



River Currents



CCB 112-1 TF 117

General Westmorland
USS Benewah APB-35

A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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SUMMER 2018

From the Radio Shack

Business as usual here at the MRFA. Thanks to Don Blankenship, our email message system has been rebuilt and moved to another server. We had very little down time, and thanks to his hard work, we are up and running again!! You may not know this, but our Webmaster Mike Harris also spends a great deal of time tending to our website. Our website had



Harry Hahn

been totally rebuilt last year and is a great place to visit and to direct anyone interested in the MRFA. This is the best way for someone to find out more about our organization. Additionally, while I am handing out virtual medals, Albert Moore continues to be the one who is responsible for this newsletter. Our appreciation and Bravo Zulu to these behind the scene worker bees!!!

Your membership information is always on your address label! If you are wondering when your membership expires, please look at the label. Charlie Ardinger and his wonderful assistant Georgie can answer any membership issue questions and he receives all renewals!!!! Let's keep this newsletter coming by your contributions and membership!

Speaking of the website, the site is now updated with the Nashville 2019 Reunion information. You should be able to start making your reservations directly with the hotel in September. The registration information with the MRFA will be in the next issue and subsequent issues. Save the dates of August 28-31, 2019! The Reunion planning committee has made a trip to the Millennium Maxwell House in Nashville. It will be a great site. I am hearing from a lot of members who have not ever been to a reunion, or have not made it to Indianapolis, that they are excited about going to Nashville. Any suggestions you may have for the reunion should be submitted to Frank Jones or me.

The sale of the Gear Locker New and Discontinued Items goes on. I have been trying to post OUT OF STOCK items. There will be items that, as we are out of stock, we will not reorder. We have so many items in our Gear Locker. Be sure to look at what is available and place your orders.

We are always looking for new articles for this publication. If you haven't ever submitted an article, please think of doing it. Personal experiences of your time in Vietnam may be something you want to share with this audience. Please let Albert know if you are interested.

Harry Hahn, President,
SparksRivRon13@aol.com

Veterans Day, Washington DC, 2018

We have blocked 40 rooms at the Arlington Court Suites, a Clarion Collection Hotel, at 1200 N Courthouse Rd in Arlington, Virginia, from November 8 to 11 (check out on 11/12). Room rates are \$125.00 (plus tax) per night. More information is available at <http://www.arlingtoncourthotel.com/>.

For reservations, call 1-703-524-4000 ext. "0". Please state our group name as "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 8, 2018.

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will have a hospitality

room available on November 8 to 11. Come join us as we honor our fallen Brothers on Veterans Day 2018. We look forward to seeing you in DC.

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will be placing wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day, Sunday, November 11, 2018. 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.

For more information, contact Vice President: Bob (Doc) Pries, (513) 659-4974, pries247@gmail.com. ★



Arlington Court Suites



Delta Airstrip Opens; First Caribou Lands

Ninth Infantry Division The Old Reliable May 6, 1967, Page 8

DONG TAM—The landing of the first CV-2 (Caribou) aircraft at the 2nd/Bde base camp here on 25 April 1967 marked the end of a fast-paced engineer project to complete a 1,600-foot airstrip.

Company D, 15th Engineer Battalion and Company C, 577th Engineers built the strip and a 175-foot by 400-foot helipad in 44 days.

"When the 2nd Bde first moved in here March 11, we had only a small 50-foot by 100-foot helipad," said Major William R. Cave, 2nd Bde aviation officer and airport commander.

Since then engineers have continuously extended the airstrip so that larger and larger planes could land there.

On 9 April the first Forward Air Control (FAC) made its landing and followed the next day by the first U-1 (Beaver), a utility plane capable of carrying six passengers. Ten days later, a U-1 (Otter) carrying 12 passengers and 3 crew members landed.

The airstrip is made of pierced steel planking and coated with non-skid paint.

Airfield facilities included 10 refueling points for UH-1D Huey troop carriers, two rearmament points for the UH-1C Huey gunships, a passenger waiting room, a pilot's briefing room, and a 40-foot control tower for accurate liaison between the incoming and outgoing aircraft and the controller. ★



MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE SUMMARY

ComRivFlotOne/ComRivSuppron-

Seven Command History - May 1967

On 2 May, the USS Colleton (APB-36) arrived at Vung Tau. On 5-7 May, RivRon 11 Staff, RivDiv 112 and units of the 4th/47th infantry embarked in the Colleton.

With arrival of the Colleton, a minor odyssey in naval annals came to pass. Benewah and Colleton departed Norfolk, VA, USA and sailed halfway around the world—each with sustained speed of between 10 and 11 knots—each with an untried crew and untested ship—each proceeding to an uncertain future about which they had little knowledge. Suffice it to say, many dire predictions were made concerning their lonely passage. Happy to say Benewah arrived ready for whatever lies ahead some 6 days ahead of the most optimistic predicted arrival. Colleton, likewise ready, arrived some 10 days ahead.

The advent of the Southwest Monsoon has resulted in rapid deterioration of Vung Tau harbor water surface conditions in late afternoon. On the several nights riverine assault craft were sorted from alongside ships to proceed to sheltered anchorage at Cat Lo. USS Snohomish County (LST-1126) arrived at Vung Tau on 1 May and

will perform duties as first MRF resupply ship.

The need for an administrative detachment staff ashore, both as a personnel processing center and to provide much needed storage space has become increasingly apparent. The entire personnel section of the Flotilla will be moved ashore to Dong Tam, RVN. This will free much needed space aboard the Benewah, and permit the setting up of a central personnel processing area for the handling of all personnel. It has been requested that four Quonset huts be made available to be used as office space and as a stowage area for personal gear that cannot be stowed aboard the Benewah or Colleton. All receipts and transfers of personnel will be affected at this location and it will function as a funneling point for R&R departures of personnel assigned to CTF-117 units.

The Naval Research and Development Unit, Vietnam provided ComRivFlot One with five experimental buoyant flak jackets for evaluation. A buoyancy test was performed by one of the RivFlot One officers on 12 May. He was dressed in full combat gear including field shoes. The buoyant qualities were excellent. After afloat for 10 minutes in the water, he could not pull himself under the water with the jacket on. A test of the regular flak vest and the CO2 type life jacket was also conducted. Sufficient positive buoyancy for a fair swimmer was obtained by the discharge of one CO cartridge. With two cartridges even the poorest of swimmers should have little difficulty remaining afloat. The five buoyant flak jackets have been turned over to a boat crew for evaluation. After a period of operation, they will be interviewed and their comments on the suitability of the jacket will be forwarded to Chief, Naval Research and Development, Vietnam.

During May, River Assault Flotilla One was visited by camera teams from NBC and CBS. Both covered the concept and general operations of the Flotilla at Vung Tau and their support of the embarked Army units. Both networks also went out on ATCs and were put ashore. NBC came back to cover the return of the troops to the Mobile Riverine Base and also interviewed CTF-117. SecNav Guest Artist Larry Zabel spent 4 days with TF-117, two of which he spent aboard an ATC on patrol. Raymond Burr and an NBC camera team visited RivRon Nine units at Dong Tam and filmed an operation for use on an NBC Vietnam special.

Concern over YRBM-17 to perform effectively still exists. During the 10 May conference at NavForV, it was determined that it would not be possible for YRBM-17 to overhaul the engines of all boats cycling through Dong Tam for overhaul. This resulted in the decision to pre-position additional engines at Dong Tam, have YRBM-17 conduct engine changes and move the replaced engines to Askari for overhaul. ComNavForV will attempt to augment the capabilities of YRBM-17 in order to support the mission assigned.

After 4 months of constant operations, our boat crews ran into their first real test on 15 May in a multi-battalion operation west of Dong Tam. Both performed in the highest tradition of the U.S. Navy. The morale of our crews is as high as



USS Benewah APB-35



USS Colleton APB-36

can be imagined. Details were submitted to ComNavForV by CTF 117, 211300Z May 67.

On 20 May, ComRivFlot One gave ADM U.S.G. Sharp, USN, CINCPAC, an update briefing on the Riverine Assault Force at ComNavForV headquarters. Topics covered were present status of arrival in-country of ships and craft, future plans and highlights of several recent operations.

