



River Currents



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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From the Radio Shack

I hope that this message finds everyone well and recovering from the winter months! Business as usual here at the MRFA. Two things have been keeping me busy! The sale of the Gear Locker Discontinued Items and preparing for the reunion NEXT YEAR!!! Yep, Nashville 2019! Mike Harris will continue to update the Reunion web page on our MRFA.org site. News about the events for the Nashville reunion will continue to be placed there. Save the dates of August 28- 31, 2019!



Harry Hahn

The Reunion planning committee will be making a trip to Nashville this spring to look at the facility and make our initial plans for the events. We are still lining up speakers and entertainment. We would like to make this an extra special event for you and your significant other!!! I know that there is a lot of excitement about going to Nashville. Any suggestions you may have should be submitted to Frank Jones or me.

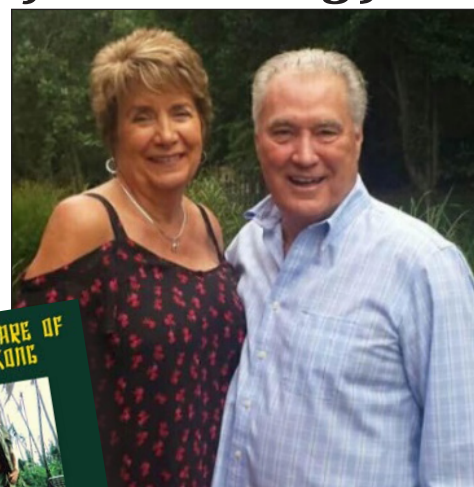
The *River Currents* you are reading requires a lot of effort. Albert Moore has been doing a great job as Editor of the *River Currents* and finding material for years. He continues to do this. I know many of you find the personal articles about your time there very interesting. If you haven't ever submitted an article, please think of doing it. Just think of one day in the life of your experience in Vietnam that you would like to share. Please let Albert know if you are interested.

Diary Entry June 17, 1968 (in *The Nightmare of the Mekong*)

By Terry Sater T-131-6/T-131-9 1968-1969,
terry.sater@yahoo.com

I'm on Tango 6, now. They call the boat, "The Animal." They have its scary visage emblazoned on the side of the boat. I'm stationed in the well deck, along with one other guy, four .30 cal. machine guns and two .50 cal machine guns. We left the *USS Indra*, near the base at Nha Be, early in the morning. We carried Vietnamese commandos on our boat, led by about six Marine advisor commandos called "Co-Vans." We were in the Rung Sat Special Zone, a Viet Cong stronghold, southeast of Saigon, on the Ong Keo Stream. It was only about 40 yards wide. Other boats in the squadron had the Vietnamese 999th Regional Forces Company.

Before we beached, we started getting fired on, all up and down the column. We had two Alphas, a Monitor, and six Tangos. All of a sudden, one of the Alphas came over the radio with, "We're taking rockets!" "Rockets" is a word that puts the fear of God into you and all you can think about is covering the banks with maximum machine gun, cannon and grenade fire. The two Alpha boats took rockets. Tango 8 took small arms fire. Three Navy guys were wounded. At first, I had the port ".50." It ran out of ammo, so I jumped to the forward ".30." It kept jamming. Tiny took the starboard ".50" and the Viets were loading. The aft ".30" gave me trouble. The lid kept popping up, so I



Judith and Terry Sater



had to hold it down, while I fired. I kept moving from one gun to another because in the seconds it takes to reload a machine gun, you are more vulnerable to being killed.

There was an explosion, just off our stern. We fired 3,000 rounds of ammo, just in the well deck. I don't know how many rounds of 20 mm and Mark 19 grenades we fired. I can only imagine how many rounds all nine River Assault Craft fired!

We got through the ambush and proceeded to our insertion point. When we beached, the

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Conex Box Op

By Michael A. Harris RAS 15
RAD 152 T-152-1 (07/68-07/69)

Our river assault boats were in Dong Tam for a routine overhaul. It meant rearming, repairs, painting and other assorted duties. Our boat had a wobble in her starboard shaft so the enginemen had to lift her out of the water onto a pontoon and were replacing it. It was nice to be off the rivers for a while. A little stand down from the combat.

The sun was lingering over the palm fronds as we headed to the Navy Enlisted Club after a long day's work. The thought of a few cool beers was inviting. Maybe the Viet Cong would give us a break by

not sending in their rockets and mortars.

The Navy EM Club was unique. You could arrive pretty early, like 9 a.m., for a few breakfast beers. Just when you got a good buzz going they would close down around 12 noon so everyone would have to go eat lunch or take a nap. Then you could return after they reopened in the afternoon and drink to your heart's content providing you didn't get too rowdy.

The club was not a very big place. I would guess maybe 40' x 30'. As you walked in, the bar was on your right and the toilet was on the left. We only needed one since there were no round-eyed women in that

area. Then the far end of the bar opened up into a larger area that housed a couple of pool tables and a jukebox. Our Commander in Chief, President LBJ, was there hanging behind the bar along with some River Assault Squadron patches and a Naval Support Activity, Det. Dong Tam logo painted on a piece of plywood.

A few weeks earlier, Bob and I had been in the club for a few beers when a group of River Assault Squadron 9 sailors showed up. You'd think that we had our hands full fighting the enemy right? Evidently not. Toss in a couple of different squadrons, some alcohol and you have a volatile situation.

On that night an argument broke out around the pool table between some RAS 9 and 15 sailors. One thing led to another and all of a sudden pool sticks were swinging, cue balls were flying and people were jumping around everywhere. Bob and I grabbed our cold ones and backed up to the nearest wall to watch the action. It afforded an excellent opportunity to grab a couple of deserted beers from a nearby table as well. After about 20 minutes, the Shore Patrol arrived and stopped the melee just when it was going good. Adrenaline and hormones were spewing everywhere.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

CONEX BOX OP

Continued from page 1

The next morning several sailors had some explaining to do.

When we arrived, the after lunch crowd had things hopping. The jukebox was cranked and we got right into the mood. The bartender made it clear that he didn't want to see any "crap" and we all agreed. I walked away thinking, "How the heck does an enlisted person get a job like this?"

As the night wore on, we loosened up nicely. Our choice of beer was Carling Black Label, Falstaff, Budweiser, and Schlitz. I think. This was around the time the pop tops came out, but none of the beer in Vietnam had them. We used Church Keys, Kabars, P-38s or anything that would get them open without causing a big fizz. After a few months in the constant humidity, our consumption rate increased immensely. The more you drank the more you sweated so you had to drink to not dehydrate. At least that was one of our excuses.

Earlier in the day I had passed by a man as he unlocked a Conex Box. These were metal boxes about 8' wide by 8' deep and 7' high. One side had double doors that latched in the middle with a big iron rod and hasp. They were used to ship equipment and other goods into Vietnam. Also to stop smaller pieces of shrapnel. I glanced over his shoulder and noted that the entire box was full of BEER...! There must have been a hundred cases in there. I sauntered on like I hadn't noticed anything. A plan began to develop right away. Emergency resources were always good to have whether they were yours or someone else.

By the time the club closed, we were all very sloshed. I had been telling Bob and Joe about my

plan. They liked it. What could they do to us if caught? Send us to Vietnam? It couldn't get any worse than it was.

