



# River Currents

Swift boats in Mekong Delta Vietnam War

Riverine Infantry 9th  
Infantry Division on an ATC

A PUBLICATION OF  
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 3  
FALL 2016

## From the Galley

Folks I hope this finds everyone getting over the hot summer weather we just had and some of you lived in areas with some real bad storms and fires and so on and now looking forward to some cooler and better weather. It was a scorcher here in my neck of the woods in the foothills of North Carolina.

Folks we the *River Currents* Staff need your help. After 20 some years, it's getting harder and harder to find articles for the newsletters without going online. We receive many requests for more articles posted by you the members. We have sent out many requests asking for articles from the membership. Below you will find something we put together that may help some of you to post an article in **Do You Remember?** I know there has to be a number of you that can help. We do very well with articles that we receive offline, but the ones we receive from you the members are the best and they help bring back a lot of memories, some good and some bad but the best are still the same. If



Al Moore

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

## Veterans Day '16 – Washington, DC

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will be placing wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day, Friday, November 11, 2016. 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 \$122 (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 10, 2016.

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 2016. We look forward to seeing you in DC.

For more information, contact Board Member Bob (Doc) Pries, (513) 659-4974, [pries247@gmail.com](mailto:pries247@gmail.com).★

## Flight Of The Phoenix

By Colonel William Wilson,  
US Army (Ret.)

Destroying the Viet Cong infrastructure was the key to winning the guerrilla war. The Phoenix program was designed to do just that.

An elaborate, sophisticated, secret enemy network existed in Vietnam that tried to impose its authority on the people through terror and threat. This network, called the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI), provided the political control and direction of the enemy's war within the villages and hamlets.

The VCI supplied the caches for the troops infiltrating from the border sanctuaries; it provided the guides and the intelligence for the North Vietnamese newcomers entering South Vietnam for the first time; it taxed, terrorized and conscripted youth for the military. During 1969, terrorists killed more than 6,000 people, 1,200 of whom had been selected for assassination. In addition, there were 15,000 wounded. Among the dead were 90 village chiefs and officials, 240 hamlet chiefs and officials, 229 refugees and 4,350 of the general populace.

Between the assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo

Dinh Diem in 1963 and the emergence, in mid-1965, of General Nguyen Van Thieu, South Vietnam's war effort was greatly hampered by political instability. A period of some 19 months saw the stagnation of the pacification programs (a broad term that included all the past and present socioeconomic efforts of the government to "win the hearts and minds of the people") and the continued deterioration of rural security as the VCI took advantage of the disarray in Saigon.

By 1965 the situation was so grave that American and South Vietnamese officials concluded that all efforts to date—including pacification plans, counterinsurgency operations and the reorganization of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)—were insufficient to stave off defeat at the hands of the Communists.

In March 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Robert W. Komer as his special assistant in Washington to direct, coordinate and supervise nonmilitary programs (in his words, "the other war")—further evidence of the priority the President gave to pacification. After several trips to Vietnam, Komer reported pacification at a virtual impasse and recommended to the President a number of measures that might produce results. He believed the best way to weaken the Viet Cong was by



**ARVN instructors train members of a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) to protect their village against the Viet Cong. The Phoenix program was designed to carry the undercover war to the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI). (National Archives)**

consolidating American assistance under a single manager empowered to eliminate overlapping programs and disentangle competition for resources.

Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) Intelligence summarized a comprehensive study of the enemy strategy, distributed June 29, 1967, based on an analysis of information reports, interrogation reports and captured documents in US and ARVN files. It clearly stated that the VCI provided a pervasive and insidious threat to meaningful victory in Vietnam, making the destruction of the VCI our most formidable task. That same year, the Central

Intelligence Agency (CIA) proposed that all US intelligence agencies pool their information on VCI at province, district and Saigon levels.

"Yes," responded Colby, "except that I would say that the Vietnamese government has made a considerable effort to indoctrinate all the way down the line that a live captive is better than a dead one because the live one carries information in his head, which can do you a great deal of good for future efforts. It has, I think, become generally accepted that what we want is either ralliers [defectors from the Viet Cong] or captives, and we are really not so anxious to get the others."

Colby was questioned in detail on "selected assassinations." He stated that there were 1,743 such assassinations for 1968, but that figures were not complete for February because of Tet.

"Are those the times when they went into a village and picked people and killed them?" Senator Stuart Symington asked. "Is that what selected assassination means?"

Colby answered, "Yes, a directed assassination against a specific [VC] official rather than a grenade going off in a market place."

Colby stated that the quota was 1,800 people per month. He was then

CONTINUED PAGE 3

# MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Reunion Registration Form

## August 31–September 3, 2017

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 • Cost includes member and spouse/girlfriend **\$70.00**  
**(Does not cover lodging, food, bus trips, or shuttles)**

Total number of other guest(s) (\_\_\_\_ x \$25.00 each) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guests under 16 are free.

Registration fee for Nonmember (\$80.00) \_\_\_\_\_

Late registration fee (\$75.00) \_\_\_\_\_

**Grand total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Please send this form with your check or money order (payable to the MRFA or Mobile Riverine Force Association) to MRFA 2017 Reunion, 1857 County Road A14, Decorah, IA 52101 before August 16, 2017. Returned checks and cancellations prior to the reunion will be charged a \$25 processing fee.**

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 2017 MRFA Reunion Flight Information Form and send to Kellie Quinn as indicated on the form.

**If you do not send the form to Kellie, 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.

## 2017 MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Reunion Flight Information

### August 31 to September 3, 2017

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*If you are bringing wheelchairs or scooters, you need to designate which and how many on this form. Also need to specify if riders are ambulatory or not. This will let the hotel know so they can get the right style of shuttle.*

Arrival Date	Airline	Flight Number INTO Indy Airport	Arrival time INTO Indy Airport	# of People Needing Ride	# of Non-Ambulatory People	Are you traveling w/ wheelchair/ scooter, etc.
						<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Departure Date	Airline	Flight Number FROM Indy Airport	Departure Time FROM Indy Airport	# of People Needing Ride	# of Non-Ambulatory People	Are you traveling w/ wheelchair/ scooter, etc.
						<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

**NOTE: Flight info due no later than August 14, 2017 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.** Send this completed form back to Kellie Quinn by e-mail [kquinn@indymarriotteast.com](mailto:kquinn@indymarriotteast.com); or fax to Kellie Quinn at 1-317-352-9775; or mail to Kellie Quinn, Event Coordinator, Indianapolis Marriott East, 7202 E 21st St, Indianapolis, IN 46219, ATTN: 2017 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 1113, when you get into the Indianapolis airport and they will get you on the next shuttle. **Guests may be responsible for their own airport transportation if the hotel is given incorrect flight information or if flight changes and hotel was not notified.**



## MRFA Reunion at the Indianapolis Marriott East Aug. 31 to Sept. 3, 2017

Start planning for the 2017 MRFA reunion. The dates are August 31 through September 3, 2017. We will be at the Marriott East in Indianapolis again. The hotel and staff treated us fantastic and I know it will be even better this time. You will be able to start making reservations on September 16, 2016. The hotels we want to fill up first are listed below with room charges. Make sure to reference the MRFA when making your reservation so you get the MRFA rate. These rooms went very quickly last reunion, so make your reservations early.

*Indianapolis Marriott East*, 1-317-352-1231, 1-800-991-3346 (No pets allowed)

Standard Room \$82.00/night, Patio Room \$97.00/night, One Bedroom Suite \$112.00/night, and Presidential Suite \$132.00/night

*Florence Garden*, formerly *La Quinta* \$69.00/night, 1-317-359-1021 (Pets allowed with \$50 deposit)

*Fairfield Inn & Suites* \$74.00/night, 1-317-322-0101 (No pets allowed)

Service dogs are allowed at all three hotels.

Hospitality rooms are available for \$125 per day. Contact Kellie Quinn after September 16, 2016, at [kquinn@indymarriotteast.com](mailto:kquinn@indymarriotteast.com) or 1-317-322-3716, ext. 1113. These rooms are to be contracted by each individual group.

**Frank Jones** ([frank@raffertylighting.com](mailto:frank@raffertylighting.com) or [popsaroni@sbcglobal.net](mailto:popsaroni@sbcglobal.net))

**MRFA Secretary / Reunion Coordinator**

**Home:** 1-314-822-1230, **Cell:** 1-314-303-2730, **Work:** 1-314-918-8144, ext. 528

**Error in the Summer River Currents**  
*On page 8 of the summer River Currents, the last medal listed as a Civil Actions Unit Citation should be the Vietnam Campaign Ribbon.*

### GALLEY

Continued from page 1

you would try and just sit down and think back on your time in-country where you were, what unit, and so on, you would be surprised at what you can do once you put your mind to it. Don't worry about the grammar or the spelling we can take care of that. Please send the file in MS Word to [mrfa35@outlook.com](mailto:mrfa35@outlook.com).

All we ask is no politics or religious statements. All that does is start a war of words between the members. As for your association, we are doing just fine gearing up for another great reunion, but we are losing some good men and spouses. Most of the members are passing from Agent Orange related illnesses, most in their mid- to late-60s or early 70s. Taps is the hardest part of the newsletter for Georgie, Robin, and I. As we age, we will see more of this so that's why it is important to stay in touch with those you served with or someone you met at a reunion or through the MRFA e-mail list. Life is too short. We need to love and honor each other as long as we can. I am looking forward to seeing you all in 2017. *Albert*



# Fire Support Base Cudgel – November 18, 1967

From the Old Reliable News, 29 November 1967

*Fire Support Base Cudgel: Where in November of 1967 elements of the 5th Bn (Mech) 60th Inf and 2nd Bn 4th Artillery withstood a brutal attack by the Viet Cong.*

As we began to dig our foxholes, a 9th Division helicopter touched down with the final resupply of ammunition for the night.

The smell of freshly turned earth filled the Mekong Delta clearing as the helicopter lifted off and hovered momentarily over this 3rd Brigade fire support base.

Specialist Four John Moses, 31, Jackson, MS, a clerk in the personnel section of the 5th Mechanized Battalion, 60th Infantry and I were debating about the size of our foxhole as the helicopter disappeared into the darkening Vietnam sky.

Moses looked up and threw a shovel full of dirt from the hole. Sweat streaked down his face. "I don't like this place one bit," he said staring into the jungle surrounding the fire base.

