



River Currents



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 1
Spring, 2024

Message From the Radio Shack



Harry Hahn

As we head into the summer months, I am thinking about our reunion next year as the planning has started. The Sheraton Chalet in St. Louis' courtyard renovations are

complete. Now there will be full access to the restaurants and shops there. No walking around the barricades that were present last year. Frank and Linda Jones recently took a trip to this venue and have a report on it in this issue. We are planning on mixing up the bus stops at this next reunion, but the rest of the program, including the Saturday night buffet for our heroes, will pretty much be the same. As we grow older, we are trying to cut down the amount of walking required for meals and activities. The hotel will begin taking room reservations this fall.

Veteran's Day this year should be interesting. As we hold the annual memorial at the wall, hosted by Bob Pries, we also are hoping for a Premier of "Mobile Riverine Force" in Branson, MO on or around Veteran's Day. The Arballos are in final production of our documentary and are about to lay in the voice over track for that movie.

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MRFA REUNION, ST. LOUIS, MO. SHERATON PLAZA -2025!

Here is a picture of the new greenspace at Westport. Start planning to attend next year's reunion! We will be in St. Louis again, on September 18th, through 21st! You will be able to start making reservations on 10/1/24. See you then. The renovation they were going through during our last reunion, is complete!



Frank Jones

Veterans Day 2024 - Washington, D.C.



The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will place wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Veterans Day, Monday, November 11, 2024. We will gather at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at 8:30 a.m. on the 11th and proceed to The Wall at 9:00 a.m.

We have blocked twenty (20) rooms at the Arlington Court Suites, a Clarion Collection Hotel, in Arlington, Virginia, for November 8th – 11th (check out on 11/12). Room rates are \$139.00 (plus tax) for a Studio King (single) and \$149.00 (plus tax) for a Studio Queen (double) per night.

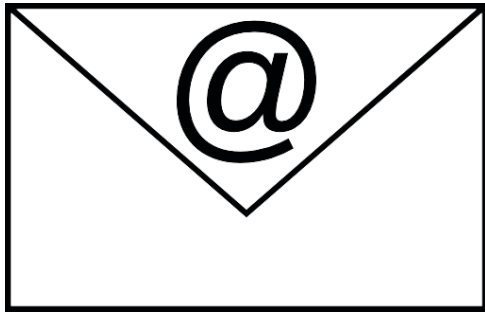
To make reservations under our group number, QX14W6, go to <https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/QX14W6> or you may call 1-703-524-4000. Please state our group number, "QX14W6" and give your arrival and departure dates. Based on my discussions with the hotel management, they expect to be very busy during this time, so I advise you to consider making reservations sooner rather than later.

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



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.



Send your questions, comments, or stories for River Currents to the Editor, at: terry.s8er@yahoo.com.

Message From The Radio Shack

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The final interviews with Navy advisors that were on boats in Vietnam, after our boat turnover, have taken place. I realize it has been a long time coming, but the producers are actively preparing the final touches, and coordinating marketing for the TV debut with PBS. Too early to schedule dates and times of other premiers, but we are close to that process taking place.

We continue to work with other organizations, including the Vietnam Unit Memorial Fund and the Combatant Craft Crewman's Association to perpetuate our Vietnam service. We have donated to the Westchester County Memorial and are attempting to place a Memorial to the Westchester County at the Vietnam Unit Memorial in Colorado. This will specifically honor the Navy and Army KIA from that mining. It was the single largest loss of U.S. Navy lives in the Vietnam War.

Have a safe and pleasant summer!!

Harry Hahn, President, SparksRivRon13@aol.com

Veterans Day 2024

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The Arlington Court Suites, a Clarion Collection Hotel, is located at 1200 N Courthouse Rd, Arlington, Virginia 22201. More information is available at <http://www.arlingtoncourthotel.com/>

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will have a hospitality room available on November 8th - 11th.

