



River

Currents



Zippos at work
Mekong Delta

USS Mark (AKL-28)

A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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SPRING 2015

From the Galley

Here's hoping each and every one of you had a Merry Merry Christmas and looking forward to a great New Year and staying warm. It seems this winter so far has been the coldest in a number of years. I know here in the foothills of North Carolina it's been way below our normal highs and lows. I'm not a cold weather person so don't go out much when the weather is like it is this year.



Al Moore

2014 was another good year for the Association; picked up a number of new members but unfortunately we have lost a good many of our members and spouses. As we get older we will see more of this. In my 20 some years of being the President of the MRFA, I have seen a lot of good people come and go. You love to see them come onboard but hate to see a member pass away; some way to early.

Some have asked me if we have kept a record on how many of our members have passed away because of Agent Orange. We have no way of knowing this and I would not make a guess. But I do know cancer is the leading cause with many of the members we have lost, but we really have no way knowing if it was or is Agent-Orange related. The VA and studies say that there are so many different cancers that can be related to Agent Orange. Who knows...?

At the upcoming reunion, member Herb Worthington will speak Friday morning about Agent Orange and other VA subjects. It would be a good time for you and your spouse to attend. Herb and his wife are very knowledgeable on the subject of Agent Orange and other VA matters.

We have another great reunion plan. The past couple reunions some of you have mention they love to hear the speakers but four or five are too many. So we have cut the time for the speakers and taken them down to three speakers. We have not taken any time away from Memorial Services which everyone really seems to enjoy. Both our Chaplains and all those who assist do an outstanding job. Gunner Stanley will as always be our MC.

There will be a dance Friday night with a DJ. Folks seem to enjoy their Friday night dance. Thelma Springer will again have her raffles and it's no telling what she has planned. We will

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2015 MRFA Reunion Sept. 2-6, 2015

We will be at the Indianapolis Marriott East again. The hotels we want to fill up first are listed below with the room charge. When making your reservation through the reservation department, make sure to reference the MRFA so you get the MRFA rate. These rooms went very quickly last reunion, so make your reservations early. These rates are good 3 days prior to the reunion and 3 days following the reunion. The last day to book is August 3, 2015.

Indianapolis Marriott East (\$79.00/night) 1-317-352-1231, 1-800-228-9290

La Quinta Inns & Suites (\$69.00/night) 1-317-359-1021

Fairfield Inn & Suites (\$74.00/night) 1-317-322-3716

Note of interest: If you have any problems registering at the hotel, please contact Frank Jones. Frank prefers e-mail (frank@raffertylighting.com or popsaroni@sbcglobal.net). You can leave a message at his home (314-822-1230). Frank will return calls or e-mails as soon as possible. Frank works a full-time job, so bear with him on answers.

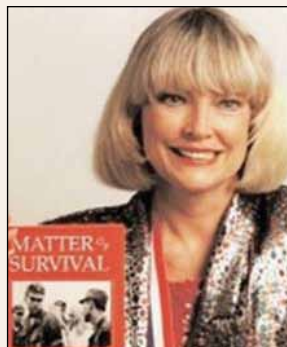
Indianapolis Marriott East is located in Indianapolis's East neighborhood and local attractions include Indiana State Fairgrounds and Pepsi Coliseum and Children's Museum of Indianapolis. Regional points of interest also include Indianapolis Motor Speedway and Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

Hotel Features: Indianapolis Marriott East's restaurant serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A bar/lounge is open for drinks. Room service is available during limited hours. The hotel serves buffet breakfasts (surcharges apply). Recreational amenities include an indoor pool, a spa tub, and a fitness facility. Wireless and wired high-speed Internet access is available in public areas (surcharges apply). Guest parking is complimentary. Additional property amenities include gift shops/newsstands and laundry facilities. This is a smoke-free property.

Guest Rooms: Indianapolis Marriott East has 315 air-conditioned guest rooms featured with coffee/tea makers and complimentary weekday newspapers. Beds come with premium bedding.

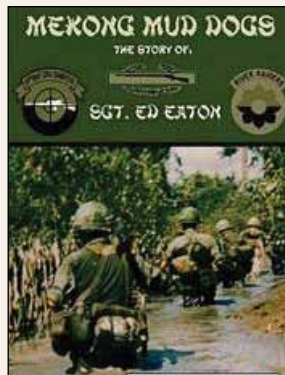
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Speakers for the 2015 MRFA Reunion



Chris Noel

Chris Noel, the AFVN sweetheart, actress, and Vietnam troop supporter, has agreed to attend our reunion. Chris will also be one of the speakers at our Saturday morning event. Chris has been in many movies, several of them with Elvis Presley and has appeared in a long list of TV shows. Chris supported the Vietnam



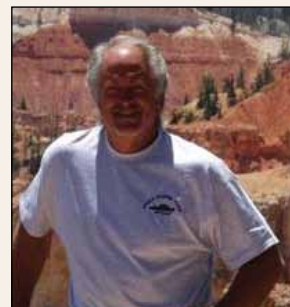
Ed (Sniper) Eaton B/CO
3rd/60th

troops when this was not popular with the Hollywood elite. Chris is still very supportive of our GIs and still loves to visit with her Vietnam Vet friends.

More information will be available in the upcoming summer newsletter. Albert ★



Jack Kitchura RiverDivison
153 (1968-69)



Jack Kitchura RiverDivison
153 (1968-69)

Once Upon a Time in Southeast Asia Vietnam: One Sailor's Story

By Rodney L. Bertram
2rodney@outlook.com

Chapter Eleven

Saigon, Vietnam. Why is everyone carrying a gun?

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." President Abraham Lincoln

The plane's screeching wheels on the runway of Tan Son Nhut Air Base just outside of Saigon, woke me up. It was a hub of activity and it was huge! There were military helicopters and airplanes of every description. As the plane came to a stop, I glanced out the window and I immediately noticed the troops on the ground were carrying weapons. There were side arms, M16 rifles, and a number of drab green jeeps with some kind of large gun on the back. There were guns everywhere and I definitely knew that I was in Vietnam now! This was all so new and unsettling to me.

After we stepped off the airplane, I continued looking around and I spotted an Army soldier directing us toward a military bus that was waiting to take us to our barracks. In Saigon, I would have to wait in a barracks for another military transport plane to fly me to a place called Cam Ranh Bay on the South China Sea coast. There I would wait again for my ship, the USS White River LSMR-536, which was out on the gun line somewhere. It seemed all I had done since leaving boot camp was to hurry up and wait. Maybe that was the military's way of getting things done: hurry up and then wait.

The bus drove out of the air base and onto the main highway leading into Saigon, the capital of the Republic of Vietnam. From the bus, I liked what I saw. It was a beautiful, old, French colonial city. The streets were full of people rushing about attending to their daily affairs and they seemed content going about their busy day the same as folks did back in America. We drove through the crowded streets and soon stopped at a building that appeared to be an old hotel that had seen better days, but there was

one very noticeable difference at the hotel's entrance. There was a 5-foot wall made of sandbags and a large iron gate both of which were wrapped in concertina wire sharp as a razor. Hanging from the sand bags was a sign written in several languages. The sign was simple and direct, "Don't stop. Keep moving!" Mounted on top of the sandbags was a machine gun, manned by two soldiers dressed in full combat gear. According to the bus driver, just 2 weeks prior a small child had walked through the hotel doors and into the barracks area with a bomb strapped around his waist. The bomb exploded and killed a dozen American soldiers. The next day the signs, sandbags, and machine gun were put in place in front of the hotel entrance to prevent such attacks. We grabbed our bags, stepped off the bus, and walked past the machine gun and into the hotel lobby.

The hotel had been converted into a military barracks for incoming personnel from all branches of the American armed forces. The area was restricted to American military personnel only. All military personnel arriving in Vietnam had to be accounted for and this hotel was one of the entry points where the service members waited for processing, before being sent on to their respective duty stations.