A test of the feasibility of employing a 4.2-inch mortar aboard an ATC was conducted by the heavy weapons platoon of the 3rd/47th Infantry Battalion and was supervised by the Fire Support Coordinator of the 3rd/47th. During the test, the ATC was beached with steadying lines out to port and starboard from the stern of the beach. The ramp was down and the awning removed. As a base for the mortar; four rows of sandbags were placed forward of the well deck of the ATC with backing support to hold the sandbags in position. The mortar was centered on the sandbags and secured by the use of additional sandbags. Twenty rounds were fired conducting three call fire missions. During the fire for effect phase, maximum dispersion of shot was plus 25 minus 25 meters. No structural deformation of the ATC was noted. The results of the test were considered to be excellent.

Plastic turret covers on LCM conversions do not stand up to the tropical heat. The covers became concave and thus of reduced value as grenade trap protection. A wire stiffening is being developed to provide a quick fix but future covers should be made from stronger plastic or wire reinforcement.

Combat operations on 15 May adequately demonstrated the effectiveness of the bar armor-XAR30 plate combination against the 57-mm recoilless rifle HEAT round. Although there was damage to the armor itself, there was only one case of penetration believed to be a projectile larger than 57-mm causing four casualties.

Reports on 19 May indicate the VC are now using an 82-mm recoilless rifle HEAT round. This penetrated the ballistic armor on one shot,

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River Currents Staff

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Mobile Riverine Force Association

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Dates Served in Unit (mm/yr - mm/yr) _____ to _____

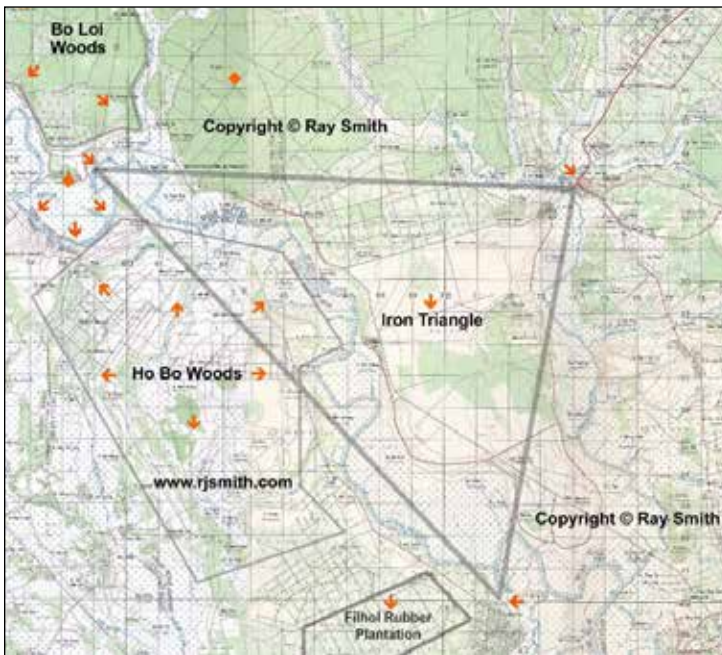
MEMBERSHIP RATES

☐ 1 Year \$20 ☐ 3 Years \$50

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



Map of HO-BO WOODS

Ho Bo Woods

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ho Bo Woods are located in Binh Duong Province 20 km north of Cu Chi, 4 km to the west of the Iron Triangle and the Saigon River and some 56 km northwest of Saigon. The woods consist of rubber plantations, sparse to dense woods, and open rice paddies with some extremely large dikes, some 1–2 metres high. The woods were used by the Viet Cong as a base area during the Vietnam War.

During Operation Circle Pines from 29 March to 5 April 1966, the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment attacked the woods and discovered that the Viet Cong had built extensive bunker and tunnels systems with some of the tunnels three or four levels deep.

On 19 July 1966 1st Platoon Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment was dropped at a landing zone (11°05'30"N 106°26'38"E 11.0916°N 106.4438°E) in the woods where it was met by sniper fire, another platoon was dropped into a nearby landing zone (11°05'30"N 106°25'48"E 11.0917°N 106.430°E) to support the 1st Platoon and it too was heavily engaged by Viet Cong fire. Several hours later an additional platoon was dropped into each landing zone and by 16:30 the 1st Platoon was extracted under fire. US losses for the action were 25 killed and 24 wounded. The following day the 1st Battalion, 5th Mechanized Infantry was sent from Cu Chi Base Camp to recover the bodies of 15 soldiers that had been left behind in the previous day's battle. The bodies were found neatly lined up but stripped of all weapons and equipment. On 10 June 2013 the 1/27th Infantry would be awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for its actions on 19 July 1966. ★

MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE SUMMARY

ComRivFlotOne/ComRivSuppron – Seven Riverine Assault Force Summary – September 1968

Ambushes of the riverine assault craft were all too frequent during the month. On the evening of 6 September, Task Unit Starlight landed Army elements on the banks of the Dua Stream. While returning to their night position, the boats were ambushed with rocket and automatic weapons fire from the south bank of the stream, 3 miles east of Can Giuoc, wounding 11 Navy men. Six of the wounded required helicopter evacuation. A subsequent search of the area indicated that 10 Viet Cong were involved in the ambush.

While proceeding southward along the Ben Tre River to land 4/47th Infantry Battalion troops for operations in Truc Giang and Giong Trom districts of Kien Hoa Province on 15 September, RAD 111 was hit with automatic weapons and rocket fire from the west bank 5 1/2 miles southeast of Ben Tre. At 1110 the fire was returned and suppressed as the assault craft pressed on and landed the troops over the designated beaches 1/2 mile further to the south. Fifteen Navy men were wounded and one Monitor damaged in the fight. The infantrymen swept

the area but found no Viet Cong. Later in the afternoon, after back loading troops, the same division again was ambushed from the west bank of the river about 1 mile south of the earlier ambush. In the second ambush return fire was light because of many civilians in the area. The assault craft cleared the ambush area and continued to a new landing site.

RAD 111 was again attacked on the Ben Tre River on the 16th; at 1053 from the east bank 6 miles southeast of Ben Tre, and at 1127 from both banks 2 miles east of Ben Tre. A mortar attack at the junction of the Ben Tre River and the Chei Say Canal accompanied the second attack. Three Navy men were wounded during the day and two ATCs were damaged.

On the next day, 17 September, RAD 111 was fired upon for the fifth time on the Ben Tre River, this time from the south bank 1 mile east of Ben Tre. Only one recoilless-rifle round was fired at the assault craft and the fire was not returned because it came from a populated area. There were no casualties.

On the same day, units of RAD 92 went to the assistance of GAME WARDEN PBRs on the Ham Luong River. On arrival the assault craft received recoilless-rifle, automatic weapons and small arms fire from the west bank of the river, 3 miles east of Mo Cay. The fire was suppressed. One Navy man was wounded as a result of a "cookoff" on a 40-mm gun.

At 0900 on 22 September, RAD 131 was ambushed while landing 6/31st Infantry Division troops on the Ba Rai Stream 3 miles east of Cai Be. The Viet Cong fired automatic weapons and rockets from both banks. Riverine assault craft fired all weapons, including flame, suppressing the enemy fire. Nine Navy men were wounded.

On 24 September at 0825, RAD 111 received three rockets and small arms fire from the south bank of the Ben Tre River near the eastern edge of Ben Tre, while escorting an Army LCU and LCM-8 with supplies for FSPB DAVID 3 miles

east of Ben Tre. There were no casualties. After delivering the supplies, the craft were returning to the Mobile Riverine Base (MRB) when, at 1305, they were again ambushed from the south bank 2 miles east of Ben Tre by small arms, recoilless rifle and mortar fire. Two Navy and three Army men were wounded. The assault craft suppressed the fire and proceeded on their way.

At 0140 on the 26th, an artillery barge at FSPB DAVID was hit by a water mine, killing two Army men and wounding eight. One man was missing in connection with the explosion that blew an 8x10 foot hole through the deck of the personnel department. The sapper/swimmer capability of the Viet Cong was amply demonstrated by the incident.

