snipers reported directly to company commanders, received a briefing on proposed tactics, picked the platoon and the area where they thought they could be most effective, and waited for a target. The nighttime sniper teams normally consisted of two snipers and two additional infantrymen armed with an M-79 and an M-16 and carrying a radio. Snipers worked in pairs to offset the eye fatigue which set in after long periods of peering through a starlight scope.

Once the snipers began to get personal attention and could handpick their assignments and fit their talents to the mission, the results were extraordinary. The steady improvement in sniper results, culminated in 346 enemy killed in the month of April and leveling off at about 200 kills per month. It was a flat learning curve initially but it soon ramped up.

After the snipers began to gain confidence and unit commanders saw that they were a great boon to the unit, the whole nighttime pace increased. Things went slowly initially because the ambush units were fearful of drawing attention to themselves as the result of snipers engaging the Viet Cong. However, 9th Infantry Division units soon became more confident and aggressive in night operations, primarily as a result of the sniper program, a large unexpected bonus that we had not considered.

One of the unusual night sniper employments resulted from the 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry operating from riverine boats along the



**Army Sniper Ed Eaton, Navy Sniper Ron Smith,  
and Chuck Mawhinney. Chuck was top marine  
sniper in Vietnam.**

SNIPER!



Mekong River. In this case, the snipers working in pairs positioned themselves on the helicopter landing pad of Tango boats. The Tango boats travelled at speeds of 2 to 4 knots moving about 100 to 150 meters from and parallel to the shore. Often they would anchor for periods of a half-hour before moving to a new location. As the Viet Cong

moved along the shoreline, the snipers after positive identification of the enemy, that is detection of a weapon, would open fire. During the period 12 April to 9 May 1969, snipers of the 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry killed 39 Viet Cong. About 1.7 Viet Cong were killed per engagement. The average time of engagement was 0040 hours. This practice was also used extensively in the MRF's 2nd Battalion of the 9th Inf Div.

One of the most effective and ingenious methods that were used in the 9th Infantry Division sniper program was the use of pink-filtered searchlights during periods of limited ambient illumination. Another was the effective use by the 4th/39th of daytime sniper operations. They would insert snipers in the early morning along known trails and infiltration routes likely to be used by the enemy. They used six-man teams—highly trained individuals capable of remaining in the field for several hours without moving a muscle when the situation required.

Another form of employment was with Hunter Killer Teams. Two snipers would lie on each side of a Huey and cruise the small river systems



**Ron Smith**

with two Cobras stacked behind. As the sniper would fire a tracer round, the Cobras would fall out of formation following the tracer round as the sniper updated target info via radio to the Cobras.

The sniper program was one of the most successful programs that the 9th Infantry Division undertook. It took over a year from its inception in the States to its peak of performance in Vietnam. It also took plenty of hard work and belief in the concept and in snipers. But more than anything, it restored the faith of the infantryman in his rifle and in his own capabilities. Fighting alone at night without the usually available combined arms team, the "rice paddy" soldier was more than a match for the enemy.

The program was so successful that it was immediately picked up by other Divisions in Vietnam starting with the 25th Inf. Div. and spreading from there. While these snipers for the most part didn't have the more accurate XM-21, the M-14 continued to be a deadly choice for the Army and Navy snipers. In fact unknown to many; the USMC snipers also used the M-14 as it was better suited for the Starlight Scope, the primary night time scope of all Vietnam snipers.

When snipers came into their own, it became apparent that aimed rifle fire was killing Viet Cong. The Viet Cong basically could not shoot and Americans could. ★

# My War

by Emily Strange

Published in Vietnam Vol 27, No. 6, June 2015

*My "Eleanor Rigby face that I kept in a jar by the door"*

I was in college during the 1968 Tet Offensive. By graduation, with a degree in English, I wasn't keen on going back into the classroom to teach. I thought, "What else is available?" The Red Cross said, "We could send you to Vietnam." Having been a war protester, it was very easy in my naiveté to believe that the war was wrong, but when the Red Cross said I could go to the war to become a "Donut Dollie," I wanted the opportunity to experience it, to know both sides, not just be doing the easy part here at home.

In February 1968, I had only 2 weeks of training in Washington, D.C. We learned such essential things as how to identify rank, that our skirts should not be more than 1 inch above the knee, that we should always act like ladies and that we should never drink alcohol when we were in uniform. The fact that there were no "ladies rooms" at firebases was not mentioned nor was the proper dress code for running from the shower to the bunker. The words "mortar attack" were never spoken.

After arriving in Vietnam, I got orders to Dong Tam in the Mekong Delta. They put us on a helicopter, and when we banked in a turn, I was more afraid for my guitar than I was that we would fall out through the open doors!

Dong Tam was home to the 9th Infantry Division and the U.S. Navy' Mobile Riverine Force. If you spent much time in Dong Tam, you were definitely going to experience mortar attacks. My first one just happened to be on a night I'd been at the Navy Enlisted Men's Club where I'm pretty sure every guy there bought me a drink. I had gone to bed, slept through a blaring siren, the explosions, and an MP knocking at my door before "Donut 6" screamed at the door for me to get out. (For the first and only time, I had locked my door.) By the time we made it to the bunker, I had sobered up. One round landed in the ditch next to our hooch. The day after the attack was the only time I ever asked for statistics: 120 rounds, 89 killed, including guys going home the next day, now in coffins.

Our regular routine was for the six Donut Dollies in Dong Tam to fly out in pairs 5 days a week. In the morning we'd get on a helicopter and fly to one of the infantry's firebases or to a ship. There is really no way of getting on a helicopter in a ladylike manner. But to their credit, the guys never said a word. When the prop wash blew the skirts over our heads, they pretended not to notice. Also they took pains to clean up their language—as though we had never heard four-letter words.

