

ISSUE

104

RED CLAY

SPRING

2025

THOMAS EICHLER 1940 — 2024



KSV NEWSLETTER

UPDATED CORRESPONDENCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS ADDRESS

To ensure smooth communication and handling of contributions, please direct all dues, correspondence, and contributions to our new address:

**Khe Sanh Veterans Inc
C/O Russell Turner
3168 Meadowfield Dr
Arnold, MO 63010**

Kindly update your records and ensure that all future communications are sent to this address.

Scholarship Program Suspension

Due to recent developments, we have decided to freeze and suspend the Scholarship program temporarily. This decision has been made to allow us (KSV) to thoroughly assess our financial situation. We appreciate your understanding during this period of transition.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please direct your inquiries to Russ Turner.
rkt88@prodigy.net 314-368-5853

IN MEMORIAM: THOMAS "TOMMY" EICHLER



Tom Eichler (1940 - 2024) KSV Treasurer.

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of Thomas Eichler, the treasurer of the Khe Sanh Veterans, U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam Veteran, and Retired Chicago Police Sergeant. Tom was a proud Marine who fiercely fought for his country in Vietnam. His bravery and service were recognized with the prestigious Bronze Star, Silver Star, and Purple Heart.

Tom's spirit of service, both in his professional and personal life, will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and the Khe Sanh Veterans community.

FROM THE DESK OF RUSS TURNER— PRESIDENT

Well friends, it's been an eventful couple of months since the reunion in Louisville KY. As most of you know Tommy Eichler has passed away and has left a void in the organization felt by many. He was a huge contributing factor in keeping this organization moving forward. And with the heart of so many members—it will continue on.

This will be the last Publication of the RED CLAY until a new Editor steps up to take over. If interested, please contact me or someone on the Board of Directors.

With the passing of Tom I have taken on the duties of Treasurer (with the Boards approval) until we can get a permanent treasurer.

We had some issues with the bank as well as the IRS regarding our 501c. The bank issues are taken care of, however we are still pending with the IRS. We hope to have things cleared up with them soon, but as we all know, working with the Government can take some time. We will IMPROVISE, ADAPT AND OVERCOME!

S/F Russ Turner 3147-368-5853

RE— RED CLAY PAST ISSUES FROM BILL RING

As many are aware the **Red Clay** was entirely composed, and distributed by Tom Eichler. With his passing the future of Red Clay is questionable as no one has volunteered to take up the task.

In the interim a few of us are in the process of collecting copies of the magazine to have them put into a digital format that is searchable by various means. This will preserve all the articles for not only our own use but for future generations and historians to study. We have a number of copies from Tom Eichler's home as well as copies from my collection as well from Jim Velcheck's basement!!! The complete list of on hand copies will send out under a separate email. What I am asking if there are anyone out there who has squirreled away copies to let me know the edition numbers and or date of publication so we can fill in the blanks.

S/F Bill Ring 513 607 5045.
(wjring@aol.com)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

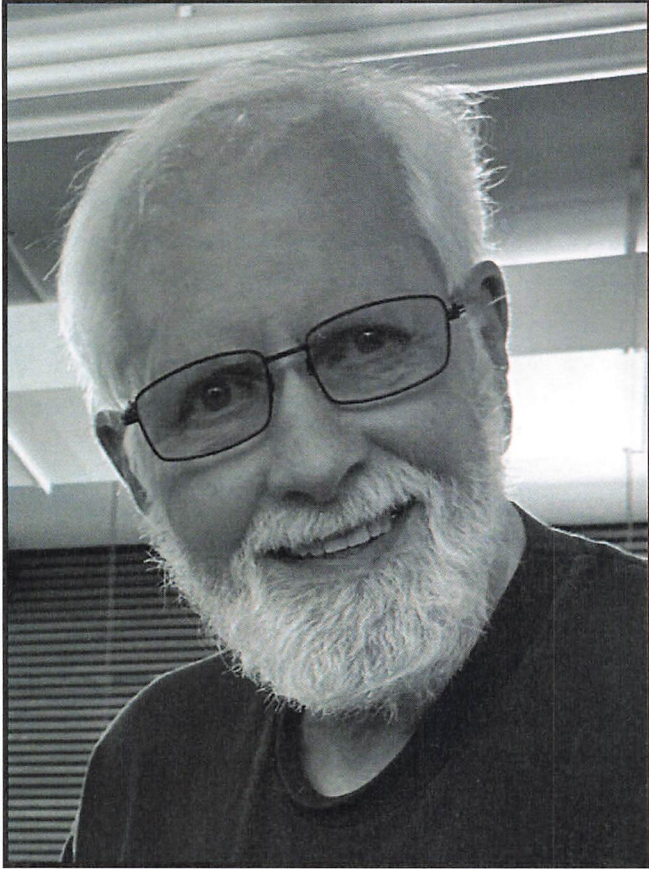
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OBIT

James Alan Thorsen, 76, of Duluth MN, passed away peacefully on Sunday February 11th, 2024. He was born on August 16th, 1947 in Duluth, MN to Lloyd and Eleanor Thorsen. Jim married Doris

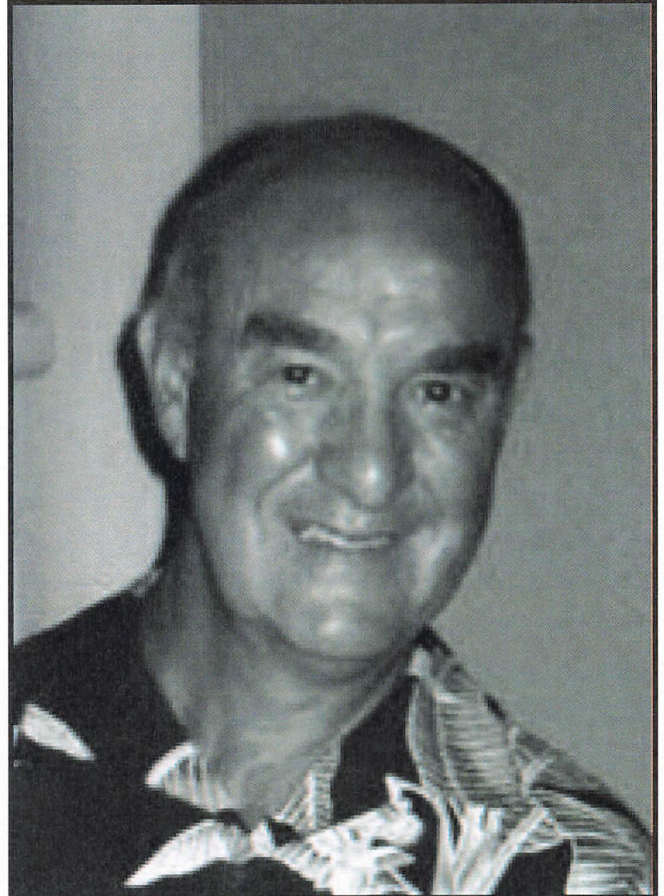


Watten on August 18th, 1973 in Duluth, MN. Jim served in the US Marine Corp from 1966 until 1972, including serving in Vietnam at the Battle of Khe Sanh. He was awarded many honors including, a Presidential Unit Citation and a Purple Heart for his service in the US Marine Corps. Jim also served as a Sergeant Troop Leader at Camp Pendleton. He returned to Duluth and pursued an education in engineering and architecture. He worked for MN Power in Facilities Management for 27 years. He volunteered for the VA DAV driving veterans to and from MPLS. He enjoyed being with friends and family, especially his granddaughter, Milly. He is preceded in death by his parents, and brother, Roger. He is survived by his wife Doris, daughter Sara (Ben) Schoenbauer, and granddaughter Milly.

OBIT

Jim Hall's military career commenced shortly after his graduation in 1966, when he enlisted in the Ma-

rines, embarking on a path that would test his fortitude and resilience. Basic training in San Diego and advanced preparation at Camp Pendleton prepared him for the challenges ahead. Deployed to Vietnam, Hall faced the realities of war, participating in significant operations near the DMZ. His first encounter with adversity came during the battle for Cam



Lo Hill, where he sustained injuries that earned him his first Purple Heart.

Continued Service and Second Purple Heart Legacy of a Marine

Returning to Augusta, Hall's life took a new direction as he joined the Army Guard, served with the 184th Air National Guard, and built a family, yet his Marine Corps ethos remained a guiding force. His story, a testament to the enduring spirit of those who serve, continues to inspire pride and respect within his community and beyond. Jim Hall's narrative is not just one of military engagement but of unwavering dedication to country, a sentiment that resonates with fellow veterans and civilians alike.

Jim Hall's journey from Augusta to the battlefields of Vietnam and back is a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by military personnel. His story,

marked by courage, resilience, and dedication, offers a window into the personal cost of conflict and the enduring spirit of those who serve. As Hall reflects on his service, his pride in being a Marine shines through, underscoring the deep bonds and commitment that define the military experience. Through his eyes, we gain insight into the complexities of war and the indomitable will of those who face its challenges head-on.

OBIT

DONALD FOX, USMC, KHE SANH VETERAN

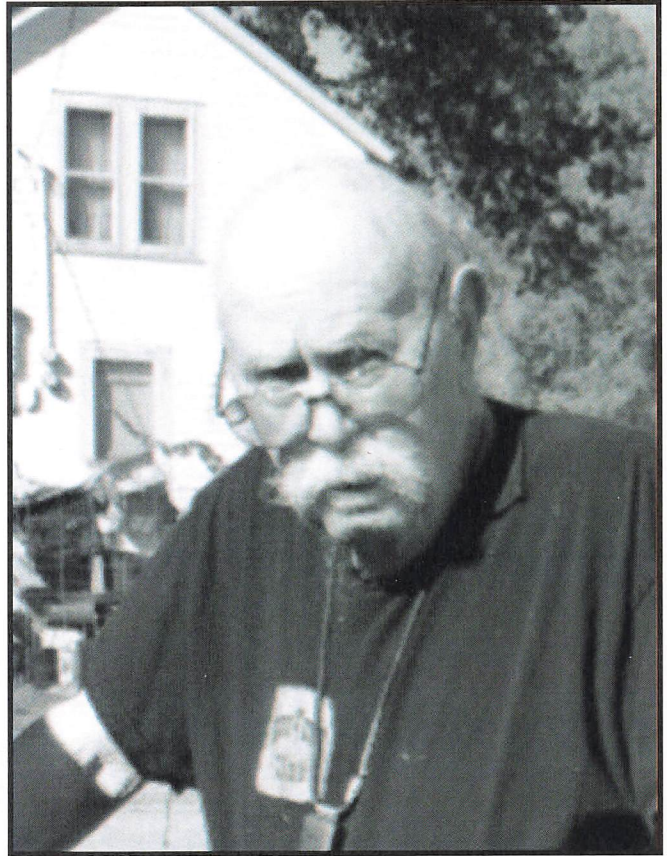
Private family services for Donald Fox, 87 year old Buffalo and Sheridan resident who passed away Saturday, February 10th at the Greenhouse Living Center in Sheridan will be held by his family at a later date. Donations in Don's memory may be made to the St. Francis Animal Shelter at 109 Flatiron Drive in Buffalo, Wyoming 82834. Online condolences may be made at nessfuneralhome.com

Donald O'Neal Fox was born on June 8, 1936 in Sheridan, Wyoming to John and Ruth Fox. He started his education in Sheridan and later moved to Casper where he graduated from Natrona County High School with the class of 1954. He joined the U.S. Airforce in June of 1954. During his military service he was married to Aletha Dillingham in Oklahoma. He received an honorable discharge in December of 1957 and went to work in construction and help to build Pathfinder Dam. He later moved to Sheridan and worked at Dan's Western Wear. In 1958 they moved to Jeffrey City, Wyoming where Don went to work for Western Nuclear Corporation and was a maintenance supervisor. He retired from Western Nuclear in 1980 and started his own construction reclamation business. In 1990 he moved to Buffalo, Wyoming where he owned and operated the Buffalo Bar on Mainstreet until it closed. Don continued living in Buffalo until his death.

Don was a member of the Elk's Club and was an avid outdoorsman enjoying hunting, fishing and spending time in the mountains. He was very active as a volunteer fire fighter in Jeffrey City and Fremont County, Wyoming.

He is survived by one son Wayne Fox and his wife Ellen of Muddy Gap, Wyoming; one daughter Sheila Lopez and her husband Marcel of Lander, Wyoming; one granddaughter, Abra D. Rusher; one grandson Bryce E. Lopez and one great-grandson

Merrik A. Moore. He was preceded in death by his parents and one brother.



OBIT**RAYMOND BOLTON OBITUARY**

Raymond Paul Bolton, age 75, passed away on Monday, April 29, 2024 in Elk Grove, California due to kidney failure.

Ray was born on June 5, 1948 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to parents Dorothea Emma Gusovius Bolton and Joseph Daniel Bolton, both from Philadelphia.

Ray proudly served in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam War engaging in combat patrols as part of the 1st Searchlight Battery. In this assignment, he would travel alone in a jeep at night using infrared and white light to identify enemy positions. He received several military medals for his service including a Navy Commendation Medal for defending the Cam Lo Bridge after detecting enemy soldiers attempting to place demolition charges, the Presidential Unit Citation for his part protecting the Khe Sanh combat base during active combat, and a Purple Heart due to being injured in battle.

His service in the Marine Corps shaped much of his life and values. He forged a bond of brotherhood with every veteran he encountered, often addressing each other as "brother" before parting ways. He frequently treated young veterans to meals whenever he spotted them in restaurants. Following his military service, he had a 30-year career as a U.S. postal worker.

Ray cherished traveling alongside his wife, exploring his family's ancestral homes in Ireland and Great Britain. He also loved to be near the ocean with Hawaii ranking as his top destination. He would also make frequent trips to Monterey and Carmel, California. In addition, he enjoyed shopping for hats, watches, and collecting memorabilia related to the U.S. Marine Corps Ray was always generous to those he saw in need. Often, he would buy lunch for an individual he felt needed some help. He was known to offer money to nieces and nephews for French fries, a new suit, or anything he felt they needed. He also loved and cared for a group of cats in his neighborhood (much to the chagrin of his neighbors and brother-in-law who had to feed them when Ray traveled).

He is survived by his wife, Donna Scott Bolton of

Elk Grove, California, his sister, Doris Jean Bolton Walsh of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and his nieces and nephews: Robert Walsh, Barbara Walsh Martina, Donna Bolton Wingood, Michael Bolton, Marybeth Bolton Mahadas, Jacqui Bolton Gilpin, and Karen Bolton White.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Dorothea and Joseph Bolton, and his brothers, Joseph Daniel (Sonny) and John Robert (Jackie) Bolton.

Funeral services were held on Monday, May 13, 2024 from 9:30 am to 10:30 am at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints chapel located at 8679 Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove, CA 95624. Interment was held the same day at 12:30 pm at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, California.

OBIT**JOEL P. MCCOY, USMC,
KHE SANH VETERAN**

Joel Patrick McCoy, aged 75, passed away on August 6, 2024 after a battle with COPD and lung cancer. He was born September 6, 1948 in Mt Kisco, NY to Joel Edgar and Kathryn Thompson McCoy. He was the youngest of four siblings.

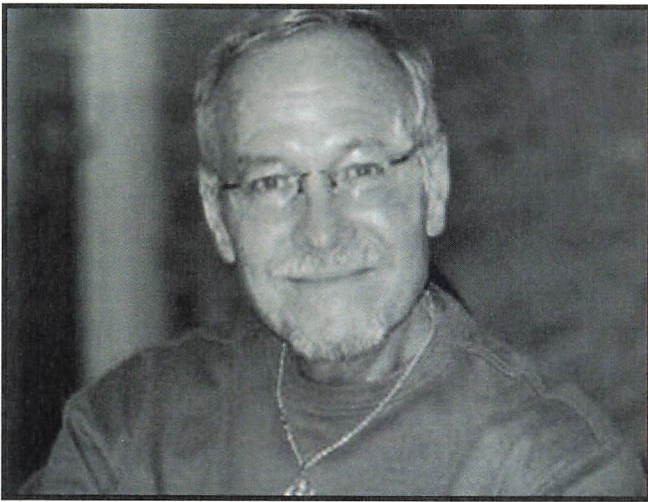
After Joel graduated from Lakeland High School in 1967, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, and served from 1967-1969. Joel valued this service highly and attained the rank of Private First Class and received a Rifle Marksmanship Badge, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 1 star, and Vietnam Campaign Medal w/device.

Joel did one tour in Vietnam and survived the Battle of Khe Sanh. After his military service, Joel started as a draftsman with Peabody Engineering, and built a successful career in Industrial product development and software sales which brought him all over the world. Joel settled in Cascade, Colorado after retirement, embracing a private life enjoying the scenery of the Rockies with his beloved Border Collie, Gracie, until relocating to Kennesaw, GA in 2023, closer to his first son, Morgan, and grand daughters. Joel was predeceased by his parents, Joel Edgar McCoy and Kathryn Thompson McCoy, and his sister Dorris Kay "Deke" Anunson.

He is survived by sisters, Michelle Hamilton and Toni Ann Sampson; two sons, Morgan McCoy and Colby McCoy, two granddaughters, Charlotte McCoy and Natalie McCoy, and former wives, Marsha McCoy, Bonnie Summers, and Kerri Holton. Joel was known for his charm, private nature, and pride in his service to his country. He will be deeply missed by his family. A visitation and memorial service will be held at Georgia Funeral Care on August 19 th, 2024. Visitation begins at 10:00 am with a service at 11:30 am. Joel will be laid to rest at the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton, GA.

OBIT

Donald "Don" Gene Bigler, 76, of [Cypress, Texas](#), passed away June 1, 2024, after succumbing to a short battle with brain cancer. Don was born in Littlefield, Texas, to Emil and Margaret Bigler on September 7, 1947. He attended schools in both Floyd



and Portales, New Mexico, and graduated from Floyd High School in 1965. **He voluntarily entered military service with the United States Marine Corps and deployed to Vietnam with rifle company Kilo, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines (Kilo 3/3). He left South Vietnam in July 1967 after being wounded in The Hill Fights (also known as the First Battle of Khe Sanh).** Don was honorably discharged with the rank of sergeant in January 1969. Upon returning home to Portales, he married Janice Kaye Webb on February 16, 1969 (later divorced in 2009). He worked the family farm in Floyd while attending Eastern New Mexico University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science.

During the same period, sons Tyson and Cade were born. He then worked as an adjuster for Farm Bureau Insurance in Espanola, New Mexico, before moving to Artesia where he earned his Commercial Driver License (CDL) with Halliburton. Upon the birth of son Josh in 1977, the family moved to Carlsbad where Don started driving 18-wheelers for Furr's Supermarkets. In 1983, the family moved to Fort Sumner where Don started driving for Walmart. Over the next few years, the family split time between Fort Sumner and Portales, eventually leaving New Mexico in 1987 for Brady, Texas. A final job transfer to New Braunfels occurred in 1990, with early retirement beginning in 1994 after sustaining a debilitating lower-back injury. Walmart honored him with a safety award for driving one million miles without an accident.

Early retirement was not something Don had envisioned, but he met the challenge head-on. Eventually the open road beckoned to him, and he set about travelling the country with a fifth wheel trailer for about ten years. He made new friends along the way, met up with old friends and family too, and routinely came back to Texas to be near his sons and their growing families. He spent his final years in the Cypress/Tomball area. Don's strong faith in the Lord helped him through many challenges. He was a long-standing member of the Church of Christ, most recently with the Waller congregation. Earlier in life he served as a deacon. He was always curious and liked to learn new things. He loved working with his hands and was an avid sports fan.

Don was preceded in death by his mother and father, along with his sister Gayle Herron of Albuquerque.

He is survived by his sons and their families, Tyson and Kathy Bigler (Tomball, Texas), Cade Bigler ([Cypress, Texas](#)), and Josh and Shomika Bigler (Cedar Park, Texas); a sister, Kay Heflin (Abilene, Texas), a sister and her husband, Faye and Travis Mitchell (Yuma, Arizona), and ex-wife Jan Bigler (Tomball, Texas). Other survivors include thirteen grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews. Don's final resting place is at Hill Country Memorial Gardens cemetery, 11700 State Highway 46 West, New Braunfels, Texas 78132..

OBIT**CHARLES M. MCINTYRE, USMC, KHE SANH VETERAN, H&S CO 1/26 81 MORTARS**

Charles Michael McIntyre, Mike, Mac, or Charlie to most, 76, of Edmond, Oklahoma, went to be with our Lord on July 9, 2024.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at 10:00 am July 17, 2024, at St. Monica Catholic Church, 2001 N. Western, Edmond, Oklahoma, with Father Balireddy Ponnappati presiding. Burial followed the funeral at Resurrection Memorial Cemetery at 12:00 noon.

Mike was born in Oklahoma City, OK on May 21, 1948, but spent most of his youth in Chickasha, OK where he attended St. Joseph Catholic School. After his further education had been interrupted by the Vietnam Nam War, he received a GED and earned a BA Degree from the University of Central Oklahoma. However, for the majority of his college years, he attended and became an avid, life time fan of the University of Oklahoma



Mike served his country with honors from 1965-

1969 in the US Marine Corps. As a highly decorated veteran, he earned these awards: National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, The Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with a Bronze Star, 2 Good Combat Medals, The Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation and multiple other commendations, citations, and awards. He served three tours of duty in Vietnam and survived the seventy-seven day Siege of Khe Sanh. In 2020, he completed and published a book, *Shining in Infinity*, which was inspired by his experiences while in the Marine Corps.

Mike began a law enforcement career as an officer of the OU Campus Police before joining the Oklahoma City Police Department in 1973. After graduating from the academy, he was assigned to the Patrol Division where he excelled and was soon transferred to other specialty units within the department that included Special Projects, F.A.S.T Unit, and the Criminal Intelligence unit.

While assigned to the Criminal Intelligence unit, he investigated or assisted in the investigation of several high-profile criminal cases. His dedication to his work resulted in receiving the Medal for Meritorious Service in 2001. He also received exemplary recognition by the Vietnamese for crimes committed against their community and numerous other awards and citations. Mike retired from the Oklahoma City Police Department in 2003. Soon after, he worked at Chesapeake and played an integral role in their security department. Though most will remember his continued law enforcement service throughout his later years while enjoying and providing security at the Municipal Employees Credit Union.

Mike married Patty O'Dea in 1969. They were married for 27 years and shared three amazing children. He stood faithfully by her side until she lost her battle with cancer. In 1998, Mike married Jan Cooper who also had three wonderful children, and they lived 26 beautiful years together.

Mike is survived by his loving wife: Jan, children: Shoana Gann, Mary Smith & husband Mike, Danny McIntyre & wife Amber, Bill Cooper & wife Jennifer, Jeff Cooper, and Shane Cooper & wife Kelsea, grandchildren: Ben Cooper, Braxton Smith, Jake Cooper, Macklin Smith, Ruby McIntyre, Kade Cooper, Kole Cooper, Leo McIntyre, Ian Rambo, and Kate McIntyre, and siblings: Mary Harris and Pat McIntyre.

KHE SANH VETERANS IN THE NEWS

Post 290 named Ronald Shouse : B BTRY 1/13, the "Legionnaire of the Year" at their July meeting.



King American Legion Post 290 convenes for their July meeting, during which the post awarded Ron Shouse with Legionnaire of the Year. submitted



King American Legion Post 290 Commander Ed Ballard presents Ron Shouse with the Legionnaire of the Year award in July.

Shouse, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam, was indeed not expecting any award don't think he expected it," said Post Commander Ed Ballard. "He acted kind of surprised, and it's hard to get one over on him." Everybody's usually picking at me to start with; I I figured it was another 'joke on Shouse' type thing," he said with a laugh. It's flattering, to be quite honest," Shouse said. "I couldn't quite get over the fact that they thought

enough of me to do something like that. I never thought of myself as anything great." The award may have been a surprise — it had been years since the post honored their top volunteer with the title — but it was no joke.

He is quite a guy," Ballard said. "I nominated him for 'Legionnaire of the Year' because all the work he does around the post. He does it, no questions...painting, repairing, fixing, building. Whatever we need on the post, he just does it. For lack of a better word, he just works his butt off."

Shouse also calls bingo every Friday night at the Legion and is a leader on the post's honor guard. The detail serves at more than 40 funerals annually. Everybody loves him at bingo," Ballard said, adding that Shouse had recently traveled to Mount Airy to pick up the fair books for the upcoming Stokes County Agricultural Fair, the post's largest fundraiser.



Legionnaire of the Year Ron Shouse pauses for a quick photo after changing the battery on a Legion tractor.

Clifton Kilby, finance officer for Post 290 and vice-commander of the North Carolina American Legion, said Shouse tackles an ongoing list of odd jobs I would say, just about every day if you go by the post, around 8:30, 9'oclock [a.m.] that Ron's up there doing something," said Kilby, noting that as he spoke, Shouse was at the Legion painting the flagpole. He's put in a lot of hours," Kilby said, "a lot more hours than anybody else." That fact was not lost on the post membership, and they wanted to show their appreciation.

"I said, 'well, we haven't had a Legionnaire of the

Year in a while, and it sounds like that's what you all are talking about," Kilby said. In addition to acknowledging the efforts of a dedicated volunteer, reinstating the award is part of a successful effort to build engagement. The local Legionnaire of the Year is eligible to win at the state and national levels

"We're trying to make the post a little bit bigger now and better than what it has been in the past," Shouse said. "We're trying to dress it up and make it appealing to the younger generation."

Shouse doesn't seek out the attention brought by the award, but if it helps the post it's another job he's willing to do. He also downplays his military service. Shouse joined the Marines in 1966 as a senior at North Forsyth High School. Six months after I went in, I was walking the swamps in Vietnam," Shouse said. He was 18.

"I got shot at a couple of times over there, so that and 50 cents will buy you a cup of coffee somewhere," he said. "I didn't feel like it was anything fantastic then; I don't feel like what I've done is anything great now. I was just lucky enough to do it." It turns out being "shot at a couple of times" included fighting in the Battle of Khe Sanh. The official [U.S. Marine Corps website](#) provides a refresher on that battle's significance:

In early 1968, Khe Sanh Combat Base gained world-wide attention as the roughly 6,000 Marines defending the base were encircled and besieged by three North Vietnamese Army regiments of about 20,000 troops. For 77 days, the Marines and their South Vietnamese counterparts, with support from an element of U.S. Army soldiers and U.S. Air Force bombers, would endure one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War."

Shouse was an artilleryman supporting infantry companies. "That was my job, and I did what I had to do. And that's what I'm doing over here right now," he said of his volunteer work at the Legion, which at the time of the interview, consisted of changing a battery in a tractor, moving vehicles and generally helping prepare the barn for a youth event the following day.

"I see some things that need to be done, and I'm just dumb enough to tell people that I know how to do it. So here I am," he said with a smile.

Shouse's Marine service ended in 1970. After retir-

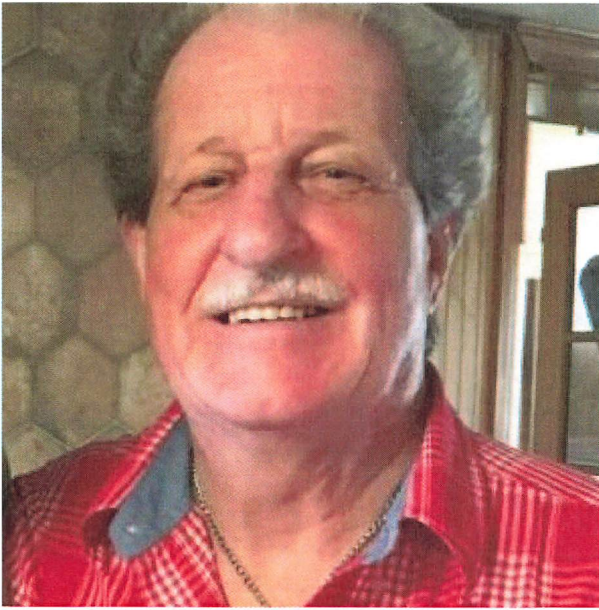
ing from Stroh's Brewing Co. in 2000, he dedicated his life to volunteering, helping spearhead the construction of the Veterans Memorial in Tobaccoville and eventually becoming active in Post 290. "I feel better for it," said Shouse. "Maybe that's the reason the good Lord saw fit to let me walk out of some places in Vietnam that I shouldn't have.

The veteran lives in unincorporated Forsyth County near Tobaccoville. His wife, Lynn Shouse, is active with the Legion Auxiliary and serves as assistant fair manager. ("She works her butt off," Ballard said.) Shouse is proud of his daughters and grandkids and, while genuinely appreciative of the award, is not much for the acclaim. "I just enjoy helping people as much as I can, and I don't need any kind of accolade for doing something like that." King American Legion Post 290 convenes for their July meeting, during which the post awarded Ron Shouse



Brothers-in-funny-hats: U.S. Marine Corps veterans Ron Shouse, left, and Post 290 Chaplain John Winfrey, are photographed together. "He is the reason I joined the Legion (but don't tell him)," Winfrey said of Shouse.

with Legionnaire of the Year.

OBITCECIL FRANLIN ROGERS, USMC,**KHE SANH VETERAN,**

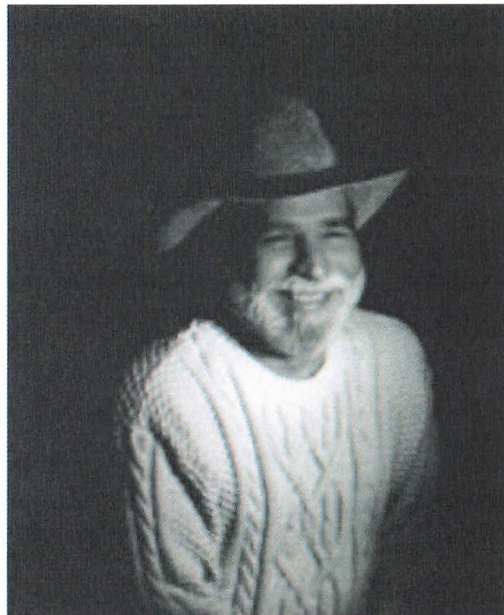
Cecil Franklin Rogers, 81 of the Green Creek Community of Robbinsville, NC passed away, Sunday, September 15, 2024, at his residence. He was a native of Graham County and the son of the late Robert Howard and Clara Orr Rogers. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brothers, David Rogers and Roy Rogers.