West of Fire Base Cudgel flowed one of the many tidal rivers that wind through the western part of Dinh Tuong Province. On the south, a smaller canal borders the camp.

By midnight the rising Delta water table had filled the foxhole with 6

inches of water and forced us to find sleeping quarters above ground.

About 2 hours later, the sound of explosions and people dashing for cover awakened me. I pulled the blanket from my face just in time to see a tracer ricochet in front of me.

Something big was happening.

Machine gun fire was coming in low and heavy. I started to low-crawl to the foxhole, but didn't dare climb over the parapet we had built around the pit.

For 20 minutes I hugged the ground.

Biting a blade of elephant grass, I waited until the enemy fire shifted to another part of the camp. The second it did, I was in the foxhole.

The crack of enemy weapons fire seemed endless. The sound of mortar rounds exploding continued almost unceasingly.

Artillery pieces of Batteries C and D, 2nd Battalion, 4th Artillery quickly countered the attacking enemy. Mighty 105 howitzers were leveled to fire point-blank barrages.

The enemy was that close.

With dawn came the dust-off helicopters. They carried away 5 dead and 38 wounded American soldiers.

Details of what happened unfolded as the infantrymen and artillerymen

“ You could hear them talking, that's how close they were... ”

talked about the fierce 2 hours of combat that had taken place early that morning.

The 156-man fire base had been attacked by two companies of Viet Cong. The two companies had tried unsuccessfully to overrun the American position.

Private First Class George Pardner, 19, a grenadier with the Recon Platoon, 5th/60th recalled the details of the clash.

“Our platoon had dug foxholes on the west side of the river and everything was quiet until about 2 a.m. That's when they hit us with everything. Man, they were close,” Pardner of Rochester, NY, continued. “They were no more than 25 m from our positions and were trying to throw grenades on us.”

We kept tossing grenades back at them and firing. I set off a claymore mine and we could hear them screaming and running all over the place.

“You could hear them talking, that's how close they were,” added Recon Platoon leader, First Lieutenant Lee B. Alley, 21, of Laramie, WY.

“They hit us with automatic weapons and carbine fire.”

Company C, 5th/60th encountered enemy wave attacks from the river.

Weapons squad leader, Sergeant Robert Frazier, 20, of Hamlet, IN, said, “I don't know if they were in boats or if they were swimming, but they kept streaming from the water.”

“They fired rockets at us from across the river,” said Staff Sergeant William Chandler, 25, of Lovelady, TX. “You name it—they had it.”

“If they weren't hard core,” Chandler added, “I don't want to mess with anything harder.”

“What had happened during the morning hours of Saturday, Nov. 18, was an attack, first from the south and then from the west,” said Lieutenant Colonel William R. Steele, Commander of the 5th/60th. An estimated three companies of the 261st Viet Cong Battalion took part.

The firepower of the leveled howitzers along with the infantrymen and supporting air strikes and armed helicopters had beaten back the enemy charge. ★

## PHOENIX

Continued from page 1

asked what percentage of that figure was captured and how many killed.

“Over the year 1969,” Colby answered, “the number captured was 8,515, rallied 4,832, and killed 6,187, to a total of 19,534. About 30% were killed.”

“That kill figure also includes a number of people who were discovered to be VCI after they were killed. For instance, various people may be killed in an ambush outside the village at night when some armed men come along and a firefight takes place, or an attack on an enemy guerrilla unit. By looking at the papers they carried and the identification, it can be discovered that those killed were actually members of the VCI. Thus, even though the particular operation was not aimed to get them, it may develop later they were members of the VC infrastructure and they consequently do count against the quotas.”

The chairman questioned the reason for fire-fights outside the village.

“Self-defense, Senator,” said Colby. “In each of these areas at night, there is a curfew and there is a small defense unit outside the village. They lay ambushes to stop enemy guerrilla units from coming into the villages. When they see some armed men coming along they shoot at them. Certain of those killed may be part of the VCI.”

A *Washington Post* article of February 17, 1970, by Robert G. Kaiser, Jr., was brought to Colby's attention during the hearing. It addressed the criticism of Phoenix, and also described how the program was supposed to work: “Phoenix offices in the 44 provinces and many of the 242 districts of South Vietnam (all with US advisers) are supposed to maintain dossiers on Viet Cong officials in their area and a ‘blacklist’ of wanted men and women. ‘Ideally, Special Branch Police (an intelligence unit

of the National Police advised and financed by the CIA), local troops and 18-man Provisional Reconnaissance Units (PRUs) are supposed to conduct operations to arrest these wanted persons. Arrested individuals are interrogated. When there is some evidence of a Viet Cong connection, they are brought to trial before the provincial security team. High-level suspects are supposed to be bound over to a military field court.” Phoenix, “the article said, “was often seen in the States as “a sort of Vietnamese Murder, Inc.”

Phoenix operated at the local level, where the problems began. Each district intelligence coordination and operations center (DICOC) had teams usually consisting of a South Vietnamese military intelligence officer, an American intelligence adviser—normally a lieutenant—special police agents and local pacification officials who were supposed to pool intelligence data and compile dossiers on suspected Viet Cong agents within the surrounding communities. When the dossier was complete, they attempted to find and arrest the suspect.

Below the district level was the village. Policy decisions focused on the village. By 1969, 95% of the villages had elected their own councils and village chiefs. The village governments received control of local armed forces, including revolutionary development (RD) cadre, assigned police, People's Self Defense Forces (PSDFs), and popular forces (PFs). A large number of Phoenix exploitation missions were executed at that level and with those forces.

Many suspects were released an hour or two after they were picked up. If the suspect was not released at the local level, he was taken to a province interrogation center for questioning and then confined until the dossier came before the Province Security Council, where the evidence was examined and the suspect either released or sentenced.

In some areas, because of the inability of many regular military units to effectively carry out

“exploitation missions,” US advisers relied on PRUs to make strikes on VCI targets.

The PRUs were more American than Vietnamese. Chosen, trained, paid and operated by the CIA, they were highly trained mercenaries, selected from Vietnam's minority groups, such as Chinese Nungs and Cambodians or from Viet Cong agents who had defected. US Navy SEAL (sea-air-land) units, assigned to the CIA, often led their operations. Members of these units received 15,000 piasters a month (an ordinary soldier got 4,000).

In late 1968, the CIA station in Saigon informed CORDS that it intended to withdraw the personnel who had been performing advisory and monitoring functions in the Phoenix program. CORDS replaced these officers with hastily trained lieutenants and captains. This shift reasserted the importance of independent intelligence collection as the classic CIA function in any situation involving the US national interest overseas. The CIA established a trend away from counterinsurgency.

The Phoenix program came to a standstill when the NVA launched its Easter Offensive in 1972, but was not terminated until 1973. In its effort to neutralize the VCI, Phoenix had employed 450 US military advisory personnel, of which 262 served in the key operational elements at district levels. According to Colby, the Phoenix program resulted in the defection of 17,000 Viet Cong, the capture of 28,000 suspects, and the death of 20,000 others. He stated that more than 85% of the dead were killed in combat with Vietnamese and American military and paramilitary troops, with only 12% killed by police and security forces. Of that 12%, most died in firefights, resisting arrest.

**Retired Special Forces Colonel William Wilson served as a combat infantryman with the 101st Airborne Division in World War II and as an intelligence officer in Vietnam. ★**

# New Year's Eve with Charlie

By John McCurdy

On most of our operations, we had no notice of when or where we were going to go. On Christmas Eve 1968 like all Ops, we left after dark to proceed to be in position to pick up our troops in the morning. This is also one of the times that I was working with the Vietnamese Marines, not the US Army. The idea was we would transit all night and then spend Christmas Day, which was a cease fire day, on the beach and then pick up our troops the first thing in the morning and move them into the operation area.

This operation went bad from the very start, and we just went downhill from there. The night transit was so dark that the boat captain was afraid to leave his position to get someone to relieve me at the helm because I could barely see the boat in front of me, and I could barely see both banks of the river of the canal we were in. So that night I spent a double shift at the helm. The next day, Christmas Day, was the first time that I ever remember them bringing hot chow out to us. They brought it out by helicopter. Meals were in long containers that looked like 55 gallon drums. They must have been some kind of heated thing to keep the meals warm. I really don't remember what we had to eat. I'm assuming we probably had a turkey dinner. Once in a while we had a beer call where we were allowed two beers a piece, which was a big thing for the Navy. But we had never done that on an operation before other than this Christmas Day.

The next day we picked up our troops and moved into the operating area. This is where things started getting strange. In our times in Vietnam on the rivers, we passed many villages, but we never operated right directly in a village and the village people usually turned out on the banks and waved at us when we went by. Not so with this area. This was the first time our troops were inserted directly into a village. As soon as we got to the village we realized it was totally deserted; there wasn't a soul in sight. It was pineapple harvesting time, sampans full of pineapples were sitting on the beach, and shop doors were wide open.

It was surprising to find that all the villagers had left. Then we found out that this was the first time any government troops had been in the area in 5 years because it was totally dominated by



McCurdy



Barry Duschaneck and John McCurdy getting ready to shave before they have ice cream and cake.

the Viet Cong. This was Charlie's R&R Center. It even had a hospital. All the villagers left because they knew the shit was going to hit the fan with us coming in there.

We operated in the area for many days. The operation lasted for 14 days while we transited up and down the canals. We noticed huts on the beach surrounded by white sheets with Vietnamese writing on them. Later we found it said, "The US boats will not leave." I guess the Navy didn't tell us that on purpose because they didn't want to scare us anymore than we were already scared. The VC were gunning for us. They weren't planning on us leaving their area alive. This turned out to be a very nasty area. We had a number of firefights, and I had several close calls. This was the longest firefight the Mobile Riverine Force had ever been in, lasting for over an hour and for three clicks (3 km). After one firefight, I was sitting in my gun turret and noticed a three-quarter inch square piece of scrap metal lying on the deck. Picking it up, I looked around my gun turret which was lined with foam, and found the exact spot that it hit: 2" from my right eye.

Next came the firefight of New Year's Eve. We were totally surrounded by the Viet Cong. The US military were afraid to move the small artillery that we had with us that had been aired in. They consolidated everyone back into one spot so all could exit the area together. Thus, on New Year's Eve of 1968, we started the operation of picking up troops.