“  
There is really no way of  
getting on a helicopter  
in a ladylike manner  
”

It was our mission to bring a touch of home to the combat zone, to help the men remember people in the real world waiting to welcome them home. It was a miracle each time I saw a thousand-yard stare change into a bright-eyed smile.

I always put on that smile for them. Sometimes I called it my Eleanor Rigby face that I kept in a jar by the door for all the lonely people.

The days we took our programs to the ships of the Mobile Riverine Force were a real treat. I remember one time that the Navy guys had gone to quite a bit of trouble to make our arrival really special. Two young, handsome sailors met us at the chopper, helped us off, took our game bags and led us over to the side of the ship, where a barge below was packed with young men waving and whistling, beckoning us to "come on down" the really long ladder in our skirts. That's another thing the Red Cross had failed to mention in our training: We would need to be really good sports in the company of young, testosterone-crazed boys and men!

But I was absolutely astounded by my first lunch aboard a ship. I got a tray and started down the line. "Steak or chicken for you today?" and "Mashed potatoes or baked?" Lunch was different at firebases. Sometimes it was C rations. Occasionally, hot chow was flown out in those metal containers, and the Donut Dollies served the food because the guys seemed to think it tasted better if we put it on their trays. "Where are you from?" we would ask. "Would you like some potatoes with that?"

Sometimes it seems that Vietnam was a lifetime ago. Other times it's like only yesterday. Man or woman, soldier or civilian, we had all breathed the dust of the delta and been mired in the monsoon mud. We have savored the luscious taste of canned peaches and pound cake. We know the true joy of a long-awaited shower, dry socks and a very rare icy cold beer. ★



Emily Strange was at a firebase when a reporter asked to take this photo of her.

Miss Emily Vietnam



Miss Emily Today

At the firebases we would go from company to company to play games with the guys or just sit and talk. Sometimes the soldiers wanted to be left alone, and I could respect that. When they were preparing for a mission, you had to understand they were getting ready not just gear wise, but emotionally, so we kept it light. I carried my guitar, and at some places we would sing, just improvise.

## Joint Patrol With Popular Forces (PFs)

by Alex "Greek" Exarhopoulos B Co 5th/60th  
9th Inf Div (01/67-12/67)

Memories about joint patrols with the South Vietnamese Popular Forces. I was the lucky squad leader who got to take Americans and South Vietnamese on a night patrol mission. I didn't have a warm fuzzy feeling about it, and Harry even said, "Greek, this is gonna be fucked up." I was told to take my squad to the PF compound, which was a small fortress. These guys weren't taking any chances of being overrun. This place had more sandbags and barbed wire than anything we had. Of course, we had more guys on our perimeter. The PFs had a fort with maybe a platoon inside. We were to pick up a squad of PFs to join our squad and pull off this joint patrol. Everything was going just fine while we walked nicely spread out down the road. We reached a point on the road where we had to cut from the road, into a rice paddy and make our way to a wood line on the other side of the paddy. Now, there are a few basic things about the individual soldier on a night patrol. He doesn't talk. He doesn't smoke. He makes sure his gear doesn't make noise while he's moving. The name of the game is "Don't make a fuckin' sound!" We turned off the road and were on our way across the paddy when the PFs lit cigarettes. One of them pulled out a transistor radio to hear the rock and roll. I told my guys to turn around and get back to the road. We headed back to our camp. I didn't really give two shits about the PFs and what they were doing, but they headed back with us. When we reached their fortress, they split from us and we continued back to our camp. I met our temporary new platoon leader who did not seem too happy with me for bringing back the squad. "What the hell are you doing here? You're supposed to be out there?" I said, "Lieutenant, as soon as we got into the paddy and headed for the wood line, the PFs completely violated noise discipline. We were in jeopardy patrolling with those guys, so I brought my boys back." I didn't like this lieutenant because he didn't like the platoon. He thought that he deserved some kind of special platoon, not us raggedy bastards. Thankfully, he sucked ass enough to get to be platoon leader of the Recon Platoon, which to me was nothing but just another mechanized platoon with a fancy name. The lieutenant understood exactly what the problem was, and it wasn't with us. He did say that we would have to continue with the patrol, but to carry on without the PFs. I didn't mind that decision and I took my guys back out to the road, but I didn't lead them through the rice paddy. We were already compromised, so I found a dry spot near the road with some decent cover and concealment and stayed out of that wood line. There was a question in my mind that had a couple of answers. Was there a reason why the PFs lit cigarettes and pulled out a radio on a night patrol? One answer was that they had no intention of going into that wood line, so they made out to be pains in our asses so that we'd turn back. I knew fuckin' right well that these guys knew better than to make all that noise. The only other answer was that they were tipping off the VC that we were on our way to meet them in the wood line. Because we didn't get fired at when the PFs made all that noise told me that VC Charlie didn't want to fire and perhaps kill the guys that were tipping them off. In that respect, we were lucky. If it was just us GIs out there, we'd have been lit up. Then again, we wouldn't have been making a sound out there. Like I said, the PFs always knew where the VC were. ★





## Remembering Foot Bridge River Raiders

Dwayne Peterson:  
Slippery nasty bridges.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Gustavo Velez:  
That is me. Gustavo Velez B  
Co 3rd/60 Inf.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dwayne Peterson:  
I was C Co 4th/47th (1968).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Jeff M:

I fell off one of these more  
than once.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Gustavo Velez:  
Dwayne you was with Sgt  
Luis Baez.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