Come join us on Veterans Day 2024 as we honor our fallen Brothers and enjoy the camaraderie of your MRFA Brothers and their friends and families.

We look forward to seeing you in D.C.

For more information, you may contact:
Bob (Doc) Pries, Vice President

Find us on Facebook

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, Benawah, 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



Letter From Warren J Thomson, 11bravo, Bravo Co, 3/60th Battalion

To MRFA Brothers,

After attending the recent San Diego conference (last Sept) with my two sons, I reflected afterwards that they asked me a lot questions about my experience in MRF. I had not shared any of my tour with them up to that time. So, sitting around the pool in SD, I opened up to them about some of the experience. I mentioned that I had a lot of 35mm slides that I had taken while in Nam. These slides covered a number of field missions plus life on the USS Benewah, my home base. I had never shown them to any of my family. I guess it was “Out of sight, out of mind.”

My boys asked if I would show them the slides and assorted other memorabilia that I had saved.

They were going to visit our home in Washington state for the Christmas holidays, so we set a date for a slide show. During the fall, I digitized all the slides so we would not have to depend on a fifty-year-old slide projector!

Other family members heard of the upcoming event and wanted me to show them what I had. I have given the slide show twice and have found that it was a profound event for my family and for me. I was surprised how much the slides and the discussion helped me remember trivia about my tour that I had forgotten.

I have to say that it was very comforting to speak of these memories with people who care about me and wanted to know more about Warren, the infantry soldier. I am sure that you will agree with me, that the experience that we had in Nam had a profound effect of on our life journey. My experience in sharing that part of my journey was emotional yet very comforting knowing that my love ones saw a part of me that had been hidden for a long time.

To decide to finally share these memories was profound and not easily made. The reward that I received was special. If you have been holding back sharing your experience, it may be as rewarding to you as it has been for me.

Warren J Thomson
Jan '69 to July '69

Letter From the Editor

I was honored to speak to two 8th Grade school kids, a couple weeks ago. I did my best to represent the MRF, and all Vietnam vets. It wasn't the first time I met the teacher, John Collins. He was in 8th Grade when I first met him, speaking to HIS class. In a short letter, he told me I was the reason he became a history teacher. That's pretty heavy!

John prepped the class by showing them the trailer for our documentary, days before I arrived, and told them a little about me and the MRF. They were ready for questions, when I arrived. I was supposed to speak an hour, but it lasted an hour and a half.

I started the class by asking how many in the class played “Call of Duty.” About half the class raised their hands. I told them; “Interesting. War isn't anything like that. Forget it!”

Next, I asked three or four volunteers to stand. Again, about half the class stood. I asked for a few to sit, so we could just get it down to four. With the four standing, I told the class just to think about which of the four would most likely be reliable, courageous people in a combat situation. I asked them to just think about it to themselves. Unfortunately, the class started pointing and yelling their guesses. I told them they were all wrong, in the sense that you cannot tell what ANYBODY will be like in combat. Nobody even knows how they themselves will react in combat. I told them a bully in the class could totally break, and the little, quiet kid could be one that saves the day. I did that exercise for a reason, because probably like you, I saw some surprising things in Vietnam. I was even surprised at myself. I laughed through one firefight, and cursed God in another. Nobody who hasn't been in combat knows what they will do in combat.

The kids asked me what the living conditions were like. I told them about living on the boats, and when Frank Springer, and I, and our crew all had ringworm, lice and dysentery. I did my best to describe the conditions for the 9th Infantry guys, when they were on ops. I could see the kids wrinkling up their faces.

They asked me if I was ever wounded. I told them the story about how I cut my thumb down to the bone, opening a beer with my K-Bar, after a firefight, and had to stand in sickbay, while men who had been wounded in combat were being tended to. It was an embarrassing memory for me, but all the kids wrote me a letter, and most said that was the favorite part of my talk.

