



River

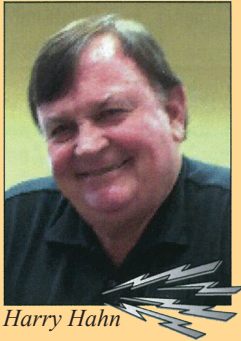
Currents



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 3
FALL 2019

From the Radio Shack



Harry Hahn

I am just recovering from the reunion as I write this. It's a big job but we like to see everyone getting together with their buddies and having a good time! Although we had some hotel issues, there were many comments that this was the best reunion ever. The live entertainment and site-seeing were right at the top of the list.

Terry Sater will be using this issue to recap the reunion for you. We had a large attendance. 721 to be exact. This was a surprise to Frank Jones and myself. There were many last minute, on-site sign ups.

I can't say enough about the team that makes this reunion happen. We have the best worker bees that you could ever put together. We had two trailers to unload and reload, the long hours of Gear Locker Sales, registration, ticket sales..... on and on. It's a lot of work.

We are already looking towards where and when we will have our next reunion in 2021. We have already made the decision to move it away from Labor Day weekend. That was a past tradition based on people working and getting a three-day holiday. As we are all retirement age now (and then some), we are looking at our options to move it out a week later, and maybe choose weekdays rather than weekends. Some of you have mentioned different cities, but we must keep in mind both airport capacity and driving distances. Also mentioned to me was an off year, "Gathering of the Troops" in San Diego. I will look to try to organize that for next September. We have a smaller group usually attend these in the past, but they have been fun.

Have a great fall season and we hope you enjoy this "Reunion" issue.

Harry Hahn, President,
SparksRivRon13@aol.com

2019 MRFA Nashville Reunion – A Family Affair



The Nashville reunion was marked by a noticeable increase in family members attending. We hope that trend continues! Tim Shires attended his first MRFA Reunion with his father, Clarence. We were fortunate to meet them at the Memorial and Museum trailer. Tim was good enough to tell us about it.

From Tim Shires;

"Even though this was my first MRFA reunion, my previous attempt to attend a reunion was four years ago, when the reunion was held in Indianapolis, IN. Unfortunately, due to a family situation we had to cancel our trip at the last moment. Prior to attending this reunion, I attended a separate reunion with my dad in Atlanta, GA, in May 2018 for his company's unit. This reunion was actually my first. After attending, I became intrigued and determined to attend as many reunions in the future, as possible. So, when the opportunity arose to attend the MRFA reunion in Nashville, I couldn't say no.

My dad, Clarence Shires, Jr., was part of the ARMY's 9th Infantry 4th/47th, Charlie Company 1st Regiment, and served in Vietnam from January '67 to January '68. While growing up, my dad would not talk about Vietnam until the late 90's and early 2000's, after seeking help for what he would eventually be diagnosed for - PTSD. Once he began

opening up about his experiences, he started telling numerous stories from his time in basic training in Ft. Riley, Kansas and the year he spent in Vietnam. Listening to his stories and hearing the names of those he served and fought with, greatly sparked my interest in wanting to learn more about the war and to meet his "Brothers in War" and fellow comrades.

My dad's 9th Infantry unit was featured in the two-hour National Geographic documentary "Brothers in War" based the book "Boys of '67," written by a fellow soldier from his unit. After reading the book and watching the movie I gained more knowledge about the joint ARMY/NAVY task force. While attending his ARMY reunion in Atlanta, I quickly could see why the term "Brothers in War" was used. It's their bond. The relationship these heroes share is one a non-service member, like me, can never understand, or relate too. But, being in the presence of the shared stories, the laughter, the tears, the highs, the lows...the emotions...is something any spouse, offspring, and family member attending on of these reunions can relate too. A reunion is a powerful event for all. So, after the Atlanta reunion and meeting these heroes I wanted nothing more than to attend the MRFA reunion. I wanted to meet these heroes as well.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



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.

Your membership expiration date is printed on your River Currents just above your name and address.

Mobile Riverine Force Association Membership Application Form

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To become a member, mail your check or money order (payable To MRFA) to Frank Jones, MRFA Membership Chairman, 9 San Marino Pkwy, Fenton, MO 63026-7513

Message from Frank Jones

MRFA Treasurer/Membership Chairman/Reunion Coordinator

Another great reunion! Nashville was a great city for our reunion. Our attendance of over 700 was due to seeing our brothers and Nashville. With the 700 plus attendees the hotel was overwhelmed. We thought the attendance would be 500 plus. The hotel employees gave it their best shot but there were not enough of them. I believe most everyone had a good time in Nashville, but mostly reconnecting with all of our brothers and their families. Always glad to see kids and grandkids at the reunion. Finally, I want to thank all of the volunteers at registration, product sales, raffle, museum, security and main room coffee and snacks. Thanks again for a great reunion!

