



River Currents



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 4
Fall, 2023

Message From the Radio Shack



Harry Hahn

Hello again
from the Radio
Shack:

What a great
reunion we
had!! I mean,
it was GREAT.
It was my
pleasure to
see all of you

there. This was the first reunion we had where we did not have a museum trailer or museum room. However, very noteworthy was the "RivRon room" where Gerry Burleigh always brings his memorabilia. Gerry has been doing this for as many years as I have been a member, which is now 25 years. He hauls it in his pickup truck from east Texas to wherever our reunions are!! Thanks Gerry! Also, we had hot food served in the RivRon room which attracted a lot of you Army guys!! I love the cross pollination that has taken place with the Army and Navy in that room. Thanks to Terry Sater, his son Chris, Randy Peat and his sons, Dan, and Dave, for sponsoring this room.

Speaking of Chris Sater, Terry's son, Chris is now the newest member of our Board of Directors. After twenty years of his coming to reunions with his Dad, and working every reunion, Chris brings the new, young blood to our association that we will need as we go forward.

continued on page 2

The Lady's Raffle Brigade!



Raffle Ladies and volunteers: Janice Boblitt, Sue Walker, Mable Springer, Debbie Jefferson, Kelly Maytyn, and Sandy Weiss. Missing, is Frank Springer, Tom Matyn, Esther Lightwine, John Weiss, Linda Jones, and many more!



Tessa & Chris Sater
Quilt by Esther Lightwine



Winner Mark Vandling
Quilt by Mable Springer



Jackpot Winners
Ross Lind Plough and
Marge Dobrofsky

Message From Frank Jones

I want to thank all of the volunteers at the reunion. Without your dedication and time, the reunion wouldn't have been the huge success that it was! I hope everyone had a good time and plans on attending the next reunion in two years!

Thanks,

Frank Jones

MRFA Treasurer/Membership Chairman/Reunion Coordinator

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

Message From The Radio Shack

continued from page 1

Going forward, your President has been working with other associations to perpetuate our organization as we all grow older.

We made an announcement at the reunion that although we were disappointed that we could not roll out the Documentary at the reunion, it continues to move forward with an expected Premier in the springtime. Arranging where and when these Premiers take place will now become my focus in the coming months.

How about that dinner, the “Banquet of Heroes” on Saturday night of the reunion. The food and the company were excellent. The announcement of our partnership with Quilts of Valor, and the presentation to eleven people there, at the reunion, was magnificent.

Lastly, thank you to all the workers, men, and women, who worked at the reunion! They make the reunion happen! That’s all for now, my friends. The planning now begins for our next big reunion in 2025 as we plan to make it an even bigger success than this year!!

Harry Hahn, President
SparksRivRon13@aol.com



The Unofficial MRFA Reunion Winner of “Who traveled the furthest?” award, goes to **Jack Ewing (L)**, who traveled to our reunion, from London, England! Jack brought many of MRFA/9th Infantry items he has been collecting, since he was a teenager! Following the reunion, Jack, and a couple of his buddies from “across the pond” drove down to New Orleans! We hope to get a full report on that adventure!

Our winner of our “Most Senior” attendee went to our beloved member, LTC. **Jim Forsberg (R)**, B Company, 2nd/60th. While he may “officially” be in the ranks of the Army, for many of us, he will always be “The Admiral.” Jim flew to St. Louis from Auburn, California, this time, but he swears that for our next reunion, he is driving.



Many visited the Soldiers Memorial, in Downtown, St. Louis, which is currently hosting a special exhibit on the Vietnam War. The “HO CHI MINH KISS MY ASS” banner, on display at Soldiers Memorial, flew between the antennas of T-131-9. Also included in the exhibit were weapons and artifacts of the Vietnam War, and a notice that the constitution of the American Legion was formally adopted in a convention in St. Louis, in 1919.

Mobile Riverine Force Association Membership Application Form

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- ☐ **Navy Member**
 Unit (Ship, Boat Hull Numbers, Navy Activity/Detachment, etc.)