Cecil was a Veteran of the United States Marines having served his country during the Vietnam War. He was the recipient of a Purple Heart having been wounded at the Battle of Khe Sanh. He was a member of the Carringer-Webster VFW post #8635 and Eller-Rogers American Legion Post #192. He was also a member of the Robbinsville Masonic Lodge # 672, Andrews Lodge # 529 and a member of the Robbinsville Order of the Eastern Star #224. He was also a butcher by trade and was Co-Lead of Cecil and June Rogers Gospel Group for 54 years and a Member of Long Creek Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife, June Buchanan Rogers; his children and their spouses; Johnny and Angela Rogers of Robbinsville, NC, Randall and Kanya Rogers of the US Embassy in Chad, Jennifer and Rev. Noah Crowe of Robbinsville, NC, Holly and Kevin Brady of San Diego, CA; 9 grandchildren, Alex Crowe, Rachael Meier, Lydia Crowe, Randall Rogers Jr., Vanora Rogers, Justin Brady, Chase Brady, Autumn Brady, and Alicia Roberts; great grandchildren, Ellis Crowe, Theo Meier, and Caleb Meier. He is also survived by his sister, Anita Seay

of Robbinsville, NC

Brothers, Bobby Rogers of Beaver Dam, KY, Tommy Rogers of Center, AL, Jerry Rogers, Ronnie Rogers, and Mark Rogers all of Robbinsville, NC. Funeral Services will be held at 11:00 am Friday, September 20, 2024, at Mountain Creek Baptist Church. Reverends Tom Buchanan, Noah Crowe, and Roger Orr will officiate. Masonic Rites will be given by Robbinsville Masonic Lodge # 672. Burial will follow the Service at Mountain Creek Baptist Church Cemetery where Military Rites and Flag Presentation will be conducted by the US Marine Corp Honor Guard. The family will receive riends from 6:00 till 8:00 pm Thursday, September 19, 2024, at the Townson-Smith Chapel.

**OBIT RICHARD M FOLEY, USMC, KHE SANH VETERAN**

Richard Martin Foley, Jr. died on November 1st. A decorated veteran of the Marines, he was the Executive Officer of India Company on Hill 881S during the Siege of Khe Sanh.

He leaves behind the love of his life Carol, daughter Joi, and granddaughter Samantha, along with countless other family, friends, fellow bridge players, veterans, and the many others who had the chance to experience his generosity and humor. Visit richard-foley.com to share memories.

OBIT

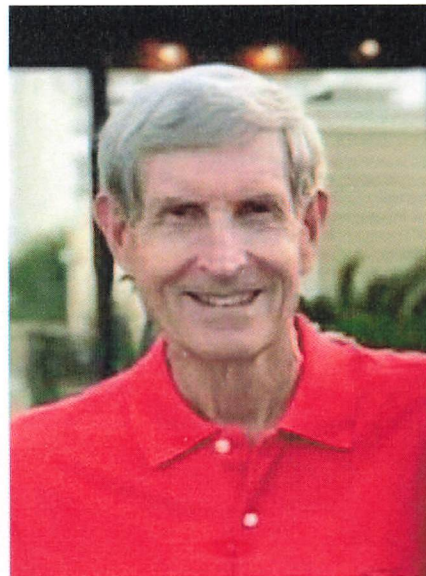
**BILL MARTIN, USMC,**

Billy Dean Martin (Bill) was born July 8, 1932, in Dallas to Lorene and Henry Newton Martin and died October 28, 2024. Bill graduated from Sunset High School in 1950. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in November 1950, and retired in November 1970. He was a Vietnam veteran. Bill retired from Sears Roebuck in 1987, at which time he became self-employed in financial services and tax preparation.

Bill was dedicated to a 12-Step fellowship, the Marine Corps League, and the DFW Honor Guard, participating in over 1,200 funerals for veterans of all services. Bill helped many and will be well remembered.

Bill was preceded in death by his son Mark and his daughter Pamela Judith Lau.

OBIT



OBIT

Ret. Col. Robert Foerster , USAF

It is with profound sadness that we announce that Ret. Col. Robert (Bob) Yates Foerster, of [Niceville, FL](#), passed away on November 24, 2024. Bob was born on August 16, 1942, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Bob graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1965 alongside his close friends from the 24th Squadron with whom he had lived for all four years of his cadet career. In 1966, Bob graduated from undergraduate pilot training at Reese Air Force Base in Lubbock, TX. Bob then went onto fly a C-130 aircraft in Vietnam in support of the defense of Khe Sanh. His Air Force career was heavily linked to the Academy—he served as First Group Air Officer Commanding, 1977-1979, as Chief of Staff to the Academy Superintendent, 1979-1983, and then as Registrar and Director of Admissions until his retirement from the Air Force in 1996.

In addition to his time at the Academy, the highlights of Bob's career included serving as the Director of Operations at Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina and Wing Commander at Clark Air Base in the Philippines

(then the largest airlift wing in the Pacific). Bob was a pillar of strength for our family and his absence will forever leave a void in our hearts. Bob was an avid golfer, greatly enjoyed sailing, and had a deep connection to nature and the outdoors. He is predeceased by his parents, Ellen Yates Foerster and Frederick Henry Foerster Jr. (USMA '39), second wife Sheila D. Foerster, and stepson Mark Larkin.

He is survived by his wife Theresa Ann Guay Foerster, first wife Linda Bishop, brothers Schuyler Foerster (Col USAF-Ret '71) and Frederick Henry Foerster III, children Katrina Varela, Leslie Presby, and Janet Sickie, as well numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, and nieces and nephews.

OBIT



Harold Rosson, Jr. Obituary

Harold Elvin Rosson, Jr., 76, of Hamilton, passed away at his home Sunday morning, December 8, 2024.

Harold was born April 9, 1948, the son of Harold Elvin and Barbara Jean (Brown) Rosson, Sr., in Normandy, Missouri. After graduating from high school, he went to work as a design engineer for McDonnell Douglas. Mr. Rosson served in the Marine Corps from May of 1967 until he retired in April of 1971 after receiving the Purple Heart award. He served with the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines (The Walking Dead.) He served at Con Thien in '67, A Shau Valley in both '67 and '68 and was wounded at Khe Sanh on February 23, 1968. He farmed upon his return home and then owned and operated Supreme Swine in Elvaston for 44 years. Harold remained active in the Keokuk American Legion Post 41, the V.F.W. and Hancock County Honor Guard. He enjoyed hunting and fishing and enjoyed tournaments for 20 years. In 2007 he was united in marriage to Andrea Pierson in Miami, Oklahoma.

Harold is survived by his wife, Andrea, of Hamilton; sons, Scott (Amie) Rosson of Nauvoo and Randy (Kim) Rosson of Weldon Spring, Missouri; daughters, Melia (Jesse) Moore and Stephanie (Kerry) Bitner, both of Ottumwa; nine grandchildren; two great grandchildren; two brothers, Stephen A. (Michelle) Rosson of Highland City, IL and Mike (Nicholle) Rosson of Wentzville, MO; and a sister, Cindie Johnson of St. Louis.

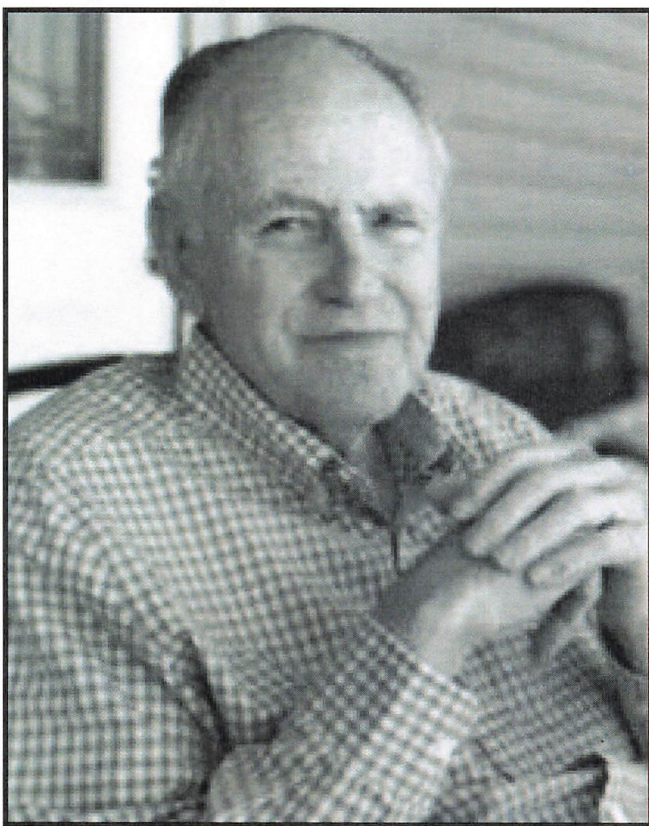
He was preceded death by his parents; and his grandparents, Calloway Elvin and Isabel (Cashion)



OBIT

**GAYLEN B. DOANE, USAF, KHE
SANH VETERAN**

Gaylen Bruce Doane was born on August 30, 1936, in Gilman, Iowa. He was the son of Bruce and Eva Doane, deceased. His only sibling, LaVonne, is also deceased. He is survived by his wife, Pauline Doane of Meredith, N.H, nephew, Ron Clay, of Las Vegas, NV, daughter, Shelly Brewer and her husband Kevin of Laconia, NH, granddaughter, Jillian Dreyer and husband Matthew of Tampa, FL along with extended family members in NH. Gaylen (aka "GB") enjoyed golf, traveling, going to the movies, and most of all a nice dinner out with family and friends. He was known to be very smart, quick with math, kind and pleasant. GB was loved by all who were lucky enough to have known him. Gaylen



graduated from Gilman High School in 1954 whereupon he began exam preparations for the Naval Academy.

The following year, 1955, he received a very coveted Congressional Appointment to the US Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD. Four (4) years later in 1959, Gaylen graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Engineering and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He was selected for Flight School which he completed

in early 1961 and proceeded to his first flying assignment in Evreux, France flying C-130(s). His missions there varied and included extensive travel to all of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, the most significant of which included an extended deployment of several months in Kano, Nigeria. The next phase of Gaylen's military career represented a dramatic change to the more technical side of the Air Force consisting of a tour at Cape Canaveral (now The Kennedy Space Center) in support of the then newly launched U.S. Space Effort to place a man in space. This somewhat short tour culminated in his enrollment in Graduate School at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute where he graduated in 1967 with a Master of Science Degree. By this time the War in Vietnam was raging and required the services of all. Due to his previous and extensive foreign flying experience, he was assigned to a Tactical Combat Squadron stationed in CCK, Taichung, Taiwan. **From here he flew his weekly combat missions into Vietnam; he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross during the battle of Khe Sanh.**

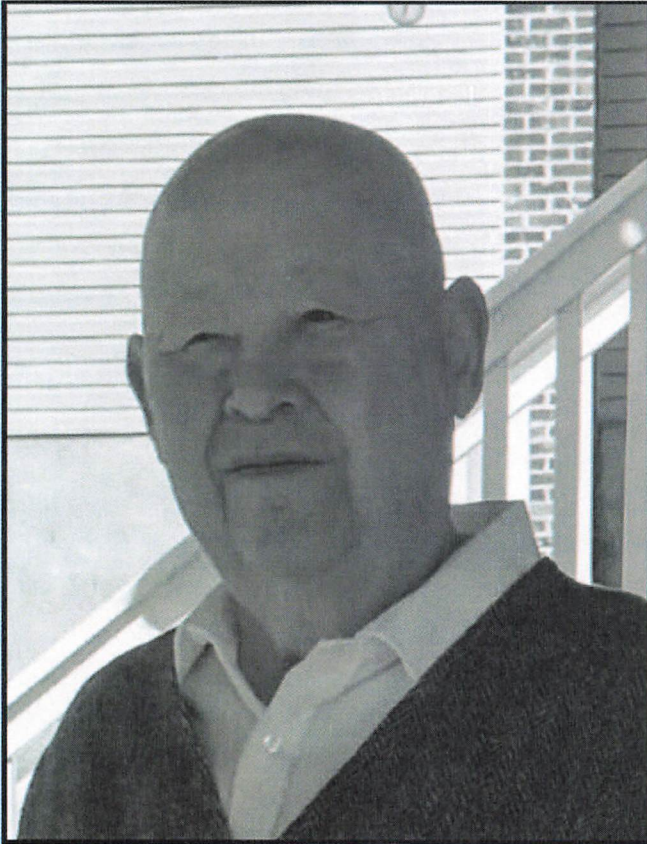
This was to be Gaylen's last flying assignment for any other than fulfillment of his flying proficiency requirements which were accomplished in twin-engine executive jets (Saberliners) used to facilitate travel for this last and final military assignment, Space and Missile Systems Command, located in Los Angeles. He spent the last ten (10) years of his military career at this location. He retired after 20 years in late 1979. Prior to this date he began to study law and accounting and worked part-time accordingly. Upon retirement, Gaylen formed the company, East-West Coast Mgt., Inc., a Florida Real Estate Corporation which served as an all-encompassing real estate entity, brokering, constructing, and managing commercial property consisting mostly of shopping centers and medically related facilities.



OBIT

On Tuesday, July 2nd at 7:21 pm, we said goodbye to a husband, father, brother, grandfather, and friend. Joseph Paul Abrams was born on October 13, 1947, and was relieved of duty on July 2, 2024. He was the son of the late Joseph and Frances Abrams.

Joseph was a United States Marine in Vietnam from 1966-1968 and one of the surviving Marines from the Battle of Khe-Sanh; he came home and became a Long Island Railroad Police officer in NYC for 27 years.



He lived a remarkable life marrying his Sweet pea, Sandy Abrams, whom he met while working as she walked through Jamaica station. After searching for her in Guatemala, he found her, and they were married 1 year later. They have been married for 49 years. He is survived by his wife, Sandy; his brother Steven (wife, Sharon), his children, Joey (wife, Liz), Paul (wife, Julie); Charles (wife, Danielle); Daughter, Krystal. He is also survived by his grandchildren Isabella (her mother, Melissa) Gianna, Gabriella, Rocco, Joey, Sofia, Nicolas, Ava, Lorenzo, Luke, Olivia, Josephine, and Franco.

OBIT

October 11, 1945 – July 8, 2024 - Steve Crittenden, 78, passed away on July 8, 2024 due to complications from a stroke at the Select specialty hospital in Richmond Virginia.

Steve was born at Naval Hospital, Camp Lejeune, Jacksonville, North Carolina on October 11, 1945 to Chuck and Marellen Crittenden. His dad, a Ma-



rine, served in WWII and the Korean War. He moved the family to Camp Pendleton toward the end of WWII and eventually moved to Lake Oswego, Oregon where Steve grew up and graduated from Lake Oswego High, class of 63. Steve attended the University of Oregon and later joined the

Marine Corps through the Platoon Leaders Class (PLC). He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in July 1967 and served as an infantry officer.

He served a tour in Vietnam where he participated in the Battle of Khe Sanh. He left active duty in the Marine Corps in 1971 and served as a reservist only to come back into the Corps in February 1975. He met his wife, Ann, while on a tour as a Public Affairs Officer in New York City where he ultimately convinced Ann that joining the Marine Corps would be the only occupation she should choose! Their long careers took them to Cherry Point NC, Los Angeles, California where Steve served as the Commanding Officer of Recruiting Station Los Angeles and Okinawa Japan where he again served as the Commanding Officer of Headquarters and Service Battalion, 3d Force Service Support Group (renamed later as Marine Logistics Group (MLG)). He served honorably until April 1991 and retired. Upon retirement from the Marine Corps, he and his wife Ann and their three children, Zeph, Michael and Maddie, made Stafford, Virginia their home.

Luck, Destiny, or Devine Intervention?

55 years ago in March of 1969, I came home from Vietnam after serving with Echo Co. 2/26th Marines, starting with the Siege of Khe Sanh (I had just turned 18 four months earlier). I had written to a young lady (Linda) for several months and we shared stories. Me about Vietnam and her about her dog Charlie, her family, etc. My younger brother Tom had asked her to write to me and she said she would if I wrote first. I did, and that started a fairly regular letter exchange (me when I could).

While in Vietnam, I tried to extend for 6 months more, but was turned down due to my top security clearance and a new destination of NSA, Ft. Meade, Maryland. This becomes important because had I stayed for 6 months all that came after changes dramatically. Would I have survived, would I ever had met Linda, etc.

When I came home, I called Linda and asked her if she wanted to go on a date. She said she would, but I had to meet her family first. I hung up the phone, I figured, damn, I don't want to marry this lady, just go on a date. Then, I came to my senses, and called her back to say I would be glad to meet her family.

We went on our date to see what I thought was a cowboy movie, but turned out to be a war movie "Where Eagles Dare" and then dated for the next 17 days of my leave before I had to be at NSA, Ft. Meade, MD. On one of my weekend visits home, I asked Linda to go to Ambridge (her hometown).

We went to a local jeweler and he asked me what I was looking for. He showed me engagement rings and I turned to Linda and said "Pick the one you want". She was stunned for a few minutes, believing I had taken her there to pick out a ring for someone else. I said it is yours. Now, I have never been bright in the woman department, but I made up for this proposal snafu over the years since.

We were married on August 2nd, 1969, about 4 months after we met. Linda later told me she told her sister, when I drove over to pick her up for our first date that I was the one she was going to marry. She had another suitor who had wanted to marry her.

Some time after we were married my mom was talking to Linda and the conversation came up about her being in the hospital and a kind woman gave her a doll (she was about 7). In those days you were placed on wards. My mom told her that she was the woman who gave her the doll, because I was also in the hospital (I was about 8) on the same ward.

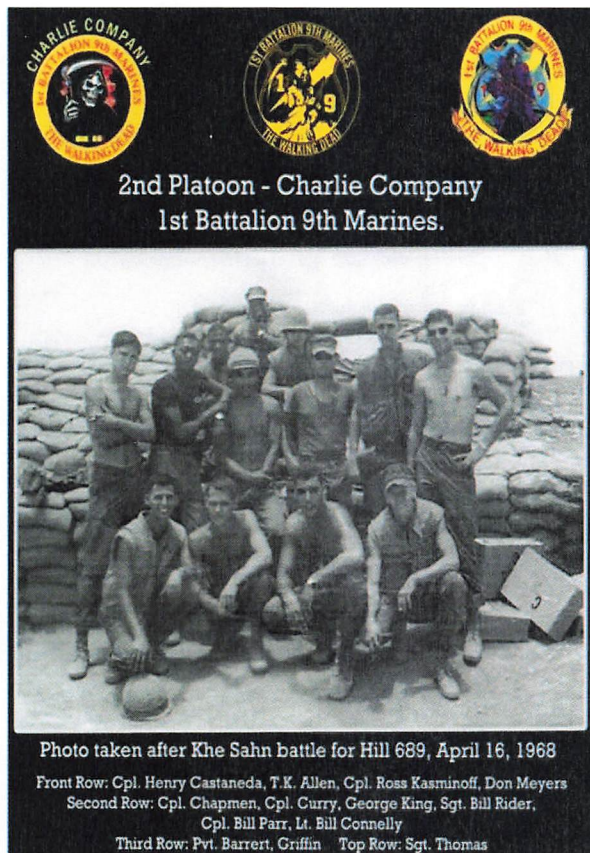
Despite a terrible war, nightmares, PTSD, AO, numerous medications, meeting and falling in love with my wife and our life together has made it all worth it.

Coincidence, luck, destiny, divine intervention, you decide. We will be married 55 years on August 2nd, 2024!

James Ulinski
Echo, 2/26 Marines
Vietnam 1968-1969

Physicians of 3rd Medical Battalion "Charlie Med" gather during a lull in the shelling at Khe Sanh.

L-R: Lt. Joseph Wolf, Lt. James Finnigan, Lt. Edward Feldman and Lt. Don-

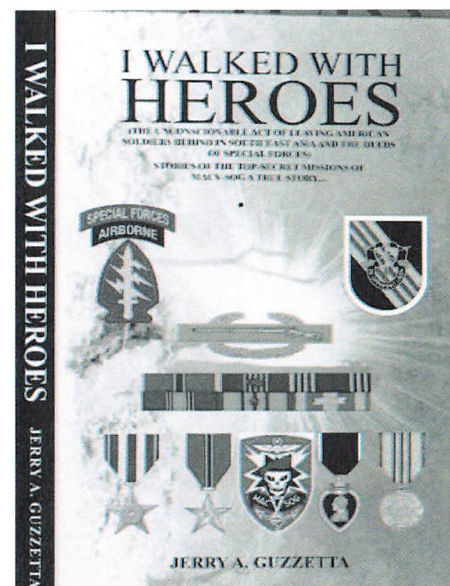


BOOK REVIEW

I Walked with Heroes, Jerry Guzzetta's new biography, chronicles the stories of the US military's most patriotic and brave figures.

The book serves as a historical collection of the events that these courageous souls went through in order to serve and protect their country. Guzzetta's book is an eye-opener to the kind of life that people in the military live, the dangers they face, and the high stakes they work in.

The author describes a number of the covert operations he and his group carried out, in which their presence in enemy territory was a threat to their lives. The people of America owe their safety to these heroes, who showed us to be tenacious and bold in the face of adversity rather than giving up.



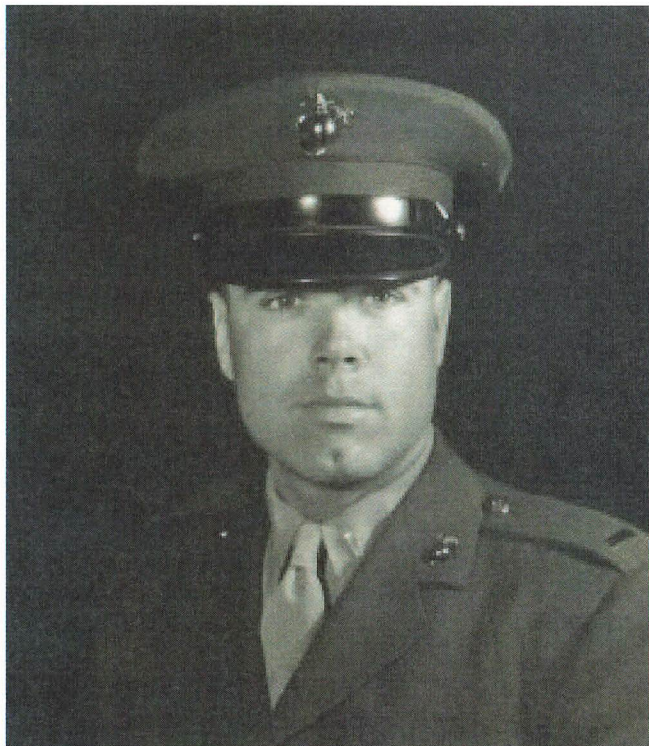
OBIT

NORMAN JASPER

A great citizen of the United States of America was lost when Norman Joshua Jasper died on April 18th, 2024.

His life started humbly, born in the town of Shipman, Illinois with a population of only 250 people. Norman grew up during the Great Depression, and lived his life on the honesty of a handshake and a smile being sufficient for all professional dealings. His favorite saying: "Good people are like cream. They always rise to the top."

Norman was successful with all sports available to him. After graduating high school, he earned his four-year degree from Illinois State University. His major in physical fitness with a minor in history



made him a valuable selection for Officer Candidate School (OCS) with the United States Marine Corps. His photo as 2nd lieutenant with the USMC is pictured above.

Norman Jasper excelled in military training with both the Army and the Marines. His Army training included Ranger school, 2nd Division Recon. battalion, and 82nd Airborne Division, among others. He was proud of making 300 free falls and made 365 parachute jumps in 8 years. His deep regret he

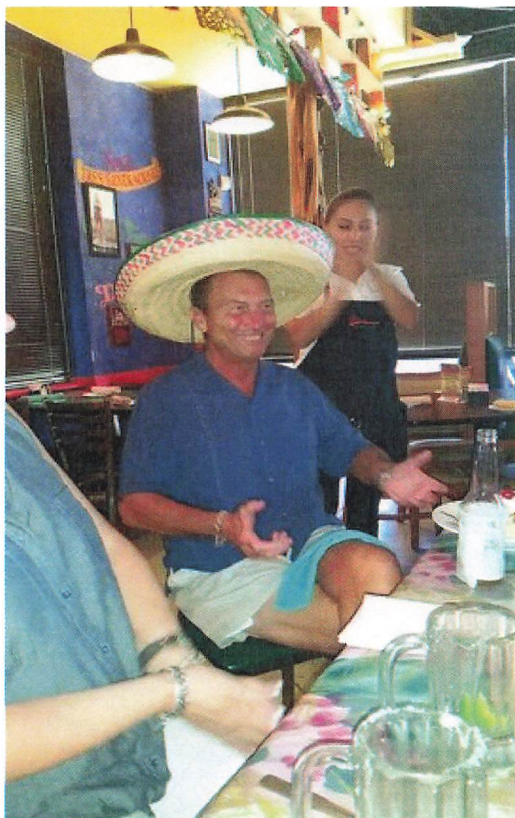
did not have the talent to learn a second language. That obstacle kept him from becoming a full Army Green Beret.

With his thorough military training, Norman volunteered for active duty in the Vietnam War. His fondest memory was as Kilo Company Commander, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines on hill 861, Khe Sanh, Vietnam. His less than 400 men were up against a North Vietnamese Regiment of 1000 soldiers. This time is called "The Siege" of Vietnam, where boots on the ground Marines were hit by heavy bombing and machine gun artillery fire. Norman Jasper was wounded in combat on January 21, 1968; along with 25 of his fellow Marines. On that date in spite of the irreconcilable odds, there were only 10 casualties of Kilo company, 26th Marines. His combat wounds earned Norman Jasper a Purple Heart medal with 2 stars, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Gold star, and later was awarded The Bronze Star with Combat V.

His leadership and skill to lead the Marines and "Hold the Hill 861" are recorded in "The Battle for Khe Sanh" by Captain Moyers S. Shore II, USMC, Historical Branch, G-3 Division 1969, page 40. Norman Jasper is featured in the book "Last Stand at Khe Sanh" the U.S. Marines' finest hour in Vietnam by Gregg Jones. He submitted materials to the author and was interviewed on January 27, 2012.

Other periodicals and materials the family did not have access to include. Norman's reading scripture in the Vietnam War and in life is the 91st Psalm of the King James Bible.

Within a year of Honorable Discharge from the USMC, Norman Jasper was hired in pharmaceutical sales then retired after 25 years. He never stopped working to improve Veterans treatment and causes. In 1987 Norman was able to push for the Military Order of the Purple Heart license plates for the State of Virginia with political assistance. He was active in membership of over 21 different Veteran groups. The Vietnam Veterans of America, Military Order of the World Wars, Blue Ridge All Airborne Division, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart are to name a few. His last year of activity before his infirmity caught up with him was 2018.



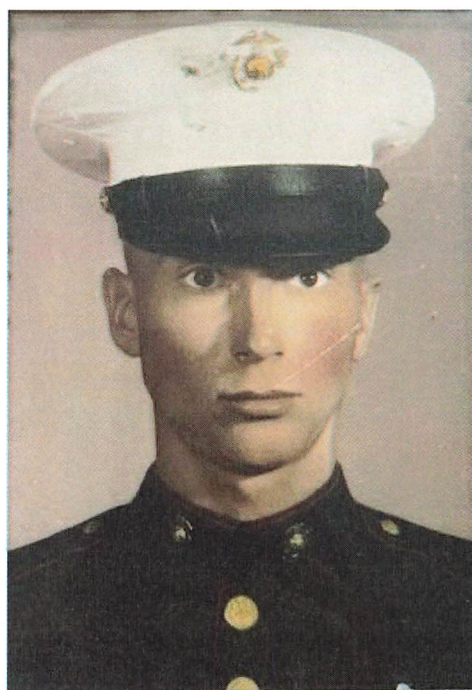
Obit

LLOYD T STRASNER JR. USMC

Lloyd T. Strasner, Jr. (Butch), age 76, of Katy, Texas, passed away September 3, 2024. Born August 25, 1948, in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was preceded in death by his parents, Lloyd T. Strasner, Sr. and Christine Lampkin; nephew, Dennis Davis. Butch is survived by his children, Shannon Ethridge (Lee); Sean Strasner (Loretta); grandchildren Chase Ethridge (Jessica); Mackenzie Strasner; Lindsay Ethridge; Zoe Naraghi; Jaden Naraghi; great grandchild Clara Ethridge; sisters Betty Davis (Jim); Linda Beard (Lee) and numerous nieces and nephews plus his loyal dog, Pepper, who was by his side when he died.

Butch, a Vietnam Veteran, served honorably in the United States Marine Corps from 1967-1970. During his time in Vietnam, he fought in the Battle of Khe Sanh, one of the bloodiest and longest battles of the war. He remained close friends with his fellow comrades from the 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines (2/26) Fox-trot Company, with whom he reunites annually through the Khe Sanh Veterans Association, having just returned from one on Sunday.

Butch graduated from North Little Rock High School in 1967 prior to joining the Marine Corps. He worked in the Gas Control Unit for El Paso Corporation in Houston, Texas and had to retire early in 1995 due to health issues. Butch enjoyed hunting and fishing in his earlier years and was an avid football fan with Notre Dame being his favorite team. He also loved playing golf with the Silver Eagles at Meadowbrook Farm in Katy, Texas for many years. Butch loved to travel both domestically and internationally, having visited approximately 50 countries.



OBIT

Larry H. Weaver, of Evening Shade, Arkansas, passed away peacefully on June 6, 2024, at the age of 75. Born on July 18, 1948, in Batesville, Arkansas, Larry lived a life marked by dedication, service, and unwavering faith.