Three more ambushes occurred during the month but without serious damage or casualties. Of greater consequence was the partial disabling of the USS Mercer (APB-39), flagship of CTG 117.2, as a result of her dragging anchor and colliding with USS Satyr (ARL-23) about 2300 on 11 September. The ships were located with MRG BRAVO at the junction of the Vam Co and Soi Rap Rivers. As she attempted to pull away from Satyr, the starboard screw of Mercer fouled in the port anchor chain of Satyr and severed the chain. About 45 fathoms of anchor chain with the port anchor still attached, wrapped around the shaft demolishing the screw and seizing the shaft. The anchor and most of the chain was cut free by divers the following day and the remaining three turns of chain were removed on the 13th. Upon removal of the chain, it was determined that the shaft was heavily scored, requiring replacement. On the 14th, the flag shifted to USS Vernon County (LST-1161) and Mercer preceded to Vung Tau, sailing from there on the 16th to Ship Repair Facility, Subic for repairs. Fortunately, the employment of 9th Infantry Division assets was such that the temporary loss of Mercer did not have a seriously adverse effect on MRF operations. ★

MAY 1967

Continued from previous page

causing a small fire in an ammunition locker within the armor shield. It has been proposed that Styrofoam or polyurethane blocks, if placed behind the bar armor, may reduce the jet formation on the HEAT round and also absorb some of the fragments produced by the shell. Experiments are being conducted with Navy standard shaped charges to determine the effectiveness of a plastic block over the XAR30 armor. Preliminary tests look very good.

As of 31 May, all Riverine Assault Craft have arrived in-country except two CCBs due to arrive on the USS Oak Hill on 6 June. Two monitors are due to arrive on the Hawaiian Retailer on 12 June and two monitors are due to arrive on the Man-keto Victory on 2 June. ★

USN Chief Howard W. Bannister Died Saving my Life July 11, 1967!

There was silence, not even the birds were singing. Our Monitor 112-1 was a hungry green crocodile, slithering surreptitiously through muddy tannin-stained water. It was designed with stealth in mind. The sun shined deceptively, a flirting cold-hearted Mata Hari with a hidden agenda. We listened so intently our ears hurt—for the breaking of a stick, a cough or sneeze, movement... nothing. Where were the Army guys? The enemy? Slowly an "igloo" rose above the jungle floor as we approached. These bunkers looked like the homes Eskimos make, only muddy brown instead of snow white. The Viet Cong fashioned them from river mud which the sun baked to concrete hardness. The VC hid in these and fired their weapons at us through holes they made around the sides. All was quiet, we sensed no threats. We were sent to take it out. Bannister ordered the four crewmen manning the front .40-mm gun turret to fire four rounds at this ugly brown wart. They obeyed, then painful silence returned... for 60 long seconds. We all exhaled, relieved this was so easy, relaxed a little, but still alert.

In civilian life, we did not consider a minute very important. We might waste an hour or two hanging out at the soda shop, the bowling alley, or bar or just sitting in the city park watching the girls go by. Life changes by degrees; this happens in all kinds of situations. Our love for a family member or friend under normal circumstances changes when we find out they are terminally ill. Our love doesn't increase but our ability to show our true feelings and express them grows by degrees; life has turned the heat up. In combat, we lived in a world of contradictions. Our boat crews' relationship changed by degrees, going from strangers to coworkers, to group vigilance...watching each other's backs, to group

combat, group killing, and group hate.

The Spanish have a saying, "poco a poco." Little by little. The worse things got, the closer we worked together, but the shorter our fuses became, the less patient we were with each other, less tolerant. We would blow up at our combat brother for the smallest thing, yet our lives depended on each other...doing our jobs. We would die for each other. We bickered, and sometimes got downright angry, yet we cared for one another in ways men cannot express. We were child warriors who could not say to our comrade, "Hey, man, I love you!"

Fire and metal slammed into my face and body, blowing me backwards into our rear 20-mm machine gun tripod. I had been at my position behind the helm, the boat's wheel, where

"...I wanted the enemy to know we were still alive. My boat and our crew were as silent as a cemetery. Rage was all I had and it seemed to be pushing me on..."

Chief Bannister had been standing in front of me. Our coxswain, David, who drove the boat, was taking a break. Bannister, our boat captain, had taken his place. When the rocket exploded before my eyes this thought exploded in my mind, "I'm dead!" Searing, burning, tearing pain surged through my body as I came to and tried to move. The blast sent me flying backwards 10 feet and knocked me unconscious. I came to with a confused, flooding mind: "How did I get here? What happened? The pain is killing me! I can't stand it! Where'd all the blood come from. I'm bleeding to death." I was bleeding from head to foot, couldn't see out of my right eye, and couldn't use my right hand or arm. I rocked then rolled



Monitor 112-2

to my knees, cradling my blown-up arm, and crawled to the hatch in the floor by my radio. Climbing down the 5-foot steel ladder one-handed, I found Ken holding his bloodied right hand with his left. He had the glazed eyes of a wounded deer, unable to understand what happened. I grabbed some gauze and clumsily bandaged his hand with my only functioning hand best I could. He grabbed some paper towels, wrapped them around my swollen blood-pumping right arm and hand. The quantity of blood immediately soaked through and I ripped them off with my left, good hand.

Ken and I uttered no words. We used the telepathy of men facing eminent death. I grabbed a pillow off the top left bunk, snapped the case off with the crack of a whip and wrapped it around my unrecognizable right arm. As a kid, I practiced every day with my 8-foot black-snake Mexican bullwhip, snapping a variety of items off our picnic table in the backyard. In my Wild West obsession, I talked my younger sister into letting me snap pencils out of her mouth, and never hurt her. If she could have seen me here, blood soaked and nearing death, she would have been more proud of me than ever. Life ran out of me, staining the grey-green deck crimson. No time to think, worry, panic, we were under attack. Except for Ken, I didn't know if my boat captain or crew were alive.

I climbed back up the ladder one-handed and crawled to my chief. With a crazy hope, I lifted him as

best I could with my usable left hand. In checking to see if he was alive, the truth shot through my heart like another hate-filled rocket, Chief Howard W. Bannister was dead. God has forever removed from my mind what I saw. My captain and I were marooned in a pool of our commingled blood. I pulled myself up one-handed to my right .30 cal. machine gun and tried to pull the bolt back to put a round in the chamber. It would not move; it was welded in place by the explosion. I inched over to my left .30 cal. machine gun and tried to operate its bolt. It was also welded in place. I remembered Chief Bannister wore a .38 cal. revolver in a black leather holster on his belt; I could fire this one-handed. I crawled back to my chief, lifted him with my one good left hand, held him steady, and slid the blue-black steel six-shot .38 caliber revolver out of its holster on his belt. Somehow, with my good hand I held the revolver with a death grip and pulled myself up to the slot where my melted left .30 cal. machine gun was then fired all six rounds at the enemy bunker.

I wanted the enemy to know we were still alive. My boat and our crew were as silent as a cemetery. Rage was all I had and it seemed to be pushing me on. (I was more incensed than my last Sunday at home two Julys ago when my powerful carpenter dad blew his top, again, and flung our large oak dining-room table, one-handed, against the wall, knocked me to the floor, then kicked me in the ribs around the room like a rag doll.) I did not know my right eyelid was held open by a chunk of shrapnel



Chief Bannister

protruding from my eye. More protruded from the lateral edge of my right orbit bone. Every breath, every blink, and even the slightest movement caused breath-stopping pain. More shrapnel leered from my upper lip and right side of my face. My right hand and arm had several coffee-cup-sized holes. I did not know there were two big holes in my right shoulder and more shrapnel across my back and in my left thigh.

Everything was silent. Where was my crew? Was everyone dead? Were Ken and I the only ones alive, lost in the jungle of Vietnam? I grabbed my radio mike, squeezed the talk button, and called Larry, giving him a SITREP...situation report. "We've been hit by a rocket. Bannister's dead. Ken and I are wounded." It was silent on his end. Was this the silence of shock, disbelief? Bannister stood above us all, even the officers. He was not only a big man, but a quiet force, a presence. When Larry spoke, I let my breath out and said, "We need help!" "It's on the way!" he said.

I radioed in artillery giving them the coordinates.

