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...and a sprinkling of your poetry throughout

A Message From The Editor:

We failed to get permission or credit the cover photo in our last issue. The photo was taken by David Douglas Duncan, a photo journalist, who went through the Siege with some of us. I first saw the photo at Jim Wilkinson's home in Memphis in 1987. I was meeting him for the first time since Khe Sanh. I thought it was his personal photo. I asked if I could use the photo for our cover and he obliged. After we had gone to print, he mentioned it was a Duncan photo. Jim said he didn't think Duncan would mind. Little did I know it was used by David on a cover of one of his books. Tommy got quite a scare when David called him from France and pretended he was upset at his photo being used without his permission. He then laughed it off and said he thought it was a great cover. His photo on last issue's cover is a segue between what Jim and Walt are looking off towards, and the NVA on this issue's cover. Paul mentioned that the wearing of the green pith helmet is akin to the brothers in America wearing their "colors." While it is common in the North, it is looked down upon in the South. Paul caught the guy's look using a telephoto lens. He was not posing.

We bombed with the Rats/Red Clay theme for this issue. One submission. You guys cannot tell me you did Khe Sanh and don't have any stories of rats or red clay. There's a big difference between mind stories and writing, huh? The submission deadline for our next issue is November 31.



KHE SANH VETERANS REUNION

2000

SAN DIEGO, CA

September 14-17, 2000

Hanalei Hotel, Mission Valley

www.hanaleihotel.com

Toll Free Reservation line 1-800-882-0858

This is a great location for a reunion. Many other military groups have chosen this hotel. Close to MCRD, Sea World, The San Diego Zoo, Sea World, and the beach. Free transportation to Old Town, the Trolley and nearby shopping centers. Poolside Hospitality Room!!! Tailgate at Qualcomm Stadium for Friday Night's Game against the San Francisco

Giants. Downtown Gaslamp District and Certain Marine-Owned Irish Pubs Standing By.

DON'T MISS THE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, TOUR OF MCRD, COMPLETE WITH COLORS CEREMONY, GRADUATION PARADE, MUSEUM TOUR, LUNCH IN THE MESS HALL AND SHOPPING AT THE PX!!!! Complete the form on the next page and mail it with your check made payable to Khe Sanh Veterans Association to:

Vince Griffith
27280 Jefferson Ave. Suite 200
Temecula, CA 92490.

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Be sure to call the hotel with your room reservation. For more info contact John Kaheny 619-282-5211, jmkaheny@home.com or Vince Griffith 909-296-0180

Khe Sanh Veterans Reunion Registration Form

Name

Phone [day] [eve]

Fax email

Address City/St/Zip

Served with (Branch, Bn, Co etc.) When

Others in your party? Adults Under 18 Total

Their names

Please indicate any special needs you may require

Interested in attending a Padres v. Giants game Friday night? How many?

Cost	Number	Total
Registration fee (\$15 per person over 18 non-refundable)	X \$15 =	
Banquet (\$30 per person)	X \$30 =	
Beef.Chicken Fish Veg....		
MCRD Tour with Lunch (\$10 per person)	X \$10 =	

Cost of Padre Game will be based on final number attending.

Total Remitted



BOD Messages

As the chairman of the publishing committee I want to personally thank every member of the organization who responded to my request for articles for our magazine. Your response is going to make this issue one of the most diverse and interesting we have ever published. Along with this issue you will also receive a copy of the 2000 Directory. Please check your personal information and correct any errors on the form provided in the newsletter and return to me ASAP. I will be making corrections and additions, which will be mailed to you in each forthcoming edition of the KSV magazine. The directory has a binding that can be removed with a little practice and

you can replace the pages with the corrected ones. I am debating whether to change the front and back cover, once a year. I would like to hear from the membership on this idea. James Wodecki (Jimbo) has done a magnificent job of recruiting new members and designed the covers for the 2000 edition.

I have one more request to help us keep our magazine one of the best published of any organization. We know and understand not everyone owns or has access to a computer. Paul Knight, along with Ernie Spencer and the rest of their staff, spend endless hours retyping and editing submitted material. They would be able to accomplish much more if we could have the materials submitted to Paul Knight, electronically. If at all possible, once you have written your story and do not have access to a computer,

maybe you could have it done at your local library, or have a friend who has a computer, help redo the material. I do not wish to, in any way, discourage any one from writing, especially after making a plea for more articles. It is just a suggestion that will help the editors and save a lot of time and work. All materials for the newsletters should still be sent directly to Paul Knight. I again welcome any suggestions or criticisms. This is the only way I can judge our progress with the magazine, which will continue to grow with your help. Keep those articles coming.

Tom Eichler
VP & Chairman Publishing &
Membership Committees



Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been my pleasure to serve you, as your President of the Khe Sanh Veterans, for the past year. Since I spoke to you last, I have made two trips to Vietnam and have been in the village of Khe Sanh. I have worked with the Bru and the local Vietnamese. They appear to be, outwardly, pleased to make contact once again with Americans. There is no animosity among the people of Vietnam towards the Americans. On one of my trips I was able to find some of the Strikers that had served with us at Khe Sanh Fire Base and Khe Sanh Village. I just wish you could have felt the joy that radiated when we were together. The Mountain People are still as poor as sin, yet are eager to share with their visitors anything they have. English appears to be their second language now. When you walk through the streets of Khe Sanh young people and children all want to practice their English.

I hope we have a tremendous Reunion at San Diego in September and I want to talk with everyone of you. I know you did your job in a far superior way than we can ever give you credit for.

Your Faithful Servant,
David "Bulldog" Smith,
President Khe Sanh Veterans



Founder's Corner

March 24, 2000
Chaplain Ray W. Stubbe

These are indeed times that become increasingly difficult. I had always assumed, when much younger,

that the transitions and the issues that would be faced as one got older became less and less burdensome and difficult—that all the major ones (like a life's work, partner, etc.) were all done early in life. I'm finding that the issues, however, have a sort of accumulative force to them. Issues of grief, of loss, of death, etc., are especially in this category—they seem to grow by adding what has been, with what is, and even anticipation of what will be!

Thus, I heard recently of the loss of Tommy Eichler's mom.

In my own case, my dad's condition has remarkably deteriorated so quick. He was placed on Home Hospice Care about a week ago—meaning that his condition is regarded as terminal within 6 months. He doesn't sleep well—and I'm up with him most of the night, and now he doesn't eat either. He's mostly in a wheelchair so that I can move him to the bathroom in a hurry to assist him while he sits on the pot—clean him up afterwards, etc. Getting him dressed in the morning, taking care of the urine bag (he has a permanent catheter now), and so on have made me appreciate in much greater degree those who have done this sort of thing in the past for others.



I received another letter from Ines S. Kerch. (I think I sent you a letter from her before concerning the advisability of autopsies so that surviving next-of-kin might get compensations from the VA.) She writes in her recent letter something that you might consider putting in the next issue of our magazine: "I wonder if other veterans may have revealed a problem with 'bumps' forming on the body? Apparently, it is accompanied by some itching and, when scratched, there is flaking of the skin. One Vietnam member at our VFW Post served in the Army and has such a problem. According to the veteran, it affects his back, legs, and arms. He stated no doctor has been able to identify what it is, nor the cause. Has anyone revealed such a problem to you? I would appreciate your response." (Mrs. Ines S. Kerch, 1918 Storm Drive, Falls Church VA 22043-1413, widow of Richard Kerch, Khe Sanh vet.)

April 17, 2000

Chaplain Ray W. Stubbe

8766 Park View Ct.

Wauwatosa, WI 53226-2729

(414) 771-9987

Taps

NAME	UNIT	DATE OF DEATH	CAUSE
COSTELLO, GARY M	D/1/9-XO	9/3/97	LUNG CANCER
FRANKLIN, FR. ROBERT	4TH MAR	10/26/92	?
GARRISON, DANNY	A/1/26	1/1/00	?
HALL, W.C.	VMO-6	1/97	?
[1/Lt Hall was co-pilot in an aircraft involved in 1/9's patrol action on 24 March during which his aircraft crashed and he sustained 2d and 3d degree burns over 60% of his body]			
HAVLIK, JOHN	MACTU-62	1/97	?
[Maj John Havlik reported to KSCB 27 Jan 68 to organize the various detachments of Marine Corps units from 1st Marine Air Wing and coordinate their support and activity].			
HENDERSON, LARRY	ARMY INTEL.	?	?
HENNELLY, JOHN	HQ/1/13-CO	1996	PLANE CRASH
LUCERO, ALFREDO	A/1/13	?	?
McGEE, RICHARD L	H&S/1/9	?	?
MUMMERT, JOHN E	?	1998	?
NEFF, ROBERT L	VMO-6	5/16/96	?
[MAJ R.L. Neff was section leader of a flight of two UH-1E gunships, SEAWORTHY 422 and 4-23 involved in 1/9's patrol action on 24 March]			
PELLETTER, P. A.	H&S/3/26-81S	6/27/96	?
PIPER, MICHAEL	2/26-CAPT	5/7/99	CANCER
PORTER, JOHN	?	?	?
RAMSEY, LARRY	11TH ENG	11/20/95	?
SEARLE, HENRY	VMA-211	6/99	PLANE CRASH
[Flying an A-4, Major Searle supported the recon team that was surrounded on 26 Jan 1967 in which PFC Steve Albert SRSEN of A/1/3 jumped on a grenade to protect others. The grenade detonated and he was put in for the Medal of Honor. CG, 3dMarDiv, recommended the MOH and General Walt concurred, but it was denied by General W.C. Westmoreland, perhaps because the incident occurred just within the Laotian border.]			
SILVA, VICTOR	A/1/26	?	?
[Diary entry for 22 Jan 68: Gunny Silva of the S-3 shop in the 1/26 COC bunker, asked that I send the Catholic chaplain to visit him. He showed me a large quantity of religious items he had with him: a plastic prayer card, a Christmas card from a Franciscan brother, and the mass for each Sunday.]			
SYLVA, DAVID	USAF	5/23/99	?
TOYE, JAMES	E/2/26	5/11/98	?
WALTERS, FRED M "CHIP"	A/1/9	2/14/94	?
WEDGE, JAMES	B/1/13	2/2/99	?
YOUNG, JAMES R	M/3/26	?	?

Hi. My name is Diane and I found a copy of The Khe Sanh Veterans' Red Clay at the Vet Center in St. Petersburg, FL. I know it is last year's issue, but I found it to be the most fascinating reading I have found in a long time. I was married (many, many years ago) to a career Marine (Air Wing) and have always had a lifelong interest in the military and battle strategies. Living on Okinawa for close to three years let me study the battle up close and personal. Otherwise, I have had to keep it to Civil War sites, like Gettysburg, Chattanooga and New Market. I had great success with Dien Bien Phu when I found a survivor from the French Foreign Legion who was willing to talk to me. Language was a bit of a problem but we managed fairly well.

Khe Sanh seems a bit overwhelming at the moment, but I thought you might be able to point me in the right direction. Is there perhaps a book that you find to be an accurate account? Or do you know of someone who would be willing to email me about it? I would sincerely appreciate any help you could give me. And feel free to forward my email to anyone who could help me with this. I know this is many years too late, but no less sincere. Thank you and WELCOME HOME.

Diane Wearins
13366 Cockle Drive Apt-221
Port Richey, FL 34668
Email: dianenprfla@aol.com

ED NOTE: "VALLEY OF DECISION" by John Prados/Ray Stubbe is an excellent choice.

By Command Sargent Major Ballogg – JTF 6

May 6, 2000

There are less than 2000 active duty military with RVN service in uniform today. All of us are senior enlisted/officers. On the eve of the fall of Saigon, I feel compelled to talk about the soldiers who served during that conflict. The barrage of misinformation about the war and who fought it is a national disgrace. For example, the B.S. movies—"Rambo," "Apocalypse Now," "Deer Hunter" and "Platoon," Oliver Stone's rendition of guys in the same unit killing each other, smoking dope on patrol. The sad thing is, Oliver knew better but wants to be one of the Hollywood insiders. Some of the things portrayed in these movies did happen, as they happen in all wars, but they are portrayed as everyday occurrences in Viet Nam, as every man's experience. Why?

My guess is that those in Hollywood and the media who avoided service have this need to reinforce their decision not to serve by vilifying those who did. This continued effort to disgrace those who went saddens me and makes me furious.

I am going to compare two conflicts: "The Greatest Generation" and Vietnam as a vehicle to define the RVN combat soldier. My intent is not to denigrate any other veteran but to shed some light. WWII was "The Good War," there was an evil foe bent on conquest and the destruction of the world as we knew it. Our whole society was galvanized behind the war effort. Every organization supported the war and total victory. There was every reason to fight and no excuse not to. The 60s generation and Viet Nam was the not-so-good war. The American public initially supported the war, but it was a side bar. The Reserves and National Guard were not mobilized. There was no societal effort. The goals were ambiguous and the threat undefined. The only reason to fight was a sense of service to the Nation. And yet during WWII, only 33% enlisted, 67% were drafted. Initially, only 21- to 35-year-olds were to be taken but not enough volunteers came forward, so the draft was lowered to 18.

Compare RVN 65-73: 67% enlisted and 33% were drafted. Of the draftees 10% volunteered for the draft.

In WWII during a 4 year period, there were 350,000 draft evaders. In RVN during an 8 year period there were 500,000 draft evaders. Developed to a fine art by some we know well.

WWII desertion "in the zone" Europe and Pacific theaters: 20,000 convicted prior to D-DAY. The British jails were full of US deserters who were brought to dockside in handcuffs. RVN desertion in country—250. WWII units surrendered to the enemy from Bataan to Europe. Many units with the ability to fight surrendered without one. Platoons, companies and in the case of the Battle of the Bulge, regiments with the ability to fight chose not to. RVN: not one platoon in 9 years of fighting surrendered. Some were overrun, but chose to fight to the death. LTG H. G. Moore, when revisiting his battlefield 20 some odd years later, was told by the North Vietnamese officers that they were astonished at the American soldiers "fanaticism" to fight to the end.

My unit was the 3rd squad C Company 2nd Bn 14th Infantry of the 25th Inf. Division (Tropic Lightning) or the "Electric Strawberry" as we called it, with pride. The Division fought in RVN from

early 66 to late 71(?).

The Division had a little less than 17,000 assigned. During its tour the 25th had over 5,000 killed in action and just under 25,000 wounded in action. That's about twice the Divisions rolls. The 25th never lost a position to the enemy. Never had a unit overrun. Never had a soldier surrender under fire.

I am proud to have served as a grunt in RVN and have never served with finer men.

ED NOTE: Too bad Tom Brokaw doesn't read our magazine.

Dear Editor,

I've been a member since around 1991 (my name is included in the Membership Directories of 1994 and 1996). Ray Stubbe and I have corresponded for quite a number of years, and I've also exchanged correspondence with Talis Kaminskis, whose written work I greatly admire.

What initially led me to become interested in the Vietnam War itself was the POW issue. I think it was during 1989 that British television aired a documentary on the POW/MIA issue, which made an enormous impact on me, the sort of impact where you lie awake at night and can't get it out of your mind. Then about 9 months later another TV channel aired a documentary called "We Can Keep You Forever," and the evidence they put forward was so overwhelming (set against the skeptics, who also had a fair hearing in the program) that it compelled me to go out and start reading up on the issue. From then on I got swept away and read just about everything I could lay my hands on. Books on the war aren't easy to come by in the UK, but over the years I've collected around 70 books on the subject, some of which I've had imported from the US. It was this accumulated knowledge that made me want to visit Vietnam, which I did in the early 90s and since then I've been working on a writing project (a novel) set during the war.

My first ever contact with the KSV Organization was when an enquiry letter I'd sent to another vet's organization for some information was redirected to Ernie Spencer. He then responded to that letter. By pure coincidence, I had literally just finished reading Ernie's book (WELCOME TO VIETNAM MACHO MAN) which I'd picked up in a book store over here. We just struck up a regular correspondence for quite a number of years after that. At that time I was preparing to visit Vietnam, including Khe Sanh as a

result of his book. Ernie asked me to write a piece on my travels for inclusion in the newsletter which I did, and, which he published (article title: "Stop the Plane I Want to Get Off"). During the early 90s Ernie was working flat out on preparing the newsletters all by himself. There was no team of editors helping to sift through and type all the submissions and prepare them for printing, etc. One day I volunteered my assistance, which fortunately for me he eventually accepted, and I think I helped him on about 3 or 4 of the newsletters. Ernie would send me a package with all the letters/articles/poems in their original format (often handwritten) and I typed them all up, sectionalized the various items, put it all onto a disk and mailed everything back to him in time for his deadline. Ernie then took over through to the final process of it going to press. When Ray took over Editorship of the newsletter, he printed an article I wrote on the Wall in issue no. 38 (Spring '97).

Ernie sounds like he's having a busy time of it at the moment—give him my regards when you next see him. Also, I hope you have a memorable visit back to Vietnam next month. It is, without doubt, the most amazing country I've ever visited and I would really love to go back some time. The poverty we saw in the south was truly humbling, both inside and outside the cities, but the southerners' friendliness was one of the major high points of the visit for me, and, alongside my visit to Khe Sanh, it's something that I'll never forget.

Sandra Hill

ED NOTE: Please see Sandra's poem about homeless Vets on page 43.