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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 Frank Jones, MRFA Membership Chairman, 9 San Marino Pkwy, Fenton, MO 63026-7513

Contact Changes

Please send Frank Jones any changes in address, phone number or e-mail addresses so that he can keep our database updated.

His address is:

9 San Marino Parkway, Fenton, MO 63026
 Frank's e-mail address is mrfatango48@gmail.com

Contact the Editor

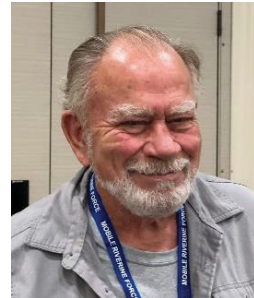
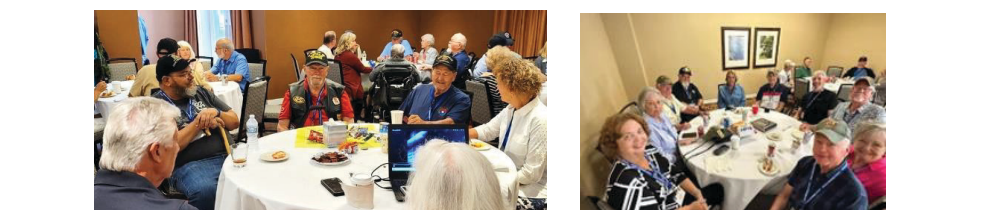
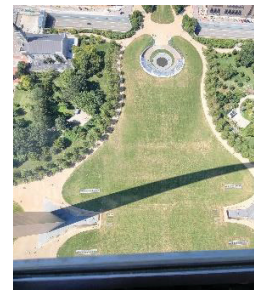
If you have questions, stories, or comments for “River Currents,” please e-mail Terry Sater, at terry.s8er@yahoo.com.

Not all stories can be published.

All must be family friendly.

We want a good balance of Army and Navy stories, so please participate!

Dave and Dan Peat rode the elevator to the top of the Gateway Arch and took a few photos!





The “Missing Man Table Ceremony” has been a time honored and solemn tradition of the MRFA and 9th Infantry Division Reunion gathering. It is an outward expression of our love for those who are departed, in battle, and in peace.

Each item on the Missing Man Table represents the emotions and feelings reserved for those who did not come home. The ceremony symbolizes that they are with us, here in spirit. All Americans should never forget the brave men and women who answered our nation’s call to serve and fought for our freedom with honor.

The exact origins of this sacred ceremony are a little unclear. It may have arisen organically, incorporating various elements of military tradition. One has it that the ceremony was first held by the Red River Valley Association, a collection of pilots who had flown in the Vietnam War. Another version credits Master Sgt. Lawrence Tassone with one of the first official performances of the ceremony, at a 1980 convention for the Air Force Sergeants Association.

Presentation of Flags to the Families

Master Chief Gunners Mate Chester C. Stanley presented flags to the families of our Fallen Brothers.



Georgina Ardinger, and CDR Charlie Ardinger Jr.



Paula Willingham



Frances Grunow Ohman

Reunion Comments

David Gianini. RivDiv 112 T-112-1. This was my first reunion and was beyond anything I expected. With three shipmates there, it was a very emotional experience. The reunion was an excellent event that was very well planned and enjoyable. The banquet was the best I have ever been to. Everyone I met, Army, or Navy were like old friends. After being home for fifty-five years from Vietnam, it was a great closure experience to be at the reunion. I’ll definitely attend the next one. Thank you! We couldn’t have been more impressed!

Harold Weber. RivRon 13, T-132-1 This was one of the best Reunion I have been to, everything was spot on. I had A Great Time!

Larry Banning. HHQ, 2nd Brigade 9th Inf. I only recently became aware of the MRFA, and my wife and I registered to attend the September reunion. I was with the advanced party in January of 1967 that met the troops of the 2nd Brigade of the 9th Division as they disembarked from their ocean voyage and handed out flack vests and ammunition. We traveled by convoy to Bearcat -- the first, initial base for the brigade.