James Henke:  
We lived dangerously, and  
half the time never thought  
about it. Oh my, don't open  
up on me now. We did a lot of  
improvising that year in the  
Delta. Nam Vet '67.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Thomas Duthie:  
Didn't use them...too many  
were booby trapped. Better  
to feed the leeches than to  
get your ass blown away. E  
Co 4th/47th (1967).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Gustavo Velez:  
To all the great soldiers of  
the 9th Div and Sailor, and  
Marine around the Mekong  
Delta. God bless each one of  
you guys. Thank you for the  
services. God bless America.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Bobby Jefcoat:  
Thankful for those "bridges."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Robert Hoelle:  
The foot bridge in the picture  
looks like a pretty sturdy one.  
I remember a few that just  
weren't made for a GI and his  
gear. I and a few others have  
gone in the leech pool more  
than once.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## Sinking of ASPB 132-3

*Okay, Cookie!*  
*This is my boat, I called it "La Tortuga"...There were only four of them. They were called "Combat Salvage Boat" (CSB, 1, 2, 3, and 4); mine was the "3." QMCM (MDV) Frank De La Oliva USN (Ret.)*

### Combat Salvage Boat "3"

Albert "Cookie" a friend of mine off the USS Askari ARL-30 took this picture and sent it to me. We were right up there on the north side of Giant Slingshot by the "Cambodia Border." CSB-3 Boat spent the most time in 'Nam of the four boats and was the last of the four boats to be turned over to the SVN. I refused to do so and they had to send another guy to do it. (Note: I served with Frank in 1964-65 on the USS Skylark ASR-20. The next time I saw Frank was in the Mekong Delta where he was Boat Captain of CSB-3. To be such a large Navy back then, you could always run into someone you served with.)



**ASPB-132-3 at Dong Tam**

Salvage operations of ASPB 132-3, which was sunk by an enemy command detonated mine on the Song Cai Tu (WR 412 753) in Chuong Thien Province on 29 April, were completed by 1 May soon after CSB-3 (Combat Salvage Boat—a converted LCM) arrived on the

scene. The heavily damaged boat was towed to Dong Tam by CSB-3 in company with escort RAC and arrived on 2 May. The mining incident is described in last month's summary.

ASPB 132-3 crew members killed April 29, 1969—Richard L. Keller, EN3, Lomita, CA and FN Terry Thompson of Gulfport, MS—when ASPB 132-3 was sunk on the Cai Tu River as an enemy mine of unknown type was detonated beneath its stern during the operation in enemy Base Area 480 in Chuong Thien Province. A second ASPB 132-1 was damaged as a result of the explosion. This incident is described in the SEA LORDS section under Operations in Enemy Base Area. ★



**Terry N. Thompson Grave Marker at Smyrna Cemetery, Brister, AR. Thanks to Chief Billy Sanders USN (Ret.) for making this photo possible. Brister, AR, is no longer a town and the only thing left is the cemetery. Billy served on T-112-1/C-112-1.**



**Frank's De La Oliva CSB-3 raised ASPB-132-3**



**Don Blankenship's three grandsons honoring Richard L. Keller this past Memorial Day weekend at Rosecrans National Cemetery, San Diego, CA. Thanks to Don and his grandsons.**



**Harry Hahn took this picture of Richard Keller on the USS Benewah when he noticed something wrong with Rick. He was reading his Bible and told me that "He wasn't going to make it." Shortly after this picture was taken, he was killed on the Alpha boat. I kept this picture private for 46 years.**

## Rice Wine

by Dennis Evenson 3rd Plt Co 5th/60th (12/69-8/70)

Howie Hillard was my squad leader in Nam. He can confirm an incident where my platoon completed a night ambush and moved to a house for a pickup by a truck earlier in the morning. I did my thing, as Platoon Sgt. and went into the house with my interpreter to see if I could find any information on the VC, etc. My interpreter introduced me to an ARVN officer that was in the house. The ARVN officer was home on leave. He wanted to practice his English, so we sat down for a visit at a small table. His mother brings a small glass with a clear liquid in it. The officer preceded to show me how to drink this liquid like a shot of whiskey and then put a small cookie like wafer in your mouth right after the drink to sooth the mouth. So I drank this liquid, or what I would like to call fire water. The cookie really helped. I indicated to the officer that this was really nice of his mom and that I liked this and to be able to share this drink with him. The trucks got delayed because of an ambush or some other reason.

So we just kept on visiting. He tried to explain his frustration with the VC and the NVA and the seemingly endless battle. He hoped that there was a way to resolve the problem and stop the bloodshed. Meantime, he had taken the side of the ARVNs and felt correct about his decision. Then we talked about his family and hopes for the future. He was a real good guy. However, as we visited, his mom kept bringing these drinks. I thought I was doing fine handling the situation quite nicely. Finally, the trucks arrived closer to noon. When I went to get up, I could not get on my feet. I summoned one of the squad leaders to get a couple of men to help me. Of course my men thought it was funny and great because the Platoon Sgt. was drunk. I was pushed into the truck with my men laughing and giving me a bad time about the wine, being drunk, etc., etc. We had a new Platoon Leader. I can still see his face as I looked to the front of the truck where he was standing. It was a look of what did I get myself into with a Platoon Sgt. like this and the men laughing and carrying on like this. Of course, he had to report me. But all of that is another story.

Now, I know what I had drank—fermented snake, scorpions, or sea horses with rice.

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## 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry (Infantry)

Arrived Vietnam: 3 Jan 1967  
Departed Vietnam: 3 Aug 1969  
Previous Station: Fort Riley  
Strength: 818

Location	Service	Major Command
Bear Cat	Jan 67-Feb 68	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Bear Cat/Dong Tam	Mar 68-June 68	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Bear Cat/Tan An	July 68	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Tan An	Aug 68-Nov 68	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam/Cai Lay	Dec 68-Mar 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam	Apr 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam/Cai Lay	May 69-Aug 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.