I closed, saying the world they will be living in is being decided on by others, all around the world, right now. I told them that they could either just ride along, or lead the world into it being the world they want. I told them freedom and liberty are worth fighting for, but that I hope they never have to do it.

It is important that Vietnam veterans get to tell our story, rather than leaving it to people who weren't there. I have mentioned before that my grandson told me when he was in 6th Grade, that he had learned about Vietnam. I asked him what he learned. He said; “My teacher said it was a bloody war, and that you killed civilians.” It gives me great peace of mind that future generations will be hearing our story, from us, when our documentary premiers!

Terry Sater

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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 Benawah APB-35



P013 3rd/60th Inf



P014 MRF 3/60



P015 39th Inf



P016 47th Inf



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A Brief Vietnam War History

By Terry Sater

Nguyen Sinh Cung was born in central Vietnam, May 19, 1890. During May, 1941, Nguyen Sinh Cung adopted the nom de guerre "Ho Chi Minh," or, "Bringer of Light." Ho formed the Vietnamese Independence League, or Vietminh. In later years, the South Vietnamese government gave it the derisive label of "Viet Cong."

On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the independence of Vietnam,

saying, "We hold the truth that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This immortal statement is extracted from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. These are undeniable truths."

By the end of 1951, French casualties in Vietnam exceeded 90,000.

January 5, through February 16, 1954.

In over a dozen ambushes fourteen French naval craft (The predecessor to the American Mobile Riverine Force) are sunk or damaged, with nearly 100 men killed, or wounded by the Viet Minh.

March 13, 1954. 12,000 French forces were surrounded by 75,000 Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu. When the French asked the U.S. for help, President Eisenhower warned Congress that the loss of Indochina would set off a chain reaction of nations falling in Southeast Asia "like a row of dominoes." The administration did not receive support from Congress for intervention.

May 7, 1954. 9,500 French at Dien Bien Phu surrendered. The last French radio message is, "We're blowing up everything. Adieu."

In January, 1961, the first American combat soldier was killed in action in Vietnam. By year-end, American troop strength was at 3,200 men.