On perhaps the first operation of the brigade, engineers had cleared a section of jungle and piled up large clumps of trees and foliage near the perimeter. After the first two days, commanders decided they wanted to deploy the last infantry squad guarding the perimeter.

Apparently, they decided to do this in two stages -- send a few enlisted men from HHQ to the line the first day and then rotate-in the last group the second night. I was one of the ones sent the first day. That first day, everyone was relaxed -- helmets off and flack vests open or left on the ground. The next day was an entirely different matter.

(On the Reunion) Both my wife and I were deeply moved -- I held back tears in recognition of all the heroes with medals of valor. We had two multiple purple heart recipients at our dinner table. I believe both had gone through the SERE camp, and they related the abuse they endured there including waterboarding and being struck by fists. Later, at the American Legion, my wife related many details to some of our friends -- our side discussions with others at the convention and the award of the Quilts of Valor. The films brought

continued on page 5

Reunion Comments

back many memories, and my wife remarked about the contrast between the young soldiers in the films and the aging veterans at the convention.

At the dinner table, I related my deep admiration for the troops that waded through rice paddies and the jungle -- many suffering injuries. I mentioned my experience practically crawling under foliage and trees filled with red ants to survey the results of gun fire and artillery from a night guarding the perimeter of a field camp near Bearcat -- and later at Dong Tam along the canal that cut-off from the My Tho River -- the fact that the Navy would dump garbage in the My Tho, the tide would change and the garbage would wash up into the canal where people just across the canal would bathe and get their water. We sat atop the bunkers to avoid the rats, and one troop was sent to LBJ (Long Ben Jail) for throwing a grenade at a rat and injuring another soldier.

Some related their experience coming home to protests. I related my return in short sleeves from a Vietnam 120-degree January, monsoon-day -- freezing to get through a custom's checkpoint in California where we were issued dress greens -- getting on a plane to Kansas City where the temperature was 7 below zero -- going to a motel with my wife and setting the room temperature to 80 degrees -- she was sweating, and I was still cold. I didn't get warm until mid-summer -- but -- nobody was there to protest!

There are many other things I could speak about. It was a very emotional, moving event.

Probably more than you asked for, but we were very impressed by the reunion, and everyone we met. We look forward to future conventions if we are able to attend. Once again, thank you.

Sincerely,

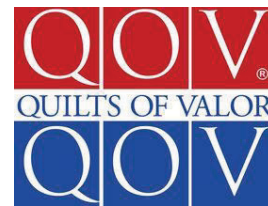
Larry & Karole Banning



Bill Lancaster. RivDiv 13 T-131-2. This the fourth reunion we have attended, and the best. The staff at the hotel was super. Hope we have it there, next time. We laughed a lot and got to see our brothers again.

Here are some photos I have never posted. Thanks again for putting on a great reunion.

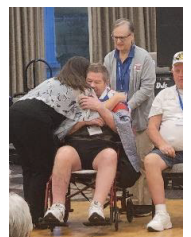
Bill and Linda Lancaster.



We were blessed to have a very special presentation by the Quilts of Valor organization. The Quilts of valor was founded in 2003, by "Blue Star" mom Catherine Roberts. With a son deployed in Iraq, as a "Gunner" sitting atop a Humvee, she felt "ten seconds away from panic," twenty-four hours a day. One night she dreamed of a post-deployment warrior struggling with his war demons at two o'clock in the morning. In the next scene in that dream, she saw him sitting on the side of his bed, wrapped in a quilt. The quilt comforted him and fended off the "war demons" that troubled him. From this vision, Quilts of Valor Foundation began. The MRFA sincerely appreciates the Quilts of Valor organization.



(L to R) Larry Etheridge, Paul Baird, Mike Connolly, James Gleason, David Hanna, Frank Jones, Leonard Krudop, David Lull, Randy Peat, Terry Sater, David Todd



David Peat, Madelynn Peat, Randy Pete, Dan Peat, Linda Jones, Frank Jones, Judi Sater, Terry Sater, Asher Bridge, Dina Bridge, Larry Etheridge.