Larry enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on August 9, 1965, at just seventeen years old. He trained rigorously for over a year before becoming eligible for combat duty. Larry served two tours of duty in Vietnam, demonstrating extraordinary bravery and leadership. His first tour began in February 1967, where he served as an infantry fire team leader and later as an infantry squad leader with F Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. Larry saw action in significant battles at Khe Sanh, Hill 881, and Hill 861. Despite being wounded three times, he returned to the battlefield, earning three Purple Hearts, a Silver Star, and a Navy Commendation Medal with combat "V".



An article from March 2, 1968, highlighted Larry's gallantry and bravery during his service. It detailed his heroic actions on May 3, 1967, when his squad was pinned down by enemy machine gun fire. Despite being seriously wounded, Larry moved forward,

throwing grenades into enemy positions and preserving the lives of his comrades. His actions on this day earned him the Silver Star Medal. The article also mentioned his continued bravery, including leaping into an enemy bunker to kill the remaining defenders and later helping a wounded Marine under heavy enemy fire, despite his own injuries. His unwavering courage and dedication were widely recognized and honored.

In May 1970, Larry returned to Vietnam for a second tour, this time serving as a sergeant with a Combined Action Platoon with H Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, 1st Marine Division. His squad worked closely with South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, teaching defense techniques and serving as humanitarians.

After his distinguished military service, Larry pursued his passion for ministry, graduating from Liberty Home Bible Institute with a degree in General Bible Studies. For over 27 years, he served as a volunteer jail minister, offering spiritual guidance and support to inmates from 1996 until 2023. Larry was preceded in death by his parents, Lewis and Lorene Weaver; his first wife, Bobbye Weaver; and his brothers, Price and Jerry Rush. He is survived by his loving wife, Nancy Weaver; his children, Bobby Rush, Virginia Rush Smith, Gavin Franke, Nathan Marlin, and Natalie Marlin; and his cherished grandchildren, Brandon Manley, Danielle Manley, Matthew Smith, Alli Polston, Abri Franke, Oliver Marlin, Laura Lamme, Charlie Lamme, and Wendy Hardy. Larry's legacy continues through his great-grandchildren, Lucero, Trentin, Julianna, Neveah, Jada, and Kaitlyn.

A memorial service to celebrate Larry's life was held on June 14, 2024, at 2 PM at the First Baptist Church of Evening Shade.

"To those who have fought for it, freedom has a flavor that the protected will never know."

— P. McCree Thornton, [The Star Spangled Son](#)

FROM THE PODIUM OF JIM "OLLIE" COLLINS
USMC - KEY SPEAKER MARINE CORP BALL
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

" " GOOD EVENING EVERYONE" "

AS A MEMBER OF THE "KHE SANH VETERANS ASSOCIATION" I WAS ASKED BY LEADERSHIP MEMBERS OF THE "MARINE CORPS DETACHMENT, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND TO BE THE "KEY NOTE SPEAKER" AT THE 249TH MARINE CORPS "BIRTHDAY BALL."

I WAS CERTAINLY HONORED AND EXCITED TO BE HERE THIS EVENING, IN CELEBRATION! AS WE RECOGNIZE "WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY" OUR 249TH MARINE CORPS "BIRTHDAY BALL."

YOU, MIGHT HAVE HEARD THIS BEFORE!! ALTHOUGH IT DOES JUSTIFY REPEATING! NO OTHER BRANCH OF THE MILITARY GATHERS ALL OVER THE WORLD ON THE SAME DAY EVERY YEAR TO COMMEMORATE THE FOUNDING OF THEIR ORGANIZATION, BUT MARINES DO! MARINES EVERYWHERE CELEBRATE AT FORMAL SOCIAL MILITARY BALLS, YOUR LOCAL MARINE CORPS LEAGUE OR WITH FRIENDS. EVERY NOVEMBER, MARINES FIND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER AND GATHER TOGETHER TO SHOW THAT OUR MOTTO "SEMPER FIDELIS" IS JUST AS STRONG IN VETERANS AS IT IS WITH ACTIVE MARINES. WITH THAT IN MIND! LET ME BEGIN WITH A LITTLE "VERBAL COLLAGE" AND EXPRESSION THAT "MARINES" ARE FAMILIAR WITH!! HOW CAN ANYONE REALLY KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE STOOD TALL AT BELLEAU WOOD, TO HAVE CRAWLED AT GUADAL CANAL, CLIMED AT IWO JIMA, HELD FAST AT KHE SANH, PUSHED THROUGH FALLUJAH OR HELMAN, AFGHANISTAN, ALL TACTICAL AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITIES. HOW CAN ANYONE REALLY KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO STAND ON A SET OF YELLOW FOOTPRINTS ON AN ISLAND IN SOUTH CAROLINA AND WRITE A BLANK CHECK

TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR THEIR LIFE. MARINES KNOW, WE KNOW. MOST OF YOU HAVE STOOD ON THOSE FOOTPRINTS. I WILL SAY TO YOU NOW! ALTHOUGH I CAN REASSURE YOU! THAT THOSE "YELLOW FOOT PRINTS" WERE NOT AROUND WHEN I ENLISTED IN APRIL OF 1965. WE HAVE CHARGED THOSE LINES, WE HAVE BEEN VICTORIOUS!

FOR 249 YEARS MARINES HAVE LED THE WAY. AS WE MARINES GATHER HERE ON THE 249TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR BIRTH, WE ALSO CELEBRATE THOSE WHO HAVE COME BEFORE, THOSE WHO HAVE YET TO TAKE THE OATH AND MOST IMPORTANTLY WE COME TOGETHER FROM DIFFERENT GENERATIONS, WALKS OF LIFE, RELIGIONS AND WARS FOUGHT. WE GATHER AS STRANGERS TURNED BROTHERS, MEN AND WOMEN TURNED WARRIORS, AMERICANS TURNED MARINES WHILE WE ALSO NEVER FORGET BY HONORING THOSE GONE BEFORE US!!

I ENLISTED IN THE US MARINE CORPS ON APRIL 22, 1965. WHAT A WAKEUP CALL!! PARRIS ISLAND LITERALLY CHANGED MY ENTIRE LIFE FOREVER. I WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON AFTER GRADUATION. THAT'S ALL I NEEDED!!!! SOMEONE OR SOMETHING TO GIVE ME "HOPE," AND A CHANCE IN LIFE'S PURSUIT OF GUIDANCE, HAPPINESS & SUCCESS. THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS DID THAT FOR ME!!!

I NOW HAD THE ABILITY TO SHAPE MY LIFE AND BE WHO I DESIRED TO BE!! AND PURSUE MY EDUCATION WITH PURPOSE, DETERMINATION AND EXCITEMENT. AFTER GRADUATING FROM PARRIS ISLAND, AND SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THE ITR PROGRAM AT CAMP GEIGER I RECEIVED MY OFFICIAL MILITARY

ASSIGNMENT ORDERS. I WAS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO 1ST BATTALION 8TH MARINES AND PARTICIPATED ON A MED - CRUISE ASSIGNED TO A BATTALION LANDING TEAM IN MARCH THRU AUGUST 1966. ALSO IN 1966 THE VIETNAM WAR WAS ESCALATING. I RECEIVED ORDERS FOR VIETNAM, IN SEPTEMBER 1966.

21 MAY 1967

I WAS DEPLOYED AND TRANSFERRED TO ALPHA COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION 26TH MARINE REGIMENT! THE REGIMENT HAD A (2) FOLD MISSION TO OCCUPY AND DEFEND KEY TERRAIN!

SEEKING OUT THE OPPOSING FORCE WHILE ATTEMPTING TO ENGAGE IN A VIGOROUS INTENSIVE PACIFICATION PROGRAM.

ALREADY COMPLETING 6 MONTHS OF THE UNIT'S OCCUPATION AND COUNTLESS KIA,S AND WOUNDED FROM BULLETS, BOOBYTRAPS AND OTHER EXPLOSIVE MINES, THEN WORD CAME DOWN FROM THE CHAIN OF COMMAND TO SADDLE-UP! DESTINATION! A PLACE CALLED KHE SANH! DEMILITARIZED ZONE! I CORPS WHICH WAS NOW THE UNIT'S TACTICAL AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY, A PLACE NONE OF THE YOUNG MARINES HAD EVER HEARD OF. THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT IS CITED BY MY PLT., COMMANDER, LT., JOHN M. KAHENY! I WAS ASSIGNED AS "PLATOON GUIDE." WE WERE A SOMBER BUNCH! WHEN WE ARRIVED ON C130'S THE "KHE SANH COMBAT BASE" WAS A VERY EERIE AND TERRIFYING COMBAT LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

AS THE RAMP OF THE AIRCRAFT CAME DOWN WE LOOKED OUT ONTO THE AIRSTRIP! WINDING DOWN THIS LONG DIRT ROAD TOWARD THE MOUNTAINS, WERE ALL THE WALKING WOUNDED FROM THE HILL FIGHTS. THERE WERE COUNTLESS MARINES SCATTERED ALL OVER, STANDING IN LINE ALL BANDAGED UP ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, COVERED WITH BLOOD AND KHE SANH "RED CLAY" MUD. MARINES FROM A/1/26, 2/26 AND 3/26 & ELEMENTS OF THE 3RD MARINE DIVISION BEGAN DAILY LONG RANGE (ROTATING) COMBAT

PATROLS IN AND AROUND "KHE SANH COMBAT BASE" CONSTANTLY ENCOUNTERING CONTACT WITH ELITE 325TH NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY FORCES AND NVA SNIPERS.

LT., KAHENY 3RD PLT LEADER, LED HIS 43-MAN PATROL INTO A VALLEY JUST WEST OF HILL 881-SOUTH TO EXAMINE A HEAVY TRAIL REPORTED BY AN "AIR TRAFFIC OBSERVER" THE PATROL WAS SUDDENLY ATTACKED BY A LARGE VOLUME OF FIRE FROM FOUR DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. TWO YOUNG MARINES EACH 18 YEARS OLD, PFC THOMAS HENDERSHOTT & L/CPL ROGER HEARD, STOOD UP, STOOD FAST AND FIRED INTO A CHARGING NVA FORCE, TAKING THE FULL FORCE AND DYING SO THE REST OF THE PATROL COULD ESCAPE & LIVE. EVENTUALLY FORTY-ONE MAKE IT BACK TO SAFETY, SOME BLEEDING, NONE BROKEN, BUT THE TWO GO ON HOME, TO REST FOREVER BENEATH MARBLE CROSSES. THEIR NAMES ARE NOW ETCHED IN STONE ON THAT WALL BENEATH LINCOLN'S WATCHFUL EYE! THE YEARS HAVE PASSED BUT EVERY DAY I SEE THEIR SACRIFICE REFLECTED IN THE SMILING FACES ON MY CHILDREN. FOR HAD NOT THOSE TWO BRAVE MARINES HELD THEIR GROUND WITH EVERYTHING THEY HAD, COLEEN, MEGHAN AND JOHN PETER SIMPLY WOULD NOT BE, BECAUSE ONE OF THOSE THEY SAVED THAT DAY WAS ME.

** I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE THE BOND BETWEEN MARINES AND HOSPITAL CORPSMAN.. PARTICULARLY BECAUSE I HAVE OVER AND OVER AGAIN..OBSERVED THEM IN COMBAT ACTION SITUATIONS. A MARINE WILL PRESS FORWARD IN COMBAT THROUGH MORTAL PERIL, BUTTRESSED BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IF THEY SHOULD FALL, A HOSPITAL CORPSMAN WILL BE ONLY STEPS BEHIND TO AID THEM, WHILE THE FIGHT CONTINUES!

A CORPSMAN WILL RUN ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE UNDER FIRE WITH THE SOLE PURPOSE OF REACHING AND AIDING A FALLEN MARINE, EVEN IF IT MEANS SACRIFICING HIS OWN LIFE TO DO SO. THEY WILL DO THIS BECAUSE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM KNOW THAT THEIR MARINES WILL PROTECT THEM WITH THEIR VERY LIVES AS WELL!! I KNOW "I AM THEIR WITNESS."

THE HOSPITAL CORPS IS THE ONLY ENLISTED CORPS AND THE LARGEST CORPS IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY WITH WELL OVER 28,000 CURRENTLY AROUND THE WORLD ON THE SEA, UNDER THE SEA, ON LAND AND IN THE AIR. "ARE THERE ANY "HOSPITAL CORPSMAN" HERE? IF THERE IS "PLEASE

"STAND & BE RECOGNIZED." IF NOT! THEIR STORY "HAS BEEN" TOLD AND SHARED THIS EVENING

27 JUNE 1967 -

JUST PAST MIDNIGHT @ 0035, KHE SANH COMBAT BASE RECEIVED MORE THAN 50 ROUNDS OF 82MM MORTARS, KILLING 4 AND WOUNDING 76, AND KILLING ONE VIETNAMESE ARVN LIAISON OFFICER. THE NVA MORTARS WALKED UP AND DOWN THE TENT AREAS OF A BATTERY, 1/3, KILLING 2 AND WOUNDING 30 MARINES, INCLUDING THE FIRE DIRECTION AND CO OF THE BATTERY CPT., BRENNAN, ESPECIALLY THE 3/26 BATTALION AID STATION. I STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY AS A SURVIVOR OF THIS EVENT AS WELL.. BUT ONLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD ALMIGHTY, I WAS SPARED AGAIN, FROM THE BEES NEST, BUT STILL HAUNTED BY THE SCREAMS OF THOSE AND THE SMELL OF LINGERING SULFUR FROM THE MANY DETONATED MORTAR AND ROCKET ROUNDS THAT POURED DOWN ON US.

AT THIS TIME!! PLEASE RISE AS WE MEMORIALIZE THOSE MARINE'S & NAVY CORPSMEN WHO GAVE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE 27 JUNE, 1967 BY CITING THEIR NAMES, HERE AT THE 249TH MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY BALL, NEWPORT RHODE ISLAND!! 7 NOVEMBER, 2024.

"KILLED IN ACTION"

27 JUNE 1967

"KHE SANH COMBAT BASE & VICINITY"

> I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE!!!!

CORPORAL, CHRISTINA WIGGINS USMC, MARINE CORPS

DETACHMENT; NEWPORT R.I..

> CORPORAL WIGGINS, WILL "RING A SINGLE BELL! IN REMEMBRANCE" AFTER HONORING EACH NAME!!

1. 2 LT., DALE CHARLES ALLEN I/3/26
2. SSGT., WILLIAM IVOR TENNEY BACON H&S/3/26
DIED USS SANCTUARY, RESULTS OF WOUNDS 6/27/67
3. LT., LAWRENCE JOSEPH BOLGER A/1/26
4. PFC FREDERICK BRENKE L/3/26
5. L/CPL VICTOR BURNS A/1/26
6. CPT FRANKLIN BYNUM L/3/26
7. L/CPL ALLEN DAMIAN A/1/26
8. L/CPL JEFFREY DAVID I/3/26
9. CPL ANTHONY DI CESARE JR 1/3/26
10. HM3 HOSPITALMAN 3RD CLASS, CARL DOUGLAS DUDLEY JR H&S/3/26

KHE SANH VETERANS**RED CLAY****SPRING 2025**

11. L/CPL CHARLES MANLEY GATTIS JR.,
I/3/26 DIED NAVY HOSPITAL, DANANG,
12. L/CPL ALEJANDRO GODINEZ I/3/26
13. SSGT DONALD PAUL HAMILTON I/3/26
14. HM3 CURTIS DARRELL JACKSON H&S/3/26
15. L/CPL FREDDIE LEE JOHNSON I/3/26
16. SGT PAUL KINCAID A/1/26
17. L/CPL CHARLES LYNCH SUB UNIT 5
18. L/CPL FRANCISCO MAZARIEGOS SUB/UNIT 5
19. L/CPL KENNETH MILLARD I/3/26
20. CPL DENNIS O'CONNOR SUBUNIT 5
21. PFC PAUL RODRIGUEZ JR A/1/26
22. L/CPL GLENN EDWARD SANDERS A/1/26 -
6/29/67- DIED USS SANCTUARY, RESULT OF
WOUNDS 06/27/1967.
23. CPL JAMES SHEPARD-SUB UNITS

24. PFC RICK STEWART A/1/13
25. CPL EDWARD TRAVIS A/1/13
26. CPL RICHARD LEE WALKER I/3/26
27. CPL STEPHEN WASSENICH I/3/26
28. L/CPL JONATHAN WHITTICOM H&S/1/26
29. L/CPL IRA WILLIAMS A/1/26
30. PFC JACK WILLIAMS L/3/26

"MAY THESE "WARRIORS" CONTINUE TO REST IN
PEACE"

THANK YOU, CORPORAL WIGGINS!

PUC RECOGNITION:

"NAVY PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION"

SIGNED BY PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON!! AWARD-
ED TO NAVY/MARINE UNITS OF THE 26TH MARINE
REGIMENT, 3RD MARINE DIVISION 1965 THRU 1968.
THE "NAVY PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION" WAS INSTI-
TUTED IN 1942. AWARDED TO NAVY/MARINE CORPS
UNITS FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM IN ACTION
AGAINST AN ARMED ENEMY.

"ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS;"

AWARDED IN THE NAME OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES TO UNITS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF
THE UNITED STATES AND CO BELLIGERENT NATIONS.
THE UNIT MUST HAVE DISPLAYED SUCH

GALLANTRY, DETERMINATION, AND SPIRIT DE CORPS IN ACCOMPLISHING IT'S MISSION UNDER EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS TO HAVE SET IT APART AND ABOVE OTHER UNITS PARTICIPATING IN THE SAME CAMPAIGN. THE DEGREE OF HEROISM REQUIRED IS THE SAME AS THAT WHICH WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR THE AWARD OF THE "NAVY CROSS" TO AN INDIVIDUAL.

THE EXPERIENCE "RETURNING HOME" FROM VIETNAM!!

AFTER SPENDING 6 MONTHS @ KHE SANH MY ROTATION DATE WAS UP. I DEPARTED KHE SANH COMBAT BASE ON A C-130. LOOKING DOWN FROM THE AIRCRAFT WAS CHILLING, FIRST WONDERING IF WE WERE GOING TO BE TARGETED BY THE NVA AND SHOT OUT OF THE SKY. GOD IS GOOD! WE LANDED AT DANANG AIR BASE. AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF PROCESSING, WE WERE IN THE AIR AGAIN! DESTINATION, KADENA AIR FORCE BASE, OKINAWA. UPON ARRIVAL WE WERE TOLD BY THE S-1 ADMIN OFFICER THAT THERE WERE NO FLIGHTS GOING TO CONUS.....

!!!!"CONTINENTAL OF THE UNITED STATES" AT LEAST FOR A WEEK OR SO. THIS WAS VERY UNFORTUNATE NEWS. A MARINE 1ST SGT ADDRESSED THE GROUP AND PROVIDED SOME ADVICE. RECOMMENDATION! GET TO THE OFFICER'S CLUB, ASK ANY-ONE THERE, IF THEY COULD GET US ON A FLIGHT TO THE STATES. "IT HAPPENED."

TWO PILOTS APPROACHED US AND STATED "WE CAN TAKE YOU TO THE STATES, BUT IT HAS TO BE BY C-130 CARGO PLAN! AND BUCKLED TO THE INTERIOR OF THE AIRCRAFT FOR THE FLIGHT DURATION. THE 14 MARINES TOOK THE OFFER.

NEXT MORNING AT 0600 HRS WE WERE LOADED AND IN THE AIR, DESTINATION; SANTIAGO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

WE LANDED AT THE AIRPORT SAFELY IN THE EARLY EVENING. STILL ON THE TARMAC, SUDDENLY ONE OF THE PILOTS ADDRESSED US. "HERE THIS! WE CANNOT DISEMBARK, WE HAVE VIOLENT-VIETNAM DEMONSTRATIONS ALL OVER THE AIRPORT. NOT SAFE. WHAT A DISAPPOINTMENT!! IN THE AIR AGAIN. DESTINATION; ADAK, ALASKA, NAVAL AIR FACILITY/ IN THE ALEUTIANS ISLANDS. STILL IN DISBELIEF!! WE SPENT SEVERAL DAYS AT THE NAVAL FACILITY! THEN BACK IN THE AIR AGAIN!! DESTINATION, DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, DOVER DELAWARE. FINALLY BACK IN THE STATES. WE WERE SUPPLIED TRANSPORTATION TO THE BUS STATION. ONE OF THE MARINES GRABBED A NEWSPAPER AND WAS SOMEWHAT VISIBLY UPSET. FRONT PAGE, ANOTHER SERVICEMAN STRUCK BY HIT & RUN DRIVER. WE WERE IN OUR TROPICAL UNIFORM. THAT WAS ENOUGH SAID, WE GRABBED OUR DUFFLE BAGS HEADED FOR THE BATHROOM IN THE BUS STATION. AS WE TOOK TURNS CHANGING INTO OUR CIVILIAN CLOTHES...ALL THE WHILE THINKING WE WERE GOING TO BE TARGETED, BECAUSE WE REPRESENTED THE MILITARY SERVICE. WE THREW THE DUFFLE BAGS IN THE BELLY OF THE BUS AND WE WERE ON OUR WAY HOME ALTHOUGH STAYING VIGILANT AND CAUTIOUS, WE FELT THAT WE WERE OUTCASTS...AGAIN FRIGHTENING WAS A LIGHT TERM. SADLY, THERE WERE NO "TICKER TAPE" OR CONFETTI :

PARADES OR WELCOME HOME ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR THE RETURNING "VIETNAM VETERANS." WE WERE CAST AS "BABY KILLERS & WAR MONGERS. AT THE VERY LEAST, RETURNING SERVICEMEN, IF NOT VILIFIED, WERE CERTAINLY NOT WELL RECEIVED. MOST TRIED TO SLIP QUIETLY INTO A NORMAL PATTERN AND ATTEMPTED TO HIDE THE FACT THEY SERVED IN VIETNAM TO AVOID THE ANGER AND DISDAIN OF MANY.

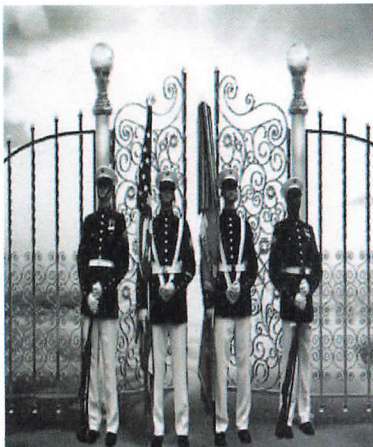
IN CLOSING!!UNDENIABLY, WITHOUT QUESTION, INFLUENCING THE ENTIRE MARINE CORP CONCEPT, IS A THING CALLED "VALUES"

WE PERPETUATE THEM, WE PROTECT THEM, AND WE PROMOTE THEM!! SO I URGE AND ENCOURAGE YOU....TO CONTINUE TO PROMOTE YOUR "MARINE CORPS" VALUES, FOR IT MATTERS NOT HOW A MARINE DIES, BUT IT DOES MATTER HOW THEY LIVE. ALL THE THINGS WE CALL VALUES PREPARE US AS MARINES FOR THE VERY CHOICES THAT WILL ULTIMATELY DEFINE OUR CHARACTER!! WHAT A MARINE IS, IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT A MARINE HAS....AND OUR BOTTOM LINE..OUR TRUE WORTH IS WHAT WE ARE! I WANT TO THANK YOU! FOR THIS HONOR.. HAVING HAD THE DISTINCT OPPORTUNITY, BOTH PROFESSIONALLY AND EARNESTLY TO SHARE IN SOME OF MY MOST GUARDED PERSONAL CHRONICLES AND ACCOUNTS OF MANY YEARS PAST.

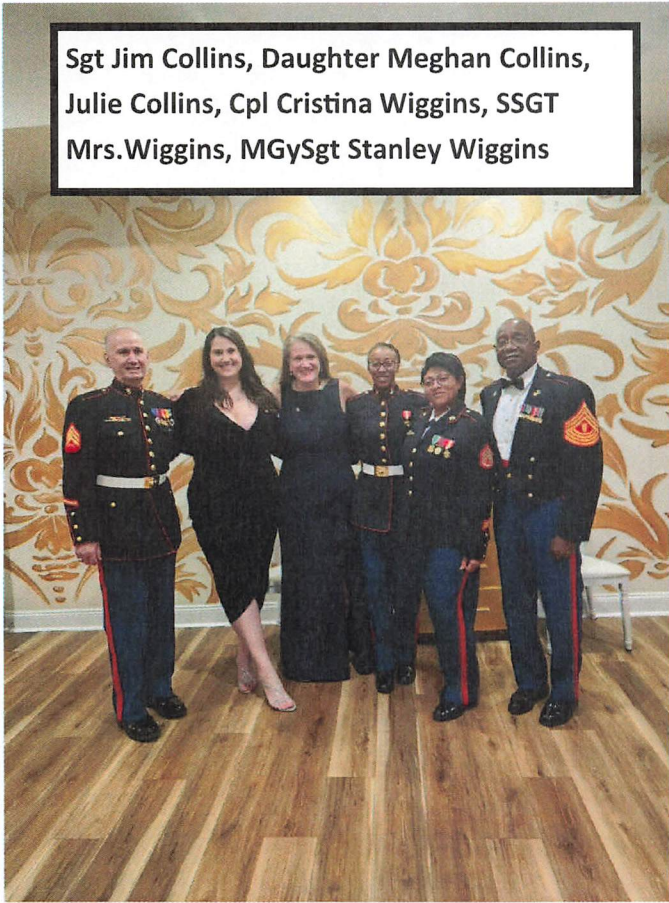
GOD BLESS AMERICA & THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS!!



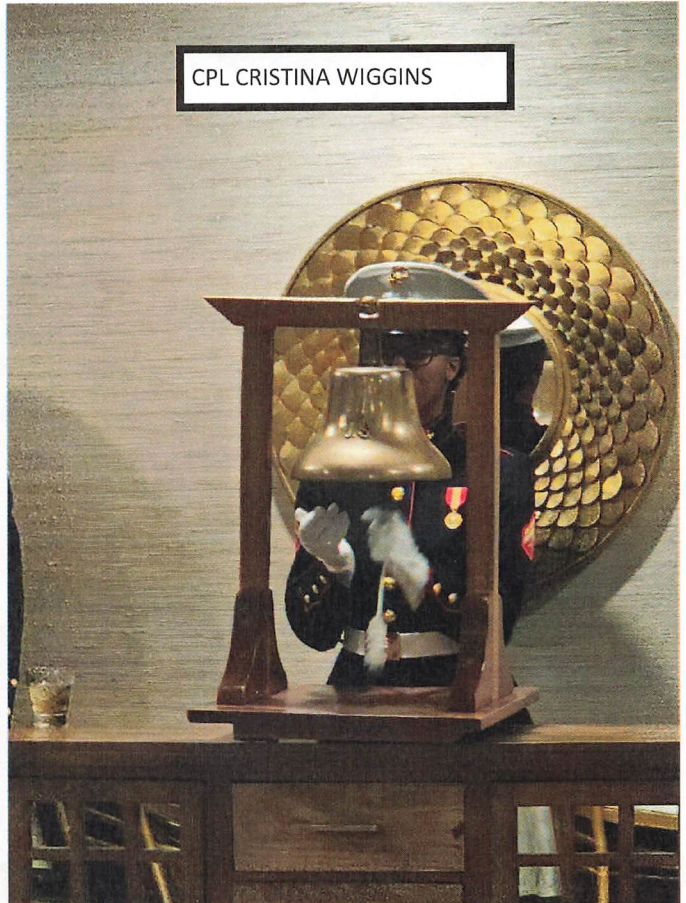
SEMPER FIDELIS



Sgt Jim Collins, Daughter Meghan Collins,
Julie Collins, Cpl Cristina Wiggins, SSGT
Mrs. Wiggins, MGySgt Stanley Wiggins



CPL CRISTINA WIGGINS



SGT JIM COLLINS , MGySgt STANLEY WIGGINS



SGT HJIM COLLINS AND WIFE JULIE COLOLINS



OBIT

**KENNETH GASCH, USMC,
KHE SANH VETERAN**

Kenneth Alden Gasch, Sr. passed away on June 8, 2024, in Palestine, TX at the age of 82 after battling esophageal cancer for over two years. Born September 30, 1941, in Victoria, TX, Kenneth grew up the youngest (and tallest!) of seven children in a close-knit family in Bay City, TX. **He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps at age 17 and began what would be a distinguished 20-year military career. Kenneth fought in the war in Vietnam for three years, where he participated in the Battles of Khe Sanh and Hue City and earned the Combat Action Ribbon.**

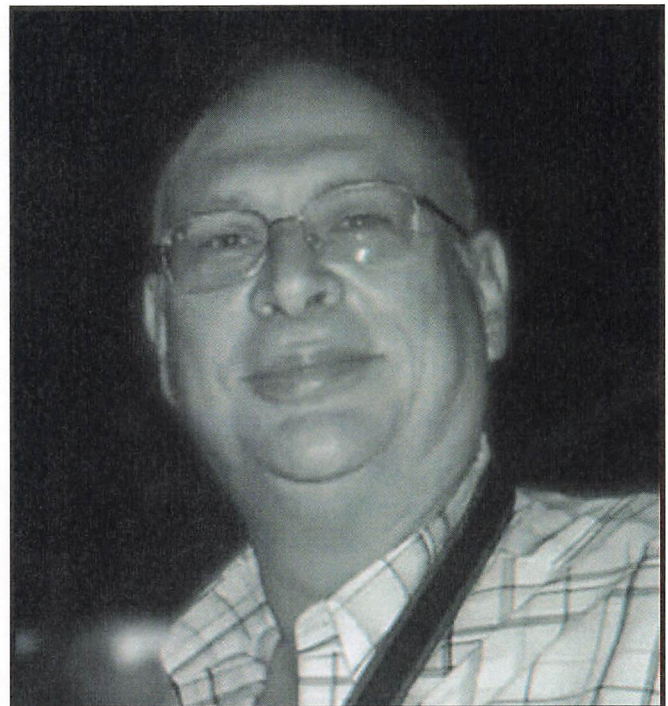
Throughout his early military career Kenneth was stationed at Cherry Point NC, Camp Pendleton, CA, Twenty-nine Palms, CA, Iwakuni and Okinawa, Japan, and Beaufort, SC. His military accolades also included the Joint Service Commendation Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross, Navy Presidential Unit Citation, Rifle Expert Badge, and four Marine Corps Good Conduct Medals. In 1970 he met Dallas native Betty (whom he affectionately called "Poo") and they married in 1971.