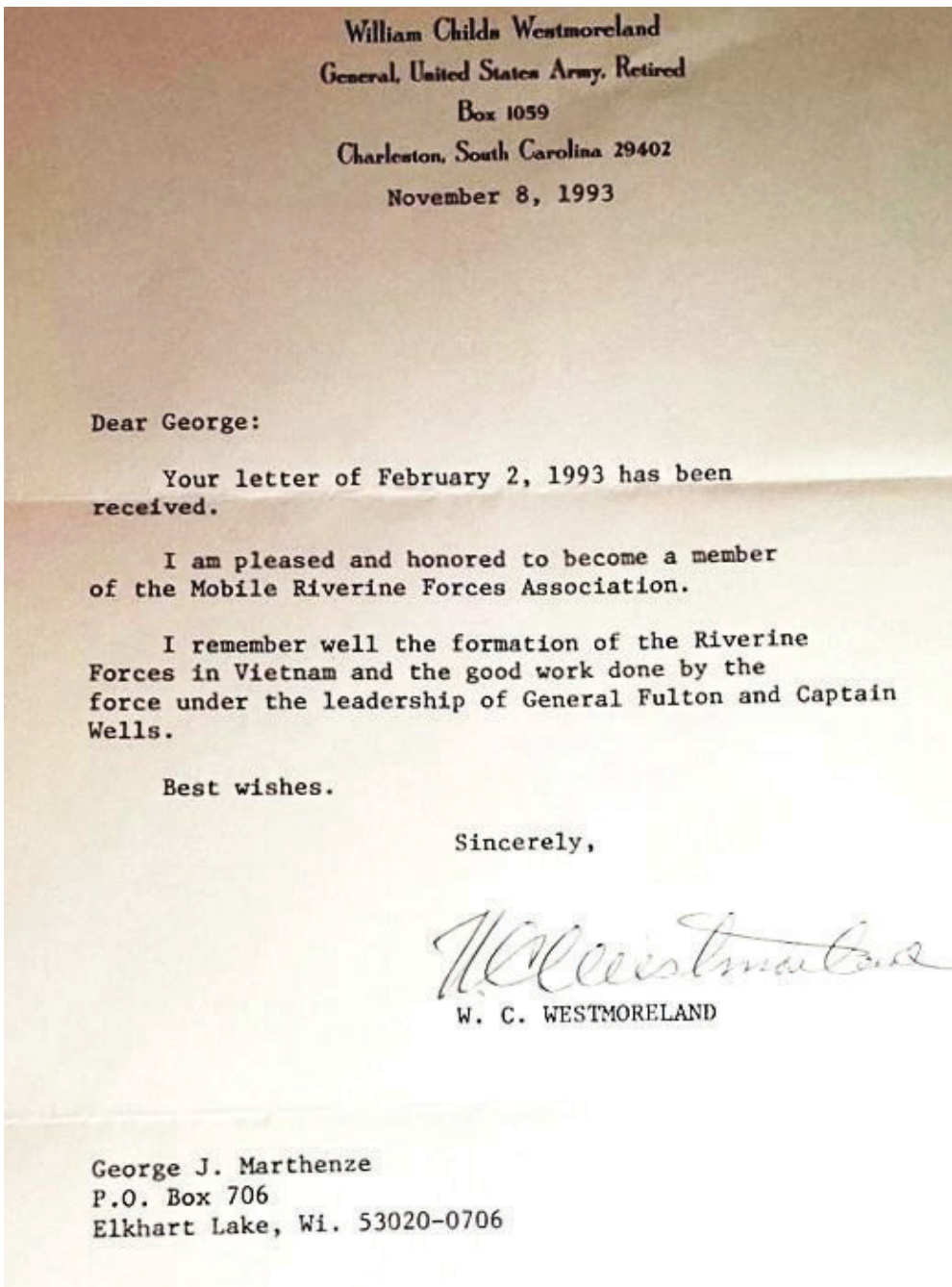
February 8, 1962, the U.S. military headquarters opened in Saigon. From 1960 through 1962, thirty-two U.S. military personnel lost their lives in South Vietnam.

November 15, 1963. Robert McNamara announced that 1,000 advisors would be pulled out of Vietnam in early December and said the US military role would end by 1965.

In April 1964, the American Ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., said; "I would not be surprised to see the Mekong Delta totally cleared of Communist forces by the end of 1965."

August 2, 1964. Three North Vietnamese gunboats in the Gulf of Tonkin attacked the U.S. destroyer Maddox. Two nights later, the Maddox, and the destroyer, Turner Joy, were reported attacked by North Vietnamese gunboats. Confusion, and a lack of evidence leave some doubt that the attacks actually occurred.

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By the end of 1965, we had 184,300 troops in South Vietnam. It was estimated there were 70,000 to 80,000 Viet Cong and Viet Cong sympathizers in the Mekong Delta. 1,594 Americans had died for the cause.

In 1965, “Country” Joe McDonald had a popular song, “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag.”

“Come on, Mothers, throughout the land,
Pack your boys off to Vietnam;

Come on Fathers, don’t hesitate!

Send your sons off before it’s too late!

You can be the first one on your block,

To have your boy come home in a box!”

On November 14th, through 16th, 1965, the U.S. Army engaged the North Vietnamese army in heavy combat in the Ia Drang Valley. The 1st Air Cavalry lost 300 men. The NVA lost 1,200. American forces won so decisively; North Vietnam decided to focus their combat strategy on guerrilla warfare.

The 9th Division was reactivated on 1 February 1966, and arrived in South Vietnam on 16 December 1966 from Fort Riley, Kansas. The division served in III and IV CTZ, and its 2nd Brigade was the Army component of the Mobile Riverine Force. Division headquarters was at Bear Cat Dec 1966 – Jul 1968 and Dong Tam, from Aug 1968 – Aug 1969.