Grant Ethridge. I write to tell you, and all others involved, present, or otherwise interested, how incredibly lucky I feel to have attended the most recent convergence of the Mobile Riverine Force Association in St. Louis. I accompanied my father, **Larry Ethridge**, to my first reunion and his long-awaited return after missing the last several due to unfortunately timed and all too frequent back surgeries!

We were both so excited to be able to make the trip this year, and from the moment we arrived until the moment we left we were surrounded by friendly faces, great stories, wonderful food (and maybe a cold beer or two), and a whole lot of love. It was an honor to meet and spend such a great couple of days with you, with all of Dad's shipmates from the USS Askari (ARL-30), Harry Hahn, Gunner Stanley, and so many more. To be able to hear all of the stories, some of which I may have heard once or twice, with other people who lived through the same experience was truly humbling and something I will never forget.

The culmination, and one of the most moving presentations of the weekend, had to be the presentation of the Quilts of Valor. Larry was fortunate enough to be one of the recipients of his quilt at the ceremony, and it too is a moment I will always remember. The welcome home moments that were so richly deserved, and for too many so long overdue, were incredibly compelling. I would like to thank you, everyone with the Quilts of Valor association, and everyone who worked so hard to organize such a wonderful event, and for allowing us to bear witness to such an awesome brotherhood. Thank you all so much,

David "Doc" Todd. I would like to thank those who work in the "Quilts of Valor" organization for their dedication and hard work. I felt that all the Veterans sitting in that room deserved the quilt as much or more than I. I can't help but to reminded of the reception we received when we returned home from Vietnam and the outpouring of gratitude that we receive these days. Thank You All who work for the "Quilts of Valor."

Dina Bridge. My first MRFA reunion was in 2019 in Nashville. It was so special, to finally get to meet the men I'd heard stories about while growing up. I had seen pictures and even heard the audiotapes (pre-screened by my dad (Terry Sater) of course, since I was young. This year, the reunion was in our hometown and with that came the opportunity for my boys, Asher, and Xander, to meet and shake hands with members of a brotherhood my dad holds near and dear to his heart. My youngest son was at the moving Quilts of Valor ceremony and witnessed his grandfather

receive one of those incredible quilts.

I know that a lot of veterans, my father included, have a concern, a fear, that their

history, and their experiences won't be told in an accurate way. The upcoming documentary will secure the true history, as it comes from those who lived it.

After watching my kids sit and talk with these men, engage with them, listen with rapt attention to their experience, during and after the war, I have hope that their positive impact will continue to affect and inspire future generations. It is up to us to keep alive the LEGACY of the "River Rats" of the Mobile Riverine Force, and the "Old Reliables" of the 9th Infantry Division.

Len Krudop. 1097th Medium Boat Co. I wasn't quite sure what to expect regarding the Quilts of Valor. Sitting in the line of recipients and looking at the members of the MRFA seated at their tables I thought, "Wow! All this for me?" Then a comforting voice spoke quietly in my ear as she gently wrapped the quilt about my shoulders. Tears immediately streamed from my eyes in a flood of emotions. Apparently, I needed the hug from that quilt more than I realized. I keep the quilt on my recliner ready for another hug. Thank you, Quilts of Valor and MRFA!

Helen Krudop. Len and I really enjoyed the reunion. We came just for the day (Saturday) since we live in

Reunion Comments



Deborah Stanley, Grant Ethridge, Chet "Gunner" Stanley, Larry Ethridge, Harry Hahn



Grant and Larry Ethridge

Wildwood MO. The meal was superb! Thank you!!! We met some wonderful couples at our table, and we all enjoyed the incredible videos that were shown. The quilt presentation was moving. Thank you so much for all the planning that went into this remarkable event.