They went on to be stationed in Seattle, St. Louis, and San Diego. Kenneth retired from active duty in 1979 at the rank of Gunnery Sergeant and they moved to Betty's family home in Dallas (Lakewood) to raise their three sons. Kenneth began his civilian career at Continental Electronics, where his mastery of RF (radio frequency), can-do-it attitude, and keen mind were highly valued. Always up for going someplace new, Kenneth frequently folded his 6'7" frame into an airplane to tackle projects around the globe, including two several-month stints in India, and projects in North Dakota, Afghanistan, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Cyprus, and Australia and on the Superconducting Supercollider in Waxahachie, TX.

In 1996 Kenneth left Continental and began roles with a series of companies that took the family to Woodbridge, VA, Phoenix, AZ, Santa Cruz, CA, and Edmond, OK, eventually returning to Dallas. Kenneth settled into retirement in the late 2010s and plunged his boundless energy into various hobbies, including restoring vintage tractors, boats, and cars; taking community college welding classes; lake and ocean fishing; tumbling gemstones; and offering

consultation to anyone and everyone who had anything that needed fixing. Kenneth was a natural storyteller, a lover of bawdy jokes, and a spontaneous adventure-seeker who didn't sit still for long. His mechanical mind knew no bounds, and he never encountered something he couldn't repair or figure out how to get fixed. Kenneth loved genealogy, dogs, western movies, photography, spy novels, history, classic country music, and soul food. He held a strong faith in God throughout his life. Most of all Kenneth loved his family and took great joy in spending time with them whenever possible.

Kenneth was preceded in death by his parents, George Alden Gasch and Denal Marie Black Gasch; his beloved wife of 52 years Betty Florence Houston Gasch; and siblings Mary Tompkins, Virgil Gasch, and Billy Gasch. Kenneth is survived by his sisters Helen Freeman, Rachael Weems, and Yvonne Dodson; sister-in-law Jane Gasch; brothers-in-law Ben and Bob Houston; sons Ken, Jr., Bill, and John Gasch; daughters-in-law Erin and Rachel Gasch; grandchildren Zoie, Winston, Tate, Benjamin, Cooper, and Emily Gasch; great-grandchildren Finley, Rayne, and Zander; and a multitude of nieces, nephews, and cousins. A memorial service celebrating Kenneth's life was held on Sunday, September 29, 2024 at 2:00 pm at Bethany Christian Church, 6282 Oram Street Dallas, TX 75214.



OBIT

Paul Weitz, 77, of Falmouth, formerly of Canton, passed away unexpectedly on Sunday, March 3, 2024.

He was born in Dorchester on December 14, 1946, and spent his younger years in Canton. He attended Boston College High School, where he was proud to be an alumnus and would go on to send his two sons.

After two years of college Paul decided to enlist in the Marines in 1967 to serve his country during the Vietnam War. He served honorably as a First Lieutenant Infantry Officer in the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment, India Company until he was wounded in battle in March 1969. Upon returning to the United States, Paul received a Purple Heart award for his valor and bravery during combat. Paul was a Marine with every fibre of his being, and he wore it proudly.

Upon returning from the war and recovering from his injuries Paul completed his undergraduate degree in Business from Boston College. After graduation Paul began working at Liberty Mutual Insurance and enjoyed a successful career as a corporate insurance broker. Along the way, Paul earned an MBA from Babson College and retired as a Managing Director from Marsh McLennan in 2012.

He was married for 24 years to his wife, Susan, whom he adored. They enjoyed a comfortable retirement splitting their time between Miromar Lakes, FL and Falmouth. Whenever Susan would walk into a room Paul would light up and often commented how beautiful she was in front of family and friends. What made Paul the happiest was time spent with his family. From his siblings to his wife and children, his grandchildren, his nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews, extended family members, that time spent was always his

happiest.

Paul relished his role as “Grandfather” and shared a special relationship with his first and only girl, Gwendolyn. He would proudly shower praise, encouragement, advice and a helping hand with all his grandchildren. He took such pride taking his family on a trips to Disney World and Turks and Caicos.

Paul was a voracious reader, enjoying books by John Grisham, and has over 4,000 titles saved in his Kindle. He also enjoyed watching old Western and war movies.

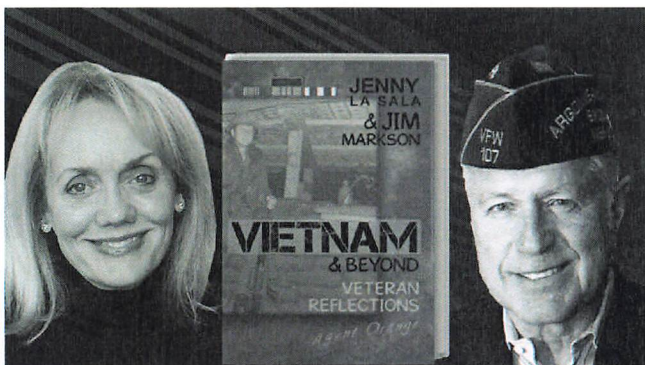
Paul was a kind and generous person who enjoyed a warm conversation over a cold drink. Being around Paul you felt a sense of safety and protection and regardless of the circumstance would constantly assure people not to worry and everything will work out. And if not, you always knew he would be there for you.

Paul is survived by his wife Susan (Peffer) Weitz, his children Jerry Weitz (Canton), Jonathan & Erin Weitz (Canton), grandchildren Gwendolyn, Christian & Harrison (Canton), his sisters Susan Sellon and her husband Raymond (Stoughton) and Sheryl Hopper (Virginia). Paul leaves many nieces and nephews and great-niece and nephews.

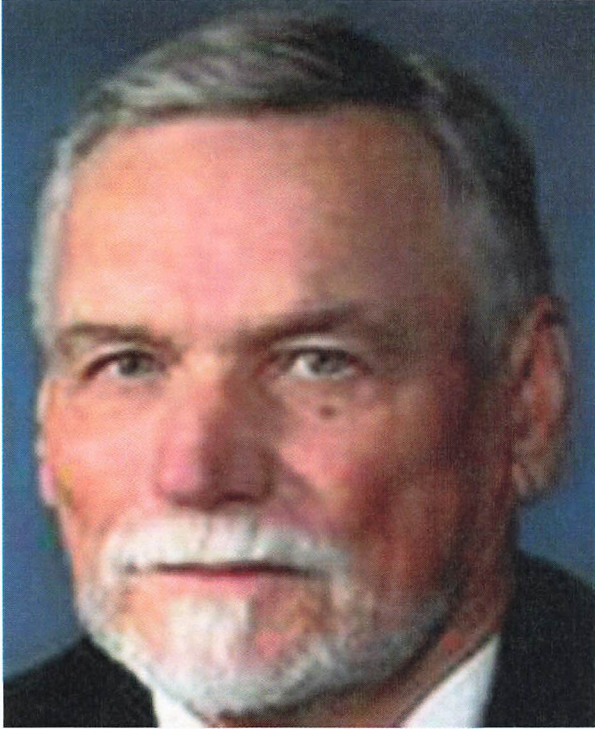
Paul was pre-deceased by his brother Jerry Weitz and his parents Wally & Gloria Weitz.

“To those who have fought for it, freedom has a flavor that the protected will never know.”

— P. McCree Thornton,
[The Star Spangled Son](#)



OBIT



LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT THOMAS BRUNER USMC (RET)

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Thomas Bruner, United States Marine Corps (Ret.), on January 14, 2025, at the age of 86. A proud Marine and dedicated patriot, Bob's life was marked by his steadfast service to his country, his love for his family, and his passion for the outdoors.

Born on January 21, 1938, Bob was a man of principle and purpose. He served with distinction in the U.S. Marine Corps for 26 years, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. His service included participation in the Battle of Khe Sanh as part of First Battalion, Ninth Marines, "The Walking Dead," where he displayed extraordinary courage and leadership. His military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star with combat "V," Purple Heart with two stars, Vietnam Service Medal with one star, Presidential Unit Citation, Combat Action Ribbon and numerous other commendations for his service in both combat and humanitarian missions.

After retiring from the military, Bob continued to serve his community in various leadership roles, including positions with the City of Corpus Christi, where he was the Superintendent of the Marina, the Director of Parks & Recreation, and the Director of Solid Waste Services (honored with Department of the Year in 1991). He later co-founded Bruner and Associates, an environmental and management consulting firm, and founded ZipFly, a company specializing in fly-fishing supplies. Bob was also a mud engineer with Magabar-Dresser.

Bob was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed fishing, shooting, golfing, tying flies and leather crafts. He was also a dedicated teacher, imparting his knowledge and skills to others with patience and humor. A proud Marine, Bob's commitment to God, country and family were always paramount. His quick wit, engaging storytelling and boundless energy will be missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his wife, Gail Bruner, of Georgetown, Texas; his daughters, Blyth Swartsfager of Odem, Texas, and Tracy Yeary of Aransas Pass, Texas; his granddaughters, Ambra Sherrod of Jackson, Michigan, and Rachel Tysdal of New Braunfels, Texas; and his great-grandson, Kyler Tysdal.

In honor of his legacy, the family requests that donations be made to his charity of choice, St. Jude's or Shriner's, in lieu of flowers.

A celebration of Bob's life will be held at a later date at Memory Gardens in Corpus Christi followed by the inurnment with Military Honors rendered by the United States Marine Corps. His family takes great comfort in knowing that his memory will live on in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Rest in peace, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Thomas Bruner—an American hero, a devoted husband, father and grandfather, and a true friend.



TOM BUNO

From The Web:

56 Years ago today, along with another NCO, we left Khe Sanh by chinook to pick up two jeeps from Dong Ha that had been equipped with sound sensitive electronics, after arriving at Dong Ha our pilots told us we would be spending the night as weather had stopped us from returning to Khe Sanh. Although it was imperative to get this equipment back to the perimeter we were stuck overnight, so the question came up what to do?

Well after hot showers, really good chow, I found my closest friend stationed there and we proceeded to kill off a pint of Seagrams seven crown, and slept on a real mattress for the first time in forever in brick barracks, the honeymoon did not last long and at dawn we hit the officers mess again and chowed down before returning to Khe Sanh, upon our return the Seabees were waiting to install the sounding sticks for this essential equipment that could detect tunnels being dug towards our perimeter.

Once detected the B-52s took care of that problem and eliminated the tunnels just several days later, we arrived back in time for the start of the siege on Khe Sanh Main base, and along with our brothers endured that horrific pounding, the loss of our ammo dump, and the precious Marines that fell to the rockets, artillery, and mortar onset of the first day of the 77 day siege. I was one of the fortunate, to have served and survived that historic battle with my Brothers of the 26th Marines, we did not falter, we did not fall, we were battered, bloodied, and dealt death as we lost numerous Brothers in Arms, unlike the French at Dien Ben Phu, North Vietnamese General Giap would not succeed with his plan to overrun with his Divisions of hardcore soldiers and take Khe Sanh, as he had done 15 years before in Indo China, this time the North Vietnamese would fall, and tired Marines would prevail,

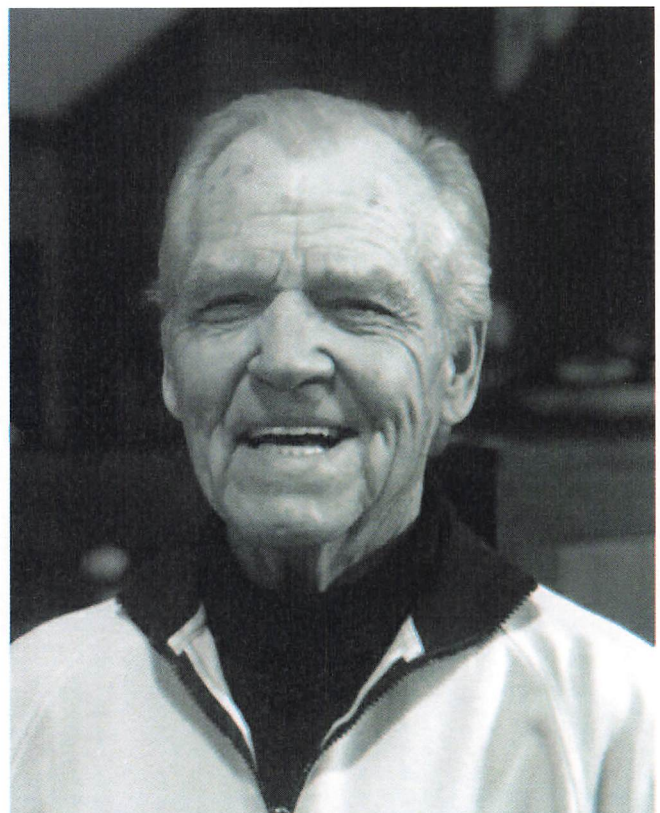
SEMPER FI BROTHERS, Tom Buno

OBIT

JOHN "BUTCH" RAY LEWIS
USMC, 1ST TRANSPLACEMENT BN
OKINAWA 1959 , B/1/1
July 10, 1941 — March 17, 2024

On March 17, 2024, we bid farewell to John "Butch" Lewis, a beacon of strength, kindness, and service. His departure leaves behind a legacy marked by unwavering generosity, steadfast commitment to justice, and boundless courage.

Born on July 10, 1941, in Abbeyville, Louisiana, to Reba Vandenberg and John Lewis, Butch's family relocated to Wyoming shortly after his birth, where he attended Casper schools and later Natrona County High School. Butch left school, one month after



his 17th birthday to join the United States Marine Corps, embarking on a global voyage that included service in Japan and Korea. It was during his tenure in the Marines that he imbibed the values of discipline, integrity, and loyalty, shaping his future endeavors.

Following an honorable discharge, Butch returned to Casper and enrolled in the police academy, commencing a distinguished career in law enforcement. Renowned for his tenure as one of the first motorcycle officers, Butch epitomized honor and protection, earning universal respect. His dedication to justice and compassion for the vulnerable marked him not only as an exemplary officer but also as a cherished colleague.

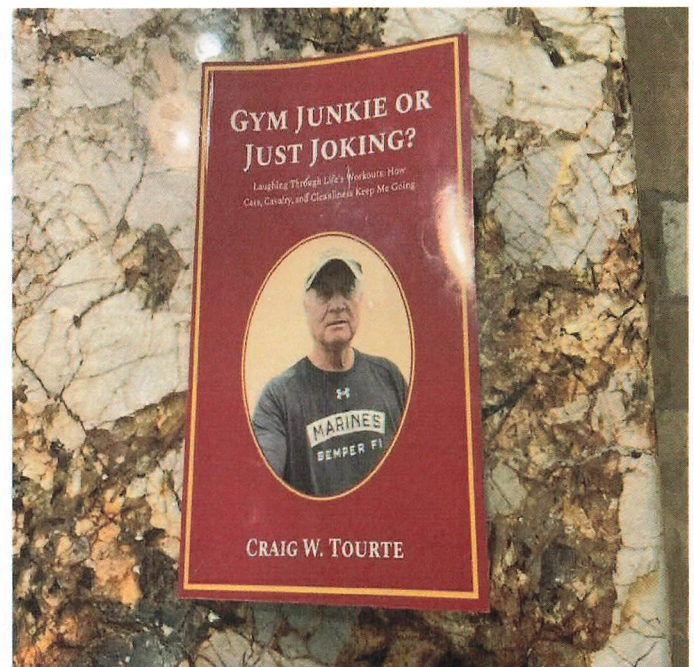
It was during his patrol duties at the Central Wyoming Fair and Rodeo that Butch encountered the love of his life, Judie Murphy. Their courtship culminated in marriage in late 1964, where they began their married life together in the basement apartment of the Casper Bandshell in Washington Park. Together they built a family, welcoming their son Johnny in 1967 and daughter Ashlie in 1969. Alongside family responsibilities, Butch pursued further education at Casper College, transitioning careers to join the Natrona County Sheriff's Office.

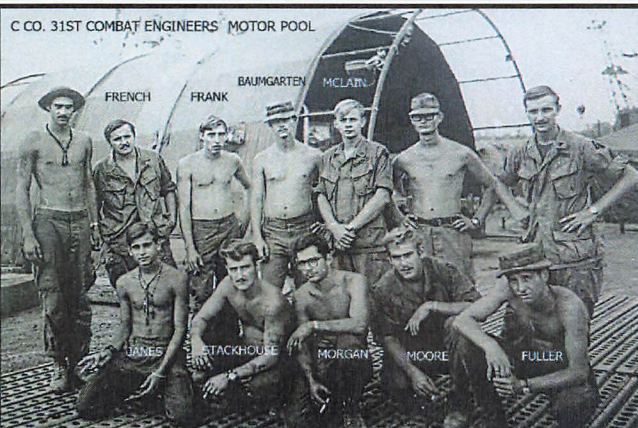
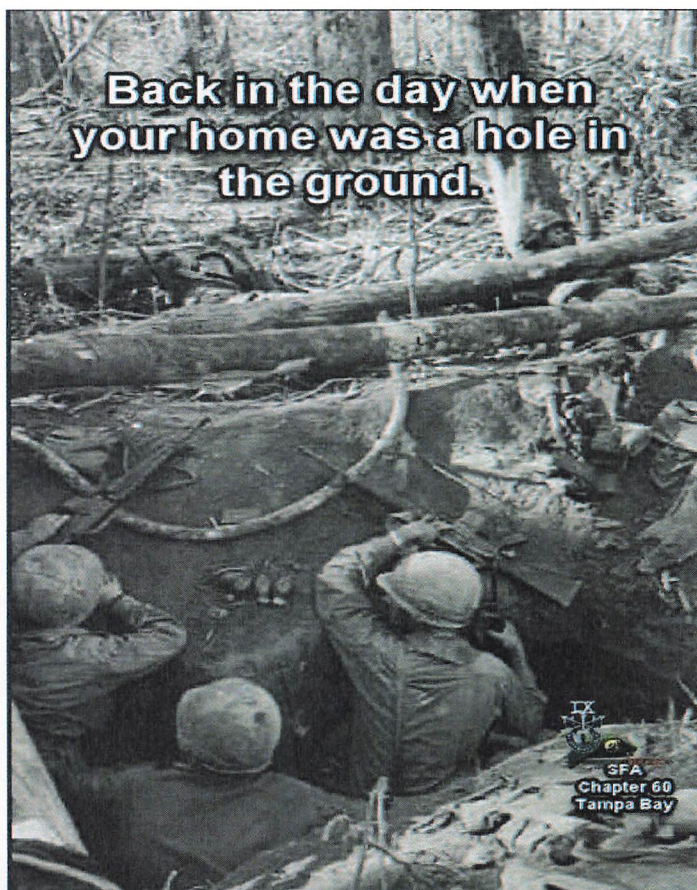
In 1977, Butch took a leap of faith, left law enforcement and purchased the Sage Club in Evansville, Wyoming. In 1988 he rebranded the Sage into Happy Days Liquor, then Butch's Happy Days in 2005. Thriving as an entrepreneur, he fostered camaraderie and warmth at his establishment, bringing his customers together, to form their own large and extended family. He extended his generosity beyond the doors of his bar, and opened his home to a wide and varying array of characters and kids alike. Butch and Judie never closed their doors to those in need, and were renowned for the kindness, grace and respect with which they treated all they encountered.

Butch is survived by his wife of 60 years Judie, his son, Johnny Lewis, daughter Ashlie (John) Schmidt, grandchildren Tim (Ashley) Lewis, Gage Williams, Sharayah Lewis, Challen Schmidt, and Hannah (Matt) Loucks, along with great grandchildren Scarlett and Quincy Loucks and a vast network of chosen family, friends, and individuals whose lives were touched by his selflessness and grace.

In honoring Butch's memory, let us emulate his spirit of generosity, courage, and compassion. May he rest in peace, secure in the knowledge that his legacy will forever endure in the hearts of those fortunate enough to have known him. Services were held at the Oregon Trail Veterans Cemetery on Monday, March 25th, at 1:00 pm, followed by a reception at The Eagle's Club, 306 N. Durbin, at 2:00 pm.

"Surviving the Siege: Lessons in Resilience" "...the battle for our lives morphed into an even more intimate battle for our hearts and minds, and that connection fueled our resilience..." from the A.I. assistant book by Craig W. Tourte.







FROM THE WEB
"A TERRIBLE FEBRUARY"
BY KEN ROGERS

I suspect that everyone who sees combat has terrible times, terrible days, or years. For me, at the Siege of Khe Sanh, the month of February stands out. Not only did the heavy incoming arrive on an almost daily basis, but combat on the ground, and in the air, took on a furious character.

When we weren't in the middle of it, we had ringside seats, and the evil stink of rumor crept among us, a whisper that added angst to every bite of the spare supply of C-rations we crammed into our mouths.

Some of my salient memories follow.

On the early morning of the fifth, the enemy assaulted Hill 861-A, manned by Echo Company, Second Battalion, 26th Marines. The NVA came through the perimeter wire and were on the hill. A vicious fight ensued, and the enemy finally withdrew. While this was going on, NVA mortars and artillery pounded the combat base below, to silence our guns that would help defend 861-A.

On the night of February 7, the NVA assaulted the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei, not far from Khe Sanh Combat Base. Using tanks, they broke through the defenses and the camp fell after a nasty fight. During the

middle of the night, we got word that enemy tanks were in the area. Tanks. I remember thinking I heard the squeak and crank of tank tracks out in the night. Mostly my imagination, I suspect. We were taking heavy incoming fire to create more chaos, so all the noise added to our anticipation. Dark, and death, and fear, and a horrendous racket.

In our area, our squad leaders told us to saddle up in anticipation of relieving Lang Vei, but we never left the combat base. I think there is still, after fifty-seven years, some residual anger from the men who survived the fight at Lang Vei, as well as some residual guilt among the Marines who didn't come out to save them. I recall, about ten years ago, hearing an audio clip from the commanding officer of the Third Marine Division, explaining in graphic and direct terms why he refused to go out and save the camp and the men who didn't get out.

Continuing salvos of incoming killed men on the surrounding hills and men in the trenches and men in their bunkers. A plane was lost south of Lang Vei while bombing enemy tanks.

Alpha Company, First Battalion, Ninth Marines, had a platoon stationed on a location known as Hill 64. On February 8, the NVA, led by a bugle call, assaulted Hill 64 and an hours-long firefight went on. With the enemy in their trenches, the Marines of Alpha fought. Eventually a relief column from the company managed to fight its way onto Hill 64 as the enemy was driven off. To those

Marines who fought on the hill, the subsequent call to abandon must have been a bitter pill.

On February 10, an incoming C-130, callsign Basketball 813, approached Khe Sanh, but at the last moment veered off the runway approach and flew low around the south side of the base and came in from the west. It was obvious to us, standing there on the ground watching, that something was wrong, maybe mechanical, maybe a wounded bird from the NVA flak constantly flying into the air. The plane came in hard and fast and veered off the runway and wrecked close to our lines. It ignited and men came dropping from the windows of the cockpit as the plane burned.

On 23 February, 1968, the NVA sent at least 1,307 rounds of incoming into the base. Mortars, rockets, artillery. Some of them big guns—152mm howitzers—and you learned to recognize the sound of the round leaving the tube—*thump*—and then you knew it was already in the air and on its way. They sounded like freight trains. If you survived long enough, you knew the fear they threw at you along with the hot metal and shrapnel that tore flesh and cut off legs and arms, and you learned the details of the thump and if the thump spoke in a very particular vernacular, you knew that where you lay in the trench would soon erupt. Despite the hell and mayhem and death, you got up and moved.

We received lots of new guys during the month of February. When the 152s fired, I would yell, “Move, a round is on its way,” and many times the men gawked, mouths open, their fear refusing to let them crawl to a different place in the trench.

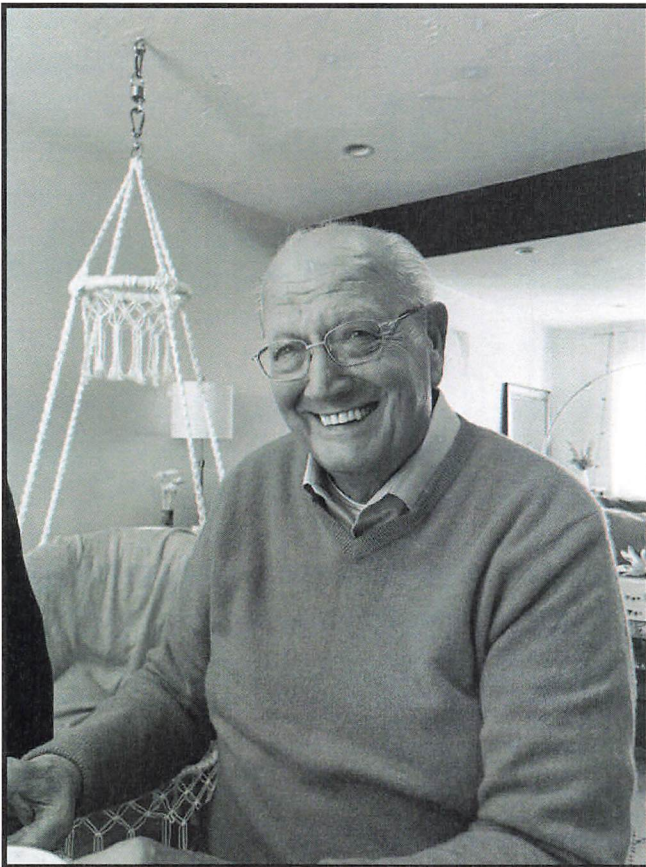
On 25 February, besides a debacle I will write about soon, NVA trenches were detected within 25 meters of our perimeter. If we didn’t feel surrounded before, we did then. Marines with stethoscopes listened to the sounds of the enemy digging their trenches. We imagined tunnels beneath us, mined with tons of explosives to erupt and kill us all.

On February 28, The NVA launched a massive assault on the ARVN troops sharing the line with us. The din of combat sailed over the ground into our ears. Our bombers and artillery units pounded the attackers and the ARVNs bravely fought them off more than once, their courage under fire in stark contrast to so many of the disparaging rumors we had heard concerning ARVN troops. In this case, they didn’t disappoint us.



OBIT**LT. COL. RONALD PARSONS, USAF, USA
KHE SANH VETERAN 15TH AERIAL
SQUADRON**

Ronald Parsons 77, a retired Lt. Col., USAF, USA died unexpectedly on Monday, July 8, 2024, at his home in Middleboro. He was the husband of 44 years to Darlene (Thompson) Parsons. Born in Chelsea, he was raised in Chelsea, Dorchester and Stoughton and was a graduate of Stoughton High School, Class of 1965. He later graduated from UMass Boston with a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing and was a certified psychiatric nurse. Ron led the life of service, and it was never as evident as with his service to his country. He was a proud Veteran of the US Air Force, serving in Vietnam. He served most of career as a member of the US Army and the Army Reserves for many years. While in the Reserves, he was activated for several humanitarian missions, notably in El Salvador and Haiti. While activated, he also served in Iraq for over 2 years, and was the Manager of the Mental Health Clinic in Baghdad during that time. Back at home,



Ron worked for the VA Hospitals in Brockton and West Roxbury for many years and retired as a Tran-

sitional Case Manager at the VA in Brockton, assisting Veterans returning to civilian life, retiring in 2010. In 2012, he was the recipient of a double lung transplant at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and was appreciative of the care and professionalism extended to him during his transplant and his recovery at BWH.

Ron and his wife Darlene loved to travel and spent the past years traveling the world, taking cruises and making many new friends. Ron also enjoyed golfing, particularly at Pine Oaks in Easton. Above all, he loved being surrounded by his beloved family and his friends. He was loved by all who met him with his contagious smile, sense of humor and his generous, kind heart.

In addition to his wife, Ron is survived by his two daughters, Heather M. Parsons and her partner John Vento of Medway and Ashley L. Correia and her husband Eddie of Berkley. He was the brother of Thomas, William and James Parsons, all of AZ, George Parsons of Bridgewater, Susan Parsons Worden of Lakeville, and the late Marie Brown and Robert Parsons. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews. He was buried

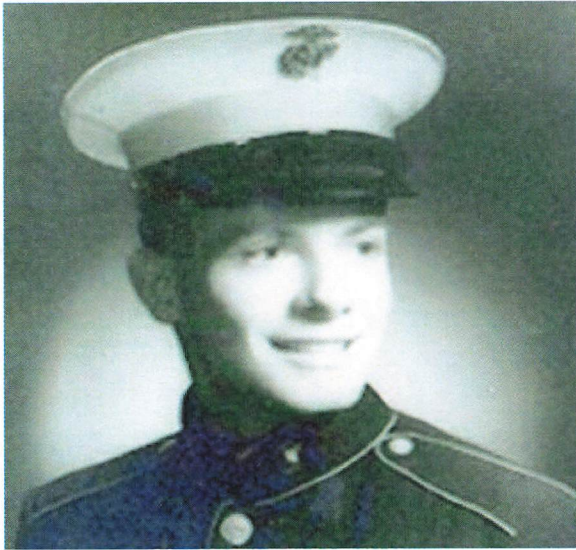
with Military Honors at the Massachusetts National Cemetery,

OBIT**DAVID T. LIND, USMC,
KHE SANH VETERAN, H&S CO 2/4**

The passing of David T. Lind Member of 2/4 and Khe Sanh Veterans Association

"Near the end of April 1968, one of the most fiercely fought but little-known battles of the Vietnam War pitted Marines of Battalion Landing Team 2/4 against the North Vietnamese 320th Division. It took place on a little piece of terrain approximately 1½ miles northeast of the headquarters of the 3rd Marine Division in the Dong Ha combat base. The fighting extended over a 3-day period."