I was assigned a bunk and instructed to meet in the lobby in 1 hour for a briefing on the "do's and don'ts" in Saigon. I still had jet lag from my long journey so I laid down on my bunk to take a short nap and fell fast asleep. "Hey sailor, get up. You have a briefing. Get to it." A soldier in fatigues was standing over me. I nodded and headed for the hotel lobby. We were shown a short video on the many beautiful and historical sites in the city, and then an army sergeant stood up and began to lecture us, "That is the good news. Now I'm going to tell you the bad news. While you are in the city, you are a walking target, understand?" He cautioned us not to go about the city alone.



Seaman Bertram on duty looking out for VC swimmers and Stanley, a friend, telling jokes. Personal photo collection, 1969.

"Always go with a buddy and always be ready for trouble. Stay safe out there," he cautioned us. The briefing lasted about an hour, then we were told that we would each be assigned a time to stand guard at the hotel that night and to check with the soldier at the duty desk for the time. I was beginning to get the sense that this country was not a safe place for Americans to be. In fact, I began to think that it was downright dangerous!

We were told to pair up before we went out to see the sights. I was paired up with another sailor and we headed out to see the city. It was early evening and we were both hungry, so we started looking for a place to eat dinner. After walking a few blocks we saw a sign that read, "Asian and American food." We took a chance and went inside. The place was full of American troops. There was loud music playing and several tables placed around a small dance floor. We looked at the menu and ordered hamburgers. We ate our dinner and listened to the music while several people danced. It reminded me of the dance clubs back home—just a bunch of kids

laughing, dancing, and having fun. It wasn't home though and we knew that we had to keep our wits about us. I guess it was about nine or ten when we walked back to the hotel. The city was lit up like a Christmas tree, with neon signs flashing and music blaring from speaker systems up and down the street.

We went to our rooms and I went straight to sleep. "Wake up buddy. You Bertram? It's your turn for guard duty. Here, take this and get on the roof." I opened my eyes and saw a soldier with his out-stretched arm holding a rifle. "Here, I want to get into my bunk." I grabbed the rifle and climbed the stairs to the roof. I opened the door and another soldier pointed me to a guard post overlooking the street below. "Shoot anything that moves," he said as he turned and walked away. I walked over to my post, sat down, and wondered if he was kidding me . . . or was he serious? I looked up and down the street and saw nothing moving, so I leaned back and watched the street as ordered.

In the dark of night, off in the distance, I could hear gunshots being fired and every few minutes flares would light up the night sky. It was frightening and I held on tightly to my rifle, looking back and forth for anything that moved. I began to pay attention to every little sound or movement I noticed out of the corner of my eyes. Down below I saw what appeared to be dogs, but a closer look showed they were just really big rats. Then out of nowhere, an army jeep came roaring up the street in the direction of the hotel. I stood up as the jeep sped past the hotel, then it was gone and quiet again. I kept watch for 2 hours and was relieved by another young soldier. As I headed back down to my bunk, I couldn't help but think this war business was serious stuff and I had better learn that lesson fast. I never felt completely safe while I was in Vietnam. Within a short time, the only people I trusted were the officers and sailors I served with on the ship. Welcome to the war! ★

Memories of the 5th/60th Mech Inf—Binh Phuoc (04/67–8/67) By Greg Farlin



View into the back of a M-113 Armored Personnel Carrier; home in the field for many in the Mech units.



Fun times like this happened quite often in the Mekong Delta.



Anyone remember any of these?

REUNION

Continued from page 1

Bathrooms feature shower/tub combinations, complimentary toiletries, and hair dryers. The MRFA guests are exempt for the fee for in-room high-speed Internet (wired and wireless). Guest rooms offer multi-line phones with voice mail. Televisions have premium satellite channels and pay movies. Rooms also include electronic check-out. Guests may request refrigerators but they are available on a first come/first serve basis and wake-up calls. Housekeeping is available daily. Guest rooms are all non-smoking.

Notifications and Fees: The following fees and deposits are charged by the property at time of service, check-in, or check-out: (1) Pet fee, USD 75.00 per pet; (2) Pet deposit: USD 75.00 per stay; and (3) Buffet breakfast fee, USD 16.95 per person (approximately). The above list may not be comprehensive. Fees and deposits may not include tax and are subject to change.

Discount: The hotel will be giving us a 10% discount for all food and beverages purchased in the hotel restaurant. You have to wear your name badge when asking for this discount.

Handicap Home Health Depot Scooters: To rent a handicap scooter, contact Kathy or Paula at Home Health Depot (317-347-6400). The requirement is a \$400 deposit, \$150 for rental, \$75



GALLEY

Continued from page 1

leave it all up to her; she's good at what she does so why try and change it. Thelma and her helpers are the best at what they do. Thelma is really our own Mable Springer. She used to have a side kick we called Louise and they were quite the dynamic duo for a few reunions. Then Louise went AWOL on us.

The Mobile Trailer will be in a different spot at the upcoming reunion. Last reunion it was position in a bad spot. So Bruce Graff our Mobile Museum Curator has had it moved to the front of the hotel where it will be in a better position and more accessible for all hands.

We will have the Museum Room as always. If you want to bring something to show, please do so, but remember the Association is not responsible for any items left unattended.

Empty Chair-Missing Man Ceremony. For those of you who have asked—yes Dave has contacted the bagpipe player and it's all go. Dave and those who participate always do an outstanding job with the ceremony. The ceremony is something the members always look forward too. Roy Moseman will do the rendering of Taps and Big John Richardson will lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

We will have more reunion information in the summer issue of our newsletter. So take care of one another and stay warm and I hope to see each and every one of you at the reunion. I apologize to all who attended the last reunion. I was under the weather and was not around as much as I wanted to be. They say the golden years are some of the best years of one's life. I'm not sure many of us old Vietnam Vets and their families can relate to that, but some are luckier than others. Have a good one! Our ranks may be thinning out but we will all remain brothers to the end...Albert

P.S. Let's remember all our Brothers and Sisters who have passed on as well as those who are not doing well .Let's keep them all in our hearts, minds, and prayers. ★

for delivery, and \$75 for pick-up. If there are no damages to the scooter, the rate upon return will be delivery and pick-up for the dates of September 1-6, 2015. The MRFA is not responsible for the delivery of the scooter or the payment.

Castleton Square Mall: The hotel will provide

complimentary transportation to and from Castleton Square Mall at a prearranged time with departure from the hotel in the morning and departure from Castleton Square Mall in the afternoon. Service will be offered on a first come, first serve basis. ★

2015 MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Reunion Registration Form • Sept. 2-6, 2015

Name _____

Unit in Vietnam _____ Dates _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ or Cell _____

E-mail _____

Name(s): Spouse/Guest(s) _____ City _____ State _____

Send my registration form by email? Yes No

No guests

First Reunion

Registration fee \$60.00

Cost includes member and spouse/girlfriend

(Does not cover lodging, food, bus trips, or shuttles)

Total number of other guest(s) (___ x \$20 each) _____

Guests under 16 are free.

Registration fee for Nonmember (\$75) _____

Late registration fee (\$75) _____

Grand total enclosed \$ _____

When filling out the form, please use one unit and one date, even if you have served in more than one unit.

To provide the complimentary transportation to and from the airport on a prearranged scheduled basis, fill out the 2015 MRFA Reunion Flight Information Form and send to Christine Noggle as indicated on the form.

If you do not send the form to Christine, you will have to find your own transportation to the hotel.

Note: You will still have to check in at the registration desk to receive your name tag.

If you wait and pay your registration fee at the reunion, the late registration fee will be \$75. Register early and help the MRFA as we use your fees to purchase food, beverages, and other items.

If you have any questions, contact Frank Jones (frank@raffertylighting.com).

