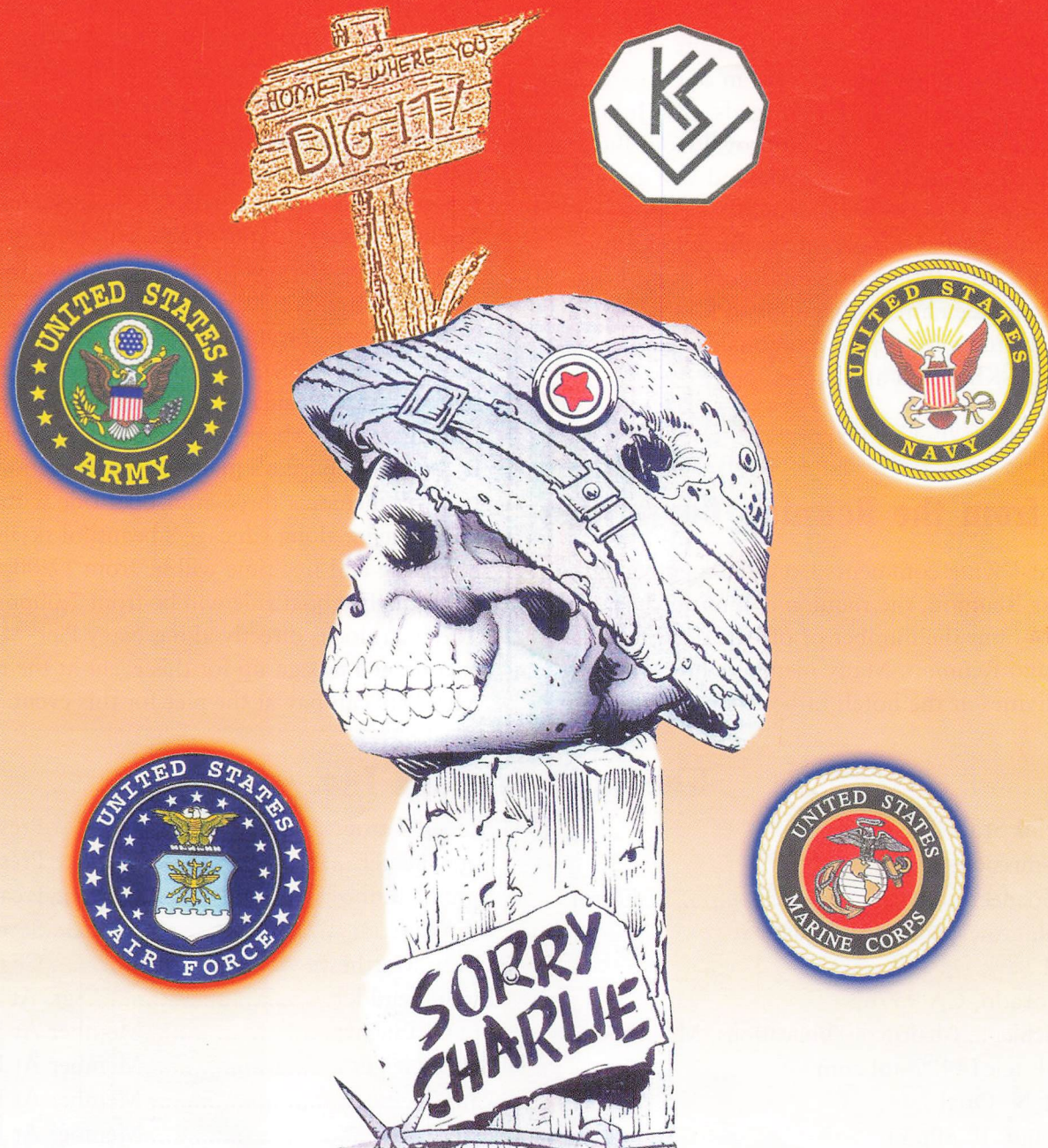


KHE SANH



In this issue...

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Secretary's Notes

Khe Sanh Veterans New Message Board

Since the last reunion we have started a new message board. This site is paid for by members of the KSV. Members are required to register, and names and information, can only be viewed by members. We presently have 128 members. This site is at www.khesanh.org. To register, sign in our guest book, then click on the link that reads <Big John send me the password>. After approval from Big John, you sign a registration form, and you are able to post messages. Welcome aboard.

Also at www.khesanh.org site is the Khe Sanh Veterans PX and 2005 Khe Sanh Reunion information, and membership applications to join Khe Sanh veterans, pictures from past reunions, pictures from 66-67-68 of Khe Sanh and more.

Big John Pessoni Secretary

Notes from the Reunion Committee

After reviewing comments from the membership at the Dallas Reunion, the reunion committee has decided to limit the number of off-site activities at the Chicago Reunion. Many members have suggested more activities at the hotel, rather than activities

requiring group travel. In response we have decided to hire our own transportation. These mini-buses will be operated by veteran Police Officers who have volunteered their time and are very familiar with Chicago and surrounding communities. This transportation will be available day & night, for small or large groups of members who wish to visit the many sites that the City of Chicago has to offer. They will drop off and pick up members at regularly scheduled sites, as well as personal requested visits to other sites not on the regular schedule. Each day the vehicles will make scheduled trips to shopping areas, museums, amusement parks, famous Chicago landmarks, and restaurants. There will be a one-time fee of \$10.00 assessed with the registration fee for this transportation.