The troops were supposed to accumulate along the bank in small groups and we would pick them up one at a time when we went past. Well, the Viet Cong had a good idea what we were going to do and set up ambushes on both front and back ends of the columns at once while on the beach in the middle of the column we ended up firing on our own troops. That wasn't cool.

This also was the place where another bad thing happened to me. While I was manning my



T-152-5 100th Landing  
Brian "Red Dog" Holtz, Larry Smith, Alex Lincoln, John McCurdy, Barry Duschaneck, and the new Boat Captain

gun, I saw a rocket coming at me from the port-side of the river. It just streaked by. Later on that night when we were all beached, I was talking to the people in the boat that was directly behind us, and they said, "Hey, did you see that rocket? It looked like it went right through you." I asked the boat coxswain, "Hey, didn't you see that rocket that came at us from the portside?"

He said, "I didn't see any rocket."

I came to the conclusion that the rocket had to have gone between my turret and the gear locker on the back of the boat. If the boat behind me said it looked like it went right through us and since the coxswain didn't see it, then that was the only path it could have taken. It had to be really low. We always got hit down by the water line. The two actual rocket hits we took were at the water line.

One of the boats took a rocket hit to the well deck. It hit up under the bottom of the flight deck, spraying scrap metal all into the well deck. We had such a large number of casualties that we ran out of stretchers.

We called this area Hootch's Forest. It had a very bad reputation. When we left, we swore we would never go back. At the end of our tour, we got called up again to take some troops back into this area. We weren't exactly excited about the idea, but all we were going to do was take them in and go out again. However, the Viet Cong had built a dam across the canal out of palm trees and fronds. It was quite an engineering project with only one opening just wide enough for the sampans. We took a group of Vietnamese engineers with us to blow up the huge structure. As this was going on, people were just hauling ass out of the area. The sampans were streaming out through the little gap in the dam. We blew the dam, went in and dropped off our troops and left. I don't know who picked our troops up. We were glad to see that place for the last time. That was our longest, biggest firefight, and it was at night. We got into a lot of trouble there at night. We used to go out and look for trouble. ★

## Punji Stick or Yellow Jackets

By Gino Vasquez

I was walking point one day when we spotted a big VC camp across a muddy creek. Since, we didn't receive any fire we approached it quietly. I asked for the grappling hook and I threw it to the other side of the creek, being the point man I proceeded to cross first and took a look at the well-built base camp. As I contemplated the trail, I noticed that there were many branches of palm trees

on the trails throughout the camp. I got suspicious and I picked up a branch, with that branch I began to move the other branches on the trail. Sure enough, there was a bamboo pit, then another and another. As I discovered them I would pass the word to the guys behind me so they would remove them or destroy them. When we were halfway through the trail, I brushed my shoulder against a banana

tree. Antonio Medina was walking behind me and I heard him cussing in Spanish, all of a sudden he dropped his rifle and ran past me like a sprinter. My reaction was to run behind him and tackle him to the ground. When I did, his right leg fell into a bamboo pit. I called the medic to give him medical assistance. As he was receiving the medical assistance, I asked him, "Why were you running?" He said, "When you brushed against the banana tree, you pissed off a nest of yellow jackets! They jumped all

over me!" I said, "Does the bamboo that's stuck in your leg hurt?" He said, "Hell no! Those f\*\*\* (expletive) yellow jacket stings really hurt!" He was dusted off to the hospital. One thing that amazed me that day was with one of the booby traps that I found. The VC took a piece of heavy wire, about 3/8" thick, shaped one end to look like an arrow and filled the bottom of the pit with cement "concrete." I wondered to myself, where in the heck did they get the cement from? ★



# About the famous quote of the Vietnamese 1968 Tet Offensive: "We Had To Destroy Ben Tre In Order To Save It"

I was the Commanding Officer of Task Force Builder, an Army engineer group of 60 soldiers that was stationed in the small rural village of Rach Kein, Vietnam, in 1968. Rach Kein was approximately 20 miles SW of Saigon, located in Long An Province. Our base camp was next to the base camp of the 3/39 Infantry Battalion of the 9th Infantry Division.

Ben Tre, Vietnam, is a moderately size town that is located on the Mekong River about 25 miles SE of Rach Kein. It was much bigger than Rach Kein, probably even bigger than the town of Long An.

During the first week of the Tet Offensive, the VC made their big move of attacking Saigon. The 3/39 Inf. was initially sent to fight in the big battle for Saigon. This left us alone to face an NVA regiment of 5,000 men that surrounded us on January 29. We survived that and we remained surrounded and cut off for several weeks. As best I recall, the 3/39 Inf. was in Saigon for about 2 weeks. I certainly remember this because while they were gone from Rach Kein we were on our own as far as defending against ground attacks. These must have been likely, for at one point, the 9th Inf. Div. sent in several companies of the 2/39 Inf. to bolster the town defenses and to conduct sweeps around Rach Kein while the 3/39 was away.

I especially remember that one platoon of infantry was wiped out in a well laid ambush in an open rice paddy. It was just a few hundred yards from where we eventually built a school near the first village North of Rach Kein (can't remember its name). The VC had cleverly built machinegun bunkers into the rice paddy dikes (it was the dry season), and the infantry walked right up to them before the VC opened fire.

Then the 3/39 returned or I should say that 75% of them returned. The fighting in Saigon had been intense. After only a few days' rest, they were air-lifted by chopper to retake the town of Ben Tre.



**Men of Task Force Builder**



**9th Infantry at Ben Tre TET 1968**

Ben Tre had been occupied by the VC during Tet. The VC had dug in heavily and were not ready to retreat without a big fight. So the still exhausted and depleted infantry troops of the 3/39 were thrown into another vicious fight. I cannot tell you how much respect that I have for those guys—True heroes, every one of them, tough, plucky, and mostly draftees. I still remember my wonder at the ability of America's youth to endure.

I sometimes wonder if I am the only one who remembers them. So I am willing to tell this story, so you can help me to remember. Their deeds should not be forgotten. The 3/39 Inf. Bn. suffered 100% casualties during the year 1968. I watched it. It is something that still haunts me. Eight hundred young men gone, dying bravely to serve the country they so loved.

Anyway, the fighting in Ben Tre went badly for the

Americans—house-to-house all the way. The VC were so well dug in and barricaded that progress got stalled. So, in desperation, artillery and air strikes were called in on the town. Much of the town was heavily damaged in the resulting melee, but the town was retaken.

Several days later, Major Robert Black (the Rach Kein US Army Advisor) invited me to attend with him an evening briefing that the 3/39 was going to give for a group of journalists and Saigon's army brass. I had never before been invited to attend an infantry battalion briefing. I accepted the invitation. The briefing was held in a Vietnamese house that served as the S-3 office. It was about seven houses east of where the VC barbershop was at one time set up. The house was on the left side of the road as you drove through the infantry compound, just about across from the infantry mess hall.

Anyway, the living room of the house was packed, mostly with civilians. The purpose of the briefing was to explain the battle of Ben Tre. Such briefings are usually conducted by the S-3, in this case, Major Booris. He was a heavy-set fellow.

He was also not my favorite officer. This was because he was the guy who told the infantry on guard to open fire on us the morning when we were walking back to Rach Kein across the rice paddies. This was when we had chased the VC who had ambushed the infantry Road Runners that one infamous and well-remembered morning (but that is another story). Fortunately for us, the infantry sergeant (an E-5) on duty had ignored the major's orders. I'll never forget his grin as he told me that he had saved our bacon by ignoring the S-3's orders. He could

clearly see that we were friendly, so he withheld his fire.

Anyway, at one point the journalists were pressing Major Booris to explain why it had been necessary to wipe out the town. They were definitely pressing the point that perhaps too much force had been applied by the US forces. Major Booris was trying his best to put a good face on the situation, but at one point he got flustered, and blurted out, "We had to destroy Ben Tre in order to save it." I have to admit that I almost laughed when he said that. It was a really unfortunate comment, but Major Booris, in his defense, was trying his best to defend his battalion's honor. His CO, Lt. Colonel Anthony P. Deluca, deftly jumped to his feet and interceded to rescue Major Booris from this difficult moment. He smoothly carried the rest of the conversation. I really liked LTC Deluca. He was a good combat leader, and he was always fair to Task Force Builder.

Anyway, that was the only briefing of the infantry that I ever attended, but it turned out to be the most famous. Some of the journalists present at that briefing seized Major Booris' comment, and they really publicized it. As I recall, it appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine within the month, and it has gone down in history as an example of some of the insanity that was Vietnam.

Last year I was reading an historical assessment of the Vietnam War. The famous historian who wrote it actually challenged whether or not that Ben Tre statement was ever made. Well I know, because I witnessed it being made. I wrote to the historian, explaining this. I hope that he got my message.

**Regards, Michael D. Miller,  
Former Captain, US Army  
Corps of Engineers  
Commander,  
Task Force Builder, 1968  
46th Engineer Battalion,  
159th Engineer Group ★**

## MRFA Memorial/Museum Activities

The trailer schedule was a little slower this year, but we had some good trips with a lot of Veterans and the public viewing the MRFA Memorial/Museum.

In May we went to La Crosse, Wisconsin, to the Vet Center for an Open House. The crowd was light but we had a lot of good comments from the Vets and the staff at the Vet Center.

Then I took it to Granville, Iowa, for a 125-year celebration. It was a parade only, but we had some good exposure and it was my hometown so that helped.

Next we visited National, Iowa (Garnaville, Iowa) for a Veteran's Memorial on the 4th of July weekend. We were there along with The Moving

Wall for 3 days and had a great turnout. I guess we had about 1,500 people that went through the MRFA Memorial/Museum; again a lot of good comments and comradeship.

We then took a day in late July to go to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to another Vet Center for an Open House. The VA had their mobile unit on the grounds also. There was a good crowd that went through the MRFA Memorial/Museum and the Vet Center put on a good meal.

Next we spent a day in Chatfield, Minnesota, for their Western Day's celebration on August 13. We had set up outside the VFW in the late afternoon.

The next thing scheduled is at Webster City, Iowa, on October 6. It's a Veterans gathering but

don't have a lot of details yet. We do plan on being open from 3 to 8 p.m.

Through all of this, I had the team of Charlie & Georgie Arding helping me. It wouldn't be what it is without them. We picked up a few members along the way and brought back a lot of memories to a lot of people.