6,350 American died in Vietnam, during 1966. U.S. Forces reached 385,300 by the end of 1966.

During January, 1967, the first elements of the Mobile Riverine Force, River Assault Squadron 9, River Assault Division 91, arrived in Vietnam.

On February 15, 1967, the Viet Cong sank a US minesweeper and damaged three others on the Long Tau River. The Mobile Riverine Force began search and destroy operations in the Rung Sat Zone,

a V.C. stronghold, which bordered the Long Tau River.

The first helicopter pad fitted Armored Troop Carrier (ATC) arrived in Vietnam, July 22, 1967.

On July 29, 1967, an electrical anomaly discharged a Zuni rocket on the flight deck of the USS Forrester (CVA-59), starting a chain-reaction of explosions, while conducting flight operations in the Gulf of Tonkin. The devastating fire and explosions killed 134 sailors and injured 161. The monetary damage exceeded \$72 Million (equivalent to more than \$509 Million, today), not including damaged aircraft. The Forrester managed to make its way to Subic Bay, Philippines. It never returned to the Gulf of Tonkin.

By the end of 1967, the U.S. had 485,600 troops in Vietnam. 15,979 Americans had died there.

The siege of Khe Sanh began January 21, 1968. There had been a U.S. presence near Khe Sanh since 1962, when a U.S. Army Special Forces camp was established in the nearby village of Lang Vei. Khe Sahn became the home of the Third Marine Division’s 26th Marine Regiment, the Ninth and 13th Marine Regiment and the South Vietnamese 37th Ranger Battalion, for a total of 6,000 men.

The North Vietnamese built up forces around Khe Sanh with elements of the North Vietnamese Army’s 304th, 320th, 324B, and 325C North Divisions, for a total of somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 troops. President Lyndon B. Johnson told his generals, “I don’t want any damn Dinbinphoo!”

North Korea seized the U.S. intelligence ship U.S.S. Pueblo, AGER-2, on January 23, 1968.

January 31, 1968. The Tet Offensive began at 3:00 a.m. The Mobile Riverine Force was heavily engaged in combat throughout the Mekong Delta. The Viet Cong attacked many places, including Saigon, and the river towns My Tho,

Can Tho, Vinh Long, and Chau Doc. By the end of the day, it had spread to over one-hundred towns, villages and cities across South Vietnam, with over 80,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighting. The Tet offensive cranked the war up a notch and proved to be the turning point of public opinion about the war. The Viet Cong lost the battles of Tet. They lost 37,000 of their best, front line fighters, with many more wounded or captured. The U.S. lost 2,500 troops. The American public showed it had no stomach for seeing the Vietnam War on its TV screens.

On February 6, the U.S. Army Special Forces camp at Lang Vei, near Khe Sanh, was overrun by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces who were supported by nine Soviet PT-76 tanks.

February 15, 1968, an Air Force F-4 Phantom became the 800th U.S. aircraft lost in the three-year air war over North Vietnam.

February 18, 1968. The U.S. State Department announced the highest U.S. casualty toll of the war in Vietnam. In the previous week, 543 Americans had been killed in action. 2,547 were wounded.

February 23, 1968. 1,307 enemy artillery, rocket and mortar rounds were fired into Khe Sahn: almost one per minute.

February 27, 1968. CBS Evening News anchor Walter Cronkite predicted; “the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate.”

In the book, “My Father, My Son,” Admiral Elmo Zumwalt said this about casualties in the Delta; “Our river patrol casualties reached an unacceptably high rate of 6% a month. That meant anyone serving a year’s combat tour on the riverboats had a 70-75 percent chance of being killed or wounded. We had to reduce those risks considerably.”

Over the course of the war, 997 men died during their first day in Vietnam.

“Dong Tam” was named by General William Westmoreland, because it meant “United Hearts and Minds,” in Vietnamese, and was easy for Americans to say. It was made by dredging the My Tho River. The place didn’t even exist until it was created by Navy Seabees and the Army Corps of Engineers.