Dear Editor,

My name is Charles Kelley and I was with the 2/94th Arty on Carroll from Sep 67 to Sep 68. After looking for over a year for something on the 94th or Carroll on the Internet I finally signed in on the Khe Sanh web site asking if any one knew of Carroll or the 2/94th. I never expected the response I got from the Marines that were in the hill battles, Khe Sanh, Con Thien, Gio Linh etc.. Long story short, we now have a 94th sign-in sheet at http://www.willpete.com/2nd_battalion_94th_artillery.htm.

I have written the history of the 94th in Vietnam for 6 years. I tried to write it as a history, but also with the personal accounts of the Marines and Army personnel. The 2/94th supported from Carroll and

other places along the DMZ. History is under my name on the sign-in sheet along with the 94th MIA, KIA, WIA. Not really a web site yet but we have added a few pictures.

The 94th was assigned to the 3rd MAG from Oct of 66 to 1968 when the unit fell under the newly formed 108th Arty Group. All fire missions went through the 3rd Division. After the 3rd was stood down, the 108th went under the XXIV Corps arty. The 94th did not leave until 1972.

The 94th supported most of the hill battles for 861, 861a, 881s and the KCB perimeter itself. When the KCB was being hit by NVA Arty from Laos, the 2/94th moved a couple of guns at night out to LZ Stud to shoot over into Laos, which was not in vogue at that time. The enemy was allowed a safe area. The NVA Arty was knocked out and the guns withdrew to Carroll. The 94th also tried to send four guns to Khe Sanh but the 9th Marine convoy was turned back. The higher ups had waited too long.

The Service battery at Dong Ha delivered to C/1/12th Marine Arty ammo and powder during the arty duels at Gio Linh in 67 when their supply was hit. The convoy was ambushed just out side of Gio Linh. Also the Service Battery delivered much needed supplies to Khe Sanh in the Pegasus operation, while their guns fired a corridor for the lead elements of the Marine break out as they left Ca Lu towards Khe Sanh.

I know the 25 guys that have signed in on our 94th site are very appreciative of the Marine comments in the history. Made their trip over worthwhile finally after 34 years.

The 94th was awarded a PUC by the Navy for its support of the Marines.

A Battery in 66 was sent down to Chu Li to support the 1st Marines down there.

See you in September. A couple of us are going to try and make the reunion.

I lost my youth at Khe Sanh along with so many other young marines. We were so wide-eyed and proud, and we had every right to be; we are the nation's best, as all our brothers who joined us in that battle from all services were. We left damaged, but not defeated. We left proud, yet lost in our own anonymity. We are the defenders of our country and the conscience of the future. Let all who fell there know we hold those truths and their story will be told.

Semper Fi

Thomas S Buono USMC, Khe Sanh Vet

Dear Editor,

Just to let you know that I received the new Red Clay today and read some of it, and so far not only so good, but so Great!

One thing of note, re: "Why Are We Here—Reunion 99" is shown as "Author Unknown." I'm the one who sent it to you. It was written by Cmdr. John "Doc" Lancaster, USN Ret. (Corpsman with E 2/26) John wrote it in honor of and read it at the Jefferson Barracks KSV Plaque Dedication Ceremony. He is a very self-effacing man, but I respectfully request that you assure he gets due credit in the next issue as well as any other use of the poem.

I understand the Ernie Spencer is on and off line. Please convey my special thanks to him for his beautiful words regarding the Echo ceremony for Joe Roble at ANC in 1998. His words and heart's recollection of this event brought it back again for me. As did the ceremony, Ernie's telling brought a lump to my throat and tears to my eyes. Since I love all these guys and this special family, for me, it was a reunion of a different sort.

Bless you all for the good stuff you do.

Lucille Biscaglio

Email: EasyEcho@webtv.net

Dear Editor,

I was stationed in Khe Sanh in August and September in 1968. My bunker was right on highway 9. I caught malaria up there and then they pulled us out of there and sent us down south near Da Nang to guard some NVA prison camp and patrol the area. We ran into an ambush and I was shot and blown up by a land mine.

I never found out what happened to anyone after that. But maybe I might find someone who was with Gold Company, 2nd platoon in the newsletter.

Thank you,

Roger D. Hildreth

ED NOTE: What unit are you talking about? Gold Company? Boy, that's a new one on me.

Dear Editor,

My husband Richard (Dick) was diagnosed with cancer resulting from exposure to Agent Orange. Had it not been for his colleague who persuaded me to permit an autopsy, it would have been impossible to prove since Richard also suffered from another type of cancer. The cancer in his spine, which caused his hospitalization, radical treatment, and subsequent death, had settled there from an unknown origin. The results of the autopsy permitted his colleague to submit a successful claim in my behalf for DIC.

Richard was an employee of the Military Order of the Purple Heart and he was its appointed representative to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA). His colleague and dear friend, Robert Rhodes was, and continues to serve, as the MOPH appointed representative to the Court of Veterans' Appeals.

I hope that this will be persuasive in convincing other wives of veterans of the benefits from having an autopsy performed, where there is reason to believe death resulted from a service connected illness.

By the way, both my husband and I come from Fond du Lac, WI, where most of our family members continue to reside.

Sincerely,
Ines S. Kerch
1918 Storm Dr
Falls Church, VA 22043-1413

May 18, 2000

From mid-January through early April of 1968, I was the commanding officer of a surgical team in Khe Sanh. We were known as Charlie Med and occupied a small piece of red clay in the middle of the base just next to the airstrip. Over the years, very little has been written about Charlie Med. There were three other physicians with me, Ed Feldman, Joe Wolfe, and Donald J. Magilligan, Jr., who amazingly was listed on page five of your Spring issue in the Remembrances section. Unfortunately, the individual who submitted his name preferred to remain anonymous. There were also twenty-six corpsmen assigned to Charlie Med. During the siege, we all lived under nearly constant incoming barrages of artillery and mortar fire. One of the most difficult aspects of providing care for the Marine casualties during that siege was the need to move the wounded, after they had been stabilized and treated from the

Charlie Med bunkers out to the helipad where they could be medivaced. The helicopters were always magnets for additional incoming and many of the corpsman and physicians who were wounded at Charlie Med sustained their wounds while loading and unloading choppers.

On page twelve of your Spring issue, there is a remarkable (to me) article about PFC Spicer written by Earl Clark. Jonathon Spicer was indeed a conscientious objector and was indeed assigned to me at Charlie Med. He was a very brave young man and as Earl Clark points out, he was severely wounded while moving wounded Marines to a helicopter. The corpsmen brought him back into our bunker and Don Magilligan (the same Donald J. Magilligan, Jr. mentioned on page five of your Spring issue) and I operated on Private Jonathon Spicer, repaired the hole in his heart, stabilized him and put him on the next available helicopter out of Khe Sanh. I never knew what happened to him until I saw his name on the Vietnam wall a few years ago. I was fascinated to learn from Earl Clark's article that he apparently made it to Japan but died of an infection. I do not have any verification of this but like Earl Clark, I am deeply saddened to learn that information.

PFC Jonathon Spicer was very special to all of us at Charlie Med. Even though he refused to bear arms, he was nonetheless a true hero. He constantly ran out under enemy fire to move Marine casualties with no regard whatsoever for his own personal safety. When he took a piece of shrapnel in the heart, it seemed for a little while as though all of us had been wounded. Don Magilligan and I were overjoyed when we were able to repair that heart wound and send him on his way and prayed fervently that he would survive. It was not to be.

After leaving Vietnam in September of 1968, I spent approximately thirty "quiet" years practicing surgery in the greater Philadelphia area. Aside from a close personal friendship with Ed Feldman, it seemed that there was very little other discussion about Vietnam or Khe Sanh in particular. About a year ago, things began to change. I discovered that LaSalle University here in Philadelphia has a very special Vietnam collection, which contains many volumes of poetry, books, movies, scripts and artwork all describing personal recollections of Vietnam. It is a fascinating collection, which I recommend to anyone who can get to see it.

I also became aware of the fact that there were three or four men in my age group who work in my

health system who were all Vietnam vets and we now get together three or four times a year to have a beer and reminisce.

LaSalle University actually has a senior honors course devoted to discussions of Vietnam and I have been privileged to sit in on a small portion of that. It amazes me how senior college students who average about twenty-one years of age are so vitally interested in what happened in that tiny country thirty years ago. I believe that the process of vindication for all of our Vietnam veterans is happening as we speak.

The appearance of the remembrance of Don Magilligan and the article by Earl Clark on PFC Jonathon Spicer in the same issue of the Khe Sanh Veterans' Red Clay has evoked an energy that I think has been dormant for many, many years. I have started writing the history of Charlie Med in Khe Sanh. I know nothing of military strategy and less about combat statistics. I do know that the physicians and surgeons of Charlie Med cared for nearly three thousand casualties during that siege. I think it is time that their story is told.

James O. Finnegan, M.D.
516 College Avenue
Haverford, Pennsylvania 19041
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Dear Editor,

In June 2000, Sons and Daughters In Touch celebrated its 10th anniversary as the nation's first organization formed to locate, unite and assist the children of fallen American servicemen. In the 1960s and 70s, an estimated 20,000 children lost their fathers in the Vietnam War. Today, SDIT has grown to have active members in every state, it reaches new members every day, it has an all-volunteer staff, and it has forged a lasting emotional bond with America's Veterans.

In 1990, SDIT was formed by the grown-children of two American servicemen lost in the war in Southeast Asia. In uniting these sons and daughters, SDIT was committed to honoring the legacies of their fathers; teaching the public about the true cost of war and providing educational assistance to its members. SDIT has given the United States a shining example of the resilience that this generation of young Americans offers.

SDIT celebrated its 10th anniversary by holding a four-day National Father's Day convention in Washington, DC. More than 1000 sons and daugh-

ters attended, along with an equal number of supportive military veterans. Throughout the weekend, themes of honor, respect, education and optimism were spread among attendees. In keeping with tradition, the convention culminated with the highly visible SDIT Father's Day ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Capitol Mall. Should you have questions please me at 858-271-6312. Your time, attention and consideration are greatly appreciated.

Patricia Lee
Member SDIT Board of Directors
Daughter of SFC D.C. Totty
B/1/26th KIA 31 Mar '67
PO Box 1596 Arlington, Virginia 22210
Ph: (800) 984-9994
SDIT Website: <http://www.SDIT.org>

From Charles Kelley

I was contacted by Paul Knight a few months ago before he made his return trip with fellow Marines to Khe Sanh. I finally met him and the others at their hotel lobby in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) during July. Paul asked me if I could write up a short introduction about what I've been doing over here.

Like some of you, I started having a strong desire to return to Vietnam and stand on the same ground where the war existed many years ago (I was a Seabee). I came back over two years ago and after I updated some of my personal memories and sorted things out as best I could, I decided I wanted to do something for the kids in need over here. After a lot of thinking, planning, and effort SEACAP (S.E. Asian Children's Assistance Project) was born. SEACAP was registered in the State of Washington as a non-profit corporation in April, 1999. We are also an IRS, tax-exempt 501 (c)(3) organization. If any of you have access to the Internet you can view our website at www.seacap.org

I spend most of my time here in Vietnam with a few folks holding down the fort back in Ellensburg, WA. We have several Vietnamese volunteers helping out here; I couldn't do it without their big-hearted assistance.

Our main project is near Can Gio, just across the bay, to the west from Vung Tau. We are taking care of all the basic needs of over 65 poor kids there, over 20 are orphans. These kids come from very poor and isolated homes out in the mangrove swamps in this tidal marsh area. The kids spend weeks at a time at

the shelter because it is too difficult and time consuming to get them home on a regular basis. We've been helping these kids since September, 1999. They are very respectful and actually bow to older visitors (you would be hard-pressed to find that in the U.S.). They're good kids and we are doing our best to give them a helping hand to succeed in life.

They all work together like a big family, several are brothers and sisters from the same family. Because they spend so much time together—even if they are not related—they tend to teach and help the younger ones whenever there's a need.

We have several other projects going. If any of you would like to help us out financially or if you are coming back to Vietnam for your first time, here is the contact information:

Contributions can be sent to:

SEACAP

503 N. Sampson Street

Ellensburg, WA 98926

www.seacap.org

Mailing address in Vietnam:

Dennis Koselke, president

68/14 Huynh Thuc Khang St.

District 1

Ho Chi Minh City

Vietnam

Lam Hoang Thi Oanh, Vietnam Coordinator

Same office address as above

E-mail address:

dkoselke@hotmail.com

SEACAP News and Updates

Sometimes we can make a very big difference in someone's life for a small amount of money. Here's Oanh's report:

Thanh (our volunteer SEACAP Project Manager) and her group of volunteer university students have started a new project to assist older children, 14 years and above, with vocational training and other supplemental needs. The volunteers (some with a solid background of social work) will approach street children in the evenings with advice and assistance. These young people will be given directions to first-aid stations, free hospital care, contacts for safe shelter and protection when needed and many other basic needs. The primary goal is to find young people who are genuinely striving for a better life and

are stuck in a cycle of poverty and sometimes a dangerous life on the street.

After years of social work and teaching experience, Ms. Thanh is very good at interviewing these young people to determine their most important and pressing needs, and their particular circumstances (how they came to be in a difficult situation). Thanh is also skilled at understanding the attitude and intent of the young person in need and their determination to work for a better life, and follows up on their progress.

Here is an example of how this program works. Two sisters, aged 14 and 17 were struggling to go to school and also work part-time. They had virtually nothing. They were selling lottery tickets on the streets (a very common practice here to make a little money, it is considered respectable compared to some alternatives). They had no transportation in this city of millions. One of the girls said "she did not even dare to dream of a bicycle." When Thanh was able to present them with a new bicycle she must have looked like an angel as she handed the "miracle gift" to them. The poor girls were shaken by emotion when they first touched the bicycle. And you know how much it cost SEACAP? About US\$22.

We will keep track of their school records and as they make progress we will be helping them more, especially for this coming school year—starting in September. SEACAP will not cover full expenses, they will have to work to earn their way—but we will cover what they cannot afford. It is our policy to help the young people to achieve independence without them knowing too much about our "safety net" in the background.

Others are being helped by this new project; the two sisters are only the beginning. Ms. Thanh has also assisted a young lady in a similar situation with a good, used sewing machine that allows the girl to earn extra money by doing part-time sewing and tailoring work. Additionally, Ms. Thanh has found a very inexpensive room for five young men (older boys) all about 17 years old (the older kids about 14 years old and up tend to "fall through the cracks" of the charitable support systems, because they are no longer cute little kids and are transitioning into adulthood.) These five teenagers are working hard with their studies and vocational training. They are close to making it on their own, but they had need of a safe place to live. The room costs 300,000 VN Dong, about US\$22 per month. They sleep on mats on the floor, cook in their room, and share bathroom

facilities with a few other families. But they are safe and are progressing toward living independently and becoming contributors to their society. More about them later.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the last week or two the older sister (of the two who received the bicycle) applied for and was interviewed for a job at a well known local hotel. She was accepted for the position. This was a major step forward—we were all very pleased to hear about her successful transition to a “regular” job. It is exciting to have such a positive impact on the lives of these young people—for so little money. Thanks for this report, Oanh.

Update on Thao's Progress:

Many of you are aware of little Thao's story. During October of last year, about ten months ago, he was found near Can Gio close to death and had lost both his parents. Ms. Thanh and Ms. Oanh intervened and brought him up to a hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. Since that time he had had several ups and downs in his short life. He was placed in a government boarding school and had recurring severe health problems. I will only say that it was extremely difficult for him and many days he would have preferred not to live any longer.

I am happy to report that he has been out of that “school” thanks to the diligent efforts of Ms. Thanh and others. He is living with his new foster family, Mr. Xe and Mrs. Nam. They have one child of their own, a daughter, and are proving to be just what Thao needed. They love him, have nursed him back to health and Mrs. Nam's renowned cooking is putting some weight on his young bones. I saw him a few days ago at their little home. You can see life in his face now, a little sparkle in his eyes, and a shy smile. In the recent past—during his severe ordeal of losing both parents, and nearly dying on more than one occasion—he had a “thousand-mile stare.” He had a blank, hopeless, and lifeless look, as if he were just waiting to die and be released from the emotional and physical pain of life. NOW he is alive and thriving! What a change! His hair is even beginning to grow out and his skin disease is nearly cleared up. He is making excellent progress with the love and care of his new family. A BIG THANKS to all of you who have shown an interest in this boy's life and progress.

Handicapped Swimming

by Joseph Olszewski,
Golf, 2/26 Third Platoon Commander

Being a below-the-knee amputee is generally not a serious mobility problem. I've written previous articles about playing handball, running 10Ks and going on hikes. However, there's one sport where being a leg amputee is a problem, swimming. While you can have a prosthesis with a fin attachment made for swimming, they are expensive (typical below-the-knee prosthesis will cost between \$2,500 to \$5,000) and I don't believe Uncle Sam will pay for one for veterans. When you swim without a prosthesis and with just your stump, it's similar to rowing a boat with one oar and not switching the oar to either side of the boat. In other words, you start to drift to the side of the amputation. In my case, my left foot was amputated and, therefore, as I swim I start drifting to my left. In open water this is not a major problem. Where it is a problem is in swimming pools, particularly those you find in health clubs with those floating lane dividers. When I swim in one of those I can never make it from one end of the pool to the other without hitting one of those dividers or turning over and swimming on my back to compensate for the drift. It's a great sight for bystanders to see me flipping from my stomach to my back and zigzagging my way through a swimming lane. Once in Hawaii, I swam the Maui surf late at night so nobody would see me taking off my prosthesis and jumping into the surf. The problem with swimming in Hawaii is that the surf and undercurrents are so strong that it's difficult to stay in open water. The surf just tosses you back on the beach and, in my case, it's hard to stand up on one leg and get out of the water. The few times I've tried this I had my wife holding my prosthesis and running up and down the beach to meet me when I run out of water to swim in. This is another great scene to watch and I'm telling you only a great wife like mine would put up with this.