I have got a couple of things starting to take shape for next year so will work on them later. I will be putting the MRFA Memorial/Museum to rest in late October unless someone calls from somewhere warm wanting it in January or February.

Have a great rest of the year. See you in Indy next year.

**Bruce Graff, MRFA Memorial/Museum driver**

# Ray Harvey's USS *Clarion River* (LSMR-409) Recollections

I thought you guys might enjoy this picture taken aboard the *USS Clarion River* (LSMR-409). I didn't take it and there is no name on the back. I estimate 1968. Same old story: We were decommissioning the ship and somebody said, "Do you want these photos?" I said "Yes" and here's one.

Launcher #4. He just caught one round in the air. Other round was either in launcher still or already out of frame. There was a slight delay between the two rockets going out so that they didn't hit each other in the air because, as I was told, "they wobble a bit." Somewhere, I believe I have a photo catching both rockets in the picture.

Note how the ship is rolling to starboard because of the recoil of the rocket; just kidding, no recoil. Ship rolled when somebody shifted from one foot to the other; really a tippy ship. Drew 7 feet forward and 9 feet aft with a flat bottom, even the twin screws were recessed into the bottom of the hull so that she could be run up on the beach. As best I recall, we never grounded LSMR-409, even on purpose. The water we went into while shooting missions was often so shallow that the cooling water pumps sucked sea shells and bottom trash into the system, so we couldn't have been far above the bottom. The range on the rockets was pretty short and the closer we got to the shore the more area we could bombard.

BM1 Young, the First Lieutenant, was sometimes stationed as a leadsman in the chains to make sure we had enough water below the keel when we went in to shore. One day, he spent about 20 minutes explaining the history of the leadsman's line to me, "Now this little bit of leather means . . ." and it didn't take a set of sound powered phones to hear him up on the bridge when he called out, "Less a quarter . . . four . . ."

## *A Routine Day Aboard the USS Clarion River*

A routine day aboard the *USS Clarion River* (LSMR-409) in January 1970, on the gunline in RVN waters might include many things. Leaving aside the basic logistics of keeping the ship supplied with food, water, fuel and ammunition, it might go like this:

"Good Morning Rocket Ship Sailors." The shrill cry of the Boatswain's pipe and here comes "Reveille" at 0600, "Breakfast for the crew," "Sweepers, sweepers, man your brooms, give the ship a clean sweep down fore and aft, sweep down all lower decks, ladder backs and

passageways, empty all trash on the fantail, now sweepers."

Clampdown the main deck and all upper decks. The plan is to swab up all of the rainwater and anything else that has collected overnight on the decks, throw the flying fish over the side and drink a cup of coffee while



the morning sun makes the damp deck steam and the world is quiet.

"Secure the Chow Line." "Muster on station." The ship expects to set Condition One Rocket at 0800. Gunner's Mates and Fire Controlmen begin getting the rocket launchers ready for the day's mission. Test firing circuits, test the "automatic" train and elevation circuits that send target information from CIC (Combat Information Center) to the rocket launchers. Test sound powered phone circuits. Gunner's mates remove the herculon covers from the guns and launchers while other gunner's mates remove the tops from the rocket cans in the launcher handling rooms and in the ready service magazines. Mount 41 and Mount 51 crews light off their mounts and check train and elevation motors as well as sound powered phones. Fire Controlmen and Radarmen prepare CIC for the day's mission, laying out NGFS (Naval GunFire Support) charts and navigation charts. Enginemen check their phone circuits, make sure the diesel day tank is filled for the day's steaming and the GM 16-278A main engines and air actuated clutches are ready to answer all bells [they will get a real workout during the fire mission]. Quartermasters pull out navigation charts for the coast of the local area and put them on the chart table. IC men check communications throughout the ship, including the 1MC and the 21MC. Cooks and Mess Cooks serve the morning meal and clean up so they can go to their One Rocket stations. Radiomen check and test the radio circuits for the day's mission and route the overnight message traffic. Officers and Chiefs read the overnight message traffic and begin drafting answers. They also help with problems encountered in getting ready for the mission. Bridge crew concentrates on getting the ship to the designated point on the ocean

where the ship is expected. The point is an arbitrary point near where action is expected that day. The bridge crew has no idea what the tactical situation is "on the beach" where the troops might need fire support. At the end of the day, the crew of the Rocket Ship still will not know what the tactical plan or situation on the beach was . . . only that they have done what they were asked and maybe there will be a damage assessment and a thank you from the spotter. After a few days of these types of missions, it was easy to begin to think that your ship's contribution to the war effort was pitifully small.

The spot on the ocean where the ship must be in order to be ready for the mission can be approached in different ways. Some officers of the deck prefer to get there very early and steam back and forth. Some prefer to appear just in time and be passing over the spot when 0800 arrives, although this is risky business because anything mechanical or operational could delay the ship. If not on station and ready for the Fire Mission, many people, beginning with the Captain of the *Clarion River*, will be upset and that is not a happy thing for the bridge crew. One morning, we spent about 30 minutes figuring out how to steam in a perfect circle about 1,000 yards around the point but I don't think we ever got it just right.

Now, I should mention that most of the crew has been up some or all of the night before, so they are pretty tired. Some have been just running the ship in a 4-hour watch system, standing one watch in three and some have been shooting H&I (Harassment and Interdiction) missions. About 1600, the local area commander would tell the gunfire support commander what real estate in the RVN was to be "denied" to the enemy overnight. The commander would designate certain points on the ground where the enemy MIGHT be and ask the *Clarion River* to "Harass and Interdict" those points on an irregular basis throughout the night time hours. So, a single launcher crew, a skeleton fire control crew and a gunnery officer would be on watch all night. Their job would be to fire one rocket salvo or 5"/38 round on each of the designated coordinate points at a random time of the hour, every hour, all night. There might be eight points on the ground designated—a crossroads, a canal intersection, an assembly area, a base camp. So this meant eight salvos during each hour. Not enough to keep you busy and too many to allow the teams to catch a cat nap. Many schemes were devised to make these salvos random and unpredictable. Probably none of them worked very well. I suspect that some crews tried to fire all of their rounds in the first, last or middle 15 minutes and sleep the rest of the time, but I couldn't say for sure. Since only one launcher or gun mount was firing, the rest of the crew that was

not on watch could sleep. "Now," you ponder, "How could ANYBODY sleep with those rounds being fired every hour all night?" I can personally testify that after about a week of this routine, you can sleep through anything. We all have interesting pictures of each other sleeping in various places around the ship at various times. Most of us believe to this day that H&I was more of a detriment to us than to the enemy.

The appointed hour arrives, the systems are all tested [and fixed because on a 20+ year old ship that lives in and under salt water, something always needs fixing] and the 1MC blares "Set Condition One Rocket, Set Condition One Rocket. All Hands man your One Rocket Stations." Now, One Rocket, for those of you who served on other types of ships is a little different from "General Quarters." At One Rocket, a rocket ship does not man the entire weapons battery. Only one 40-mm mount and its director is manned and the Mount 42 personnel go to the rocket handling rooms. The 5"/38 mount is manned as is the director [the director that doesn't work because the wave guide for the radar is a special made piece that costs \$X,000.00 and the captain doesn't want to buy it]. The bridge is fully manned with a navigation and operations team. However, the .50- and .30-cal machine guns are not manned. The captain has his M1 Garand on the bridge just in case he needs it, though. Everyone topside is in full battle gear, long sleeves, flak jackets, helmets, etc. Very few will be wearing hearing protection and those of us who were topside are paying for it today . . . "Huh, what did you say? Quit mumbling . . ."

After about 15 minutes, the 40-mm crew will be taking off their shirts to get a sun tan and hiding behind the splinter shield and the director tub so the captain can't see them, anyway. There will be one special guy, like GM2 John B. Santopietro of Altoona, PA, who puts on an asbestos fireman's suit and lounges around on the deck in the RVN heat. He has a special job in the event of a misfire. You can see a picture of that event on the *Clarion River's* web site at <http://our409.home.att.net/vietnam.htm> just as it happened.

It takes four men to operate the loading mechanism in a rocket launcher handling room and there are eight launchers, so every extra man is appreciated when the mission gets underway. Those rockets are heavy and passing them tires the crew out pretty fast. When a call for fire comes, nobody wants to tell the guys on the beach "We're tired, we'll be with you in a minute." Every man who is not at his GQ station is either in the rocket handling rooms or on a damage control party.

All stations report manned and ready, the ship slides across the designated point on the ocean and

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



# Casualties from Friendly Fires

**Source: Vietnam Lessons Learned No. 70: Friendly Fire Incidents. United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 17th October 1968**

There can be few situations in warfare that are as unpleasant and demoralizing as sustaining casualties as the result of your own friendly fire. However, such fatalities inflicted by friendly fires on friendly forces are as old as warfare itself. Stonewall Jackson, one of the most brilliant general officers the Confederacy produced, was mortally wounded at Chancellorsville by the fire of his own men. As technology increases the complexity of modern warfare, such mistakes are apt to occur more frequently. This was true especially in an environment like Vietnam where there were no "front lines" and firepower was continually massed in support of ground operations.

Early in 1964, the increased rate of accidental casualties became a matter of grave concern to COMUSMACV who stated, "... one mishap, one innocent civilian killed, one civilian wounded or one dwelling needlessly destroyed is one too many." Commanders were directed to maintain a personal interest in these accidents as they occurred and take appropriate corrective action to drastically reduce or eliminate such occurrences. This was to be accomplished by constantly reviewing and updating

training programs and safety directives, and strictly enforcing approved operational procedures and rules of engagement. The goal was to eliminate, to the maximum extent possible, all friendly casualties due to human errors.

To ensure continuing command attention and emphasis on this subject, a quarterly analysis of friendly casualties caused by friendly fires was initiated. Subsequent to this analysis, data were disseminated to subordinate commanders for information and necessary corrective action to minimize casualties inflicted on friendly forces and civilians.