This is the only engagement of the entire Vietnam conflict where a single reinforced battalion-sized Marine unit, with less than 1,000 fighting men, supported by intense naval gunfire, fought head-to-head with a division-sized unit of between 6,000 to 10,000 regular NVA soldiers who were augmented with 600 guerillas and who were supported by artillery on the demilitarized zone."...

**OBIT****PAUL GERALD BOULEY**

Bouley, Paul Gerald age 76, of Elk River, died on Dec. 31, 2024 at Guardian Angels Care Center while under the care of hospice. He was born in Minneapolis on August 8, 1948, and was joined minutes later by a twin sister. Paul graduated from Golden Valley High School in 1966. In July of 1967, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He left for Viet Nam in January of 1968. Paul saw some of the worst action of the Vietnam War, and on June 10, 1968, he was injured at Khe Sanh. The experience had a lasting impact on his life. He spent months in a hospital in Japan, and a couple more at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital. He was awarded a Purple Heart for his sacrifice, and he was a life member of the Disabled American Veterans. Paul was honorably discharged in February 1970. Paul overcame a lot in his life. He had multiple eye surgeries for his war injuries, and a significant hearing loss due to the blast when he was injured. For over a decade he dealt with shrapnel that would migrate in his body, and at times, find its way out. A brief marriage ended amicably. He resolved an alcohol problem at age 27. He built himself an earth-

sheltered home in Zimmerman where he lived modestly almost all of his adult life. It was the perfect home for a returning soldier. Earth sheltered on three sides, but full of sun and views of nature on the south side. Twenty five acres of land gave him the peace and privacy he craved. Paul had a successful career as a proud member of Pipefitters Local 539. He was preceded in death by parents, Emmett and Mabel O. Bouley. He is survived by sister, Janet (Denny) Miller; brother, Dean (Sandi) Bouley; and twin sister, Paulette (John) Cervenka. A private interment will be held in the Spring.

OBIT

Robert "Bob" Warren Scruggs, 77, passed away on June 29, 2024, in Marietta, GA. Born on August 5, 1946 (to the late Warren and Mary Katherine Scruggs), Bob grew up in Del Rio, TN. After graduating from Cocke County High School, he joined the Marine Corps and honorably served during the Vietnam War where he bravely participated in the Battle of Khe Sanh. He was a member of the Marine Corps Silent Drill Team, getting to perform on the Ed Sullivan Show, and was part of the Presidential Guard for President Lyndon Johnson.

Sullivan Show, and was part of the Presidential Guard for President Lyndon Johnson. Corps Silent Drill Team, getting to perform on the Ed Sullivan Show, and was part of the Presidential Guard for President Lyndon Johnson.

After his military service, Bob met the love of his life, Nanci Heinzer, in Washington, DC. Within six weeks, they knew they were soulmates and married. They lovingly shared 43 years of marriage. Together, they lived in many places due to his career in medical sales, eventually retiring to Hilton Head. Following Nanci's passing, Bob moved to Marietta to be close to his children and grandchildren.

Bob was deeply devoted to his family, cherishing his role as a father and Pappy. He is survived by his children, Robert W. Scruggs II (Mary), Kimberly Bradigan (Greg), Amy M. Raminger (Chris) and Michael Scruggs (Tonya); grandchildren, Madison and Tripp Scruggs, Savannah Bradigan, and Cody Scruggs and Austin Scruggs. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Nanci; grandson, Nicholas Bradigan; and sister, Polly Willard.

OBIT

ROBERT PAUL BURDETTE 1947-2025

Robert Paul Burdette passed away on January 1, 2025, in [Atlanta, GA](#). He lived a magical life of 77 years. He grew up as an outgoing young man on a farm in Delaware, Ohio. Bob displayed charisma and leadership from an early age. In high school, he played bass for the area's first and only rock and roll band. His popularity from that led him to become class president.

After graduating, Bob served as a Navy Corpsman dental technician embedded with the Marines during the Vietnam War. He experienced the harrowing events of Khe Sanh and took immense pride in serving alongside his military brothers. That experience led him to become a fearless warrior for peace. For his acts of valor and meritorious service in combat,

he was awarded the Marine Corps Bronze Star Medal, one of the military's highest honors, recognizing exceptional bravery and performance under challenging conditions.

Following his military service, he found knowledge of inner peace through a Prem Rawat community that taught him the power of meditation. He pursued his passion by attending Life University's chiropractic school. As a chiropractor, Bob dedicated himself to healing the lives of those around him.

Dr. Bob, as he was known to all, left a written legacy of three books chronicling his lifelong journey toward inner peace and sharing "Clean Sweep" technologies-tools designed to free himself and universes from darkness to serve The Creator most appropriately. Link to the Clean

Sweep: www.keystoascension.com/clean-sweep His writings reflected his deep commitment to achieving spiritual enlightenment.

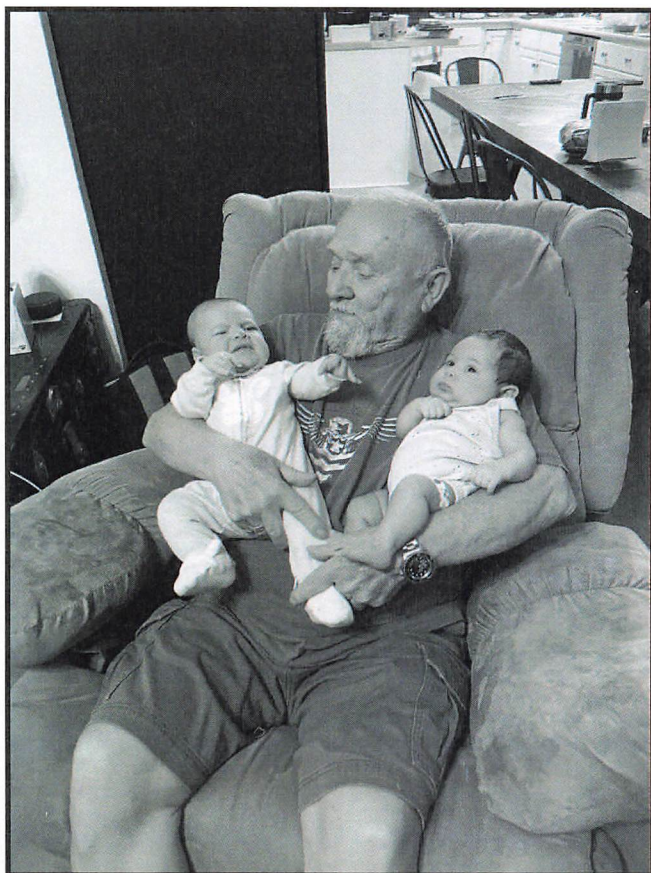
He would marry and divorce twice while bringing three boys into the world. Despite facing health and financial challenges later in life, Dr. Bob maintained an enduring optimism exemplifying his resilient outlook. He was a very charismatic and unique individual loved by all who got to know him. His favorite catchphrase to say to anyone who ever asked him how he was doing is a lesson for us all to live by.

"Worst day I ever had was wonderful"

He is survived by his sons William Blayne Burdette, Travis Ryan Burdette, Derek Ian Burdette, and his sister Kathryn Ann Stults.

Dr. Bob's remarkable life touched many through courage, wisdom, and compassion. May his memory bring comfort to all who knew him.





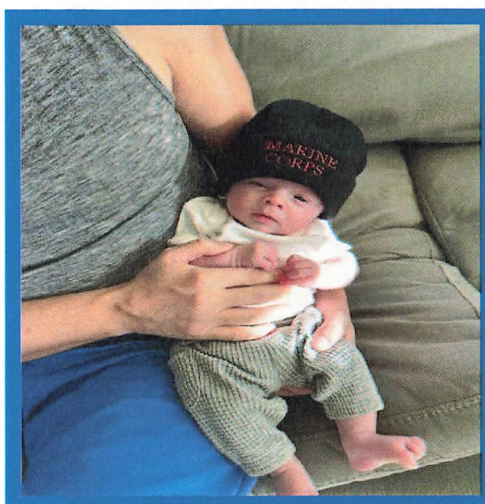
GRANDPAW TURNER

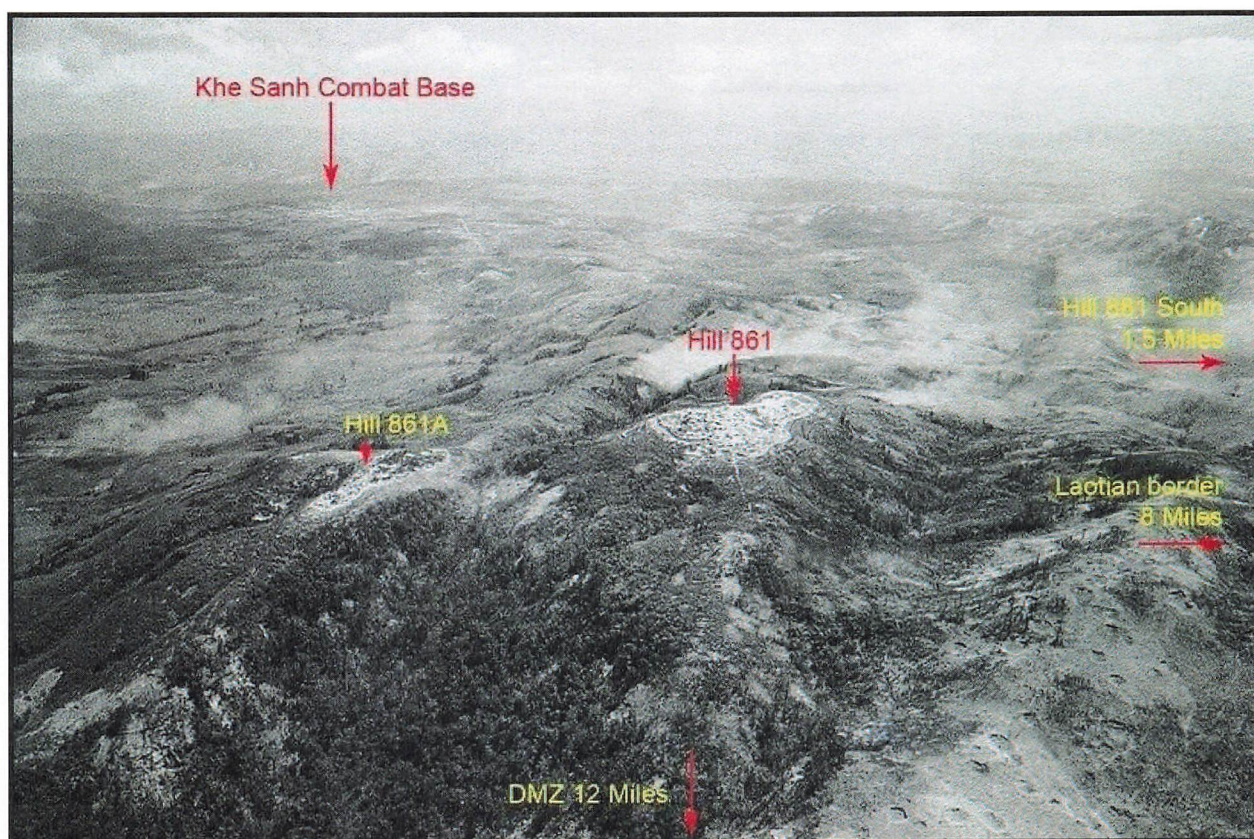
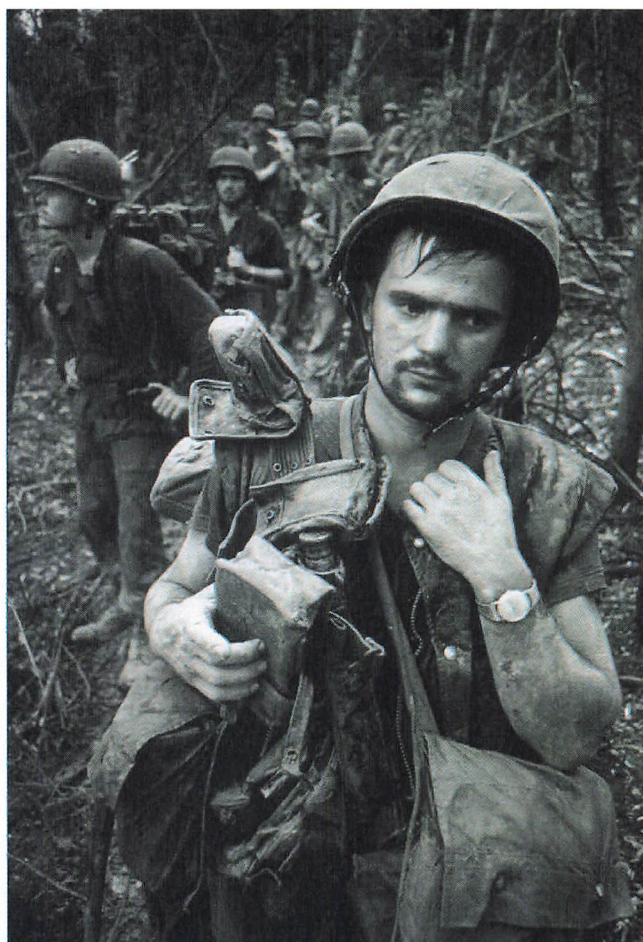


JOHN KAHENY CLAN



**ONE OF OUR NEWEST MARINES.
GRANDPA CRAIG TOURTE—
ARLO CRAIG TOURTE**





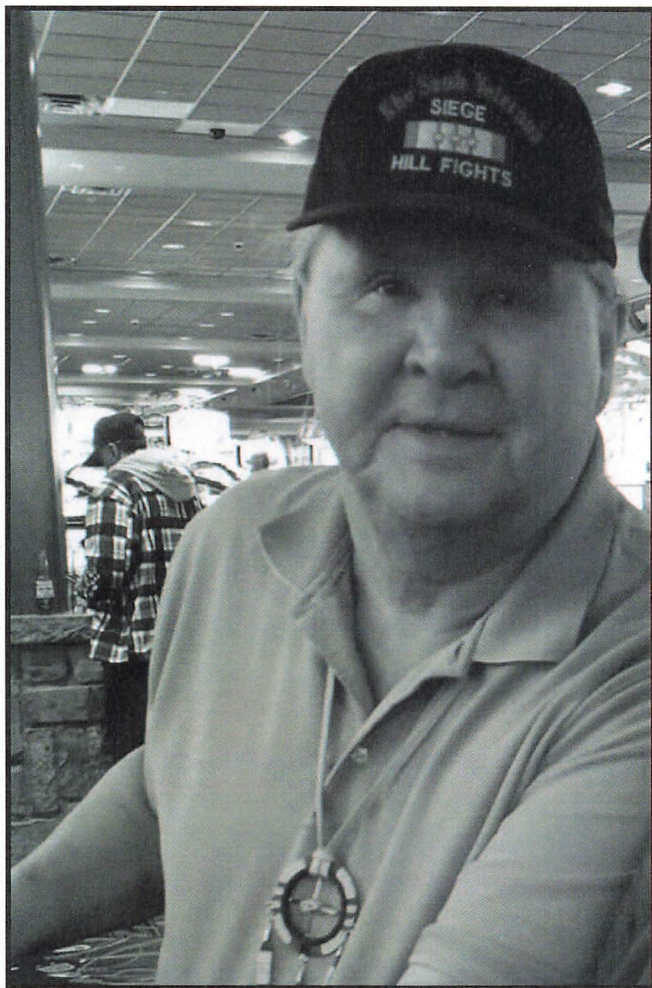


He ain't heavy

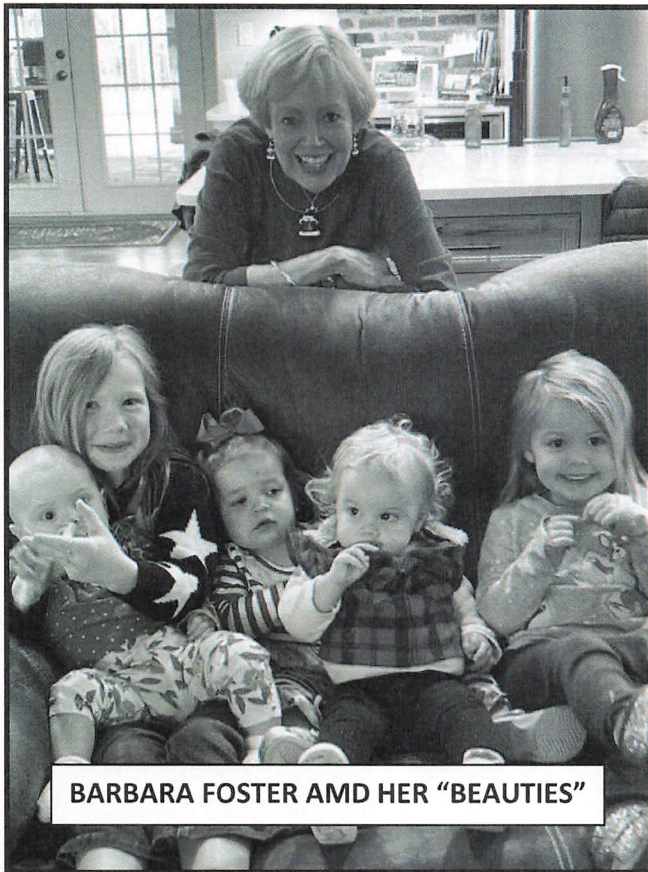


He's my brother.

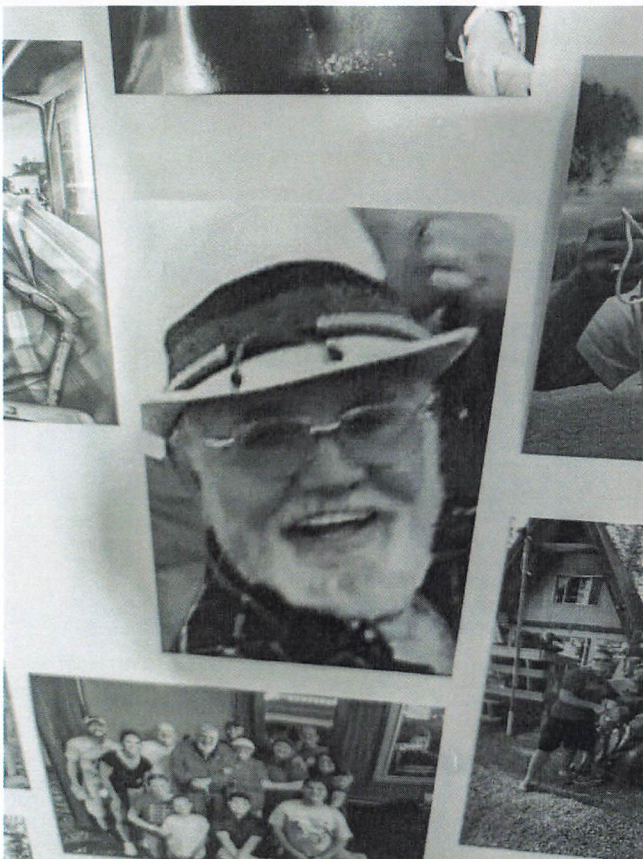
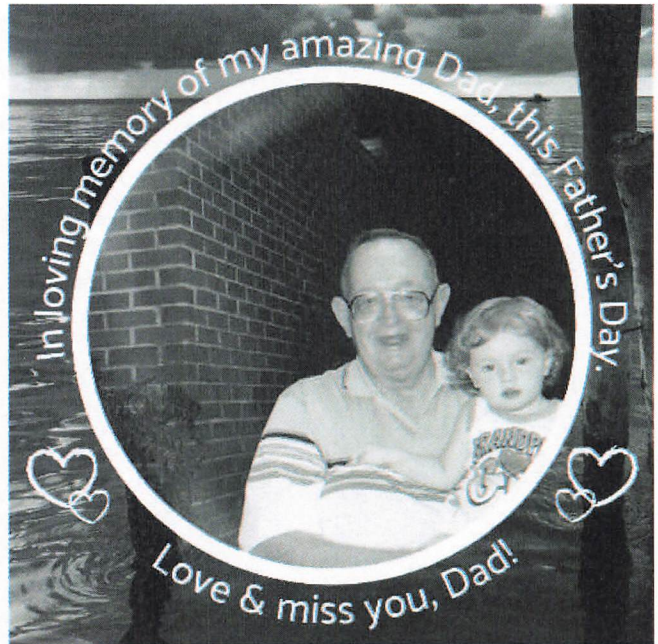




**INSIGHTS FROM
"BUTCH" DEVERNE**

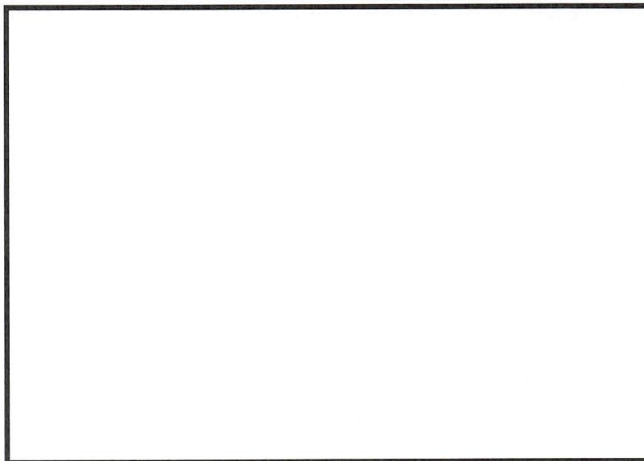


BARBARA FOSTER AND HER "BEAUTIES"



STEVE STAOVICH





**OBIT****LT. JAAK AULIK , WEAPONS
PLATOON LIMA CO 3/26**

Memorial service for Jaak Aulik will be 8-15-24 in Southbury, CT at 11:00. Reception afterward. Interment in Arlington National Cemetery at a later date to be determined.

**OBIT****BENJAMIN H. FRYE JR.**

He was in 81s platoon during the siege. Rest in Peace Ben. Benjamin H. Frye Jr. (Ben), Age 76, passed away on January 12th, 2025, in Vero Beach, Florida.

Ben was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania to Benjamin H. Frye Sr. and Dolores Diehl.

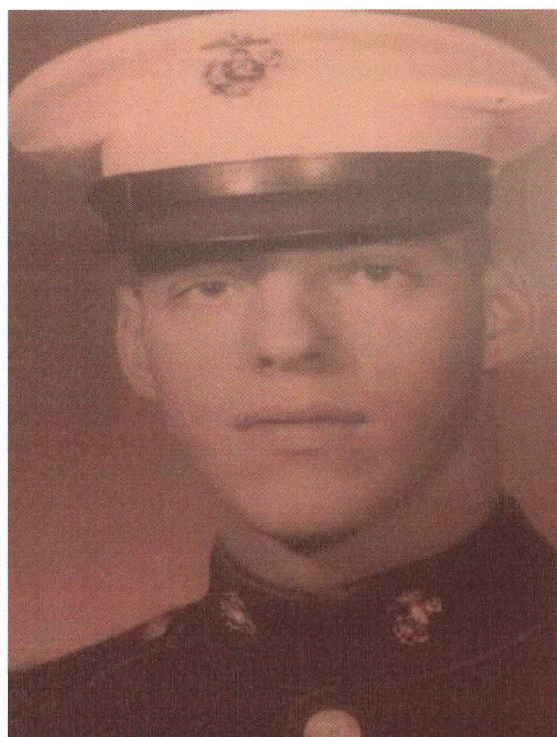
Ben served in the United States Marines from 1966-1970 where his last rank was Sergeant. He was a veteran of the Vietnam War. After the war Ben attended Penn State University in 1982 and graduated with an associate's degree in electrical engineering. He worked for and retired from the Buckeye Pipeline Company in 1999. Ben moved from Hollidaysburg, PA to Vero Beach, FL in 2003. He enjoyed riding motorcycles and spending time with loving family and friends. He also had a love for his country.

Survivors include son John Nebelski (Stephenie) of Duncansville, PA; daughters Lori Miller (Rob) and Jessica Ulery (Douglas) of Duncansville, PA; brothers Dennis Diehl and Bob Frye; sisters Karen Brown and Kayann Painter; grandchildren Erica Kennedy, Amanda Fleischer, Abbey Nebelski, Nathan Nebelski, Wyatt Ulery and Mara Ulery; great grandchildren Calle, Teagan, Braxton, Johnny, Bristol, Jake, Baylee, and Blair; and previous life partner Patricia Madden. He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews.

Ben was predeceased by his father Benjamin H. Frye Sr., mother Dolores Diehl, son Benjamin H. Frye III, and grandson Benjamin Miller.

A burial will take place at Blair Memorial Park in Bellwood, PA at a later date.

Arrangements are by Thomas S. Lowther Funeral Home & Crematory, Vero Beach.

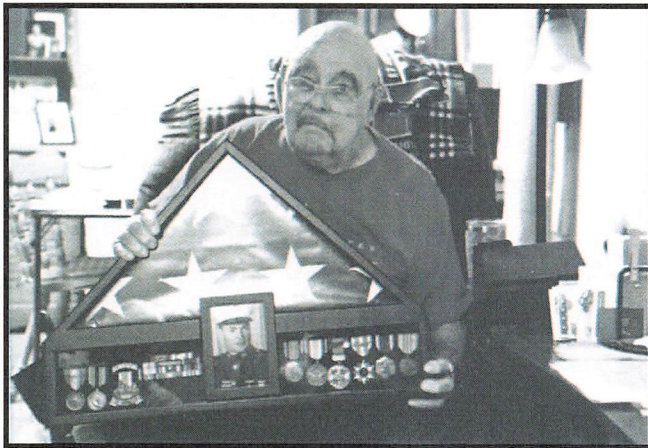




KHE SANH VETERANS IN THE NEWS

Charlton Blanks is affectionately known to Chester County veterans as “The Major.” When you say ‘I’m going to go talk to the Major,’ everyone knows just who you mean.

Any Marine would count himself lucky to have survived during the Battle of Khe Sanh, a significant battle during the Vietnam War. Any Marine would have counted themselves fortunate to have survived the Tet Offensive, one of the largest military campaigns of the war. Any Marine would have thanked his lucky stars to have come through the evac before the Fall of Saigon.

CHARLTON BLANKS WENT THROUGH ALL THREE.

The N&R had a chance to sit down with Blanks almost a year ago as he told his story as part of the Veterans History Project, a partner project with the Louise Pettus Archives at Winthrop University for the Library of Congress national project. When some additional information was discovered about his tours of duty, The N&R went back recently for a follow up. Blanks was also recently named the Veteran of the Week by the S.C. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Blanks got his first taste of military life when he joined the ROTC battalion at Clemson University, which was still an Agricultural and Mechanical College. He was a member of the Pershing Rifles honorary military society while at Clemson. He later transferred to USC before graduating in 1961.

HE WORKED ON HIS FAMILY FARM BEFORE BEGINNING HIS MILITARY CAREER.

My twin brother, Carlton and my older brother Robert, neither one of them cared much for farming, but I did. I was a member of the FFA, the Future Farmers of America, while I was in school. I bought some cows and other livestock. I really got into it,” he said. Blanks started out as a PFC in the U.S. Marine Corps until he graduated OCS, Officer Candidate School. “I had a friend who was in the Marine Corps, Donald Boulware, he was my brother in law; I was married to his sister. He went into the Marine Corps and then his father died and he got out on a hardship discharge, because he was the only male in the family. “He talked about the Marine Corps and I don’t know, I just took to it. All services are good, patriotic and everything, but we all have our preferences,” he said. Blanks tells the story that after he graduated from USC, he was in the student lounge contemplating his next move when a Marine recruiter challenged him and Blanks decided to join the USMC. Also, Blanks said he joined the Marine Corps because he thought he was “macho”.

Blanks attended USMC officer candidate school at Quantico Marine Base in Virginia.

After graduating he was assigned to Camp Pendleton as an infantry officer with the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, where he went through “Lock On” jungle training. “We spent a lot of time in the boonies,” he said.

“The idea was back then, you trained as one unit – we were the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, and when you went over to Vietnam, you know everybody in the regiment, because you had trained with them. I had a weapons platoon, and I knew every one of them.

“That was one thing that screwed us up during the war – they started drafting kids and they started putting soldiers and Marine in individually, and they didn’t know each other in their units, didn’t know what they were capable of. They started piecemealing the units,” he said.

Blanks attended Intelligence Officer School at Fort Holabird, in Maryland. His MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) was intelligence.

When I was at Camp Pendleton, they cut orders for me and I got a trailer behind my car, because they were going to send me across the country to Fort Holabird. That as a mess: I had already sent my wife back to Chester earlier,” he said. After intelligence training, Blanks’ unit was sent to Vietnam

"The Army had more ships than the Navy. We headed overseas, stopping at Okinawa first. While we were heading there, John Kennedy was assassinated. This was 1964. We went to Japan first and then to Okinawa. That's where our unit debarked, and they put us in trucks and we went to the northern part of Okinawa," he said.

"There was training again on Okinawa, and the told us what to expect in the jungle, including about the different types of traps," Blanks said. On a brief stop in Japan, Blanks was introduced to sake, rice wine. "I didn't quite like it," he related.

Then the unit got orders to go into Vietnam. They loaded onto a ship and waited for two months for the order to disembark; the ship was occasionally served by tender ships while they steamed a zig-zag course near land.

"Things were getting hot, and they had to make sure the area was secure. We were the landing team, the spearhead, you might say, if anything started getting bad.

"During that time the North Vietnamese shot at some of our ships in the Gulf of Tonkin – President Johnson used that as an excuse to escalate things," Blanks said. While they were in the Philippines on exercises, Blanks' unit backloaded their artillery, 105 and 155 mm cannons, got back on the ship and headed to the northern portion of Okinawa.

"My first job over there was as an aide to a South Vietnamese unit – I didn't even have any weapon with me. I came off that assignment and went back to the ship," he said.

When the unit landed on the beach and were met not by the enemy, but by a bunch of Vietnamese girls anxious to see the Marines.