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

2015 MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Reunion Flight Information • Sept. 2 to 6, 2015

NOTE: Flight info due no later than August 16, 2015, to get on the hotel shuttle. **No exceptions to this rule. If you do not sign up, you will have to find your own transportation to the hotel.**

Name(s): _____

Cell Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Date	Airline	Flight Number	Arrival time INTO Indianapolis Airport	Number of People Needing Ride from Indianapolis Airport
Date	Airline	Flight Number	Arrival time DEPARTING Marriott East Hotel	Number of People Needing Ride to Indianapolis Airport

Flight Information Form: If you are flying and have friends flying, try and work your air travel around each other. The airport is about 16 miles from the hotel and the cost per taxi runs around \$45 or \$50. To provide the complimentary transportation on a prearranged scheduled basis, fill out the below form and send to Christine Noggle by e-mail cnoggle@indymarriotteast.com; fax to Christine Noggle at 1-317-352-9775; or mail to Christine Noggle, Event Manager, Indianapolis Marriott East, 7202 E 21st St, Indianapolis, IN 46219, ATTN: 2015 MRFA Reunion Flight Info.

If you e-mail this form, you will receive a confirmation e-mail back within 3 days of arrival as to what your pick up times will be. If flights are delayed, call 1-317-322-3716, Ext 1255, when you get into Indianapolis airport and they will get you on the next shuttle.

September 23, 2014

By Frank Silva D Co 4th/39th Inf
ftaman439@razzolink.com

Today was just one more step down the road called, "Life." It has been 45 years since the two of us (me and LtGen Hughes) would meet face to face. Forty-five years ago we were both in a far off place called Vietnam. We were both soldiers in Dagger Company, 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division. I was a 22-year-old Sergeant in Dagger Company; he was the Platoon Leader of our infantry platoon. We were only together for a short period of time, maybe 2 months. During those months, we had several intense fire-fights and many of my fellow soldiers were wounded, and some gave the ultimate sacrifice, their life.

Today we met face to face, soldier to soldier, and the closeness and the emotions were more than evident. Since I was seriously wounded in Vietnam and medically evacuated out of the war, I lost almost all contact with the men that I fought with. Being only 23-years old and alive was all that was important. Contacting your fellow combatants never entered my mind. For that matter, I guess it didn't enter my fellow combatants' minds either.

For 26 years I had never talked to anyone I served with in combat. I remembered their names. I had no idea

what states they were from, so I just went on with normal life trying to forget that place called Vietnam. It was time to pursue another path, that of starting relationships with girls. Yes that was much more important. Vietnam was once again 12,000 miles away and out of my life; at least physically, emotionally it will always be there.

Just by fate our Battalion Commander, Colonel David H. Hackworth, decided to write a biography of his life in the Army. His initial book signing took place in Monterey, California, only about 25 minutes from my home in Salinas. I immediately bought his book and went directly to the chapter about our Hardcore Battalion. As I read about our unit, I saw two paragraphs about a young draftee (that was me), who wrote FTA (Fuck the Army) on the Colonel's bunker in the middle of the Mekong Delta. It wasn't the best decision I made in my life but I am one that does the best with the cards I am dealt. I was immediately sent to Dagger Company, a front line combat company. I wrote Colonel Hackworth a letter letting him know that I was the young draftee that wrote those three letters on his bunker. He



LtGen Pat Hughes U.S. Army (Ret)
Plt Ldr 4th/39th Inf 9th Inf Division Vietnam



Frank and LtGen Hughes

replied back to me immediately. He even asked me to join his association: "A Band of Brothers." I was reluctant at first, because I assumed it was mostly officers, and I didn't care much for any of the ones that I had met in Vietnam.

The next year's reunion would be in Reno, only about a 5-hour drive for me. So I decided to go, the only reason I was going was because my Commanding Officer of Dagger Company, Capt. Ed Clark, was going to be there. He would be the first person I talked to and saw in person since I left Vietnam 26 years ago. It was quite an emotional meeting. Once I became a member I was given a company roster of Dagger Company from 1969. It had everyone's names on it, with their Army Service number, as well as their Social Security number. Within the group was an officer that did investigative work. When I told him what I had in my possession he said send me the name and

the SSN and he could find them for me. I sent him about 24 names, just the ones that I remembered. Within hours he had their phone numbers and addresses and now I was on my journey to find some of the men that I was in combat with. I called every number on the list and I got the same answer from all 24. They told me that I was the first person that they had talked to since leaving the war. They were just like me, trying to lead a new life, and leaving Vietnam behind. Most didn't remember who I was, some didn't really want to talk about it, but I felt a lot better after each phone call.

Several from my company joined Hack's group and started coming to the yearly reunions. The bond was still there, it was almost like we had been in contact all those 24 years. We talked about guys that I didn't find, and we wondered how they were. And we would always talk about

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The Sound of Helicopters in Vietnam

For many of us, it was the sound of combat, of strength, valor, protection, ammunition, and the sound that got us there and got us back. It was also the sound that we heard as our KIAs made the beginning of their final trip home. This is a tribute to those that were there for us come hell or high water. This is our sound . . . we have earned it.

http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=02e_1374306864

As Bob Hope used to sing: "Thanks for the memories . . ."

Helos of all sorts, military and civilian, continue to fly the skies over the south shore of Boston—where I live. But they have lost that distinctive wop-wop-wop emotion-sparking sound. . . as that LiveLeak site covers so well.

The now-gone-to-condos South Weymouth Naval Air Station, around 15 miles south of Boston (as the crow/helo flies), used to send a Huey over my then Quincy home every day; it was the daily Mail Run. Alone, I was renovating the entire exterior of an old large Victorian house around the early '80s; mostly ladder and scaffold work.

They changed the route slightly each day; one day it would be distant as it passed a ways away, other times it went directly overhead. The altitude altered too, but always was close. When it was extra low over my house, I always was powerfully brought back to having one landing on my Tango's flight deck.

I didn't realize it, in those early days of PTSD not even being called that, but those 3 p.m. flights had their effect: At first it was a temporary break from work to binge on Oreos and cold milk.

Then I "graduated" to milk with coffee brandy. Ultimately, to save the effort of making one glass at a time, I ended up drinking from a gallon of sombrero mix . . . and eventually, for that lost day, not resuming work on my house. That led to my floating to the local gin mill for laughs, dancing, and often a nighttime companion.

I am lucky that I finally realized the waste and danger of what was my personal reaction to the overhead helo. This tale is to say to others that they aren't alone in having similar stories of dealing with affects and effects of war. My belief is that to not experience "heart terrors" of some sort and degree, would be the scariest of all . . . that's being stone cold . . . and no way to live.

Rich Lorman T-152-6 ('68-69)—out.

From **Donald Matras**—The sound for me was the sound of the twin Detroit diesel engines on a Navy Swift boat. For many in the Army and Marine Corps, it was the helicopter chopping the air.

From **River Rat Ron**—It's a rare event even now that I don't "feel" before I hear a helicopter. I always stop what I'm doing and watch. It takes me back and brings back a lot of memories, including the one below.

An Army chopper almost dumped me out somewhere over the U Minh when I hitched a ride from our AO behind the left rear gunner. I was extra baggage, sitting with my rifle between my knees. Suddenly, the helo banked hard and fast. I was out the door. Didn't have time to get scared; but I grabbed hold with my right-hand fingers and my boot heels. Didn't drop my rifle!



I think it scared the gunner and the pilot more than me at the time. After I plopped back into the seat, they flew straight! It was my very lucky 21st birthday.

Rambo, I wasn't. Army guy told me later that they thought they had seen some enemy activity, thus the fast turn. The belly of helo sort of went right and up so I was looking down at the forest canopy. They had lost two choppers earlier that day so still in fight mode. It was just something that when it happened, I was lucky.