When outside we huddled around a bunker refining tactics. There was a huge well-lit warehouse with a sentry. He was packing heat to the tune of an M-16. Small weaponry for us river sailors. I knew where a forklift was. Being the perpetrator, I took charge. Bob was to distract the sentry on the other side of the warehouse so he could not witness our clandestine operation being pulled off. Joe became the replacement sentry so that he could keep an eye on everything and sound the alarm if anyone wandered into our area of operation. I was the forklift driver. What we hadn't thought of was where we were going to take the Conex Box.

Joe and I watched Bob's lanky figure disappear behind the warehouse. Being a jovial guy, Bob would have no problem with the sentry. Soon the sentry rode around the other direction on his bicycle. We waited a few minutes and then Joe ran over to the opposite corner of the warehouse to his position. I jumped on the forklift.

Now I'd driven farm machinery while bucking hay so I figured I knew what I was doing. I didn't take into account how inebriated I was. After climbing up onto the seat of the forklift, I located the key and starter button. She cranked over nicely as I pumped on the pedal. No ignition. I checked a couple more things and then began cranking once again. The noise was awesome as she fired up. Varoom....varoom.....!! I had a grin on my face as I began grinding gears. I'm sure that no one in the adjacent barracks even knew what was happening.

While continuing to grind gears, I heard a faint sound to my left. The vibration of the machine had me bouncing around. Finally I looked in that direction and couldn't believe it. There stood a Shore Patrol yelling at me...! I hollered, "What?" He began giving me the slicing hand across his throat. I shut the girl down. She lurched and coughed before becoming silent. The SP was still screaming. Then he lowered his voice a notch or two and said, "Get the hell down here...!" I stumbled to the ground with great confidence. I was sure that he would understand.

Much to my surprise, he didn't understand me at all. I tried to tell him that a tablet wasn't

necessary, but he kept writing anyway. He was asking questions like, "What is your name?", "What unit are you with?" etc. As he was writing I'll be darned if Bob didn't ride by behind him on the sentry's bicycle. It had a piece of metal welded on it with a number cut into it. I did my best to keep from laughing, but failed. Bob made a second pass waving both hands in the air and I busted a gut. This made the SP madder than hell. He kept asking me what I was laughing about as he didn't even know that Bob was behind him. I saw Joe standing at the corner of a barracks doubled over.

Falling off to sleep was not much of a problem that night. Uh...morning. Waking up later that morning with a vague memory of the night before was a little more difficult. As I swung me feet to the floor, I noticed a "chit" lying on top of my jungle fatigues. A closer look alerted me to the fact that I had to be at Chief so and so's office at 8:30 a.m. The sun was already baking the tin roof and it was 8:15. My first mission was "water." Cotton mouth had taken over my entire oral cavity.

As I walked into the Chief's office wearing my best tattered greens, I was met by a young clerk who told me to be seated. I made sure that I wore my beret with my unit patch hoping that the man would understand. It could go either way as he was not a river assault boat sailor.

Finally I heard him bark, "Get in here Petty Officer Harris!" I staggered in trying not to appear hung over. He looked as gruff as his voice. "What the hell did you think you were doing last night sailor?" I said, "Truth?" He answered with, "You're damned right." I proceeded to tell him about the plan. The need for more beer after the club closed. Of course he did not understand my side or have any compassion. After giving me a few choice words, he said, "Did you just come off the rivers?" I said, "Yes." He then said, "Get the hell out of my office and if I ever see your face in here again your ass will be in big trouble...!" My legs almost buckled as I turned and walked for the screen door. A smile crossed my face as I passed the surprised clerk. After the screen door slammed behind me, I pumped my fist in the air and headed for my 9 a.m. breakfast at the club. It was going to be another fine day in the Mekong Delta. ★

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Viet Cong Squad Plays Losing Game With 9th Div.

ABOARD THE USS BENEWAH—Like a pinball breaking up on the board, an 11-man Viet Cong squad bounced off different units of the 9th Division one day last week until only two remained alive.

The action took place on the first day of a 3-day operation by the 2d Brigade in Go Cong Province.

A 35-man ambush patrol from Company B, 4th Battalion, 47th Infantry was the first to spot the enemy force. The Americans opened fire and called for support from the 3d Battalion, 34th Artillery.

After a brief firefight, the VC broke contact and fled north. The Old Reliables swept the area and found a .50 caliber ammunition can, a billfold, and three blood trails.

At the end of the trails, about 50 yards into the woods were three bodies.

Just 29 minutes after the first encounter and 100 meters north of the fight, the rest of the VC squad ran smack into an ambush patrol from Company A, 4th/47th.

The brief firefight yielded negative results but the Viet Cong were playing a losing game. The enemy fled south.

Above the battle area observing in an OH-23 helicopter was Lieutenant Colonel Carroll S. Meek, Commanding Officer of the 3d/34th Artillery.

Meek pinpointed their position and adjusted artillery fire onto them. Four of the enemy were killed. Four remained.

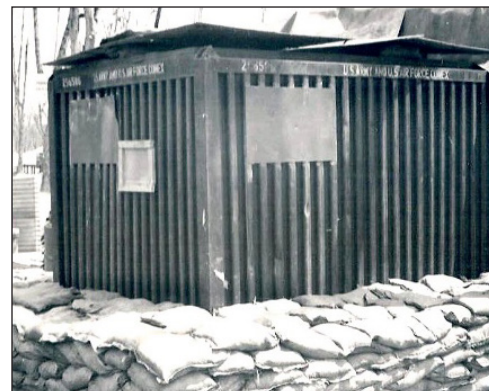
By this time darkness had fallen and the ambush patrol from Company B—the first to tangle with the enemy squad—had moved 900 meters southwest of the original position.

The enemy quartet bumped into them again, losing two more members.

The remaining pair headed west—directly towards an ambush site set up by Company B, 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry—but they never made it.

Thirty minutes after the last fight, one of the VC was captured as he frantically tried to change out of his black pajama uniform. The last member of the enemy squad escaped into the night.

No friendly casualties were taken during the skirmishes. ★



History of the Conex Box

The use of standardized steel shipping containers began during the late 1940s and early 1950s, when commercial shipping operators and the US military started developing such units. During World War II, the US Army began experiments with containers to ship supplies to the front lines. Cargo was being delayed at ports due to the time required by the breakage while bulk loading and

offloading of ships. In addition the supplies suffered from pilferage and in-transit damage. In 1948 the US Army Transportation Corps developed the "Transporter," a rigid, corrugated steel container, able to carry 9,000 pounds (4,082 kg). It was 8' 6" (2.59 m) long, 6' 3" (1.91 m) wide, and 6' 10" (2.08 m) high, with double doors on one end, was mounted on skids and had lifting rings on the top four corners. After

proving successful in Korea, the Transporter was developed into the Container Express (CONEX) box system in late 1952. Based on the Transporter, the size and capacity of the Conex were about the same, but the system was made modular, by the addition of a smaller, half-size unit of 6' 3" (1.91 m) long, 4' 3" (1.30 m) wide and 6' 10½" (2.10 m) high. CONEX boxes could be stacked three high, and protected

their contents from the elements. By 1965 the US military used some 100,000 Conex boxes, and more than 200,000 in 1967 making this the first worldwide application of intermodal containers.

More than three quarters were shipped only once because they remained in theatre. The Conex boxes were as useful to the soldiers as their contents. ★

SATER

Continued from page 1

commandos got off quickly, but cautiously. It seemed like they just got off our bow ramp, when all hell broke loose. I thought Charlie was going to charge right down our ramp. I couldn't see them because the jungle was so thick, but I could sure hear the fire. It sounded like they were right on top of us.