An article in the December, 1968 issue of National Geographic said in part, “First, the war. I saw it blazing most fiercely in South Viet Nam, where the U.S. Navy’s “miniature battleships,” painted green and built expressly for combat along the Mekong Delta waterways, pitted their rapid-fire cannon against Viet Cong rockets made in the Soviet Union and in China. Those deadly rockets spewed from bunkers hidden in dense greenery, sometimes along canals so narrow that the boats could not turn around. “It’s like the old days,” said the commodore of the River Assault Flotilla, “Exchanging broadsides at 15 to 20 yards, point-blank.”

March 31st, President Johnson announced that he would not seek, nor accept the nomination of his party for President, in the next election.

General Westmoreland ordered the Marines at Khe Sanh to be relieved by the first US Air Cavalry Division, on April 1st.

The Battle of Khe Sanh in northwestern Quảng Trị Province, lasted from January 21st, to July 9th, 1968. Pinned to a bulletin board in Khe Sanh was a note that read, “For those who fight for it, life has a flavour the sheltered never know.”

Operations Report. November 1, 1968. “Sixteen were known dead and nine others were still missing Friday, November 1st, night as a result of the early morning explosion between the pontoons and hull of Westchester County. Another 22 were wounded in the suspected mining in what ranks among the most-costly naval casualties of the war. The explosions at 3:22 A.M. opened two holes in the starboard side at the waterline – both more than 20 feet in diameter.

30,568 Americans had been killed in Vietnam by December 31, 1968. During that year, 14,501 Americans died. It was the highest American casualty year of the Vietnam War.

On February 23, 1969, Viet Cong attacked 110 targets throughout South Vietnam.

On March 26, 1969, the St. Louis Post Dispatch front page article headlined this news about Dong Tam’s ammo dump: “Big U.S. Base Shelled; Ammunition Explodes, Helicopters Destroyed. Reds Use Biggest Mortars.” “Heavy Communist mortar salvos struck the biggest United States base in the Mekong Delta today, demolishing the Ninth Infantry Division’s ammunition dump and forcing the evacuation of half of the sprawling complex. U.S. military sources said barrages from the biggest mortars in the guerrilla’s Vietnam arsenal damaged or destroyed six helicopters, the copter pad, a mess hall and several other wooden buildings on the U.S. Army-Navy base. These sources said three Americans were killed and 65 wounded in the attack. The U.S. Command said casualties and damage were “light to moderate.”

By April 30, 1969, U.S. troop strength in Vietnam peaked at 553,400.

June 27, 1969. The war dragged on. Life Magazine published pictures of 217 of the 242 men who had been killed during the week of May 28th. One of the men said in his last letter home, “You may not be able to read this. I am

writing it in a hurry. I see death coming up the hill.”

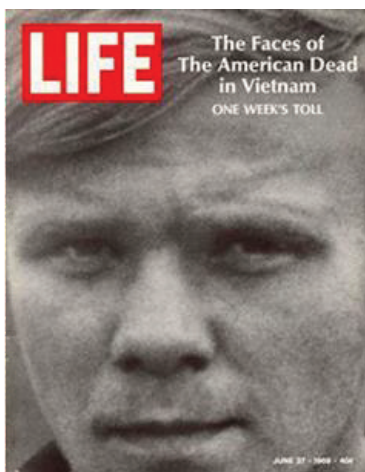
July 8, 1969. The first U.S. troop withdrawal took place when 800 men from the 9th Infantry Division were sent home from the Mekong Delta, leaving its 3rd Brigade behind as a separate unit (under command of 25th Infantry Division) until Oct 1970.

December 31, 1969. To date, 40,024 American servicemen had lost their lives in Vietnam. The years 1968 and 1969 accounted for approximately 42% of the war’s total death casualties.