The door gunner's eyes were in wide-eyed shock mode. He was looking at me and yelling something into the intercom, at which time the pilot (guy in right front seat anyway) almost jumped out of his seat (if that's possible with seat straps) craning around to see. His eyes were big and he was yaking away too. All I could do was look at them wondering what just happened, then lean back and sit there. I think the gunner was attached to chopper with a steel cable—Another day in SVN. My CO wanted me to enjoy my birthday in Dong Tam instead of out on the river. Almost 24 hours later, I made it to the hooch. ★

River Raider Rap-Up

Colonel Robert Archer Commanding Officer 2D Brigade
The DEROS, Volume 1 Number 4, June 19, 1968

After a 100 mile voyage that took 13 hours, the Mobile Riverine Force dropped their anchor at the last stop on their now 9th Division stationery Can Tho. Can Tho, of course, is the Mekong Delta's major city. It is also IV Corps headquarters. Interestingly enough, the IV Corps Junior Advisor is MG William Eckhardt who debarked at Vung Tau on December 19, 1966, as Commanding General of the men who support the OCTOFOIL. River Assault Flotilla One and the River Raiders are the first and only major US force to operate in the strategic IV Corps area. Monday's top story was a highly successful "people sniffer" mission conducted by the 2d Brigade's chemical officer, Maj Franklin Wagner. A people sniffer in a chemical personnel detector that samples the air and tells its operation when it smells humans. After obtaining a maximum reading in an area 9 miles southeast of Can Tho, Major Wagner directed a scout ship to buzz the area. When the desperate Gong opened up on the LCH craft, Alpha Troop 7th/1st Cav gunships brought smoke all over that grid square. Sweeping River Raiders discovered 33 enemy dead in that location. Moments after midnight A Co 3/60 sprung an aquabush on a VC sampan killing three enemies. Two hours later, the Tigers Alpha element triggered a claymore on another enemy sampan trying to sneak by them to the North. One female detainee was taken at the scene. Later in the day the Wild Ones netted five detainees. During the morning while the Air Force was destroying 10 VC bunkers, another "people sniffer" mission was run. This time, when it was over, two Viet Cong lay face down in the mud. Then at 1230 Echo Co. 3/47 got hit from the front, right, and left. Airstrikes and gunships supported as the other Tiger companies moved to assist E Co. The 7th/1st Cav dragonships prowling over the contact area in late afternoon spotted five more VC running away and quickly dipped down to kill them. During the night, spooky and artillery fire pounded the enemy positions as the estimated VC Company separated into two-to-three man groups to attempt escape. The 3/47 discovered two enemy bodies in the morning and A Co. 7th/1st Cav reported killing 10 more VC in the June 18 contact.

In the News . . . LTC John G Hill, 3/60 Battalion Commander, was awarded a Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, and an Air Medal by 9th Division CG, NG Julian J. Ewell, aboard the Colleton, June 12. Since LTC Hill took command of the Wild Ones on November 28, 1967, they have killed over 700 Viet Cong (by body count) and captured over 200 individual and a row-served weapons. The Wild Ones enjoyed their finest hour under LTC Hill when, at the outbreak of the VC Tet Offensive, they rushed to My Tho to lift the siege of that Province Capitol and then redeployed to Vinh Long to again repulse the VC. ★

Historic Fleets

By A. D. Baker III, Editor,
Combat Fleets of the World

Among the few World War II-constructed ships and craft remaining in U.S. Navy service are the Benewah-class berthing barges Mercer (APL-39; ex-IX-502, APB-39, and APL-39) and Nueces (APL-40; ex-IX-503, APB-40, and APL-40), employed at San Diego and Yokosuka, respectively. As their strings of former hull numbers indicate, they have had interesting careers. Intended as transports and accommodations ships for crews of floating dry docks in forward areas, the six Benewah Class were authorized on 17 December 1943, as APL-35—40. To distinguish them from the APL-2-class barges, the Navy retyped the Benewah Class as APB—"Barracks Ship, Self Propelled" on 8 August 1944. The Benewah (APB-35), Colleton (APB-36), Echols (APB-37), Marlboro (APB-38), Mercer (APB-39), and Nueces (APB-40) were built by Boston Navy Yard to a modified version of the standard LST (landing ship, tank) design, on the same 328-foot hull propelled by two 800-horsepower diesels.

All six ships were completed after the war and served for the next two decades mainly in such roles as receiving ships and accommodations ships attached to mothball fleet anchorages before going into reserve themselves. The Marlboro was

stricken in December 1963, and the Echols, still in her original configuration, was redesignated IX-504 in 1971 and used as a barracks barge for submarine crews at Groton, Connecticut, until stricken in December 1995. The other four were reactivated in 1967-68 after major modifications to serve as riverine force flagships in Vietnam. The 03-level deckhouse was lengthened and surmounted by a helicopter platform, an enlarged bridge superstructure was topped by a sturdy tripod mast to support new communications antennae; and the surviving armament of two quadruple Mk 2 40-mm anti-aircraft gun mounts was supplemented by two single-fire 3-inch guns.

On their return from Vietnam in 1970, the four were returned to reserve. The Colleton was stricken on 6 January 1973 and scrapped, but the others were again modified and reactivated as IX—"Miscellaneous, Unclassified"—for use as non-self-propelled accommodations barges at shipyards. The Benewah became



USS Benewah (APB-35) Vietnam

IX-311 in February 1971 but was stricken in 1973. The Mercer and the Nueces, reactivated on 1 November 1975 as IX-502 and IX-503, respectively, remain in use 55 years after their completion, with their hull numbers returned to APL-39 and APL-40 on 7 March 2001.

The Mercer (as APB-39) is seen on trials, 2 days prior to commissioning on 19 September 1945. The 2,189-ton (full-load displacement) ship, in addition to a crew of 141, had berthing and dining facilities for 1,226 passengers and carried six 40-foot personnel launches in davits atop the blocky 2-level deckhouse that stretched nearly from bow to stern.

The Benewah (as APL-35) moored in

the Mekong Delta in the late 1960s as flagship and support vessel for River Assault Flotilla One. Note the 3-inch guns at the after corners of

CONTINUED PAGE 7



USS Nueces (APB-40) Vietnam



USS Colleton (APB-36) Vietnam



USS Mercer (APB-39) Vietnam

A Trip to Remember— Binh Phuoc (04/67–8/67)

By Greg Farlin

While sitting on my cot in our new wood and screened barracks, I received orders to report to the 9th Infantry Division in 24 hours. After packing all my worldly goods and saying good-bye to the guys I had been with my entire military career (18 months), I jumped on a truck bound for the nearest air base. Being strapped to the floor of a C-130 was not my idea of first class. After a harrowing flight and landing, I was put on another truck and transported to the middle of nowhere. This "nowhere" was called Bien Phuoc. After getting off the truck, I waded through the mud to Headquarters. Headquarters was a conex container. Upon entering, I reported in to a guy sitting in a chair—"Spc-4 Farlin reporting for duty." "Put your damn orders on the desk and report to the 1st Platoon." I later learned that the guy in the chair was none other than Sgt. Board. After wandering around aimlessly for a while in the mud, I heard a voice call out "What are you looking for?" I looked over and saw a guy with a great smile and a flat top haircut. I walked over to him and introduced myself and asked him where 1st Platoon was? He said, "You're standing in the middle of it." He told me if I wanted I could bunk in his tent. His tent was a shelter half just like everyone had. As I looked around at B Company's pup tents scattered around in what was and for the most part still was a rice paddy I couldn't believe where I was. Little did I know that this was the beginning of something that I would treasure the rest of my life! By the way, the guy who was so kind to me would become my best friend—his name was Ron Groff. I am very proud to be a member of the best company in Vietnam—Bravo Company! ★

Captain Revisited

By Matthew Rovner YN3 USS Colleton APB-36 (1966-67)

Thanks to the MRFA and the great group of folks who put all the effort into keeping in contact with its members in so many different ways. I was recently able to have a memorable lifetime experience. Here's what happened.