"It was sort of like Hawaii," Blanks remembered. "We thought we were going to make a landing sort of like the soldiers and Marines did during WWII at Omaha Beach, and then there they were – the girls with leis around their necks. It wasn't quite the same thing."

Blanks practiced his infantry officer skills and intelligence training from the DMZ (De-Militarized Zone) down along the northern part of Vietnam. He came under fire at Khe Sanh Combat Base. It was while stationed here that the Marine learned

an appreciation for the U.S. Air Force. "If it hadn't been for the Air Force, I would be dead right now. Up at Khe Sanh, B-52 bombers dropping those 250 and 500 lb. bombs.

"Khe Sanh was sort of an enclave, like Dien Bien Phu, they say President Johnson told the leadership 'I don't want any more Dien Bien Phus – y'all make sure you don't get overrun,' so the enemy dug these trenches and then they kept coming up closer (to the perimeter of the Khe Sanh Combat Base) and they would dig another trench, so they could get close enough to rush the compound. Those Air Force B-52s they saved us; they would carry out carpet-bombing on the enemy. We'd sit on the sandbags and watch them," Blanks said.

His first combat experience he said, "was nerve-racking, because you'd be sitting there (at the base) and every 10 or 15 minutes, here comes an exploding artillery round," he said. Blanks made numerous trips in the jungle, setting up places to broadcast with his radio unit, often having to hack his way through the brush.

He remembers looking up one time and seeing a formation of three C-123 airplanes dropping the Agent Orange defoliant and being thankful they were clearing away some of the jungle along his path.

"We thought, 'Oh, thank God,' not knowing at the time the danger of the chemical. What we did know is if they took away the vegetation, the enemy couldn't sneak up on us," Blanks said. Blanks completed his first tour in Vietnam as an advisor, went home and came back for his second tour in 1968.

Blanks completed his first tour in Vietnam as an advisor, went home and came back for his second tour in 1968. "I got over there just in time for Tet (the Tet Offensive)," he said.

"It was supposed to be a holiday like our New Year holiday, and they broke it. That's when they started overrunning all of the bases. (The Tet Offensive was a series of surprise attacks against military bases throughout South Vietnam, during the Lunar New Year, when many of the Republic of Vietnam – ARVN soldiers were on leave). "But we beat that attack back," Blanks said. After that tour, Blanks was attached to the Pentagon, working in intelligence.

"I had all of these high level clearances, which is one reason why when I was in Germany later, they wouldn't let me go to Berlin," he said.

During his third tour of duty, Blanks was involved in the evacuation of the villages around Saigon (formally known as Operation Frequent Wind) when the capitol fell in 1975 near the end of the war. More than 7,000 people were evacuated by helicopter from various points in Saigon

Blanks' unit, the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade, was stationed aboard USS Blue Ridge as part of Task Force 76, whose mission was the evacuation efforts.

"The ARVN and the NVA started coming further and further south, and they would take over this town and that town. They finally got down south as far as Saigon. I was there when the NVA tank came through the wall of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon," he said.

Those South Vietnamese who had fought along side and aided the Americans became worried, because they didn't know what their fate would be if the capitol fell. They began to make plans to evacuate the country and leave the Embassy by helicopter. "They climbed up to the highest point in the Embassy they could and the helicopters would pick them up and fly them to different ships. I was on the Blue Ridge.

"As the helicopters came back, especially the ones flown by the South Vietnamese Air Force, they would drop the refugees off. So what were they going to do with the helicopters, because more were coming up right behind them? They had to have a place to land, so the Captain of the ship told them to pitch the helicopters over the side. They pushed several over the side, and as they did that, the rotors were still turning. The crews were told to fly the helicopter out over the sea and ditch when it was low to the water. After the crew got out of one, the aircraft came back towards the ship on its own.

"I was below deck at the time, and I heard a huge crash. What had happened was the helicopter, a Huey, had come forward and hit the side of the ship! I thought we were under attack. I was waiting for them to call General Quarters, but they never did. Good thing was not a soul was hurt," he said.

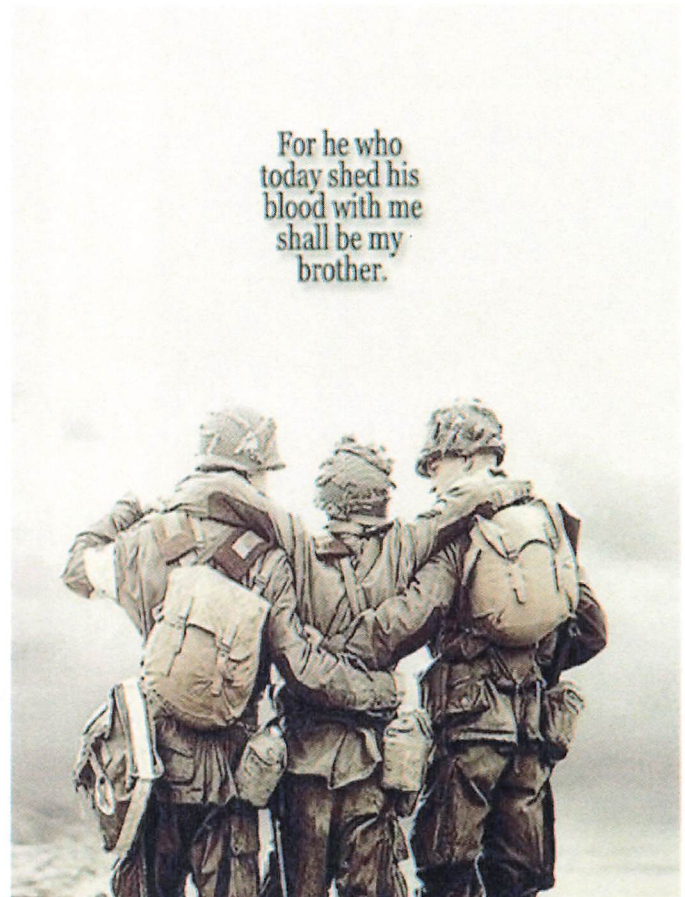
Following his military service, Blanks' civilian work included teaching high school in Chester County, where his classes included 8th grade sci-

ence and 12th grade physics.

He continued to be interested and helped organize veterans events in Chester County until he recently had to retire from actively doing that. He is still a frequent honored guest at Chester County veterans events.

Charlton Blanks' medals and honors include the following:

- Humanitarian Service Medal
- Letter of Appreciation
- National Defense Service Medal
- Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal
- Vietnam Service Medal
- Presidential Unit Citation
- Navy Commendation Medal
- Combat Action Ribbon
- Navy Unit Commendation
- Republic of Vietnam National Gallantry Cross Unit Citation
- Armed Forces Expeditionary Service Medal
- Defense Meritorious Service Medal



**Khe Sanh Veterans, Inc. Scholarship Foundation
2024-2025 Applicants:**

Application Review Rating :

1. Connor C. Corrotti, Senior @ Univ. Of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IND.

Dabney Award

SPONSOR— DONALD CAMPBELL , HQ Co. 26th Marine Regt.

2. Cristin G. Coppes, Freshman @ Central Michigan Univ., Mt. Pleasant, MI

Gaynor Award

SPONSOR—CHARLES COPPES - SOG Tigerhound, 20th TASF, USAF

3. Lucia A. Fisher, Freshman @ Univ. Of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

Dabney Award

SPONSOR—DANIEL FISHER – D Co. 1st Bn 26th Marines

4. Delana R. Ortiz, Freshman @ Kansas State Univ., Manhattan, KS

Lownds Award

SPONSOR—JOHN ORTIZ – H&S Comm 3rd Bn 26th Marines

5. Marek E. Ortiz, Sophomore @ University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

Dabney Award

SPONSOR — JOHN ORTIZ – H&S Comm 3rd Bn 26th Marines

6. Kylin R. Starkovich, Freshman @ New Mexico State Univ., Las Cruces, NM

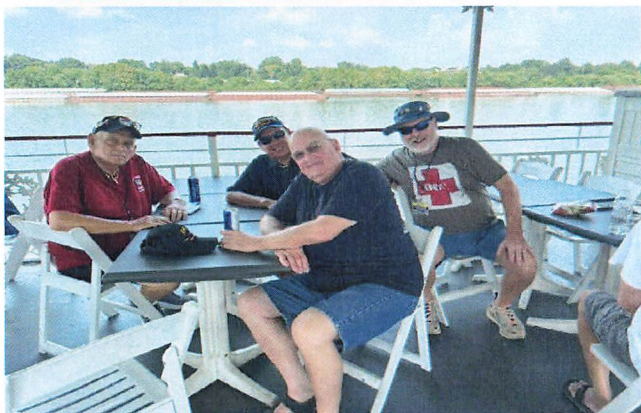
Dabney Award

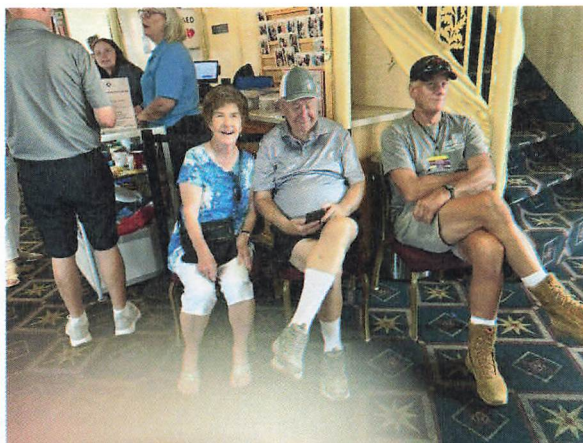
SPONSOR –STEVE STARKOVICH – Bravo Bty, 1st Bn 13th Marines

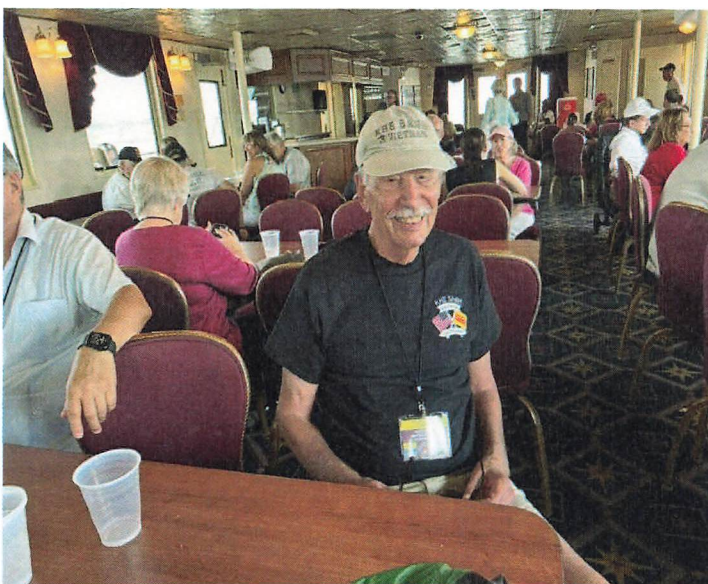


ROLLING DOWN THE RIVER - LOUISVILLE KY



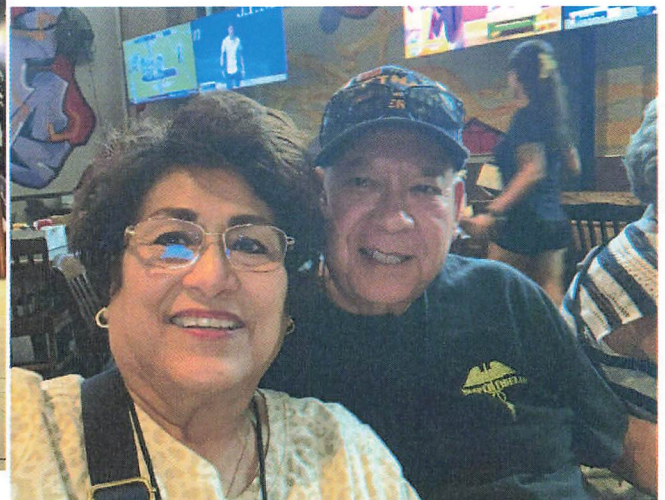




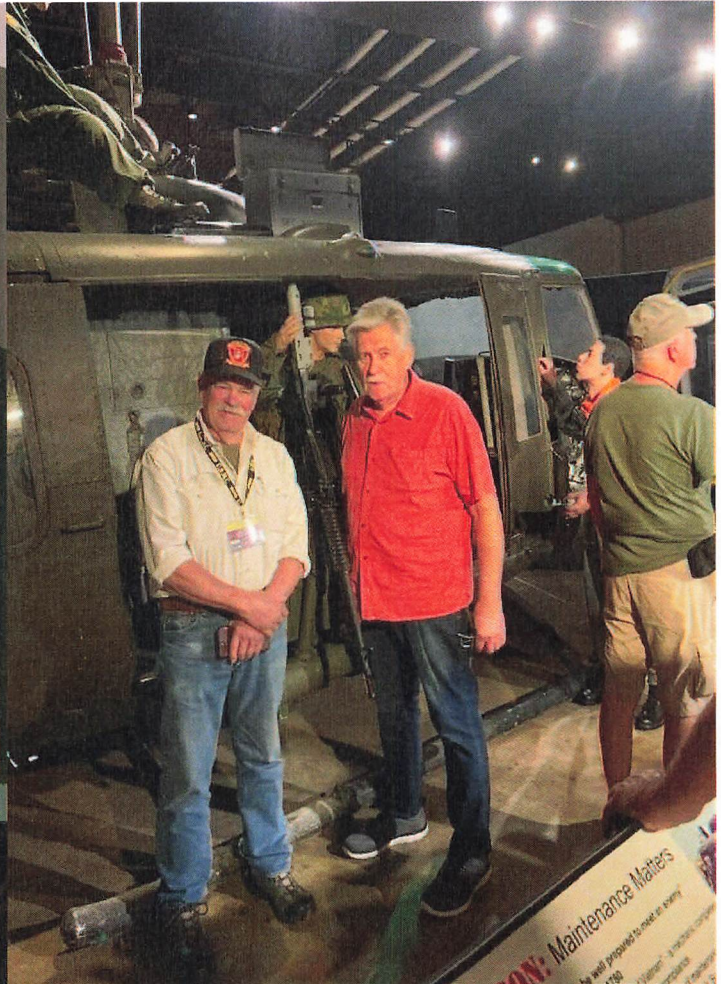


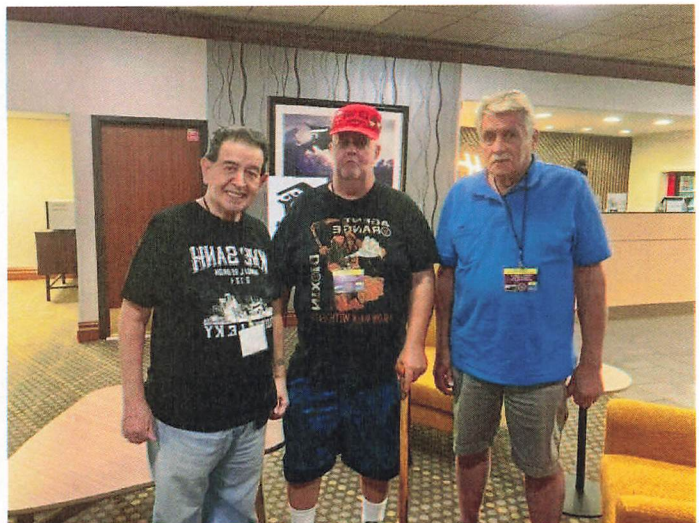
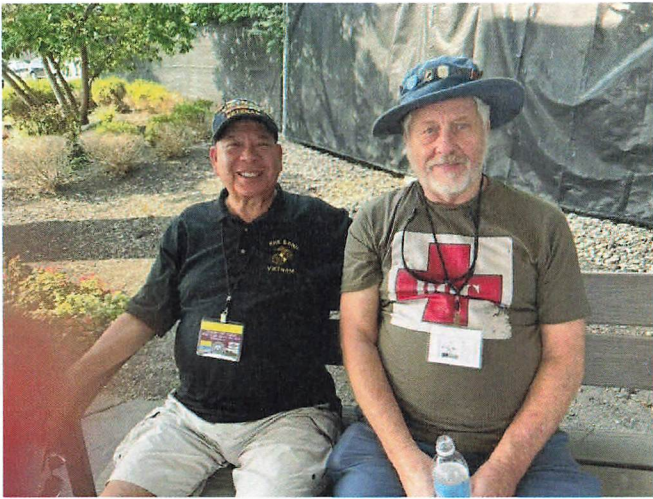


**MORE FUN TIMES
AROUND
LOUISVILLE**

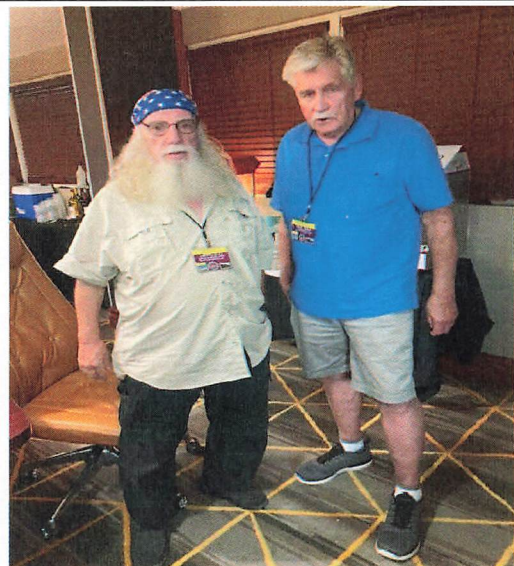


GENERAL GEORGE PATTON MUSEUM
LOUISVILLE KY



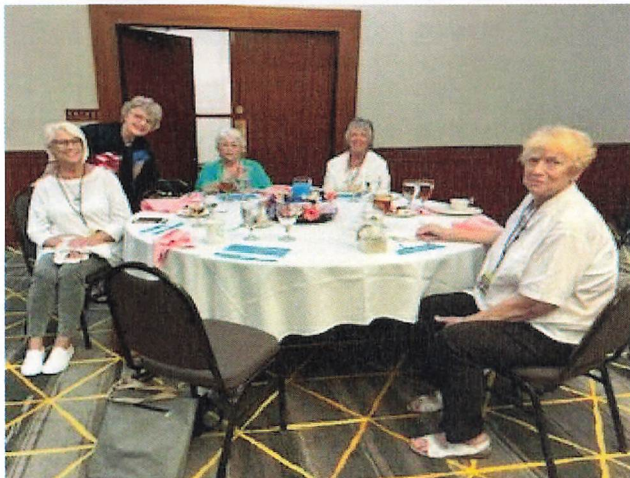


CATCHING UP WITH OLD AND "NEW" FRIENDS





KSV
LADIES
LUNCHEON





DOCS

"ANOTHER SATURDAY
NIGHT"



LAW ENFORCEMENT

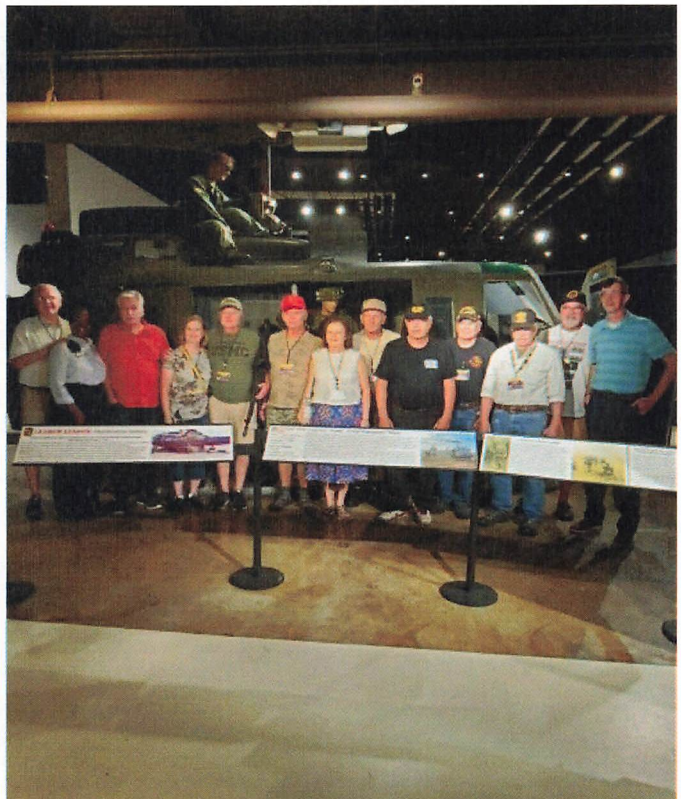
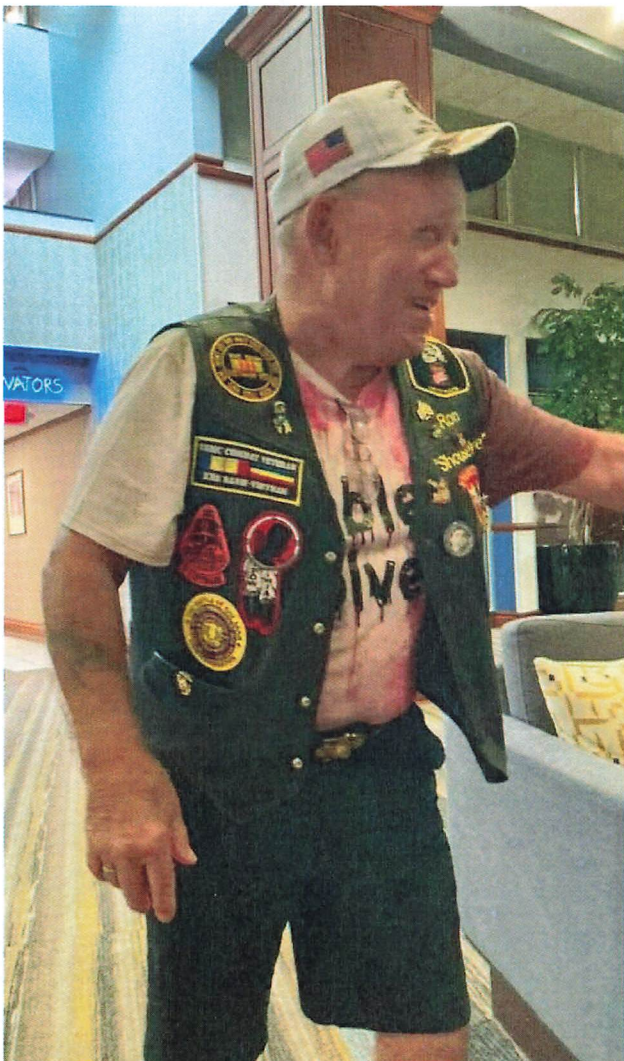
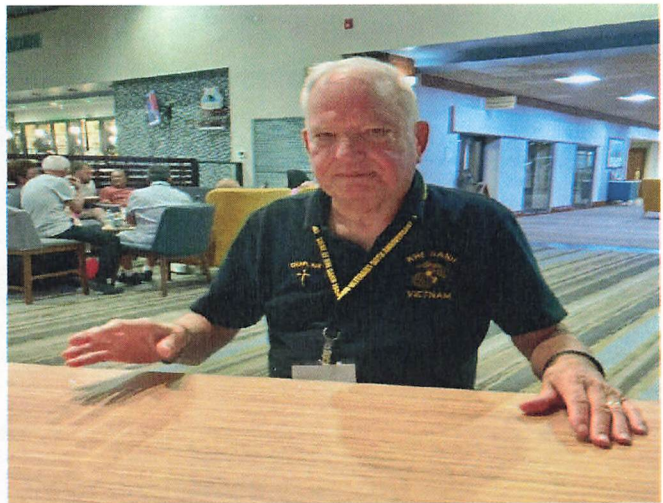
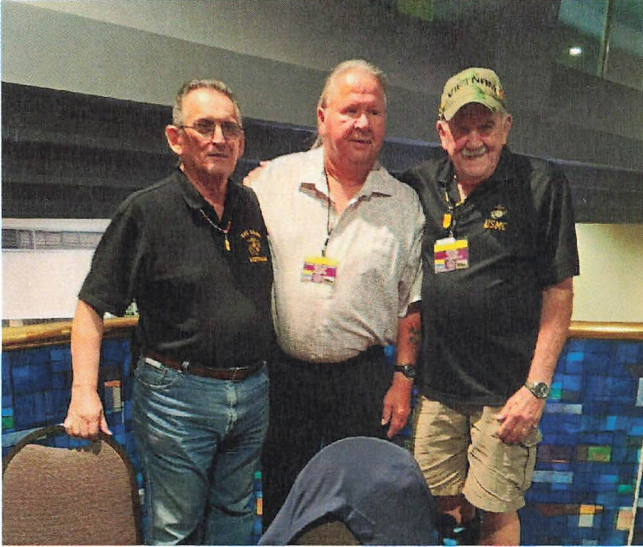


KSV IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

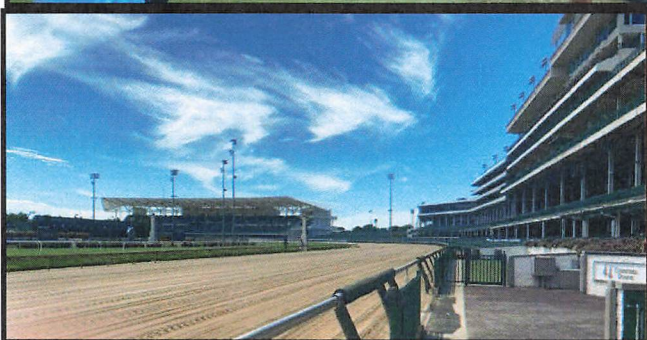


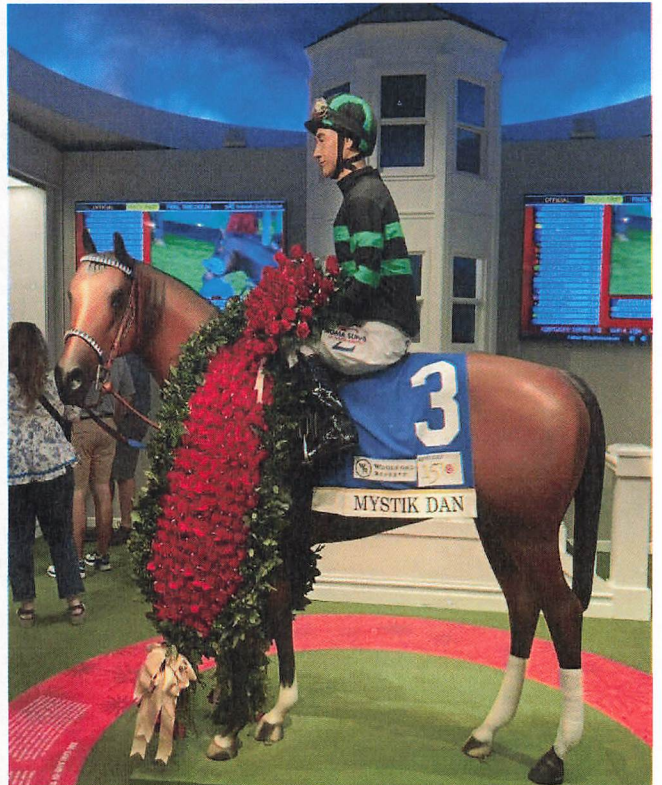


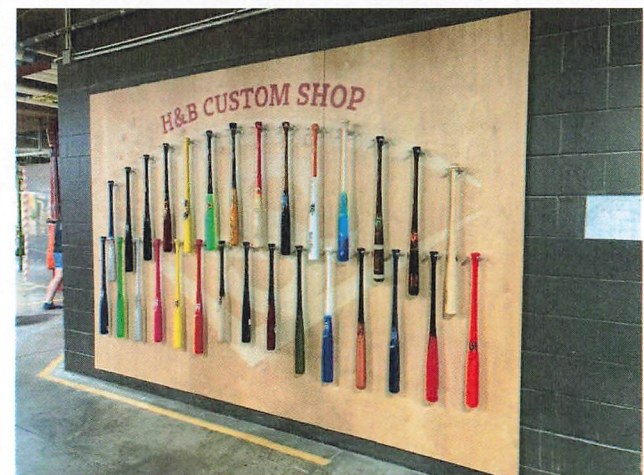
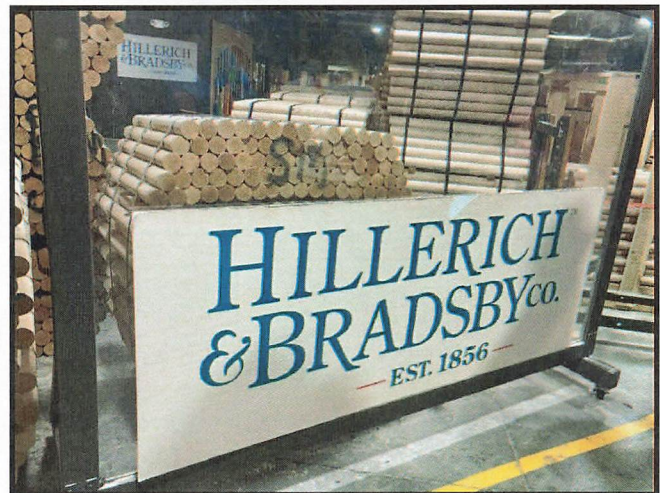
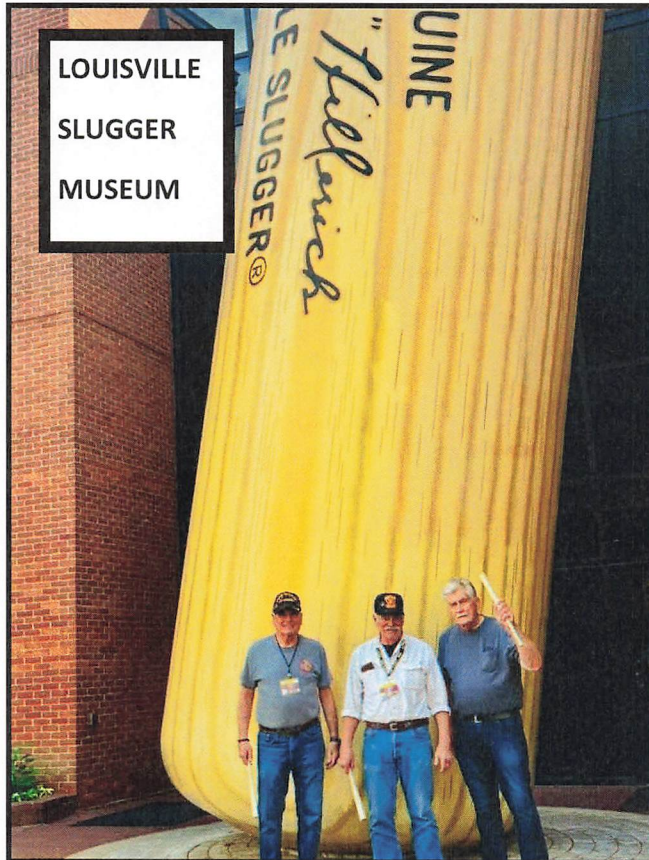