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BANNISTER

Continued from previous page

The sound of a thousand crashing waves and a hundred thunder claps kept coming closer. Several of our boats moved toward us as fast as they could, shooting everything they had at everything out there. They were pissed and throwing all the lead they could. Chief Bannister was our division's first boat member to be killed.

David, our coxswain, was the main person who drove the boat. Where was he now? I got to drive it a lot, maybe because of my position behind the wheel or maybe because I grew up with boats on a big river where we fished a few times a week. Bannister had taken David's place at the helm, doing his duty. Was it his 20 years of obeying orders? He could not know we were about to be blown up. He never balked; he walked straight ahead in military life as a man who knew who he was, what he was supposed to be doing, and doing it. He liked to play poker and drink with the other boat captains, all boatswain mates, a tough sea-hardened group. He was never disorderly or dirty. He was always

“...I radioed in artillery giving them the coordinates. The sound of a thousand crashing waves and a hundred thunder claps kept coming closer. Several of our boats moved toward us as fast as they could, shooting everything they had at everything out there. They were pissed and throwing all the lead they could. Chief Bannister was our division's first boat member to be killed...”

shipshape, even in our relaxed Vietnam patrol-boat culture. We all wore green shorts and green T-shirts in hot weather and Vietnamese rubber sandals made from old tires. He did not. He never started a fight, but I'm pretty sure if he

was in one, he would have been the last man standing. I don't think anyone questioned him, not even the officers. “Was he a hero?” “Was he doing his duty?” “Yes and yes!” Nuff said!

As Bannister's radioman, I went to all pre-operation briefings with him. These included the other boat captains, their radiomen, all officers...the guys with the silver or gold bars on their shoulders and their minions. These were the old days, mid-60s, big dark-green chalkboard on a roll-around stand, squeaky white chalk, dimmed lights behind closed steel doors, something out of a WWII movie. Almost everyone sat as if hypnotized while the briefing officer droned on and on, pointing occasionally to a large map with a long-tapered stick, a lit cigarette bobbing up and down at the corner of his mouth, ash occasionally dropping on the floor. Men yawned, brave ones whispered in the back. Handouts were passed around. “Know your enemy.” I still have one of these, a memory. We radiomen were given new code books; codes were changed for every



Phillip Dowsett at Vietnam Memorial Visiting his Boat Captain

“No greater love has any man than to lay down his life for his friend.”

operation. Our minds detached from the OIC (Officer in Charge) as we poured over the new codes, if only to have something interesting to do, a diversion. We may have seemed a bit like rude jerks, but no one can survive war, constant, bloody, all-out, mind-bending, gut-wrenching war without learning to disconnect, often, and at the most unusual times. The briefings were basically always the same: enemy location, enemy strength, assets, level/quality of training, i.e., was these elite troops or Cub Scouts? Rear support...i.e., air, artillery, or other, proximity of supplies...do they have the type and level of support to sustain a prolonged assault, a lengthened time in the field? And finally, find them and kill them. ★

About Chief Bannister

Not too infrequently, Chief Bannister livened things up. There were two things he could not abide: 1. Endangering his men, and 2. Military Intelligence...an oxymoron...code word for STUPIDITY! When he saw the ridiculousness of a plan being presented...and he would never miss this, he jumped up out of his hard, gray metal folding chair, sending it screeching backwards, and yelled, “What the hell are you thinking!” waking everyone up, even the droning officer. His scolding's were well seasoned with expletives, telling everyone present in no uncertain terms how stupid this plan was, that it was doomed to failure! This always brought some life to the party. No one ever disagreed with him, out loud. On the one hand, I thought, “What does he have to lose? He's put in his 20 years.” On the other hand and maybe I knew this from watching too many old Westerns, this was who he was—A cowboy sailor, a rawhide-tough trail-hardened boss taking care of his men, even if it put him in danger.

Duty: too many a forgotten word—an unknown code—a foreign language. Duty is not an action or a word but a lifestyle. This was Chief Howard W. Bannister, a man of few words. “Was he greater than other men or women?” “No, he was not greater than any man or woman doing their duty, as a fireman, policeman, lifeguard, EMT, paramedic, teacher, minister, mother, or father. He was as great as them.”

Every time we were heading into combat, he sang this song, and these are the last words I ever heard from him, “In the summertime when all the trees and leaves are green and the redbird sings...”

Somewhere in the South, there is a redbird sitting in a magnolia tree at the Bannister Family Cemetery, above a hero's grave, singing this song to my captain, my friend.

The below men also lost their lives in the same operation.



On the left Eakins Marion C Co 4th/47th; HOR Edelstein, IL; Born 01/29/47, KIA 07/11/67; Grave site Fairview Methodist Church, Millersville MO



On the right George E. Smith C Co 4th/47th HOR Pine Valley, NY; Born 06/02/47, KIA 07/11/67; Grave site Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Elmira, NY



On the right Harold W. King C Co 4th/47th; HOR Floyd, VA; Born 01/15/47, KIA 07/11/67; Grave site Copper Hill Church of Brethren, Copper Hill, VA



Phillip Ferro C Co 4th/47th; HOR Northridge, CA; Born 10/30/46, KIA 07/11/67; Grave site Oakwood Memorial Park, Chatsworth, CA



Elmer Kenney C Co 4th/47th; HOR Canoga Park, CA; Born 10/23/44, KIA 07/11/67; Grave site Los Angeles National Cemetery, CA

Marion "Butch" Eakins and the other men of 9th Infantry Division, 4/47th Battalion, C Company, 2nd Platoon

Mobile Riverine Force Area of Operation: Mekong Delta

This is also for Phil Ferro, a fellow platoon member and a fellow graduate of my Cleveland High School class in Northridge, California, summer of 1964.

It's been more than 50 years since that awful day when we lost these young men, yet I can remember it almost like it was yesterday. Throughout all of these years I have never forgotten the friends that were lost and much of the circumstances that wiped out so many lives.

This is my memory of July 11, 1967:

The day started out like so many other days—another "search and destroy" patrol. We were dropped off by the Navy's landing craft very early that morning and for several hours, it seemed like we were on another long, boring, hot and sweaty, hike from one dry rice paddy to the next. Each rice paddy was bordered by a tree line. Lieutenant Jack Benedick ordered each squad to take turns going recon over the rice paddy to the next tree line. The idea being that if we encountered VC in the trees then the whole platoon would avoid ambush. My squad had just completed a recon and then it was SSGT Smith's squad that ventured into the next paddy towards another tree line. To that point, it seemed like another tedious patrol.

When Sergeant Smith, Harold King, Phil Ferro, Butch Eakins, and the others reached halfway into the clearing, Lieutenant Benedick ordered the rest of us to advance from the trees into the paddy. SSGT Smith's squad was almost across the paddy and the rest of us were well out there when all hell broke loose. The whole platoon was immediately

pinned down. The Viet Cong had been laying in ambush for us and they waited to open fire until the recon squad got really close. At first, we didn't know what happened to our recon guys; we were all trying to lay low and crawl out to them.

Everyone was firing like crazy and bullets were flying all over the place. You could barely lift your head without a bullet zinging by. I was carrying a radio that day and I stayed in contact with Lieutenant Benedick and the other radio men. There were no messages coming from the recon squad. Lieutenant Benedick really wanted us to reach the guys out there, but it was impossible. He called in "willy peter" artillery for a smoke screen so that we could reach them, but it was too windy. I can remember how afraid I was when the shells started coming in and I just knew we were all going to be blown to smithereens. Luckily, the shelling was on target.

We laid out there and tried to reach the guys all the rest of that day, but when darkness came, Lieutenant Benedick called for us to pull back to the last tree line. None of us slept that night, but we could see some night time map lights moving about out there in the paddy. We were tempted to fire but we couldn't because our guys were out there.

The next morning at first light, two of the recon guys came walking up to us. Frank Swann, our machine gunner, had been hit in the chest and he was being helped by Henry Hubbard, who miraculously escaped the ordeal without a scratch. They told us that they were lying all night behind a rice paddy dike fairly close to Phil, Butch, Harold, and Sergeant Smith. They were holding grenades with the pins pulled in case the Viet Cong found them.