Dakota Tolbert. Over the past four reunions I've been to, this has to be one of the best yet! At this Reunion there was a Quilts of Valor Presentation. Where I'm from, my American Legion Honor Guard presents a Color Guard for our local Quilts of Valor presentations. I wanted to do that for this Reunion and salute each Veteran individually.

The 9th Infantry Division holds a very special place in my heart. My grandfather Roger Tolbert, who raised me since I was three years old, Staff Sergeant was in the 9th Infantry Division with D/E Company. He was a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars one with Valor, Purple Heart, CIB, and Air Medal recipient. He did two tours in Vietnam, and one in Germany. He also served with 101ST Airborne, Air Cav Recon. He served a total of nine years in the Army. I'm still learning the details of his service.



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Mobile Riverine Force Association



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P001 MRF



P002 9th Inf Div



P003 RAD 91



P004 RAD 92



P005 RAD 111



P006 RAD 112



P007 RAD 131



P008 RAD 132



P009 RivRon XV



P010 RAD 152



P011 Riv Div 153



**P012 USS Benewah
APB-35**



P013 3rd/60th Inf



P014 MRF 3/60



P015 39th Inf



P016 47th Inf



P017 River Raiders



P018 River Rat



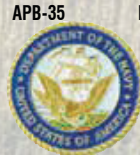
P019 Brown Water Navy



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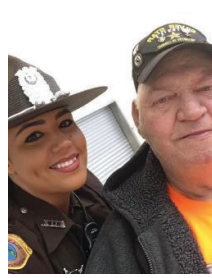
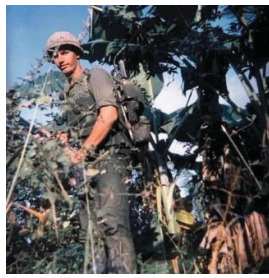
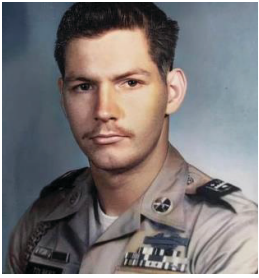
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Reunion Comments



At this reunion, I learned that he was on the USS Benewah. I used to go with him to previous reunions. He kept everything from pictures, mission reports, to news articles. One of the most fascinating things to me is hearing the stories of Vietnam, firsthand. There are three veterans who attended the reunion that were actually there when Roger got his Silver Star. They told their side of the story, and they had pictures of Roger that I've never seen before. I can't say enough how much of a privilege that is to hear their stories and how they're doing today.

Roger never talked about the war, for years. It wasn't until the last fifteen years of his life when he started to open up. When he retired from truck driving, he joined the Patriot Guard, a motorcycle association that escorts Veteran funerals. I guess you could say that's where this whole story started. I rode the motorcycles with him on a lot of these funeral details.

I was in Pageantry, dance, and cheerleading for almost ten years, but when he came home to retire, that totally changed. Grandpa taught me how to shoot, about fast cars, and his time in the service. We were pretty close, even sharing the same birthday. We were always getting into something whether it was a road trip across the country, or buying store bought hot rods.

Over the years, Agent Orange started to take its effect. This led to Congestive Heart Failure, Diabetes, Neuropathy, Skin Cancer, Prostate Cancer, Digestive Issues, a Pacemaker, and many medications such as blood thinner. We had a handful of scary medical emergencies. Roger never talked about his health conditions, and he never let it stop him, regardless that he was considered 200% disabled. I never

heard him complain. In fact, he was the one suffering, telling me to calm down. We would be in the emergency room, and Roger would still manage to make a joke. He got a motorized scooter, and that allowed him to continue to do what he does best, reaching out to other veterans.

We went to our first reunion in Indianapolis. I'll never forget it. He didn't remember much, so he brought the photos he had. A lot of veterans in D/E Company remembered him. They could tell you who, what, where, and when. We all went to dinner at the Cafe across the street and those guys were throwing spit balls at each other having a great time. It was truly remarkable, and I'll never forget the smile on their faces. When he passed, it changed my entire world. I walked into the hospital, and I saw a white sheet lying over him. I started demanding someone find a flag, right now. My neighbor's son, who had served in the Army, showed up with a huge flag. We unfolded the flag, laid it over him, and gave him a salute.