Cedar Point Foundation

The Cedar Point Foundation was established for the funding and provision of medical, educational and other humanitarian assistance to the Bru Montagnard tribesmen of Vietnam.

Our objectives are to provide medical assistance, agricultural aid and improvements on educational facilities and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

The Cedar Point Foundation raises funds by various means including grants, foundation and individual support and periodic fund-raising activities.

Donations can be sent to:

Cedar Point Foundation

2 Cedar Point Rd.

Durham, New Hampshire 03824

The Cedar Point Foundation continues to provide the Bru with assistance as we have in the past; improving water production, increasing farming efficiency, expanding educational programs and continuing to work with the Huong Hoa Health Center.

In January, I contacted by email a Vietnamese man named Doan Quang Hien, who lived in Saigon and had contacts with the security police. It was at this time that he suggested that we send him and his friend, Nguyen Van Hoai, whose father was connected with the Quang Tri Province government, up to Dong Ha during the Tet holiday to present some gifts and make clear our plans for our upcoming trip. Hien emailed me an itinerary which we approved and he was given the go ahead to begin negotiations on our plans.

Within a month I had received my visa approval number and a tentative okay to prepare to make the trip. Reservations were made on Korean Airlines and letters were sent out to members on our mailing list requesting donations. One week before we departed, Cedar Point sent me a check for \$6,000 USD. This was the usable amount that we had collected since trip number 8 in 1999.

David "Bulldog" Smith and I departed JFK International Airport, New York, New York on 14 March 2000 aboard Korean Airlines to Seoul, Korea. The Boeing 747-400 was only half full so we had 3 seats each to stretch out on for the long 16-hour flight. In Seoul there was a 2-hour layover before our flight to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam. This leg of the journey was on an Airbus A320, which took a little over 5 hours.

We arrived at Saigon's Tan San Nhut Airport at 11:45 PM. Over the past few years the Vietnamese have been continuing to improve this airport. On this trip the big change was that there are now jetways to serve the international flights. Gone are the days of deplaning the aircraft, getting on buses and then getting off the bus after a one minute trip. The terminal building is now air-conditioned and there is a new security checkpoint that will be opening shortly. Our friend Nguyen Van Loi met us outside the

terminal building and we were soon on our way to Mogambo's, a mini hotel operated by Lani and Mike Ahlmark, at 20 Thi Sach, in District On the 20th of March David "Bulldog" Smith and I flew on Vietnam Airlines from Saigon to the Hue/Phu Bai airport. Our Fokker 70 was one of two owned and operated by the airlines. The twin-engine jet aircraft was full for the flight, which lasted one hour and twenty minutes. We were met at the terminal entrance by Doan Kim Cuong, who was to be our driver for the next six days. In Saigon we had called Hue and contracted to rent a van from the same company that we used last year, ATC. From the airport at Phu Bai we drove past the old FOB-1 compound and drove to Dong Ha in Quang Tri Province. The trip took two and a half hours traveling up Highway One. We departed Dong Ha early in the morning and headed west on Highway 9.

Construction on the new and improved road is completed on the Eastern part of the road. From Dong Ha to Cam Lo the road is almost 4 lanes wide. From Cam Lo to Khe Sanh the road narrows to 2 lanes. Shoulder work is still being improved however all the bridges and curve straightening has been completed. The stretch from Khe Sanh to Lang Vei has not been worked on lately. The rest of the road from Lang Vei to the border post of Lao Bao was unobserved, as the area is closed to foreigners.

We arrived in Khe Sanh approximately 12 noon on Tuesday, March 21, 2000 from Dong Ha. A construction boom was continuing with new buildings going up throughout the town. A very large cultural building had just been completed and a new district headquarters building was in the middle of being constructed. Most if not all of the work were government buildings.

There is only one place to stay over night in Khe Sanh now and that is the government guesthouse that has been there since our earliest trip in 1992. There are nine rooms that have ceiling fans. The rooms are small but adequate. After checking in, Hien called the People's Committee for Huong Hoa District to set up a meeting for us. We were asked to come over to the office where we met with Secretary Thanh of the People's Committee for Huong Hoa District (Khe Sanh). We outlined our proposal after which he agreed to set up a meeting on Wednesday with the People's Committee of Huong Hoa's Vice Chairman, Nguyen Thi Ninh.

Wednesday's 9 AM meeting was attended by Nguyen Thi Ninh, Vice Chairman of the People's

Committee of Huong Hoa; Vo Thanh, Deputy Chief of Office of the People's Committee; Phan Trong Dai, Vice Chairman of the People's Committee for Tan Lien village; Ho Vi, Assistant Leader for the Bru community of Thon Cheng. In addition, Doan Quang Hien, Coordinator for this trip, Nguyen Van Hoai, son of influential government official in Quang Tri Province; Nguyen Van Loi, volunteer assistant; David "Bulldog" Smith and Bob Donoghue.

Presented during this meeting was our proposal to provide the following financial assistance to the Bru community of Thon Cheng and the Huong Hoa Health Center: \$1,000 USD for coffee tree seedlings; \$1,000 USD for hospital equipment (10 blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, and a microscope); \$3,000 USD for house repairs Thon Cheng; \$350 USD for school equipment; \$60 USD for volleyball equipment and 10 uniforms; \$25 USD for school supplies (paper, pens).

Madam Chairman Ninh accepted our assistance. We also presented two sets of blood pressure cuffs designed especially for children along with a stethoscope with each kit. We discussed getting approval and how best to carry out these trips.

During our discussion for continuing our assistance to the Bru, Madam Chairman Ninh stated that there were 14 Bru communities within Huong Hoa District and that they all were in need of various types of assistance. She also felt that if only we assisted Thon Cheng there would develop bad feelings within the different communities, as their standard of living would rise while others stayed stagnant. We agreed with her and pointed out that we were trying hard to increase our fund raising efforts and that with the Committee's guidance we would gladly help any community that need our help. We also pointed out that if the district gives us a "Request for Assistance" that it would help with obtaining visas and getting supplies and equipment through customs. She agreed to work with the province in trying to obtain that document for us.

Xa Lun

In the Bru community of Thon Cheng lives Ho Xa Lun. She is the 16-year-old daughter of Ho Tu, who was my interpreter/squad leader at Khe Sanh in 1968. It was during our 1996 trip that it was brought to our attention that she was having medical problems. She was complaining of dizziness, headaches, and ear problems. Robert Shippen and Bruce Johnston, both ex-Special Forces medics, examined her in '96 but without proper equipment

they could not make a proper diagnosis. Now, four years later she is still having the same problems. Last year after only a few months of being married her husband returned her to her family because he didn't want a sick wife on his hands. This brought dishonor to their family. To have her properly examined she needs to travel to Hue where there is a large hospital with all the necessary equipment to examine her. The cost for her and her father to travel by bus to Hue stay in Hue for a week, and the week long stay at the hospital while they conduct all the tests is expected to cost up to \$1,000 USD. It has been decided to fund this with leftover money from trip number 8 and hope that we can put some closure to the episode.

During a lull in our meetings with the government officials we decided to visit the old site of the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei (A-101). On the South side of Highway 9, about 5 kilometers from Khe Sanh, The Vietnamese have recently added a small monument there that has a PT-76 tank located on the top. Most of the site is now covered with banana trees. While taking pictures of the tank, three Bru children approached us on their bicycles. They told us that they lived in the Bru community of Lang Vei and that their families were living there in 1968, relocated to Cua valley (Mai Loc) by Special Forces during the siege, and then resettled back to Lang Vei after the war. This is one of the 14 communities that we have been asked to help.

The old Khe Sanh Combat Base has had a few changes since we last visited there. A new monument has replaced the frequently vandalized old one. A small building now houses a little museum, which has pictures on the walls and two small piles of weapons on the floor. Outside there are several beat up pieces of military equipment. An M-48 tank, 155 MM howitzer and the propeller from a C-130.

Cedar Point Foundation was contacted by Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Dennis Thompson, (1968 Lang Vei) POW 61 months, to see if we would be able to assist him in his desire to return to Lang Vei and visit the POW sites where he was held.. Charles Berg contacted Jim Hetrick (MSG-SOG OP 35 & 34) (1966 to 1972) for his return visit to Khe Sanh also.

CSM Thompson was returned to US Army control with the other POWs and after the necessary medical processing set about to restart his military career. He attended college to get his degree and then went back into the military school system to "catch up" and

after all the standard schools, attended US Army Ranger School and was the first former POW to attend and complete the school. After his completion and attendance at the Sergeant Majors Academy he was assigned to 2nd BN, 75th Ranger Regiment and became 1st SGT HHC, then, CSM before retiring. Dennis spent many long nights on the email discussing his return trip with both Charles Berg and Jim Hetrick.

The trip started in Saigon and went to Hanoi and visited the "Hanoi Hilton" and the "Plantation" and a full day trip to locate the camp at Dao Tru (Farnsworth) (D-1). The lodging arrangements were made via a friend in California and they stayed at the Hanoi Towers (\$350.00 per night) and it was like a bit of America. Incidentally, the luxury facilities are located on the old grounds of the "Hanoi Hilton" and a bit of the old POW compound remains as a museum. Dennis Thompson and Jim Hetrick were clearly grateful, for the assistance of Cedar Point Foundation for the logistical coordination.

Everyone returned to the village of Khe Sanh and Lang Vei for the emotional returning to the site of his point of capture by CSM Thompson. Jim Hetrick's last trip to Khe Sanh was in 1968 and everyone was amazed at the physical, social and cultural changes in the area. Charles Berg reported that the return trip was as fulfilling as the initial trip with Cedar Point Foundation, and felt that this was a unique opportunity for CPF to provide assistance to a fellow warrior that experienced the trauma of Khe Sanh and Lang Vie.

We rose early on Friday and packed our bags and loaded the van in preparation for our departure from Khe Sanh. In the Guest House office we paid our lodging bill and our passports were returned to us. At 08:00AM we arrived at the People's Committee building to inform them that we were leaving and to leave word with Madam Chairman Ninh that we would call her from Saigon referencing our contract paperwork. Our last stop before heading down Highway 9 was to say goodbye to Miss Mai, the lady that had lost her legs in 1968. We gave her \$100 and told her to continue to help the Bru who stop at her shop but might be a little short of cash. She promised to provide assistance this she can and to write Loi in Saigon regularly to keep him informed. With that task done we all got in the van and headed east, to Dong Ha. We arrived in Dong Ha about an hour and a half after leaving Khe Sanh. After we dropped Hoai off at his parent's house, the

driver gassed up the van for our 2-hour plus drive to the Imperial City of Hue.

Immediately upon returning to Saigon we set up a meeting with PACCOM and also contacted the US Embassy to inform them of our progress. Charles Ray, the Consul General in Saigon was out of the country so we emailed a report to Hanoi and agreed to send copies of the trip report to those whom we are in contact with.

On Monday afternoon we had a meeting with the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM). Their Project Coordinator at the Saigon office is Mai Phuc Tien. Tien had accompanied us on our 1998 trip to Khe Sanh to inspect our projects and assist in obtaining NGO status.

The next day we meet with Hien again to outline our goals for the next trip and to try and clear up some of the barriers that we kept running into with the security police. In addition we had a critique of the trip and reviewed every detail to see where we could improve our performance for later trips.

The final task that had to be done before leaving Vietnam was to deliver a package to a family in Nha Trang, whose son lives in Springfield, Massachusetts. In addition, since Dennis Thompson, Jim Hetrick and Charles Berg would be returning to Nha Trang from their trip to Kontum, we all decided to meet again. Loi and I took Vietnam Airlines, on the afternoon of Thursday, March 30th. The ATR 72 turbo-prop was one of 6 owned by the airline. The flight from Saigon to Nha Trang took about an hour. After landing and collecting our bags we headed over to the Sailing Club at 72-74 Tran Phu where we met with Charles and the others.

On Sunday afternoon, David "Bulldog" Smith, Charles Berg, and I decided that we would spend the afternoon in Charles' hotel room at the Saigon Hotel working on part of this trip report. During this work period there was a knock on the door, which Charles answered. It was the maid that was assigned to Charley's room. She was frantic as she tried to explain in broken English and Vietnamese that she had lost some of Charley's laundry. She explained that she had searched the entire floor of the hotel and the laundry room looking for the lost clothing items. She continued to explain that she had lost or misplaced one of Charley's socks. It was at this time that Charles explained that since he only has one leg that he would only have one sock. The maid looked down at Charley's leg and then a sign of relief swept across her face. David and I were laughing so hard

we had to sit down.

This trip was a lot more rewarding than last year's. For one, the Vietnamese government, especially in Khe Sanh, seemed a lot more appreciative of our assistance. That made it easier to sit through numerous meetings and lengthy negotiations. Being able to assist Dennis Thompson and Jim Hetrick return to Vietnam for the first time since the war and to share their adventurous experience with them was priceless.

Cedar Point's Vietnamese contacts are continuing to work with the People's Committee of Huong Hoa District and Quang Tri Province to get a 3 year contract signed that would allow us easier access into the 14 Bru communities and government approval to continue with our projects. Fund raising for this phase has already begun. In addition, Cedar Point has put into place a plan to obtain a large shipping container that will be filled with medical equipment and supplies in Detroit and shipped from the West Coast to Da Nang harbor in Vietnam. The ocean-going transportation is being paid for by an NGO in Hanoi called Counterparts.

Bob Donoghue, FOB-3
June 2000

The Truth

by Steve Riddle, Scout/Snipers 1/26

Years have passed

Elation and adrenaline have ebbed

Once again sitting quietly in the darkness

Only now, sipping scotch

Still absorbing the night

rejoicing in my solitude

The Big Dipper stationed overhead

Thank you God

for not making those jungle boots

*be mine hanging from that poncho
in "68"...*

A letter from Talis to Ray Stubbe written in 1993

Dear Ray,

A short letter to cover the enclosed writing I am sending you. For a long, long time, it has been within me, unable to put down in words the images that are its background. I have talked to "Charlie" quite a bit over the years. Some of it I know comes from a guilt trip but part of it, too, I feel comes from what it all represents. It was the end of an era for me, and the beginning of another age. One in which I would struggle just as hard to sort out all the confusion and questions. It is awfully easy to say I saw death, or, I experienced the violence of it. To proclaim that one is a veteran of war. To be knowledgeable of the whims of battle. But, too often many of us let it end there. We hide behind the pain and anger of it. Not willing to take that one anguish filled giant step that will begin the very slow ascent into not just being veterans of it, but being veterans of what it means to us; our comrades; our whole way of life. We are scared, and deservedly so, of the process of transfusion from that old to our new selves. Unresolved conflicts, personal in nature, litter the domain of our inner beings. To reach them, we must sort through so much "clutter"—much of it that we wish better left undisturbed. Disturbing them disturbs us. Causing much mental turmoil in the process. We are forced to relive much that we thought we had left behind. Unfortunately, many times it is the down side and not the upside that is remembered.

The overwhelming nature of war is thus. Even the happy times with a lost comrade, are translated into sadness. His passing seems to have cast a pall of gray over all that is related to him. And yet, it should not be so. This is the clutter, the mayhem, the relegated trash that must be sorted through. The good times were good. The happy times were happy. The laughter genuine and real. A treasure of sharing and bonding. We must not let the loss offset or overburden that. We cannot surrender to war's circumstances the true memories and experiences of it. They are buried; buried deep and buried strong. We have a fear that somehow if we consider what happens good, then we are letting those who did not come back, down. But those of us who came back, we must force ourselves to suffer a little more. Overcome the hurdle, take the initiative to start a new push. Learn and grow from the tears of the heart. No greater pain is there, than the pain of the soul. No greater love is there, than the love from that pain. The bonds of

war are like a marriage—"till death do us part." And many times that is the way of those who do battle. But parting should not mean separation. Physically the loss is there, but in the mind, there is so much new source of inspiration, that separation need never occur. Most of those who I saw in their final stillness, I never knew, nor ever will I. Most were not combatants, but civilians whose presence in a war zone was the only reason that that was their home. Age, sex, religion, meant very little. The NVA and Viet Cong occupy the same niche in my being that Marines do. War's effects bring great equality to all those that suffer. This past weekend I watched a special on the Beirut bombing that caused a cynical smile to cross my being. The act of driving a truck loaded with 8 tons of TNT into the Marine Barracks was continually referred to as a terrorist act. My mind went back to the continual bombing from high altitudes by B-52's in and around Khe Sanh. Perception and so-called patriotism, provide how you perceive each action. To me there is no difference. Whether 241 Marines died, or 8000 Bru, they died needlessly. Victims of indifference on the part of those who could make a difference. And that is a role I see for a lot of us who have survived war. If we look to the real meaning war has left within us, are willing to endure the pain to let others know, then all of us can make some minute difference. Over the course of generations, the minuteness might grow, so that one day it will overwhelm those who have not learned, and refuse to learn, and the world will live in peace.