We have one group trip planned for Friday the 15th of July to Navy Pier. Here there are a myriad of activities on this peninsula that extends into Lake Michigan, from shopping and a fun amusement park. It is one of Chicago's main tourist attractions. This trip will include a three-hour boat ride with dinner and dancing along Chicago's beautiful skyline. Shopping and free time will be from 12:00pm-6:00pm. The boat ride will be from 7:00pm-10:00pm. The boat docks directly along Navy Pier. Members are encouraged to sign up for this event at the reunion. Members can pay at the pier for this event.

Khe Sanh Veterans Inc.

Editorial Staff

All submissions go to:

Ernie SpencerEditor

email: erniespencer@comcast.net

3811 Park Dr.

El Dorado, CA 95762

Tom EichlerChairman Publications, Membership

email: teic1448@aol.com

3221 N. Opal

Chicago, IL 60634

James Wodecki, John Pessoni ...Web Page Editors

www.khesanh.org

Diana F. FecarottaEditing Director

Leo Wong.....Design/Layout

James "Jimbo" WodeckiTreasurer

2200 McGarity Ln

Allen, TX 75002

Russell Turner.....President

Tom Eichler.....Vice President

James "Jimbo" WodeckiTreasurer

John PessoniSecretary

Owen MatthewsChaplain

Lloyd Scudder.....Sgt. At Arms

Frank TaggartMember At Large

Bruce GeigerMember At Large

Cliff Treese.....Member At Large

Dale Pack.....Member At Large

Ronald ShouseMember At Large

Thomas FordMember At Large

Robert Moxley.....Member At Large

Dan FisherMember At Large

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Note from Chairman, Membership & Publishing Committee

With your magazine you will find new pages for your membership directory with changes since November 2004. There were over 300 changes in that short period of time, so you can see why it is important to immediately inform me when there are changes in your personal records (address, phone, email). If you know the location of any member who has moved and who has left no forwarding address per listing, please inform me so we may get them back on the mailing rolls.

Tom Eichler

Editorial Note

Although our **Red Clay** magazine has almost exclusively published stories and articles pertaining to our experiences at Khe Sanh, we have made the decision to dedicate a new section of this publication to our brave young men fighting the war in Iraq. So much misinformation has been reported concerning the actions of these young warriors that we felt obligated to publish true stories of their heroic actions. Most of these articles have been sent by our own Khe Sanh veterans, who brought them to my attention.

Note from Editor

Everyone says how much they love our magazine. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, we need more personal stories. You will note that we are having to go "outside" of Khe Sanh for our stories to fill our magazine. This is not our wish. Sometime back I went up on the message board and asked for stories. I received promises that have not been fulfilled. As I stated on the message board, your musings on the message board only last a couple of weeks then they are gone forever. Our magazine will be kept by Texas Tech and other schools "forever." We are a historical society. Do your part. Tell your story.

Book Review – Con Thien: The Hill of Angels

Reviewed by Lt Col. Kenneth W. Pipes, USMC (Ret)

With this sterling book, Captain Coan, Marine Tanker, wounded Vietnam Veteran and combat leader of many battles fought against the experienced and professional North Vietnamese Army in and around "The Hill of Angels," has arrived as a riveting and knowledgeable Marine Corps historian! In my opinion, with the publication of this detailed and well researched work, he joins a small, elite band of Marine authors, who expand the grasp and understanding of a confusing period of the Marine Corps heroic battles in the far northern provinces of South Vietnam!

Unlike most authors, Captain Coan made a bold and commendable decision early in his organizational research period. He would focus his research on the continuing Battles of Con Thien within a four-grid-square area and include all units, operations and major combat actions. Thus, everything that occurred in this arbitrary zone from 1967 until 1969 when the area became the responsibility of the South Vietnamese is included. Major operations in this time period in and around Con Thien will be more than familiar to those that fought and survived these fierce battles: Prairie III, Prairie IV, Hickory, Cimmarron, Buffalo, Kingfisher and Kentucky to mention just a few of the major actions! Marine casualty totals, when viewed in this correct manner are staggering: over 1400 Killed In Action and 9,200 wounded in action.

Impressively, the author's decision moved his writings from personal recollections, which is the format of many books written about Vietnam, to an all encompassing and well documented historical overview of major events surrounding the titanic struggles between our Marines and the NVA for control of this key piece of terrain. Consciously and commendably this approach highlights the individual courageous actions of Marines — from PFC to company grade officers. You will recognize the names of and remember many of these stalwart Marine warriors. I sure did! Details that you may not have known become rhyme and reason for the saga of Marine courage and tenacity — in any clime and place! Rightfully so, few senior Marine Field Grade

or General Officers are mentioned. The war in Northern I Corps and their civilian counterparts neither tactically nor strategically was something many of them could nor should be proud of!