The map lights that we had seen during the night were used by the enemy to collect the weapons and ammo from our fallen comrades. Lieutenant Benedick called for a chopper to take Frank out and then we went across the paddy to find our guys lying there.

I'm certain Phil never knew what hit him and it was obvious that the others had returned fire for as long as they could; empty shells were lying all around them. When the chopper came in for our dead, myself and a few others were asked to help put them on the chopper. That's when I broke down and I couldn't help; it was just too painful to see my friends like that.

As for the Viet Cong, they had cleared out during the night, except for one that apparently didn't have time.

After the mission ended, I learned that another buddy, Elmer Kenney, was also killed during that same action. I don't recall the circumstances, but I do recall being shaken up upon hearing about Kenney. He was a really decent guy from Canoga Park and I remember that he was married. I can't even imagine the pain that was felt by all of the family members to these men.

All of us in the 2nd Platoon were upset and beginning to believe none of us would get out of Nam alive. We had endured a large battle and many casualties just several weeks earlier.

I only hope that this letter serves to honor these men—they should not have died over there. I, and the other soldiers that served with them, will forever remember them in our hearts.

Bill Reynolds billry@ca.rr.com

Men also lost that day: Folks Edward E. A Co 4th/47th and Lossing Clarence E. B Co 4th/47th ★

"Remembrance"

If you are able, save for them a place inside of you and save one backward glance when you are leaving for the places they can no longer go.

Be not ashamed to say you loved them, though you may or may not have always. Take what they have taught you with their dying and keep it with your own.

And in that time when men decide and feel safe to call the war insane, take one moment to embrace those gentle heroes you left behind."

Major Michael Davis O'Donnell
1 January 1970 Dak To, Vietnam
Listed as KIA February 7, 1978

Navy Report

While supporting Operation Coronado Concordia (Phase II) in Can Giouc District of Long An province on 11 July, elements of the squadron came into heavy contact with Viet Cong insurgents. As ATC-112-4 was landing elements of "A" Company 4th/47th a claymore mine on the bank was triggered into the boat, wounding seven Navy men and four Army personnel. Later in the morning, Monitor 112-1 and M-111-2 were hit by recoilless rifle fire with no personnel casualties and only light boat damage. At 111620H ATC-112-7 received a B-40 anti-tank rocket grenade round on the starboard side of the bow ramp. Shortly after 1758, Monitor 112-1 received a rocket hit directly into the coxswain flat, killing the Boat Captain (BMC Howard Bannister), and wounding six other crewmen. The boat returned to the MRB for repairs and proceeded back to the operational area the following day. ATCs 112-4, 112-12, and 112-13 were also subjected to small arms fire during this period, with no casualties. LT Norman E. Wells, ComRivDiv 112, received the Silver Star for this action and BMC Howard Bannister received a similar award posthumously.

Heavily Armed Cong Pounded By Air Strikes

Ninth Infantry Division The Old Reliable March 27, 1968, Page 1

DONG TAM—Units of the 9th Division's Mobile Riverine Force killed 26 Viet Cong in a fierce fight with a well-armed enemy force Mar. 17. The fighting near Cai Lay, 13 miles northwest of here, began when a scout helicopter from the 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry, a 25th Division unit under the operational control of the 9th Division, spotted a cross-shaped Viet Cong bunker complex in a ring of nipa palm.

While a gunship made rocket firing runs over the complex, the Aero Rifle Platoon of the 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry was inserted north of the bunkered cross.

Converging on the enemy fortifications, the Aero Rifle Platoon killed three guerrillas after flushing them from the lush Delta undergrowth.

Meanwhile, the helicopter gunship was receiving sustained AK-47 and AK-50 machinegun fire from the complex.

Company E 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry was inserted to reinforce the Aero-Rifle Platoon for an assault on the fortified positions.

As the 9th Division troops advanced on the enemy base camp, the Viet Cong opened up with .50 cal machinegun fire.

Two Americans were killed and five were wounded by the heavy weapons fire, but not before 23 Viet Cong had fallen under the guns of the 9th Division troops. The remainder of the skirmish line took cover in the large crevasse as a lightly armed command and control helicopter dove to machinegun positions. While the command and control chopper kept the guerrillas pinned down, the two US units organized and hit the complex with every weapon in their arsenal.

An even more intense battle broke out when six helicopter gunships arrived at the complex to support the infantry. The six gunships soon encountered more than a dozen .50 cal machineguns. Air Force fighter bombers dove on the insurgent force as darkness fell on the Delta battlefield. Throughout the night, the heavily armed jets pounded the enemy with nine separate air strikes. ★



I believe this photo was taken when we made it to the LZ Zone.



This is David Butler and me (sitting) in the 93rd Evac Hospital in Long Bien.

You Are Not Alone You are Loved There's Hope By Phillip Dowsett

There was an embedded reported July 11, 1967, the first time I was blown up. Monitor 112-1, my gun boat took a direct hit from a B 40 anti-tank rocket while we were trying to take out a VC Bunker and protect 9th Infantry troops.

Chief Howard W. Bannister took a direct hit from the rocket. I was standing behind him and was blown backwards into the 20-mm tripod and knocked out. I had shrapnel in my right eye, face, lip, shoulder, many holes in my right arm, right wrist cut in half, shrapnel in my hand and fingers, some across my back and upper left leg.

My best friend from Vietnam, Larry Lyons and I were blown up 50 years ago on (Feb. 19, 1968) at Tan Son Nhut Airport in Saigon, Vietnam, while waiting to check in to board our plane back to the USA!!! The Viet Cong dropped a 122-mm rocket through the roof right above my head.

The man in front of me was killed...along with about 8 others and about 40 were wounded.

The man in line behind me was a LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) Medic...a doubly dangerous job. My right thigh and hip were cut almost in half.

He cut off my right pant leg; put a tourniquet above my big thigh wound/hole saving my life!!

I grabbed a 2 x 4 that was part of the debris blown out of the ceiling by the rocket and used it for a crutch. Larry was hollering my name. He needed my big K Bar, Military Issue, knife to cut up his clothes to make bandages. He was holding a retired Navy officer/engineer's head in his lap. The man was bleeding to death.

I ended up having surgery at a field hospital there in Saigon...they saved my leg. A few days

later I was flown to Japan on a hospital plane and had more surgery. About a month later I came home on a hospital plane. I was discharged from Great Lakes, IL, USN hospital April 11, 1968.

I lost contact with Larry for 22 years. Then found him with the help of a Texas phone operator supervisor in the spring 1990!

We made the first MRFA reunion in Hickory, NC, in 1992 and it was great seeing fellow Army and Navy people who had served in the Mobile Riverine Force and the 9th Infantry Division.

The subtitle of my book is You Are Not Alone. You Are Loved. There Is Hope. My goal/hope with my book...sharing my story, is to help others who have been in dark places or are in a dark place now.

If you've read my book then you know all about the dark

“...My best friend from Vietnam, Larry Lyons and I were blown up 50 years ago at Tan Son Nhut Airport in Saigon, Vietnam, while waiting to check in to board our plane back to the USA...”

places I've been in. And more importantly about all the help I received from many places. I battled with suicidal depression and nightmares about Vietnam...things I did there, for 25 years. I was a practicing alcoholic for 19 years. As I'm sure you know, right now, 22 Vietnam Veterans a day are committing suicide...and many active duty military...and even civilians also. In my book I use my life story, the help

I received, my healing and recovery, and my counseling education and practice experience to help those who read my book. Many who have read my book have told me with tears in their eyes, “Your book helped me very much. It told my story. I now have hope.”

As my life got better, sober, I finished college and university and got a master's degree in counseling. I have been a family counselor for many years. When I survived terminal kidney cancer...a long 3-year journey...I closed my two offices and have worked for free ever since. I had an office in our church back in Oregon. I haven't charged anyone since 1990 when I was diagnosed with terminal kidney cancer.