With my son graduating college in St. Petersburg, Florida, this past May, I began planning our 1,300-mile journey back home to Natick, Massachusetts. It would be a father and son bonding trip with meaningful stops along the way. At 22, my son and my life were complete dichotomies. I'm 69 and in 1967, I had spent most of that year in the Navy on the USS Colleton, in and out of Vung Tau and the tributaries of the Mekong Delta.

I was one of the lucky ones. Out of harm's way for the most part, I was a Weapons Yeoman. But due to some luck and timing, I also worked with a small handful of talented shipmates creating and producing our ship's cruise book, a written and photographic journal of its mission and its crew.

A few years ago, the MRFA sent out a contact list: addresses, email, and telephone numbers of former Colleton's crewmembers. I saw that former captain, Lt. Commander Floyd Banbury now 89-years old, lived just a 100 miles across the state in Indialantic, a small island community off of Melbourne.

It had been 47 years since a helicopter transported me from the

helo deck of the Colleton for re-assignment in Saigon. A remarkable leader at 42, Captain Banbury had commandeered the ship from the Philadelphia Navy shipyards, 12,000 miles, half way around the world, to navigate the treacherous delta rivers.

Working on the cruise book allowed me access to the captain. The cruise book was his idea and his baby from the very outset. He was enthusiastically involved in its conceptual planning and design. Throughout the many months of development, I was afforded the privilege of meeting with him for frequent updates on the production, design, layout, copy, photos, and artwork.



USS Colleton APB-36

It was during this process and the many meetings with Captain Banbury that I began developing the skills that would shape my professional career. His kind demeanor and gentle manner brought out the best in me. As the book unfolded, so did our relationship. He took an interest in me and encouraged me



Matthew Rovner YN3 (1966-67) and LtCdr Floyd Banbury USN (Ret) CO USS Colleton APB-36 (1966-68)

to pursue a college education when my tour ended and my active duty commitment was up.

The cruise book committee was a team of creative and remarkably resourceful officers and enlisted men. There was an illustrator, Ed Bridge (SPF3), a poet, Clyde Cripe (YN3), writers: (Ernie Rapp (YN3), Mike Petersen (LTJG), Charles Corey (LTJG) Tim Petta (RD2), me and so many more.

When the book was completely laid out and paginated, I was sent to Tokyo, Japan, for printing. Upon my return to the ship in November, I learned of my reassignment to the USS Arlington, a communications ship that was stationed off the coast of South Vietnam. November 1967 was the last time I met with Captain Banbury until now.

When my son and I arrived at his home, I had some wonderful memories in the 40-plus Polaroids and Kodaks photos in my bag. There were three or four of Captain

Banbury with other officers and crew. We reminisced for hours. We exchanged stories and experiences. We learned about each other's life. We laughed. At times, I welled up with emotion.

The Captain lives alone. He's divorced and widowed from a second marriage. His daughters live on the West Coast. He has trouble walking, but he deftly uses a walker. He's fiercely independent. With a gleam in his eye and a wry sense of humor, the captain shared vivid memories and fascinating stories of his time in Vietnam.

He spends quite a bit of time at his computer reading and staying current on world issues. He enjoys emailing and would welcome hearing from former crewmembers. He still drives, although now taking only right-hand turns. Indialantic is on a grid, so getting around in his 2004 Cadillac Seville is a breeze. He spent 32 years in the US Navy, enlisting as a young man, rising up to NCO then was sent to college emerging as an officer. His first command was the USS Colleton and what a commanding officer he was. A quiet, confident, kind and soft-spoken man, Captain Banbury's leadership style earned the respect and admiration from all who served under him.

During dinner at a local pub, between bites of whole red snapper, he reflected on world's affinity for war and the constant clashing of cultures. "It has been going on forever." He referenced a favorite book, *The Histories* written in 450 BC by

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

1097th Boats Keep Barges Moving in Delta

Published in *The Old Reliable*, February 26, 1969

DONG TAM—Artillery can be a lifesaver for the infantryman and the 3d Battalion, 34th Artillery provides this artillery cover throughout a large part of the Division's tactical area. The reason for their success is mobility is the 1097th Transportation Company.

With the unlikely organization of 337 men and 27 boats, the company is the prime mover and resupplier of the 3d/34th Artillery barges. They move barges wherever they are needed to cover the work of the infantryman and keep the artillery supplied with both ammunition and the everyday necessities of life.

Operating with Mark VIII Mechanized Landing Craft,

better known as "Mike" boats, the company has abandoned the Army boat companies' normal mission of off-shore loading and lighterage to become the only tactical transportation company in Vietnam.

Working primarily at night, boats designated as moving craft hook up alongside the barges and tow them in a side-by-side manner between firing locations. The side-by-side configuration is dictated by a need to keep the barges stable.

In addition to moving the barges from site to site, the boats also act as a battery command post, fire direction center, barracks ships and even floating prisoner-of-war detention sites.

Outfitted with a salvage pump, welder, work benches and a vast array



Cleaning mess equipment one of daily chores anywhere... boats no exception and ramp provides room for working KPs



1097th soldier finds time to wash clothes... water no problem where they operate



3d/34th artillery barge gets push from 1097th Boat Co... up and down the rivers, boats support infantrymen in the field

to a crippled boat which is already in the middle of a move and repair it on-the-move, preventing any dangerous gaps from opening up in the convoy.

While the damage control vessel can take care of a large majority of the problems that arise, the biggest problem—engines—are repaired on the large Maintenance Barge in Dong Tam basin.

Working the Mekong Delta, primarily at night, the boats must ply the narrow



Complicated equipment keeps barges on move... 1097th mechanic knows engines inside and out

waterways that lace the area. While appearing to be slow moving and an easy target, the boats can pump out fire with a combination of .50 Cal. and M-60 machine guns, M-79 grenade launchers and personal weapons. They can also use the artillery for direct fire.

★

of parts and tools, a damage control vessel can tie up

Roaring 3-34 Boosting MRF

Published in *The Old Reliable*

ABOARD THE USS BENAWAH—With howitzers lowered and ready to fire, the “Roar of the River Raiders” glide down a calm, muddy river as darkness begins to close around the Mekong Delta.

The 9th Division soldiers are tired from a full day's work, but they must continue until they reach the site of their next fire support base. An hour after they arrive, their guns will be set to give close support to the infantrymen of the 2d Brigade “River Raiders,” the Army component of the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF).

The artillery fleet has grown out of a need for a highly mobile, indirect fire support for the MRF. If moved by helicopter, the heavy artillery pieces would be swallowed by the mud and water covering the Delta.

However, placing two batteries of the 3d Battalion, 34th Artillery on 80-foot barges and towing them with LCM-8 landing craft of the 1097th Medium Boat Company has produced one of the most successful innovations to come out of Delta warfare.

The artillery section of these self-sufficient fire bases consists of three barges for each battery

with a 105-mm howitzer mounted on each end of the craft. The artillerymen live in sandbagged huts between the two guns, with shells and powder stored on each barge.

“When we need to move to a new position to support the ground troops, we just pick up and leave,” explained Sergeant Tim Tschida, of Holdingford, Minn., an artillery section chief. “We go ashore, pick up the aiming stakes and the mooring anchors and move out. It's a lot easier than with a ground battery.”

When setting up, the barges are maneuvered parallel to the shore and the mooring cables are run out from the corners of the craft. Two large metal beams are placed on the canal or river bottom from the sides of the barges to keep them off shore and to keep the mooring lines taut. With the barges as immobile as possible, the crew go ashore to place the aiming stakes, and the guns are ready to blast away.

Fire from the barges is as accurate as that from steady ground.

“The main problem not found on the ground is that the boats tend to rock when there is a wake in the river,” said Corporal Harry Atkins, of Teachey, Ohio, a section chief. “To correct for this



... back up MRF infantrymen in the Mekong Delta

we have to judge exactly when the bubble is level and yank the lanyard. It's not very complicated, but it takes a little practice.”