“

Our gatherings are more than a reunion of the men and their families who physically attend. It is a reunion with the memories of good friends who fell in battle, and friends who have fallen along our march into old age. It is a reunion with our own youth, remembering when we were strong, and faced death on a daily basis.

It gives our families a better understanding, and just a glimmer of our experiences in the Mekong Delta on “The River of Nine Dragons.”

Every reunion brings us peace through a better understanding of that experience, and satisfaction that we answered the call and did our duty, the best we could.

”

A Tale of Two Tango Models



Anyone who has been in the “Riv Ron” hospitality room at an MRFA reunion has seen some terrific artifacts from the Vietnam War, but unaware of how they came to be there. One example is the Tango boat model in these photos, with Gerald Burleigh. You may have assumed it was done in recent years, with a complete supply of intricate tools and extensive material supply. You would be wrong.

Gerald (Jerry) Burleigh served with Riv Ron 13, ‘69/’70, as an E-4 Engineman, on T-132-13, later renumbered T-27. He watched someone named Franklin on another Tango boat making a model of one of the boats out of cardboard from C-ration packages, LRRP boxes, and the wire wrapped around them. Gerald thought to himself, “I can do that!” He began building one boat that was pretty close to scale and was about three fourths of the way completed, when his boat tied up next to a Navy destroyer, near Dong Tam.

One night, sailors from the destroyer came down and wanted to see Gerald’s boat, after drinking at the EM Club in Dong Tam. Gerald didn’t work on his boat every day, so he didn’t notice until about three days later, that it was missing. He began his tedious and intricate project from the beginning, working on it between patrols and fire-fights. It took him about three months.

The materials he used included toothpicks, masking tape, wire, cardboard, glue, and paint that was actually used to paint the river assault craft. It was an exacting, tedious, and time consuming

process, making each facet of the boat, and putting it together to fit right. He cut countless toothpicks with his knife, to replicate the bar armor. Masking tape helped to form a lot of the curves, and helped hold the boat together.

After finishing the project, Gerald wondered if he would be able to get it home in one piece. He went to the USS Benewah chow hall, and asked a cook if he had a large cardboard box. The cook gave Gerald an egg case the boat would fit in. Gerald carefully placed his Tango model in the box, and stuffed his poncho liner, field jacket, boat flag, and other memorabilia around it, before mailing it home.

Gerald’s beautiful wife, Shelia, was anticipating a shipment of fine China, which Gerald had purchased for their home. People who were there when the Tango box was opened, said that Shelia’s face showed real disappointment. The Tango boat box stayed on a shelf for years after Gerald came home, until he joined the VVA and was part of a booth exhibition for “The Moving Wall.” He got the boat out of the box and put it into a Plexiglass case, further decorating it with other memorabilia. For many years, perhaps even today, many don’t know much about the Brown Water Navy and our boats. Gerald and two other vets started showing their souvenirs and memorabilia to schools, veteran organizations, “The Moving Wall,” and other veteran associated events. It has helped Gerald’s PTSD symptoms to be able to tell our stories and the history of what we did in Vietnam.



Years ago, Paul Kasper was frustrated that so many people were unaware of the Mobile Riverine Force and our river assault craft. Many people thought all sailors in Vietnam were on PBR's. Paul and Jack Carrico talked about making a large model. It fell to Paul to begin construction on it. He decided to use one sixth scale, which would enable him to use the "G.I. Joe" figures and other existing items, in conjunction with it, including the tire bumpers tied to the sides of Tango boats.

Paul works with wood as a hobby, so applying the math equations to building the model was the only real challenge for him. He carefully drew out plans for the model, and compared the plans to photos of Tango boats. Paul brought his plans to a reunion of the MRFA and set up in the museum room. He asked the guys there if he was missing anything. He would then take their information and continue refining his plans.

Paul made the deck first, then built the hull. The ramp on his model even goes up and down! The turrets move and even have plastic tops, just like the real Tango boats. Most of it was carved, or otherwise handmade, piece by piece



The outside bar armor was the most difficult challenge. Paul counted how many bars were needed in order to be an accurate representation, then had to make sure they were straight and of proper spacing. He would make the bracket to hold them only to find the holes didn't line up and have to take it back apart. The winch and chain was a relatively easy element to reproduce. The landing pad was also done from photos. Paul counted each beam and studied how the ladder and trapdoor hinged and operated.