I should have known better when I sat down just to add a few personal notes to the enclosed writings. The mind is unpredictable, and sometimes just doesn't know when to stop. Thanks for letting me unload on you. I do not mean to cause you any pain by it. The world of thought can be a very lonely world at times, and it helps when there is someone who it can be shared with. Makes the endurance a mite easier.

Talis Kaminskis

First Cavalry Troopers Steal Flag from Khe Sanh

Thomas 1. Harnisher US Army, B CO 229th AHB
1st CAV & C Troop 1st CAV
29 West 17th Road
Broad Channel, NY 11693
t.harnisher@excite.com

I remember the first time I landed at Khe Sanh during the siege. I contacted the Tower (actually a man with a radio in a hole in the ground) and received clearance to land and refuel. As we started to refuel the enemy started walking mortars towards us. I started to depart, calling the tower and got the reply, "YES, EVERYTIME ONE OF YOU ASS-HOLES FLIES IN HERE, THEY START SHELLING US."

I replied, "You could've said something else, THIS IS MY FIRST TIME HERE."

B Company of the 229th AHB 1st CAV Division (Killer Spade) had been tasked to supply helicopter support to Special Forces (actually SOG) at Khe Sanh. The mission required two lift ships, one to do the mission and the second to rescue the first. Two gun ships would supply close gun cover during the missions. These were usually from D Company/229th (Smiling Tigers) but were sometimes from other units. The missions were usually to insert and/or extract six man teams into and out of Laos.

Shortly after the Khe Sanh Combat Base had been

vacated, I arrived at the relocated Special Forces camp for a SOG Mission. A Special Forces captain informed me that the scheduled mission was canceled but that the NVA were flying their flag off the main flag pole at the former Khe Sanh Combat Base and then added, "What do *you* think of that?" Naturally, we would task ourselves with a new, self-appointed mission to "capture the flag." I was happy to be flying this day with a good pilot, Mike LaPierre. He was a new pilot and as he was flying enroute I would roll up the chart and hit him about the head to simulate stress. In the chase ship was another new pilot, Bob Hicks, who later became the unit safety officer. For some reason, we seemed to always have a high turnover rate for these missions.

Our gun team was Two Cobra A1-1G attack helicopters from the Smiling Tigers. As we approached Khe Sanh we could see the NVA flag. The gun ships started firing rockets, then 40 mm grenades hoping to destroy or detonate any booby traps. Unexploded ordnance could be seen lying on the ground. As we came closer, we started to orbit around the flag with



Second from left, CW2 Thomas J. Harnisher (Air Mission Commnader); third from left, CW1 Bob Hicks, pilot of 2nd helicpoter; lower right, CW1 Mike LePierre, pilot of lead helicopter

our door gunners spraying the area with M-60 and the Cobras spraying miniguns. Just as I was about to nuke my move for the flag, My wing man broke the orbit first and hovered next to the flag. One of his door gunners reached out and wrapping the flag around his arm, pulled the flag from the pole with a sharp tug. I immediately thought of "trip wire." I pulled in full power trying to put some distance between us and the upcoming explosion. No explosion came and we made it back to the Special Forces Camp with our Prize.

I am very proud to have flown into and out of Khe Sanh during the siege and to have helped in some way the many brave individuals who gave so much in the service of our country.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Sunday, 21 January, 1968

6:30 AM

South Vietnam

Enemy contacts in the Khe Sanh area, 58 miles west of Hue, have increased and the intensity of the fighting appears to be increasing. US Marines engaged an enemy force near Hill 881, seven miles northwest of Khe Sanh and Marine reaction forces; moving toward the area of contact, engaged another enemy force. There was intermittent fighting for about four hours. The Marines killed 103 of the enemy while losing one Marine killed and 22 wounded.

In another sector of Khe Sanh, a US Army Special Forces patrol observed 30 to 35 enemy in a stream and called for artillery fire which resulted, in 10 enemy killed.

Yesterday a Popular Force platoon made contact with an estimated 200 enemy employing small arms and automatic weapons fire about 40 miles north-northwest of Hue. The Popular Forces were reinforced by an ARVN battalion and US Marines in amphibious tractors. Friendly casualties were five killed (2 Marines and 3 ARVN) and 28 wounded (17 Marines and 11 ARVN). The enemy lost 123 killed.

In Operation Saratoga, 18 miles north-northwest of Saigon, a US Army battalion received small arms, automatic rifle and rocket fire from an enemy force. Artillery and armed helicopters supported the friendly force and the enemy broke contact. Eight US were killed and 15 wounded. Enemy losses are unknown.

In Operation Mac Arthur, nine miles west of Dak

To, two US Army companies made contact with an enemy force using recoilless rifle and mortar fire. Friendly forces were supported by artillery and tactical air strikes. Twenty-one of the enemy were killed and 26 US Army personnel were wounded.

North Vietnam

US Tactical aircraft flew 123 sorties over North Vietnam yesterday. Due to poor weather in the target areas, the strikes of special interest scheduled for last night were cancelled:

One US Air Force F-4C on an armed reconnaissance mission was downed by suspected ground fire approximately 15 miles north-northwest of Dong Ho. No chutes were sighted but search and rescue is in progress.

A US Marine A4E aircraft was downed by ground fire near Khe Sanh while flying close air support. The pilot has been picked up and is reported in good condition.

White House Situation Room

Charles E. Hayden

Briefing Officer

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Monday, January 22, 1968

6:30 AM

South Vietnam

Sharp fighting broke out near both ends of the DMZ over the weekend, with the heaviest action taking place around Khe Sanh.

On Saturday a US Marine rifle company in a defensive position on Hill 861 near Khe Sanh came under attack by an estimated 300-man enemy force. The enemy attack was repulsed, but sporadic enemy fire continued for about 12 hours. Fourteen enemy were killed during this action.

At about the same time the Khe Sanh combat base received a mortar attack. Enemy mortar fire continued for about seven hours. The ammunition dump was hit, but the extent of damage is presently not known. The airstrip was also cratered and one helicopter was destroyed and five others received damage. Repair of the airstrip is underway and at least 2000 feet is serviceable.

Then early yesterday morning the enemy began probing the perimeter wire defenses to the south and west of the Khe Sanh airstrip. A Marine rifle company in a defensive position in the area repulsed the attack, killing 14 of the enemy. Marine losses for

these actions were 14 killed and 43 wounded.

US Marine aircraft flew 211 sorties in support of the base, accounting for 104 enemy killed.

We have just received a cable from Gen. Westmoreland giving his assessment of the situation at Khe Sanh and the actions he is taking to meet the enemy threat—cable attached.

On Saturday morning, a South Vietnamese sub sector headquarters seven miles southwest of Khe Sanh came under an enemy ground attack. During the attack 12 ARVN were killed and 25 wounded. The enemy lost 92 killed in this battle.

North Vietnam

US pilots flew 175 sorties over North Vietnam yesterday but poor weather hampered operations. No major targets were struck nor were any aircraft lost.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tuesday, January 23, 1968
6:30 AM

South Vietnam

US Marines in the Khe Sanh area continue to receive sporadic artillery, mortar and rocket fire from the enemy as the ground action has diminished. As a result of the fire, five marines were wounded.

Civilians are being evacuated from the village of Khe Sanh: 412 have been air-lifted to Da Nang; 300 to the refugee center at Camp Evans, 16 miles west-northwest of Hue; and 400 to Quang Tri City.

A US Marine battalion near Con Thien received 100 rounds of mortar fire and at the same time one-mile north two Marine companies made contact with the enemy. After a brief fight the enemy withdrew leaving 3 killed. Marine casualties were 4 killed and 32 wounded.

A US Army company made contact with an enemy force 25 miles northwest of Saigon. After one hour of fighting the enemy withdrew leaving 12 dead. Two US Soldiers were wounded.

An observation post 10 miles west-northwest of Can Tho was attacked by the enemy using small arms and 82mm mortar fire. At the same time the district town of Phong Phu received 20 rounds of 82mm mortar fire. One ARVN was killed and nine were wounded.

A US Marine F-4B aircraft was shot down by ground fire near Khe Sanh. Both crew members were recovered in good condition. Also an A-4E was hit by ground fire in the same area and the pilot landed

inside the defense perimeter.

North Vietnam

Air activity over North Vietnam yesterday was limited to 148 sorties due to adverse weather. All Rolling Thunder strikes scheduled for last night were cancelled due to poor weather in the target area.

White House Situation Room

James L. Brown

Briefing Officer

The Rats of Khe Sanh

by Bob Donoghue, FOB-3

As 1968 began to unfold, SOG's Forward Operating Base #3 (FOB-3) located on the Southeastern perimeter of the Khe Sanh Combat Base, began to switch from offensive to defensive operations. As the enemy intensified their indirect fire into the base, more and more time and effort was spent digging and building extensive trench and bunker complexes. Constructed of sandbags, lumber, and aluminum pallets these semi-subterranean complexes soon became home to two kinds of rats. Two-legged fatigue-wearing men known as bunker rats and the four-legged hairy rodents known as "The Rats of Khe Sanh."

Khe Sanh's rats lived in the sandbagged bunker structures feeding off the remains of food found inside discarded C ration cans. As nighttime approached they would emerge from their nests to scurry about the area. Anyone trying to get some sleep at one time or another, had one of these critters run across their body. During this time period several people were bitten and had to undergo an extremely painful series of rabies shots.

The tide slowly turned against these rats due to the deteriorating weather conditions and the North Vietnamese Army. The only way to supply the troops with food and ammunition was by parachute drops. After several days of heavy enemy fire and lousy flying weather, the resupply drops tapered off creating a shortage of rations.

Our indigenous troops, the Bru montagnards, soon devised a plan to supplement their meager rations. First, they would take a small individual equipment net and stretch it across the bottom half of a trench. They would then have two other men start beating on the bunker sandbags with pieces of 2x4's. The rats, being startled by the banging, would scurry out of the bunker and down the trench line only to be

entangled within the net. A short time later the Bru would be heating up the water in a #10 can with pieces of C-4 explosive and throwing the captured rats into the can to cook them. These Khe Sanh rodents provided fine dining at a time when rations were limited. As the siege progressed it became harder and harder for the Bru to find these fine tasting rodents.



Photo by Bob Donoghue

While the parachute re-supply is cancelled due to the cold fog, the Bru montagnards of SOG's Hatchet Force El Dorado dine on Khe Sanh's abundant rat population

Dave "Doc" Steinberg
3rd Plt. India 3/26
Hill 881S Jan-May 1968

I enlisted in my junior year of college and joined the U.S. Navy, as my father did in WWII. I was named after his brother 1st Lt. David Steinberg USMCR, assigned to 1/13 as a spotter pilot and based off the USS Saratoga. He was high in the sky spotting for his troops all through Days 1 & 2 of the Invasion of Iwo Jima.

At the end of Day 2 he was to land on the carrier Saratoga but could not land due to a Kamikaze hit on the deck of the grand ole' lady. Instead he safely landed on the smaller carrier the USS Bismark Sea. The planes were quickly taken below still fueled and armed, to make way for additional craft off the burning Saratoga.

My Uncle David Steinberg was lost that day as the Bismark Sea took a direct Kamikaze hit mid-ship and sunk with many souls aboard. His remains lost at

sea. His name-sake joined the Navy and ended-up on another Hill, this one called 881S. I survived the entire siege with him looking down from the heavens, which it seemed sometime those of us on that 3,000 foot high hill could just reach out and touch.

And by the way, the brave weapons platoon assigned to 3/26 on Hill 881S, manning the 3 105's and the mortars, were from 1/13, the same unit my Uncle Dave served with so many years before.

Charles Kelley

2nd Bn 94th Arty

The 2nd Battalion 94th Artillery arrived in Vietnam on 18 October 1966 and was under operational control of the Third Marine Amphibious Group. The 2/94th provided artillery support for the Third Marine Operations from Laos to the South China Sea.

Article from USARV-IO: Camp J.J. Carroll, U.S. Marines are fighting three North Vietnamese Army (NVA) divisions in Quang Tri Province with the aid of the Army's 175mm guns.

This camp, just six miles from the demilitarized zone (DMZ), is the base for the big guns of the 2nd Battalion 94th Artillery. Since the battalion fired the first rounds on Oct. 21, 1966, over 70,000 projectiles have been fired.

The artillery unit is the only Army unit of its type supporting the Marines. All fire missions in the area go through the 3rd Marine Division.

The battalion including Operations Hastings and Prairie and the recent fighting in the DMZ has supported ten Marine operations.

The 175's move around the province so that their 22 mile range can support the Marines, Special Forces, or the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) as they are needed.

Batteries have gone to Con Thien and Gio Linh to fire deeper into North Vietnam.

The big guns have fired across the DMZ since February 22. The targets are given by forward observers in Bird Dog spotter planes flown by Army, Marine, or Air Force pilots and by ground combat forward air controllers assigned to the line companies. Targets have been SAM missile sites, anti-aircraft emplacements, staging and assembly areas of troops, and convoys.

Information Office, US Army Vietnam: "U.S. Army Units in Vietnam Back the Marines with Action. The artillery men of these units along the

DMZ don't talk much about how they live in mud-filled bunkers and brave the incoming rocket and artillery rounds. They are too busy keeping the enemy busy ducking the shells and small arms fire they throw at him day after day." Actual accounts from Marines on 861A report that an undersized company of the 26th Marines (E/3/26) had not been set up long enough to have their defenses the way they wanted them to be. Early in February 1968, about 3:30 AM, two battalions of NVA regulars contested the Marines for the hill. 175mm supporting fire was called in immediately and continued until 7:00 AM. The 175mm fire support broke up the attacking Battalion and in the words of one of the Marines describing the action stated, "A bunch of pissed off young Marines took care of the rest." In addition to the attacking battalion the Marine FO then turned the fire to the reserve battalion of NVA and all but destroyed them. This combination of devastating 175mm fire support and bravery of the young Marines on 861A preserved the integrity of the hill so important to the defense of Hill 881N and Hill 881S and the Khe Sanh Combat Base. If 861 and 861A had fallen this would have left both 881 hills totally isolated.

A Marine FO from Kilo/3/26: Actual account about 861 and the 175's from Carroll is as follows: On 18 or 19 January 1968 (a day or two before the siege started) my Commanding Officer asked/ordered me to register targets in the ravines and likely approaches around 861. I registered and got target numbers from the 105's, 155's and the 8 inch guns at the base. In addition, I registered some targets on the northern slope of 861 using the 175's at Carroll. To this day, I still remember their call sign Colorado 1/9 and I never did speak directly to them because of the distance 18+ miles. My words and theirs were relayed from the base.

We got all friendlies out of the northern end of the trench line and then I registered the targets. Must have been three or four targets in all. In each case, the final rounds hit less than 50 meters outside our last strand of wire and that's when I cease fired and asked for Target Numbers. Man, those bad boys certainly crunched into the hillside less than 75 yards from my position! I knew the rounds were on the way from the "shot" and "splash" calls, but they still made my teeth rattle.

They fired in support of us again on the night of 20 or 21 January 1968 and I remember 861A using the 2/94th in that early February NVA attack. One

night in mid to late March, the NVA launched rocket after rocket into the base. These 122's were fired from behind 881N and they had to travel almost directly over 861 on their way to the base. I called Colorado 1/9 (through the relay) and gave them the grid squares of the two launch sites behind 881N. My request was that they saturate both grid squares in order to stop this huge, on-going barrage. These grid squares were 1000's of meters from us and would have been max range for the 175's but I felt that just reaching out there would cause the NVA to stop.

Less than three minutes later I was told that the first rounds were on the way. Within seconds, WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! Three or four rounds impacted less than 50 yards outside our wire! Scared the living hell out of all of us in the bunkers and the trench line. We even had a Listening Post right outside the last strands of wire, and those three guys must have shit their pants. Immediate "Check fire" on my part...one more round hit...then all was quiet.

Somehow, the 175mm people thought I had called for my target numbers to be fired, and they responded. Imagine, two and a half months after they were registered, and with no adjustments, and with cold tubes, and from over 18 miles. Those shells hit right outside our wire! A phenomenal display of shooting that I have never, ever forgotten even 32 years later. We got the Check Fire, corrected by a half a dozen grid squares, and they resumed firing. That's my memory of the big guns at Camp Carroll. I just realized that it was 32 years ago today or tomorrow that I registered those guns.

Actual accounts from Marines posted on the East Perimeter of the Khe Sanh Combat Base document a heavy ground attack that was turned with 6 rounds from the 175's on Carroll and Rockpile. Unconfirmed body count was 76. The Marines that were under the attack report smiles on their faces when they saw the 175's heavy destruction of the NVA Regulars that were trying to over run their positions.

Army perimeter defense units at Khe Sanh also report the importance of the 175mm perimeter support when needed expeditiously and were relied on heavily. "We relied heavily on the big 175mm guns at Camp Carroll and the Rockpile to lay in their fire missions at predetermined coordinates and suspected NVA positions."

Actual account of a C Battery 2/94th gunner: "We were always in a rush when we had a fire mission for

Khe Sanh. We knew that they were in a very bad spot when they called for us to help them out. That was our job, and we knew that if we were in their place that we would want the most help possible as quick as we could get it, so we always pushed ourselves to see just how fast we could get the rounds out and on the way."

