



River Currents



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THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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Message From the Radio Shack



Harry Hahn

Happy Spring-time from the Radio Shack. Time flies! This is the 25th such message I have written for you.

I am on my way to a warm weather vacation this week. After much negotiating, I am pleased to announce that our 2025 MRFA reunion will be back in St. Louis at the Sheraton Westport Chalet. This is the same place we had the reunion last year and in 2021. Our negotiations were successful at obtaining only a five dollar increase in the room rate. These days, with inflation being what it is, and costs skyrocketing, we feel this is quite an accomplishment. A hot buffet breakfast is included with the room. If you were to go out for breakfast and have a great meal like this at a restaurant, you would be looking at a \$20 per person breakfast. So, you are getting quite the deal here. Our goal for the next reunion is to duplicate the program we had accomplished this last year. With so many people saying it was the best reunion ever, we are working towards meeting or exceeding this high bar that we set.

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Jack Ewing, Our Honorary “Old Reliable, River Rat” From “Across the Pond!”

It was good to be back at the Mobile Riverine Force Association reunion in 2023. I haven't attended a reunion or been back across the pond from the United Kingdom since the 2019 reunion in Nashville, Tennessee.

After Frank Jones and his lovely wife Linda offered to help me out with a hotel, I had no excuses to not attend this one.

Great to catch up with old faces and good to see some new faces too. Also, to see veterans from other branches at the reunion. There was even some PBR Sailors and a Navy Seal who attended this year.

It was warming to see the camaraderie between the Army and Navy, even men and their old Officers.

My display of original memorabilia was in the RivRon Room. Which thanks to the Sater family and the Peat family was well stocked with beer(!) and other refreshments – and thanks to Gerald Burleigh for keeping us all well fed with his cold cuts of meat.

I got to chat and most importantly listen to the vets at my display table. Many of whom recognized the memorabilia or wore the patches, berets and jungle jackets on display. Some veterans even served with some of the named items I had with me.



I met RivRon 9, veteran Larry Hare, who came down to see his original patched green utility shirt which I have in my collection. The last time Larry saw the shirt was in August of 1969 when he took it off and threw it in a barrel in Dong Tam when rotating home. I purchased the shirt from a rag mill picker in Thailand some years ago.

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

Message From The Radio Shack

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Mike Harris has been working with Arballo Productions in the final editing process of the “Mobile Riverine Force” documentary. No dates yet for the premier, but I can assure you that it will be happening in the not-too-distant future. The Arballos have a deadline that was set by PBS and that date must be met. We appreciate your patience as we have had so many delays that were unforeseen, but our full story will be finally told in this movie.

Lastly, I have been working with several people attempting to undo a mistake that was made some years ago. In 1967, at the battle of Ap Bac, also known as operation Coronado, Padre Johnson, our Navy Field Medical Officer and Chaplain, risked his life multiple times to save Army personnel that were trapped and wounded just after being inserted by a Tango boat. In attempting to upgrade his medal to the Congressional Medal of Honor, firsthand witnesses and testimony are still required. Anyone who was there in June 1967, and witnessed this heroic act, please contact me by email or phone call and I will arrange for your testimony to be taken. If you don't have a computer or email, please call me at 847-722-2509.

Thanks to all who work and support our great organization.

Harry Hahn, President, SparksRivRon13@aol.com



The Quilts of Valor Foundation is honored to help all members of the MRFA in receiving a comforting and healing “Quilt of Valor.”

On June 14, 2023, forty Charlie Company survivors of the Ap Bac June 1967 battle in Vietnam were awarded Quilts of Valor at their reunion in Las Vegas. On September 16, 2023, eleven members of the MRFA were awarded their Quilt of Valor (QOV) in St. Louis. Since September, sixty additional veterans in the 3rd Platoon of Charlie Company have been contacted regarding requesting and receiving their Quilt of Valor. These quilts are made by the over 11,000 volunteers of the Quilts of Valor Foundation, a national organization whose mission is to cover veterans and service members with quilts of comfort and healing and are awarded at no charge. As you may have witnessed at the last reunion in St. Louis, the presentation is a thank you for your service and a “WELCOME HOME” that many never received. The comments in River Currents' last issue show the emotional gratitude from many of the attendees.

By requesting a QOV from the www.qovf.org website you will receive a presentation and a Quilt made by folks who really care about the service and sacrifice made by our veterans. Quilts presented to date in QOVF's 20-year history total 369,697, with 33,636 in 11 months of 2023.

If you were not able to attend either the reunion in Las Vegas or the reunion in St. Louis, and would like to receive your QOV, please contact outreach@QOVF.org for additional information.