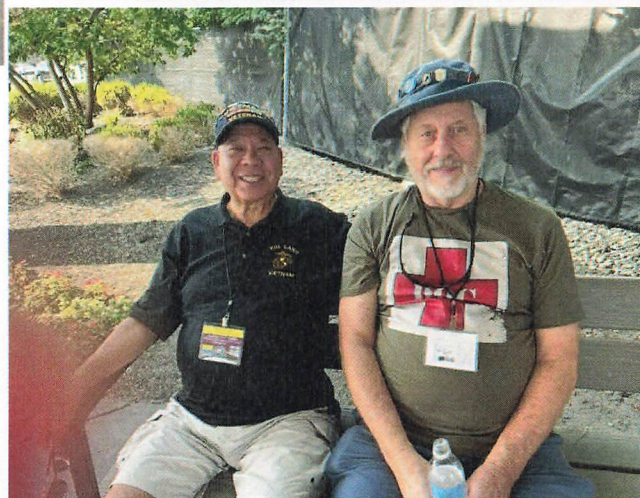


A FEW MEMBERS OF THE KSV AT THE REUNION, UTILIZED THE RENTED VANS TO MAKE A TRIP
TO THE KENTUCKY DERBY FACILITY











LOU LECLAIRE

GUINN WOLFE

JANE VOSNICK

DENNIS MANNION



Pool crew



LADIES GET TOGETHER AT THE OUTSIDE POOL AREA

KATE MEYER CAROLINE TORRES, GUINN WOLFE, LOU
LECLAIRE, CONNIE BELLANTONE, JANE VOSNICK ,
JULIA LEWIS AND MARY GREEN



THE 2025 REUNION WILL BE HELD IN PENSACOLA, FLORIDA, ACCOMMODATIONS AT THE HOLIDAY INN RESORT, 14 VIA DE LUNA DR., PENSACOLA BEACH, FL 32561 OCTOBER 12 - 18, WITH A RATE OF \$139/NT STREET VIEW AND \$159/NT GULF VIEW. PLEASE CALL @ 850-932-5331 FOR RESERVATIONS





THE 2025 KHE SANH ANNUAL REUNION WILL BE HELD IN PENSACOLA BEACH FL AT THE HOLIDAY INN RESORT PENSACOLA BEACH — 14 VIA DELUNA DRIVE, PENSACOLA BEACH, FL RATES = \$139.00/NIGHT SOUND SIDE ////\$159.00 PER NIGHT OCEAN SIDE. 3 DAY POST AND PRIOR - FREE PARKING - HOTEL NOT PET FRIENDLY DATES: OCTOBER 12-20 2025.PLEASE CONTACT THE HOTEL DIRECTLY @ 850-932-5331 TO RESERVE YOUR ROOM - PLEASE REFER TO KHE SANH VETERANS REUNION—CODE KSV ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RUSS TURNER @314-368-5853 OR KATHY TURNER @ 314-368-5016 (CUT OFF DATE FOR RESERVED ROOMS 12 SEPTEMBER 2025)

EVENTS TO BE HELD DURING REUNION WEEK

EVENT	COST	NO. OF PEOPLE	TOTAL EVENT
REGISTRATION	\$50.00		
TRIP NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM/BLUE ANGELS	\$65.00		
Ladies lunch	\$20.00		
KSV banquet	\$75.00		

Daily events

SUN:	12 OCT 2025	FREE DAY	ENJOY PENSACOLA BEACH
MON:	13 OCT 2025	FREE DAY	ENJOY PENSACOLA BEACH
TUES:	14 OCT 2025	10:00 A.M.	Registration Opens. PX & Hospitality Room Opens.
WED:	15 OCT 2025	8;30 A.M.	Trip to Naval Aviation Museum & Blue Angels
THU:	16 OCT 2025	10:00 A.M.	Registration Opens. PX & Hospitality Room Opens.
FRI:	17 OCT 2025	10:00 A.M.	Registration Opens. PX & Hospitality Room Opens.

SAT: 18 OCT 2025

9:00 to 10:00am Memorial Service

10:00am to 12:00 Membership Meeting

12:00am to 2:00 pm Ladies Luncheon

ANNUAL KSV BANQUET:

Cocktails 1800 Dinner 1900

0845 Board Trolley for National Nava Aviation Museum

1030 Blue Angels fly

1130 Buffet lunch at the Cubi Bar FIRST GROUP

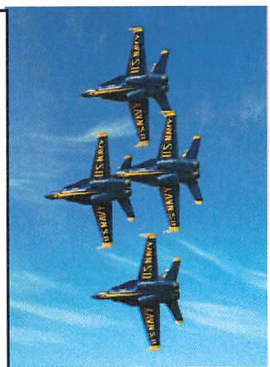
12:00 Buffet lunch at the Cubi Bar SECOND GROUP

1300 Docent led hour of the Naval Aviation Museum

1500 Free time to tour the museum on your own

1530 First trolley boards for the Holiday Inn Resort

1600 Last trolley boards for the Holiday Inn Resort



SUNDAY 19 OCT 2025 HAVE A SAFE TRIP HOME

MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: KSV ASSOCIATION

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check# _____ Date Received _____

Name Tag Completed _____

Send Check, Money Order or Credit Card Information To:

The Khe Sanh Veterans/ Russell Turner

3168 Meadowfield Dr

Arnold, MO 63010

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

NAME ON CARD:	VISA	MASTER CARD	DISCOVER
CARD NUMBER:	OTHER	Note: Our Bank Does Not Accept AM/XPRESS	
EXPIRATION DATE:			
3 DIGIT CODE ON BACK OF CARD	Note: Address Must Be The One Card Issued To		
ADDRESS FOR CREDIT CARD:			

NAME TAG INFORMATION PLEASE PRINT

NAME:

UNIT SERVED WITH:

SPOUSE OR COMPANIONS NAME:

OTHER GUEST (1)

OTHER GUEST (2)

OTHER GUEST (3)

OTHER GUEST (4)

OTHER GUEST (5)

ADDRESS:

CITY:

ST:

ZIP:

PHONE:

CELL PHONE:

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

EMAIL:

SPECIAL NEEDS:

EMAIL:

ARRIVAL DATE:

DEPARTURE DATE:

ARE YOU STAYING AT HOTEL: YES — NO CIRCLE ONE

2025 Dues

01 AUG 24	ARCHER, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2098
01 AUG 24	ANTOINE, GARY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#463
01 AUG 24	BARRA, WILLIAM	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1056
01 AUG 24	BARRY, DERMOTT	40.00	Dues	CHECK#218
01 AUG 24	BATES, ROBERT	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5956
01 AUG 24	BAUMANN, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6371
01 AUG 24	BAUMANN, WILLIAM	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 Aug 24	BEADLING, VEE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#810
01 AUG 24	BEAUREGARD, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#9076
01 AUG 24	BEAUREGARED, STEPHEN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#383
01 AUG 24	BECK, RALPH	40.00	Dues 100.00 D	CHECK#5316
01 AUG 24	BEDRAVA, GEORGE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4483
01 AUG 24	BERG, DENNIS	40.00	Dues	CHECK#3073
01 AUG 24	BISSELL, ANTHONY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1707
01 AUG 24	BLUMBERG, ROGER	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5195
01 AUG 24	BOBRIK, RONALD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#208
01 AUG 24	BRAUN, FRANCIS	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4971
01 AUG 24	BROWN, MARGARET	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5221
01 AUG 24	BROWN, PAUL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5221
01 AUG 24	CARWILE, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4102
01 AUG 24	CASEY, MAURICE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4164
01 AUG 24	CHASE, JONATHAN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5682
01 AUG 24	CHOC, CHARLES	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6164
01 AUG 24	CLARKE, BRUCE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6859
01 AUG 24	COOK, FORREST	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6125
01 AUG 24	COX, GARY	40.00	Dues 20.00 D	CHECK#1031
01 AUG 24	CRAWFORD, DANIEL	40.00	Dues 10.00 D	CHECK#516
01 AUG 24	CROWLEY, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#173
01 AUG 24	CZECH, THOMAS	40.00	Dues	CHECK#225
01 AUG 24	CZYSZ, KENNETH	40.00	Dues	CHECK#7366
01 AUG 24	DAVIS, TED	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4445
01 AUG 24	D'ELIA, ROBERT	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1394
01 AUG 24	DELOTTO, RICHARD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#221
01 AUG 24	DERIAN, JOSEPH	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4563
01 AUG 24	DIAMOND, DONALD	40.00	Dues	CHECK# 4868
01 AUG 24	DIFLFORIO, DANIEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1718
01 AUG 24	DOUGHERTY, ROBERT	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1733
01 AUG 24	DOUGLAS, EDGAR	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5628
01 AUG 24	EAKIN, RANDALL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2781
01 AUG 24	EAST, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4170

KHE SANH VETERANS

RED CLAY

SPRING 2025

01 AUG 24	ERICKSON, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2781
01 AUG 24	ERNFIELD, HARRY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#678
01 AUG 24	ERWIN, DANIEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1687
01 AUG 24	FARRELL, BRIAN	40.00	Dues 35.00 D	CHECK#1609
01 AUG 24	FETTER CHARLES	40.00	Dues 10.00 D	CHECK#1104
01 AUG 24	FISHER, ST4EVEN	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	FOWLER, WILLIAM	40.00	Dues	CHECK#180
01 AUG 24	FOURNIER, TERRY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#8719
01 AUG 24	FUNK, HARRY	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	GAROUTTE, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues 25.00 D	CHECK#10622
01 AUG 24	GIACCHETTA,PETER	40.00	Dues	CHECK#264
01 AUG 24	GOULD, DAVID	40.00	Dyes	CHECK#2529
01 AUG 24	GULLEY, JOHN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#7095
01 AUG 24	GUTHRIE, TIM	40.00	Dues	CHECK#9175
01 AUG 24	HALEY, TIMOTHY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#224
01 AUG 24	HARBISON, JAMES	40.00	Dues	CHECK# 2859
01 AUG 24	HARMON, STEVEN	250.00	Dues/Life	C/C
01 AUG 24	HERCHER, STEPHEN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1845
01 AUG 24	HOPWOOD, HARRY	40.00	Dues 60.00 D	CHECK#3307
01 AUG 24	HUGHES, MICK	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2561
01 AUG 24	HUNTER, DWIGHT	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1342
01 AUG 24	JASMUND, RUSSELL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2865
01 AUG 24	JONES, MILTON	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1162
01 AUG 24	KEATING, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#3047
01 AUG 24	KERRINGAN, PATRICK	40.00	Dues	CHECK#9928
01 AUG 24	KESEK, RONALD	40.00	Dues 10.00 D	CHECK#5554
01 AUG24	KILGALLON, FORD	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	KILROY, JOSEPH	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2122
01 AUG 24	KING, DANIEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5015
01 AUG 24	KLOOTE, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5048
01 AUG 24	KLOPCHIN, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues 10.00 D	CHECK#7835
01 AUG 24	KOLLMON, ALBERT	40.00	Dues 25.00 D	CHECK#1124
01 AUG 24	KRAMARCZYK,DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6052
01 AUG 24	LARSON, LARRY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1201
01 AUG 24	LEONARDI, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4043
01 AUG 24	LEMIEUX, LORNE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1450
01 AUG 24	LEMKE, CHARLES	40.00	Dues 10.00 D	CHECK#458
01 AUF 24	LEWIEN, JERRY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5838
01 AUG 24	LEWIS, WILLIAM	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1519
01 AUG 24	LIVERMAN, HUGH	40.00	Dues	CHECK#790
01 AUG 24	LOOKER, JOSEPH	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1121

KHE SANH VETERANS**RED CLAY****SPRING 2025**

01 AUG 24	MAGUIRE DANNY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6242
01 AUG 24	MAPEL, RANALL	40.00	Dues 35.00 D	CHECK#7049
01 AUG 24	MARSHALL, EDWARD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2641
01 AUG 2	MARTIN, LARRY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5359
01 AUG 24	MAURI, JIM	40.00	Dues	CHECK#49958
01 AUG 24	MCCALL, DAVID	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	MCEVER, DOUG	40.00	Dues	CHECK#9482
01 AUG 24	MCQUIRK, STEPHEN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4262
01 AUG 24	MCKEON, PAUL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#11687
01 AUG 24	MEAD, TED	40.00	Dues	CHECK#3558
01 AUG 24	MEADE, WILLIAM	40.00	Dues	CHECK#8077
01 AUG 24	MERCADO, SATURNO	40.00	Dues 60.00 D	CHECK#9810
01 AUG 24	MERCIER, GERALD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#7491
01 AUG 24	MEYER,LAWRENCE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1134
01 AUG 24	MILLOCK, CARL	40.00	Dues 60.00	CHECK#2383
01 AUG 24	MOORE, FULTON	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4282
01 AUG 24	MORRISO, SAMMY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4070
01 AUG 24	MUELLER, ALBERT	40.00	Dues	CHECK# 728
01 AUG 24	NESTOR, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1111
01 AUG 24	NOWACKI, IRVIN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5966
01 AUG 24	ODONNELL, CHARLES	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2856
01 AUG 24	OKSNEE, CARL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#3107
01 AUG 24	OTOOLE, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#995840
01 AUG 24	PAGANO, ROBERT	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2016
01 AUG 24	PARZANESE, JR, DONALD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4362
01 AUG 24	PEARSON, SCOTT	40.00	Dues 100.00 D	CHECK#6898
01 AUG 24	PESTINGER, DANIEL	40.00	Dues 60.00 D	CHECK#2693
01 AUG 24	PIEDRA, ABRAHAM	40.00	Dues	CHECK# 1275
01 AUG 24	PLOURDE, EVAN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2082
01 AUG 24	POLAND, WILLIAM	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2889
01 AUG 24	PURDY, WILLIAM	40.00	Dues	CHECK #1239
01 AUG 24	RAGSDALE, HOMER	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1366
01 AUG 24	RALSTON JR, ROGER	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5958
01 AUG 24	RAY, BERNARD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2521
01 AUG 24	REES, RONALD	40.00	Dues 40.00 D	CHECK# 9943
01 AUG 24	REILLY, PHILLIP	40.00	Dues	CHECK#8764
01 AUG 24	RIEDMAN, GARY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#13280
01 AUG 24	ROBINSON, JOHN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1481
01 AUG 2	SANDER, RICHARD	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	SCHWARTZ, RICHARD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1243
01AUG 24	SHOWALTER, TED	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2428
01 AUG 24	SINCLAIR, GLENN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2867
01 AUG 24	SIRCHIA, PAUL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#24322

KHE SANH VETERANS**RED CLAY****SPRING 2025**

01 AUG 24	SNIEGOWSKI, RONALD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6236
01 AUG 24	SOMMERS, MICHAEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4544
01 AUG 24	SPUNAR, GEORGE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2621
01 AUG 24	SPRAGUE, HERERT	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5370
01 AUG 24	STEWART, RICHARD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#3350
01 AUG 24	STICKEL, FRED	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1154
01 AUG 24	STODDARD, DENNIS	40.00	Dues	CHECK#6007
01 AUG 24	SULLIVAN, DANIEL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1742
01 AUG 24	SWTS FRED	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	TAYLOR, RONALD	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	THOMPSON, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#440
01 AUG 24	TORRES, RAY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#8852
01 AUG 24	UPDIKE, RAYMOND	40.00	Dues	CHECK#5691
01 AUG 24	VALDES, ENRIQUE	40.00	Dues	CHECK#7047
01 AUG 24	VANKUIKEN, ROBERT	40.00	Dues	C/C
01 AUG 24	WASSON, RONALD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#3614
01 AUG 24	WELLS, MARSHALL	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1778
01 AUG 24	WIHREN, THOMAS	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1400
01 AUG 24	WILKERSON, RICHARD	40.00	Dues	CHECK#8056
01 AUG 24	WIMBISH, DENNIS	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2176
01 AUG 24	WORLEY, JOHN	40.00	Dues	CHECK#4080
01 AUG 24	YOUNG, DAVID	40.00	Dues	CHECK#2683
01 AUG 24	YOUNG, GARY	40.00	Dues	CHECK#1649

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED FROM OUR GENEROUS MEMBERS OF THE KHE SANH VETERANS

JIMMY COLLINS	\$1000.00 MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION	CHECK#2061
WILLIAM EICHLER	\$ 300.00 (in memory of TOMMY EICHLER)	CHECK #4012
ROBERT HOLSCHER	\$ 200.00 (IN MEMORY)	CHECK#18631
DWIGHT HUNTER	\$ 200.00 SCHOLARSHIP	CHECK# 1343
DAVE& CAROL MEYER	\$ 1250.00 CONTRIBUTION	CHECK# 619992
PETER POST	\$ 50.00 "BEAD FLAG"	CHECK# 3404
ROBERT RIORDAN	\$ 250.00	CHECK# 775
ED TROUP	\$ 200.00	CHECK# 7117

FROM THE WEB

Veterans recall difficult days

Saturday, July 01, 2006

By GEORGE WERNETH

Staff Reporter—Leatherneck

Two former Marines and a retired Army colonel nicknamed "Bulldog" sat around a table Thursday in the Riverview Plaza Hotel in Mobile, reminiscing about their service at Khe Sanh in the Vietnam War.

Khe Sanh was a strategic Marine Corps base close to the border separating South Vietnam and North Vietnam when it was battered in a 77-day siege by enemy forces, starting on Jan. 21, 1968.

The base, manned by some 6,000 Marines and assorted other American forces, was surrounded by more than 20,000 North Vietnamese Army troops, according to official military estimates.

"It was an unbelievable experience," said David C.

"**Bulldog**" Smith 74, a retired Army colonel who underwent the entire siege while a major at Khe Sanh. "We were attacked by rockets, mortars, howitzers -- by everything. Day and night, night and day. Seventy-seven days of it."

Smith, who now lives in Trinity, N.C., shared his memories of Khe Sanh with Dan Fisher, 59, of St. Paul, Minn., and Russell Turner, 59, of St. Louis, who had served as enlisted men in the Marine Corps at Khe Sanh.

The three were in the downtown hotel taking part in the annual convention of the Khe Sanh Veterans Association which will conclude Sunday. About 250 Khe Sanh veterans are in town for the convention.

Fisher and Turner served at the base for a period of some five or six months, just prior to the official start of the siege. But they noted the base often came under fire from the enemy while they were there. Both men spent much of that time rotating service in combat patrols on nearby hills, and at the base, where they were lucky if they got a shower once in a month. Smith said their association considers Khe Sanh veterans to be anyone who served at Khe Sanh before, during or after the siege.

All three veterans said they were wounded in Vietnam and Smith received three Purple Hearts in that war.

The NVA failed to take Khe Sanh and the siege officially ended April 8, 1968. Several months later, U.S. forces abandoned Khe Sanh because of a change in U.S. strategy, officials report. The base had originally been used as a point from which to disrupt the flow of supplies from North Vietnam down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

According to Wikipedia, an Internet encyclopedia, the NVA sustained more than 9,000 casualties at Khe Sanh. Many of them were killed by American B-52 bombers.

Smith said he believes the B-52s were responsible for bringing the siege to an end and said he feels the NVA death total was substantially higher than official estimates.

Wikipedia reports there were 205 U.S. casualties at Khe Sanh, along with 443 wounded. The three veterans said they believe the U.S. casualties were higher, also.



There were 205 Marines killed between Nov. 1, 1967, the beginning of a Marine operation against North Vietnamese Army forces in the Khe Sanh area, and March 31, 1968, as the siege of the base was ending, according to general Marine Corps records.

Khe Sanh Casualties

However, Navy chaplain Ray Stubbe, after extensively researching losses during the same period, put the number of Marines killed at 274. There are an array of tallies for the NVA deaths, ranging from 10,000 to 15,000, according to official public estimates. A once-classified report from Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, estimated 5,550, with 2,000 due to ground action and 3,550 from air and artillery forces. —Dick Camp

FROM THE WEB

VETERAN REMEMBERS BATTLE OF KHE SANH

27 JAN 2023

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS PREDRO RODRIGUEZ

ARLINGTON, VA --

This year the U.S. Marine Corps commemorates 55 years since the Battle of Khe Sanh, which lasted from January 21 to March 31, 1968.

In early 1968, Khe Sanh Combat Base gained world-wide attention as the roughly 6,000 Marines defending the base were encircled and besieged by three North Vietnamese Army regiments of about 20,000 troops. For 77 days, the Marines and their South Vietnamese counterparts, with support from an element of U.S. Army soldiers and U.S. Air Force bombers, would endure one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War.

Among the Marines defending the base was U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Ronald Echols, who was serving with Company M, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, 3rd Marine Division on Hill 881 South.

"We had Marines at Hill 661, and we had Marines at a radio relay tower, which was on Hill 950, and my company was on 881S," said Echols. "There was two 881s, one 881 South and 881 North, we maintained those hills because we wanted to

keep the high ground away from the North Vietnamese that overlooked Khe Sanh."

North Vietnamese forces conducted a massive artillery bombardments on Khe Sanh, located just 10 miles from the Sepon River, which marked the border between Laos and South Vietnam.

"I remember that during dawn it would still be foggy and as soon as the fog burned up, they would start hitting us with mortars and artillery. If there was daylight, we would get hit," Echols said.

Due to the constant attacks from the PAVN, Marines at Khe Sanh faced significant supply challenges, but their training helped them find ways to capture water and overcome the lack of supplies.

"For the first 30 days they couldn't get us resupplied; seven helicopters got shot down bringing supplies into us," said Echols. "We went nine days one time without anything to eat. Fortunately, with the thick fog, we were able to spread plastic down the hill and catch condensation. We needed to have about two 12 oz. cans of water to last until the next morning, but guys were still dehydrated, they weren't getting enough to drink."

You get a bond with your fellow Marines that's indescribable. I've got two brothers, but I've never had with them the bond I had with the guys I was in combat with. They were my brothers." *U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Ronald Echols, who was serving with Company M, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, 3rd Marine Division*

During the siege, Marines created an air delivery method called a "super gaggle" to provide supplies to areas cut off from land supply routes after several aircraft were lost during resupply missions. The super gaggle method coordinated air and artillery strikes to occur simultaneously during resupply missions, providing a shield for aircraft delivering much needed ammunition, food, water and evacuating the wounded.

"The airwing came up with the idea they could come in and bring jets in and bomb, then come around the hill, put up a smoke screen, and then the helicopters would come in five-at-a-time with the resupplies; they looked like geese coming through there, so they called it the super gaggle, and that's how they started getting us resupplied," said Echols.

Echols added that helicopters often had just 20 seconds to land, and evacuate the wounded and get airborne before the mortar attacks resumed. Echols also remembers the air support provided by American bombers and how close they were to his positions on Hill 881S.

We had a couple of North Vietnamese soldiers surrender. We asked them why they surrendered, and they just pointed up to the sky," said Echols. "You can't just imagine what these B-52s do. They called it an Arc Light, and they would just drop hundreds of bombs out of one plane, and there was three or four planes at one time. It was just devastating."

By the end of the battle, U.S. Air Force assets had flown more than 9,000 sorties and dropped 14,223 tons of bombs on targets within the Khe Sanh area.

It would not be until April 14, 1968, that Marines from 3rd Marine Division, soldiers from the US Army 1st Cavalry Division and South Vietnamese soldiers would be able to break through and push back NVA forces from the area. Khe Sanh would continue to see combat until the end of July 1968, after which the base was destroyed and abandoned by American forces.

"On April 14 my company moved off of the hill, and they had showers set up outside for us," said Echols. "You get a bond with your fellow Marines that's indescribable. I've got two brothers, but I've never had with them the bond I had with the guys I was in combat with. They were my brothers."

Echols received a battlefield commission and a Bronze Star for his actions during the Battle of Khe Sanh. According to his Bronze Star Medal citation, "on numerous occasions, Staff Sgt. Echols served as a platoon commander, a billet normally assigned to a commissioned officer, and repeatedly disregarded his own safety to maneuver his unit against the enemy. While his company was three deployed on Hill 881 South during the siege of Khe Sanh, he worked tirelessly to ensure the safety and welfare of his men despite constant North Vietnamese mortar and artillery fire."

(1st Lt. Isaac Lamberth and MC1 Pedro Rodriguez contributed to this story



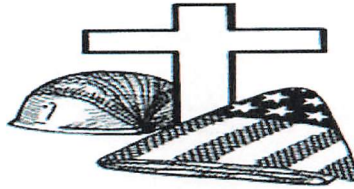
VETERANS DAY 11/11/24

—WASHINGTON DC

KHE SANH VETERANS WREATH PLACED AT THE WALL DURING THE VETERANS DAY CEREMONIES.

JOE BELARDO (C-1/44), BRUCE GEIGER (A-1/44) & VIN TEDESCO (C-1/44).

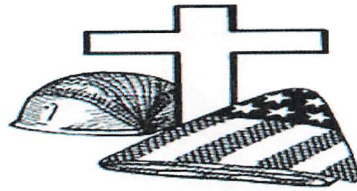




THOSE REMEMBERED	REMEMBERED BY
S SGT PAUL J CHOCLIS USMC C BTRY 1/13 CPL VIC M PIZARRO "PIZZA" KIA 3/6/68 A 1/13 CAPT DANIEL J COONON KIA 10/8/68 VMF115 MAG--13 CHU-LAI AB PFC ROLAND T MARSHALL USMC KIA 5/17/68 M 3/4 PFC FRANCIS FOILES USMC KIA 5/27/68 M 3/4 L/CPL LEE EDWARD HIMEBAUGH USMC KIA 5/27/68 M 3/4 SGT THOMAS EICHLER USMC E 2/26 SGT THOMAS EICHLER USMC E 2/26 L/CPL WILBUR STOVAL USMC HQS BTRY 1/13 KIA 09/03/68 SGT TOMMY ANTRIN A BTRY 1/13 KIA 08/02/68	VEE BEADLING F.O. FOR LIMA CO 3/26 DENNIS WIMBISH A 1/13 " " " " " " WILLIAM & JOANN EICHLER RUSSELL & KATHY TURNER ROBERT HOLSCHER ROBERT HOLSCHER



Khe Sanh Veterans at the
Chicago Vietnam Veterans Parade
June 1986

**THOSE REMEMBERED****REMEMBERED BY****"THOSE REMEMBERED" 27 JUNE 1967**

2 LT DALE CHARLES ALLEN 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 SSGT WILLIAM IVOR TENNEY BACON H&S/3/26 *DIED USS SANTUARY
 2 LT LAWRENCE JOSEPH BOLGER A/1/26
 PFC FREDERICK JOSEPH BRENKE L/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 L/CPL VICTOR LEE BURNS A/1/26
 CPT FRANKLIN DELANO BYNUM L/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 L/CPL ALLAN JAMES DAMIAN A/1/26
 L/CPKL JEFFREY JAY DAVID 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 CPL ANTHONY DI CESARE JR 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 HM3 HOSPITALMAN 3RD CLASS, CARL DOUGLAS DUDLEY JR H&S/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 L/CPL CHARLES MANLEY GATTIS JR 7/5/1967 1/3/26* DIED NAVY HOSPITAL, DANANG
 L/CPL ALEJANDRO RAY GODINEZ 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 SSGT DONALD PAUL HAILTON 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 HM3 HOSPITALCORPSMAN 3RD CLASS CURTIS DARRELL JACKSON
 H&S/3/26 L/CPL FREDDIE LEE JOHNSON 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 SGT PAUL EDDIE KINCAID A/1/26
 L/CPL CHARLES AARON LYNCH SUB UNIT-5 HQ CO/HQ BN CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 L/CPL FRANCISCO MAZARIEGOS SUB UNIT-5 HQ CO/HQ BN CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 L/CPL KENNETH ARTHUR MILLARD 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 COPL DENNIS ALFRED O'CONNOR SUB UNIT-5 HQ CO/HQ BN CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 PFC PAUL MALDONADO RODRIGUEZ JR A/1/26
 L/CPL GLENN EDWARD SANDERS 6/29/67 A/1/26 *DIED USS SANCTUARY
 CPL JAMES MERRILL SHEPARD JR SUB UNIT-5 HQ2 CO/HQ BN CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 PFC RICK JAMES STEWART A BTRY 1/13
 CPL EDMUND BURKE TRAVIS 1/3/26 A BTRY 1/13
 CPL RICHARD LEE WALKER 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 CPL STEPHEN GEORGE WASSENICH 1/3/26 CAC-OSCAR HILL 689
 L/CPL JONATHAN CHARLES WHITTICOM H&S/1/26
 L/CPL IRA WINARD WILLIAMS A/1/26
 PFC WILLIAM JACK WILLIAMS L/3/26

JIMMY COLLINS & FAMILY A/1/26

***KHE SANH UNDER SIEGE: A VIEW FROM
THE 3RD BATTALION, 26TH MARINES******BY DICK CAMP 4/5/21***

At approximately 4 a.m. on Jan. 21, 1968, I stood watch as assistant operations officer in the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment's combat operations center at the Khe Sanh Combat Base shooting the breeze with Maj. Matt Caulfield, the battalion's operations officer. I remember handing him a C-ration cup of coffee when we heard heart-stopping words come over the radio speaker from a lieutenant on a nearby hill: "We're being overrun!"