“Living conditions on the barges are better than in a ground battery,” stated Private First Class Roy Johnson, of Hollister, Fla., a gunner. “There's no dust to fight, and there's always a cool breeze on the river.

“It can get to be a pain not having anywhere to go or anything to do in your spare time though.”

The 1097th personnel live on their LCM-8s, two of which house the Command Post (CP) and the Fire Direction Center (FDC). The CP holds a complete tactical operations center for the 2d Brigade and can quarter the 2d Brigade commanding officer, his staff and the 3d/34th Commander. Adjacent to the

CP, the FDC controls all fire from the “Roar” guns, as well as those in adjoining areas.

The 9th Signal Battalion, supplying communication lines for the fire base, occupies another boat in the group, and the 9th Military Police have what might be the most interesting craft. With a temporary prison and interrogation area, it serves as a collection point for detainees.

Four remaining boats are for supply, maintenance facilities, the 1097th's commanding officer and the mess hall.

Mobility and firepower make up the “Roar of the River Raiders.” The success can be measured by the thanks of the infantrymen of the MRF as the artillery rounds whiz over their heads toward the Viet Cong. ★

Herb's Corner

Herb Worthington, National Chair, Agent Orange/Dioxin & Other Toxic Substances Committee, Vietnam Veterans of America, Hworthington1@comcast.net

You made it. You are home from Vietnam and even though you had a rough time, someone was on your side and got you through the war and home safely . . . or so you thought. When you came home, I'll bet you thought the war was over for you and you could go on with your life. As time went on you notice that you have problems with your health. Maybe you become a Type II Diabetic or you get Prostrate Cancer or even Lung Cancer but you think it is because of the cigarettes you smoked in Vietnam. Then you notice your children becoming ill or having learning problems.

What does it all mean? Are you the only one to have these problems? What is being done, where do you go? These and many other questions will be answered and probably many more questions will rise after you hear Herb Worthington speak at our 2015 MRFA reunion in Indianapolis, IN. This talk can change not only your life but your whole families' lives. Be sure your spouses are made aware of this as well; it's very important they do so.

Herb is schedule to speak 10 a.m. Friday, September 4, 2015, in the large hospital room. You do not want to miss this. Herb will also have packets of information on hand as well. He also has current legislation that he has going on in Congress. The bill went back to committee for a few small changes and will be given a new number. Once he has that, he will write explaining how we will need everyone's help by contacting their Senators to pass the bill. This bill will affect not only the Vet but also his children and grandchildren.

Herb Worthington served with C Co 3rd Brigade 2/60 Recon 9th Infantry Division 1970. Herb is the National Chair for the Agent Orange/Dioxin & Other Toxic Substances Committee of Vietnam Veterans id America. I am also the Region 2 (DE, NY, NJ, and DE) Director for the VVA and sit on the National BOD for the VVA. Herb is a MRFA member and has been for quite a while. ★

CAPTAIN

Continued from previous page

Herodotus. Well, my son lit up. “I loved that book.” Off they went like two old cronies sitting on the front porch sharing a beer and conversation. They had connected. Mission accomplished!!

What an incredible moment and remarkable experience we all shared. As Captain Banbury wrote in an email when I first reached out to him, “Hearing from you means more to me than all the ribbons and rewards.” Getting to see him 47 years later with my son means the memory of a lifetime for us. ★

HISTORIC

Continued from page 6

the helicopter deck added amidships and the heavy tripod mast atop the bridge area forward.

The Nueces (again as APL-40), moored at Yokosuka in April 2001. has her former helicopter deck screened in as an excise court, and external pipe fendering running down both sides of the hull. The Mercer is in Japan as well as (APL-39). They both have been stripped of their engines and all weapons and their pilot house and they both are used for berthing of fleet personnel. Note: The Benewah never made it back to the states. She was turned over to the Philippine Navy and used as a hospital ship. She later caught fire after an inspection. She was consider unseaworthy and sunk for a barrier reef. ★

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APB-36 Colleton
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APB-51 DuPage

From The Membership

Forwarding this from Jim Brown

Just received another excellent edition of *River Currents*. There are two articles about experiences with the 15th Combat Engineer Bn., one by James Wollner and the other by Lee Kolstad. This brought back memories since I was a platoon leader in A Co, 15th Combat Engineer Bn. from Jan 1969 to August 1969. My experiences departing Viet Nam and the 9th Inf Div were bizarre to say the least, in my opinion. Our platoon was in support of the 1st Brigade. When the 9th was withdrawn, I was told by the 1st Brigade XO that I would be transferred as a rifle platoon leader in the 2nd Brigade to finish out my combat tour. But first we had to get all the battalions of the 1st Brigade safely back to Dong Tam. We ran a daily mine sweep from outside of Dong Tam to FSB Moore

every day of my tour, and when our withdrawal was announced, Charlie stepped up his mines and booby trap game. We would spend several weeks clearing these mines as each battalion in our area trucked to Dong Tam. It was intense, with daily mines to clear, but we accomplished the mission without a casualty. When we arrived in Dong Tam, I was surprised that my CO, my First Sergeant and my entire company were already gone, along with most of the 15 Combat Engineer Bn. So, we proceeded to pack up my platoon and get them eventually aboard C131s headed to Hawaii where they would be reassigned stateside. I never did hear from the second Brigade for my new assignment, but after most of the 9th was in Hawaii, I was told that to fill the withdrawal quota, I was also being assigned to the 25th Inf Div in Hawaii. Needless to say, I was thrilled. In Hawaii, I discovered that we had not earned a Combat Infantryman's Badge even though most of my troops spent a good part of their tour walking point and clearing booby traps for the infantry and the rest of my platoon was running daily mine sweeps where sometimes we had a squad of infantry to help with the many ambushes and sometimes we just went it alone. No one in Hawaii had an answer to my questions about why we didn't earn a CIB because by that time the 1st Brigade had been disbanded. After reading the two articles on the 15th CIB I realize that someone on this email list must know the CIB policy of the 9th Inf Div and maybe could comment as to whether or not we combat engineers were eligible to receive CIBs or not. Thanks.

Jim Brown jbwwoods@suddenlink.net

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Note that other than 11 series, only Special Forces (18 series MOS) can receive the CIB. No



**Sergeant
Joseph Salazzar**

What is a hero? A hero is a person "admitted for courage, nobility, or exploits especially in war; admired for qualities or achievements and regarded as an ideal or model." This definition describes these two American heroes:

Who was Sgt. Joseph Salazzar? He was an E-6 Platoon Sgt. who was assigned to B Co. 4/47 3rd Pfc. 9th Inf. Div. Mobile Riverine Force in Vietnam in 1968. Sgt. Joe was already a seasoned Korean Combat Veteran before he volunteered for duty in Vietnam. He was an old man by most standards, being close to 40 at the time. He was a father figure to young men. He was a soldier's soldier.

His loyalty and concern for his men were demonstrated many times but especially on these two occasions.

One day on an air assault mission his men were put down about 50 meters from a tree line in an open rice paddy. They were immediately pinned down by machine gun and small arms fire. Sgt. Joe, realizing the grave danger his troops were in, stood up and charged an enemy machine gun bunker and knocked it out with a grenade. All the men of the 3rd Pfc made it safely into the tree line. Sgt. Joe's act of bravery probably saved many lives that day.

On another day his platoon was pinned down by enemy fire coming from a bunker. Once again Sgt. Joe charged the bunker single handedly and knocked it out with a grenade. This time he received a bullet wound to his leg.

After this, his CO assigned Sgt. Joe to the rear detachment. He was awarded a bronze star for his valorous actions. His Captain wanted him to return home without a flag draped over him. We were glad for Sgt. Joe, but at the same time sorry he was leaving us. We loved him and he loved us. The Bible says in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Sgt. Joseph Salazzar was willing to lay down his life for his friends. He is a real American hero!

other MOS in the US Army is authorized to receive or wear the CIB. The Army does, now, have an award that goes to all MOSs that are not 11 series (Infantry); the Combat Action Badge (CAB). It would be somewhat analogous to the Navy/USMC CAR, but it has only been in existence for less than 10 years.