As a Recon E/3/47/9th Inf Div (67) Brother in War and Peace, I received my QOV not realizing that it would have such a great effect on me, and that I would be so honored to help all receive and feel the love from fellow Americans.

John ROWDY Oxley
John.oxley@qovf.org



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The St. Louis Reunion of Alpha 91-3! A Celebration of Life!



Boat Captain Glenn Fittro, Twin .50 gunner Jim "Rapid-Fire Rozie" Rozema, Boatswain Mate Ken "Baby Boats" Sutton, Engineman Art Mann and Radioman - Gunner Ed "The Greek" Gorczyk

(Missing from the photo is 20mm gunner Henry "Hank" Dotson who was unable to attend, and Dan Rider who we're still searching for. Maybe one of the MRFA members knows his whereabouts.)

Our group of guys served together on A-91-3 during 1967, and into 1968. We had an original crew of five that trained together at Mare Island and arrived in-country around mid-December of 1967. Later on, two extra guys were assigned to the boat, bringing our headcount to seven. We all got along well and continue our friendship to this day. Of the seven guys, we have six who reconnected through the MRFA and the Internet. We are still searching for the seventh crewmember, Dan Rider.

I believe much of what has bonded our small crew was the shared experiences of battle. We depended on each other to get us through each firefight, and with every combat operation we grew together tighter.

In one particularly intense ambush in which our boat took multiple rocket hits while leading a column of Tangos and Monitors up a narrow river on May 8, 1968, we ended up separated from the column and fighting for our lives, just twenty meters from the Viet Cong position.



Ed Gorczyk & Art Mann

While riding in point position, the VC opened fire with multiple rockets. The first round hit the coxswain flat on the starboard side, severely wounding our boat captain and the radio operator to a lesser degree. The explosion took out steering and engine controls while jamming the throttles in all-ahead full. As the Alpha boat gained speed another rocket hit the stern near the waterline causing the boat to turn slowly to starboard. The uncontrollable boat made a wide arch and ran into the riverbank approximately twenty meters from the VC position. We killed the over-revving runaway engines which sounded like they were going to blow any second.

There we were, lodged on a riverbank, next to the enemy, with no power and the entire crew wounded to varying degrees. With smoke and small fires visible in the lower berthing compartment, we grouped on the back of the boat to make our stand. It was the worst firefight of our lives and we weren't sure if we would make it out alive. I picked up an M79 and fired a round: it didn't detonate. I thought it was a dud. I reloaded and fired a second round, when it didn't explode, I suddenly realized we were too close to the enemy for the rounds to arm themselves. I then used it like a mortar firing nearly straight up to give the round enough distance to arm before falling into the jungle in front of us. The other guys were on our .30 cal. machine guns,



Jim Rozema, Ken Sutton, and Ed Gorczyk 1968

M16's and shotgun, returning a storm of fire. Other Alpha boats were providing cover fire, and making firing runs behind us. They were close in and taking rocket hits. A Monitor standing off a short way pumped 40 mm cannon rounds off to our port side where the VC were embedded. Disobeying orders to retreat and regroup, the Monitor, taking direct rocket fire, came alongside and threw ropes to our boat and dragged us out of the kill zone and likely saved all our lives that day. I believe that particular life and death situation strengthened our bond, which holds to this day. Jim Rozema composed a short response regarding how he feels when he's with our crew at the reunions:

"When I go to the reunion, I can for two days know that I can be at peace, because Alpha 3 will not let anything happen to me. I can also sleep for two nights, and not be scared that when I wake up, I will not be looking at palm trees because I will be protected. Also, to feel the brotherhood that only a Nam vet knows." Jim Rozema

A while later, some Alpha boat crews, including our crew, were reassigned to other craft. I don't know if it was because Alpha boats were notorious for being "shrapnel magnets," with a lot of guys being wounded, but some of us were rotated to relatively safer Tango and Monitor boats.

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A Celebration of Life!

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During our time in Vietnam our group of seven guys were in a lot of firefights and accumulated between us, one Silver Star, four Bronze Stars and thirteen Purple Hearts, besides all the other medals and citations awarded to the Mobile Riverine Force. I only mention the awards as a testimony to the situations we shared and endured. Ten of those Purple Hearts occurred between the start of Tet, and May 1968. I believe the ferocity and intensity of battle in which you depend on a small crew or squad to get you through these life and death situations is what keeps us so close.

Also, I was looking at the list of Navy WIA's and saw that April and May 1968 were some of the highest numbers for Purple Heart awards and 1968 is the year of most Vietnam war casualties. Probably a lot related to the Tet offensive.