Documented here and in the recently published book, "Khe Sanh, The First Battle of the Hills," are the terrible screw-ups regarding the M-16. Though they were wrong, very senior Marines in Vietnam and Headquarters Marine Corps blamed the Marine Infantrymen for not cleaning their weapons properly and their combat leaders for not correctly supervising this necessary combat evolution. They were terribly and tragically wrong in their assessments and testimony before Congress! It was they who were negligent for not giving their last full measure of devotion in defense of their Marines against these dastardly and cowardly accusations! Marines were fighting and dying as they repeatedly and successfully executed Regimental and Division orders — orders that precluded our attack into NVA artillery, staging and marshalling areas just to the north of the Ben Hai River. Few senior civilian or military leaders were as willing to go into the breach for their Marines or Soldiers. As Captain Coan documents, the Marines on the sacred ground in and around Con Thien did not have this luxury! Like their French Foreign Legion predecessors, they marched and died, while their senior civilian and military leaders were generally not willing to place their careers in jeopardy by fighting for necessary life saving changes to the convoluted rules of engagement and failed strategy!

Captain Coan's research moved the stories of the murder of Marine prisoners of war by the NVA from the realm of rumor to fact. The skinning and nailing of bodies to trees, desecration of our dead and wounded by unspeakable mutilation have all been moved from the shadows into the harsh light of day! Was it better that this information was kept (to the extent possible) out of hands of the Marines on the ground? You who were there have your own opinions! Personally, speaking as a rifle company commander at Khe Sanh during the Siege, we and our Marines had a need to know this information!

This outstanding historical writing builds upon the groundwork laid by the Reverend Ray Stubbe and others who have written similar works about the many battles in and around Khe Sanh. The operational battles of Con Thien and Khe Sanh frequently

changed names. The reality is that only the name of the operation changed. The committed forces on either side remained much the same, as they were funneled into and out of these meat grinders. Captain Coan's commendable research approach documents the terrible cost in Marines and Soldiers killed, maimed and wounded. Remember: 1419+ killed and 9265 wounded in a two-year period within four grid squares of the "Hill of Angels." It should come as no surprise to those who buy this book that some of the units that fought at Con Thien were then sent to Khe Sanh for the "Battle for the Hills" and "The Siege," before returning to the never ending struggle for control of Con Thien. As we used to say with great justification, "one good deal after the other!"

For the serious historian and Vietnam Marine and Army Veterans who survived the carnage in Northern I Corps, this outstanding book is an absolute must buy! When the reader adds Captain Coan's superb book to "Khe Sanh, The First Battle of the Hills," they will have a nearly complete picture of this trying and demanding time in our Marine Corps history. For our professional cadre of NCOs and officers, the long running fiasco of our experience in that time and place became a template for how not to fight a war. These Marines, who were later to occupy senior positions in our Corps, changed the way we would conduct our future war fighting! Out of the dismal failure of members of the "Greatest Generation" in Vietnam arose the success of Desert Storm and the initial success of the second war with Iraq! With its publication, Captain Jim P. Coan deserves only the highest praise for his book and has earned the support of our loyal Corps of readers! Well done, sir and congratulations!

Captain Coan is an active member of the Khe Sanh Veterans.

CON THIEN: *The Hill of Angels*, by James P. Coan (University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 35487-0380 ISBN 0-8173-1414-8 360 pp.) \$29.95. (for members \$26.95)

Lt Col. Pipes retired in 1982 and lives in Fallbrook, CA.

Memorial Notes

Representing the Khe Sanh Veterans, I attended the funeral of James Storc of A Co 3Rd SP, who died after a fight from cancer. James was a gifted athlete and played softball (16-inch Chicago-style), most of his short life. The many people paying their last respects came from all walks of life: former Marines, police officers and motorcycle enthusiast. James was a Life Member of the Khe Sanh Veterans. I met him at the reunion held in Chicago in 2000. Although he lived a short distance away, I never really got to know him. While paying my respects, I discovered that I was a few years older than Jim, but we grew up in the same neighborhood and had the same childhood group of friends, who greatly admired him. What a small world. Jim leaves two young twin daughters and a lovely wife and will be missed by all. His two best friends, Joe and Jim Krzak, both former Marines, called Jim "The Colonel." Both said; "Our country lost a hero, and we lost our brother and best friend. We will miss him dearly."

Tom Eichler



John Noon writes that John W. Greene was a true friend and a great Marine, who could have been removed from a combat zone after receiving 3 Purple

Hearts. He refused because he promised John Noon's mother, that he would watch over him. While keeping that promise, John was KIA after the tank he was riding on struck a mine during a combat operation. John Noon still thinks about his friend every day.



David P. Leitch was an international news reporter that was with the Khe Sanh Veterans during the battle of Khe Sanh. His articles focused on the life conditions of the men. His articles reflected a great concern for our welfare. He often spoke to me, and related the agony he still felt for those who endured at Khe Sanh. He was a Life Member of our organization. Two of his writings on Khe Sanh were printed in the book *Deadline, Collected Journalism* (published in London by Harrup in 1984, "Inside Khe Sanh," pp.6-13; and "Khe Sanh-Two," pp.20-24).

Ray Stubbe



Father Thomas S Stott passed away 18 Jan 2005. Tom served two tours as a corpsman in Vietnam with G Co 2/26, 67-68 and B Co 1/7 in 1970. Tom became a Catholic priest and served several churches in North Carolina. He was a loyal Khe Sanh Veteran and will be missed by all. Our condolences to his loving family.