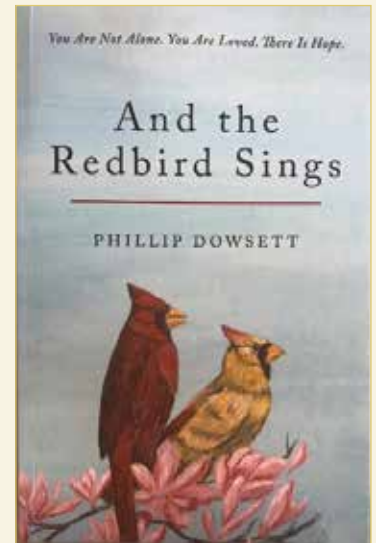
I lost my right kidney to Agent Orange and 8 1/4 inch renal cell carcinoma tumor. I was sick for 3 years. My doctor gave me no odds to live. At my final 3-year checkup he said, “The kind of cancer you've had always comes back.” In Oct. 2007 a small tumor was found in my only, left kidney. I was told it was the return of my cancer. I almost died in hospital from a full body infection...my whole body shut down. I was only sick for 1 year that time.

Albert, I just want to save lives, to help veterans, military, their families, and even civilians to have hope.

Thank you for working with me. You Are a Good man Albert! Thank you for you!

Phillip Dowsett MS Monitor 112-1

The book is available on Amazon Books. Just go to Amazon, type my name Phillip Dowsett in the search box or my book title *And The Redbird Sings*. ★



And The Red Birds Sings Title is taken from a song by Roger Miller (You Don't Want My Love).

You Don't Want My Love
By Roger Miller

In the summertime

When all the trees and leaves are green
And the redbird sings, I'll be blue
'Cause you don't want my love
“Some other time”
That's whatcha say when I want you
Then you laugh at me and make me cry
'Cause you don't want my love
You don't seem to care a thing about me
You'd rather live without me
Than to have my arms around you
When the nights are cold and you're so all alone
In the summertime
When all the trees and leaves are green
And the redbird sings, I'll be blue
'Cause you don't want my love
Once upon a time
You used to smile and wave to me
And walk with me but now you don't
You don't want my love
Some other guy
Is takin' up all your time
Now ya don't have any time for me
You don't want my love
You don't seem to care a thing about me
You'd rather live without me
Than to have my arms around you
When the nights are cold and you're so all alone
In the summertime
When all the trees and leaves are green
And the redbird sings, I'll be blue
'Cause you don't want my love
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knew my sin or my sorrow
Nobody knows

Bunker Duty

By Ed Sanicki D Co 2nd/60th Inf 9th Inf Div (1969-70)

Our battalion's base camp perimeter was defined by a 6x10 foot high berm of dirt accented every 100 yards or so by bunkers. Since you would hit ground water if you dug into the ground of the delta we constructed our bunkers by building up layers of sandbags, topped with 12x12s, corrugated metal sheeting and more sandbags. Each had about a 8x48 inch gun slit facing out and was fronted by a makeshift metal fencing contraption that looked something like a little league baseball backstop. The fencing was there to catch rocket fire. The theory being shells aimed at the bunker would spend their explosive energy when they hit the fence rather than impacting on the side of the bunker. The occupants would therefore be spared the problem of dealing with the concussion in order to give their full and undivided attention to the shrapnel this arrangement generated.

I've got two "bunker" stories.

Each night our battalion would slip four squads out under cover of darkness to operate as "Listening Posts." Just after sunset, each would move out of the base camp toward a different point of the compass, find cover several hundred meters out, and post guard overnight. Their job was simply to sit quietly and listen in order to warn the base camp by radio of any enemy movement they might sense.

At our battalion's northern border, the small hamlet of Tan Tru pressed within a few hundred meters of our perimeter. This close proximity meant that the LPs north of camp would, of necessity, often be set up in the same, somewhat predictable positions. We were told that several months before I arrived in-country, four GIs had been caught unawares while pulling this duty and had their throats slit by the VC.

Because of this incident, by the time I had to spend my first night guarding the north end of camp, the battalion had, somewhat curiously, built a bunker to serve as a permanent Listening Post. It was an unusual bunker in that it was a story-and-a-half high. On the flat roof above the conventional bunker an additional, waist-high wall of sandbags surrounded the structure. It was also now manned by a double complement of troops. A squad of ARVN soldiers was detailed to the bottom floor, with a squad of GIs manning the roof.

I was scheduled for the 3:00 a.m. watch, and was asleep on the roof when I felt something moving in my fatigue pants pocket. Fatigues have those big, expandable pockets on each thigh, and I had put a Snickers bar in one of mine for a late night snack. I had forgotten to button it closed. It seems a rat had slipped up the bunker from the muck of the rice paddy below, sensed the candy bar and had been bold enough to go after it.

When the surprised realization of what was happening hit me, I jumped to my feet (remembering I was in an exposed position, where any noise

could announce my exact location), and began to yell...silently...fists clenched, mouth agape and eyes wide with revulsion.

By standing I had inadvertently trapped the rat in my pocket. It began thrashing about and now I had to worry if it would try to chew its way out, and if it did, would it choose the right direction. All I could think to do was to reach down, grab the pocket with both hands and squeeze the damn thing to death.

I then rolled the corpse up and out of the pocket and over the side of the bunker, where it made a maddeningly loud splash in the muddy water of the paddy.

The second bunker story is about an incident that happened about mid-way through my tour in Vietnam.

For several months rumors had been circulating that one of the perimeter bunkers was inhabited by a boa constrictor. Quite frankly, no one paid this petty rumor much mind, because among others we had big-league tales going around of Viet Cong cavalry operating by night, tigers left in bungee pits to snare the unwary, and North Vietnamese troops on elephants. Besides, boas were South American, not Southeast Asian, right?

I was standing one of the late watches, peering out through the gun slit of the bunker. Sitting on the end of a cot with my face 6 inches from the opening, I was concentrating on the distant darkness to such an extent that I didn't notice the rustling just below my nose until the last minute. It was a snake all right, but no boa constrictor, only a little green skinny thing about the size of the garter snakes we had back stateside. No big deal.

At this point in my military career, I was one of my platoon's two radio/telephone operators (I was more than willing to carry the radio's extra weight if, by doing so, I could get any information about what the chaos that regularly erupted about me was all about.). As an RTO, I was often required to hack the radio's antenna out of the entangling jungle. Many radio operators carried machetes to do this job, but I preferred a great big, razor sharp, kitchen cleaver (unknowingly donated by battalion mess) that I kept strapped to the side of my radio until needed.

I had my radio with me on bunker duty that night, so I grabbed my cleaver and slammed it down on the gun slit rail, slicing the snake in two. Both halves fell to the bunker floor, and the scurrying sounds that followed told me the rats had found another meal.

Back in the company area the next day, I was talking up my big adventure with a little snake, when the Top Kick showed me an illustration from some Army jungle manual of the exact type of little green snake with which I had recently been so familiar. The caption read, "Green Pit Viper"...One of the most poisonous snakes on earth.

From that day forward, in mutual recognition of my reptilian experience and New Jersey roots, I was nicknamed, "Da Snake." ★

Battle of Long Tan

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Battle of Long Tan (18 August 1966) took place in a rubber plantation near Long Tan, in Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The action was fought between Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units and elements of the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF) shortly after its lodgement in Phuoc Tuy. 1 ATF began arriving between April and June 1966, constructing a base at Nui Dat that was located astride a major communist transit and resupply route and was close to a Viet Cong base area. After 2 months, it had moved beyond the initial requirements of establishing itself and securing its immediate approaches, beginning operations to open the province. Meanwhile, in response to the threat posed by 1 ATF a force of between 1,500 and 2,500 men from the Viet Cong 275th Regiment, possibly reinforced by at least one North Vietnamese battalion, and D445 Provincial Mobile Battalion was ordered to move against Nui Dat.

For several weeks Australian signals intelligence (SIGINT) had tracked a radio transmitter from the headquarters of the 275th Regiment moving westwards to a position just north of Long Tan; however, extensive patrolling failed to find the unit. By 16 August the communist force was positioned east of the Long Tan rubber

plantation, just outside the range of the artillery at Nui Dat. On the night of 16/17 August, Viet Cong mortars, recoilless rifles (RCLs) and artillery heavily bombarded Nui Dat from a position 2 km (1.2 mi) to the east, damaging the base and wounding 24 men, one of whom later died. The Viet Cong positions were then engaged by counter-battery fire and the mortaring ceased. The following morning, B Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR) departed Nui Dat to locate the firing points and the direction of the Viet Cong withdrawal. A number of weapon pits were subsequently found, as were the positions of the mortars and RCLs.