When all the work was done he included a Helicopter and the G.I. Joe figures. The helicopter has the markings for the Greyhounds and the pilot named is a friend of his, living near him. Paul lives outside Ft Rucker, Alabama, and an Army

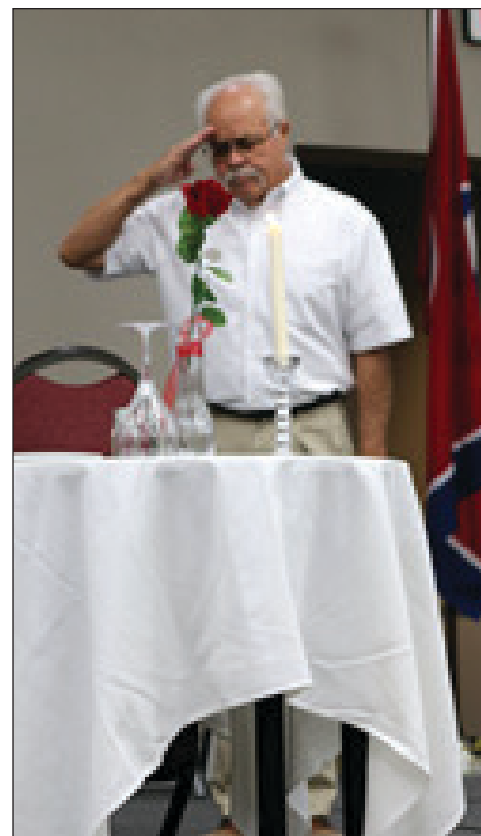


training center for helicopter pilots. Bob Cooper is his name. He retired as a WO-5, and had told Paul about flying people and materials for the 9th and MRF.

It took Paul about six months to build, and another three months for small details and painting the model. Paul was married at the time. His wife kept asking him what he was going to do with it when he was finished with the project. He already knew it was going to the MRFA, but he told his wife it was going to be a coffee table in their living room. She told friends she was going to take a hammer to it, or burn it before she let that happen.

We are certainly glad Paul gave the model to the MRFA!

A Company 3/60th, Fifty years after leaving Vietnam



3/47 9th Infantry



What Do We Want Our Children and Grandchildren to Learn in School About Vietnam?

By Terry Sater

A few weeks ago, our grandkids were staying with us. The oldest one, eleven, told me, *"Papa, last year in fifth grade, we learned about Vietnam."* I asked him what he learned. He told me, *"We learned that it was a very bloody war, and that you killed civilians."* Stunned, I gave him my answer to that, but I wanted to hear what my brothers in the MRFA had to say about it.

I discussed it at our reunion with Sgt. Ed *"The Sniper"* Eaton. If you haven't read it yet, his book, *"Mekong Mud Dogs,"* is riveting! An incident in his book that took place during a recent tour of Vietnam stood out. On the tour was Vietnamese General Vi, who was formerly our enemy. At one point, he approached Ed, and gave him this message;

"I have fought all enemies of Vietnam, throughout my life, and I am most proud of calling myself an American war veteran, than anything, as you Americans were the bravest and most honorable of them all. But the reason I'm here is because I have wanted for the longest time to thank the American soldiers, and this may be my only chance to do so. I want to thank them for going out of their way to save the women and children. I know that you did so at the cost of your own lives, and I just want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart."

I also asked the question on the MRFA Facebook page and sent an e-mail out to several people. Here are some of the answers I received.

Bill McCollum
T-111-2, '68-'69

"For me that answer is simple, notwithstanding the way the politicians ran the war. We answered the call to serve and the vets fought valiantly and bravely in a cause that had long term consequences in world events.

I feel that after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the world came extremely close to a Nuclear War. Both sides realized that both would lose if that happened.

So then to prevent that it became necessary for us to fight what people call satellite wars in order to show the other side that we would not give in that easy.

I know that it was really more complicated than

the above simple statement. But I think History bears some of it out.

The proudest I was as a Vietnam veteran was when the Berlin Wall came down and the world took a giant step back from a Nuclear War I knew

signed to T-92-1.

I think that "we," the first ones in country were not only River Rats but also "lab Rats" for those that followed, both in equipment, weapons and tactics. Because as you know from being there you learned from every fire fight you were in. Because no two fire-fights were the same. I know that the first firefight T-92-1 was in, being an Engineman, I had the port and Starboard 30 cal's and if I remember right, they had to replace the port's barrel as I burned it up. The one thing people who have never been in a firefight and combat will never understand the adrenalin rush that it brought. I have tried to explain to my wife and others why and what made me go back again as an advisor. And I guess it is hard to explain and for others to understand.