Actual account of a Marine that was around Carroll and Hill 881: "I was an 0311 with 'F' 2/3 from 11/66 to 10/67. I was at Carroll from 11/66 to 3/67. My company would rotate between Carroll and the Bridge down on Highway 9, I don't know if you remember the Bridge? On Feb 28, 1967, we were involved in a battle at Cam-Lo. My squad became surrounded and we had to call for fire support from Carroll. I don't know if you were there then or you may have heard that we had to call the 175 rounds on our own position. The guys up at Carroll laid those four rounds right between us and the NVA, which was only a matter of 20 feet or so. Laying on the ground and hearing Carroll launch those 175's knowing they were coming right at us makes me numb to this day. Having those shells rip through the trees and impact right in front of us was the most amazing, scary, bone chilling experience you could imagine. I guess the NVA figured we were crazy because they broke off from us. There is no doubt in my mind that without those well placed rounds my name would be on the Wall. We depended on you guys at Carroll many times to get our butts out of a jam and you were always there."

Excerpt from the S&S Vietnam Bureau: A Marine convoy carrying supplies from Carroll to Khe Sanh was hit three miles from the Rockpile by 200 to 300 NVA Regulars. Many of the 109 communists that were killed were hit by air strikes and 175mm artillery fire.

By reports from supported troops, the NVA hated the big guns at Carroll, Rockpile, Gio Linh, Con Thien and any other places the big guns were assigned in the I Corps area. The big guns could target anti-aircraft firing on U.S. planes, fortifications, and infiltration routes in North Vietnam.

Account from a Marine that was part of the Marine contingent on Carroll during TET: "You may recall a situation where a Marine recon patrol ran into big trouble one late afternoon (March 5, I think). E/2/9 was pulled off the front of Carroll's line to go fetch the dead officer who had been left behind when the patrol was extracted out. But darkness fell before we could lift off the LZ. You guys fired all

night to keep Uncle Ho's Finest away until morning. You guys on the guns were always Johnny-on-the-spot when it came to fire support. Thank you very much."

I recall a day when my squad escorted a FAO out northwest of Cam Lo. He called in an air strike up in the DMZ and then we just cooled our heels awhile. His radioman carried 2 PRC-25s (wow!) so he could hear both sides of a conversation. Somebody who was awfully excited called in a fire mission. He really rattled it off fast. The FAO said his call sign put him in Khe Sanh. He had to say it all over again because he spoke too fast to get it all. He was asked what his target was and he said, "I got a battalion o' gooks in the open and running." When asked how far away they were, he said, "Fifty meters and closing!" It seemed like only a second before we heard guns open up and the FDC announced, "They're on their way!" Now that's service.

There was one night, though, that y'all really annoyed me. We got the word that Carroll was going to be overrun. So we were pulled back from our front line and placed in a tight perimeter along a dirt "road" directly in front of the 175s. I mean directly in front of the muzzles, about 20 feet!

Every time a gun captain would yell "Stand by!," I'd cover both ears, open my mouth wide, and lay flat on the hard-packed adobe. Then the damned thing would explode, scooting me back 6-8 inches, knocking all the wind out of me. And of course the first gasp only sucked in burnt cordite. Gag a maggot! Even my helmet, set alongside me, would tumble a foot or so. The ground was so hard it broke our E-tools trying to scratch its surface. No joy there. I must have dozed and missed a warning order because one cannon went off without my preparations. I think it popped my eardrum, 'cause I got a little blood from it. At that, I just picked up my gear, sat behind the gun, and the NVA and USMC be damned! Of course, nothing happened that night. All plans and intelligence must first be cleared through Hanoi!

The Original KA-BAR®

United States Marine Corps
World War II Fighting Knife
"An American Legend"

The U.S.M.C. Fighting Knife is famous in its own right, and has an historical background behind it

that is an exciting adventure story and is now an American Legend!

Ask some World War II Marines what kind of knife they depended on during the war and you will get only one answer: a KA-BAR! Back in 1941, after the start of World War II, KA-BAR submitted a Fighting-Utility knife to the United States Marine Corp that was accepted as the standard issue for the Corps.

KA-BAR started supplying these knives and they soon became the prized possession of every fighting Marine. They depended on it for a combat weapon and for such every day tasks as pounding tent stakes, driving nails, opening ration cans or digging foxholes their KA-BAR was constantly at their side.

During World War II, the KA-BAR Fighting Knife earned the greatest respect, not only of the Marines, but also of those who served in the Army, Navy, Coast Guard and Underwater Demolition Teams, who were eventually issued the U.S.M.C./KA-BARS.

Years later, during the Korean, Vietnam and Desert Storm conflicts, many KA-BARS were reactivated into military service, as World War II veterans, remembered how well the knife served them passed their personal KABARS along to their sons.

The dependability and quality of the wartime KA-BARS weren't the result of just a casual approach to the production of these knives. In addition to the constant quality control procedures of the U.S.M.C. Marine Corps and Navy Supply Depot inspectors, Dan Brown, then President of KA-BAR, and the entire KABAR Company was dedicated to making this knife their contribution to the war effort. As a result of this personal involvement, quality went into the knife that assured its meeting all types of tests without failing. Even tough Marine Corps and Navy tests were supplemented by additional trials, such as driving the knife deep into a 6" x 6" timber and straining the blade back and forth at extreme angles, constantly testing edge retention in cutting through all types of materials and submitting the leather handles to severe atmospheric and corrosion tests to be sure they would hold up under all conditions of cold, heat or jungle rot without loosening or decomposing. As a result, the many thousands of KA-BARS produced during World War II performed so well that the people at KA-BAR were very proud of the reports that came back from all areas of operations and the excellent reputation they had earned. World War II ended and KA-BAR Fighting Knives went out of production until 32 years later when the original

KABAR factory in Olean, New York and some of the craftsmen who worked on the original knife began production again to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the United States Marine Corps. KA-BAR wanted to recognize this great milestone in U.S.M.C. history by issuing a "full dress model" of the original KA-BAR—a limited edition that would be most meaningful to the Marines.

Throughout the production of the Commemorative a few KA-BAR senior employees proudly performed the same tasks they worked on during the years 1942 to 1945 when KA-BAR was making its contribution to the war effort. As a result the completed knives were a true "work of art," but retained the look, feel and performance of a battle ready combat knife. KA-BAR was proud to present Serial No. 1 to the Commandant of the Corps destined to be displayed in the U.S.M.C. Museum at Quantico.

The U.S.M.C. Commemorative was so enthusiastically received that it became obvious that the old KA-BAR Fighting/Utility Knife had retained its notoriety throughout the years. The limited production Commemorative was very quickly taken up by Marines, knife enthusiasts and collectors and KA-BAR knew that it should now be returned to production, in its standard issue form, with all of the original specifications. Fortunately, they were available because the original blueprints were found in the company archives. So the "fighting KA-BAR" got back into its original gear and today it continues to be a favorite among Marines who adopt them as their own personal option knife and carry them into active service. But it's also a favorite of adventurers, survivalists, outdoor sportsmen and, of course, knife collectors who know that this knife—this "American Legend"—above all, deserves a place in their collection. And so it is, not only in America, but throughout the world.

When the name goes on the blade, it's not just called a "kabar", it is a KA-BAR.

ED. NOTE: Reprinted from "Ka-Bar Was There," Ka-Bar Knives, 1125 East State St., Olean, New York 14760

Dear Editor:

My wife and I will not be able to attend, due to how close it is to my recent back surgery, but I want to wish all the best to those who do. Maybe we can catch you at the next one. I would appreciate you sharing some of my thoughts to all the guys who do

get to go.

I'm still not allowed to ride in a car or an airplane at all, so travel is out for me right now. I am looking forward to meeting some of those whom we had to evacuate out of Khe Sanh Combat Base. I will be particularly interested in what they've done with their lives since.

You know, when we Air Evac'ed someone, most of the time we only had a very brief contact with them. I usually don't remember anyone's name or face, but I can remember their wounds, and what I did to treat them. I remember calling in the C-123's and C-130's that it took to get them out, and I remember setting up a system that was unique to Khe Sanh. While I was there, our aircraft could still land, but due to enemy artillery fire, they had to keep taxiing very slowly while they off-loaded supplies. We had pre-positioned an Aero Med Evac Crew on the aircraft, and as soon as the cargo pallets were off-loaded, this crew would swing down the litter stantions, and stantion straps to be ready to receive the incoming patients. What we would do then is place up to 18 patients on the ground at about the position where the airplane's wing tip would pass over us as he taxied by. Since there were only 4 of us Air Force Medics there, we had to find volunteer Marines to help load the patients. The correct litter carry was to use 4 men, one on each handle. Then they would all start off in step, but for Khe Sanh we had to use only two men per litter because we had to run with them in a dead run. Our timing had to be close to perfect. When the wing tip passed over us, each litter team had to pick their patient up and run directly at the airplane fuselage. By the time we intersected with the path of the airplane, the back end was just passing us. Then we had to make a banking left turn with our litter and jump up on to the tail ramp, as it was still moving. The guy on the front of the litter had the advantage in that he could see the ramp as he jumped up the nearly 18" to get on the ramp. He knew if he missed the step, the guy in back was going to ram that litter right up on him. But the guy in back had the tougher job, because he had to give that litter a real hard shove to help the guy in front get up on the ramp and less than a second later he had to jump up on the ramp himself. If the guy in front made a mistake, and missed the ramp, he would crash down on the ramp and the litter would be driven right up his back. Although we wore flack vests, I still have scars on the back of my neck where the bar underneath the litter hit me in the back of

the head. I also have scars on both of my shins where I missed the step up onto the ramp and hit it. That was in our learning stage, but we finally got to where we could hit the ramp at full gallop and run our patient all the way to the front litter tier. We would set him down in the stanchions, while the on-board medics would snap them in place. Then we would make a U-turn and run back out and jump back off onto the ground, before the airplane made the turn at the far end of the ramp. When he made that turn, the loadmaster was closing the door, and as he entered the active runway, he was picking up speed for the takeoff. I am sure that this system of getting patients loaded onto a moving airplane has never been done before or since.

We could usually get about 18 wounded on the aircraft if our timing went well, and we were able to keep up with the pace of the number of wounded we had to move. We weren't too picky though, if an Army or Marine helicopter had room on it, we would send as many patients as possible out on it. The C-123's and C-130's were able to carry so much more that we welcomed them and the opportunity to move the bulk of our patient load. At one point while I was there, our bunker took a direct hit, but as I recall we didn't loose anyone. It just scared the hell out of us. But the entire bunker had to be rebuilt. It seemed like we spent as much time refilling sand bags as we did taking care of patients.

By the way, I met Chaplain Stubbe several times when he came over to our bunker and visited our wounded. I have a picture that I think is of him riding on a captured motorcycle. If you see him there, I'd like to know if that was him. The picture is just from the back, but I think I was taking it of him.

Hope you all have a great reunion, and that you'll remember all the ones we didn't get to save. They and their families are the ones that I have the most feelings for, because we didn't have a chance to bring them home. Although most of us didn't get decorated for just doing our job, I believe that every man there was a hero. Even though at the time, nobody wanted to be called one, and maybe most of us still don't, but we did our jobs under very difficult circumstances. We few are a precious band of brothers. I know one thing from all this, my experiences at places like Khe Sanh changed the way I look at life. I treasure every minute of it now. I love being with my two sons and their wives, and especially my grandkids. I love most of all being with my sweet wife, who stood by me all those 13 years I was flying

patients around the world. A lot of the guys weren't so lucky. Our divorce rate was astronomical. Most wives couldn't take all the absences. So I'm glad I married an Air Force Nurse, who at least understood what I was doing while I was away. I lost my right lung, and it knocked me off flying status, or I guess I would have still been in AeroMed Evac Units until I retired. Sometimes God just has different plans for you than you do for yourself. Now, I try to go with His flow, and not mine. May God richly bless each and every one of you who attends this reunion.

Semper Fi,
Ira D Wilson

No Small Things

by Mike Worth

Each year around Mother's Day, I try to visit my Mom in Asheville, North Carolina. Mom, the one who worried as she watched the nightly news, while I was in Vietnam. Wrote faithfully, sent "care" pack-

ages, and prayed for my safe return. As she counted the days, she also wrote condolence letters to other parents; those of my boyhood friends and those of too many Echo Company brothers. She said it was just a small thing and the least she could do.

This year I arranged to take a little side trip to Simpsonville, South Carolina to visit with one of my personal heroes, John "Doc" Lancaster, Echo 2/26. Some may remember Commander John Lancaster, USN (Retd) from the dedication at Jefferson Barracks last year—but he is always "Doc" to me. "My" Doc, who when I was wounded on 27 October 1968, ran through a hail of bullets to get to me and patched me up. We spent a day at Laurens High School where Doc Lancaster is now the director of the JROTC program. In his classes, Vietnam became the lesson of the day. The scars from where the bullet went through my arm (having fortunately missed my head) and Doc's fancy patchwork became the "show and tell" for these interested, pulled together and well mannered young people.



Stan Pettit. 3rd Sqd., 3rd Plt., Echo Co., @nd Bn 26 Marine Regt, 3rd Marine Div
June-July 1968, Con Thien area near the DMZ

Part of our plan was to also visit the parents and the grave of another Khe Sanh Veteran, Stan Pettit, E 2/26, who survived Khe Sanh, but was Killed in Action later at LZ Margo. Stan was our friend and brother then, remembered still—and John is the Doc who tended to Stan when he was killed by machine gun fire as he walked point on 15 September 1968.

And so, we traveled along Liberty Highway to a sleepy rural area between Easton and Liberty, South Carolina to visit Stan's parents, Paul and Colleen Pettit. Stan's brothers, Ray and Eddie and sisters, Paula and Kathy, were at a family wedding rehearsal this day, so maybe next time.

Mrs. Pettit is ill and confined to her bed, but we hoped the flowers brought a touch of cheer and a splash of brightness to her day. Sadly, Mr. Pettit tells us that Mrs. Pettit has never quite gotten over the loss of Stan, their oldest boy.

In a devastating set of circumstances, the Marine Corps failed to inform the Pettits in a timely manner of the death of their son. The Pettit family first learned of Stan's death when they received a letter of condolence from a Marine in Stan's squad. Hoping it was a mistake, it was only after Mr. Pettit asked his Congressman to investigate that they finally received the heartbreaking confirmation.

Mr. Pettit, a WWII Marine, who worked in Naval Intelligence and took jungle training in Panama, Central America, is a very warm and most engaging guy, with strong political views and an acute and accurate memory. Paul Pettit is also a loving father whose son fought and died for this country. This father's deep love is evident in the accompanying poem, inspired by a photo of Stan that was sent to the family by a buddy, and was written two days after he buried his eldest son, Stanley.

When we visited Stan's grave, which is in the very center of a small church cemetery near the Pettit home, the roots of the patriotism and sense of duty that was so obvious in Stan, were movingly clear. Rising to nearly 15 feet above the grave with the simple bronze headstone reading Cpl. Stanley R. Pettit, E Co 26th Marines, is a flagpole bearing an American Flag. This powerful symbol of freedom and sacrifice, standing vigil in remembrance of one brave Marine, has flown there for 32 years. For 32 years, Paul Pettit has maintained the grave, reinforced the flagpole, and replaced each fading or tattered flag with a new one. For 32 years, Stan's father has ensured that anyone who visits or drives by this humble churchyard will see this flag—and know that

it proudly waves over the resting place of one who gave his life for his country. He says it is just a small thing and the least he can do.

For 32 years this flag tells of duty, honor and sacrifice. May it always fly. May Stanley R. Pettit and so many other brave hearts always be remembered. It is just a small thing and the least we can do.

Author's Note: The Pettit Family would like to hear from anyone who knew Stan or even has memories of those times to share. Stan's youngest sister, Kathy Pettit Finley, will be the Pettit family point of contact and will distribute to all. PH: 864/843-6556, email: TREBKathy2@aol.com Poem used by permission.

Armed and Ready

by Joe Olszewski

I stepped on a mine in late February 1968 on Hill 558. My medivac route was from Hill 558 to Dong Ha to DaNang. Each stop included various medical procedures to ensure that I wasn't in pain, the bleeding was controlled and fresh bandages were applied to prevent infection. At Dong Ha, they took off my uniform as added protection from infection.

At DaNang I remember being placed on a stretcher, carried into a building and being set down on a table. I don't remember why. Shortly a rocket attack hit DaNang and they took all the wounded and placed us on the floor. I remember the corpsmen saying that we were probably more used to "incoming" than they were. At DaNang the doctor who examined me took one look at my shattered foot and said, "this one goes afloat." This meant I was headed for the USS Repose, where my foot would be amputated.

For some reason the chopper flight to the Repose didn't take place until nightfall. It was very dark and the flight was crammed with wounded troops. I was placed on the floor and I remember feeling the cold of the steel beneath me, as all I was wearing was a blanket and a huge bandage on my foot. The flight seemed to take forever and once we were over the Gulf of Tonkin, the cold air also entered the cargo (or I should say the meat locker) area. It was so cold I was shivering.

We landed on the Repose on the stern where a landing pad had been built. It took some time to unload the wounded and in my case, since I was targeted for surgery, I was sent immediately to the "pre-op" (pre-surgery) room. Again all I had on was that blanket. One corpsman took off my bandages and

after receiving my approval took pictures of my foot, I guess, for medical textbook purposes. After he was gone I was alone for a while and began to warm up, as I was finally indoors and out of the cold air.