January 27, 1973, The Paris Peace Accords were signed, with the aim of ending American involvement in the war in Vietnam. The accord called for an immediate cease-fire, and the withdrawal of all American forces within sixty days. Two months later, Nixon met with South Vietnamese President Thieu and promised him a “severe retaliation” against North Vietnam should they break the cease-fire.

On April 30, 1975, Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces.

During the 1968 calendar year, 14,501 Americans died in Vietnam. It was the highest casualty year of the war. During the 1969 calendar year, 10,096 Americans gave their last full measure of devotion. The total America KIA in either of those years, exceeds all of the fatalities America has experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined, from 2001, to 2017.



MRF Training Before Vietnam - Navy

By Al Breininger

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 2-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 SEAL's. 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 six 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 fall 1966. Boat training include 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 opera-

tions 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 evaluating electronic sensors use. In the Riverine environment. We helped develop the initial tactics, and then specify and deploy the first unit of “Duffel Bag” Operations.

So much was learned during the first 6 months in country after starting operations with the Army in Mid-January 1967.

The first boats we used in Vietnam were 7 RAG boats borrowed from the Vietnamese Navy. Their call sign was “HOGBACK”, and believe 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.

Al Breininger
CSO, RIvDiv 91, Oct 1966 – Dec 1967

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

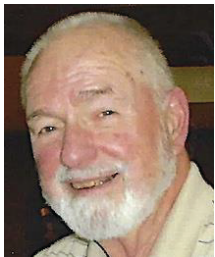
Contact the Editor

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!

TAPS Tribute to a Fallen One

Howard Dunson “Reb” Turner

Member Howard Dunson “Reb” Turner (Major USA Ret.) passed away on January 26, 2024. While in Vietnam he served as a Platoon Leader and Company Commander with 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division from March 1969 to March 1970. Reb did two tours in-country. He is survived by Deni, his wife for 63 years. – “Reb was a damn good man!” – MRFA VP “Doc” Bob Pries – B Co, 2/24th (Mech) Infantry).



Charles Franklin “Frank” McGinnis

Member Charles Franklin “Frank” McGinnis passed away on January 14, 2024. While in Vietnam he served as an enlisted sailor with River Assault Squadron 9, River Assault Division 91 onboard A-91-2 and T-91-2 in 1968 and 1969. Later he received a Naval Commission and served with River Division 595, which was later named River Assault Division 153.



David A. Ball

Member David A. Ball passed away on February 22, 2024 following a brief illness. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 13, River Assault Division 131 onboard T-131-1 from March 1968 to March 1969. David is survived by Claudia, his wife of 38 years. Terry Sater remembers David as someone who trained with him and served with him. He was a quiet,



good-natured man, and served honorably. I recall David caring for a fellow crewman who was in poor health, at our reunions.

Robert C. Doyle

Member Robert C. Doyle passed away on January 24, 2024 following a courageous battle with cancer. While in Vietnam he served as the Navy Intelligence Liaison Officer (NILO) at Ben Tre from March 1970 to March 1971. Robert was preceded in death by Beate, his wife of 35 years.



Michael W. Dolezal

Member Michael W. Dolezal passed away on March 31, 2024. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 9, River Assault Division 92 onboard A-92-7 from April 1968 to July 1969. Michael was preceded in death by Lynda, his wife of 37 years.



Richard John Young

Member Richard John “Rick” Young passed away on March 21, 2024 following a courageous battle with several serious medical issues. While in Vietnam he served onboard the USS Colleton (APB-36) from September 1966 to November 1967. Rick is survived by, Patricia, his wife of 26 years.



Thomas “Tom” Robert Boyd



Member Thomas “Tom” Robert Boyd passed away on February 10, 2024 following a battle with cancer. While in Vietnam he served with 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division from December 1966 to December 1967. Tom is survived by his wife, Lahoma, of 57 years.