## 3rd Battalion, 39th Infantry (Infantry)

Arrived Vietnam: 1 Jan 1967  
Departed Vietnam: 8 Aug 1969  
Previous Station: Fort Riley  
Strength: 818

Location	Service	Major Command
Rach Kien	Jan 67-Feb 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Can Giouc	Mar 68-Apr 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Rach Kien	May 68-July 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
My Tho/Can Giouc	Aug 68-Sep 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
My Tho	Oct 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam	Nov 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Tan An	Dec 68-Feb 69	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam/Cai Lay	Mar 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.

## 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry (Infantry)

Arrived Vietnam: 3 Jan 1967  
Departed Vietnam: 30 July 1969  
Previous Station: Fort Riley  
Authorized Strength: 818

Location	Service	Major Command
Bear Cat	Jan 67-Oct 67	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Ban Me Thuot	Nov 67-Jan 68	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Nha Be	Feb 68-July 69	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Nha Be	Aug 68-Oct 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Binh Long	Nov 68	3rd Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Binh Long	Dec 68-Feb 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam/Cai Lay	Mar 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam	April 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.
Dong Tam/ Cai Lay	May 69-July 69	1st Brigade 9th Infantry Div.

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# 15th Combat Engineers 9th Inf Division Vietnam

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

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

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

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

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

Between March and August 1968, the Battalion was primarily engaged in Operation

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

*The 15th Engineer Battalion has been involved in every major operation undertaken by the 9th Infantry Division after it deployed to the Republic of Vietnam.*

Through the efforts of the 15th Engineer Battalion, principally Companies A and B, and with the coordinated effort of the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) and other non-divisional engineers, these roads were mine swept, cleared, and repaired on a daily basis. In addition, the roads were shaped and resurfaced to handle heavier traffic. Valuable civic action was also made possible as a result of military operations in this area and the ARVN engineers, as well as the local RF/PF (Regional Forces/Popular Forces) acquired important training and experience in dealing with VC interdictions. The 15th Engineer Battalion also built several fire support bases and outposts in conjunction with this operation.

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

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

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

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



# Battle of Doi Ma Creek

by Gino Vasquez Bear Cat Dong Tam,  
Binh Phuoc (12/66-01/67)

I spoke about this battle at one of the reunions. At that reunion, there was an ex-helicopter pilot who validated a point that I spoke about during my recollection of the events. He saw the boat that I hit with my M-79 grenade launcher. Here we go; we were relaxing one afternoon at Binh Phuoc when the word came up for us to mount up and head to the rescue of the 3rd/39th because they were going to be attacked by a superior VC force. We were the second track and we received fire from the VC about a mile before entering their basecamp. When we were inside the 3rd/39th basecamp, I could not help but say; Damn! This basecamp is worth fighting for! Nice huts that were much nicer than ours. As we waited, word spread that two ARVN tracks have hit mines trying to go in the direction that the VC were thought to be located. A thought occurred to me that if the VC started to mortar the base camp they could wipe out all of our tracks. Later, word came that we would drive through a mine field and meet Charlie wherever they were. Pat Donnelly was driving our track that was given the task to lead the company through the mine field. I had just gotten out of the hospital after hitting a mine with our track a month earlier. I remember having the thought that if we were going to hit a mine that night to please let it be big enough to blow my ears drums again and send me home for good. God had other plans. We traveled all night with the cover of gunships and Puff the Magic Dragon who not only was puffing fire but also dropping huge flares that gave us light to see our way to Doi Ma Creek. We arrived

around 4:30 a.m. and I took the first guard at 5:00 a.m. I woke up the next guy in line for guard at 5:30 and told him to be very awake and alert because Charlie was around us. He said ok, but, I knew him better than that. I made him believe that I was sleeping and 10 minutes later he laid down and fell sleep. At that moment, I woke everybody up and we stayed up until daybreak when we started to eat our C rations. I was sitting on top of the hatch eating when a shot just missed my head. I put my helmet at the end of my rifle and pushed it up in hopes that the VC would do it again? He did and I saw the smoke of his gunpowder. I told Lester Brown to call Lt. Palmer and tell him that Charlie was on the tree line right behind us. We turned our tracks and charged the tree line with every weapon blazing. After what seemed an eternity of heavy fire from both sides, I knew that we had the upper hand. Word also came that four of our guys had been killed in the exchange. Word came that we had to dismount and go into the tree line and chase Charlie all the way to the other side. As I was about to enter the tree line, a VC jumped up in the tree line, I fired a burst, he dropped a grenade and as I was falling I yelled grenade. When I got up, I turned to tell the guys to follow me into the trees when Lester Brown yelled Vasquez you're hit! I looked at my chest and saw blood streaming down. Lester told me to go back to the track and get patched up by the medic. Lester took our squad through the wood line, when I got to the track Donnelly patched me up when the word came through the radio that Charlie was coming out of the tree line at the other side. I looked at the guys that were left in the track and they were Donnelly the driver, Ace Johnson on the