Right then and there, I promised Roger that I would continue his legacy. I didn't know what that meant at the time. All

I could think

of was what would Grandpa do? He would handle it, so I did. The American Legion was there for me when I needed help with his funeral arrangements. I was twenty-seven years old, having to deal with this on my own.

His wife was in the hospital at the time he passed so I had to step up and take care of everything. To this day, it's one of the largest funeral details the American Legion and VFW has ever

done. I couldn't have done it without them. Sara's blood pressure finally stabilized, and she was able to attend the funeral. A few months later the American Legion recruited me onto the Honor Guard. I couldn't say no. That first year, I did fifty-seven funeral details. It's been two years, now. Everyone grieves differently, but I felt like being on the Honor Guard kept the memory of my grandfather alive, and a way I could give back to the veterans and their families.

The Mobile Riverine Force presented a flag, in honor of Roger later that year, at the reunion, and made me an Honorary Member. I still keep in contact with the MFRA D/E Company, so I decided that I would continue to go to future reunions. The Mobile Riverine Force is a strong brotherhood, and it always will be. It is my duty to make sure our veterans are respected, honored, and never forgotten.

Jim Gleason. It was a nice ceremony. For the record, I was 2nd squad Sgt. 2nd platoon, Delta Co. 4/47 1968-1969. I have a bronze star, CIB, Combat Air medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation medal and good conduct, (though I have no idea why on that one!)

At the reunions I sit with the original E Co. troops as well as my D Co. guys. E Company was a mixed company, consisting of a recon platoon, mortar platoon, and early warning listening device guys planting alert devices in our AO. E transformed into a full-blown infantry line co. (Delta) reporting to 4th Battalion around Sept. '68.



The boys from Delta Co. 4/47 Sgt. 's Jim Gleason, Barry Baron, and Lee Jackson. Medics Jay Warren and Larry Austin are in the middle.

Reunion Comments



E and D company guys; 4/47, reviewing maps of Ben Tre province AO. We all operated in "68-69. Gleason, Holcomb, Sharp, Tex, Warren, Austin. Map was bought from ex NVA soldier who is now an Admin in My Tho.



Very touching story here: Doc Larry Austin (middle rear) introducing Winona Siedentoph to two Navy survivors of the sinking of Tango 132-1, February 6, 1969, in Kien Hoa Province, off VC Island. Pictured are Harold Weber (left) and Jack Raucher (right) who served on Tango 132-1. Mark Siedentoph's photo is on the right. He is listed on The Wall, panel 33W, Line 74. Three soldiers drowned that day. Doc Austin was with 2nd platoon. He is credited with getting these guys together with us.



Jim Gleason, and Lee Jackson, with Terry Sater autographing his book, which Lee won in a raffle!

Sgt. Lee Jackson was recognized as the only attendee who was awarded FOUR Bronze Stars by Harry Hahn!

Chuck Chaldekas, President, Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument Fund.

The primary reason for attending this year's reunion was to thank you all for the continuing support for CCB-18, over the last twenty-five years or so, but I had several other ulterior motives. I fulfilled a fifty-three-year-old promise to visit the family of one of the members of my first platoon, in 1970, at Seafloat. Absolute success!



VUMMF intends to place a kiosk at our monument recognizing the 9th Infantry. So, finding someone with a database is essential to that mission.

We have promised the Westchester County association a bronze plaque placement on the kiosk, when we are able, so I had hoped to meet some from their crew, but unfortunately, missed them.

My last objective was to try to find members of the LST servicing Seafloat in the Spring of 1970. One of their crew, an MM-3, who graduated with me from high school, cut threads into the barrel of my M60, so I could attach a flash suppressor and keep the night from exploding into light. Could that be the Windham County? We'll see. Three of six tasks is not nearly as good as I had hoped, so I still have much to do. Hopefully, with help from some of you, I will accomplish a few more.