## *Trends 1967-1968*

In the first and second quarters of Calendar Year '67, fire direction center errors and firing battery errors were the most prevalent, with a total of 56 incidents. Faulty ammunition created 30 incidents; lack of coordination accounted for 24 incidents; unit disorientation was responsible for 20 incidents; forward observer and forward air controller errors caused 16 incidents; and violations of rules of engagement, particularly delivering ordnance

into villages without the sector chief's approval, accounted for 13 incidents. Fixed wing aircraft delivered ordnance incidents, although infrequent, had devastating effects when they occurred. Many miscellaneous incidents occurred after all prescribed rules of engagement and established standard operating procedures had been followed. These primarily involved civilians returning to hostile zones that had been cleared for harassing and interdiction fires or civilians violating curfew laws.

In the third quarter of Calendar Year '67, a rising trend was noted in the number of incidents and friendly deaths. This represented an increase of 24% in the number of incidents and an increase of 71% in the number of friendly deaths over the second quarter of that calendar year. Artillery fires and air delivered munitions accounted for 63% of the incidents, 83% of the deaths, and 70% of the wounded. Remaining casualties were by mortar fires, small arms, naval gunfire, water surface craft, and miscellaneous incidents. Although all of the

**CONTINUED PAGE 10**



## **CLARION RIVER**

Continued from previous page

everyone is ready for the Fire Mission du jour.

We wait.

The captain picks up the radio and calls the spotter to tell him we are on station and ready for a fire mission.

We wait.

Nobody answers.

We wait. [Did I mention that there was a lot of waiting involved?]

The captain goes for his backup radio, a PRC-25. No answer. We [you guessed it!] WAIT.

Finally, the spotter checks in on the net and we are ready to go to work. We get the Fire Mission orders. We set up the solution. We announce we are ready. We shoot, he spots, we shoot more, and he spots more. We finish the mission. We wait. Another mission and another. We get "bomb" damage assessment reports. The captain passes the word over the 1MC. "You sank a sampan, you got multiple secondary explosions and a pile of rice" or whatever we hit.

Suddenly, the morning is gone and it is lunch time. If we are lucky, we take a break, secure and eat whatever lunch the cooks have been able to make without leaving their One Rocket stations where they were busy passing rockets or sitting in a bored damage control party. Probably cold cuts and bug juice, but good!

Back to One Rocket and more fire missions until 1700. One by one, the launchers develop problems until at

the end of the day, we might have only four launchers working.

Now, the ship has experienced several types of misfires and mishaps with the ammunition we are shooting. All of the rockets we saw were manufactured in 1945 or thereabouts. This old ammunition had been on pallets and in storage for nearly 25 years and had been moved by fork lift, crane, barge and highline transfer many times. Some were a little worse for wear. Unfortunately, you could not tell which ones just by looking and there were so many of them onboard that the bad ones were only found by firing. One type of mishap was the close in premature. The point detonating nose fuse on the 5" spin stabilized rockets we fired had a safety device on it so that contact on the point of the warhead fuse would not [necessarily] detonate the fuse unless the fuse was spinning as it did when launched. It was supposed to have a 50 or so yard safety distance from launch also. Sure enough, it seemed like about 50 yards when, once in a while, the warhead would explode right after launch at about 50 to 100 yards from the ship. Another mishap, which could occur, was the "dud" rocket where the rocket motor failed to ignite. That is where Santo got to do his job, tripping the bore clear switches, taking the dud out of the launcher into his arms and dropping it over the side so some RVN fisherman could find it with his net next year. Occasionally, instead of a dud rocket, the rocket motor case would break, fail or burst, dropping flaming solid rocket propellant on the ship's deck and ruining the First

Lieutenant's paint job and anything else in the way. The last type of exciting mishap was a "short" round that went only a few feet before falling on the deck or into the water.

Although with these "short" rounds, the warhead never exploded as far as I know, the captain took a dim view of shooting the portside launchers across the deck at a target off the starboard side of the ship. For this reason, the engineering crew and the Officer of the Deck were kept busy during the fire missions keeping the ship "parallel" to the beach and dead in the water [not moving forward or backwards]. In this way, if the ship's starboard side was facing the beach, the four starboard launchers could be used without shooting over the portside and vice versa. The ship could be turned after a while and the port launchers used while the starboard crews were given a chance to restock the ready service cans in the handling rooms from the extra rockets carried in the centerline magazine.

Keeping the ship parallel to the beach was hard on the engine room crew and the bridge watch. It involved almost constant shifting of the engine clutches from ahead to astern ... Port ahead one third, Starboard back one third, right full rudder ... All Stop ... rudder amidships ... left full rudder Starboard Ahead one third, port back one third ... all stop ... Remaining dead in the water made the fire control solution much easier for the CIC and quartermasters. The *Clarion River* lacked the sophisticated gunfire control systems and computers that the destroyers, cruisers and

battleships had. Instead, we had the mechanical computer Mark V. It was so inaccurate that we never used it. Instead, the captains before us had determined that we could do as well or better by picking a spot, staying in that same spot, and taking a navigational fix [bless you Radarmen and Quartermasters ... shooting fixes using canal mouths and hooches on the beach !!!!! ... the East Coast sailors would laugh at that]. Then the CIC crew would plot the ship's location on an NGFS chart. When the fire mission came in, the location of the target would be plotted using a converter board [formerly, in our politically incorrect lives, known as a Comanche Board] and the same NGFS chart. Then, using the highly technical method prescribed, they would lay a plotter [a glorified ruler] down, connecting both points with a line. The range and bearing would be read from the scales on the plotter. The range would be converted to an elevation by reference to a printed table and those readings would be cranked into dials in boxes on the bulkhead. The rocket launchers would "automatically" slew around to the designated bearing and elevate for the correct range—that is if the gunner's mates had remembered to engage them in automatic before they went below and if everything was working properly. The gunnery officer in CIC would report that the battery was ready and the captain would look out on deck just to make sure that none of the launchers was pointed at the bridge and then would announce to the spotter that we were

**CONTINUED PAGE 10**

## Do You Remember?

How many remember Route 66 and the Jamaica Bay at the entrance to Dong Tam? Dredge info was put together from an Internet search on Wikipedia by Albert Moore

The fourth largest dredge in the world, the *Jamaica Bay*, was



Army dredge *Jamaica Bay* lies on its side after VC swimmers mined and sank it off Dong Tam in January 1967.



The Navy's heavy lift craft and the salvage personnel of Harbor Clearance Unit that Edward Marolda worked night and day for over a month to clear the *Jamaica Bay* from the constricted water approach to Dong Tam.

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



### How many remember the Plain of Reeds?

Vinh Te Canal; The Crossroads; Rung Sat; Tour of duty on the boats or in an Infantry or Mech unit, Medics and Corpsman; Ship's personnel; Base personnel; Walking the pipeline from the dredge at the entrance to Dong Tam, etc.,?



## Rattle! Are You Working?

By Tom Hain 9th Infantry Division, Vietnam

For those of us who have come to appreciate modern communications, come back with me to the stone age of telephone systems.

The Tactical Operations Center (TOC) was where, among other things, all the battalion communications were connected. Both radio and telephone (land line) shared the same cramped space. When I was in the operations center and I needed to talk to one of our orderly rooms or to brigade, my phone was right next to the switchboard where I could keep an eye on the operator. That would be the only connection that I could count on keeping without constant vigilance against the fastidious switchboard operator who would keep busy by plugging into your line to ask, "Are you working?" meaning, "Is this line being used?"

The Army's mobile telephone system was rugged and, in its basic form, was very reliable. The most basic hookup was two battery powered phones with crank handle ringer, connected by a pair of wires. Turn the crank on one phone and they'd both ring. Add another phone and they'd all ring. Connect the phones to a switchboard, and you could select to whom you wish to speak. For the phones that were connected directly to the same switchboard, it worked well. The problems started when the number of switchboards (and operators) increased.

The switchboard was a box with a bunch of terminal units, each the size of an audio cassette case, plugged into it from the front. Each phone on the exchange was connected by a pair of wires to its own terminal unit. Phone lines from other exchanges had their own terminal too. The boxes could handle about a dozen phones and the boxes could be stacked to increase the size of the exchange. On the face of the terminal unit was a little glass porthole, a

1/4" diameter socket for a headset plug, and a plug on a self-retracting wire that could be plugged into another terminal. An incoming call would ring at the switchboard and a white flag appeared in the normally dark port hole of the terminal to show which line was ringing. The operator would then plug his headset into that terminal and identify the exchange. The caller would make his request and the operator would say "Roger" and take the plug from that terminal and plug it into the terminal of their choice, crank the ringer handle, and then unplug his headset. When both phones would hang up, the white flag in the port hole dropped down. The operator would plug his headset into the connection and listen for a few seconds. If he heard nothing, he would ask "Are you working?" If there was no answer, he would pull the plug.

Problem was that not all the telephones were connected by wires. We were stationed on ships in the river some of the time. The link to the shore or to the other boats was by single-side-band radio. If the radio was allowed to drift a little off the frequency, voices would sound like something from a bad Sci-Fi flick. (CB radio fans call single-side-band users "hog callers.") A radio link was iffy at best and quite often not even available. Sometimes the connection would just fade away or the white flag on the terminal would drop even if the line was still active. A call to someone in Saigon from aboard the USS *Colleton* could include three or four radio links along the way, each with their own form of signal degradation, and each with someone ready to pull the plug on you.

The exchange at Division Headquarters was named Reliable from the Old Reliabilities moniker for the 9th Infantry. All the telephone exchanges in the Division had names starting with the letter R. Our

(4/47th) exchange was named Rattle. Second Brigade was Raider. I don't remember any of the others but there was probably a Raccoon or a Revolver in there somewhere. To contact someone through a number of switchboards required you to know the names of the exchanges in advance. Anyone with a speech impediment for the letter R was in trouble. It was more like a verbal internet URL, than it was like dialing a phone number.

If I wanted to call Division operations, for example, I would pick up the phone, crank the handle and wait for the operator to say "Rattle." Then I'd say, "Rattle give me Raider," and he'd say "Roger" and connect me to brigade. (All battalion telephone traffic went through brigade when we were station on the ships.) "Raider," a voice on the line would proclaim. "Raider give me Reliable," "Roger." "Reliable!" "Reliable give me G2," "Roger!" (Who is this Roger guy and why does his name keep popping up?) If everything worked right, a phone at Division operations would ring and I could converse with them, most often at the "Sound off like you've got a pair" volume level. If, however, the conversation had to be put on hold, the party that was holding had to maintain the connection by talking, singing, or whistling, so that if a switchboard operator plugged in, he could tell that the line was busy and not ask "Are you working?" Failure to say "Working!" fast enough would send you back to the starting line.