Later, I found out contact was made just 5 meters off our bow. We beached on top of two companies of Viet Cong. We brought the ramp up and stood at it with M-16s. Within minutes, the commandos had to come back. Charlie was too thick. He was dug in with bunkers.



Terry in his Gun Tub

An American Marine commando, a major, came stomping back to the boat with three bloody VC packs and rifles in his right hand. His left hand was up to his throat, trying to stop blood from seeping out between his fingers from a shrapnel wound. He didn't look scared or worried. He looked pissed. He was a big guy, wearing the typical VC black "pajamas." He had long hair and a beard. I'll never forget his eyes.



He looked like he could burn a hole right through you with a stare. All of the commandos were back onboard by 1115.

Tango 131-8 beached a little south of us and reported seeing Viet Cong moving in the brush. One crewman was wounded when Tango 8 took shrapnel in the coxswain's flat.

A Vietnamese commando had a wounded leg. They brought back a captured Russian rifle, two grenades, three mines, and several packs of personal gear, covered in blood, including diaries, pictures, clothing, ponchos and other personal items. There was a medical kit, too, with bandages that were taken off dead GIs.

As I went through one of the VC packs, one photo grabbed me. It was a picture of three boys. I wondered, "Was he one of the boys in the picture, were they his children, or his boyhood friends?" I can't look at the picture without wondering. I know it will forever remain a mystery.

The boats had a total of 10 wounded in the action. Four had to be medevaced. Three US Army men were wounded in action. At least three Viet Cong were killed in the fierce, close combat.

Tango 132-3 fired an M-79 round at a suspected VC position and observed a secondary explosion.

My old boat, T-131-3 had battle damage to its port screw and shaft. An underwater explosion bent two of its screw blades forward and left burn marks. Tango 131-6 reported an underwater explosion at its stern. T-131-11 took a rocket hit dull round that put a 4-inch hole in the Styrofoam and knocked off a strip of bar armor on its starboard



"...I'll never forget his eyes. He looked like he could burn a hole right through you with a stare..."

side. A-111-5 observed two secondary explosions while returning fire.

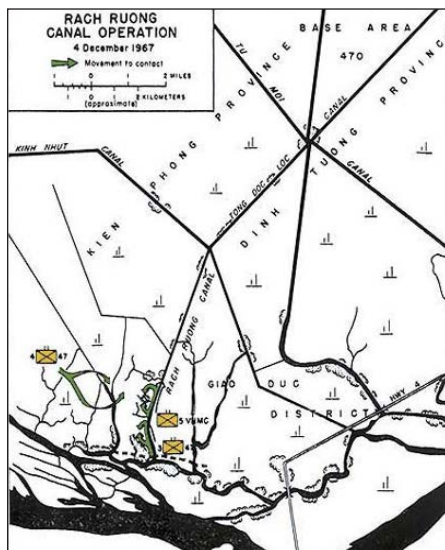
Monitor 91-1 had a radio handset destroyed, a hole in the starboard side of the Styrofoam below the mortar pit and damaged bar armor. It also suffered damage to its coxswain's flat and radar antenna, due to shrapnel and small arms fire. Five crewmen of M-91-1 were wounded by B-40 rockets and machine gun fire.

A-111-4 took two rocket hits to the port side of the coxswain's flat with an exit hole on the starboard side. Their coxswain flat canopy was destroyed.

A-92-5 had an RPG 7 round hit their starboard side, amidships, which damaged their fuel tank and filter. Three crewmen were injured when a B-40 rocket hit just aft of their 20-mm mount. A gear locker was destroyed with the loss of personal gear due to fire.

All boats except T-131-7 suffered varying degrees of small arms and shrapnel damage.

When we left, they called in air strikes on the area. ★



Rach Ruong Canal operation



Honoring Soldiers KIA from A-C Cos. 3rd/47th Inf., December 7, 1967, on USS Benewah APB-35.

December 4, 1967 Battle at Rach Ruong Canal

**Article submitted from
Gary McCabe 2nd Plt, A
Co. 3rd/47th 9th Infantry
Division**

The battle on December 4, 1967 was one of the most severe battles to date for the Mobile Riverine Force. The MRF moved to Sa Dec and 3rd and 4th Battalions, 47th Infantry, along with the Vietnamese 5th Marine Battalion, began operations to find and destroy elements of the 267th Main Force and 502nd Local Force Battalions in Western Dinh Tuong and Eastern Kien Phong Provinces.

Early that day the MRF encountered elements of the Viet Cong 502nd Local Force Battalion in a fortified base on the west bank of the Rach Ruong Canal. The enemy attacked the boats with rockets and automatic weapons. A decision was made to land the 5th Marine Battalion to the north of the enemy position. This action

demonstrated the importance of a quick decision by a waterborne force commander when the force was under fire. The commander decided to land immediately on what he determined to be the enemy flank.

Shortly afterward the 3rd Battalion, 47th Infantry, was landed south of the enemy position. The commander of the MRF supporting river division immediately gave the order to his boat captains, and the landings were made. The 4th Battalion, 47th Infantry, was standing at a pickup zone and then taken by helicopter to land west of the enemy location.

Fighting was intense. In the midafternoon of December 4, 1967, the Vietnamese Marine Battalion made a frontal assault that overran the enemy's major bunker complex. Supporting fire from armed helicopters and assault craft contributed largely to the success of the assault. To the south the 3rd

Battalion, 47th Infantry, encountered stubborn resistance from scattered enemy bunkers that prevented it from linking up with the Vietnamese Marines.

The assault craft were able to land the Marines with light casualties chiefly because of a flame thrower aboard one of the armored troop carriers. A vehicle with a flame thrower had been driven aboard, and the ATC was placed in the convoy to fire on targets as required. The flame thrower had not only a physical, but also a psychological effect on the enemy manning bunkers south of the Marine landing site. The first successful test of a flame thrower aboard an ATC had been made on October 4, 1967.

Total enemy casualties for December 4-5 were 266 Viet Cong killed, with the Vietnamese Marines accounting for the heaviest enemy losses. The Vietnamese

Marines had 40 killed and 107 wounded. Nine soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 47th Infantry were killed and 89 wounded. Two Navy sailors were killed by the VC.

Sgt John Juarez, Colton, CA, 22 years, 2nd Plt. A Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31 E, Line 35)

Corp. Byrant Henry Young, Jr., Salt Lake City, UT, 19 years, 2nd Plt. A Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 40)

HHC Medical Sgt. Alvester Lee Winston, Baltimore, MD, 19 years, 2nd Plt. A Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 39)

MSgt William Pollard, Swedesboro, NJ, 42 years, 3rd Plt. A Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 38). MSgt Pollard was the new man in the 3rd Plt., his first day in the field.

PFC William Francis Moseley Moorestown, NJ, 18 years, 3rd Plt. A Co. 3rd/47th

Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 37)

Donald Richard Cote, Mountlake Terrace, WA, 20 years, B Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 33)

Sgt Donald Wayne Miller, Alexandria, KY, 24 years, B Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 36)

Richard Arnold Russ, Wilmington, NC, 20 years, B Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 38)

Corp Charles Glenn Schnegg, Beallsville, OH, 20 years, C Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 37)

It was a lousy day.

The Mobile Riverine Force had two Navy sailors died on December 4, 1967. They were FN Adrian Ealon Howell, Lucedale, MS, 20 years (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 35) and FN Robert John Moras, Escanaba, MI, 21 years (DC The Wall Panel 31E, Line 37). Both were with RAS 11, TF-117 and died onboard T-111-8. ★

History of the 60th Infantry Regiment From the National Archives

On 1 February 1966, as a result of the war in Vietnam, the 9th Division was re-activated and along with her the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Battalions of the 60th Infantry. Once again the GO-DEVILS took their place on the firing line.