The VUMMF has long appreciated the MRFA. My first opportunity occurred sometime around 2007. After a long morning of CCB Clean-up, friendly patter from the crew, and of course the obligatory sea stories, we were summoned by the bell to a sumptuous feast of brats, baked beans, potato salad, macaroni salad, cold sodas, ice cold water, and cookies, to polish off the event. All provided by the MRFA. The feast was prepared and grilled by our outstanding "Grill Master," and CCB Lead, Tom Matyn. Before Tom, Don Blankenship.

Due to MRFA generosity, I have had the privilege to be a part of the great exchange each and every day across the internet by many of OUR members! Thank you all! I knew that this was the year I had to attend. Last year, in San Diego, was just a taste, but it didn't really scratch the surface. Not only would I be able to meet many of you who have contributed to my memory bank, but I would be able to finally fulfill a promise I made to visit the resting place of a wonderful friend, and his family, as well as to thank you all for supporting the VUMMF so well. Harry, Frank, Terry, Mike Harris, your better halves, and all of your families, as well as all whose hands I was able to shake, thanks again. Steve Hopper and others from the 9th, it was my pleasure. Mike Croan, Jolly Roger will fly next week.

I still can't believe we found an eatery, around the corner called "D D Mau!"

Chuck Chaldekas

Chuckc50@netzero.com

CORRECTION! In the Summer Edition of River Currents, the three men in the above photo at the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument were identified as; Richard Kopec, Mike Gughen, and Ben "Keifa." Ben's name is actually spelled "Cueva."





At Echoes of the Vietnam War, we present personal narratives from Vietnam veterans and the people who love them. Several MRFA members were kind enough to share their stories with me at the reunion in St. Louis, and we're looking forward to producing an episode — or maybe two — from those interviews.

—Michael Croan, host and producer

From Terry Sater, Editor, “River Currents:”

A “podcast” is like a radio show (audio only), but you can listen to it anywhere, anytime, on any device that's connected to the internet — even on your smartphone. *“Echoes of the Vietnam War”* is the official podcast of the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF)**, founders of “The Wall” in Washington, DC.

“Echoes” focuses on narratives from Vietnam veterans and the people who love them. I have listened to several of the podcasts, and loved them, particularly the ones listed below.

EP40: Seawolves (Part 1)

EP41: Seawolves (Part 2)

EP42: Ann-Margret

EP25 Building the Wall

As of this writing, “Echoes” has published fifty-six episodes, and they have been listened to more than 230,000 times by listeners in 157 countries.

VVMF's mission is to honor those who served, and preserving your story in your own voice is one of the ways we do that.

I urge you to check out the Echoes podcasts! You will be happy you did!

Terry



THESE OLD MEN

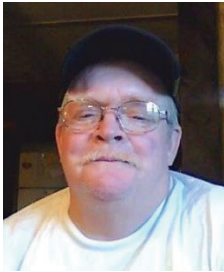
*Now we stand behind old men's faces,
Speak of forgotten times and places
So bent are those who wouldn't break,
Who did fearsome things with lives at stake.
Their shadows sharp and darker then,
Now fading away are these old men,
But no one can steal the legends bold,
Not thieves nor liars nor growing old.
To never weave excuses that some men must,
But to stand with men who earned our trust,
And speak of what we did back then,
Before we became, these old men.*

By Pat Ewing, Blue Star 114—Vietnam, 48th Assault Helicopter, 1969-1970



TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One

Member **Daniel D. Olson** passed away on July 7, 2023. While in Vietnam he served onboard the USS White River (LSMR-536) from 1965-67. Daniel is survived by his wife Laurel.



Mark E. Harris Sr.

Member **Mark E. Harris Sr.** passed away on April 12, 2023. While in Vietnam he served with the 1097th Transportation Company (Medium Boat) from January 1969 to July 1969.