Be Safe and Well

*Mike Spight LTC USA (RET)/USN River Division
153 Vietnam*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On Mon, Sep 29, 2014 at 12:03 PM, Reb Turner <rebturnermaj@gmail.com> wrote:

In general, you have to have an Infantry MOS, be assigned to an infantry unit at brigade level or lower, and be in combat for 30 days or more. *Reb Turner* ★

SEEKING

My Dad Sgt. Craig McBride died suddenly on February 4, 1999. Sgt. McBride served in C Co. 4th/47th (1966-69). He did not arrive to Bear Cat until September 1967 so he was a "replacement." On March 15, 1968, he was hit by a grenade and spent a month in the hospital and then was back on the ship around April 21. He left Vietnam September 1968. He was diagnosed with Carcinoid Cancer the day before he died. Is there anyone out there that fought with our Dad? Has anyone else had medical problems that could have been caused by Agent Orange that served in the same area at the same time? More than anything we are looking for someone who was in the field with him, who might have pictures or stories, especially from the day he was hit from the grenade. *Please contact Angie McBride Olsen, PO Box 262, Wellsville, UT 84339, angiemcbride@gmail.com.*



SEPTEMBER 23 Continued from page 4

our platoon leader, yet none of us knew his name. When he joined our platoon, he told us he wanted us to call him "Montana," so that is all that we knew, we didn't know his whole name, or even why he wanted to be called "Montana." I would look at the officers listed on the company roster, and there was nobody by the name of Montana. But it did show a person listed as second lieutenant, Patrick Hughes. We all thought it could be him, but no one was sure of it.

About another 10 years passes by and by chance I am reading the newsletter from the Mobile Riverine Force Association. The Riverine Force is the Navy boats that carried the Army units up and down the canals on search-and-destroy missions. In the newsletter, there were various articles written by some of its members. I started reading one article, I only read about the first three sentences

when light bulbs started bursting in my head. With every new sentence was a description of my company in Vietnam. The more I read, the more obvious that this article was written by someone who was in my Company. I looked at the author, Lt. General Patrick Hughes. I couldn't believe it, the same name on our company roster. Without a doubt we had found our lieutenant platoon leader after almost 30 years, and I was more than impressed to see that he had stayed in the military and he now was a 3-Star General. Wow!!!

I immediately e-mailed him, then I phoned him, and we were connected once again. It was like finding a long lost family member. We kept in touch through many more years, with e-mails, but we never actually arranged a personal meeting together. That was until today. The time had truly flown by; it was 45 years since leaving Vietnam. He e-mailed me and said he was going to visit family in San Francisco, about 2 hours away, and he would like to come down one

day and say hello. I was ecstatic. So we planned it to happen today September 23, 2014. He arrived at my house almost exactly on time. He looked almost the same, except we both had gray hair, and maybe a little more weight, but the bond was there instantly. He gave me a big hug, and I hugged him back. I had a lot of things I wanted to talk about, but unfortunately he could only spend a few hours. So we certainly made the best of the situation. I probably talked too much because there was so much to talk about in such a short time.

I am the caretaker of the local Vietnam Memorial, and I knew he would like seeing that. So we headed into town and out to the Memorial. He was truly amazed at how beautiful and peaceful the place was. He said it truly honored those names engraved on the marble wall. We got a young high school boy to take a couple of photos of us standing in front of the Memorial; they came out great. Then we went over to one of my favorite

restaurants and had a great lunch and great conversation.

The time went much too fast for me. He was the same kind, gentle, caring person that he was in Vietnam. The bond was still there after 45 years. We came back to my shop, took a few more photos, had a great handshake, and he was on his way back to San Francisco. He said there is a good possibility that he will be returning next year, and we can plan a couple of days together. That made my day even more special. To go through an experience like I did today, well it makes me think that the big man upstairs let both of us survive a war called Vietnam because he had plans for us in the future.

To Patrick Hughes, I thank you, you helped an old combat soldier in ways you will never know or understand. I am very proud of you and your military career. You are still the greatest (no doubt about it) lieutenant that I had the honor of knowing. Take care my friend.

Frank Silva ★

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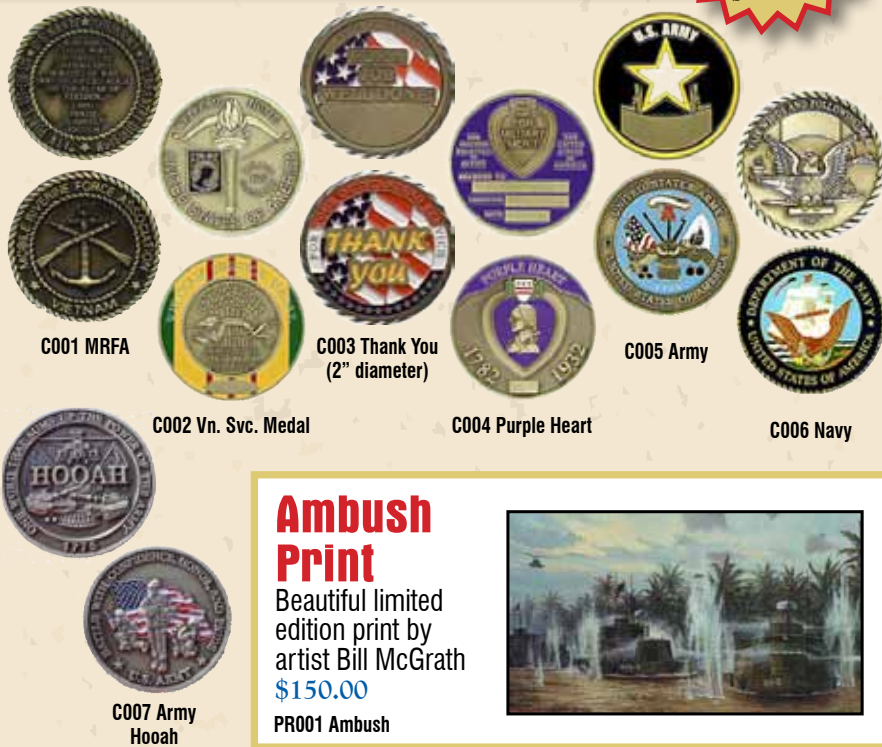


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NOTES:



Memories of Camp Roberts Gun Training

In the latest issue of *River Currents*, there was mention of Camp Roberts and the gun training we had there [’68] and some pics. I’d like to add a few photos about that subject. I am a self-confessed "lurker" at the interesting MRFA blog site and can't add my 2 cents worth that way.

I remember several things about that time at the Camp Roberts Army installation. We reactivated a long unused Army barracks and mess that were insultingly short on supplies. We had to make do with dehydrated eggs for breakfast [ugh!]; being separated from Army types in a remote and "secret" manner, probably it was energetic Barry Duschenek of T-152-5 who somehow leaked the rumor that we were USN S.H.A.R.K. teams. I now forget the meaning of the letters, but I do recall that they were laugh-out-loud funny. This game was reinforced by our wearing

of green duds with "lots" of running and calisthenics in the mornings; the .20s got fired by mistake over the distant hill and we got blasted by the brass for setting off grass fires in some far away golf course; Firing the .50s and the .20s made for strange sensations from my wearing of Navy issue underwear...too loosely-goosey for this sailor; The last photo is of a fellow who I heard soon after deserted...sad.

Richard Lorman T-152-6 (1968-69)
richlorm@comcast.net

Rich,

None of that stuff was available to the early boat crews. We used a Navy training barge to shoot automatic weapons, .30-, .50-, 20- and 40-mm at a bird sanctuary off the California coast. Even our boat training was in genuine WWII surplus landing craft. PBR sailors at least got to train on the boats they were going to use. I have no idea what training my Army brothers got so they could run up a ramp onto a hostile muddy river bank.