After several minutes a Navy nurse came to see me to prepare me for surgery. She was the first Caucasian woman I had seen in five months and beautiful. I was at least on morphine and probably something stronger by then, but my male senses said this was a gorgeous creature that was about to examine and prepare me for surgery.

In a quick movement she undid the blanket I was wearing and there I was—ARMED AND READY. She took one look at me and said with a smile: "Well, there's definitely nothing wrong with your reactions." I don't remember my response, but I'm sure it was something cute. That night I had the surgery and spent three more days on the Repose recovering before being flown to Japan for additional rest. During those three days on the Repose, I never saw that nurse again as the Navy obviously had separate personnel for separate duties and the nurses who worked pre-op and surgery did not work the recovery wards.

I do remember being out of bed for the first time in a wheel chair and having dinner. After eating I was playing chess or checkers with a "candy striper" who were young teenage girls that were there for comfort purposes. I guess I was too weak to be up so soon, as after about a half-hour I promptly threw-up in the candy striper's lap. But, that's another story for another time.

Sure wish I could find that nurse today in my old age. I still have my reactions.

ED NOTE: Joey, Joey, Joey. Be careful about what you brag on in front of these strange fellows. Some of 'em are liable to call you on it.

Ambush

by Steve Riddle

Lying on the ground

Motionless

Searching into the night

Listening to the darkness

Its raining again

Soaked to the bone

Hours have come and gone

It seems like centuries

God, just to close my eyes

for a moment

Fighting to stay awake is agony

If I fall asleep

I might not wake up

I don't feel the insects biting anymore

just their buzzing in my ears and nose

as they suck my blood

*I slide my tongue slowly over my
swollen lips*

Having to be so still for so long

Amid such intense misery and torment

Leaves me numb

Messages to the Khe Sanh Vets home page

I am Mike Castle, 2/4 Gulf Company May 68 to June 69. From Dia Do to Khe Sanh Hills. To all of you I wish you well. I will never forget where we dug it! I carried a Hog and a Few Wraps (M-60) up and up and down the hills most of my tour. I am in touch with the 2/4 site and a member. Wounded a few times still kicking. I hold Vietnam close to my heart the rest in my mind. This site is awesome; it is about time I found it. I have many of our brothers to send it too. I hope we are welcome.

Semper Fi, Your Bloody Brother, Mike Castle

Had a can of c-rat ham slices and someone had a can of c-rat grape juice and shared it. Just like home—ham and a glass of make believe wine. But it was Easter Sunday, and it was special.

Don Lacy

There is not a date or a place that has as much meaning in my memory as that of tomorrow when the first Battle of the Hills began at Khe Sanh in 1967. The epic struggle over 881N/S and 861 rank among the most significant in all of Vietnam's actions, but for me, it was a personal and deadly struggle just to do my duty and stay alive. It was nearly a disaster for those manning the base then, and a prelude to the more notable siege in 1968. But for those of us who fought that first battle, it was time never to be forgotten. May God bless all who served and stood their ground during this desperate time—and bring them peace in all things. Kimo Andrews

Five long years ago today this nation watched in horror at the tragedy in Oklahoma City when the federal building was bombed killing so many innocent people, including a couple of Good Marines. But my eyes were fixed elsewhere that day farther west. While most folks were glued to the TV sets watching one tragedy unfold, I was on and off the phone throughout the day with my dear and precious friend Quiles Ray Jacobs and his beautiful wife Naomi. Those of you who had the privilege of knowing him he was simply "Jake the Snake." Jake was a Warrior in the truest sense of the word. First as a young Marine, who led our squad through much tragedy and triumph throughout his tour of

duty, he earned two Purple Hearts, one Navy Commendation, one Bronze Star, and one Silver Star for his valor on the field of battle. Jake was a good Christian man and for sure one of the finest human beings I ever had the honor of knowing. He cared a great deal about his family and his friends and this organization as well. Jake had quietly been battling Agent Orange related cancer for over three years and had very nearly concealed it from me up until his last year. It was a Thursday, I believe, 19 April 1995 when I had my last conversation with him. True to form he just laughed at death as he had done so many times in the past, assured me he knew exactly where he was going to be when the sun went down and promised he'd prepare the way and wait for us all at a time somewhere in the future. Yes it was true. The mighty man I loved so much for so many years had fallen at last. I just know the ground rumbled and roared that afternoon in Southern California. Jake was a giant of a man and he had to make the earth shake. I thank you my good friend for all that you gave me. I still miss you dearly, as if you were my own flesh and blood. Each year when I see the magnolia blooms I think of the good times we had. They were so beautiful here in Indiana when we last spoke. I guess that was God's way of telling me you were OK now. 19 April 1995.

Godspeed and Semper Fi Jake.

Love ya Bro

Michael E. O'Hara Bravo Co 1/26

The sniper and his 50 cal. kept me and the other trench troops hopping throughout our 77 days and nights (we owned the nights since the clouds settled below our 3,000 ft elevation). We would egg the poor bastard on by waving MAGGIE's Drawers whenever he missed one of us running through the shallow in the trench line. That sniper did get more than a few of my HST buddies and, of course, your choppers. He also caused us to look at that big damn box you guys dropped on top of Hill 881S. By the time night fell and we could check it out we found the ice cream! Damn, I medivaced 95% of our troops on the Hill, lost 60 pounds as we were down to one c-rat meal per day between 3 of us and you deliver ice cream that baked in the sun until nightfall when it was safe to retrieve.

YES! We loved the melted goo and we all had the shits for days and days, not having had dairy products since January 21, 1968. We had a great time

despite the SHITS and we thank you for improving the morale, even though you upset our stomachs. We will always remember the ice cream in the big box on top of the Hill. Dave

"DOC" Steinberg

• • •

reply: Hi Doc Gary here.

Don't remember much of the ice cream, but I do remember the sniper. I remember wondering what to worry about more, the sniper or the incoming rounds that always followed the choppers in. I believe we had only about two minutes to get things done before they came in. Now the sniper never had to wait, he just did his thing and you couldn't figure out if it was the dirt and rocks flying around you while under the birds or the snipers rounds. I do remember one of the 26th guys getting his finger blown off while waiting to get on a 46. I believe you picked up the finger and put in a wet rag and put him and the finger on the bird. Now could that sniper have been that good?

I also remember spending many an hour on the side of the hill putting a lot of fire power on his position. We even called in "Scarface" (gunship) to work over the site. Be good doc. See you this summer...Gary (Shore Party Gary Parker)

I was with 2/94th arty. We made a night convoy to your humble abodes and as usual were greeted with fireworks. From all the guys that made that trip I want to thank you for keeping us, our trucks and ammo safe until we left. You guys did one hellava job up there with very little thanks.

So on behalf of the 2/94 at JJ Carroll and Dong Ha thanks and Welcome Home.

Duffy 2/94 67-68

At 1:30 P.M. on Saturday, 3 June 2000, a park atop a hill in Closter, New Jersey, will be re-dedicated. Schauble Park was named to honor the memory and the sacrifice of one of our own, Corporal Kenneth W. Schauble. Ken was a Squad Leader with the 2nd Platoon, "Echo" Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines. He served at Khe Sanh on Hill 861-A during the 1968 Tet Offensive, and he was later Killed in Action on 6 June, 1968 during an intense battle in "Leatherneck Square" near Con Thien. The date of the ceremony closely coincides with the 32nd

anniversary of the day he and 13 other Marines died. On the day of his death, the 2nd Platoon of "Echo" Company was on a security patrol when they engaged a large North Vietnamese Army force concealed in a bunker complex. After a pitched battle which lasted several hours and resulted in numerous casualties on both sides, the 2nd Platoon was cut off, nearly out of ammunition, and had only sporadic communication with one remaining radio. Realizing the only hope was to break out, Ken gave the order to "fix bayonets" and he led 2nd squad "over the top," on line, into the enemy bunker complex. While Ken was killed instantly when struck by a machine gun bullet, the 2nd squad pressed the attack suffering near total casualties while pressing the attack into the enemy bunker complex, killing numerous NVA. Jim Kaylor, the only survivor from 2nd Squad, said "Ken was one of the many brave hearts who died that day; 14 Marines were killed and 11 wounded. He was always one of my heroes because he was a bright and very brave man. Ken Schauble was a strong leader, tough as hell and he loved the Marine Corps!"

The Closter, New Jersey Parks Service Director, Jim Oettinger, and his staff are committed to assuring that the proper respect be made in Ken Schauble's memory, and have gone to great efforts to make sure the citizens of Closter are aware of Ken's sacrifice. Mr. Oettinger and his staff are determined that Ken, and the heroism he displayed, will not be forgotten.

All of Ken Schauble's surviving family is expected to attend the rededication. We are hoping that many Khe Sanh Veterans and Ken's other combat brothers will attend as well. He's not just a home town hero .. he is a true American hero.

The details are as follows:

Schauble Park Dedication Saturday, 3 June 2000, 1:30 PM Closter, New Jersey Point of Contact: Jim Oettinger, Park Service Director Phone: 1- 800/795-3663 ex 325

Email: JOtto98@aol.com

I came across your site last week while I was searching for resources with which to teach my 11th graders the Vietnam War. Since then, and especially as today approached, you have been on my mind. I want to take this opportunity to tell you who made it home, and those who did not, "Thank You!" Thank you for myself, and thank you for my children. We will reserve a special place for you in our

hearts and prayers.

We love you.

D. Benthall & sons

To all, Thanks to Dean Caton, formerly of Golf/2/3 Marines, I am finally able to put a name on the Marine casualty in the famous picture taken by Catherine LeRoy of Corpsman Vernon Wike on Hill 881, taken on April 30, 1967. The Marine was LCPL William Junior Roldan, of Philadelphia, PA. Dean related that he knew LCPL Roldan when they were stationed in Okinawa with the bulk of the 3rd Marines, prior to deploying to Khe Sanh. Roldan was killed by machine-gunfire directly in front of the Platoon Commander 1LT Peter Hesser during the assault on Hill 881. His name is found at Panel 18E 128 on the Wall.

Steve D

It was 32 years ago today that pilot, Captain Luke Sharp and copilot, 1st Lt. Mike Helmstetler (HMM 161) lifted off of LZ Robin with a load of Marines and a Corpsman from Kilo 3/9/3 for a troop delivery to Khe Sanh. Not more than 20 minutes later they would be dead and the lives of the passengers and crew would be forever changed. They will not be forgotten.

Ray (Doc) Felle

On the morning of June 7, 1967 Hill 950 was attacked and overrun at the same time the KSCB was under rocket attack. As memory serves there were 18 to 22 Marines on the hill. Of that number 5-8 were KIA and 6 were WIA. The next morning those Marines who managed to evade the NVA retook the hill. Reinforcements arrived from the base by chopper under a huge fog. I was the Pinefold radio operator who called for an arty strike on top of the hill. Thanks God it wasn't done.

I want to say to the Marines who were on the hill that night it's been 33 years since that encounter I haven't forgotten you! We have lost a few since then for different reasons but all of you are always in my prayers.

S/F David Buffalo

I was with 1st BTN 13th MAR. "A" BTRY. I arrived early March until we convoyed out.

Sometime in April. I would like to hear from anyone from this BTRY. or from anyone in the time frame above.

Raymond Weaver

Thank you to the 'Nam vets who have come forward with information regarding mass or individual burials of NVA soldiers. I promise that this information will be utilized towards a full-accounting for all our POW/MIA's. All reports will remain confidential as promised (except for vitals such as incident date, location, etc.) and I will share any progress made on this message center. I will be leaving for my second trip to Vietnam on July 5th. For those of you who don't know me, I search for my brother, Army SSGT Jerry W Elliott. Details to be published in the next issue of Red Clay. Thank you, my other brothers!

Donna E Elliott

I was with I company 3BN 26th Marines in 66 & 67 got to Nam in Spring of 67 just in time for monsoon, serve with a lot of brave guys. Wish I could talk to all of them again, and personally thank every one of them for a job well done, and thank the ones that paid the big price to help keep us free. Was up at Khe Sanh for the hill battles and saw a lot of buddies fall to enemy fire and some of our own from short rounds. Would like to hear from anyone that was there.

James H. Fritz (Baby Huey)

"A" Co. 1/26 finally! I have found the Mother-Of-All-Sites!! (Opinion of a MARINE who happened to be at KHE SANH—Before, DURING, and After the "SIEGE"). Although I know we have tried to convey to others: Marines and civilians alike, what the experience of Khe Sanh was all about ONLY those of USMC who was there can re-live its terrifying, surreal, adrenaline pumping, heart-racing, sweat-flowing, finger-shaking, eye-popin, income-hating, arclight-loving, NVA spotting, NVA removing, red clay-hugging, non-bathing, cussing, preteen, living in a hole Leatherneck-Experience and More. I believe that this site and the "Khe Sanh Veterans Org." that exists, is paying tribute to ALL of us who are part of Marine Corps history via the experiences of the Khe Sanh combat base saga. I joined "Alpha" 1/26 in November, 1967 (Company HQ). Stayed with A 1/26 for the duration, until rotating back to "The World"

in December of 1968. Chances are, if you reported for duty with "A" either at Danang, Phu Bai, Quanq Tri (White Beach) or at the place (Khe Sanh). I signed you on and escorted you (all) to your platoon commander. So if you are all reading this, you are OK. SEMPER FI!

Thomas Edghill

To all of you guys that fought along side of me at Khe Sanh I think of you ever day and I hope your life is good. I wish I could find you guys and talk to all the parents, wives and other relatives of the ones who died at Khe Sanh I wish you peace and love. And to the ones that died on April 24, 1967 on hill 861 our blood is on that hill we own it god I wish I had you guys back. I miss you all so very much I love you.

Dennis F. Blodgett

I was with B co 1-26 Nov 67-Dec 68 when I got in country I was on Hill 881S OR N. I can't remember. I remember the ammo dump being hit early that morning this is the first time I have even tried to contact other Khe Sanh vets

Lloyd Scudder

Served at Khe Sanh in the Dental Clinic Nov. 67 Looking for Docs Janowski, Birtcill and the Irish Chaplin from Boston.

Dan Donahue, DT3/USN

Looking for anyone who served with Bravo Battery 1st Battalion 13th Marines. I was wounded on Mar 11, 68 while unloading my truck full of ammo. Those that I have talked to said it was reported that I was dead. I am very much alive and living in Pennsylvania. Would like to hear from anyone who served with B-1-13 from June 67 until Mar 68 in Khe Sanh. Would especially like to hear from Cpl. Dave Cook from California. He was wounded just before I was. I have a lot of pictures from Phu Bai to Khe Sanh. I plan on coming to the reunion and I will bring them with me. I have some good pictures of some incoming. I am trying to get them all put on a CD so I will be able to e-mail them.

Clifford Treese Jr.

Would like to hear from anyone who knew Richard E. Williams, who was killed on April 5 (4?), 1968 on one of the Khe Sanh hills 861, I believe. Mortar round I think. Rich and I were homies, boot camp buddies, and as close as brothers. I went to Golf 2/4 the Magnificent Bastards (Dai Do); choppered to Khe Sanh on June 1, 1968, and then to 861. Thank you, and Semper Fi.

Tom Couillard

My name is Ricky West I am the son of Gary M West LCpl C&D company 1/26 Marines 1966-67 he was wounded April 19 1967 by sniper he never talked a lot of his time their and I would like to know from anyone who might have known him we are from north Carolina and my mom and sisters would be very grateful for any information I lost my dad a Cpl. Years ago he made it home after being wounded but he never totally came home I miss my dad desperately he was my best friend and if anyone knows his platoon or squad he was with my email address is rnrwest@primeline.com any info would be deeply appreciated.

My brother, Thomas J. Sweeney was killed in Feb. 1968. I was born in Dec. of that same year. Tom was in Unit C 1/26, 5th Marine division. I do not know much about him, only what I have seen in photographs and what friends may had said about him. Twice a year the Boys and Girls club in Mckeesport. PA. have a memorial for the fallen members. My brother is one of those. I go there for all the ceremonies on behalf of my family. The services that are held there are very touching, and it is there that I get to meet some of my brothers friends and discuss the kinds of things that Tom liked. I am looking for anybody that may have served with him or new of him while in the marines. I would love to hear his courageous story. I would also like to share this information with the veterans that attend the ceremonies each year at the Boys and Girls Club.

Thank you, your help is greatly appreciated

Tim Merlin

Would like to hear from anyone who was stuck with D company 1/9 at op-1 in Khe Sanh. We were the lucky ones that got to do all of the retrieving of goods dropped by parachute after the airstrip was

blow up. I was there for the entire Tet offense and managed to get wounded two times by incoming. I've got a ton of slides from there and a whole lot of shots of buddies that never made it back. This is the first time I've tried to make any kind of contact in over 33 years and am still a little skeptical about talking about it.

Ron Garner from Gary, IN

Looking for anyone that served with me in Golf Co, 2nd Bn, 26th Marines, 3rd platoon on hill 558 in Khe Sanh in March of 1968. Especially anyone who participated in the last battle on one of the ridges that led to hill 861 south on April 6th & 7th. It's been a long time and a hard shell to crack but this site has helped allot. I believe 2nd Lt. Combs was out platoon Comdr. at the time. I remember LCPL. Ray Burrell, LPL. Pete Yovine, Cpl. Ski, Cpl. Wormy. It's funny, the faces are so fresh but a lot of the names are so distant!!