To me it is as though our *"Brown Water Navy"* war has been forgotten and hidden from people. And again I think we, The Mobile Riverine Force, did something that no other group of people did or will ever do again."

Keith Phillips
A-132-1, 9/68-9/69

"This is what I'd like my kids and grandkids to know about what "we" did during the Vietnam War. I think it could be difficult for them to comprehend because the Vietnam War is as ancient to them, and their generation, as the Civil War is to us and our generation.

I'd like for them to know that when we were called, we went. The Ninth Infantry Division soldiers and the River Rat sailors did not protest, we did not hide in another country, and we endured/survived a true hell on earth. We fought side by side, our brother's side, under some of the most difficult conditions any combat veteran has ever had to endure. Any particular mission or operation could last for a day, or days and then pass into weeks. We would rest when we could, and eat when we could. There were often times we could do neither. The tropical heat and tropical rain could be unrelenting. The flak jacket was both hot and heavy.

We were witness to sights, smells, and sounds whose memory will never, ever fade, or go away.

"THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO DESTROY PEOPLE IS TO DENY AND OBLITERATE THEIR OWN UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR HISTORY."

GEORGE ORWELL

that our effort and sacrifice that we endured there helped to come about.

So that is what I want my family to remember about the Vietnam War."

Warren Domenick
XO/CO, C Battery, 2/35th Arty, 155sp, '67-'68

"War without objectives; fought by young men of dedication; sent by national political leadership without resolve"....

Russell "Buck" Buchanan
T-92-1, '67-'68

"I don't have any kids or grandkids, but I have very strong feelings about what we did in the rivers in Vietnam. Yes there were many types of boats in the *"Brown Water Navy,"* but to me the Mobile Riverine Force is/was the Tango Boats, Monitor's and CCB's. I was a Plank Owner of River Assault Squadron 9. River Division 92, Tango T-92-1.

I had gotten out of the Navy and stayed out about three months, then went back in and went aboard the USS Independence, CVA 62, out of Norfolk, Va. *"The Indy"* was the first carrier to transit from the east coast, to Yankee Station, off North Vietnam. On 29 September, 1966 I was transferred from CVA 62 to PHIBTRADET, Mare Island, Vallejo, Ca, which was later renamed NI-OTC (Naval Inshore Operations Training Center). Finished NIOTC training and was transferred to COMRIVRON 9 on 23 Feb. 1967 and I think we arrived in-country on 28 Feb. 1967 and I was as-

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

WHAT DO WE WANT

Continued from previous page

We were kids when we went, eighteen or nineteen years old. We were witness to our friends being killed or wounded. We saw all this in real time. We continue to fight those days and nights in our thoughts, memories, and dreams, though not as often as we may have in the past. Combat is a horrible time and cannot be glorified. Perhaps the only one positive thing to come out of all this would be the “bond” that was forged with those with which we fought.

I would avoid any attempt to try to explain the politics of the era. I can’t believe them myself. Why or how the war happened is moot. It happened and it was ours.

Lastly, I would disagree with Tom Brokaw. I think ours was “*The Greatest Generation.*”

Ralph Christopher

TF-116 author of “*River Rats,*” “*Duty Honor Sacrifice,*” “*Iron Butterfly*” and the “*Riverine Photo Album*”

“Recently a friend told me that his grandson was taught in school that the Vietnam War was bloody, and we killed a lot of civilians. I cannot believe that after fifty years I am still hearing this. For years it was hard for most of us to speak of it. I have tried through my books to teach the truth as we saw it so others could understand. Not for fame or glory but to clear up all the stories and put to rest that we weren’t baby killers. With that in mind, I offer the following to our grandchildren.

When I was a boy one of my heroes was my uncle Johnny who was in the water for three days after his ship was sunk in WWII. So I grew up in the shadow of the WWII generation, and when I was asked to serve I went. I could not run, or burn my draft card, as many did. It was President Kennedy that tasked us to *not ask what our country could do for us but rather what we could do for our country.* JFK was one of my heroes as well. I volunteered to serve at 17 so I could learn a trade and make something of my life. After training and serving in the 7th Fleet, I volunteered for in country duty, but had no idea. You must keep in mind that we were all young and trusted our leaders of whom most were WWII veterans and still afraid that we could lose our freedom. Germany and Japan came very close to taking it away.

After WWII, America rose to be a superpower, and was pulled into a cold war by the communists. They built a wall across Europe, dividing it, then armed countries in an attempt to spread their way of life. The free countries who believed in Democracy countered this and met them at every corner in an attempt to stop the Red Tide from taking over the world. Then, the North Korean communists attacked South Korea, and America was pulled into another war, and fought bravely with it ending in a treaty.