Donald K. Bullard

Honorary Member **Donald K. Bullard** (RADM USN Ret.) passed away on July 11, 2023. During his 39-year Naval career Admiral Bullard became the first Commander of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC). He was tasked with ramping up the new Riverine Group ONE, which included Riverine Squadrons ONE, TWO and THREE. The unit would later serve in combat during the Iraq war. It was the first time that Navy riverine forces had been active since the Vietnam War. RADM Bullard is survived by, Katherine, his wife of 50 years.

Member **James "Jim" G. Keller Jr.** passed away on June 10, 2023. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 92, River Assault Division 92 onboard T-92-9 and R-92-2 from August 1968 to July 1969. Jim is survived by his wife Nancy.



Member **Jackie "Jack" Wayne Steinman** passed away on July 18, 2023. While in Vietnam he served with 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division from November 1968 to November 1969. He is survived by Sandra, his wife of 44 years. Jack was a highly decorated soldier, including the Distinguished Service Cross, citation, below.

CITATION:

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Specialist Fourth Class Jackie W. Steinman, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division. Specialist Four Steinman distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 14 May 1969 while serving as team leader during a reconnaissance-in-force operation near Thu Thua in Long An Province. As the members of his unit swept through a defense nipa palm grove, they ran on to a concealed bunker complex and were pinned down by hostile automatic weapons fire only ten meters from the enemy. Specialist Steinman assaulted a machine gun emplacement to his immediate front and eliminated it with hand grenades. Then, showering the fortifications around him with the last of his grenades, he secured the enemy machine gun and returned to his platoon's position. After obtaining more ammunition, he began maneuvering toward a member of his squad who lay isolated behind a hostile position. Slowly crawling to the rear of the nearest bunker, he destroyed the position with a grenade. At that moment he spotted a North Vietnamese soldier approaching the American. Specialist Steinman quickly fired his rifle killing the aggressor and laid an intense barrage of fire to cover his squad member's withdrawal. Noticing one last enemy bunker, Specialist Steinman worked his way to an advantageous position and opened fire. When his weapon jammed, he threw his remaining grenades. As he moved toward his platoon, he encountered a wounded American. Using the casualty's rifle, he provided suppressive fire until an ambulance helicopter arrived to evacuate the wounded soldier. Specialist Four Steinman's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



Jackie Wayne Steinman





The Ballad of Willow Hill

(A Tribute to Jackie “Jack” Wayne Steinman, By Andrew Taylor)

(Sent by George Fearnow, B Co. 2nd/60th 9th Inf Div)

It was down in the Delta, the year was 69,

We were the “DLIC,” THE TROOPS THE 9TH LEFT BEHIND

It all began on the fourteenth day of May,

When the Two-Six Platoon met Charlie and his cousins, the NVA.

It was a firefight characterized by violence and surprise.

When the fighting started the platoon was surrounded on all four sides.

In the midst of the confusion, agony, and Hell,

There was a rifleman that we all knew so well.

Some called him “Jack,” because he had courage, guts and skills,

No one called him by his real name, just “Willow Hill.”

Using fire, and maneuver, and hand grenades, too,

He charged the enemy line, killing all but a few.

The enemy machine gun fire didn’t faze “Willow” at all,

But every time he would fire two VC would fall.

When his sixteen jammed, he let out a shout,

“My rifle is gone; but I’m gonna see what this AK is all about!”

So, he grabbed an AK-47, off a dead NVA,

And continued to fire, and maneuver in a Hell of a way.

When the smoke had cleared, and the fighting was done,

“Willow” had killed the enemy with their own favorite gun.

This is ballad is true, and I say it is so,

Because I was there, and witnessed the whole damn show.

If you are ever in Illinois and want to show your respect and goodwill,

“You don’t know Jack,” if you don’t visit Willow Hill.

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)
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 and Dennis Mattox 1st/501st 101st Abn. KIA 08/23/69
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 Nancy VanDruff, in memory of Robert E. VanDruff, T-91-5/T92-4 (11/68-11/69)
 In memory of my Brothers, B Co. 2nd 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division



Mobile Riverine Force Association

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