Arriving in the Republic of Vietnam in December 1966, with other elements of the 9th Infantry Division, the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry, pushed its way south from Bearcat to establish its Base Camp in Rach Kien, Long An Province. The months that followed saw the construction of a well-fortified base of operations and concentrated efforts toward the elimination of all insurgent activity within Long An Province. Minor skirmishes with local guerrillas and hard core Viet Cong constituted the paramount efforts of the unit in its first year in the Republic of Vietnam.

The TET Offensive, 1967-1968, posed new and greater challenges for the GO-DEVIL Brigade. Such places of battle as Ben Tre, An Nhut Tan, Ben Luc, Rach Kien and Peoples Road stand as important victories for the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry.

In June 1968, the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry, was a major cog in the wheel that rolled into the Plain of Reeds to do battle with no less than three Viet Cong and NVA Battalions. Total destruction of two of the insurgent battalions was the result of that action that has been termed a classic counter-insurgency warfare.

The standard is high, and the history of the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry is a proud heritage indeed, and each member of the unit should be reassured in knowing he is a part of "The Best Battalion in the Republic of Vietnam."

Poisonous Snakes of Vietnam

The most common venomous snakes in Vietnam would be the Malayan Pit Vipers (Agkistrodon) and Asian Lance-Headed Vipers (Trimeresurus). Less common venomous snakes would be the Indian Cobras (Naja), the King Cobra (Ophiophagus), the Oriental Coral Snakes (Calliophis), and the Kraits (Bungarus).

Studies indicated only 25-50 snakebite incidents occurred annually in US forces. Of these, only a few necessitated intensive therapy.

The most common venomous bite was from the arboreal white-lipped bamboo viper, but such a bite was never lethal for an American soldier (Berlinger and Flowers 1973). From the reference above, apparently fear of snakebite was pronounced, but all out of proportion to its actual occurrence or lethality. Quoting some more:

The authors found, upon interviewing troops in Vietnam, that the majority believed that poisonous snakes were to be found in abundance there and that few persons survived a bite. Soldiers from rattlesnake-infested areas in the United States harbored little fear of these reptiles but were deathly afraid of the "bamboo vipers" of Vietnam. In actuality, the "bamboo viper" is a small snake that seldom injects sufficient venom to inflict a serious bite, whereas rattlesnakes are capable of producing death or permanent injury in victims. Almost all of the persons questioned had heard of the "cigarette snakes" (when you are bitten you only have time for one cigarette) or the "two-step snake" (no explanation necessary), but were not cognizant that only one snakebite death had occurred in US forces since United States involvement there. ★



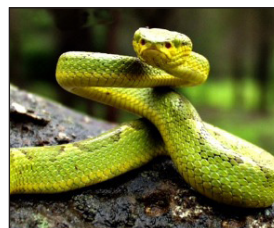
75th Team Texas LURPs I Corps 1969. Photo courtesy by Steve Johnson, Bemidji, MN



Above is a snake that some RAS 13 guys were handling. RAS 13 and 15 were on an Op down into the U Minh Forest area.



Two-Step Snake



Bamboo Viper



25-foot python. Photo courtesy by Matthew Veneziano

I think this was either Long Xuyen or Chau Doc, and I was on a trailer headed for a zoo. I said to my buddy Marty Grooms (on right), "Hey let's take a picture with the snake." He looked me square in the eyes and said, "Vanuchi, let's go into that bar over there and have a few drinks, and then take a picture with the snake." We did.

Later I had all I could do to hold him for a few seconds to get a picture.

2nd/60th Empties Enemy Arsenal

By SP4 John Collins
Assistant Editor

AN NHUT TAN—An enemy arsenal of carefully oiled rifles, automatic weapons, ammunition, mines and even a mortar was uncovered near here last week by a 19-man brush-clearing detail of 9th Division soldiers.

The well-constructed underground metal bin also yielded an obsolete combat radio and a badly damaged M-16 rifle.

The detail from Company A in the 3d Brigade's 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry stumbled upon the arsenal not more than 150 yards from the perimeter that protects this Mekong Delta village.

Staff Sergeant Edwin D. Kirk of Utica, KY, had led the soldiers into an area just north of the village proper shortly after noon chow. They had been chopping away at the dense foliage along Vam Co Dong River for less than an hour when the discovery was made.

Kirk was checking progress when he noticed the corner of a plank in the grass and palm fronds his men had cut down to clear a field of fire.

"At first I thought it was part of an old grave or something," he recounted. "But when I moved one of the planks aside, I saw a heavy-gauge metal sheet about 10 feet long and 5 or so feet wide. There was a rectangular hole cut in the center," he said.

The metal was the top of a well-concealed bin set 2½ feet into the ground.

"We started pulling up the weapons," continued Kirk.

The bin yielded 22 rifles, including US and foreign-made carbines and semi-automatic weapons; seven submachine guns of various types, a machine gun of East German manufacture, ten 20-pound shape charge "turtle" mines complete with the electrically detonated blasting caps, a 60-mm mortar, a PRC-10 combat radio of the type formerly used by American ground troops, and a large quantity of ammunition.

"The weapons were well-lubricated and oily rags had been stuffed into their barrels," Kirk said.

The M-16 rifle had been struck by a bullet destroying its firing mechanism, according to Kirk.

The weapons were placed upon ammunition boxes to prevent damage from water that had collected in the bottom of the metal bin.

"We hauled up two 5-gallon oil buckets filled with .50 caliber ammo," said Kirk, "and seven boxes full of small arms ammo."

"The mortar was complete except for the sighting device," he said. "But it could have been aimed without the sight," he added.

The radio lacked only its headset, battery, and calibrating knob.

Both the mortar tube and the German machine gun were wrapped in portions of a poncho for further protection.

Troops of rotating companies of the battalion have several times swept the area where the arsenal was uncovered, but had turned up only grenade-type booby traps.

The village on the banks of the Vam Co Dong River, about 20 miles southwest of Saigon in Long An Province has been occupied by elements of the 2nd/60th since March.

Before then, it had been a long-time Viet Cong stronghold.

Beer and Soda Available During The Vietnam War... A Welcome Break From The Hardships

Input, Photos, and Stories Welcome from Those who Fought the War

Jim Stone Echo 2/39 Romeo Recon March 15, 2003

Jim passed away a few years back and was a wealth of information and he was always willing to help and was much appreciated. RIP Jim.

Guys: I see that you are back to talking about beer again. GOOD... that is a much safer topic than religion and politics.

Here is my 2 cents worth from the perspective of a grunt (11-H), who served with the First Bde 2d/39th Inf from 02/68 to 02/69.

Most of my time was spent in the field at FSBs or working out of the base camp at Rach Kien with occasional trips to Bearcat and Dong Tam, but very little exposure to the Navy and the MRF.

I remember a number of American beer brands being available in-country that year—Pabst Blue Ribbon, Carling Black Label, Budweiser—I even had some Ballantine's once!

One thing that I found interesting was that all of the cans of beer that we got over there were the old style (pre-"pop top") cans

that required a can-opener (a/k/a "church key"), even though pop tops had been in widespread use in the US for several years. I guess that there must have been some kind of problem in transporting pop-top cans across the Pacific by ship. Maybe some of you swabbies might know why that was.