M-60, Willie Pitts became the magazine loader for my rifle, and the other guy was the guide that gave us directions on how to arrive at that place. I told Willie Pitts to load as many magazines as fast as he could and we charged around the other side where Charlie was coming out and many had crossed to the other side. We got caught in a cross fire, I fired automatic with my M16 "Over and under" that I had until it turned red hot, I dropped it inside the track and Willie handed me his rifle, I switched my firing because Charlie was coming out of the tree line again. I used my M-79 to get a VC that was about to get away from us as he entered a hut (that's about the only time that I can say that I hit something with it). When the VC stopped coming out of the tree line, we dismounted and went to the tree line again, this time I found myself in front of the Doi Ma Creek. I started to shoot at anything that looked like a head in the water. Suddenly a boat appeared going slowly down the creek, and I saw a VC trying to climb into the boat, I fired my M-79 and hit the boat. Later on that day we finally had a break. When we were resting, word came through the radio asking if we deserved any medals for what we did that day. We just replied we did what we were supposed to do. I never got my second Purple Heart for that wound. I also want to mention that day was Andrew Johnson's finest hour. During the firefight he changed barrels on the M-60 machine gun twice because they turned red hot. After the fight was over, there was a huge pile of empty shell cases next to his machinegun. Later on that night we sent a patrol to the entrance of the tree line, the guys killed another VC trying to come out of the woods. ★

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## 15TH COMBAT ENGINEERS

Continued from  
previous page

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

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

During the 1968 wet season, generally between May and November, the main engineer effort was directed towards the following: Maintaining passable roads, keeping water from inundating fire support bases and completing the base camp at Dong Tam. Once the wet season started to ease, the Battalion started opening roads, which had become inaccessible during the wet season. Some

were opened easily, but for the majority, the Viet Cong made the Battalion earn each mile. Access to more roads gave all units of the 9th Infantry Division quicker land access to all areas of the Delta and aided in the rapid Vietnamese resettlement of the Delta.

Earthen work was the prime means of building fire support bases. As the rice paddies dried and the water level lowered, fill was bulldozed into base camps and fire support bases. Berms of earth were built high enough to limit small arms, RPG and B-40 rounds from entering the bases. Earthen pads for artillery, Helo pads, bunkers, and interior roads had to be built and stabilized. Living quarters, bunkers, and permanent fighting positions had to be constructed. Accommodations were provided for the 2nd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division as they left the ships positioned in the My Tho segment of the Mekong River.

During the 1969 dry season, the 15th Engineer Battalion constructed 7 fire support bases, repaired 4 bridges, cleared 2,050 acres of jungle, and repaired 88 kilometers of previously impassible roads.

This was in addition to providing combat support for the infantry brigades. That support was comprised of detecting mines and booby traps, destroying enemy bunkers, and arms caches.

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

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

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



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## From The Membership

### Seeking

#### Wife and Daughter find husband and Father's name on MRFA Mobile Trailer

Seeking anyone who remembers Sgt. George Washington Moore A Co. 2nd/3th KIA 04/11/68 only 7 days in-country. His daughter and mother found his name on the MRFA Mobile Trailer while it was display in Loves Park, IL.

She would like to hear from anyone who knew her dad. If anyone remembers Sgt. George Washington Moore (African America), please send me the info and we will get you in contact with the daughter. Any help would be appreciated. He was KIA ground fire was awarded a bronze star. **Albert mrfa35@charter.net**



Dear Vonda,

I served with Sergeant Moore for approximately 2 months in 1968. I was assigned to the 3rd platoon of Alpha Company in February 1968 after arriving in Vietnam a week earlier. I had been an officer for less than a year and had no combat experience. Getting assigned to the third platoon was the best thing that could have happened to me, because the non-commissioned officers were among the best I ever encountered. Wayne Blessing, Ray Canady (who are copied in this email), platoon sergeant Sau Lavatai, and of course, your dad. I had so much to learn and these men guided me patiently, under harsh and sometimes violent conditions. I'd like to think that our platoon

performed our missions in exemplary form because of these men.

In my humble opinion, Sergeant Moore was an outstanding soldier. My memory (perhaps mercifully) is not too clear any more after so many years. I do remember that our commander (at the battalion or brigade level?) instituted a "soldier of the week" program and Sergeant Moore was the first to be selected—which speaks volumes for him. He was able to spend a few days back in base camp as the guest of the commander. I also remember that George had a great demeanor about him. He was always positive when I was struggling (often!!). In that part of March in 1968, I was wounded and had to go to a hospital in Vietnam for over a week. On the day I returned to our base camp, I was waiting for my platoon to return from an operation. It was then

I learned that your father had been killed that day. The men returned to the base camp and very few words were exchanged. We knew we had lost one of our best.

I will continue our correspondence and try to answer any questions you may have, at your convenience. You may also wish to hear from some of the men who knew him longer than me. Please forgive me if I do not return any correspondence for the next few days as I will be away from home.

I have read a number of books on Vietnam over the past 10-15 years and one quote strikes me. I cannot remember it exactly, but the author was writing about the men he served with and asked in wonder "Where do we get men like this? Men

who will answer the call to fight day and night, when they have serious concerns about exactly what they have been told to accomplish." We were asked to fight an unpopular war and we knew how split our country was in its support. The tactics employed by the senior army commanders, continually put us at risk of being ambushed. And yet, these men answered the call 24/7 to go out on foot or get on helicopters, where we were almost always exposed as the attackers. Indeed, where do we get these men.

**Tom Bogner A and C Cos. 2nd/39th Inf (01/68-01/69) thomasbogner@sbcglobal.net**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Thank you from Marilyn Moore (Dog Tag found in Vietnam)

I also want to thank everyone who assisted with finding Marilyn. Albert

-----Original Message-----

From: Marilyn Moore [mailto:star63006@icloud.com]

Sent: Sunday, May 24, 2015 5:19 PM

To: MRFA35@charter.net

Subject: Thank you

Thank you so much for sending Tyrone's dog tags to me. It was quite a shock when you called. There are so many scammers out there that I was really skeptical about answering your questions. I really didn't know what to think. I didn't know if you were for real or just trying to get information, but I felt like you went to a lot of trouble to find us. This restores my faith in humanity. It really means a lot to me and my children. They were young (daughter 13, son 8) when he passed so they didn't have much time to get to know him. So again I say Thank you so much.