Joe Mannone

My name is Teo. I'm looking for the U.S. Marine Corp 1st Bn, 9th Marines, 3rd Marine division. My first husband was one of them. He passed away Jan. 11, 1984 at the young age of 34. We had 3 small children at the time. He was 80% disabled. Not until my youngest child was entering college, and we tried to apply for some help through the VA did we discover that his death was indeed service connected. I'm now 49 yr. old, remarried and my children are grown.

TeoAndBob@aol.com

Did anyone serve with Jim Tucker in 1968 in Khe Sanh??? He is my dad he was hit on 881 North. also with him was Dr. Adams navy corpsman. Also a man named zulo?

Kolpfjager@yahoo.com

"Look Homeward"

© Paul R. Pettit, 1968

Look homeward my beloved son

Across the misty sea

Out past the blue horizon

Beyond this galaxy;

Out past the fading sunset

Beyond the moon of gold

Look homeward my beloved son

No one your dreams can hold.

Look homeward my beloved son

Up, o'er the rolling swells

On, past the muddy rivers

High, o'er the jungle hells;

Up, o'er the raging monsoons

Beyond the rattle of the gun

Forget hunger, thirst and misery

Sweet victory you've won.

Look homeward my beloved son

Above life's rugged sea

Hark! A gentle Voice is speaking

Yes, the Master calls for thee

"Come out My blessed loved one,

depart earth's dismal scenes;

Come quickly, I have need of thee

in My 26th Marines."

In memory of my son, Stanley

Returning to Vietnam with my Dad

by Tara Ford

As a young girl growing up, I used to thank God in my prayers for making me a girl. As a child, my perception of reality was that all boys went to war when they grew up. Both of my grandfathers had fought in WWII and my father was a Marine in Vietnam. Although no stories of the wars have been passed down, I instinctively knew that war was Hell. When my grandfather, Gerard "Rocky" Ford, suddenly passed away in 1995 I realized that I didn't know much about him. I didn't know much about the WWII Marine whose picture was on the cover of the NY Times in 1943. I didn't know much about his life experiences, which undoubtedly shaped the man he became. And when he passed, I realized that I didn't know much about my own father's history. My quest to unfurl my father's past began at that moment. My father never spoke about Vietnam. I only knew that he had enlisted in the Marines, received 2 Purple Heart Awards and that a bullet still remained lodged in his leg. I also had no idea the depths of which Vietnam still haunted our society. I didn't know about Agent Orange, B-52s, Napalm, Ho Chi Minh, POWs, My Lai, TET Offensive, Khe Sanh or even which side the Americans were fighting for. All I knew was that Americans didn't like to talk about the Vietnam War, nor did they like to teach it in school. Unfortunately, all I learned was that Vietnam was something you didn't talk about.

In 1998, I accepted a teaching position in Japan which brought me closer to Vietnam. Vietnam was now my neighbor and not some evil secret. I wanted to visit Vietnam but I couldn't imagine going with friends. I wanted to see my father's Vietnam. I knew I had to go with my father. Asking my father to return took a lot of courage. I was nervous about how he would react. But I was encouraged by the strides he was taking on his own in rediscovering his past. He had begun attending Khe Sanh Reunions, which enable Veterans to rekindle ties with the brothers they fought so valiantly to protect. It was at a reunion in 1996 that he met Ed Zimmerman. "Zimmo" was awarded a Bronze Star for his bravery in saving my father's life the night he was shot. That was the first time the two had met since April 7th 1968, the day he was shot.

During a conversation with my father while I was in Japan, I asked him if he'd ever want to return to Vietnam. It was then that he told me about his desire

to return to Vietnam and more specifically Khe Sanh during peacetime. I was elated to hear this response and then asked him to accompany me. We were both overwhelmed at the possibility and the uncertainty of planning such a trip. For Father's Day last year, I sent him a Vietnam travel book. We began planning for our trip the very next day.

We arrived in Vietnam on March 18th, 2000. In the following two weeks, we traveled from Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) up North to Hanoi. Along the way we met many curious and friendly Vietnamese people. Some took us into their homes and others shared their life stories with us. All of them had stories about the "American" war. All of them continue their struggle to survive in a country marred by poverty and corruption. All of them touched our hearts in a way that will never be forgotten.

During those two weeks we visited Saigon, Danang, Hue, Dong Ha, Khe Sanh, Lang Vei and Hanoi. After spending three emotionally and physically challenging days in Saigon, we escaped from the city and arrived at the beautiful beaches of Danang. My father didn't realize we were staying on China Beach until he looked out of our hotel window and instantly recognized Monkey Mountain to the North, where he had done many patrols. It was hard to believe that 30 years earlier, this same beach was littered with armored tanks and overflowing with American soldiers. The pristine coastline is now littered with hand-woven, circular fishing boats, although my father did find a rifle butt lying in the sand.

While sitting on China Beach, I was approached by an amiable looking, broad-grinned Vietnamese man. He politely inquired about our travel plans and offered his services in helping me accomplish them. His knowledge of the area was impressive and his sincerity was refreshing. He thought we were traveling alone. When he met my father he was impressed that we had traveled to his country together and that my father was sharing his past with me. After spending one day with Van, we hired him to drive us all the way to Khe Sanh. We were together for the next 6 days.

During those days I learned more about Vietnam than I had ever hoped. Van is an honest, hard working, intelligent man who was prohibited from attaining a salaried position because his father was an officer in the South Vietnamese Army. Both he and his father had been imprisoned in "Re-education camps." Van was imprisoned for 3 years because he

tried to flee Vietnam by boat at the age of 16. Van's presence was a blessing and our friendship continues through letters since leaving Vietnam.

The same night that we met Van, we met three other American Veterans who had just come from Khe Sanh. Charles Berg, Jim Hettrick and Dennis Thompson were all friends from their days in the US Army Special Forces. Charles Berg was a Sergeant in FOB-3 at Khe Sanh and has been returning to Vietnam for years. He helps the Bru tribe, a minority tribe located near Khe Sanh and the Laos border, in digging wells and education. My father had already met him at a Khe Sanh reunion and I remembered reading about his efforts in a magazine. I was shocked though, when I realized that he was missing a leg. Jim Hettrick is a retired Army Master Sergeant and Dennis Thompson is a retired Sergeant Major in the Army. Dennis Thompson was captured in the battle for Lang Vei and was a POW for 61 months. He had been captured 4 times yet managed to elude his captors for 8 days, living without food and suffering from septic wounds while trying to make it back to the Khe Sanh base. Coming across Veterans on the same mission as us was a shock, in and of itself. But after hearing their stories, I realized that I was in the presence of true American HEROES. For the first time, I was able to see my father as a soldier. I looked at these great men before me and I was overcome with a feeling of pride. A pride so thick, causing a lump in my throat and tears in my eyes. I watched these men as they embraced like long lost brothers with the moonlight dancing in the tears in their eyes.

At that moment I wanted to reach in and wipe away their memories of the war. I wanted to take away their anger, guilt and pain. For in those brief moments, I was able to see the young, frightened soldiers they once were and the hardened, mature men they have grown to be. Through the tears and the pain, I still felt their PRIDE. You saw it in their eyes and you saw it on their faces. They believed wholeheartedly in fighting for their country. The character amongst them was powerful and it was a moment that I will never forget. After meeting these men our spirits were boosted. And the goal of reuniting my father with Khe Sanh was in sight. On March 28, we finally arrived. It was hard to imagine that 32 years earlier my father was living in the hills that now looked so beautiful and peaceful. Nothing is left of the combat base except for a small building which serves as propaganda-filled museum. The informa-

tion depicted was so disturbing that I was moved to tears. For my father's blood was spilt on this land and everything written in the museum was nothing more than Communist lies. We left the museum quickly and my father pointed out the remains of the airstrip, which was vital for the soldiers survival in 1968. On January 21, 1968, a week before the TET Offensive began, the siege on Khe Sanh started. My father arrived about a week after the siege had begun. Khe Sanh was in such a precarious situation that convoys weren't able to re-supply the men with food or ammunition. Their only means of survival was from the sky. Cargo planes carrying men, food and weapons often came under fire and airdrops were sometimes all that could be done. The Marines had no choice but to "dig in." Unknown to my father at the time was how dangerous a predicament he was placed in. President Johnson followed the developments at Khe Sanh closely and vowed never to lose the combat base. At one particular time it is estimated that more than 30,000 North Vietnamese Army Regulars had surrounded the American base of only 6,000 Marines. In order to defend Khe Sanh, the US mounted the most intense bombing in the history of the war. The equivalent of 5 Hiroshima-sized bombs were dropped within a mile radius of Khe Sanh. General William Westmoreland even considered the use of tactical nuclear weapons. The siege lasted 77 days and in the end, the combat base was still under American control. It was near the end of the siege that my father was shot while trying to rescue a corpsman that lay wounded in the enemy's lines. After 6 weeks of operations and physical therapy in Japan, he was back on the front line where he remained for the rest of his 13-month tour. Thirty-two years later, I stood on the hard red clay earth with my father trying to imagine the chaos that once enveloped the area. None of the stories my father had been telling me before our arrival seemed plausible for the mountainous area is serene and peaceful now.

Moments after leaving the museum, my father pulled out an old map of Khe Sanh and with his compass we headed into the coffee plantations that now surround the area. When we emerged from the plantations we followed a dirt road that split the mountain range. We followed this road, which didn't exist 32 years ago, as my father pointed out the different hills that he remembered and the numbers that were used to identify each hill; 950, 1015, 558, 861, 861a, 881 and hill 700. We also passed a schoolyard

and met up with a group of 15 middle school students who were walking home for the day. Our methods of communicating were restricted to sign language and gestures. It was quite easy for them to understand that my father was a GI. We walked for over an hour with the students following our every move. When my father stopped to tell me stories about the different hills or to take pictures, the children would stop and giggle. It was quite a moment when my father pointed out hill 700, that was the hill that he was shot on. It was mid-afternoon and the sun was glaring down on us. The heat was oppressive and the air was stagnant. As he recounted the story, I closed my eyes and tried to imagine the horrifying scenario. The way the hills bled into one another enabled me to picture the constant danger that lay beneath the thick brush. But I couldn't imagine the sheer horror and terror felt by all that were there. Neither one of us could believe we were there. Nor could we comprehend the entourage that now followed us. The children's nervous laughter was infectious and their curiosity was becoming. Their presence was comforting to me as it was a constant reminder that life in the barren area did go on.

We stopped our trek once we reached their village. The children were part of the Bru tribe, the people that Charles Berg helps. Their tiny houses are made from bamboo. There was no electricity nor was their running water. We stood in the ville and received curious smiles from small children and older folks alike. My father paused and stared off into the hills. I knew that he was tempted to run back into the hills to reclaim apart of his youth that he had tried hard to forget. As I stood there watching him a wave of emotions came over me. I was so proud of my father for returning to the land that took the lives of many of his comrades and nearly his own. I also felt extremely lucky to have a father so willing to share such a painful part of his life with me. We stood there for a few minutes then wiped away the tears, said goodbye to the children and headed back to the base.

From Khe Sanh we drove out to Lang Vei where Dennis Thompson was captured. Bomb craters pockmark the earth and banana trees thrive next to crumbled bunkers. My father told me the story behind Lang Vei and again I was moved to tears. In the final days of our trip, we visited the infamous Hanoi Hilton where Dennis Thompson was imprisoned as well as Sen. John McCain. We also visited Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum. It is here that the embalmed for-

mer Prime Minister of VN has rested since his death in 1969. Hordes of Vietnamese people flock to his tomb on a daily basis. It was strange walking by the man who was once at the center of the Vietnam conflict, but died before witnessing his dream come true of Vietnam as one country. I couldn't help but wonder if the dire straits many Vietnamese live in now is what he wanted for his country.

Vietnam is a beautiful country with a fascinating ancient history. Although extreme poverty and corruption hinders its beauty. There is no animosity held towards American tourists or returning American Veterans. POW Dennis Thompson remarked, "Everyone and everything in Vietnam has moved on, but us. They have gotten over it, so why can't we?" This statement struck a chord in my heart and made me wonder- why we (Americans) can't get past the Vietnam War.

From my travels and research, I feel I can understand the fear that communism created in the 1960s and the political reasons why we entered the war. I can also understand why many Americans protested against the war. But I cannot, nor will I ever, understand why America's bravest were spit on, defamed and deemed morally bankrupt by their peers upon returning to their country. For there is nothing immoral about standing up to serve for one's country. Three million brave men and women returned from Vietnam to have their character questioned and their voices silenced. Thirty-two years later, my father is finding his voice, as many other veterans are too. Vietnam Veteran Association memberships are rising. Enabling veterans from all over the country to come together to find long lost comrades; to laugh, to cry and most importantly, to remember.

On behalf of my generation, I would like to support Veterans in sharing their stories and experiences with others. America needs to hear about the individual sacrifices that each soldier made in his life. The heroic stories about young men and women risking their lives to save others are inspirational.

Vietnam will always remain an integral part of my life as well as the lives of many other Veteran's children. However, many of "us" haven't learned about Vietnam. We are curious about our fathers' experiences and their lives, but we don't know enough to ask. I urge educators to find the importance of teaching this chapter of American history. I am lucky that my father has broken his silence. I am inspired by his life and by the lives of other Veterans we I have met. For I have learned the value in teamwork, persever-

ance and strength. For standing fast in the face of adversity, fear and pain. And for knowing that I need not be ashamed of fighting for what I believe in. That is what I've learned from my father, a Vietnam Veteran. For better or worse, his experiences in Vietnam have influenced my own life. Rediscovering his past together has helped me discover my own future. Those are the lessons we've learned from Vietnam.

Thanks Dad and WELCOME HOME.

ED NOTE: Tara Ford is a 23-year-old Lindenhurst (New York) native and graduate of the State University of New York at Albany. She is currently teaching English in Japan. Her father, Tom Ford of Lindenhurst, served in the Marines in Vietnam for 13 months.

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From left to right: Tom Ford, Tara Ford, Dennis Thompson (POW Lang Vei, Sgt. Major USA Ret.), Charles Berg, Jim Hettrick (M/Sgt USA Ret)

Of Madness and Meaning

Jim Carmichael
60 mortars Echo, 2/26- 861 Alpha

It is rarely comforting to recognize that the dubious distinction of participating in the entire siege fell to our lot. Those were the most desperate days of my

short life, up to that point. Presently, I feel ancient. I have become a pastor by trade in the ensuing years. I am currently unemployed because the war has invaded me to the point of ministerial distraction and dysfunction. Thus, this sabbatical "year" has left me with time to ponder, to muse over the concept of meaning and the war for me personally.

Much of the human philosophy that is penned in the pages of the **Red Clay** magazine leaves me cold or puzzled and especially saddened. I move away from too many of the articles and poems more hurt than before I mentally entered them. Many of us are left to the questions of what do I make of those days, now? What did they really mean? Was the death and destruction really worth the effort expended in the larger scheme of things? Why is my life coming unglued after so many years? I'm sure none of us would have retreated an inch looking at the small picture we were given of things then. On my own, I come to confused reasoning; muddled thinking or no "comment." I feel incapable of discovering "true, truth" as Francis Schaeffer called it. My unexpected and unscheduled sabbatical has shown me who I really am, as a person. I do not like what I see. I am left staring at the effects of my fallenness[?] and Khe Sanh upon me. Nothing outside of Scripture that I read satisfies my soul, and I read voraciously as I am able. My studies in Seminary and out have proved vastly "thin." So I am left to find meaning for that year of unorganized chaos as I can.

I am trying not to speak as a professional clergyman. I am speaking as a human being, hurt deeply as a former Marine. I desperately need answers; real "meat" for thought that feeds and fuels my inner man. "Textbook" answers leave me flat because textbook writers seldom "lived" as we did. None of my school mates, almost all younger than I, or my fellow pastors know anything of how to respond to my desperation. And my fellow Marines are often as confused as I am in these weighty matters. In other words, shut up. Eat, drink and be merry because there are no real satisfying answers out there. There is no unguarded truth to be had except as you make it yourself. Please don't bring your dead Marine buddies in here." I recoil at that. I found it waiting for me in the church as well as grad school as well as at work.

Now, so no one will wonder if my search is purely existential and vastly unintelligible, I believe there is an answer for "those days." A meaning, if you will; true truth. I stumbled across it in conversation but

left it alone to stew on its own, in its own juices. But I keep returning to it. "If I make my bed in Hell, You are there." David, Israel's warrior King, penned those words. Having studied the subject for years, I am convinced that Biblical Scripture is inerrant truth. So I can trust its words. Not everyone is so inclined. I would ask you to hear me as a man who is hurting, in need of a healing salve. This is what I believe I have found.

I return to those words because they tell me that my God, Jesus Christ, went before me to the hell of my war. Let's settle there for a moment. I did not realize that for some 30 years, I believed that God was absent from the Vietnam I knew and was avoiding. He wasn't there. Why would He want to be in Hell? All those years I thought I was alone with 5500 Marines. Where did I think God was? I thought He was at least on R & R. Hell is no place for Deity. That's only logical but it's not good theology. God, the True God, says He was there on all those rainy ambushes; all those days of incoming; all those days of hunger and sleeplessness and so much more. We made our beds in Hell and He was there or He's a liar. So, if God was there, Jesus Christ, by reason of His Personal Presence, was there. The place has meaning because God has meaning or He isn't God. I have to deal with that. Vietnam had meaning, not because of who died, but because of who was there. Logic? Biblically so. That means I find truth where I didn't look. I kept looking at the pain and death for meaning. Not in a Personal Person.