As for the local Vietnamese stuff, there was "Ba Moui Ba" Biere "33" that came in a bottle about the size of a US 12 oz. and tasted OK, most of the time. The other local beer was called "Tiger Beer," but was actually named Biere Larue and usually came in a 1-liter bottle. This stuff was very inconsistent in quality. Some bottles tasted bitter, some like formaldehyde, and even vinegar, but occasionally (about once out of 3 or 4) you hit one bottle that was about as good tasting as you could ever find.

I did a google search on those two "Bieres" and found that both labels are still available in Vietnam, but are now owned by a subsidiary of Foster's Group of Australia. I think that Biere "33" Export is even available here in the US. I have been told that this beer sold locally in Vietnam has been relabeled as Biere "333" (or "ba-ba-ba") for some reason.

Speaking of Foster's, do any of you guys who were in-country just after Tet of '68 remember a period of time when American beers were unavailable? Sometime in February or March, all we could get out in the field was Foster's Lager and another Aussie beer called Reschs.

Foster's was OK, but



that Reschs was crap... real bitter, as I recall.

I just looked up Reschs and found it on the Foster's web site. Their only export brands nowadays are Reschs Real Bitter and Reschs Pilsner. We must have gotten some of that bitter beer, although I have remembered it as Reschs LAGER for the last 35 years.

Around that same time, we could not get American Coke or other sodas instead we got F&N Soda from Malaysia. This stuff came in two flavors, Lemonade (which tasted kind of like a dry ginger ale—think Canada Dry) and Ginger Beer that tasted like *\$^@!

The reason, we were told, why our hard-earned cash was being wasted on these inferior foreign products, instead of good old American beer and soda pop, was that a freighter full of American beer and soda had been blown up in Saigon harbor during Tet, and the Army had to procure supplies from closer sources in the western Pacific. Hell, I think I even saw some San Miguel from the Philippines at an EM Club once!

We used to take up a collection from all of the guys (and I think it may have been supplemented by "company funds") and one of our

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



**Dewey Pollock
T-131-3/1968-69
(March 15, 2003)**

A shot of the "Pontoon Beer Party" in making. Notice who's guarding the beer; some bottled beer photos



**Tom Scott FTG2 USS Colleton APB-36
(12/66 to 04/68)**

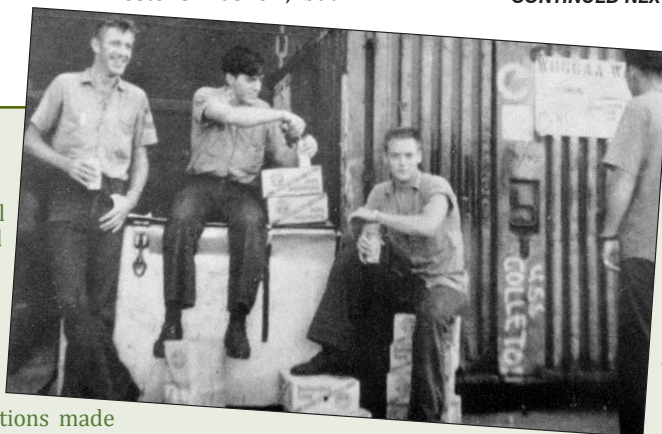
I was embarked on the USS Colleton (APB-36) from December 1966 until April 1968. One of the first rules we learned in boot camp was that no alcohol was allowed onboard US Navy vessels. My experience on the Colleton was contrary to those rules.

First, during our 60-day trip from Norfolk, VA, to Vung Tau (at AN all ahead flank speed of 10 knots), we had a barbecue on the helo deck about halfway between Pearl Harbor and Vung Tau. Much to my surprise, each were served two beers.

When we arrived in Vung Tau, there were several immediate modifications made to the ship. First, we added the bar trigger armor all around the pilot house and forward superstructure. Then we painted the ship green. Finally, one of the reefers was modified with a locking cage. As soon as that was completed, the cage was filled with cases and cases of US beer.

That beer was consumed off the ship, in conformance with naval regulations. It was served on the pontoons that served as the docks for the ATCs (those pontoons were not commissioned naval vessels and apparently exempt for the rules). I remember vividly watching the troops from the 4th/47th return from a mission and climb out of the ATCs where someone would take their M-16 in one hand and replace it with a beer. I thought that was the coolest way to welcome the guys back from 3 days in the mud.

The other occasion when beer was served was when the 4th/47th would depart for an operation. After all of the boats were away, the ship's company was invited down to the pontoons for a couple of beers. I thought that was pretty cool as well. ★

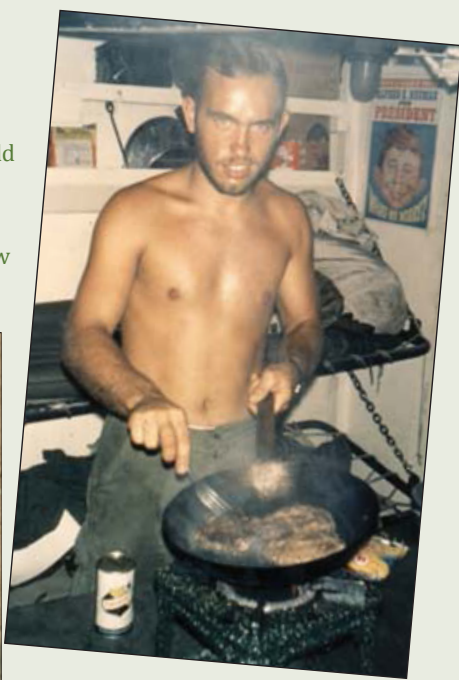


we

the

Mike Harris T-152-1 1968-69 (March 15, 2003)

Sometime in '69 we came out of the rivers/canals and stood BID patrol around the ships. One afternoon I cranked the sweep gear up so we could change watches. It was heavy so I tried to be cautious in case it was a mine. Finally a green mesh sack appeared about the size of a sandbag. In it was a ½ case of unopened Foster's beer cans. Now how's that for a snag? Of course we iced them down and enjoyed.



BEER

Continued from previous page

NCOs would take a jeep with a trailer into Dong Tam on a beer run (and also to pick up other supplies). He would come back with a trailer loaded with whatever had been available at the PX (or was it the "Class-6" Store?).

Once out at our base in the field, we had to get the local kids to bring us ice to chill down our beer and sodas and we also needed something to use as a cooler. At one time, we were at a place we called Fort Dent, a little compound with an ARVN fort and an abandoned schoolhouse on Hwy 4. We "requisitioned" a large water crock from a native hooch. This was a red clay pot about 2-3 ft tall and about as round. We used to load up this crock with beer and soda cans in the bottom and fill it with ice cracked from the big blocks that the kids would deliver by Lambretta, covered in rice husks for insulation.

It was great to come back after a hard day of slogging through the paddies and woodlines along Hwy 4 to come "home" to our schoolhouse and find a chilled-down crock of beer and soda. I used to reach way down to the bottom of that crock and grab a couple of nice cold cans of beer and crack them both open with my church key—one hole to vent and a double wide for pouring. I would then "shoot" the first one to

shake my thirst, then sip the second one while relaxing and cleaning my machine gun and getting ready for chow.

Man, it was about as close to heaven as a low down dirty grunt could experience, without sex or drugs!

At chow time, we switched to soda, as we always went out on roving patrols or set up ambushes at night, or else manned the bunkers at our little fort.