Ed Gorczyk
A-91-3 1967-68

Jack Ewing *continued from page 1*

It was a memorable experience to meet the man who originally wore the shirt during his tour 1968 - 1969.

I am glad there now is more light shone on the Mobile Riverine Force - I think the upcoming documentary on the MRF will spark new interest and give people a better understanding of what the MRF did during the Vietnam War, what the Mobile Riverine Force achieved and the important part they played in American History.

As time goes on, people come and go, and memories fade but as long as we continue to archive and preserve the history, it will always live on.

I will continue to document and record the artifacts the MRF used and wore. I still hope to one day produce a book about it, which will focus on divisional and boat patches, uniforms, berets and other unique accoutrements associated with the Army and Navy in the Mobile Riverine Force.

As always, I appreciate the help of the Mobile Riverine Force Association veterans. Much of this would not be possible without your help.

If you have any original items, and information you would like to show, or share, please get in touch with me at:

Jack.ewing.hk@outlook.com

Jack Ewing
Millbridge Stud
Stanwell Road
Horton
SL39PH
United Kingdom

As for the rest of my trip; I met up with two friends who flew over from the UK to meet me after the reunion.

We hired a car and drove down (while constantly reminding myself to drive on the right side of the road in the States!) from St Louis to the musical city of Memphis. Saw the lights and sounds, then carried on down to vibrant New Orleans, where we took an airboat tour out on the bayous and swamps in Jean Lafitte. The woman in the gift shop was perplexed when I enquired if she has seen any old military airboats in use from the Vietnam War. However, when I came back after the hour tour, she was keen to learn more... well there it is...

I hope to see everyone at the next reunion.

All the best,
Jack Ewing

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!

Memories of 9th Infantry "Advanced Infantry Training," and NCO School, and Navy S.E.R.E. Training



Al Breininger, CSO, RivDiv 91, Oct 1966 – Dec 1967. I was part of the first 135 Navy personnel who trained for the Mobile Riverine Force. None of the formal organization of Flotilla, Squadron, or Division had been commissioned, as yet.

We all reported to the Naval Amphibious Base and Coronado by a Monday Morning in early October, 1966, to learn of our new adventure. We reported to a large auditorium if my memory serves me correctly. And training began. Squadron and Division structure had been previously established so people were immediately given their assignments.

The initial days included the normal pre-deployment briefs. Where we were going, a rough schedule of our next 12 weeks, compulsory swim screening, preparation of wills and getting our personal affairs in effect.

An early lecture included "the Religions of Vietnam". It was a captivating two-hour lecture by a mustang Lt. with a sharp delivery. Lt. Roy Boehm, USN was the instructor and he held our attention with his delivery. Lt. Boehm was the first Acting CO of SEAL Team 2, and after setting that up, he went to Vietnam to set up VN Navy seals. He got to know his enemy, and their motivation by having dinner about every 2 months while in Vietnam with a Buddhist Priest and the Head VC of the Mekong Delta. The VC boss and Lt. Boehm each respected each other as "warriors," and understood that their loyalty to their country might sometime face them off as mortal enemies. Read the book "First SEAL" if you find that a fascinating concept.

Anyway, training continued with SERE, learning about engines, guns, first aid, driving LCM 6's – those were the only boats available, Our Tangos, were being built as we trained. The first time we saw a real MRF boat was 6 months later in country.

In November our training shifted to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in a variety of buildings. The NIOTC building did not exist in the fall of 1966. Boat training included operating in Suisun Slough, as it did until NIOTC training closed. Initial boat operations had us practicing amphibious landing tactics, because it was not known how we were going to land the troops. Once in country we quickly learned that training had been all wrong, as boats pushing up on a mud bank can slide back sideways if you use the full power approach to a normal sand amphibious beach.

I had the privilege of being the first MRF Officer instructor assigned to go back to NIOTC to teach after my year in the delta. Several others, of all rates and ranks, soon joined along with several PBR veterans, and we focused on improving the tactical side of waterborne operations to make them more realistic. One problem for training the MRF folks was that it took until about the beginning of 1969 before an actual in-country model MRF boat was in the training inventory at NIOTC. We had to use the basic unconverted LCM 6, far too long.

NIOTC was an interesting place because we also had a side mission of evaluating new equipment. We evaluated using low level light TV monitoring for base defense, did the first tests on the water cannons, tested different prototype boats, and evaluated electronic sensors use in the Riverine environment. We helped develop the initial tactics, and then specified and deployed the first unit of "Duffel Bag" Operations.