Always, Marilyn

## TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One



**Moore**

**Herbert "Bugs" Moore** passed away December 16, 2014. Bugs served with the 3rd Platoon, Delta Company 3rd Battalion/47th Infantry 9th Infantry Division (1968-69). You may contact the family c/o his son Roger Moore, 678-314-7353, rogerelectrician@live.com.

Herb was a very close friend. He will be missed. Larry Tabor

**Michael P. Pacholka** passed away January 19, 2015. Michael served on CCB-112-1

(01/67-02/68) while serving with the Mobile Riverine Force TF-117. You may contact the family c/o Betty J. Pacholka, 567 St. Rt. 72 N, PO Box 16, Reeseville, OH 45166, mammy02@aol.com.



**Boyett**

Albert! I wanted to inform you of the passing of another brother **Mike Boyett** April 28, 2015, who served with Echo/Delta Co, 3Bn/60th Inf (04/68-04/69). You may contact the family c/o Carol Boyett, 705

Shalom Way, Nacogdoches, TX 75964.

A truly good man, who was wounded as we landed in a hot LZ on July 15, 1968. Unable to remove the bullet as it was near his femoral artery, he served the rest of his tour at Bn Hq. Mike taught school after his return home, but shortly turned to sculpture and became a very well-known one. Joseph Flynn



**McIver in Vietnam**



**McIver**

Member RM3 **Harold Bruce McIver** passed away July 1, 2015. While in Vietnam, he served with River Assault Squadron 13, River Assault Division 131 aboard T-131-7 (03/69-03/70). Bruce then volunteered to become a Naval Advisor to the Vietnamese Navy and Marine Corps. He served with RAID 72 - Vietnamese ATF-211 until his tour was completed in March 1970. "Bruce served heroically and honorably.

He is one of the most decorated sailors of the Vietnam War. We were close. Brother Bruce will be missed immensely by his family, myself and all who knew him. Rest in Peace until that day Brother! Michael A. Harris



**Cole**

Member **Leonard Cole** passed away August 7, 2015. Leonard served on Monitor 131-1 (03/69-4/70). You may contact the family c/o Armenia Cole, PO Box 124, Deville, LA 71328. May our brother rest in peace.

Leonard was a great guy. Liked by everyone. He was a true Cajun! He kept us laughing all the time! We all knew we were having a good time amidst of the bad environment when Leonard would break



**Freeman**

**Bobby J. Freeman** passed away May 24, 2015. Bobby was in the Repair Division onboard the USS Askari ARL-30 (1968-69). He was residing in Garden Grove, CA, at the time of his passing.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



# TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One

## TAPS

Continued from previous page

into his happy shuffle. A little Cajun dance he would do when things were going well! RIP Harry Hahn



### Bacon

**Glenda Bacon**, wife of member Karl Bacon, passed away May 6, 2015. You may contact the family c/o Lindsey Nichols, 2408 Summerfield Dr, Stockton, CA 95209-1124, lindsnichols06@gmail.com.



### Bacon

Member **Karl A. Bacon** passed away July 3, 2015. Karl served with B Co. 3rd/60th Infantry (08/68-07/69). You may contact the family c/o Lindsey Nichols, 2408 Summerfield Dr, Stockton, CA 95209-1124, lindsnichols06@gmail.com.



**L-R Dogman, Pat Patterson, and Jack**



**1970 Jack Shimizu**



### Scimizu

**BMCN Jack Shimizu** USN (Ret.), MOPH's outstanding leader in Guam since 2002, passed away June 5, 2015. He served in RivRon 13 and 15 as a Boat Captain. You may contact the family c/o Teresa Shimizu, 5370 E. Craig Rd. Apt. 1432, Las Vegas, NV 89115, mcposhimizu@yahoo.com.

*Jack was a long time member of the Mobile Riverine Force Association and will surely be missed by all who*

*knew him. May our brother rest in peace.*



### Dziok

**John V. Dziok** passed away April 10, 2011. John served with COMRIVFLOT ONE (1967). You may contact his family c/o Catherine Dziok, 910 Masters Row Apt J, Glen Allen, VA 23059-7430, unchatfrais@yahoo.com.



**USS White River LSMR-536**



### Faris Antoon FTG3

Member **Faris Antoon** passed away July 6, 2015. Faris served as FTG3 on the USS White River LSMR-536 (05/67-10/69). You may contact the family c/o Rose Antoon, 101 Mariners Cir Apt F, Sheffield, OH 22207, Antoon1@

roadrunner.com.

May our brother Faris rest in peace.

*Faris will be deeply missed by all who knew him. He was a great guy and shipmate! Condolences to his wife Rose, and to his family. Shipmate Wayne Ringate.*



### Lynd

Member **Allen F. Lynd** passed away February 1, 2015. Allen served with HHC 3rd/47th Infantry (07/67-07/68). You may contact the family c/o Margaret Lynd, 227 S Washington St, Lake Mills, WI 53551-1627.



### McBride

**Terry A. McBride** passed away from cancer June 30, 2015. Terry served with C Co, 3rd Platoon, 4th/47th Infantry, from October 1966 to October 1967 in Vietnam. You may contact his family c/o Susie Rossi, susierossi@comcast.net.