Caulfield grabbed the radio handset and demanded, "What the hell's going on?"

The Khe Sanh base was on a plateau in the northwest corner of South Vietnam just south of the Demilitarized Zone dividing it from North Vietnam and about 6 miles from the Laotian border. The base was intended to block enemy infiltration from Laos and serve as the western anchor of a linear barrier containing manned fortifications, minefields and sensors stretching from the South China Sea to Laos, a line known as "McNamara's Wall," a reference to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, the barrier's chief proponent.

The base's perimeter consisted of bunkers and trench lines that stretched roughly in an oblong circle surrounding a 3,500-foot runway large enough to land C-130 Hercules cargo planes. Several thousand yards from the perimeter, hills 881 South, 861, 861A and 558 figured prominently in the defense of the base. Approximately 6,000 Americans defended the base perimeter and the hill positions.

In January 1968, the North Vietnamese Army cut the overland supply route to Khe Sanh, leaving the base totally dependent on aerial resupply. At the same time, the NVA surrounded the base with upward of 20,000 battle-hardened soldiers, supported by heavy artillery, rockets and mortars.

The 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, had been airlifted to Khe Sanh in mid-December 1967 and assigned an approximately 3,000-yard-long slice of the northwest defense perimeter, known as the Red Sector.

"They [the regiment] didn't have any room for us," recalled 1st Lt. John T. Esslinger, executive officer of the 3rd Battalion's Company M. "So they sent us outside the wire to the west a little bit...we build sort of an add on, an annex to the base. We extended the wire and dug our holes and that's where we lived."

The 3rd Battalion's combat operations center was in the only grove of trees in that portion of the base. The battalion logistics officer had been able to bribe a Navy Seabee into digging a rectangular pit with his front-end loader. The pit, some 12-feet deep, 8-feet wide and 20-feet long, was just large enough to accommodate the battalion commander, his staff and radio operators, together with about 15 to 20 men.

The operations center was "roofed" with 2-inch-thick perforated aluminum planks (intended to be runway matting), reinforced with crushed rock, expended artillery shells and layers of sandbags, making the overhead cover at least 5 feet thick. This would easily protect us from NVA mortar fire. Unfortunately, as the siege progressed the NVA brought in heavy artillery—122 mm and 152 mm guns, as well as 122 mm rockets—along with 120 mm and 82 mm mortars. A final layer of 2-inch plywood sheets was placed 6 feet over the entire roof area.

Once a 152 mm shell landed on the hardened crushed rock main road

running through the base. I was told to survey the resulting hole to determine what the battalion should do to protect itself. I stared at the huge crater, 6 feet deep and 8 feet in diameter, compared it to our small entrenching tools and reported jokingly to the battalion executive officer that we should surrender!

As a further protective measure our battalion instituted a policy that no vehicles were allowed into the grove of trees—only foot traffic was permitted. We were concerned that NVA observers on the high ground might spot vehicular traffic and identify the area as a command post. Finally, a general purpose tent and camouflage netting were erected over the operations center.

From this underground bunker, the command group and staff—battalion commander, executive officer, operations officer, intelligence officer—directed the widely dispersed rifle companies. Company I and two platoons of Company M occupied Hill 881 South; 2 miles east Company K and two platoons of Company A, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, held Hill 861; and 500 yards to the east Company E, 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines held Hill 861A.

Those three hills, along with the 3,000-foot-high Dong Tri Mountain, Hill 881 North and Hill 558, dominated the Khe Sanh Plateau and would enable the regiment to control the high ground overlooking the base. Company L of the 3rd Battalion defended the combat base's Red Sector, tying in with the 1st Battalion of the 26th Marines on the right flank and the U.S. Army's forward operating base on the left.

The battalion combat operations center maintained radio communications with the hill positions, as well as the 26th Marines regimental command post and supporting arms radio networks.

A hand-lettered sign was placed above the radio operators' bench. During the day, its wording was turned toward the dirt wall of the bunker and not visible, but at night the sign was turned over and revealed a tongue-in-cheek response to the imminent threat of an NVA ground assault: "Tonight's the Night."

Sometime around 1 a.m., Jan. 2, a Company L listening post reported six NVA had just crept by. A reaction force was sent out and, together with the listening post men, swept the area. They discovered five NVA and killed them. The five were officers and may have been performing a reconnaissance for a ground assault. An enemy captive later reported that an NVA lieutenant colonel was one of the dead.

The night of Jan. 21 several NVA "sappers," an elite assault force, attempted to breach the wire in front of Company L. They came under fire, and 14 bodies were observed being dragged away.

On Hill 861, as sounds of small arms and machine gun fire, explosions and muffled shouts filled the air in the pre-dawn hours of Jan. 21, K Company's executive officer, 1st Lt. Jerry N. Saulsberry (call sign Kilo 5), responded "What the hell's going on?" question Caulfield had asked from the combat operations center.

"We're being overrun!" Saulsberry shouted.

The regimental fire support coordinator, Lt. Col. John A. "Band of Steel" Hennelly, directed radar-guided planes to drop ordnance on suspected NVA assembly areas around Company K's hill position. Just before dawn two A-6 Intruder planes dropped.

56 500-pound bombs on a likely assembly area, which not only dampened the enemy forces' assault but also forced them to break contact.

At 5:30 a.m., on Jan. 21, just after the enemy had been driven from Hill 861, the NVA unleashed a terrifying artillery and rocket bombardment on the Khe Sanh base, beginning a 77-day siege. Enemy shells hit all around the operations center. Others hit the 1,500-ton ammunition dump on the eastern end of the runway, setting it off with a thunderous roar and sending unexploded ordnance hurtling through the battalion area.



The solid thud of a 30-pound shell striking the ground in the darkness was unnerving. Making matters worse, the regiment's supply of tear gas was blown up and the chemical saturated the air, forcing everyone to wear gas masks...at least those who still carried them.

In the following weeks, the entire combat base and the hill positions were hit all hours of the day and night by various combinations of mortar, artillery, rocket and recoilless rifle fire.

The NVA attacked Company E of the 2nd Battalion on Hill 861A at 4 a.m. on Feb. 5. A sapper unit armed with Chicom grenades (long-handled grenades modeled after those made by Chinese communists) and bangalore torpedoes (metal tubing filled with explosives) preceded an infantry attack by approximately 200 troops. Companies I and K of the 3rd Battalion supported Company E with 81 mm and 60 mm mortar fire, which helped disperse the enemy. By 6:30 a.m., Company E had beaten back the attack using small arms and aggressive hand-to-hand combat. Seven Marines were killed and 24 wounded, while the NVA lost 109 killed.

The major spoke to Saulsberry in an unbelievably soothing voice to calm him. However, things went wrong when Caulfield decided to finish his instructions with some football team rah-rah, saying, "OK, Kilo 5, take the ball and run with it!"

The lieutenant must have been still too anxious to comprehend Caulfield's use of the cliché or had trouble hearing amid the gunfire and explosions.

"Did I hear you say 'run,' sir?" Saulsberry asked.

Caulfield shouted into the handset: "Hell no! I was just trying to encourage you to hold on."

Saulsberry was in charge of Company K because the company's commander, Capt. Norman Jasper, had been seriously wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade in the first minutes of the attack and was out of action. The company first sergeant was also wounded by the same rocket. The company gunnery sergeant had been killed.

The artillery and air officers in the combat operations center requested assistance from the 26th Marines' Fire Support Coordination Center, in the middle of the combat base, which we called "downtown ground zero." Within minutes the regiment's direct-support artillery battalion, 1st Battalion, 13th Marines, was in contact with Company K's Cpl. Dennis M. Mannion, an artilleryman attached to the company to direct the support fire. "I started calling in target numbers [pre-planned artillery targets] on the ridgeline 500 yards to the west...I pulled the rounds as close as I could get them...I fired as many rounds as the 105s [howitzers] at the combat base could give us."

Company I on Hill 881 South also began firing in support. "Our two 81 mm mortars fired several hundred rounds on that slope," Capt. Bill Dabney, the company commander, reported. "The mortar tubes became so hot that the gunners cooled them with water, then fruit juice, and finally by urinating on them. It smelled a bit rank in the gun pits!"

On Feb. 15, between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., the NVA struck the base with 1,307 artillery and rocket rounds. A seemingly unending succession of casualties had to be evacuated to Company C, 3rd Medical Battalion, at downtown ground zero. For most of us, the only protection was to burrow deeper into the plateau's red clay.

Intelligence reported the North Vietnamese had placed heavy artillery, Soviet-made 130 mm and 152 mm guns and 122 mm rockets, across the border in the Co Roc Mountains of Laos.

Our operations center was on a straight line from the NVA fire, and the rounds came right overhead before exploding somewhere in the middle of the base. Occasionally a "short" round impacted the battalion area.

On one memorable occasion, the battalion tactical network came alive with the warning from Company I on Hill 881 South: "Arty, arty, arty, Co Roc Mountain, 220 degrees." Company I, some 4 miles

west of the base, was first to hear the round and broadcast a warning over the radio network, which many units monitored.

Sirens and horns sounded all over the base, giving everyone several precious seconds to find cover—often the margin between life and death. The warning got to be Pavlovian. At the first note all hands scrambled for cover.

I wondered where that SOB was going to hit. Suddenly there was a terrific explosion, the generator lights went out, and thick dust filled the operations center. Everything went deathly quiet. The heavy stench of the shell's cordite explosive material permeated the air. Someone shouted, "Is everybody OK?"

After verifying there were no casualties, Caulfield and I went outside and saw a gaping hole in the operations center's tent covering, which was also perforated by shrapnel. About 4 feet of the center's roof was gouged out.

The bunker had taken a direct hit from a heavy-caliber round, which hit the plywood and exploded, then took out part of the roof. If the plywood had not

detonated the shell, the round would have penetrated the bunker's roof—and everyone in the close confines of the space in the operations center would have been killed from shrapnel or concussion.

Two unconscious Marines lay just outside the entrance of the tent. Later we learned that they were about to enter when the shell exploded. Fortunately, the angle of the blast was away from them. Neither was hurt except for minor burns, scratches and headaches. Upon coming to, one looked up and remarked, "Don't mean nuthin," which was a standard sarcastic response to truly frightening combat experiences.

Others weren't so lucky. One day a radio operator had to make a "head call." Another man took his place. After a long interval, someone took notice and asked about the man who went to the latrine. It turned out the Marine had stepped out of the bunker just as an incoming round hit close to the operations center. He was wounded and evacuated before we even knew

mortar round clipped several Marines close to the entrance of the operations center.

Everyone adopted what we called the "Khe Sanh Shuffle" or "Khe Sanh Two-Step." Just about anyone who was walking above ground held his helmet under an arm so it would be easier for him hear an arriving shell. All of us kept an ear cocked toward Laos in the west, where most of the NVA artillery was positioned.

Our senses were finely tuned. We would stand around talking with our helmets tucked under our arms until someone said, "Shhh" or "Stop talking." If nothing more was heard after a few seconds, the conversation resumed. If there was "something" in the air, everyone suddenly dashed for cover. It was automatic. If someone started running, everyone joined in.

As a result of the close calls, the battalion executive officer and I established a second combat operations center in an old above-ground bunker some distance away. We remodeled it, adding more sandbags and digging it deeper—much deeper! We occupied the bunker

at night, but during the day maintained watches in the primary operations center.

As the siege developed, the NVA blockaded the road into the base. Supplies could be delivered only by cargo aircraft. Initially, the supply planes were primarily C-130 Hercules and C-123 Provider transports. However, in mid-February the runway closed after a Marine KC-130 was struck by anti-aircraft fire and crashed, killing six Marines onboard.

Using an alternative delivery method, the Air Force air-dropped containers into a zone in front of the battalion lines. Every morning, a team from the 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, swept the drop zone to ensure the NVA hadn't moved in during the night. We could see the drop zone from the operations center.

Supplying the outlying hill positions required an innovative approach because the NVA ringed them with anti-aircraft weapons. After several helicopters were shot down, the 1st

Marine Air Wing instituted "Super Gaggle," an air task force consisting of eight to 16 resupply CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters, accompanied by about a dozen A-4 Skyhawk attack aircraft and four Huey gunships flying cover, a Marine KC-130 to refuel the aircraft and a TA-4F Skyhawk with a "tactical air coordinator" in the back seat to orchestrate the entire affair.



In a typical "Super Gaggle" mission, a TA-4 flew first to Khe Sanh on weather reconnaissance. When it reported favorable conditions, the other aircraft launched from various bases in northern South Vietnam. The A-4s took off from Chu Lai en route to Khe Sanh. The helicopters departed Quang Tri, en route to Dong Ha, where supplies waited.

After picking up their loads and carrying them underneath in especially designed cargo slings, the helicopters began the short trip to Khe Sanh flying on instruments and then letting down through a hole in the cloud cover.

Just before the helicopters arrived, four A-4s struck enemy positions with napalm and two others saturated anti-aircraft positions with tear gas from spray tanks. About 30 seconds before the helicopters' final approach to the designated hills, two A-4s laid a smoke screen on both sides of the planned flight path. As the helicopters flew in behind the smoke, four more Skyhawks carrying bombs, rockets and 20 mm cannons suppressed known and suspected North Vietnamese gun positions.

As soon as smoke was laid, helicopters from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron HMM-364, the "Purple Foxes," would appear with the sling loads brought from Dong Ha—10 birds in two strings of five just above the smoke. They flew parallel to the hill, usually to the south since wind was usually from the north. They came into five zones on the hill, released their loads and beat feet. One bird in the second echelon was designated to land in a zone that we would have ready, drop off mail and replacement Marines, and pick up casualties. Only two CH-46s fell to enemy fire during

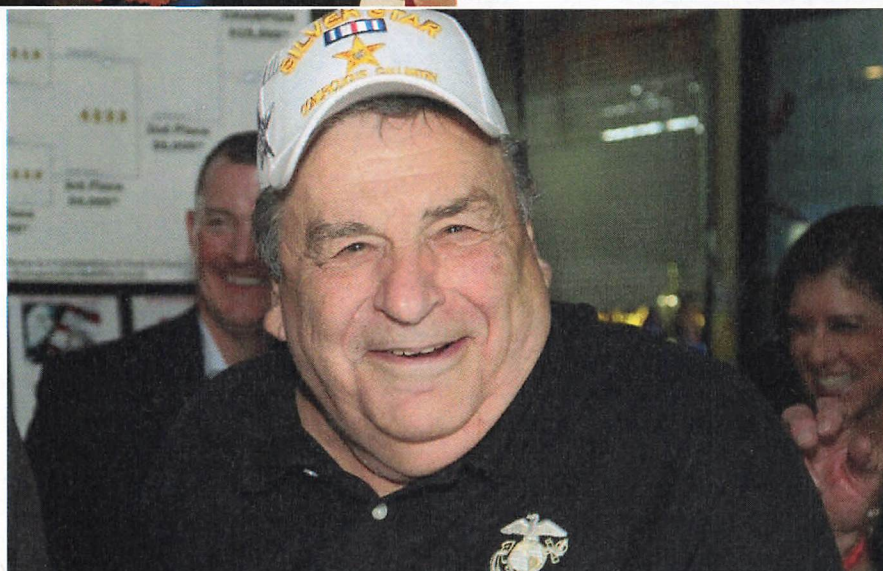
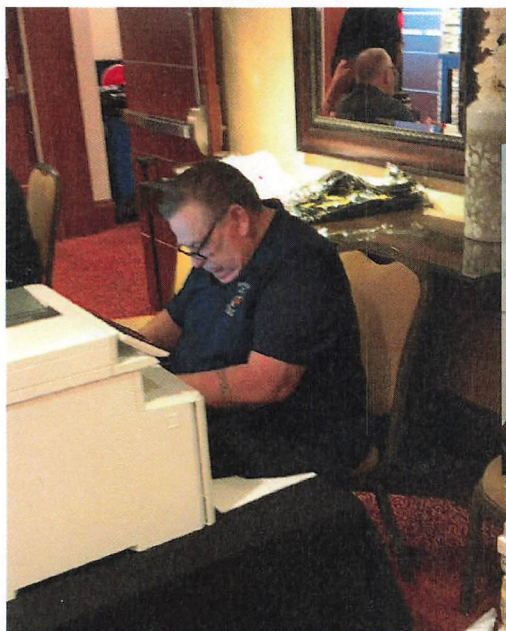
the "Super Gaggle" missions. In both cases, the Hueys picked up the crews immediately.

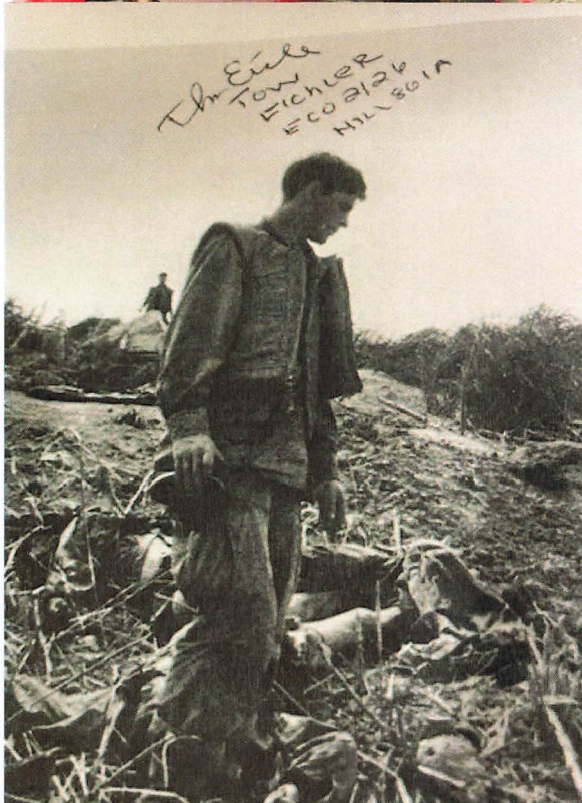
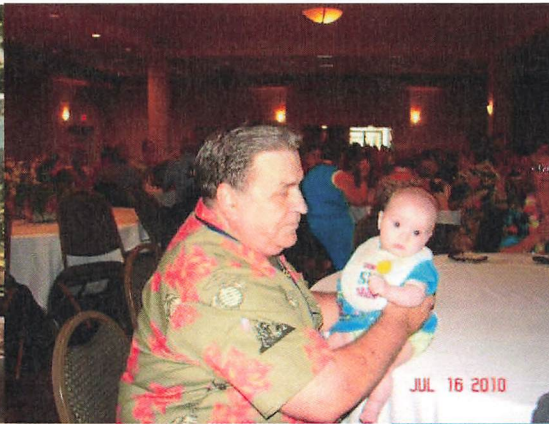
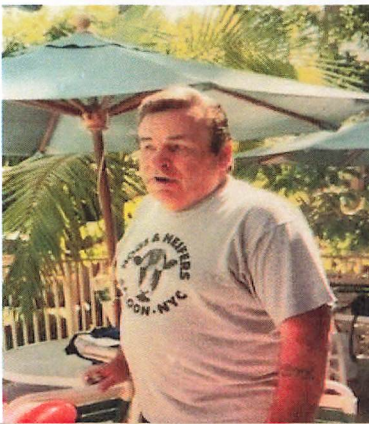
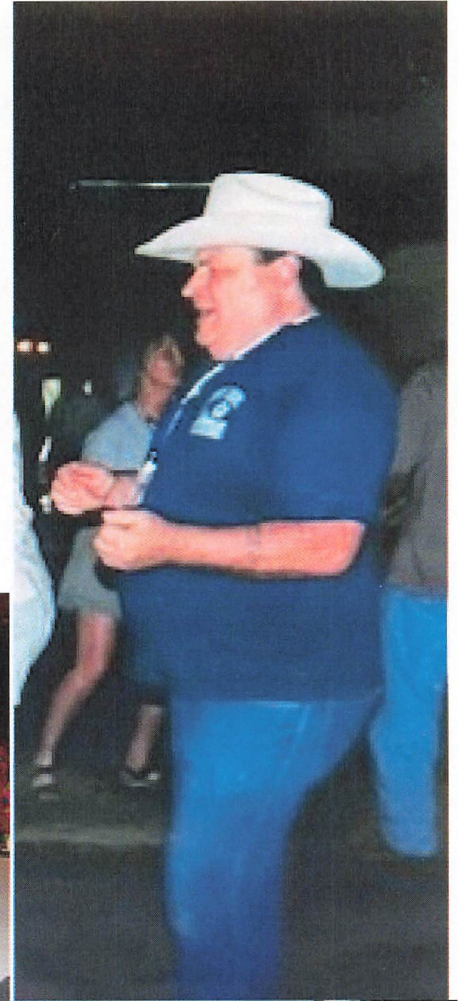
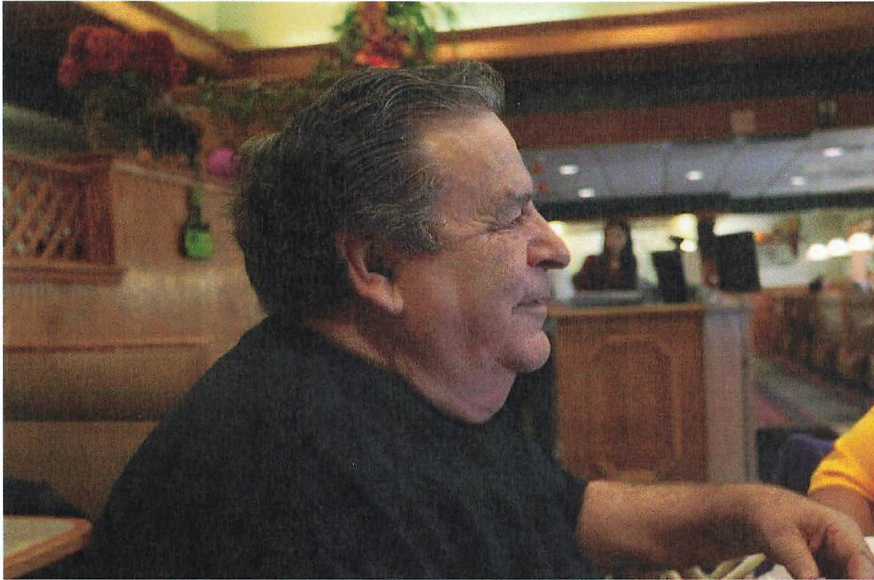
On April 8, Operation Pegasus, an over-land and air assault mission involving the Marines, U.S. Army and South Vietnamese troops, broke through the North Vietnamese encirclement and lifted the siege.

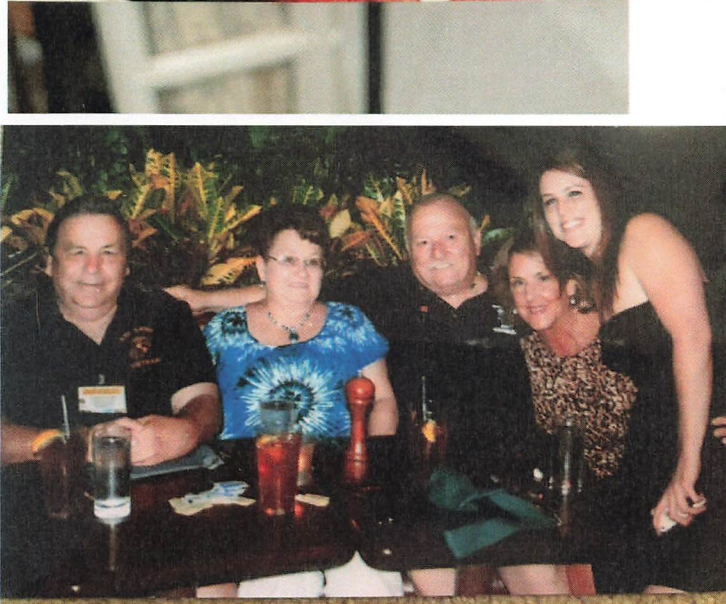
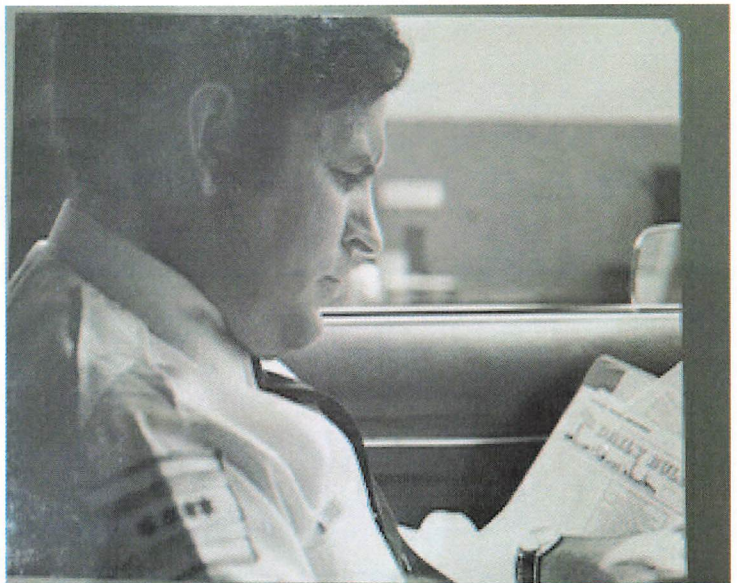
The 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, had some unfinished business, however. On April 7-8 the command group and Company L were airlifted to Hill 881 South to prepare an attack on Hill 881 North. Shortly after midnight on April 14, all four of the battalion's companies advanced against the hill under a massive 2,000-round artillery barrage. At 2:28 p.m., the Marines raised the Stars and Stripes over the smoking hilltop. The capture of Hill 881 North was the 3rd Battalion's last battle in the Khe Sanh area. **V**

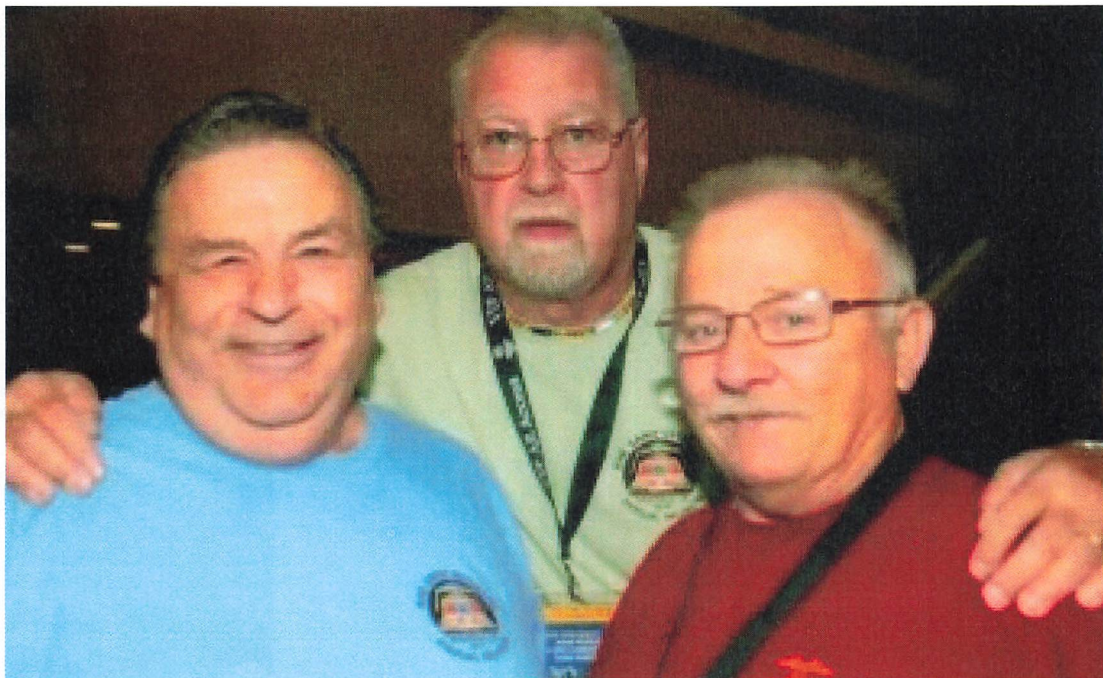
Dick Camp retired from the Marine Corps in 1988 as a colonel after serving 26 years. He served in Vietnam 1967-68 as an infantry company commander and aide de camp to Maj. Gen. Raymond G. Davis. Camp, who lives in Fredericksburg, Virginia, has written 15 books and more than 100 articles in military magazines.

TRIBUTE TO A HERO









HOME OF RECORD:

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AWARDS BY DATE OF ACTION:

1 of 1

Silver Star

AWARDED FOR ACTIONS
DURING Vietnam War

Service: Marine Corps

Battalion: 2d Battalion

Division: 3d Marine Division (Rein.), FMF

GENERAL ORDERS:

CITATION:

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Corporal Thomas J. Eichler (MCSN: 1838959), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving as Weapons Platoon Sergeant with Company E, Second Battalion, Twenty-Sixth Marines, THIRD Marine Division. During the early morning hours of 5 February 1968, two companies of North Vietnamese regulars attacked Company E's defensive position on Hill 861A near Khe Sanh with grenades, mortars, automatic weapons, and small arms fire. Realizing one of his gun emplacements had gone silent, Corporal Eichler moved through the heavy enemy fire first to bring up and emplace another machine gun team, and then assisted in moving the casualties out of harm's way. With complete disregard for his own safety, he made several sprints to the forward edges of the perimeter to evacuate critically wounded Marines and reposition his teams into more effective firing positions. When the enemy breached Company E's perimeter, Corporal Eichler played a vital role in the successful counterattack. He brought ammunition to Marines in the front line positions, engaged the enemy in close quarters combat, and repeatedly exposed himself above the trench line to direct the actions of his fellow Marines and personally hurl grenades on the enemy with devastating effect. By his undaunted courage, bold initiative, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of intense enemy fire were an inspiration to all who observed him and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