Robert A. Burgette

Member Robert A. Burgette (USN Ret.) passed away on February 5, 2024. While in Vietnam he served onboard the USS Benewah (APB-35) from July 1966 to June 1968. Robert is survived by Judith, his loving spouse.



Kenneth Roger Thorpe

Member Kenneth Roger Thorpe (USN Ret.) passed away on April 30, 2024. While in Vietnam he served with River Assault Squadron 11/ River Assault Division 112 onboard R-112-1 from April 1967 to April 1968.



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)
 Ron Baker, In memory of BM2 William Comer, KIA 2/68
 Serena Barnes, for Michael Barnes, 2nd Brigade, 3rd/47th, 9th Inf.
 Bill Buffie, in memory of Lyle Parin, USS Floyd County LST-762
 Clyde T. Colbert, for David Raybell
 Lee J. Connell, Jr. for David Wilson, 2nd/60th, KIA 08/05/69, 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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 Orville "Lee" Daley, for Roger Valentine, CSI. USS Askari ARL 30 (1967-1968)
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 Robert Flaige, for SFC Fernando Quintero, KIA 02/27/68, and SP4 Robert "Bob" Jenks, E Co. 3rd/60th KIA 03/03/68
 Bill Frede, for BM1 Guy Dail, BM3 Johnny Maness, and SN David Flamburis T-112-2, 1967
 Patrick Haggerty, in memory of CDR. Charlie Cox., CO RivDiv 11 (11/67 to 11/68) and Capt. Jim Gautier, CO RivDiv 11 (12/68-6/69)
 Susan Hanmer, for SFC Michael Hanmer, RivRon 13 and 153 (07/69-02/71)
 Gordon Hillesland, for Pat Lawson, NSA Dong Tam (67-68), and Mike Mosey, NSA Dong Tam (67-68)
 Joe Hilliard, for Joe Benack, from Florida, and Donald Hartzell, from Pennsylvania KIA 1970
 Bruce Jensen, in memory of Frederic Peers Webb A-111-4 KIA 12/21/67
 J. R. Johnson, 3rd/47th 9th "Recon" (05/66-01/68), in memory of Walker, Gotch, Paredez, Nelson, Hayes, Howard, King, Twitchell, Spake and Chesnoski.
 Frank Jones, for Arthur Delmar Grant "Buck," RivRon 13/15 (07/69-07/70)
 Frank Jones, for SFC Michael Hanmer RivRon 13 and 153 (07/69-02/71)
 Stan Melton in Memory of Gary Speckman and Dick Hewitt, ATC91-5. Plank Owners
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 Theodore and Anita Richter (Ralph's sister) for Ralph Bigelow RivRon 13 T-131-8
 Theodore and Anita Richter (Ralph's sister) for Ralph Bigelow RivRon 13 T-131-8
 Larry Ruebke in memory of Alan Trucano
 Dave Schell in memory of SFC Mike Hanmer, RivRon 13 & 153 (7/69-2/71)
 John Smith for Paull D. Jose B Co. 3/60 KIA 11/01/68
 Charlie Thompson in Memory of Doyle E. Templeton, 2nd/39th Inf. 9th Inf.
 Henry Velez MD In memory of my Brothers B Co. 2nd 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division

Meaning of "Fair Winds and Following Seas."

"Fair Winds and Following Seas" is a gesture of good luck to those we will miss and sailors who have served with honor and courage. The combination of phrases implies that a vessel will have good winds, and not have to pound into the waves. The phrase can be used as a toast or salutation between mariners. It is often used at a "beginning" ceremony such as a commissioning ceremony, as well as in retirement, change of command, or farewell ceremonies.

Following seas are defined by Bowditch's American Practical Navigator as *"A sea in which the waves move in the general direction of the heading"* and can be dangerous if the winds and sea are too strong. But the mariners' traditional blessing implies that both are comfortably rolling in the same direction as the boat.

(Sources include the former Naval Historical Center and Wikipedia)



Mobile Riverine Force Association

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