So much was learned during the first six months in country, after starting operations with the Army in Mid-January, 1967.

The first boats we used in Vietnam were seven RAG boats borrowed from the Vietnamese Navy. Their call sign was "HOGBACK," and believe me, they were hogs! We had no maintenance parts, because all that equipment would arrive when our actual boats arrived from the states, starting in late February, 1967. So, it was necessary to beg for parts from other Navy operations when we could find them.

Steve Jenkins, Sgt., B 4/47th, March 68, to March 1969. I did the normal Army basic training followed by AIT, both at Ft. Jackson in 1967. Following AIT, I was sent to NCO school at Ft. Benning. I was in the third class of the "Instant NCO's" and the training was pretty intense, as it was a modified version of OCS. I was then posted to Ft. Polk in January 1968 for my OJT portion of NCO school where I was assigned to an Infantry AIT company and basically did AIT all over again but as an NCO.

NCO school had some pretty tough training. We went out one day to learn how to rappel off a 60-70-foot tower, which turned out to be pretty cool even though I'm no fan of heights. At the end of the day, we all thought we were going to hop on the "deuce and a half's," and head back to the barracks. Nope, we then had a nice four-mile forced march back, we followed this up the next day after training all day with an eight-miler, and the following day with a twelve-miler. Not everybody made all of them, due to blisters and other ailments, but I managed. Of course, I was all of twenty years old and weighed about 150 pounds. I know I was in pretty good shape when I got out of NCO school.

After two weeks of leave, after Ft. Polk, off I went to Vietnam, in March 1968. I was sent to Bearcat for the 9th's in-country training. The only part of the training that was a little scary was the night setup outside of the base camp. Looking back at that later on I wished that all my patrols had been so easy. After the training, I was supposed to go to the 2nd of the 47th Mech, but I got called out of the shipping formation, along with a couple of other guys, and we were sent to Bravo Company, 4th of the 47th. Bravo Company had lost five or six guys KIA, in an ambush and needed new replacements. Not what you wanted to hear as one of the replacements. We landed at Dong Tam, and were rushed off the Caribou and left standing on the runway as the plane turned around and took off. Eventually, someone came and got us and we stayed in Dong Tam for a couple of days, as the ships were off on a mission. I spent my whole year with Bravo Company, and went home in March 1969.

Pat Kelly, C-151-1. Most searing memory was seeing CDR Deal being beaten by the instructors at SERE. Also SERE, learning how to react to interrogation, and attempting to escape, only to be submerged in a barrel of cold water. I remember Tommy Gaudet sleeping in the "box" and the look on the two instructors faces when they found him. Only years later did I realize the elite character of our unit and the planning to train us. NIOTC was enjoyable to me. Instructors were excellent.

In country, I remember having to turn all of our U.S. currency in, except for a nickel and a dime. Fortunately, none of us were captured.

John W Weiss. Charlie Company, 2/60th, 9th Infantry Division, 10/68 to 2/69. I took my basic training at Fort Dix, in New Jersey. Not a lot of stories from there. Advanced Infantry Training at Fort Polk in Louisiana. Fort Polk was a mixed bag of nuts. The cadre was rarely seen. We were led by NCO's that just came from NCO school. The upper brass didn't tell them what we were doing. I

think the biggest thing that stands out in my mind is this. One Saturday we got up about 0400 hours. ate breakfast, and then sat around until 0900 hours. The cattle trucks picked us up, minus any permanent cadre. We were driven somewhere. The cattle trucks took the other troops that were there, back. We were left in the middle of nowhere. After several hours, somebody got the idea that we were abandoned. One of the NCOs flagged down a passing car and told the driver of our plight. Later the cattle trucks came and returned us to our company. To this day, I have no idea where we went and why. There are more stories from Fort Polk. I think this stands out the most.

Dick Sowa, T-131-3 and RAID 73, 1969-1970. For me, the most vivid memories are SERE training in Warner Springs. It started out cold and damp, but then started snowing, and by the time we did the evasion and POW parts, there were several inches of wet snow on the ground. Part of SERE was pleasurable. Navigating with a compass was a piece of cake. As a Boy Scout, I had done it a lot, and had that mastered. The evasion part was also pretty easy. Going hungry for the whole thing was hard, but tolerable. The worst part was the POW portion. I managed to get slapped around a lot, so it felt like my teeth were loose. Right after SERE I had a month of leave built up, and when I got home, my mother was beside herself. My face was black and blue, and she threatened to call her congressman. Calming her down, and waiting for the bruises to fade, left pretty vivid memories for me.