In 1954, the Vietnamese defeated the French, who had ruled them for 100 years, and Vietnam became a divided nation, with the communists in the North, and the South was led by President Ngo Dinh Diem, who was a devoted catholic.

In the early 1960’s, the Russians built missile sites in Cuba, which JFK was able to stop as the whole world watched, and prayed we would not enter into a nuclear war. Things escalated in Vietnam and Diem was begging America to help and soon after JFK sent the first advisors. By 1965, JFK had been assassinated (1963), and President Johnson declared war and sent in troops.

The Mekong Delta was the rice bowl of Southeast Asia and the home to half the population. The Viet Cong called it home as well, and ruled the region with intimidation and fear, and anybody that opposed them was a war criminal and subject to execution in some terrible ways. There were very few roads in the delta so the Navy was assigned that region. INTEL estimated over twenty Viet Cong battalions in the delta alone, and the Navy and Army were tasked to fight in ways they had never known with hundreds of boats manned by sailors patrolling and hauling infantry up and down canals that were scary as hell and everyone knew they were in *Charlie’s* back yard. Still, the 9th Infantry bravely charged ashore in mud infested swamps, cleaning out pockets of VC. It was a slugfest at first but slowly the Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry started to clear the delta with help from the PBRs, Swifts, Seals, Seawolves, South Vietnamese regional forces and many others.

After TET of 1968, the VC had been cut to

shreds and retreated, but you would never have known it by papers back home who wrote we had just been defeated. We had lost a lot of good men, but we hurt the enemy, badly. The hit ratio on Operation Slingshot alone was thirty to one. But if that one was your buddy, you can throw all that kindness out the door. You either became a killer, or you and your friends could die. And that is really who we fought for. Not the people in DC, or back home. We fought for the man on our left, and the man on our right, and the right to return home someday and go back to school like other kids our ages. We knew very little about the protesters. We were a little busy trying to stay alive and put the VC out of business.

After pacifying the delta somewhat, we turned over our boats as ordered to the South Vietnamese Navy, whom we trained. After completing our tours honorably, we returned home with many of us greeted by people calling us “*baby killers*” and “*war criminals.*” There should be a law against that, because it hurt us deeply, and unless you were there, you had no idea what our brave troops had faced. The men I had the honor to serve with in the Mekong Delta were some of the greatest guys I ever known, and are still my heroes today. So my beloved grandchildren, if someone tries to tell you about Vietnam ask them if they were there. If they say “*No,*” just walk away, and please read our books. We wrote them for you.”



Our ladies in pink had quilt raffle tickets covered! The large, red, white and blue quilt made by Esther Lightwine was won by Judy Smith. A red, white and blue hand tied quilt, made by Rosemary Leonard was purchased through an auction, by Kathleen Harness. A large flag blanket made by Mable Springer, was won by Frank Jones. A wall hanging, created by Wanda Frezon-Smith, was won by Lois Masters.

We had two winners of the 50/50 Drawing. Debbie Jefferson and Judy Kresna each won \$288!



The senior member of the MRFA (at least in attendance at the Nashville Reunion) was 84 year-old Lt. Colonel James Fosberg (Ret.), B Company 2/60th, 9th Infantry, 7/67 – 6/68, shown here with MRFA President, Harry Hahn. Although he was Army through and through, we enjoyed his company in the Riv Ron hospitality room so much, we dubbed him “Admiral,” and adopted him into the Navy, as an honorary sailor. We were touched by the fact that the men who served under him in Vietnam often came by the Riv Ron room to check on him, even escorting him back to his quarters, at the end of the evening.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Continued from page 1

While attending the MRFA reunion, I met several Navy heroes who served on the boats responsible for transporting the Army soldiers from their base camp to numerous landing spots. I heard stories of landing craft captains remaining at shore with their front ramps down and engines running during the night to provide added protection to the Army soldiers who were bedded down in the jungle. I heard stories of Army soldiers defending Navy boats and coming to their aid when under fire. Although these were two different branches of the military, they too became one, and “*Brothers in War*.” Seeing the MRFA trailer in the parking lot with the names of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice was very humbling. Listening to my dad talk about specific battles and point out the names of those who died during those battles on the trailer was very emotional.