I worked the switchboard sometimes just for something to do. It wasn't my job but it wasn't hard, and it beat having nothing to do. Sometimes boredom could even make sitting in front of a box filled with phone wires look interesting. Microprocessors do the job now, and they never ask "Are you working?" ★



**SALE**  
**\$15<sup>00</sup>**  
 FREE  
 SHIPPING!

# Jumbo Patches



JP001 MRFA  
Vietnam



JP001a MRF  
Vietnam



JP002 MRFA  
Vietnam



JP002a MRF  
Vietnam



JP003 MRF Mekong Delta



JP004 9th Inf Div  
Vietnam



JP005 9th Inf Div  
Vietnam Veteran

## Bumper Stickers



B001 MRFA w/ribbons (measures 11.8" x 3.5")



B002 VCCC (measures 12" x 4")

## Magnet

**ONLY**  
**\$5<sup>00</sup>**  
 FREE  
 SHIPPING!



M001  
MAGNET

All Gave Some...  
Some Gave All

**ONLY**  
**\$5<sup>00</sup>**  
 FREE  
 SHIPPING!



B003 MRFA (measures 10 1/2" x 3 3/4")



**MEMBER**  
 B004 Member  
(measures 3" x 4")



B005 9TH Inf Div  
(measures 3" x 4")



B006 MRFA w/web site  
(3" x 4")

Show your colors with pride. These durable vinyl bumper stickers will look great on your car or truck. Brilliant, bright detail on a weather-resistant vinyl. Help spread the word out about a great organization and maybe find someone right next door! Six great styles to choose from.

### Mobile Riverine Force Association Membership Application Form

- ☐ New Member ☐ Associate Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Sponsor  
☐ Donation ☐ CCB-18 ☐ Mobile Museum  
☐ Change of address below.

### NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

- ☐ Postal Delivery ☐ Go Green with Email

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cell \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ WW-II ☐ Korea ☐ Vietnam  
☐ Army Member  
 Unit (Division, Brigade, Battalion, Company, Platoon, Battery)  
☐ Navy Member  
 Unit (Ship, Boat Hull Numbers, Navy Activity/Detachment, etc.)

Dates Served in Unit (mm/yr - mm/yr) \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP RATES

- ☐ 1 Year \$20 ☐ 3 Years \$50

### DONATION

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

To become a member, mail your check or money order  
 (payable To MRFA) to Charlie Arding, MRFA Membership Chairman,  
 1857 County Road, A14, Decorah, IA 52101-7448.

## GEAR ORDER FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Ordering is as easy as 1-2-3.

1. Indicate your choice of item number (be sure to include color and size, if applicable), with quantity, and total amount. Add amounts for grand total to enclose.
2. Make your check or money order payable to the MRFA. The MRFA does not take credit cards.
3. Mail Gear Order Form and check to Products Chairman, Chet Stanley Jr., 205 Carolina Ave., Easley, SC 29640-1409; 864-306-8400; gunnerstan@aol.com.

Visit [www.mrfa.org](http://www.mrfa.org) to download our product catalog from the MRFA Gear Locker!

Item No./Description	Size	Quantity	Amount
			\$
Total items ordered _____			
Grand Total			\$

NOTES:

**FRIENDLY FIRE**

Continued from page 7

reports of investigation were not available, those analyzed revealed that the most prevalent causes of incidents were human errors by Forward Observers (FO), Fire Direction Center (FDC) personnel and gun/howitzer and mortar crews. During this quarter, coordination problems resulted in 35 incidents; faulty ammunition caused 27 incidents; disorientation was responsible for 20 incidents; and pilot/Forward Air Controller (FAC) error caused 11 incidents. The principal cause of most incidents was failure to follow established procedures, directives, and safety checks. Incidents also continued to occur when civilians violated curfews, entered fire areas, or inadvertently became involved in firefighting.

In the fourth quarter of Calendar Year 67, the upward trend of total incidents was reversed. The number of incidents was down 30%, deaths down 28%, and casualties were down slightly but remained at a high level. The preponderant cause of incidents was the result of supporting fires being too close to friendly positions. The enemy's tactic of "hugging" the friendly positions complicated the task of delivering supporting fires without a margin of risk in inflicting friendly casualties. Although in the minority during this quarter, incidents continued to occur as a result of human error.

The country-wide trend for the first quarter of Calendar Year '68, as compared with the quarterly averages for Calendar Year '67, showed a decrease in incidents by approximately 51%, a decrease in deaths by approximately 17%, and a decrease in wounds by approximately 33%. One accidental air strike accounted for 25% of the total number of deaths for this quarter. In view of the increased number of operations for this quarter, friendly casualties caused by friendly fires showed a significant improvement.

The downward trend in casualties continued during the second quarter of Calendar Year '68. A comparison of the second quarter results with the first quarter, Calendar Year '68 showed a reduction in incidents by 18%, deaths by 55%, and wounded by 18%. And in the first quarter of Calendar Year '68, artillery and fixed wing air incidents continued to cause the majority of the casualties. During this

same quarter, as a result of the 5 May 1968 VC/NVA Tet Offensive against Saigon, 127 civilians were killed and 2,950 by enemy/friendly actions. This resulted in a study being made to determine those measures that needed to be taken by friendly forces to reduce noncombatant casualties and destruction of civilian property. Corrective action was then initiated.

*Incidents And Causative Factors*

The causative factors involved in incidents of inaccurate or accidental delivery of ordnance, resulting in the injury or death of friendly military forces or noncombatants, were myriad. Lessons Learned #70 could not detail the multiplicities of causes in each and every such incident that occurred throughout the Republic of Vietnam. However, representative ground incidents and air incidents have been selected and are discussed from the point of view of (1) what caused the incident and (2) the lessons learned.

*Summary*

The statistics and examples of incidents, although important, cannot and do not of themselves reveal the complete picture of the deplorable loss of life by fire from friendly sources. All service components were acutely aware of the seriousness of these incidents in terms of lowered effectiveness of the fighting forces, lessened rapport between US Forces themselves and Vietnamese Nationals, and the unquestionable adverse effect on the overall military effort.

The lessons learned were not new. They were merely a restatement of lessons that had previously been publicized in various forms and in great detail by commanders at all levels. They also served as a reminder that the battlefield was and always has been a strict and harsh disciplinarian. Those who deviated from proven techniques used "short cuts" because it was the "easy way out" or failed to follow directives and established procedures invariably did so with disastrous results. While adherence to proven techniques and established procedures did not completely eliminate the possibility of error, it certainly reduced the probability. Therefore, it was incumbent upon commanders at all echelons to constantly press, with every means available, for a solution to the vexing problem of "friendly casualties from friendly fires." ★

**CLARION RIVER**

Continued from page 7

ready. If one of the launchers in use happened to be pointed at the bridge, or was waving about more than usual or was obviously not elevated in line with the others, it was either shut down and another launcher prepared or good old Santo would go out and put it in automatic. Then we were ready.

When the order came to "shoot" [OK, Army guys, we don't say "fire" on the ship because a fire is a bad thing on a ship and "fire" is reserved for the real thing,], the gunnery officer would close his "firing" key in CIC, two rocket handlers would set a pair of rockets on the loader tray and push them into the hoist. [They might have set several rockets on the tray already in preparation if the sea was not very rough.] The rocket launcher tubes would go to the vertical position. Hydraulically operated cable "whip" hoists would sling the rockets up from the rocket handling room below decks into the launcher tubes, the launcher tubes would go back to the prescribed elevation and the electrical circuit in the launcher would ignite the rocket motors [one just before the other] and the rockets [hopefully] would go out of the launcher and to the target. The launcher tubes would go to vertical again, the rocket handlers would load another pair and the process would repeat until the requested number of rounds were fired. Of course, the mission was passed to the launcher captain in the handling room so he knew when to stop loading when his rounds were complete.

"Rounds complete ... standing by ..." And so it went all afternoon.

When the spotter released us for the day, it was time for us to do our regular shipboard routine jobs, cooks cook, engineers engineer, shipfitters fit, yeomen yeo, supply clerks clerk, gunner's mates fix what broke during the mission and there is another story there.

Then supper, stand your steaming watches, eight o'clock reports, the evening movie, TAPS at 2200, H&I all night and up the next day to do it again. Just a routine day on a Rocket Ship. ★

**TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One****Garcia**

Member **Martin M. Garcia Jr.** passed away June 15, 2016. Martin served in Bravo Co. 2nd/47th Inf. (02/68-02/69). You may contact the family c/o Maria Garcia, 1806 Hooper St., Killeen, TX 76543-6711, 254-699-2070.

Member **George "Rick" F. Gandenberger III** Major USAR (Ret.) passed away May 19, 2015. Rick served as a US Army Ranger Small Unit Advisor, MAT IV-30,

MACV (1969-1970). You may contact the family c/o Joyce Gandenberger, 376 Rolling Knolls Way, Bridgewater, NJ 08807-1900, 908-218-4351, gardenbergers@hotmail.com.

**James Wilson Wingard** passed away from Agent Orange heart disease, June 6, 2016. James served with 1st Platoon of D Company 3rd/47th 9th Division. You may contact the family c/o Hilda Wingard, 3930 S State Highway 87, Samson, AL 36477-6604.

**Edna Quigley** passed away November 5, 2015. She was the wife of deceased member Michael Quigley of YRBM-16, Binh Thuy. She was residing in Lenoir, NC.

Member **Welton Brent Dillard** passed

away August 6, 2016. Brent was the Boat Captain on R-112-1 (01/67-03/68). You may contact the family c/o Deborah Dillard, 1839 Wards Rd, Altavista, VA 24517-4018, 434-369-5298.

*I just wanted everyone to know that a very good friend of mine went to be with the Lord this morning (August 6). Johnny Jones.*

SP4 **Jerry R. Littles** passed away December 5, 1998. Jerry served with C Co 2nd/60th Infantry Regiment 9th Infantry Division (12/66-12/67). You may contact the family c/o Rev. Richard L. Littles, 122 13th St, NE, Mason, City, IA 50401-1237, 641-21-0559, lordsothkbr@gmail.com.