Memorial Page

Those Remembered

PFC Bruce Cunningham, C Co 1/26, USMC KIA 08 Feb 68
 Wilbur (Willie) Stovall, HQ Btry 1/13, USMC, KIA 09 Mar 68
 Sgt. Neil Tycz, A / 3rd Recon, USMC, KIA 10 May 67
 L/Cpl. Edward Day, NC, L Co 3/3, USMC, KIA 26 Aug 68
 Thomas M White, G Co 2/4, USMC, KIA 01 May 68
 L/Cpl. James M. Mullins, USMC, KIA 25 Mar 68
 HN Jose Lopez, 2/26, USN, KIA 18 Apr 68
 PFC Walter Tyrz, A Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 14 Mar 68
 2Lt David C Ferguson, C 3RD Recon, USMC, KIA 05 Mar 69
 Cpl. Ruben C McMackins Jr, L Co 3/26, USMC, KIA 14 Apr 68
 Cpl. John W Greene, C Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 04 Jul 68
 L/Cpl. Paul F. Stedman, A Co 3RD SP, USMC, KIA 26 Feb 68
 PFC Ted Britt, C Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 30 Mar 68
 SW2 Edward Cody Adams, CBMU-301, USN, KIA 16 Apr 68
 Sam Lightman, D Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 02 Nov 66
 L/Cpl. Thomas J McManus, C Btry 1/12, USMC, KIA 06 Jun 68
 HN Robert "Doc" Aucoin, D Co 1/26, USN, KIA 27 Jul 68
 PFC Edward L Towslee, A Co 1/9, USMC, KIA 04 Apr 68
 L/Cpl. Michael J Kilderry, C Co 1/4, USMC, KIA 06 Jul 68
 2Lt Thomas Hoare, USMC, KIA 18 Jan 68
 GySgt. Di Reyes Ibanez, A / 3rd Recon, USMC, KIA 05 Jun 67
 L/Cpl. Frederick W Bivens, H Co 2/3, USMC, KIA 30 Apr 67
 PFC Ezekeil T Exum, A Co 1/5, USMC, KIA 22 Feb 67
 George King, C Co 1/4, USMC, KIA 05 Jun 68
 Timothy R Cox, H Co 2/26, USMC, KIA 13 Mar 67
 Ralph Padilla (Manny), K Co 3/4, USMC, KIA 18 Jun 68
 HM2 James D Raab, C Co 1/26, USN, KIA 12 Jun 68
 Cpt. Walter "Jack" Egger, C Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 22 Mar 68
 GySgt. John J Grohman, C Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 22 Mar 68
 1LT Paul W Bush, C Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 22 Mar 68
 L/Cpl. Stephen C Shannon, C Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 22 Mar 68
 PFC Bennie J Sisson, C Co 1/26, USMC, KIA 22 Mar 68
 Sgt. Manuel Martinez "Dusters" A -1/44, USA, KIA 09 Jun 68
 Maj Harry M. Ravenna III, 2/94TH Arty, USA, KIA 03 Jun 75
 Doug Meredith
 All of 1/26 Who Gave All, USMC
 2ND Platoon, E Co 2/26, USMC, 06 Jul 68
 All Active Corpsmen & Their Marines
 3rd Bn 26TH Marines
 All of Fox Co 2/26
 Tommy W Lassiter, M Co 3/26, USMC, 10 Apr 04
 A Company, 3RD Engrs, USMC
 1st Lt Lewis B Puller Jr, 3/1, USMC

Remembered by:

Barry Cunningham (Brother)
 Robert Holscher, HQ 1/13
 Sharon L. Pelon
 Michael Fleming, E Co 2/26
 William R. Yates, W 1/13
 Max L. Welden, B Co 11Th Engr
 Rick C Zunnio, A Co 1/26
 Rick C Zunnio, A Co 1/26
 Daniel Ferguson, W 1/13 Brother
 Thomas Pierce, L Co 3/26
 John M. Moon, C Co 1/26
 C.T. Green, A Co 3RD SP
 Mr&Mrs Michael McCauley
 Larry Kubley, CBMU-301
 John Peterson, D Co 1/26
 John Fedyszyn, C Btry 1/12
 "Doc" Bob Cahill, D Co 1/26
 Terry N Tillery, C Co 1/4
 Terry N Tillery, C Co 1/4
 Bruce Lewy, E Co 2/26
 Whipple Ibanez (Brother)
 Eugene P Lessman Jr, FLSU -2
 Eugene P Lessman Jr, FLSG-A
 Dan L Burton, C Co 1/4
 Roger D. Chicoine, H Co 2/26
 Louis R Menacho, K Co 3/4
 Lee D Rimkus, C Co 1/26
 Bruce Geiger, A Btry 1/44
 Bruce Geiger, A Btry 1/44
 Bruce Geiger, A Btry 1/44
 Bruce Geiger, A Btry 1/44
 Bruce Geiger, A Btry 1/44
 Bruce Geiger, A Btry 1/44
 Bruce Geiger, A Btry 1/44
 Mark Swearengen, 2/94TH Arty
 Mark Swearengen, 2/94TH Arty
 James B. Wilkinson, (LtCol) 1/26
 Jeff Bodenweiser, E Co 2/26
 Kevin J Cotter, HM-2 MACG-18
 Richard Gallegos, I Co 3/26
 Richard Soto F Co 2/26 Cpl.
 John J. Lassiter M Co 3/26
 John Pessoni A Co 3RD Engrs
 Col William Dabney C/O I Co 3/26