Dave M-111-3 (1966-68)

My experience at Camp Roberts was day firing all the weapons, including the 40 mm. Being on a 105-mm Monitor crew, we did the 40 mm there and the 105 at Camp Pendleton.

They have me guard duty during the night fire exercise to guard the road that went through the range. So I got to see the tracers from a distance.

During the day, someone ran a truck down that road and we had fun walking 40 mm behind it until the range officer called a cease fire!!!

Harry Hahn

Camp Roberts . . . yeah, I remember going there in the fall of 1969 (NIOTC Class 13-69) for weapons training and qualification on the M16 and pistol ranges. The things I really remember (besides the remoteness and crappy chow) were the tarantulas. They were EVERYWHERE.

Funniest thing that happened: The Army ran the ranges . . . their house, their rules. I remember a big Army Infantry Captain . . . RANGER Tab, Airborne wings . . . can't remember if he had a CIB and combat patch on his fatigues or not, but he was strutting around like the reincarnation of GEN George S. Patton. He was coming down the ladder of the range tower and was about to step off the last step onto the ground, and then he spotted a huge, hairy assed tarantula on the ground, right below where he was going to step. Well, Mr. Infantry let out a squeal like a little girl and ran his big ass right back up the ladder of that range tower. Some young Army E4 giggled a bit . . . then walked over and stomped the crap out the arachnid with his combat boots; problem solved. I remember we all laughed our asses off at Mr. Infantry . . .

Be Safe and Well, Brothers.

LTC USA Ret. Mike Spight mgs.1911a1@gmail.com ★

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TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One



Lord
 Member **Robert D. "Bob" Lord Jr.** passed away after a long and courage's battle with lung cancer Agent Orange related October 14, 2014. Bob served on the Yard Tug Boat (YTB) Winnemucca YTB 785, Naval Support Activity Saigon (02/71-12/71). She had previously been part of the Mobile Riverine Force TF-117. You may contact the family c/o Leslie S. Lord, 1635

Winterwood Sparks, NV 89434. May our brother rest in peace.



Clair
 Member **Warren G. Clair** passed away September 11, 2014. Warren served in HHC and B Co. 2nd/47th Inf (1967-68). You may contact the family c/o Sharon Clair, 1213 N. Tenaya Way, Las Vegas, NV 89128-3250, 702-363-4055, clair4055@centurylink.net.



Spradling
 Member **Tony Spradling** passed away from a heart attack January 5, 2015. Tony was a founding member of the Mobile Riverine Force Association. Tony was in A Co. 4th/47th (Riverine Infantry) 9th Infantry Division (11/68-11/69). You may contact the family c/o Phyllis Munsey, 343 N Dark Hollow Rd, Andersonville, TN 37705-1955,

865-719-6179, phyllis-munsey@aol.com.

Tony was one of the nicest people I ever had the honor and privilege to have met and know.n He was a man of high standards and integrity just an all-around great person. His kind doesn't come around that often.

I was honored to have been able to sit down and talk with Tony at the reunions and share a drink or two of the moonshine he always brought to the reunions. When Tony called you brother he meant it with all his heart and soul I was honored to be one of his brothers. May our Brother Tony rest in peace. He was really

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

TAPS
Continued
from previous page

one of a kind and will be greatly missed; sleep well my BROTHER. Albert Moore



**Bravo Co Spring
1969**



Bercury

Edmund T. "Ned"

Bercury, Jr. passed away December 6, 2014. Ned was a 1st Lieutenant and served first in Delta Company and then in Bravo Company of the 4th Battalion/47th Infantry Regiment/9th Infantry Division in 1968-1969. Between these two assignments he served on the Battalion S-3 staff. When he was in Bravo Company, he was the 3rd Platoon Leader. You may contact the family c/o Donna J. Bercury, 47 Reed Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201-6724, ebercury@nycap.rr.com.

Robert W. Hauser passed away February 22, 2014. Robert was in River Division 152 on Tango 49 (1970-71). You may contact his son Michael Hauser superikedaddy@yahoo.com

Jeff Mueller SM3 passed away due to a heart attack October 19, 2014. Jeff served

on the USS White helping and doing for

River Rover LSMR-526 (1968-69). You may contact the family c/o Rita Mueller N96 W237 Orchard Dr., Sussex, WI 53089. May our brother and shipmate rest in peace. Shipmate Bill Brennan



Lowe in Vietnam



Lowe

Colonel **Karl Lowe** US Army (Ret) passed away after a long struggle with cancer November 7, 2014. Karl served in Vietnam with the 6th/31st Inf Regiment in 1967 and later as CDR D Co 6th/31st (1970) where he took the company into Cambodia and the Plain of Reeds. You may contact the family c/o Sandra Lowe, 5101 Portsmouth Rd, Fairfax, VA 22032.

Although I had never met Karl, we were in touch by e-mails as he was the Historian for the 6th/31st and helping me with articles for the River Currents. He was a wealth of knowledge on Vietnam and other military matters I will miss his e-mails and his friendship.

Rest in Peace Colonel. You may have lost your battle with cancer, but you won many battles during your lifetime

others. One can only say in praise Karl Lowe was a good man! Albert Moore President Mobile Riverine Force Association



Walter

Lawrence "Larry"

Walter passed away after fighting a long battle with lung cancer January 21, 2015. Larry served with the 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 4th/47th Battalion Riverine Infantry (1966-1967). Larry was one of the original troopers out of Fort Riley, Kansas. He was transferred in June 1967 to the 4th Infantry Division via the infusion program where he was seriously wounded in July 1967. You may contact his sister, Kathy Sweigart; sweigart4@yahoo.com.

Info furnished by Bill Reynolds C Co 4th/47th.



Long

Member **James E. Long** passed away April 29, 2013. Jim served on the USS Satyr ARL-23 (1968-69) as part of the Mobile Riverine Force TF-117. You may contact the family c/o Patricia Long, 209 Roberts Rd #110, Pttatton, PA 18640-3111.



Ottney in Vietnam



Ottney

Member **Edward L. Ottney** passed away January 14, 2015. Ed served in the 120th Aviation Company attached to the 98th Trans Det CHFM, Saigon, Vietnam (1965-68). Ed served in maintenance and occasionally volunteer to go on missions as a door gunner on Hueys in the Mekong Delta.

Ed was a very close friend. May our brother rest in peace. Charlie Ardinger and Bruce Graff



McBride

Sgt. **Craig McBride** died suddenly on February 4, 1999. He was diagnosed with Carcinoid Cancer the day before he died. Sgt McBride served in C Co. 4th/47th (1966-1969). You may contact the family c/o Angie McBride Olsen, PO Box 262, Wellsville, UT 84339, angiembride@gmail.com.

In Memory Of

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

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- Dennis D. Erlandson for Verlyn H. Hanson Co D 3rd/47th (1968-69)
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- Regina Gooden for Sgt Lloyd Earl Valentine B Co. 3rd/47th KIA 09/05/68
- Gordon Hillesland for Pat Lawson NSA Dong Tam (1967-68)
- 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 Benawah. 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
- 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
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- John Smith for Paul D. Jose B Co. 3/60th KIA Westy 11/01/68
- Chet "Gunner" Stanley for all the USN and USA KIAs of the MRF (1967-70)
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- 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
- Steven Totcoff for my brother CPL Dennis S. Totcoff B Co 3rd/47th 9th Inf Div KIA 5/2/68
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- USS Benawah 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
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 David H. White USN (Ret) USS Satyr ARL-23 (08/69-08/70)
 BMCMT Donald Witta USN (Ret.) T-111-13 (03/67-02/68)
 Norm Wilkinson B Co. 4th/47th Inf (03/67-03/68)
 Jeffrey L. Withers RivRon 11 A-112-8 and M-112-12 (06/68-06/69)
 James Ziemiński 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