D Company took over the pursuit around mid-day on 18 August. After clashing with a Viet Cong squad in the afternoon and forcing them to withdraw, the Australians were engaged by small-arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire from a flank. Numbering only 108 men, D Company was facing a much larger force. Pinned down, they called for artillery as a monsoon rain began, reducing visibility. Heavy fighting ensued as the advancing battalions of the Viet Cong 275th Regiment and D445 Battalion attempted to encircle and destroy the Australians. After several hours D Company was nearly out of ammunition, when two UH-1B Iroquois from No. 9 Squadron RAAF arrived overhead to resupply them. Heavily outnumbered but supported by strong artillery fire,

D Company held off a regimental assault before a relief force of cavalry and infantry from Nui Dat fought their way through as darkness fell and forced the Viet Cong to withdraw just as they appeared to be preparing for a final assault. Withdrawing to establish a landing zone to evacuate their casualties, the Australians formed a defensive position overnight.

Returning in strength the next day, the Australians swept the area and located a large number of Viet Cong dead. Although the Australians initially believed they had suffered a major defeat, the scale of the Viet Cong's losses revealed that they had actually won a significant victory. Over the next 2 days, they continued to clear the battlefield, uncovering more dead as they did so. Yet with 1 ATF lacking the resources to pursue the withdrawing force, the operation ended on 21 August. Eighteen Australians were killed and 24 wounded, while the Viet Cong lost at least 245 dead. A decisive Australian victory, Long Tan proved a major local setback for the Viet Cong, indefinitely forestalling an imminent movement against Nui Dat. Although there were other large-scale encounters in later years, 1 ATF was not fundamentally challenged again. The battle established the task force's dominance over the province and allowed it to pursue operations to restore government authority. ★

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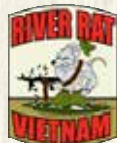
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After Action Report May 26, 1968

Thirty Viet Cong were killed and three were captured by MRF units Sunday in heavy fighting, 7 miles southeast of Ben Tre. The battle broke out at 0715 when assault craft of River Division 111 were ambushed on the Ong Huong River. Ground elements that were beached in the area achieved almost immediate contact and the fighting continued to sundown.

Two Navy men were killed and 13 were wounded in a series of rocket and recoilless rifle attacks on the boats. Most of the casualties occurred in the first assault on the 111 craft as they moved into land elements of the 3rd/47th Infantry.

The lead units in the boat column bore the brunt of the attack. The Boat Captain and Radioman of ASPB 111-1 were killed instantly and two other crew members were wounded when their boat took two rocket hits and two recoilless rifle hits. Two of the rounds struck the boats 20-mm cannon, another hit the mast, and the fourth into the coxswain's flat.

Four Crew Members on ASPB 111-5 were also injured in the first attack as a rocket blew open their 20-mm mount, Monitor 111-2 the first boat behind the lead ASPBs took heavy fire and reported two men with minor wounds. ASPB 111-3 and ATC (Tango) 111-5 also took rocket hits there was no casualties.

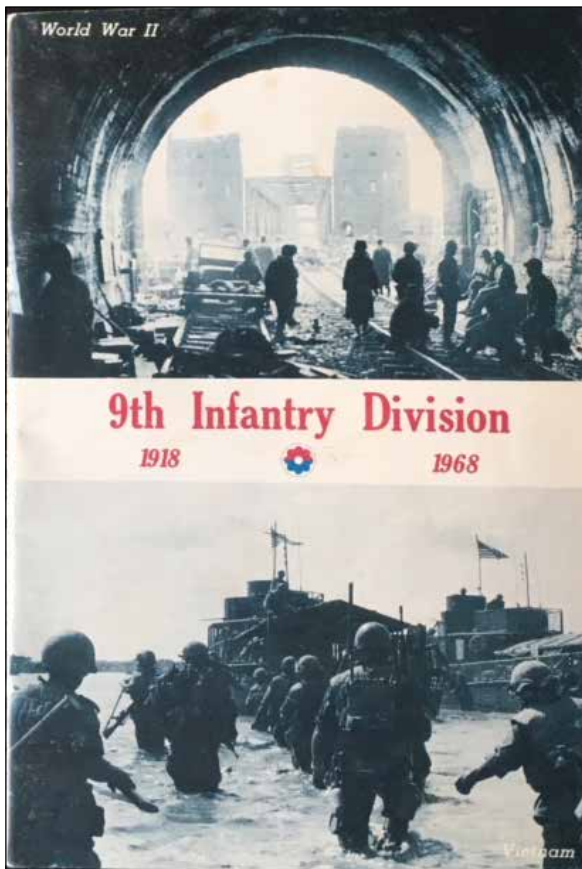
Boats of River Division 91 were also hit several times during the day, at 0750 they were ambushed with automatic weapons just west of where the 111 boats were attacked. A crew member of ASPB 91-7 was slightly wounded in the attack. There was no significant damage to the boats.

The 91 boats were target for a second time; more substantial attack later in the morning at virtually the same position where the 111 boats were hit. Four men including three crewmen of ATC 91-5 were wounded by automatic weapons, rocket and recoilless rifle fire.

The boats were attacked on several other occasions during the afternoon, but no other casualties were reported. Other units hit were ASPB 111-2, which took four recoilless rifle rounds, Zippo 111-7 and ATC-111-1.

Ground forces stayed in continuous contact, with the VC elements, calling in heavy air and artillery strikes on the enemy bunkers. As of 1900, three Army personnel were reported killed and 26 were wounded, all Army casualties except for two WIAs were from the 3rd/47th 2nd Bde. Most of the boats moved out of the AO early in the evening as the Army settled into night positions.

The MRF relocated to Ben Tre Sunday morning, departing for Dong Tam at 0800 and arriving at their new anchorage about 1115. ★



From Emily Strange with Love

From the Membership

River Currents continues to be a very well organized publication that ensures the historical preservation of the operations of the Mobile Riverine Force. Your articles and first person stories from individuals who had lived the actual experiences in the deadly swamps and along the great rivers of the Mekong Delta accurately record the unique combination of Navy and Army soldiers. Thanks for your excellent and dedicated work on the River Currents.

Bruce Branigan D Co. 3rd/60th Infantry
(05/68-12/68)

MRFA Memorial/Museum Schedule

The MRFA Memorial/Museum trailer will be at the 4th of July Celebration, Great Lakes Naval Station, Great Lakes, IL, July 2-4, 2018, and the Car Show at the American Legion, New Lisbon, WI, July 7, 2018.

Bruce Graff, MRFA Memorial/Museum driver



The Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry Division Vietnam Page. After you send a request to join the group, Bob Pries will approve your request to join the group.

Newly Arrived Rifleman Kills 3 VC In First Fight

in The Old Reliable, May 29, 1968, Page 3

Permission was granted by the 5th/60th association to use this article

FIRE BASE LAMBERT—After 2 weeks in Vietnam, Private First Class David T. Griffin was batting 1,000.

While on patrol recently with the 9th Division's 5th Mechanized Battalion, 60th Infantry, near this base 10 miles west of My Tho, he fired three bursts from his M-16 rifle and killed the first three Viet Cong he ever had seen.

"I was walking point through some heavy brush near a deserted village," said Griffin, 23, of Haytville, MD. "I was being extra careful because we knew there was a lot of VC activity in the area."

"As I moved through some dense foliage, I was startled by a VC who jumped in front of me. I fired a quick burst and he fell into the canal."

Before taking a dozen steps, Griffin flushed two more enemy soldiers from their hiding place.

"I fired a burst at each one as they crashed through the underbrush," Griffin said.

The patrol advanced cautiously in pursuit of the fleeing VC, but the search barely got started when Griffin spotted the two enemy bodies on the trail.

The dead guerrillas were identified as demolition experts who had been sabotaging Highway 4.