I discovered a bond with the MRFA that will never be broken. I also discovered a bond with the spouses, offspring and family members who attend these reunions that will never be broken. Just like the 9th Infantry reunion, the MRFA was equally as powerful. Even though my dad is my ultimate hero for not only being his son but with the Hell and injuries he endured and his acts of heroism on the battlefield while in the line of fire, all those who served are my heroes as well. I consider it a true honor to be in their presence. I look forward to the next reunion, where, GOD willing, I can talk again to those I met previously and take part in the shared stories, the laughter, the tears, the highs, the lows...the emotions. Most important, to be there to show my support and love for my dad.”

Tim Shires

The Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry Division Vietnam



Hey Brothers, check out our Facebook page, “The Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry Division Vietnam” Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195572170458597/>

Our Facebook Group is dedicated to all Army and Navy men who served with pride and distinction in a place called the Mekong Delta. Be it on water or land, they all served their country. Whether they were on a Monitor or making a helo assault, setting an ambush on a lonely, quiet, dark night, walking through waist-deep water in a rice paddy, riding a tango boat up a narrow canal, or at anchor in the middle of a brown-water river for long hot hours. Places like Dong Tam, Tay Ninh, Snoopy's Nose, the Cross Roads, Ambush Alley, My Tho, Rach Kien, Plain of Reeds, Parrot's Beak, Tan An, Nha Be or Ben Tre and names like Colleton, Washtenaw, Windham, Benewah, Westchester, Satyr, Askari, PBR, and Swiftboat are names and places we'll never forget.

This group is to preserve a living memory of all those who served in the Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry Division Vietnam.

Many friendships from days past have been renewed because of our group page. It is a great place to make connections with others who served with the Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry Division.

A few rules are in place to keep order in the group. They are:

1. Politics and religion are the fastest way to start an argument and cause hard feelings and absolutely have no place on this page.
2. We expect members to treat each other with respect.

We hope you enjoy the group.

In Brotherhood,
Doc Pries - MRFA Vice President and Group Admin



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From the Membership

"I just wanted to thank you for the article on military dogs in Vietnam, in the summer edition. There were two units of scout dogs supporting infantry operations in the 9th division; the 43rd and the 45th. I was the CO of the 45th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog (IPSD). Lt Karl Lunkenheimer was CO of the 43rd IPSD. In addition, the 65th Infantry

Platoon Combat trackers had 4 black lab tracker dogs. A scout dog team consisted of a handler and a German Shepard type dog (they were donated to the military by civilians so some were not pure-bred).

Scout dog teams would go out with an infantry company or platoon to provide advanced warning of snipers, ambushes, and booby traps. A Combat Tracker Team was used to track down the enemy in support of an infantry unit. The combat tracker team had a visual tracker (think Indian scout) a dog handler and tracker dog, two cover-men and a team leader. They were trained at the Jungle warfare school run by the British, and were as at home in the jungle as the VC/NVA. They could follow a visual track or a scent track.

When the 9th ID was broken up in July of 1969, the 43rd IPSD went up to the DMZ along with two of the tracker teams. The other two tracker teams came under my command when we moved to Tan An airfield. During my time VN (Feb 1969 to Feb 1970) I lost one scout dog handler, Thomas Quinn, and one scout dog, Crypto. Both the 65th IPCT and the 43rd IPSD also had losses during that time."

Lt. Mike Burke



**Thomas W. Quinn Spec. 4, with "Crypto,"
45Th Inf. Plt. Scout Dog, 9th Inf. Div.
KIA, April 04, 1969**

To all soldiers, sailors, and "sailorinors" of the MRFA and 9th Infantry Division

Geoffrey Moss is looking for information on his father, Dennis Moss, hoping to clear up confusion on an uncompleted application for a Distinguished Service Cross for his father. We are publishing this in the hope that someone will be able to shed some light on his father's service, and help his family get answers. If anyone here can provide information about Dennis Moss, please contact his son, Geoffrey, at Geoffrey.Moss@erm.com, or 602-432-4170.

Here is some background information, provided by Geoffrey;

"Dennis Moss passed away on 2 June 2018



Dennis Moss

just days after his 70th birthday. While we will never know for sure, there is some likelihood that his exposure to Agent Orange during his service in Vietnam led to the illness that claimed his life nearly 50 years later. He served as a combat infantryman and sniper in the Mekong Delta from July of 1968 through February of 1970 with the 9th Infantry Division and spent his final 6 months as a sniper instructor with the 25th Infantry Division. In his relatively brief time in combat he distinguished himself as one of the Army's most successful snipers with 49 confirmed kills and was awarded numerous medals for valor, including 2 Silver Stars, 8 Bronze Stars (3 with "V"), 2 Air Medals, and 4 Army Commendation Medals (2 with "V").