Of course, while out on patrol, we generally did not drink beer, local, or otherwise. On occasion, we did manage to buy a bottle of the locally bottled Coke (it seemed much sweeter than the US stuff and cost as much as \$1 per bottle) or some other soda. They had some pretty strange flavors of soda pop in Vietnam—sarsaparilla (tasted like a weak root beer), mint, and orange, among others. The best local soda (non-cola) that I remember was Bireley's Orange Soda.

Bireleys, it seems, must have been a Western brand, but it looks like it is now owned by Asahi of Japan. Speaking of Japan, while on R&R there, I had Asahi Lager, Sapporo, and Kirin Beer... all pretty good, as I recall.

Note: On a trip back to Vietnam in the 1990s, Mike Harris, our Webmaster, asked a former South Vietnamese Navy man why the "33" was changed to "333." He was told the Russian made the change when they moved into Vietnam after 1975. ★

Crew Members Critique Beer on the Pontoons

Ron Jett: As I remember in '67, we had Pabst, Schlitz, Hamm's and Black Label.	Steve Dexter: Harry, I think you are right. After all, it was often stored in the high heat/humidity of the host country.
Rich Lorman T-152-6 (1968-69): In the face of different [ignorant] opinions, I have maintained for years that the beer contained formaldehyde, yuck! Also that it was Australian.	Jerry A-91-7: I remember Oly, Bud, and Hamm's.
Bob LST-1166: All I remember drinking over on Washtenaw's pontoons was Black Label and Ballantine. Both tasted like tin cans, but better than nothing, and we didn't have to pay for it.	Steve Dexter: My vague memory tells me that we only had American beers—at least from October '68 to March '69—the realm of my "experience."
Ron Perry T-132-11: As I recall, we had to wear long pants and a shirt on the pontoon along with a hat if we went on the ship. Is my memory correct?	David Howington T-92-13: The barge beer bust in 1967 we had American-made beer; Pabst, Ballantine no limit.
Jerry Weston: If the beer had formaldehyde in it, what did they put in "Ham and Lima beans (P/C term for them)?"	

5th/60th Kills 76 VC During Op Coronado V

Ninth Infantry Division The Old Reliable
September 27, 1967

CAI LAY—The 5th Mechanized 60th Infantry was credited with 76 enemy kills during Operation CORONADO V—the highest number of any single unit participating in the search and destroy mission.

Fifty of the enemy died Sept. 13 in one fierce encounter along the Rach Ba Muong River 4 miles southwest of here.

The action began at 11 a.m. when two platoons from Company A 5th/60th and two platoons from Company C 3rd/60th were hit by machine gun fire from four bunkers concealed in a woodline along the river.

The infantrymen turned into the attack and called in the 5th/60th reconnaissance platoon for reinforcements.

Reports initially listed the enemy force at squad size but as the fight became more intense, officers at the scene radioed that the VC strength was much greater than originally estimated.

In the late afternoon recon platoon leader First Lieutenant Robert L. Beechinor of Bakersfield, CA, launched a swift attack against the bunkers and found they were only part of a much larger complex.

A heavy volley of anti-tank rounds and automatic rifle fire answered the probe.

Artillery pounded the enemy throughout the night although ground contact was broken off at night fall.

A sweep the next day revealed 50 enemy bodies.

Lieutenant Colonel William B. Steele of Carlisle, PA, 5th/60th Battalion Commander, praised the performance of his men against a well-equipped and well-entrenched enemy. ★

Mascots



ComRivFlot-ONE
Mascots Linus and Lucy 1967

MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE SUMMARY

ComRivFlotOne/ComRivSuppron - Seven Command History - July 1967

A significant new capability has been added to the ever-expanding horizons of the Mobile Riverine Force. On 4 July an H-23 helicopter landed and took off from the first ATC(H)—an ATC with a helo platform mounted over the well deck. The helo platform, designed by ComRivFlotOne and Mr. Sheppard, NOL White Oak, constructed locally by USS Askari (ARL-30) is portable and can be mounted on any ATC of the MRF. On 5 July a UH-1D helo successfully completed three landings and takeoffs from the flight deck of the ATC(H). The ability of the ATC(H) to operate the UH-1D greatly expands the MRF capability for command and control, personnel transfer, reaction force lift, resupply, liaison in the field and MEDEVAC in areas where no landing zones are available.

Riverine Survey TEAM (RST) operations are blending in very well with riverine combat maneuvers. During Operation Coronado (CONCORDIA III), four units deployed on separate ATCs for the 3-day operation. This was the first data collected within Go Gong Province. The Rach Go Cong was well covered as far as the city of Go Gong. Many of its tributaries were also surveyed in the course of patrol actions and troop re-insertions. The RST used the staff's KE-28B 70-mm aerial camera to obtain photographs of brigades in Go Gong Town, obstructions, and waterways. This camera was previously used by a staff member in Operation Coronado (CONCORDIA I), and it yielded excellent photographs.

The first increments of protective flooring and seating were installed in ATC-112-11. Thirty-two seats are provided with standing room for eight more troops. Each seat has been equipped with a life preserver cushion and a seat belt. The final effect is similar to a well-appointed airline. To make the installation, all but two of the bunks had to be removed.

The remaining bunks will be relocated within the boat. The chairs and matting take up about 2/3 of the well deck of the ATC. The installation can be removed in about 2 hours. The present plan is to test the installation for a few operations to determine its suitability and make any rearrangements required before going into full scale installation in the remaining boats.

Disposal of waste from the ships of the Mobile Riverine Base is a problem when anchored near a port city or inland on the rivers. Loose boxes, released by ships upstream, are a source of concern to the ships downstream as possible explosive carriers. A suggestion has been forwarded that a machine (like an automobile scrapping press) be installed on each ship to compress this trash and make it dense enough to sink. This would eliminate the requirement for a trash incinerator and would be a cleaner way of disposing waste. The recommendation will be examined for feasibility and a formal request will be forwarded if the unit is desired.

On 6 July, Colleton suffered a serious casualty to number 1 a/c diesel generator when the diesel exploded and a piston and rod were thrown through the crank case. Loss of the a/c generator reduced the Colleton's power capacity to the point where her ability to support the MRB was marginal. A request to ComNavForV resulted in two portable 150 kW generators that were installed on the Colleton as back up support. This is the third casualty of this type on the English-made Fairbanks-Morse engine. A new type of generator or a modification to the present diesel is urgently required.

ComNavForV representatives visited the flagship on 15 July to discuss assignment of National Police to CTF-117. It was agreed at this meeting that ComNavForV would request the

Chief of National Police to assign 12 personnel from the River Police Branch to CTF-117 on a permanent basis. Addition of National Police will measurably increase visit and search effectiveness of River Assault Craft both in the vicinity of the MRB and in the area of operations.

The following boats re-

operations. The concept receiving current emphasis is that of developing a Chieu Hoi leaflet featuring the ATCs as floating Chieu Hoi centers. The leaflet will give a standard Chieu Hoi appeal, will contain a picture of an ATC and will urge the VC to Chieu Hoi to the "green boats." These leaflets will be passed out

Minimum interference occurs with the .50 caliber mount while firing forward. Based upon this prototype installation, present plans are to install this on all boats.

To date we have suffered one killed (monitor Boat Captain) and 76 wounded in action, including a Squadron Commander and three Division Commanders (one permanently evacuated to the US). The majority of casualties have been caused by shrapnel from recoilless heat rounds. The worth of helmets and body armor cannot be overstated. The majority of wounds have been in face and arms, and legs not protected. The general reaction of the assault boats crews to this rather high percentage of wounded in a short period of time is that is an inescapable part of the type of war we are fighting. One cannot detect any trace of apprehension other than a healthy regard for the danger involved and an appreciation of the VC will to fight and of his cleverness.