Tom Scott. I went aboard the USS Colleton as a member of the pre-commissioning crew at the Philadelphia Navy Yard on 4 Nov 1966, straight from completing FTG "A" School, in Bainbridge MD. On 9 November, several of us were sent to NAVPHIBSCHOOL, Little Creek, Norfolk for SERE training.

I went through SERE for a couple of weeks of classes on survival, escape and evasion methods, Code of Conduct training and some history & background

regarding our involvement in Vietnam, followed by a week in the winter woods at Ft. Picket, VA.

My experience with the week in the woods was sort of fun. We had a group of nine guys. We foraged the c-rats that had been left there, they gave us a live chicken, and we also foraged the feed corn that had been put out for the deer. We made some very filling hominy from that. We also had a guy from Louisiana who found a coral snake which we roasted (it tasted like chicken). I don't remember starving during this survival phase.

After a couple of nights camping out under the snow flurries (what did this have to with the jungle), we were told to make our way overnight to a camp without getting captured, and staying off the roads. There was a full moon, and we had a compass and map. I volunteered to lead us to our destination without getting caught, a goal we accomplished. We paid a price for it however, as the woods were full of brambles and by staying off the roads, our fatigues were in full tatters by the time we arrived. Of course, the camp where we arrived was a POW camp and we were the POWs. The camp consisted of a bunch of wooden huts with wooden shelves to crawl into.

When all the groups of nine arrived, they lined us all up had us strip to nothing in the Virginia winter. Some of our captors walked around inspecting our personal parts and calling out the anomalies that they observed. They also wacked on some of the whackers with some sticks.

The other thing I remember was being sent to the huts, and then, one by one we were interrogated. We were supposed to limit our answer to name, rank and serial number. I have same vague recollections of being "tortured" but I don't recall it being abusive or painful.

All in all, I found it to be a little adventure for a "gung-ho" kid who wanted to play war without consequences.

Regarding other training experiences I had. The first was the total lack of training I was given to stand watch on the flight deck and when a dust-off was landing. I was merely handed the lighted wands and told to provide some sort of guidance to the pilots. I was never trained what the signals were. I did notice that the pilots were looking down at the deck, not me, so I stopped worrying about it.

The final experience was regarding the choice of duty station after an in-country deployment. I applied for Swift boats. They didn't give me that, but they did send me to the "C" school at Bainbridge, MD for the swift boat fire control equipment, with orders on to a DD. I turned out to be the only US Navy sailor in the "C" school. The rest were from South America where the obsolete equipment was being used on ships that we surplused to the foreign navies. The class included a field trip to the Carling Brewery in Baltimore. It was an eight-week vacation. I never saw the fire control equipment after that, nor I was ever trained on the DD's fire control equipment, even though I was an FTG2 by then.

Warm regards,
Tom

Tom Scott, Commissioning Crew USS
Colleton, APB-36, 11-66 to 4-68.
12533 Niego Ln
San Diego, CA 92128-3025
858-486-6033 (h)
619-384-9042 (c)

See my hobby site: <http://nesbittsorange.com>

Jim Gleason. 9th Infantry Division. I arrived in Nam, in Dec 1968. We were then assigned specific units. (in my case I was assigned 2nd squad, 2nd platoon 4/47th replacing another Sgt.) They had us practice shooting, tossing hand grenades, first aid, hygiene, etc.

That's it. However, I should point out that much of that SERE type stuff was taught in Advanced Infantry Training stateside.

In my case I attended NCO school at Ft Benning, after AIT for about six

months prior to shipping out. We were to be replacement Sgt's for active combat units who lost a Sgt. Despite being called "Shake and Bakes" the training was the most intense I ever experienced. It included a lot of SERE, and Ranger survival courses. Night navigation, booby trap detection, Leadership training big time. Only two of my class wound up in the 9th. The rest went to 1st Cav, 101st, 82nd airborne, etc. I should point out that half of the 9th was mechanized, meaning not Riverine. They operated with tanks, APC's, gun trucks, etc. Only half the 9th were in the MRF. There may have been consolidated command somewhere, but I'm not aware of it.