Despite all the awards and recognition he brought home, the most impressive thing we have uncovered is a nomination for the Distinguished Service Cross that was never approved, downgraded, or disapproved. Following is the text from a portion of the DSC narrative:

"On 3 June 1969, Sgt. Moss' element, carrying out sniper missions aboard a Tango Boat on the My Tho River, came under sudden and intense automatic and semi-automatic weapons fire from a superior sized enemy force, concealed in positions at close range. While others aboard the craft sought positions of safety, Sgt. Moss, disregarding his own welfare, braved the withering, grazing fire, and remained in a completely exposed position atop the open deck of the boat. While a hail of rounds passed inches from his body, Sgt. Moss sighted more than a dozen of the enemy and engaged them with heavy and highly accurate fire. Due to his quick, skillful, and courageous actions, a number of the sighted enemy element were killed, the remaining forces were put to rout, and the lives of those aboard were saved.

On 16 July 1969, while his element was deployed in a night defensive position, Sgt. Moss alertly detected movement to his front, illuminated the area with a flare, and sighted a platoon sized enemy force about to engage the friendly perimeter. Sgt. Moss simultaneously alerted his comrades to the location of the enemy and engaged the force with deadly fire which quickly dispatched three of the charging Viet Cong. Sgt. Moss' immediate and aggressive actions led his element to the swift devastation of the enemy and subsequent discovery of a sizeable arms cache."

Melvin Ewing did an article on Dennis Moss on the website, "Sniper Central." In part, Melvin Ewing said this, about Dennis Moss;

"SSgt. Moss's family always knew he had 'earned lots of medals and was a sniper in Vietnam,' but it was not until he died on 2 June 2018 that his family discovered the full extent of what he had done. They found the proverbial 'box in

the attic" that was filled with medals, official documentation, and pictures from his time in service. Then the digging and investigative work began and with the help of the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis they were able to piece some of the details together. Not all of those pieces have been completely filled in, but enough of them have been to paint a remarkable picture of one of the exceptional US Army Snipers in Vietnam.

Dennis Moss grew up in Spokane, Washington and as was typical for the successful snipers during that time period, was an avid outdoorsman. After he graduated high school in Spokane, he headed up to Alaska to help with guiding hunters and he himself was an accomplished hunter and marksman. He then enlisted in the US Army and headed off to basic training as an infantryman in March of 1968. By July of that year he was in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, a grunt in the 6th Infantry Battalion, 31st Infantry, 9th Infantry Division.

It did not take long for Dennis to show his capabilities and abilities and he was sent to the famous 9th ID Sniper School that was setup in country. The school was two and half weeks long and he was a part of the third graduating class from that school that consisted of about 10 graduates. That was on 4 Jan 1969 and then he was deployed as an operating sniper soon thereafter. On the first day of February he was able to get his first confirmed kill and over the next five months his confirmed kill count rose until he was transferred over to be an instructor at the same 9th ID Sniper School in July of 1969. At that time he had 49 confirmed kills. But his kill count does not tell the entire story. During his time operating as a sniper he showed extreme bravery in countless engagements, performing numerous acts of heroism that earned him two Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars with "V" for valor, five Bronze Stars without "V," two Army Commendation Medals, with "V," two Army Commendation Medals without "V," and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

On top of the above impressive list, just as the 9th ID was rotating out of Vietnam, he was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest medal for valor behind the Medal of Honor. Unfortunately, as the 9th ID rotated out of Vietnam it appears that the paperwork was lost in the shuffle. The National Personnel Records Center is helping to try and get the final paperwork approved after all of these years so the award can be given. Everything had been filled out, and copies of the recommendation and eye witness testimonies have been found, but it was just never finalized.

There were many other ribbons and medals that SSgt Moss has on his official DD-214, but perhaps the most remarkable is the one that is not there. Notice there is no mention of a Purple Heart ever being awarded, that is because he was never wounded in combat.

Dennis served a full twelve month tour in Vietnam and when the 9th ID rotated home, the 25th ID contacted him and somehow convinced him to extend six more months in Vietnam where he continued as an instructor in the 25th ID sniper school (See the picture below). Finally he was discharged in March of 1970 as a Staff Sergeant (E-6) after only two years in service. It was a different time back then and we have all heard and read the stories of how veterans were treated and we can assume it was the same for Dennis."

TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One

CORRECTION TO NOTICE OF JACK KITCHURA PASSING:

We received this good news from Jack Kithcura, sent to Mike Harris and Albert Moore,

"Not sure where this "fake news" of my demise came from? Rest assured still alive and well. Just in from working in healthily in the hot Houston sun all morning, grabbing a cool drink and headed back to chain saw some trees (seriously). I haven't got Harry Hahn or Frank Jones emails but will search them up later tonight to connect. Picture is last month working out at my ranch in New Mexico. I'm still here.