## In Memory Of

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

Wendell Affield for Buddha Ed Thomas, Boat Captain Tango 112-11 (02/68-02/69)

Tom Bird for Sam Boyce RM3 A-92-2 KIA Vinh Long (02/06/68)

William Blausier for Thomas Gaudet, David Land, and Jose Campos our 151 Division brothers that were KIA's

Maj/General Lucien Bolduc, Jr. USA (Ret) for Guy Tutwiler

Bravo Charlie A 10 (04/69-04/70) for Terry Mason and Gil Reyna (Class NIOTC 2-69)

Brothers of the 2nd/47th Inf for all Army and Navy KIA's

Craig "Doc" Champion in memory of KIA's 3rd Pitt D Co. 3rd/47th (1968)

John and Doris Chrzanoski in memory of SP/4 Humberto Ruiz Santiago Jr. Grenadier A Co. 4th Bn 47th Inf. Rgt 9th Inf. Div. Died of wounds 06/27/69, Kien Hoa, South Vietnam (DC Wall Panel 21W Ln 025)

Mike Clark in memory of Larry Welk and Lydes Gardner 4th/39th 9th Inf Div (1967)

Orville Daley for Merrill Davis USS Askari ARL-30 (1952-1953)

Fran Divilbiss for Cdr. Dave Divilbiss, Supply Officer on Staff COMRIVFLOT ONE, USS Benewah APB-35 (1966-68)

Ron Easterday for Marco A. Serrano Jr. and Franklin D. Hite HHC 2nd/47th Inf (Mech) KIA 03/13/67 and William B. Cronin (LTC) HHC 2nd/47th Inf (Mech) KIA 04/27/67

Ted Fetting for Eloy "Stevie" LeBlanc, Roy Phillips, and Fred Jansonius B Co. 2nd/60th KIA 02/02/68

Sgt Robert Flaige for SP4 Robert "Bob" Jenks E Co. 3rd/60th KIA 03/03/68

Nan Fulton for LtGen Bill Fulton Cdr 2nd Bde Asst Div Cdr 9th Inf Div (1966-68)

Tony Garvey for Wes Sade, Billy Olsen, and Staff Sgt. James Williams C Co. 4th/47th 9th Inf John W. Gerbing for Noel T. West A Co. 4th/47th KIA 06/19/67

Regina Gooden for Sgt Lloyd Earl Valentine B Co. 3rd/47th KIA 09/05/68

Mrs. Elizabeth M. Hayes for LTC Daniel P. Hayes HQ 3rd/34th Artillery (06/67-01/68)

Leo Haynes for my fellow plank owner and buddy Don Grier GM2 USS Benewah. He died in a car crash in 2003

James Henke, Dave Nelson, James Callan for Sgt Tony Spradling, Sgt Gerald Thurman, Spec James B. Johnson, and all our Brothers lost on June 19, 1967, from A Co. 4th/47th 9th in AP BAC, Long An Province

Gordon Hillesland for Pat Lawson NSA Dong Tam (1967-68)

Joe Hilliard for Joe Benack from Florida and Donald Hartzell from Pennsylvania

Bruce Jensen in memory of Frederic Peers Webb A-111-4 KIA 12/21/67

J. R. Johnson 3rd/47th 9th "Recon" (05/66-01/68) in memory of Walker, Gotch, Paradez, Nelson, and Hayes

Dave Justin for Robert "Bobby" Scharpnick A Co 2nd Platoon 3rd/60th and Dennis McDougal A Co 3rd/60th

Bob Land, Rich Lierman, Jim Zervos, and Pete Oakander for Frank Dettmers, our boat captain on CCB-131-1 (May 69-May 70). We do this in his honor and remembrance.

Richard MacCullagh for John (Doc) Phillips, HMC, USN (Ret) RivRon 15

Richard MacCullagh for Chaplain Rene L. Petit, LT, CHC, RC, RivRon 13 and 15

H. Bruce McIver for HM1 Zeph Lane who was severely wounded 03/31/69 and unfortunately killed in a private plane crash 05/20/85

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

A R "Monti" Montillo for William "Bulldog" McLaughlin B Co 3rd/60th KIA 10/03/68 and Barry "Butch" Copp B Co 3rd/60th KIA 10/28/68

Albert Moore for Ralph Tresser CS3 USS Benewah APB-35 (1966-67)

Albert Moore for Tom Bityk CS3 IUWG-1 VC-Hill/Ha Tien (1969-70)

Albert and Sarah Moore for Capt Gerald Saucier CO USS Benewah APB-35 (09/66-02/68)

VP Roy Moseman for Oscar Santiago C-2 4th/47th (10/67-10/68)

Herman Murphy EN2 for USS Benewah shipmates: John Long EN2, Craig Bronish MR3, and George Schnieder MR2

Maj J. D. Nichols III CMDR C Co. 3rd/60th Inf (12/66-11/67) for Alfred Cornejo, Anthony Galeno, Richard Lasher, Rudolph Melendez, Sigfredo Pinto-Pinto, and Darrell Reid KIA 08/20/67

Jasper Northcutt for SSGT Henry T. Aragon B-2 2nd/47th KIA 08/23/67, SGT James E.