Randy Peat. I tried to escape twice. I had carved a small gun from a piece of wood, and stuffed it in the lining of my coat. When I was placed in the small box, I pretended I was having a breakdown and they opened the box door and I jumped out and pointed the gun. Unfortunately, there were two guards and the other one I didn't see, and he was able to stop my escape. Back into the box I went. My next attempt was from the POW compound. There was a machine gun tower in one corner, and there was scaffolding that ran along one wall. I determined they would not be able to see me as long as I stayed under the scaffolding. When the camp commandant came inside the compound to harass us, I noticed they did not lock the gate behind him. Being as stealthy as I could, I stepped out the open gate, got under the scaffolding and ran to the end of the compound. There I had to do a 90° turn to the left, which did expose me for about fifty feet or so. As soon as I did the turn, the machine gun started barking. I kept running and hid in the woods, and after so many minutes, you had to turn yourself in which I did. Back into the compound I went.

Even though I knew it was blanks I'll never forget the feeling when that gun started to shoot. I was so puckered up you could not have pulled a greased toothpick out of me.

David Gianini. I went to SERE in June 1967. When we were in the POW compound I was pulled out with several other guys to break up ammo crates, for firewood. It was a chilly morning, but as the sun rose, I was getting warm. I was watching the guard on the catwalk above the compound and he was getting warm. When he started to take his jacket off, he leaned his rifle on the railing so I took off for the barbed wire fence about twenty-five yards away. I dove between the strands of barbed wire and caught the back of my knee but the momentum took me through the fence. I got up and started running as fast as I could. Right through small trees and brush.

We were told in the briefing if you escaped, you could not cross a road. Within seconds I came to a road so I burrowed into a large brush pile as the sirens blared from the camp. The sound of trucks speeding down the roads was everywhere. Two guards got out and searched the area around my brush pile and stopped on its edge and lit cigarettes. They stood there smoking and said where is that m'fer? They looked up in the trees not down in the brush pile.

They finally gave up, and minutes later, the camp siren went off summoning that I should return. I walked up to the gate and reported myself back to the problem.

I was escorted back to the "commandant's" hooch, and the officer asked what I wanted. Got two bologna sandwiches, coffee and a couple smokes. It was a great day to be young. After two hours I was escorted back to the compound always looking for a way to escape again!

Walter Meyer. USS Benewah APB-35. We did our thing out of Little Creek. We were taken to an Army installation in Virginia, in November. Other than being cold, three things stick in my memory, (1) we were given a dead chicken I think to smoke, (2) a couple of the guys snuck off the area and found fresh road kill, (3) a guy in our group had done a year of Army ROTC and knew how close to the "closed latrine" markers where they

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buried unused C rations, we ate better than most.

Paul Dino DeNicola. B 3/60th and HHC 3/60th. It was 1968 AIT at Fort Polk, LA. There were food shortages, unless you were in the front of the chow line. I went to the Lt. to complain, and things got better for a while. The barracks next to us had their pipes freeze so that their bathrooms were unusable. Instead of fixing the pipes they decided to have that platoon share ours. Needless to say, there was overcrowding and soon we ran out of toilet paper. Welcome to the Army.

Nicholas Miller. I was a Lt(jg) (Number two in command) of RivDiv 152, from mid-July68 to mid-June69. We spent the first six to eight weeks in Vung Tau, activating our Program V new boats that had just arrived by freighter. I arrived a month after most of the RivDiv152 sailors so my DOR was mid July 69, compared to most of the guys in mid-June. After we got the boats equipped and tested, we transited to the MRB at Dong Tam. We were the RivDiv that operated mostly with Vietnamese Marines (They WERE serious soldiers). We did some occasional 9th Inf Div lifts but the US soldiers were mostly air-mobile by the time we arrived and the US soldiers did NOT like the boats (as compared to helos). The Vietnamese Marines loved us--we were the best transport and combat support they had ever had in combat. And they were fresh from the battle of Hue/Tet.

Anyway, my last day in Nam was the lift/battle in which Lt Kelley (RivDiv 152 CO) received the Medal of Honor--a long story in itself. The new squadron commander (Cdr. Henry) was riding the operation as an observer on my monitor. As we were extracting after the battle and back on the big river, headed to the MRB, Cdr. Henry asked me when I was due to leave (since most the 152 planners were in the process of leaving). I said "another month." He said "You should go now with the others." I said, "YES, SIR!" and was in Saigon the next

day and on Travis AFB tarmac the day after.

Ralph Boblitt. RivRon 112. Arrived, February 68. Got transferred to Staff around May, and extended till March 69. In the prison part of this training when we first got there, it was still cold, since it was winter of 1967. They asked for volunteers to go get drinking water. One of the guys in our area raised his hand. When he came back, they had dunked him in the water, and he was soaked from head to toe. Of course, at that point we were all in our underwear, and it was cold in Whidbey Island. He came down with pneumonia, and we didn't see him until we were in Vietnam for a couple of weeks.