Member **Kenneth R. Ellis** passed away

November 2, 2015. Kenneth served with B Co. 2nd/47th and 2nd/39th (01/66-01/67). You may contact the family c/o Rita Kay, 251 N Ellis Rd, Wheatland IN 47597-8102, 812-321-3831.

**Crotty**

Member LTC **Richard E. Crotty** USA (Ret) passed away March 4, 2016. Richard served with HHC 3rd Bde, 9th Infantry (07/67-07/68). You may contact the family c/o Joan Crotty, 125

Sylvan Dr, Stuarts Draft, VA 24477-3316, 540-337-3825, ltcregjc@aol.com.

**Dosa**

**Richard Dosa** passed away February 15, 2012. Richard served with 1st Platoon of D Company 3rd/47th 9th Division. He was residing in Yuma, AZ.

**Ernest Glenn Shultz Jr.** passed away October 20, 1972. Ernie served on T-151-11 (1968-69). You may contact the family c/o his brother Ed

Shultz, PO Box 11, Mount Vernon, IA 52314-0011, mvsal480@gmail.com.

Member **Robert P. Williams** passed away January 22, 2014. Robert served with the 1097th TC (MB) (01/68-01/69). You may contact the family c/o Katherine Williams, 26 Trevett Dr, Newark, DE 19702-1450, 302-368-5810, williams1955@hotmail.com.

**Bryce Kimrey** passed away on March 22, 2016, of acute pulmonary arrest. While in Vietnam he served with RAID 75, CATF-211, TF-21 as a riverine warfare advisor with the Naval Advisory Group, Vietnam, as a Petty Officer 1st Class. Bryce was stationed at Dong Tam and rode the

**CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**



## TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One

### TAPS

Continued from previous page

rivers with Vietnamese Navy crews whose boats were acquired from the US Navy. He was with the last group of riverine sailors to leave Vietnam and the Brown Waters of the Mekong Delta. You may contact the family c/o Nancy Dennis Simcox, 905 Brewster Lane, Wilmington, NC, Nc-1simcox@yahoo.com.



**Strange**



**Strange**

Member **Emily Anne Strange** passed away July 12, 2016. Emily served with the American Red Cross as a Donut Dollie with the 9th Infantry Division and Mobile Riverine Force in Vietnam in 1968-69. You may contact the family c/o Emily's sister Peggy Michel, 107 Wesley Ave, Oak Park, IL 60302-2907, (708) 415-4872, Pegmichel107@gmail.com.

Emily's obit: Emily Anne Strange of Johnson Creek, WI, passed away on July 12, 2016, at her home. She was in her 70th year.

Born July 23, 1946, in Atlanta, Georgia, Emily graduated from Murphy High School in 1964. She attended Young Harris Junior College and graduated from Georgia Southern University in 1968.

After college she served with the American Red Cross as a Donut Dollie with the

9th Infantry Division and Mobile Riverine Force in Vietnam. She later created a web site (emilydd.com), where she shared her writings and helped veterans reconnect with one another and tell their stories.

An active member of the Vietnam Vet community, she was proud to be considered "one of their own." She was active as a speaker at Vietnam Vet Reunions and her words brought both laughter and tears. Emily was featured in a movie called, "A Touch of Home" that tells about the lives of the women who served in Vietnam as Donut Dollies and nurses.

She leaves behind her sister, Peggy Michel and her husband, Dennis, of Oak Park, Illinois and two nephews: Hans Michel of Chicago and Christopher M Knight, his wife Tara and their children Avery, Rylan, and Davis of Woodland Hills, California.

A private family service will be held at a later date.

*From Emily's sister to Harry Hahn: She said that Emily came home to die, as she wanted to die with her two cats. Peggy said Emily had a wonderful life and died a beautiful death! I told her how much Emily was loved by all the Vietnam Vets, but especially the 9th Division and Mobile Riverine Force Members. We talked about many things, including how Emily loved going to our reunions. We spoke about the reunion next year. I told her that we would be honored if she and her family would attend. That we would have a special memorial presentation for Emily! She said that she would love that! I also asked her if we could send her email messages from the guys who knew Emily, maybe with stories about Emily. She said she would greatly*

*appreciate it! I will send a general email to the list stating this!*

*One of the things that Emily requested in her death is that her web site be maintained for 10 years. She doesn't know if Emily prepaid that, but is checking. It is \$50 a year. I told her that if she had not prepaid it, that we would take care of the costs and maintain it. She greatly appreciated this! The MRFA will be taking care of Emily's request on her web site and will be honored and proud to do so.*



**Leffler**

Lt Col **John Joseph "Red" Leffler** passed away July 25, 2016. Red served with 2nd/47th (12/67-01/68). He resided in Fort Belvoir, VA.



**Blee**

**Joseph P. Blee** passed away from Agent Orange related ALS June 11, 2015. Joe served with C Co. 2nd/39th Infantry (1967-68). He was a Philadelphia policeman for 40 years. You may contact the family c/o Donna Blee at donnalee451@msn.com.

*Joe was a boyhood friend of mine and often provided support in Dong Tam for items we needed at the MRFA supply base on the LSTs. We rode out a few mortar attacks in Dong Tam*

*together and were often the lucky ones. Tom Smith former NCOIC of MRFA Forward Support Team, smith1041@aol.com.*



**Miserendino**

Member **Thomas Miserendino** YNCS (Ret.) passed away June 4, 2015. Tom served on the USS Sphinx ARL-24 (02/69-02/70). You may contact the family c/o Patricia Miserendino, 1045 Seamen Ave, Beachwood, NJ 0722-3405, 732-286-6322.



**Friberg**

**Ronald Dean Friberg** passed away April 8, 2012. Ron served with 1st Platoon of D Company 3rd/47th 9th Division. He was residing in Tucson, AZ.



**Roth**

Member **J. Robert "Bob" Roth** passed away July 13, 2016. Bob served as the Engineering Officer on the USS Benewah APB-35 Flagship TF-117 (08/68-08/69). He will be missed by all who knew him and those whom he served with. May our Shipmate rest in peace.

## 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)  
William Blausser 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

Bill Buffie in memory of Lyle Parin USS Floyd County LST-762 (Vietnam)

John and Doris Chirzanowski 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)

Janice Dahlke for son Cpl. Randy R. Mueller D Co. 2nd/47th KIA 03/03/69

Orville Daley for my good buddy Merle Haggard, one of the greatest name in country music, 1937-2016

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 Janssonius 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 Lt Gen 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 and Dave Nelson for James Callan, 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. Pettit, 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

William Nesmith for Thomas E. Huffines B Co. 3rd/60th Inf (03/69-07/69) and D Co. 2nd/60th (08/69-02/70)

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)

Luis Peraza for SSG Michael K. Lewis KIA 06/13/69, SGT Harold H. Hunter KIA 01/27/69, and brothers of D Co 3rd/60th KIA during 1968-69

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

Thomas E. Smith for Joseph P. Blee C Co. 2nd/ Bn. 39th Infantry (1967-68), a boyfriend of mine 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

Steven Tolcoff for my brother CPL Dennis S. Tolcoff B Co 3rd/47th 9th Inf Div KIA 5/2/68

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

Wm. "Whit" Whitworth for CPT Franklin D. Bryan D Trip 3/5 Cav 9th Inf Div KIA 02/25/69

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



# Mobile Riverine Force Association

1857 County Road A14

Decorah, IA 52101-7448

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## MRFA Sponsors

Our expressed thanks to those who have become MRFA sponsors! It's never too late to get onboard as a sponsor, so we continue to seek and welcome those who wish to sponsor the MRFA! Sponsorship in the MRFA helps to defray the cost of producing *River Currents*. Sponsorship lasts for a period of one year, with your name and information appearing in four issues. Send your \$25 (payable to the MRFA) to Charlie Ardinger, 1857 County Road A14, Decorah IA 52101-7448

VISIT [WWW.MRFA.ORG](http://WWW.MRFA.ORG)

## Sponsors...

Dallas Abbott A Co. 3rd/60th Inf (06/67-06/68)  
LT H. M. "Murf" Alexander ComRivDiv 132 (06/68-06/69)  
George B. Amador USS Krishna ARL-38 (1969-71)  
Jimmie J. Apel A Co. 4th/47th Inf and 6th/31st (1969-70)  
Charlie and Georgina Ardinger T-151-11  
Ed Arledge USS Indra ARL-37 (1967-70)  
John Armstrong HHC 3rd/47th Inf (04/66-01/68)  
Dale Ashley USS Monmouth County LST-1032 (11/66-11/67)  
Christian Bachofer Jr. ComRivDiv 92 (07/68-06/69)  
Dr & Mrs John Baldwin Surgery 24th EVAC HOSPITAL (1968-69)  
Ralph Bakke from Charles Sykes for a job well done  
William G. Bennett APL-30 (05/70-05/71)  
Ralph Bigelow RivRon 13 T-131-8 (1968-69)  
Robert B. Blair USS Clarian River LSMR-409 (1966-68)  
Donald Blankenship A-111-3 and A-152-21 (02/69-02/70)  
Bill and Darlene Blausen T-151-10 (06/68-06/69)  
MajGen Blackie Bolduc USA (Ret.) Cdr 3rd/47th Inf  
Thomas Breidel R-92-2 (06/68-06/69)  
William Brennan USS White River LSMR-536 (02/66-10/67)  
Brothers of the 2nd/47th (Mech) Inf  
C. Vic Brumley USS White River LSMR-536 (05/66-07/67)  
MGen Walter Brydie, Jr. HQ 3rd/34th Arty (1968-69)  
Chapman Burguiers Jr. B Co. 3rd/47th Inf (1968-70)  
Gerald Busic USS Garrett County LST-786 (06/68-05/69)  
Robert Caldwell Jr. USS Nye County LST-1067 (02/66-02/67)  
John and Pamela Carlin in honor of Erol Tuzco  
RADM William Carlin CO USS White River LSMR-536 (10/65-03/68)  
Jim Carter RivRon 15 T-52 (12/69-12/70)  
William Catron River Sect. 513 (10/67-10/68)  
John and Doris Chranowski A Co. 4th/47th and  
B Co. 6th/31st (03/69-03/70)  
Mike Claranhan USS White River LSMR-536 (07/65-05/67)  
Mike Clark Medic 4th/39th 9th Inf. Div (04/66-09/67)  
LTg Robert Conaty XO RivDiv 131 (05/68-04/69)  
Randall Cook USS Monmouth County LST-1032 (1970)  
LTC Richard Crotty HHC 3rd Bde, 9th Inf (07/67-07/68)  
William "Andy" Curtner RivRon 13 T-131-1 (03/68-03/69)  
Orville Daley USS Askari ARL-30 (1967-68)  
Frank De La Oliva Harbor Clearance Unit One (09/68-06/71)  
Robert Dockendorf NSA Dong Tam YRBM-17 (03/67-04/68)  
William Duggan RAS 13 M-131-2 (08/68-08/69)  
Robert Durrett T-112-7 (01/67-12/67)  
Ron Easterday HHC 2nd/47th Inf (04/66-09/67)  
and G-5 9th Div (09/67-01/68)  
Paul Eastham T-132-11 (05/69-07/69)  
Virgie Eblen Associate Member  
Leon Edmiston B Co. 3rd/60th 9th Inf (06/68-05/69)  
Edith Ethridge Associate Member  
Larry Gunner Ethridge USS Askari ARL-30