Memorial Page

Those Remembered

Dr Donald J. Magilligan Jr, USN, Passed Away
 John R Heinrich, I Co 3/26, USMC, 22 Apr 95
 David P Leitch, Writer, CIV, 03 Dec 04
 Michael P. Rossi, 75TH INF AB, USA, 13 Nov 04
 Raymond Barnwell, F CO 2/1, USMC, 11 Oct 04
 Gary West, C CO 1/26, USMC
 Larry Goeske, MACTU-62, USMC, 21 Mar 03
 Alex Stokes, G Btry 1/12, USMC
 James Storck, A Co 3rd SP, USMC, 09 Dec 04
 FR Thomas D Stott, (HN) G Co 2/26, USN, 18 Jan 05
 Charlotte Everley, Passed Away, Mother of James Everley G/2/26
 John C. Lane, H&S Co 1/26, USMC, 22 Jan 05
 John Subbiondo, H&S CO 3/26, USMC, 22 Jan 05

Remembered by:

Danette Magilligan (Wife)
 Christine M Heinrich (Wife)
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Jim & Joe Krzak (Friends)
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans
 Khe Sanh Veterans

Donations

ADAMS, Harry J Jr
 AMBROSE, James F
 ANDERSON, Raymond P
 ANDRES, Gregory R
 ARBOLEDA, Robert J
 BILOVECKY, Michael II
 BODENWEISER, Jeff
 BURTON, Daniel L
 CAMPO, Carl C
 CASEY, Maurice
 COTTER, Kevin J
 CRUZ, Raymond
 CURRY, Parris D.
 DABNEY, William H
 DWORSKY, Richard F
 FAMIANO, Louis V
 FESSENDEN, Gregory L
 FORBES, James M
 FOSTER, Douglas W
 GAROUTTE, Michael L
 GREEN, C.T.

HADDAD, Steven L
 HALL, John E
 HALLER, Thomas L
 HAQQ, Talib-Abdul
 HEINO, Jack L
 HENDRY, David J
 HERNANDEZ, John G
 HOLSCHER, Robert J
 KUBLEY, Lawrence W
 LEAHY, Michael M
 LITTLE, Michael J
 MATASICH, Robert T
 McCAULEY, Michael H
 McCROSSEN, John P
 MILES, James J
 MILLOCK, Carl P
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 OTOOLE, David
 F OTTERAAEN, Robert M
 PELON, Sharon L.
 PETERSON, John F

PIERCE, Thomas A
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 SHOUSE, Ronald E
 SILVA, Wayne H
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 TIERNEY, Mark F
 TILLERY, Terry
 TOMER, Charles D
 TURNER, Franklin Jr.
 VARELA, Senico
 VINING, Francis E
 WIEDHAHN, Warren H
 WILKINSON, James B
 WONDERS, William K
 WRIGHT, Phillip J
 ZDUNCZYK, Richard

VA Health News

Help the VA Help You?

by Patrick G. Brady

To Those Who Served:

We are at WAR and have a medical system in the Veterans Administration that is in crisis. Care is a disaster as it tries to put a patch on the dam holding back old problems, along with current problems, and make adjustments for perceived future problems. It is time to step back and look at what is working and what is not. All of our VA Medical Centers are affiliated with a University Medical School, which use us veterans to train their interns and residents. In past years, some within the system had the foresight to set up accredited fellowship programs that granted physicians Board Certification in a particular specialty, such as cardiology, endocrinology, neurology, radiology, neuro-radiology and spinal cord injury and so on. It used to be that these physicians would have to commit to so many years of service within the VA to gain access to these programs but as years passed, these programs were slowly eliminated as not being cost effective.

What they failed to realize was that in doing away

with these programs, they did away with a source of future specialists and thus put the load on the staff on hand. Through attrition, we now find ourselves in the CRISIS we are in today. Nursing had similar programs with either a two-year nursing program at community colleges, four-year programs from the universities, or nurse-assistant programs that were set up at the high school level which, upon completion, gave the individual a General Education Equivalency Degree — all at local VA facilities. This was seen by some as being too expensive and that is why we have staffing problems in some facilities today. We need to renegotiate our affiliations with the universities and create through Congressional incentives, if necessary, a return to these types of programs for the facilities that do not have them.

The cost of it will be far less in lives lost due to poor care. Currently, good physicians are stressed to the limit. I stress the fact that these programs be accredited as this is the only way it would end up being an asset to the Veterans Hospital System. There is no reason why we should not have an accredited fellowship program in every Veterans Medical Facility in every specialty that the facility has.

I ask that you copy this and send it to your local Congressmen and Senators.

Oops...

On page 28 of the Fall 2004 issue of **Red Clay**, the article "A Patrol Gone Bad," lists Tom Ford as the author. It should read Tom Howard. The name is also incorrect in the picture at the bottom of the page. Sorry, Tom. Fat thumbs.

On page 52, the caption at the bottom of the picture of the KSV Board of Directors, incorrectly has Bob Mills listed. It should read Robert Moxley. Sorry, Bob.