Frank Jones. Captain, T-44. It started when we first arrived at the POW camp, at Whidbey Island. One of the guards dragged me out of my chair and smacked me around in front of the whole class. I avoided being caught and got to the safe tent, but I didn't get any food, just another smacking. This continued all week. He dragged me off the top of the bunker, in the POW camp. I escaped, and came back to the gate, at the camp, looking for my apple and orange. I took one bite and he took them away from me. It ended when the American flag was raised.

I wanted to kick his ass, but I knew I couldn't. That's when I found out his name was exactly the same as mine; "Frank Jones." He actually apologized, and gave me a big hug. Then, we went to eat spaghetti, and I ate too much. I heaved my guts out. Good times!

Paul George. RivDiv 112, T-112-9 from June 68, to November 68 and then A-112-8, from November 68 to July 69. I went to SERE training at Whidbey Island, back in the spring of 1968. I was expecting cold, damp, rainy conditions, but the weather actually was pretty nice for the week we were there. It might have rained once or twice, but nothing that really registered.

The first couple of days of classroom training, we were turned loose and told to evade! We were given some beef and we made some beef jerky in a hollowed-out tree. It actually wasn't too bad. I ate some carrot-like roots that I found. We were supposed to bring whatever edibles we found to the group. Someone managed to catch a young rabbit... not much for the group we had. Anyway, we put the rabbit, roots and other greens we found into a pot (or can) and made some soup. It was not very good at all and if I remember correctly, it stunk like @#%\$!

I remember sleeping on the side of a hill in a sleeping bag fashioned out of a parachute. It was a little uncomfortable, but it was warm and I seem to remember sleeping quite well!

After a couple of days, we were supposed to turn ourselves in to the pursuers, and enter SERE's POW camp. It was simply a fenced area with a few guard towers surrounding the place. Inside the compound, I remember several ditches and some lean-to's made out of plywood. The SERE instructors acted as prison guards, and messed around with us a bit. If I remember correctly, a couple of the guys were "water-boarded" as part of a simulated interrogation. They never really gave us a chance to sleep. At night, they had us go to sleep in the lean-to. We were told to take our boots off, tie them together and place them in a pile outside the lean-to. I held on to mine! After a few minutes, an alarm (or siren) went off and they said it was an air raid. They killed all the lights and made everyone leave the lean-to to get into one of the ditches in the dark. Of course, the guards kicked all the boots around so a lot of the guys couldn't find the correct boots. I had heard about this stunt earlier and luckily, held on to my boots and was OK.

We had an E5 or E6 that they broke down. The guards put him on guard duty with a rifle and actually got him to shoot one of his own people with a gun!

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From The Editor

Terry Sater



Frank Jones sent out the above photo, and it has had a real impact on me. Seeing Rich and Ralph share a moment, years ago, makes me think our Brothers are having their own reunion, somewhere up above.

Ralph Bigelow was one of the first guys I got to know, at my first reunion. He gave me a Riv Ron 13 patch. Over the years, he continued to give me gifts of patches, and pins. He was a wealth of information on everything about the Mobile Riverine Force Association, the 9th Infantry, and all weapons systems. At our last reunion, he gave me a bunji cord bracelet in the Vietnam colors. I cherish it, and think of Ralph when I wear it.

Ralph lived life on his own terms, that's for sure. He's been everywhere, and done everything. I'm sure he could appear gruff, at times, but he had a heart of gold, and I'll miss him.

"Ralph Bigelow, whose Tango boat was sunk by a Viet Cong mine at Snoopy's Nose, had a great forty-year career with Detroit Edison, as a lineman. He has two great children, in Michelle and Ralph. He also has two lovely grandchildren, Natalie and Whitney. Ralph has expressed his pleasure of knowing and have served with the greatest group of sailors and soldiers he's ever had the honor to know."

Fair winds and following seas, Ralph.
We'll be seeing you.

At our 2011 Reunion, we knew Rich Corrick was terminal. Someone asked me to say a few words to the group about Rich. Afterwards, I asked Rich to speak, not knowing if he would. With a big smile, Rich came up and spoke. While I can't repeat his exact words, I know he was facing death with no fear, and no

bitterness. He was grateful for his life, and his friends. His brothers, in the MRFA. I know we all still think of him. Bravo Zulu, Rich.