Vietnamese Marine Corps proposed participating in MRF operations on 20-21 July was delayed until 24-25 July. River Assault Division 91 provided close support to the 3rd Battalion, Vietnamese Marine Corps during the operation that was conducted in the northern Can Giouc District area of Long An Province. The Marines were picked up in the vicinity of Nha Be by Riverine Assault Craft and transported to the landing beaches in the AO. River Assault Division 91 remained in close support conducting numerous troop landings and pickups on streams within the AO, providing fire support, command and control facilities, and re-supply of water. CTF-117 and VNMC Brigade issued a joint movement and embarkation order for the initial phases of the operation—probably a first in US Naval history in Vietnam. ComRivDiv 91 was enthusiastic in his report of

“ **The MRF is rapidly developing a well-rounded psychological warfare program. While Army elements of the MRF have a greater portion of the assets and the program itself, Navy elements are increasing the Navy commitment to these operations.** ”

ceived VC fire on 11 July 1967 supporting Coronado Concordia (PHASE II) in Can Giouc District of Long An Province.

At 110945H, a claymore mine was triggered when T-112-4 dropped her ramp to land elements of A Company 4th/47th (7 USN and 4 USA WIAs).

At 110950H, M-112-1 and M-111-1 were both hit by RR rounds, no personnel casualties. Both boats continued mission.

At 111620H, T-112-7 received a B-40 round on starboard side of the bow ramp. No personnel casualty resulted.

At 111758H, M-112-1 took a B-40 round in the conning station killing the Boat Captain and claiming six USN wounded in action. The monitor returned to the MRB for repairs and was back in the area of operation (AO) at 121700H.

Also receiving fire (SA mostly) during the operation without personnel casualties were M-91-1, T-91-13, T-112-12, T-112-4, and T-112-13.

The MRF is rapidly developing a well-rounded psychological warfare program. While Army elements of the MRF have a greater portion of the assets and the program itself, Navy elements are increasing the Navy commitment to these

to sampans that ATCs stop for search and will be air-dropped in riverine operation areas. Other concepts under development are taped broadcasts, additional materials for handing out to indigenous personnel during stop and search and other leaflets.

The onset of the monsoon season with resulting wet weather has made the boats much less habitable. Personal belongings are being damaged by the rain and dampness. In order to reduce the damage to personal gear, small waterproof duffel bags have been ordered for each member of the boat crew.

The first helo barge for MRF use was delivered to Nha Be on 20 July 1967. YTB-784 towed the helo barge to the MRB on 22 July. This helo barge will further expand the growing capabilities of the MRF by providing an afloat landing area for two additional helicopters with an emergency refueling capability.

An additional defense against the RPG-2 (B-40) missile, bar armor has been extended up around the coxswain's platform on one ATC. The armor has been hinged so that the armored doors can be opened. A slot has been left in the side to permit firing the 7.62-mm guns from the pilot house.



UP001 MRF Mekong Delta (white anchor)

UP002 MRFA Vietnam

UP003 MRF Mekong Delta (yellow anchor)

UP004 9th Inf Div (no words)

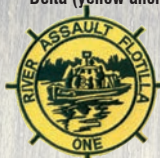
UP005 9th Inf Div Vietnam



UP006 9th Inf Div Vietnam Veteran



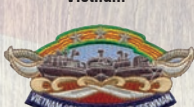
UP007 RAF TF 117



UP008 RAF One



UP009 VCCC (blue)



UP010 VCCC (brown)



UP011 VCCC (silver)



UP012 Combat Boat Captain



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UP015 RAD 91



UP016 RAD 92



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UP018 RAD 112



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UP020 RAD 131



UP021 RAD 132



UP022 RivRon XV



UP023 RAD 152



UP024 Riv Div 153



UP025 MRF 3/47



UP026 3rd/60th Inf



UP027 39th Inf



UP028 47th Inf



UP029 USS Benewah APB-35



UP030 USS Colleton APB-36



UP031 USS Mercer APB-39



UP032 USS Nueces APB-40



UP033 USS Benewah Logo



UP034 USS Mercer Logo



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Wild Ones And Tigers Team Up; 33 VC Killed in Ap Bac Zone

Ninth Infantry Division The Old Reliable June 3, 1967, Page 1

DONG TAM— Soldiers from the 9th Division dashed into the Ap Bac Secret Zone in Dinh Tuong Province Monday for an airmobile search and destroy operation and swept 33 Viet Cong into a deadly net.

The action occurred in almost the same spot where units of the divisions 2nd Bde killed 195 VC on 2 May.

Monday's firefight was the result of an operation involving the 3rd Battalion, 60th Infantry "Wild Ones" and the 3rd/47th Infantry "Tigers."

The 9th's Old Reliabilities were helo-lifted into an open rice paddy area interlaced with tree lines and canals 12 miles north of Dong Tam.

The moment they touched down they received sporadic sniper fire that continued throughout the morning.

The US soldiers made solid contact in the early afternoon and scattered fighting continued throughout the day.

A final body count revealed 33 enemy dead. Stingray helicopter gunships from the Old Reliabilities 9th Aviation Battalion have been credited with 12 enemy kills.

In addition the 2nd Bde soldiers rounded up a 40-mm rocket launcher, two Springfield rifles, one M-1 rifle with an attached grenade launcher, four rifles grenades, and 16 magazines of M-1 ammunition.

Five pounds of documents were also captured. ★

2nd/60th Unit Kills Forty In Battle

Ninth Infantry Division The Old Reliable May 6, 1967, Page 1

TAN AN—An unknown sized enemy force attacked a 9th Division Company early Tuesday about 19 miles southwest of Saigon and by the latest account 40 were killed.

Friendly casualties to the 3rd Brigade's B Co. 2nd/60th were 16 KIAs and 48 WIAs.

The attack began about 0200 hours Tuesday. Company B 2nd/60th had established a night position near the junction of the Tan Tru and Can Duoc Rivers about 6 miles northeast of Tan An in Long An Province.

The embattled company was supported by artillery fire, three Spooky aircraft and two air strikes.

The enemy broke contact at 03:30 hours. ★

MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE SUMMARY

Continued from page 8

the excellent cooperation and coordination between his task unit and the Vietnamese Marines. He stated that the battalion was a well-organized force and a pleasure to work with. Conversations with members of VNMC Brigade staff subsequent to the operation indicated that they were equally pleased with this initial operation and are anxious to join the MRF on future operations.