— Tom Eichler

No Greater Love Hath a Man

by Joyce Greenwood

In July of last year I had the opportunity to attend the Khe Sanh reunion with my husband in Irving, Texas. The men and the stories they shared was an experience for me that I would like to share. My husband is a proud Marine who served in the deadliest battle (77 days under constant siege from the North Vietnamese) in the Vietnam War's history.

My weekend experience with these brothers (Marines) changed my way of thinking forever. I will never understand what they went through. I wasn't there. They were. However, I can now understand what they meant when some Marines are called the "walking dead." Our men all gave the ultimate sacrifice for all of us.

When we arrived at the Omni Hotel there were groups of men sitting together, and there were those who sat alone with a blank stare. We gathered for the reception that afternoon, and my husband met another Marine who served in his same unit. This individual had been bayoneted eight times and was presumed dead. He was placed in a body bag. But, medical personnel noticed movement in the bag — he was still alive! He is a living testimony of someone who was determined to live despite his injuries. At the same gathering was another veteran who was also cared for by his nurse. This Marine is paralyzed from the neck down and can only move his eyes. My husband and I acknowledged him with a smile and a pat on his arm. He responded with a beautiful smile.

Another veteran walked in with no hands, the lower portions of both arms were gone. That reminded me of a quote, "I complained I had no shoes, until I met a man with no feet." This was the veteran who carried in the Marine flag during the ceremony that evening.

The evening ceremony began with the salute of flags. After the prayer the various flags — Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Marine — were carried in by their respected veterans. The veteran with no hands carried the Marine flag. He struggled to carry the flag, but he did it. All the brothers saluted him and shouted their hoorah! You would have to have been there to experience that salute, and the grunt of the Marines in unison. I asked my husband how they knew to shout at the same time. He said that it was the sergeant's tone of voice and training he had had

as a Marine. I noticed that when the flags were being carried, all the veterans stood at attention. An Indian veteran at our table who was crippled and somewhat bent over, stood tall and tears came from his eyes as he watched his brother struggle to carry the flag. Another veteran had to hold up his right arm with his left arm during the salute. His arm had been re-attached, and he could not use it.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the medals to various veterans. A soldier, who had just returned from the Iraq War a week before, was present and he gave an update on the war. He carried in a helmet and lit the candle for the "Missing Man." He asked for our understanding. It was going to be hard for him to talk of the war because he had not yet talked about it to anyone. He asked for a moment of silence for one of his brothers who took the hit and was killed. He said it should have been him, but instead his brother had shielded him. This was an emotional time for some of the veterans present. I observed very few cried — most had only blank stares and looked at the floor. I, along with other veterans' wives, were the ones who cried silently.

We wives were honored and presented a sterling silver necklace with a medicine wheel emblem and the letters "KS" inscribed in the middle of the emblem. The officer said that if the significant others had not been there for their men, who knows where they would be now? Our young men were rejected when they returned from the war. Some did not fit into the mainstream of society. Instead, they used drugs and booze to soothe their pain and injuries. This is the sad reality of war. Today, many veterans isolate themselves and are homeless, or sit in institutions because of no support system at home. Our society is ignorant and does not understand what sacrifices our men endured for our freedom.

As I observed these men and heard their stories, I thought of the appropriate scripture passage which says: "No Greater Love hath a man than he would lay down his own life for his brother." I said this to myself every time a medal was presented to a veteran.

This experience made me realize that even if some of our veterans may not have the visible scars on the outside, they have scars on the inside. War is so ugly a word. It changes the lives of our men who fought and are still fighting today so that we may enjoy our freedom. I am sure that if my husband's mother were alive today she would say: "My son is not the same

person he was when he left for the war.”

These brave men gave the ultimate sacrifice when they went to war to fight for our freedom. With this in mind, as Veteran's Day approaches, be mindful of this. Don't take this day for granted as just another day. Show your utmost respect for those veterans you meet. Say a silent prayer for those families who were not as fortunate as us who had our loved ones return from the war.

Our Roving Ambassadors Do It Again

by Ron Shouse

Here we are for another great Veterans Day celebration. A day off, with picnics, parties, football, and beer drinking. I remember when it was just another day — like November 11, 1967. Back then, some of us probably thought absolutely nothing about the importance of it. Little did we know that this was the last Veterans Day that some of our brothers would ever celebrate, and within a little over two months we would all experience what is our bond to each other and a big page in the History of Vietnam.

For years, I tried to forget the 'Nam and did not celebrate this holiday for our Brothers. But alas, I kept seeing some of them on a regular basis in dreams and thoughts and found out later that I have PTSD. I try to remember the good things we did and the laughs we had, rather than the things that all of us would just as soon forget. If we do not remember the Brothers we lost, they will be forgotten. This is the reason that I volunteer for veterans programs in my community. I know we were taught to NEVER VOLUNTEER, but if somebody doesn't step up, it will not get done. I belong to Post 290 of the American Legion. We do the military funerals, parades and any other patriotic programs for our community. So here I am, the tallest guy in the squad (as all of you can tell), out front to give the command for the 21-gun salute for our fallen heroes at the dedication of the Veterans Memorial in our local park. This monument dedication was for the City of King, County of Stokes, in North Carolina. The theme was “ALL GAVE SOME — SOME GAVE ALL.” I wonder who suggested this? A few years ago when I was part of a dedication at another memorial, I sent in pictures and wrote to say “Gentlemen, raise your glass, this one is for YOU.” Now I say “Gentlemen, raise your glass, because this one is for THEM.”