Cdr Kirk Ferguson USN (Ret.) ComStabRon-20 (11/69-11/70)  
Terrance Fetters HHQ 3rd/47th Inf (04/69-07/69)  
Ted Fetting B Co. 2nd/60th Inf (10/67-02/68)  
Robert Flaige E Co. 3rd/60th Inf (05/67-05/68)  
Ronnie Fontenot YRBM-17 in Dong Tam (01/68-11/68)  
Neil Fovel 3rd/47th Inf (11/67-03/68)  
Dennis Frank D Co. CMDR 3rd/60th Inf (07/68-07/69)  
Nan Fulton Associate Member  
Richard Gallagher USS Mercer APB-39 (1968-69)  
Gamewardens of Vietnam Mid-Atlantic Chapter  
Jaime Garcia M-111-1 (03/67-12/67)  
CSM Homer Garza First Sgt of C Btry 3rd/34 Arty (01/68-01/69)  
John N. Gavin USS Satyr ARL-23 (1971)  
John W. Gerbing A&E Co. 4th/47th Inf (1966-68)  
Regina Gooden Associate Member  
Gary Grahn A-111-7 (05/68-05/69)  
George Grigorovich 1097 TC Medium Boat Company (03/68-04/69)  
Roger "Grossie" Grossinger D Co. 3rd/47th 9th Inf (1968-69)  
Frank Gubala A Co. 3rd/47th Inf (02/68-07/68)  
Harry Hahn RivRon 13 M-131-1 (03/69-03/70)  
Daniel B. Hall, Jr. Staff ComRivFlot One (12/68-07/69)  
William Halloran COMRIVFLOT ONE N2 (09/67-09/68)  
Roger Hamilton, Jr. USS Mark AKL-12 (08/68-08/69)  
Robert "Bob" Hammond HQ 3rd/34th Arty (10/68-10/69)  
Jeffie Hanks USS Benewah APB-35 (01/70-01/71)  
SFC Michael Hammer RivRon 13 and 153 (07/69-02/71)  
William Harman T-132-2 (02/69-03/70)  
Joseph Harper USS White River LSMR-536 (12/66-12/68)  
Leo Haynes RivDiv 594 PBR-8120 (04/69-02/70)  
Charles Heindel C-91-1 (11/67-12/68)  
Joe Hillard Gunner T-48 (09/69-03/70) and  
Boat Captain T-44 (03/70-07/70)  
D. D. Hoffman RivRon 9 ASPB 91-8 (03/67-03/68)  
Bernard Howlett GMSGN USS Carronade IFS-1 (12/65-08/67)  
MajGen Ira A. Hunt Jr. HHQ 9th Inf Div (05/68-07/69)  
Alan G. Hyde 9th Signal (1966-67)  
Truman Irving USS Mark AKL-12 (08/68-08/69)  
Bill Isetts RM2 USS Askari ARL-30 (07/66-08/67)  
David Jarczewski C Co. 4th/47th 9th Inf Div (05/66-05/68)  
Bradley Jenkins HHSB 3rd/34th Arty & 2nd/47th Mech (09/68-10/69)  
Bruce Jensen T-111-3 (1967-68)  
Duane Johnson 15th Combat Engineers (06/67-06/68)  
Gerald Johnston USS Nye County LST-1067 (01/66-01/67)  
"Doc" Dale Jones B Co. 4th/47th Inf (09/68-07/69)  
Everett Jones CCB-151-4 and CCB-152-5 (04/69-04/70)  
Frank B. Jones RivRon 15 T-48  
Dave Justin A Co. 3rd/60th Inf (12/66-11/67)  
Harry & Judy Kawamura  
Jerry "Hollywood" Kaweci B Co. 3rd/47th 9th Inf (07/68-12/68)  
Dane Keller RivDiv 532 PBR 121 (05/69-05/70)  
Thomas Kelley USN (Ret) RivDiv 152 (09/68-06/69)  
LTC Nick Lalacona USA (Ret.) C Co. 3rd/60th Inf (1968-69)  
James Lanier 2nd/47th Inf (07/68-07/69)  
Roy Lee D Co. 15th Combat Eng Bn (01/67-04/67)

Bob Lennon USS White River LSMR-536 (1966-68)  
Walter F. Lineberger III XO RivDiv 91 (1968-69)  
Arthur L. Lockhart NSA Det Dong Tam RVN (01/68-01/69)  
James Long Sr. ComRivFlot One Staff (11/67-11/68)  
Steven Loomis NAG, Saigon Shipyard (06/70-06/71)  
Robert "Bob" Lord YTB-785 Winnemucca (02/71-12/71)  
Richard Lorman T-152-6 (06/68-06/69)  
Lilyard Lucas Z-132-2 (06/68-06/69)  
Corrado Lutz PCF-23 (03/68-03/69)  
Stella Gayle Malone  
Frank O. Martinovich D. Co. 3rd/60th 9th Inf Div (09/68-07/69)  
Terry Mason RM3 RivDiv 132  
Larry McCallister C-2 4th/47th Infantry (12/67-12/69)  
Cratis McLaughlin D. Co. 3rd/47th 9th Inf Div (09/68-07/69)  
Phil McLaughlin USS Blanco County (LST-344) & USS  
White River (LSMR-536) (08/67-09/69)  
Thomas L. "Mac" McLemore T-112-7 (12/66-12/67)  
Philip Mercurio USS Colleton APB-36 (09/48-07/52)  
Adam Metts T-111-2 (08/68-10/69)  
Nick Miller COS RivDiv 152 (07/68-06/69)  
MiSpec Tours Inc  
Nickola Mitschikowetz BM2 APL-30 (11/68-11/69)  
Capt K. Monahan USNR (Ret.) YRBM-20 (1970-71)  
A. R. "Monti" Montillo B Co. 3rd/60th Inf (04/68-09/68)  
Albert and Sarah Moore USS Benewah (APB-35)  
J. Russell and Alice Moore A-91-5 (11/68-06/69)  
Roy and Lynn Moseman 4th/47th Inf  
Tom Muench Korea Era Vet SAC  
Co Van My TF-115.3.7 Cat Lo  
Naval Advisory Group  
Edwin Newland A-111-7 (06/67-06/68)  
Nha Trang (1967-68 and 1970-71)  
MAJ Joseph D. Nichols III, CO Co. 3rd/60th 9th Inf Div (12/66-11/67)  
Jasper Northcutt B Co. 2nd/47th Mech Inf (11/66-05/67)  
James Noyes C Btry 3rd/34th Arty (06/67-06/68)  
Gary O'Brien MM3 USS Mercer APB-39 (04/68-12/69)  
George R. O'Connell USS Terrell City LST-1157  
John C. Odey Recon C Co. 3rd/47th Inf (11/65-11/67)  
Capt Jerry Pape USN (Ret) Staff COMRIVFLOT ONE (01/68-12/68)  
Rodney Peeler 2nd/60th Inf (04/69-08/69)  
Luis F. Peraza D Co. 3rd/60th Inf (11/68-08/69)  
Anthony Perez USS Iredell County LST-839 (11/69-07/70)  
John "Ron" Perry T-132-11 (06/68-06/69)  
Col Pete Petersen USA (Ret.) Cdr 3rd/60th Inf (11/68-08/69)  
Michael Howard Phillips P Co. 15th Combat  
Engineers 9th Inf (08/68-06/69)  
William "Bill" Powell USS Askari ARL-30 (08/69-09/70)  
LCDR Leonard Previto CTF-117 (08/67-08/68)  
Bryan and Dolly Rasco USS Indra ARL-37 (09/67-01/69)  
CAPT William Renton USS Askari ARL-30 (10/68-09/69)  
Donald and Marjio Robbins USS Benewah (APB-35)  
William Robinson Jr. CO USS Mark AKL-12 (06/70-05/71)  
Greg Rockow USS Hammett County LST-821 (1968-69)  
Jerry Ross T-131-1 (08/69-08/70)

Durwood D. Rosser M-91-1 (10/67-08/68)  
Matthew F. Rovner USS Colleton (09/66-12/67)  
RADM Merrill Ruck USN (Ret) CosDiv 13 Cat Lo (02/66-02/67)  
Ronald Rulon HHCO and D Co. 15th Combat Engr. Bn (03/6-10/67)  
Billy Sanders RivRon 11 RAD 112 T-112-1 & CCB-112-1 (Vietnam 1967)  
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)  
Thomas D. Scott USS Colleton APB-36 (12/66-04/68)  
Bob Shawen Friend of the Ardingers  
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 9th Inf Div (05/67-05/68)  
Thomas Slater USS Hampshire County LST- 819 (1967-69)  
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 Spoilberg 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)  
John Sturtz T-151-9 (06/68-06/69)  
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)  
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  
GMGI 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 (01/67-09/69)  
Bill Weidman T-111-12 (02/67-02/68)  
Gary Weisz A-91-4 (10/67-07/68)  
David Welch NavSupAct Saigon (06/65-06/66)  
James Leroy Welch SFM2 USS Carronade IFS-1 (10/65-08/67)  
David H. White USN (Ret) USS Satyr ARL-23 (08/69-08/70)  
Wm. "Whit" Whitworth Lighthouse 5 D Trp 3/5  
Cav 9th Inf Div (03/68-03/69)  
BMCOM Donald Wilts 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