From River Currents, 2012

"MRFA Plank Owner (1992) and Member, **Richard L. Corrick**, passed away suddenly on February 29, 2012, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Our Brother passed over quickly while surrounded by his loving family so he and was not alone. While in Vietnam Rich served on R-112-1 from February 1967 to March 1968. You may contact the family C/O: Miss Patty Corrick (Rich's spouse) – patty-corrick@yahoo.com

"Richard & I were in RivDiv-112 together and I have known him since 1966, may he rest in peace, and may God continue to bless his family." – Billy Sanders

"I will never forget Rich's words to everybody in the hospitality room at the last reunion. I was a little surprised that he even got up to speak, but when he spoke, I was blown away with his grace, his courage and his gratefulness

of a life well lived. Courage can be found everywhere, not just on the battlefield. Rich proved that." – Terry Sater

"We seem to lose so many of our brothers. Rich has been a close friend for many years and all of us will surely miss him. The reunions and our trip to DC on Veterans Day will never be the same without him. It seems like time is just eating away at us." – Roy Moseman

"It was definitely sad to come home from the hospital today and learn of Rich's death. He will definitely hold a special place in the hearts of all who knew him. God watch over you Rich." – Don Blankenship

"He will be missed. RIP Brother Corrick. Rich was one of the best of the MRFA. Bravo Zulu" – Bob Pries

"Rich has been my Brother, and Friend since the MRFA reunion started in Hickory, NC, in 1992. He was always ready to help out. Every time you see the Memorial Trailer, think of Rich. If not for him, we would not have the Trailer. Rest in Peace." – Charlie Ardinger – RivRon 15 T-151-11 (05/68-07/69)"

Letter From Henly "Ed" Reed, COL (Ret) USA

Former B Company Commander, 2d Battalion 60th Infantry

Dear Terry,

I was Jack Steinman's Company Commander on the day he performed the gallant actions cited in the Distinguished Service Cross citation. When the Company Clerk and I probably wrote up citation and forwarded it to the Battalion Adjutant, he called me and asked if Jack had been wounded, to which I replied "No, not a scratch!" His response was "that's too bad, because if he had been wounded, I'm sure we could get him the Medal of Honor!"

I served in the US Army for twenty-eight years, and Jack Steinman remains the bravest soldier I ever served with!

Please pass this on to his wife Sarah, with my sincere condolences!

Best Regards,
Ed

TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One



**Gordon
Bruce
Shulze**
Former
Member
Gordon
Bruce

Shulze passed away on July 1, 2023. While in Vietnam he served onboard the USS Satyr (ARL-23) from February 1970 to February 1971 as a Radioman. Bruce was Webmaster of the MRFA website for a few years. After discharge he joined the Oklahoma Army National Guard and later the Army Reserves. He is survived by Rhonda, his wife of 36 years.



**James "Jim" Berry
Gautier**

Member Captain James "Jim" Berry Gautier (USN Ret.) passed away on October 6, 2023 as a result of injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident a month earlier. While in Vietnam he served as Commanding Officer of River Assault Division 111 from October 1968 to May 1969. Jim is survived by his wife Ann.



**Gary
Antoine
Dufrene**
Member

Gary Antoine Dufrene passed away on November 12, 2023. Gary passed away from the effects of agent orange. He was a member of the American Legion and VFW organizations, as well as the MRFA. While in Vietnam he served with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division with the Mortar Platoon from December 1966 to November 1967. Gary is survived by his wife Margie.



Ralph Howard Bigelow
Member Ralph Howard Bigelow passed away on November 1, 2023. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 13, River Assault Division 131 onboard T-131-8 in 1968-69. Ralph assisted in forming the MRFA with Albert Moore in 1992. He was a Board Member and an ever-present figure at all MRFA reunions.



**Philip Ed-
ward Deal**
Philip
Edward
Deal passed
away on

December 28, 2023. While in Vietnam he served with Bravo Company, 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division in 1966-67. Philip is survived by Linda, his wife of 55 years.



**Robert
David
Howington**
Member
Robert
David

Howington passed away on November 20, 2023 after a battle with cancer. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 9, River Assault Division 92 onboard T-92-3 from February 1967 to February 1968.



**Arthur
Delmar
Grant**
Member
Arthur
Delmar
"Buck"

Grant passed away on January 20, 2024. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadrons 13 & 15 from May 1969 to May 1970.



Former
Member
**Dennis
"Denny"
Robert
Meyer**

passed away on January 27, 2024. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 9, River Assault Division 92 onboard R-92-1 from November 1968 to November 1969.

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.

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Timothy Shelton, 4th/39th, KIA 06/25/69,
Steven Murrury, 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
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Charlie Thompson, in Memory of Doyle E. Templeton, 2nd/39th Inf. 9th Inf.
In memory of my Brothers, B Co. 2nd 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division



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