Al - Heard about your eye. Glad you got outside civilian Doctor help and things are working out for the better. Hang in there friend and get well. We need all us older guys around a bit longer to give the younger generation something to complain about.

*All the best guys,
Jack"*

2015, **Charles Joseph Lubs**
M-92-2 (Zippo)

2016, **David J. Welch** Naval
Supply Activity, Saigon

2017, **Herman Murphy**
USS Benewah APB-35

Sheldon H. Marcus, passed
away 7/25/19. Sheldon was
with A Company, 709th Main-
tenance (3/67-3/69).



Hanmer

Member **Michael Douglas Hanmer** passed away on July 26, 2019. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 15 - River Assault Division 152 onboard T-49. Then later, with River Assault Division 153. Michael continued his service in the Michigan Army National Guard and retired in 1998 as a Sergeant 1st Class with 25 years of honorable service. He is survived by his wife Susan and son Michael.



Kohler

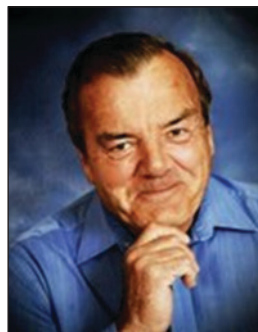
Member **Edward Otto "Rusty" Kohler Jr.** passed away on August 17, 2019. While in Vietnam he served with the 9th Military Police Company, 9th Infantry Division from December 1967 to January 1969. He is survived by his wife Kay. - "Rusty" was a Gentle Giant and good friend through the years. I will miss you Hoss." - Harold Smith - 9th MPs

BMCM (SW) **George Queen** USN (Ret), USS Benewah APB-35, 4/67-11/67, Randallstown, MD, passed away on 11/2/2017.



Burpo

Member **Captain James H. Burpo** (USN Ret.) passed away on August 5, 2019. He served in Vietnam with several units earning 11 campaign stars. While with the Mobile Riverine Force LCDR Burpo served as Commanding Officer of the USS Washtenaw County (LST-1166) from April 1968 to July 1969. He was living in Lawton, OK at the time of his passing and is survived by his wife Sue.



Kaufman

Member **James David "Jim" Kaufman** passed away suddenly on September 12, 2019. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 13, River Assault Division 132 on board A-132-1 from September 1968 to September 1969. Jim is survived by his wife Pat.

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 Blauser for Thomas Gaudet, David Land, and Jose Campos our Riv Div 151 brothers that were KIAs
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John and Doris Chrzanowski in memory of SP4 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)
David Wilson 2nd/60th KIA 08/05/69, Timothy Shelton 4th/39th KIA 06/25/69, Steven Murray, 4th/39th KIA 05/26/69, Harvey Crabtree, 2nd/4th Arty KIA 06/19/69, and Dennis Mattox, 1st/501st 101st Abn KIA 08/23/69
Janice Dahkle, for her son Cpl. Randy R. Mueller, D Co. 2nd/47th KIA 03/03/69
Fran Divelbiss, for Cdr. Dave Divelbiss, Supply Officer on Staff COMRIVFLOT ONE, USS Benewah APB-35 (1966-68)
David Donovan from Dick & Lisa Dorato
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Regina Gooden, for Sgt. Lloyd Earl Valentine B Co 3rd/47th KIA September 5, 1968
Gordon Hillesland, for Pat Lawson NSA Dong Tam (67-68) & Mike Mosey NSA Dong Tam (67-68)
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Sally Jackson, for Paul Nace USS Colleton APB-36 (09/68-11/69)
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Jaspar Northcutt, for PFC Robert C. Voltz B-1 2nd/47th Inf. (Mech.) KIA 3/11/67 (first KIA 1st Platoon B Co. 2nd/47th in Vietnam)
Jaspar Northcutt, for SSGT Henry T. Aragon B-2 2nd/47th KIA 08/23/67
Jaspar Northcutt, for SGT. James E. Boorman B-2 2nd/47th KIA 08/27/67
Jaspar Northcutt, for SP4 Michael G. Hartnett B Co. 2nd/47th KI 04/27/67
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Henry Velez, for my fallen brothers, B Co. 2nd/39th Inf.
CPT. Steve Williams and MAJ Bob Bischoff, in memory of 2Lt. David George Williams, Co A, 4/47th, KIA 9/21/67

Letters to the Editor

If you have questions, stories, or comments for "River Currents," please e-mail Terry Sater, at terry.s8er@yahoo.com



Mobile Riverine Force Association

9 San Marino Parkway

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