Boorman B-2 2nd/47th KIA 08/27/67, SP4 James D. Bronakoski B-2 2nd/47th KIA 04/27/67, SP4 Michael G. Hartnett B-2 2nd/47th KIA 04/27/67, SGT William D. Mize

B-2 2nd/47th and 5th/60th KIA 10/28/67, CPL Harold K. Southwick B-2 2nd/47th Inf KIA 03/02/67 (first KIA in B Co. 2nd/47th in Vietnam), and PFC Robert C. Voltz B-1 2nd/47th Inf (Mech) KIA 03/11/67 (first KIA 1st Platoon B Co. 2nd/47th in Vietnam)

John Smith for Paul D. Jose B Co. 3/60th KIA Westy 11/01/68

Aaron R. Spurway for Chief Ray

Chet "Gunner" Stanley for all the USN and USA KIA's of the MRF (1967-70)

Ken Sundberg for Michael David Sheahan 5th/60th KIA 02/25/68, Robert L. Conley 5th/60th KIA 02/01/68, and Glenn Dean Taylor 5th/60th KIA 02/01/68

Robert Sutton for LT James F. Rost Jr. Vin Te Canal Chau Duc KIA 11/69

Robert Thacker for SFC Earl T. Pelhan, Jr., 15th Eng, 9th Inf Div, KIA in Delta Lo

Okey Toothman in memory of Sgt Dick Arnold A Co. 3rd/47th, Max Delacruz and G. P. Jones C Co. 3rd/47th

Edward Toth for Norman Neuleib USS Askari ARL-30 (1952-53)

USS Benewah shipmates: John Long EN2, Craig Bronish MR3, and George Schnieder MR2

USS Guide MSO-447 for Shipmate and Brother Harold Foster

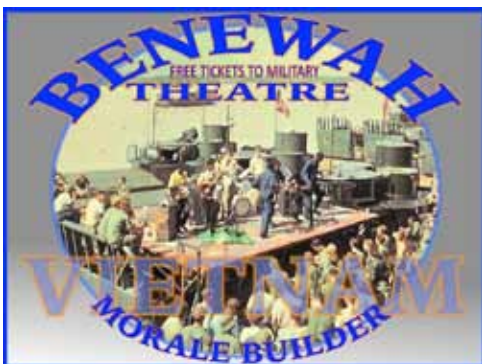
Henry Velez for my fallen brothers, B Co. 2nd/39th Inf

Ron and Judy Wallace for all those lost from 3rd/47th Inf

Gary Williams for Dale Winkler C Co. 3rd/60th 9th Inf (01/68-01/69)

CPT Steve Williams and MAJ Bob Bischoff in memory of 2LT David George Williams, Co A, 4/47th, KIA 9/21/67

David Wilson 2nd/60th KIA 08/05/69, Timothy Shelton 4th/39th KIA 06/25/69, Steven Murray 4th/39th KIA 05/26/69, Harvey Crabtree 2nd/4th Arty KIA 06/19/69, and Dennis Mattox 1st/501st 101st Abn KIA 08/23/69



Posters done by member Dwayne Peterson



# Mobile Riverine Force Association

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Norman Saunders B Co. 3rd/39th Inf (01/69-08/69)  
Paul Schaut COMRIVFLOT ONE USS Benewah APB-35 (1967)  
Dave Schell RivRon 15 Tango 49 (07/69-07/70)  
Robert "Bob" Schrader D Co. 9th Med BN (07/68-07/69)  
F. George Schuster LTJG USS Indra ARL-37 (1968-69)  
Col Sam L. Schutte USA (Ret.) B Co. 4th/47th Inf (VN)  
Jerry Shearer C Co. 3rd/60th 9th Inf (04/67-04/68)  
Clarence Shires Jr. C-1 4th/47th Inf (01/67-01/68)  
Richard Simpson C Co. 3rd/47th Inf 9th Div (05/67-06/68)  
BrGen Douglas Smith USA (Ret.) Cdr 2nd/47th (Mech) Inf  
John Smith B Co. 3/60th (05/68-06/69) for all Riverines  
Thomas E. Smith 9th S and T Battalion (03/67-06/68)  
Marc Spilberg 4th/47th Inf (01-68-01/69)  
Aaron R. Spurway USS Vernon County LST-1161 (1966-68)  
Chet "Gunner" Stanley C-111-1 and M-111-3 (1966-68)  
Robert Sutton RivRon 9 M-92-2, Z-92-11, and R-92-1 (11/68-05/69)  
John Swart T-132-1 (04/68-04/69)  
Bryan Swisher B Co. 3rd/47th Inf (12/68-06/69)  
Jack Terry USS Colleton APB-36 (1966-68)  
Thanks to 155 mm (Mech) Arty  
Charles Thompson 9th Admin Co. (02/66-11/67)  
Harley Timmerman T-132-10 (06/68-06/69)  
Edward Toth USS Askari ARL-30 (1952-55)  
Milton Turnage M-151-1 (07/68-06/69)  
Erol Tuzco A Co. 3rd/60th Inf (1968-69)  
USS Terrell City LST-1157  
Roger Valentine USS Askari ARL-30 (07/67-05/68)  
Bob and Nancy VanDruff T-91-5 and T-92-4  
GMDG Ricky Vice USN (Ret.) T-131-7 (03/68-05/69) and NAG (01/71-06/72)  
Ron Wallace B Co. 3rd Plat 3rd/47th Inf (05/66-08/67)  
Hank and Becky Washburn USS Colleton APB-36 (01/67-09/68)  
Gary Weisz A-91-4 (10/67-07/68)  
Captain Chaplain Lester Westling Jr. NSA Saigon  
in IV Corps (05/69-05/70)  
David H. White USN (Ret.) USS Satyr ARL-23 (08/69-08/70)  
BMCM Donald Witta USN (Ret.) T-111-13 (03/67-02/68)  
Norm Wilkinson B Co. 4th/47th Inf (03/67-03/68)  
Tom Wischman USS Indra ARL-37 (1967-70)  
Rhett Wise A Co. 3rd/47th Inf (03/67-04/68)  
Jeffrey L. Withers RivRon 11 A-112-8 and M-112-12 (06/68-06/69)  
William H. Ziebarth 9th Signal, 34 Arty (1966-68)  
James Zierninski EN2 Boat Captain RivDiv 153  
ASPB 6854 (04/69-04/70)  
Robert Zimmer XO USS Mercer APB-39 (02/68-07/69)  
Admiral Elmo Zumwalt ComNavForV