Now, just set all the terrible things that we experienced aside for a moment. Someone in time-space-history said that God was where I was convinced He wasn't; didn't want to be; had no place being. Is that possibly true? Was He there in Vietnam? With me? I'm not asking you the question. I'm asking myself the question. I desperately need to know. Was I left hanging; all alone? Or was there some reason why I got out, alive? The questions won't go away. I can't defer to why someone else didn't make it, but was God possibly there so that He is the Personal reason I made it? I am perplexed. Either I have to alter my preconceived ideas about God and Vietnam or remain rigid and my existence sadly meaningless.

If God was actually there on the battlefield, then the killing ground, the place of unspeakable terror and horror, was of necessity, holy because God is Holy. It was a place set apart, conquered, if you will, by the very presence of God. Christ sanctified or set apart Vietnam for me to redeem me from it via His

Personal incarnation there. What a mouthful. I have trouble with a place of death being holy; holy to anyone, much less God. But I still have to deal with the implications of the statement, "If I make my bed in Hell, You are there." That is to say, without Vietnam, I would not have come to put my trust in Him as the personal God of the battlefield as I did in 1972. Now, that is not a leap. Such truth doesn't make God a monster, it simply gives the place of madness real, true meaning. Doesn't it?

Do I still hurt? Yes. Do I still have bad days? You bet. Too many of them. Is life still a kind of hell? Well, I went to 4 years of college, 4 years of Seminary, 8 years of pastoral ministry and 3 years of Campus Crusade for Christ. Now I'm sitting on the bench. I've been in the hospital 3 times, all PTSD related. You tell me if life is still a kind of hell? My wife wants to do me in some days the way I act. And yet, it has meaning. God is still the God who is with me when I make my place in hell. *Semper Fi.*

My Buddy Kenny

Kenny Orton and I had lived in the small summer resort town of Guerneville, California. Guerneville is located on the Russian River seventy miles north of San Francisco. We weren't real close friends like my buddy George and I were, but we always seemed to be hanging around with the same crowd of kids. Kenny had been raised around Guerneville all his life, but I'd only lived there during seventh, eighth and ninth grades. We had moved there shortly before my Dad retired from the Army. He had been stationed at Fort Mason in San Francisco.

Kenny, George, Jessy, Steve and I were the local terrors of the seventh grade. We all hung out together, and would for the next few years. One good thing about living in a place like Guerneville was there was always something to do and ways to get into trouble! The bad thing though was everybody always found out when you did something wrong. You couldn't get away with anything in that small summer resort town!

Kenny was a short skinny kid who was pretty much a follower. If a group of kids were hanging around Kenny would always be there, but he'd be standing back just a little. He was never the kid in charge. Kenny's father owned Johnson's Beach. It was a small section of sandy beach located on the Russian River and was directly across the street from my house. That's where I met Kenny in the summer

of 1961. I knew some local girls who worked in the snack shack at Johnson's Beach and I'd spend a lot of my time there trying to act cool. Kenny was always running up and down the beach yelling and complaining about having to load little kids into paddle boats his father rented or about having to unload supplies at the snack bar. He just wanted to hang around the girls visiting his father's beach. Work was the last thing on his mind!

It was a known fact that Kenny was always about one step away from getting into trouble. I was usually only one step behind that! While in the eighth grade, Kenny, Steve and myself got caught borrowing our elementary school's pick up truck. They always left the keys in it so we would take it out for a joy ride on the many back roads around town. We got away with this for many a Friday night until one time we forgot to turn off the headlights. By Monday morning the battery was dead! To this day I don't know how we got caught, but by ten in the morning we were all standing in front of the principal. Punishment was swift in those days. Within the hour we were all bending over holding our ankles as the giant wooden paddle with the holes in it rang out in the name of justice!

Freshman year found us at Analay High School in Sebastopol, twenty-seven miles from Guerneville. Kenny would always show up at my door looking for a ride to school. It wasn't cool to ride the bus. Kenny never had his own car, but could always be found sitting in the back seat of someone else's. Every morning it would always be the same. Kenny would start with, "Where are we going today?" Not, "lets go to school," or "hurry up, we'll be late!" It was true, most of the time and for sure on Fridays, my old blue 1951 Ford (it had "Mr. Blue" written on each front fender) just couldn't seem to head in the direction of Analay High. Instead it headed toward the ocean, fifty-miles in the other direction, stopping in Guerneville only long enough to pick up more kids. That was the Kenny Orton that I knew!

I left high school in 1963 during my junior year. I was so excited about joining the Army, I don't even think I said good-bye to Kenny. Joining the Army was something I had always dreamed of doing that I didn't even think of my school or childhood friends.

The next time I saw Kenny was six-years later in the summer of 1969. I was standing in the motor pool in a place called Xuan Loc in a strange country called Vietnam. I was watching my crew changing a worn out road wheel on our tank when I heard,

"Jack? Jack Stoddard, is that you?"

I turned around to see a young skinny soldier who was about three inches taller than me just smiling. I knew that smile! My mind searched all the faces from my past. Then it clicked! "Kenny, you old son of a bitch! What are you doing here?" It was great to see him. I couldn't even remember the last time that I had run into anybody from home. And to find an old friend in Vietnam was twice as nice.

After work we spent most of the night drinking beer and talking about the good old days on the Russian River. Kenny updated me on the happenings of all our friends. It seemed like most of them were in college trying to avoid the draft. That kind of upset me, but at least my friend Kenny was in the Army. It felt great that he was here with me. We spent a lot of time together and soon became even closer then we had been back in the world. I think the 'Nam had a way of doing that.

We were in different units, me as a tanker, and Kenny working in the Chemical Corps. His job was to help purify the drinking water for our whole base camp. Kenny wanted to be a combat soldier like me, but I told him his job was even more important then mine. A lot of men counted on that water and without it we couldn't do our jobs. I joined the ARPs about three months later. Kenny also tried, but his commander wouldn't let him go from his unit. It really upset Kenny as he wanted nothing less than to get into the action. He still wanted to become a combat soldier! He wanted that first fire fight.

We still remained good friends and would get together about once a month. I was now stationed out of Bien Hoa and Kenny was still at Xuan Loc. Six months later I would leave Vietnam and once again I didn't get to say good-bye to my old friend. It was December 1969. Merry Christmas, Kenny. A soldier like me didn't last long back in the world and by March 1970 I was once again riding a tank through the rice fields of Vietnam. This time I was way up north in a place called Quang-Tri.

About halfway into my second tour our unit was working around Khe Sanh. Just holding onto this piece of land had a reputation of being hard and dangerous work. Myself and my crew were just about worn out from the long hours, lack of sleep and constant off and on contact with the enemy. It had been a really long two weeks and we had just pulled back into the base camp and parked the Double Deuce next to the shower point. I was in the process of getting my shaving kit from the bussel

rack of the tank when I heard, "Jack? Jack Stoddard, is that you?"

Right away I recognized the voice and turned around expecting to see the same old friend I had left in Xuan Loc nine months earlier. What I saw sort of looked like Kenny only much older, tired and scared looking! I was taken aback by my friend's appearance, but I still managed to jump off of my tank and give this stranger a big and long hug. My awaiting hot shower no longer seemed important to me. I yelled up to Jim, my gunner, to throw us down two cold beers from our Mermite can.

Kenny and I sat on a large boulder and sipped our beers in silence for what seemed like an eternity. Then Kenny started to speak. He explained that he had finally become a combat soldier. He also had extended in Vietnam and had volunteered for sniper school. You could hear the excitement in his voice as he slowly started to sound like the Kenny I had always known. He told me all about the special weapons he so proudly carried and the training they had to go through. Then he started to shake and turn away from me as he started to tell me his terrible story.

My dear friend Kenny had just returned from the worst mission in his life. I really don't want to tell you his story. I can't, not even today. But what I can tell you is that four snipers had left Khe Sanh the night before and early this morning only Kenny had walked back in. He was now crying and asking for my advice on what he should do next. Should he quit or go back out? I took a long drink from my now warm beer. I told him if it was me I'd have to go back out at least one more time. Kenny just sat there nodding his head, yes, as if in agreement. We talked for a while longer, but I could see that my friend was far away in a different place and time. Soon Kenny, without saying a word, stood up gave me a long hug and walked away. I never saw or heard from him again.

In 1998 while doing research for my book, I found the phone number of my friend George and decided to call. After a while the conversation turned to Kenny. George said that Kenny had called him the year before around Christmas time. Kenny had made it home from Vietnam and graduated from college four years later. He became a successful design engineer. George said everything was going well for Kenny until he started getting flash backs of Vietnam, then everything fell apart. He had become an alcoholic and lost his job, home and money.

George thinks Kenny lives with his parents somewhere in California. He wouldn't leave his address or phone number with George.

I miss that skinny kid, even if he did manage to keep me in constant trouble! I'd give anything if it could be the way it used to be. Kenny and I skipping school, laughing and telling jokes as old Mr. Blue carried us off to the ocean.

The preceding piece is an excerpt from the book "What Are They Going To Do, Send Me To VietNam?" Written by Jack Stoddard. If you enjoyed this chapter you can purchase the entire book from Jack at: Sunrise Mountain Publishing, 5397 E. Washington Ave., Las Vegas, Nevada 89110. Phone: 702-459-4233. E-Mail jscb@lvcn.com. The price is \$16.00 which includes shipping and handling.

The Bond

by Talis Kaminskis

On a night quite dark, I sat and waited your coming. Who you were, I didn't know then, and I don't know to this day. Although since our meeting that night, you have been quite a part of my life. Many a time I have sat and talked to you; invited you into my home; shared the tales from that long ago past. I had you at quite a disadvantage that night. Waiting for you wasn't an accident, or a chance occurrence. You had done everything but issue me a written invitation, complete with road map. Broadcasting your coming appearance, we were well prepared to take you up on your offer. As I sat and waited, I gave very little thought to you at the time. Part of my thoughts drifted to my far off home. A home alien to the lifestyle I now led. Changing to memories of childhood friends whose antics seemed more like fairy tales. All the while though, a part of me kept attune to the serenade of, the night all around me. Taking nothing for granted, experience had given insight as to what belonged and what didn't. What didn't; did not necessarily mean danger, but it did bring instantly a return to complete alertness. Erasure of all non-vital senses. Quickly the mind went to work evaluating the intruding clues. What is was; how far away; the duration of it; the direction; the possible relationship of what I was doing out there. Without words everything was gathered, sifted, and rated. Wordlessly shared with the companion by my side. Thus it was the barking of dogs let us know you were on the move long before your

arrival. Very soon, I knew with a certainty that my wait would not be in vain. What little alterations needed to be made to my position, I made, and then settled down for the final wait. No more letting the mind drift; no more movement. My comrade and I were as still as the night had become around us. In the darkness not ten feet away, I watched the first of your party pass silently by. Armed and dangerous, we were not concerned with him. We had come here for you, and patience gained from many other nights like this, kept our growing highs in check. And then—then it was your turn. Very close, carrying rice, you and your remaining comrades, made your last fateful steps. They brought in range of two M-16's. Lightweight, deadly, you had no inkling they were there. Both sighted, so that their paths of human destruction would cross just where you happened to be. I imagine that a few of the people with you were also your friends, but that, like so much of your life, is only conjecture on my part. Your small party crossed into our established killing zone. I knew I had you. No doubts, no qualms, no misgivings. It wasn't hard at all. The squeeze of the triggers made no sound, and by the time any reaction on your part was possible, the first magazine was empty and the second finishing the task. The joint effect of our actions was devastating. I was entranced by consequences of what was happening. The bullets swept your group like a tractor at harvest. Only you were caught in the criss-cross of our two weapons. Like a puppet on a string, your body jerked and danced. A slow motion performance, the bullets keeping you up. Unable to fall, my fascination grew. Never had I been privy to such a private and intimate occurrence. The rice you had carried, pitched and flew to fall; again and again. A pseudo snowlike vision to blanket your diminishing stage. I saw and remember quite literally everything that night. Everything but your face. Everything but who you were. But then again, maybe I did not want to see it. I didn't hate you. I didn't even know you. Up until that time, you were a nobody to me. I had no regard for your emotions, your feeling. No respect for the same fear that you and I probably shared. Never thought about your home and family; the love that ended for them that night. No, to me you were only a job that had to be done, a stranger who had come a calling. And I had answered in a very deadly way. Much more deadlier than I had planned. Somehow with the passing of your life, I realized the futility of mine. A year and a half of my young life, I had spent seeking to

end the lives of others. I had seen blood run like water from a spring. Listened to the sounds of the maimed and the scared. Walked many a step hoping each would not be the last. And now, this night, with the chance meeting with you, it all reached my own private crescendo. I knew inside that my usefulness in this game was over. Just as it was for you, it now was for me. In that instant I lost the edge that had protected me for so long. My mind, my body were tired. Slowly I stood, holding my empty weapon in one hand, a full magazine that would never be loaded in the other. With a resigned relief I faced in the direction of your point man. Already I could see the evidence of the gun he carried. The tracer rounds gave his position away, but I no longer cared. Closer and closer, the points of light came. There was no fear, no anger, no pleading to keep on living. Just a waiting release from all the pain and anguish. A rest from the strain that had so long been kept in check. But alas my dear friend, your destiny was not to be directly mine. The bullet I sought, came and went. And I still stood. Stood shocked that I lived, stood shocked at my wait. A hammer blow had hit me, and brought me back to the living. The suddenness and force of the blow, a message to run and live. And so I ran, a fist sized hole in my back. A permanent reminder to carry, to remember you by. Ran with the vision of our meeting, with the thoughts of my deed, ran with my blood watering the ground. Seeing you now, as I saw you that night, you have not aged, neither have you changed. We have become good friends discussing so much. Many a night we have shared without light. So come in and enter, any time that you wish, my house is yours, and the bond between us means so much.

Vagabond

by Sandra Hill

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His crumpled form was huddled seeking shelter from the cold,

with heavy heart and soulful eyes he watched the night unfold.

The city folk just passed him by, oblivious of his plight,

and as the rain began to fall he settled for the night.

He wondered how things got so bad and where it all would end,

his past just full of broken dreams, the future not his friend.

A vagabond they called him, a rogue, a rolling stone,

unfettered by convention with no place to call his own.

He dreamed of places far away, strains of a lullaby,

precious moments long since gone just made him want to cry.

Reality was far too stark, its price too high to pay,

he yearned for a release from life, with no desire to stay.

"You're a derelict! A down and out!", they shouted in his dream,

recollections of a time when he was warm, secure and clean.

To when his body didn't ache, before he got this old,

to cherished aspirations of a life yet to unfold.

Sometimes dreams collapse, fate intervenes and plays its hidden hand,

the sudden spiral downwards can be hard to understand.

Just a fugitive from life itself, in search of peace of mind,

tethered to a pipe dream which long since he'd left behind.

A vagabond they called him, a rogue, a rolling stone,

he finally surrendered, took the hand which led him home.

As the stars receded heavenwards he did not greet the dawn,

just a solitary silhouette, a soul forever gone.

"Untitled"

by Timothy Pipes Bravo 1/26

*The Siege—What is it? What was it? How, O Lord can I
comprehend?*

*I wasn't there, but I was literally dying, six month old, at the
beginning; desperate,*

*cold and hungry just the same! But, why O Lord can't I
comprehend?*

*I have listened and I have read; I have seen the "thousand yard
stare!" Why can't I*

*comprehend? I wish I knew, but I don't, in a way you Khe Sanh
Veterans couldn't*

*comprehend! Why? Because I wasn't there and neither were you
all here; here*

*in my shoes and my shoes are heavy! Heavy with the burden of
trying to understand!*

*Oh, why can't I comprehend? I wish I could—maybe it wasn't
meant for my eyes*

and my heart—But, why can't I comprehend; I wish I could!

*Lord, I was lying near lifeless while you had my Dad at the land of
Khe Sanh—*

But, I don't understand why my Dad was in a lifeless land!

*What you all went through I pray I never can comprehend; but
please, O Lord, help me
understand!*

Semper Fidelis

*Tim is the son of Lt. Col. and Mrs. Kenneth W. Pipes, USMC, (Ret.). Tim
was six weeks old when his dad went to Viet Nam; his brother, Dan, was
2¹/₂. Their mom and dad will celebrate their 39th Wedding Anniversary
December 9, 2000.*



Alpha - 1/9. From top: Cpl. Robert H Littlefield [KIA, Khe Sanh Hill 689],
Issac Lunke [w/a], George Eihorn [w/a]

Cpl. Robert H. Littlefield KIA Tues. April 16, 1968

by Suzi Littlefield

Bobby

*I was so blessed to find you
The person I was born to love
The special kind of love we shared
If only for a short time*

*You changed my life with just one kiss
You surpassed my everything
You gave your all in life and love
If only for a short time*

*You were all I ever wanted
You are all I'll ever need
I wish everyone could know this kind
of love
If only for a short time*

*Life is not forever
Love is
Your wife
If only for a short time*

Suzi