Honor guard salute

KSV Members Still Serving Lands of Russia Ministry Cadence International

by Dr. David L. Meschke, Chaplain 1/26 Khe Sanh

PURPOSE – To proclaim the gospel of Christ and disciple believers in the military communities (military forces and their families, retired military, and civilians working in the military community) in nations of the former Soviet Union.

STRATEGY - Cadence International is partnering with the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (UECB), a well-established and growing evangelical church in countries of the former Soviet Union. Working together, we identify within their churches former military personnel who have biblical training and who sense the Lord's calling to minister to their military forces and communities, which as yet do not have official military chaplaincies. The UECB assigns these men and their wives to do military ministry, with Cadence providing them prayer support, financial support, and encouragement.

CURRENT STATUS – Our first selection and supporting of military workers took place in Belarus in early 1997, then followed in Ukraine and in Russia during 1998. Additional workers have been appointed each year since then. At the present time, a total of twenty nine national workers are working full-time in military ministry in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, together with their wives, supported financially by praying donors who provide them funds through Cadence International.

In addition, God has brought Alex and Isabel Jaruchik to serve alongside Dave and Betty Meschke in this unique Cadence ministry. Alex is well known among believers in the former Soviet Union, having translated Dr. J. Vernon McGee's radio program "Through the Bible" into Russian language for twenty-five years. Alex now prepares Bible teaching radio programs which are aired four times weekly by Far East Broadcasting Company, targeting military people in the Lands of Russia. Alex also serves as Dave's translator when they visit our workers in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

Military people and their family members are coming to Christ, being baptized, and then being disciplined in the Christian faith. Many Bible studies are being conducted. Churches have even been organized in military villages (we would say "military housing

areas") adjacent to military bases, and some of them have already acquired their own houses of prayer (we would say "church buildings"). Over three hundred thousand Gospels of John have been distributed by our military workers.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORSHIP NEEDED – Will you prayerfully consider helping to sponsor one of our workers, by prayer and financial support? Financial support for these national workers varies from \$200 to \$300 monthly, depending on the size of their family and their geographical location. We have several workers who still lack a portion of their support, and we have recently appointed additional new workers for whom we have only a small amount of support. Support in any amount will be appreciated. You may make your check payable to "Cadence International," and send it to P.O. Box 1268, Englewood, CO 80150, together with a separate note that your gift is for support of one of our Lands of Russia workers.

Thank you and may God bless you.

Dr. David L. Meschke, Director of Lands of Russia Ministry, Cadence International, 6763 S. High Street, Centennial, CO 80122-1331. Phone: 303-794-0095; E-mail: dave_meschke@cadence.org

Biography

Dr. David L. (Dave) Meschke is the former General Director of Cadence International, the mission known for its first forty years as Overseas Christian Servicemen's Centers, or OCSC. Dave is the founder and leader of Cadence International's "Lands of Russia Ministry," evangelizing among the military forces and families in nations of the former Soviet Union.

Dave was reared in a Christian home in southern Minnesota and trusted Christ as his Savior at the age of twelve. He received his formal training at



Oleg, Nastya, Vadim, Mikhail, guest Dick Barnes and Dave

Wheaton College and Dallas Theological Seminary. Following ordination and a short pastorate in Oklahoma, he was commissioned a Navy chaplain in 1957 with the endorsement of IFCA International.

During twenty-one years of active duty service in the Navy, Chaplain Meschke served more than eight years in ships, aboard Destroyer Squadron 26, USS AJAX, USS CORAL SEA, and USS PROTEUS. Much of this time was spent at sea in the Caribbean and Western Pacific areas. He served at Navy bases in Tennessee, Illinois, Florida, California and Rhode Island, and at Marine bases in California and North Carolina. He also served with a Marine combat infantry battalion (1 8t Battalion, 26th Marines, Fifth Marine Division) in the Republic of South Vietnam for one year.

Dave left active duty with the Navy in 1978 to become the General Director of Cadence International. Founded by Jesse Miller and other former GIs in 1954, Cadence now numbers 250 missionaries who lead ministries in some sixty locations near military bases in Korea, Japan, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and sixteen states in the U. S. including Alaska and Hawaii.

Dr. Meschke also served from 1981 to 1994 as leader of the military chaplaincy program for IFCA International, known now as Bible Churches Chaplaincy. During those years the number of their chaplains serving in the Armed Forces more than doubled. Dr. Meschke has served in other offices of IFCA International, including the office of National President from 1993 to 1996.

After leading Cadence International for seventeen years, Dave relinquished leadership of the mission in 1995 to pursue gospel ministry to the military forces of nations of the former Soviet Union. To date these nations do not have official military chaplains to

carry on religious ministries. He has established a partnering relationship between Cadence and the largest evangelical Protestant church body in these nations. American donors to Cadence are providing prayer and financial support for twenty-nine former Soviet military men and their families, mostly former officers, who are now engaged in evangelistic outreach to their own military forces in three nations of the former Soviet Union, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Dave has made twenty-one ministry trips to these countries, providing training and encouragement, as well as financial support, to those national workers.