CTF-117 received word at 1300H on 25 July that the MRB would relocate from the junction of the Soi Rap and Vam Co Rivers to the vicinity of Dong Tam on 27 July, a distance of 61 nautical miles. At this time the MRF was conducting a search and destroy operation in the Can Giouc District of Long An Province. In addition to the Army riverine ground forces TF-117 was providing close support to the 3rd Battalion VNMC. During the afternoon of 25 July, ground forces were picked up by the Mobile Riverine Force craft and returned to the MRB. Planning began immediately for relocation of the MRB and was promulgated on the morning of 26 July. Commencing at 0200H on 27 July riverine assault craft began departing the MRB to proceed to minesweeping and patrol stations along the track of the MRB. At 0550H the last ship of the force was underway and proceeding toward the entrance of the Soi Rap. Because of the relatively slow speed of the APL tow and the fact that the ships were steaming against a flooding tide while proceeding out of the Soi Rap River and an ebbing tide while proceeding up the Mekong River, the move required 11½ hours to complete. This did not delay, however, the commencement of the strike operation in Dinh Tuong Province on 28 July. The first units of TF-117 were underway escorting 3/34th Artillery Barges at 0030H. Thus, in just a little over 48 hours the Mobile Riverine Force was able to relocate a base supporting 3,900 personnel over a

distance of 61 nautical miles and to shift its combat area of operations a total of 85 nautical miles. This relocation proved the ability of the MRF to react rapidly to a changing situation and through its great mobility to effectively redirect its combat power over substantial distances. This mobility enables the MRF to apply assault forces in the Delta very rapidly, and this capability permits a fast reaction to intelligence of VC locations. Our experience with regard to the available intelligence on VC Locations upon which to react with assault forces is that such intelligence is for the most part 1 to 2 and sometimes 3-days old. Our ability to react to this less than timely intelligence has resulted in the MRF having contact with the VC in every one of our CORONADO operations. Each VC contact has been company size or larger. The sad part is that this 1- to 3-day old agent intelligence is the most reliable available. Heretofore, the VC have been able to maneuver away from the reported position within the intelligence time lag coupled by slower reaction forces. We could even do better with a reconnaissance capability assigned to the Force. Contrary to the belief of many, the Army does not have covert or for that matter overt reconnaissance capability in any way comparable to the Navy SEALs or Marine Corps RECON companies.

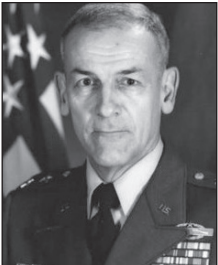
During the action on 29 July, several boats were hit with small arms fire, rocket and recoilless fire. The most seriously damaged was Monitor 91-3, which was hit by a possible claymore, one 56-mm recoilless rifle, and four B-40 missiles. Shrapnel was received through the 40-mm sight port, damaged the 81-mm mortar to the point where it had to be replaced, destroyed the 20-mm ammo box and loader, and damaged the .50 caliber barrels. No major structural damage to the boat was sustained. Hits and minor damage were received in M-91-1, M-91-2, T-91-6, T-91-8, and T-91-10. Once again the ability of the boat to absorb punishment and remain in operation was demonstrated. ★

The First Landing...



The first landing of 3rd Plt. A Co. 3rd/47th Inf. 9th Inf Div. in the Saigon River on about February 14, 1967. Photo courtesy by Gary McCabe.

TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One



Bolduc

Member Major General **Lucien "Blackie" Bolduc** passed away November 30, 2017. Blackie served as CDR in the 3rd/47th Infantry (02/67-01/68). General Bolduc was a very large part of the Mobile Riverine Force Association since our beginning and up to his passing. He was liked and respected with honor by everyone who knew him especially those whom served under him in Vietnam with the 3rd/47th Infantry Battalion and those who met him at our reunions. He really fit the description of an "Officer and Gentleman". Some have told me he was hard as a battalion commander, but had to be and he got results. Hard but fair.

General Bolduc served his country in

World War II, Korea, and Vietnam with honor, pride and distinction. Recently one General Officer told me General Bolduc was a great Officer and leader of men. He is the last of the Battalion Commanders of the 2nd Brigade 9th Infantry Division. He will be strongly missed by all hands Army and Navy alike. General Bolduc was one of the best of his and our Generation. May he rest in peace. Happy Trails General Blackie Bolduc.

I recall having breakfast with him while at one of the reunions in Fort Mitchell. He was one of the most polite and intelligent men I have ever met. Also, the idea of a retired general having breakfast with a former sergeant shows a humility that seems so rare today. RIP. Bob Dyson Co. B 2nd/47th Inf.

Member **Frederick H. Miller Jr.** passed away October 17, 2017. Fred served on T-92-2 (11/68-11/69). You may contact the family c/o Amy Miller, 143 E 57th St, Tulsa, OK 74105-7714, catsend@sbcglobal.net.



Nelson

Member **Richard E. (Doc) Nelson** USN (Ret.) passed away from declining health issues, December 25, 2017. Richard was attached to Task Force

117 Staff as a Corpsman with RivRon 15 (05/69-05/70). Richard was credited with saving LT Tom Kelly's (MOH) life during an ambush on June 15, 1969. At the time of his passing, he resided in the Georgia War Veterans Home in Milledgeville, Georgia. You may contact MRF Member Frank Jones for more information papsaroni@sbcglobal.net.



Hart

Member **George Richard Hart** passed away December 18, 2017. George served with the 3rd/39th Inf. (03/66-06/67). You may contact the family c/o Maria Carfora Hart, 284 Buttercup Ln, Newport News, VA 23602-6812.

Member **Anthony Hector Perry III** passed away January 25, 2017. Anthony served with MMA Det. 2 (06/68-04/70). At the time of his passing, he resided in Parkersburg, PA.



Covey

Rebecca Jo "Becky" Covey passed away December 27, 2017. Becky was the wife of

deceased member Gary Covey, who served on A-132-3 and Z-131-1 (08/68-07/69). You may contact the family c/o Crystal Hillenburg, 2590 W Archer Ln, Bloomington, IN 47403-4219, chillenburg01@gmail.com.



Fitzgerald

Member **Dean J. Fitzgerald** passed away April 21, 2016. Dean served in the Army in SE Asia Vietnam (1958-1962). You may contact Carol Campbell, N7159 Perry Rd, Au Train, MI 49806-9625, mizfitz@tds.net.

Member **Franklin Johnson** passed away November 22, 2017. Franklin served on T-111-8 (10/66-12/67). You may contact the family c/o Doris Johnson, 3358 Trinity Dr, Springfield, MO 65803-6164.



Hart

Member **Phillip H. Mercurio** passed away May 1, 2017. Phillip served on the USS Colleton APB-36 (09/48-07/52). At the time of his passing, he resided in Dayton, Ohio.

In Memory Of

This section is for members who wish to sponsor the MRF 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)
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Donald P. Brosnan for Col George E. Bland, CO 2nd Bde (06/68-01/69), WIA January 1969, Evacuated to Convs, Died 12/20/03
Brothers of the 2nd/47th Inf for all Army and Navy KIA's
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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 names in country music, 1937-2016
Fran Divilbiss for Cdr. Dave Divilbiss, Supply Officer on Staff COMRIVFLOT ONE, USS Benewah APB-35 (1966-68)
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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
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 Benace from Florida and Donald Hartzell from Pennsylvania
Sally Jackson for Paul Nace USS Colleton APB-36 (09/68-11/69)
Bruce Jensen in memory of Frederic Peers Webb A-111-4 KIA 12/21/67
J. R. Johnson Recon 3rd/47th (01/67-01/68) for Walker, Paredes, Gotch, Hayes, Nelson, and Howard
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 Oaklander 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
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Adam Metts for Donald L. Bruckart T-111-2 KIA 03/31/69
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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
Janet Petersen for Col Pete Petersen USA (Ret.) Cdr 3rd/60th Inf (11/68-08/69)
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Robert Sutton for LT James F. Rost Jr. Vin Te Canal Chau Duc KIA 11/69
Okey Toothman in memory of Sgt Dick Arnold A Co. 3rd/47th, Max Delacruz and G. P. Jones C Co. 3rd/47th
Okey Toothman in memory of Judy Wallace
Steven Totcoff for my brother CPL Dennis S. Totcoff 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
CPT Steve Williams and MAJ Bob Bischoff in memory of 2LT David George Williams, Co A, 4/47th, KIA 9/21/67
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War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.

--John Stewart Mill--



Mobile Riverine Force Association

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