TET 1968 – 31 January 1968

By David Russell

RivDiv 11 was at the Crossroads 31 January 1968 when we received our orders to pick up our "playmates." Our boat, T-111-11, was assigned to embark elements of E 3/60 from the north-west side of the Crossroads. We started to on load around dusk so it was full dark when we formed up for transit to the Mekong and My Tho.

The boats all formed up in our normal single file to make the transit of the Kinh Giao Hoa canal. Orders came done to us that we were to proceed at our fastest speed and not slow down. We were also told to expect a night ambush along the way and we had free fire on both banks if ambushed.

About halfway through the transit, around midnight, all hell broke loose. We were hit in the middle of the column with rockets, recoilless, and heavy weapons fire. Watching tracers spall off the boat ahead of me, some RPGs miss my canopy over the well deck, I realized that the tracers were getting very close to my boat. I realized that the boat ahead of mine was backing up at full speed and I was still going as fast as I could forward. BAM! We hit the boat ahead of ours HARD, knocking all of the "playmates" to the deck causing quite a few injuries. The boat two boats ahead of mine took a rocket in the cox'n flat wounding the helmsman and one of the 50 gunners. Their boat then headed for the eastern bank until the other 50 gunner took the helm and got their boat back in formation. A couple of 9th Inf. Div. guys got in the 50 tubs and manned the guns for the rest of the firefight.

Later when we arrived at the MRB, we found out that throughout all of South Vietnam, a coordinated attack was taking place by the Viet Cong and it all began at midnight.

This has been with me every night for 50 years.

30 January 2018, I am again going into harm's way as I am having open heart surgery to replace the Aortic Valve and do a bypass of a major artery of the heart. Not really what I wanted to do on this anniversary date. ★

TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One



Madison

Member **John Edward Madison** passed away November 23, 2017. John served in B Co. 4th/47th Inf. (Vietnam). You may contact the family c/o Sylvia Madison, 1205 Lake Glad Rd, Wendell, NC 27591-9651, 919-333-5014, smsmi95@gmail.com.



Smith

Member **Glenn Ira Smith** passed away May 1, 2016. Glenn served in B Co. 4th/39th Inf (06/68-08/68). You may contact the family c/o Mrs. Nancy Smith, 109 E South Temple Apt 4D, Salt Lake City, UT 84111-1107, nksmith28@gmail.com.



Wilkinson

Member **Norman C. Wilkinson Jr.** passed away September 20, 2017. Norm served in B Co. 4th/47th Inf (03/67-03/68). You may contact the family c/o Patricia Wilkinson, PO Box 4144, 115 Cover Cir, Delaware City, DE 19706-4144, 302-834-9017.



Heintz

Member **Henry Heintz** passed away October 28, 2016. Henry served on the USS Nueces APB-40 (1968-69). You may contact the family c/o Christine Heintz, 6033 Lily Patch Ct, Newport, MI 48166-9794, 734-790-5154.



Lockhart

Member **Arthur "Art" Lockhart** passed away January 6, 2018. Art served in NSA Det Dong Tam RVN (01/68-01/69). You may contact the family c/o Earlene Lockhart, 3050 US Highway 311, Madison, NC 27025-8445, 336-427-0049 biguk-blue@triad.rr.com.



Oneyear

Member Master Chief (BMCM) **Thomas C. Oneyear** USN (Ret.) passed away April 7, 2018. Master Chief Oneyear served with Task Force 116 (Game-wardens). You may contact the family c/o Cheryl K. Oneyear, 113 Quaker Dr, Elizabeth City, NC 27909-9105, bmcmtoneyear@centurylink.net.



Stenerson

Member **David Stenerson** passed away February 23, 2016. David served in RivDiv153 (07/68-10/69). You may contact the family c/o Diane Stenerson 217 Antigone Dr, Hamilton, WI, 59840-3436, 406-369-0279, dianestenerson@outlook.com.



Kelleher

Member **Dennis Kelleher** passed away August 25, 2017. Dennis served in Task Force 117 (1968-69). Dennis was residing in Suffolk, VA, at the time of his passing.

Member **Kenneth W. Novack Sr.** passed away July 31, 2015. Ken served in C Co. 3rd/47th Inf. (12/67-12/68). You may contact the family c/o Carol Novack, 1870 Clear Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55119-4502, 641-771-4145.



Horton

Member **Gary Horton** passed away June 18, 2016. Gary served with T-91-11 (07/68-09/69). You may contact the family c/o his sister Gwen Bryant, 2528 Mimosa Cove, Germantown, TN 38138-5720, 901-753-6123, gbnny2@aol.com. His sister would like to correspond with some of his buddies, specifically James W. Stack.

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 Clauser for Thomas Gaudet, David Land, and Jose Campos our 151 Division brothers that were KIAs

MajGeneral Lucien Bolduc, Jr. USA (Ret) for Guy Tutwiler
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 KIAs
Bill Buffle in memory of Lyle Parin USS Floyd County LST-762 (Vietnam)
Craig "Doc" Champion in memory of KIAs 3rd Plt D Co. 3rd/47th (1968)
John and Doris Chrzanowski 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)
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)

Ron Easterday for Marco Serrano Jr. HHC 2nd/47th Inf and LTC William Cronin HQ 2nd/47th Inf (Mech) KIA 04/27/67

Dennis Erlandson in memory of Fran Convery C & D Cos. 3rd/47th (1968)
Ted Fetting for Eloy "Stevie" LeBlanc, Roy Phillips, and Fred Jansonius B Co. 2nd/60th KIA 02/02/68
Sgt Robert Flaige for SP4 Robert "Bob" Jenks E Co. 3rd/60th KIA 03/03/68
From your Brothers B Co. 2nd 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division in memory of Monte Marten B Co. 2nd/39th (04/68-04/69)
From your Brothers B Co. 2nd 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division in memory of John Nielsen B Co. 2nd/39th (04/68-04/70)

Nan Fulton for LtGen Bill Fulton Cdr 2nd Bde Asst Div Cdr 9th Inf Div (1966-68)
Tony Garvey for Wes Sade, Billy Olsen, and Staff Sgt. James Williams C Co. 4th/47th 9th Inf
John W. Gerbing for Noel T. West A Co. 4th/47th KIA 06/19/67
Regina Gooden for Sgt Lloyd Earl Valentine B Co. 3rd/47th KIA 09/05/68
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
Sally Jackson for Paul Nace USS Collette 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, Paredez, 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 Oakander for Frank Dettmers, our boat captain on CCB-131-1 (May 69-May 70). We do this in his honor and remembrance.

Richard MacCullagh for John (Doc) Phillips, HMC, USN (Ret) RivRon 15
Richard MacCullagh for Chaplain Rene L. Petit, LT, CHC, RC, RivRon 13 and 15
Stella Gayle Malone for Timothy Neary USS Jamestown AGTR-3 (01/69-12/69)
Kaye Marten, Travis Marten, and Tristen Marten in memory of Monte Marten (husband, father, and grandfather) B Co. 2nd/39th 9th Inf Div (1968-69)
H. Bruce McIver for HPM1 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
Major 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 Garrett Reid KIAs 08/20/67
A. R. "Monti" Montillo for William "Bulldog" McLaughlin B Co 3rd/60th KIA 10/03/68 and Barry "Butch" Copp B Co 3rd/60th KIA 10/28/68

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

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
Janet Petersen for Col Pete Petersen USA (Ret.) Cdr 3rd/60th Inf (11/68-08/69) DELETE
Claire Siebert for GMG3 Richard Siebert IUWG-1 Unit 3, Qui Nhon (03/67-01/69)
John Smith for Paul D. Jose B Co. 3/60th KIA Westy 11/01/68

Aaron R. Spurway for Chief Ray
Chet "Gunner" Stanley for all the USN and USA KIAs 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
Okey Toothman in memory of Major General Lucien "Blackie" Bolduc
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

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 Airborne KIA 08/23/69



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Tip of the hat to Albert
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Gary Weisz A-91-4 (10/67-07/68)
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BMCM Donald Witta USN (Ret.) T-111-13 (03/67-02/68)
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Rhett Wise A Co. 3rd/47th Inf (03/67-04/68)
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William H. Ziebarth 9th Signal 3rd/34th Arty (05/66-12/67)
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