In 1950 Dave married his college sweetheart, Elizabeth ("Betty") Warren, of Oak Park, Illinois. They now live in Centennial, Colorado, near Denver. They have five adult children, one of whom is serving in Christian ministry, fifteen grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

In 2003, Dr. Meschke was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Rocky Mountain Bible College and Seminary, located in the Denver area, for his forty-six years of faithful ministry to the military forces of America and of other countries.

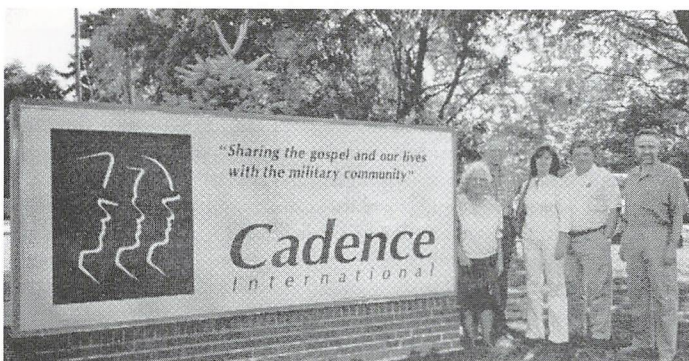


Dave and Betty Meschke

Khe Sanh Community Library Fund

by Chuck (Lt. Col., USMCR, Ret.) and Laurelyn Gaede

March 2003. Sitting on a split bamboo floor in a house on stilts, sipping fresh green tea with Chief Nai in the village of Ruong after a day hike up Hill 881S with the Chief and one of his villagers guiding



Dave and Betty, Nastya, Oleg, and Mikhail

us, it is hard to imagine the danger and destruction of the area in March 1968 — unless you were there back then. As Ray Stubbe wrote after viewing a picture of my wife and I on the slope of 881S in March 2003, “Who would have thought that a man and his wife would one day stand in a place that once was so dangerous.” But we did, and we have decided to return the Chief’s hospitality by raising money to build a community library for his village and other villages in the area.

Chief Nai’s village is nestled in the valley by the stream below Hills 689 and 881S. He returned to the area in 1972, and today his village numbers about 400 people. In May 2004, my wife and I visited with him again. This time we went specifically to ask him what we could do to help his village. Chief Nai replied that his village has a school, a water purification system, a hospital, and a road was being built; he really didn’t need anything else!! But his village does not have a library.

The library that we are building is fully equipped and staffed for one year, and it will also serve the community as a social gathering place. Approximately half of the books will be about unexploded ordnance and landmine safety. The land for the building will be cleared of unexploded ordnance, and landscaped when the building is finished. A librarian will be hired and trained. The cost is about \$7000 dollars, and our first library project has been fully funded by my wife and I and our family and friends.

My wife and I are working with Chuck Meadows, Executive Director of Peace Trees Vietnam, Inc. (COL, USMC, Ret.; Commanding Officer, Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines in the battle of Hue City, February 1968). We are looking for others who will help build another library in the Khe Sanh area. Maybe there are members of the Khe Sanh Veteran’s Association who would like to build for the future in Khe Sanh today. Perhaps some of the Khe Sanh veterans would like to build a library in memory of some buddies. For myself, I am not only returning the hospitality of Chief Nai, but I am continuing to help the people in the Khe Sanh area in a way that I could not in 1968 or 1969. My wife is a humanitarian at heart, and I am proud to have her as a partner in this project.

If anyone would like to join my wife and me in our community library project, you may send your contribution to Peace Trees Vietnam at the address on

the brochure, and mark it for the “Khe Sanh Library Fund.” Locations for future libraries, when funded, will be based on needs assessment by the local authorities and agreement with Chuck Meadows and his Peace Trees Vietnam staff. We expect to work throughout Quang Tri Province, and be we are focused in the Huong Hoa District, of which Khe Sanh is the capital. I forgot to mention that on our second visit to Chief Nai, after the fresh green tea, he served his own locally prepared rice wine. He said it was 50% and not as strong as that of the next village over which has 65%. Now that was an honor and an experience I will not forget for a long time!! As a matter of fact, I am looking forward to returning to his village to see the library, and I am wondering what Chief Nai will do then.

See following page for information on how to help >



KHE SANH COMMUNITY LIBRARY FUND

Bring Education to Children and Families
Peace Trees Vietnam

P.O. Box 10697

Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 www.peacetreesvietnam.org

206-842-7986

Huong Hoa District

Quang Tri Province, Vietnam

Location: in the center of Vietnam, near Laotian border

Population (as of Dec 31, 2003): 63,614 people; 31,181 children under 18 years old; 16,188 women

Ethnic minority: Van Kieu (28,629, 45%); Paco (3,197, 5%)

Majority: Kinh (33,530, 52.7 %)

Area: 1,150.75 sq. km.

Average yearly income: \$200.00 USD

Agriculture: Forestry: 51.99% (cultivating, farming, breeding...)

Industrial: Construction: 29.66% (sewing, construction material production)

Communes: 21

Villages: 174

Towns: Lao Bao, Khe Sanh

Schools: 14 primary, 7 secondary, 8 primary & secondary, 2 high

Hospital: 1



**Donate
Now!**

Peace Trees Vietnam Khe Sanh Library Fund

Thank you for helping bring more education to the children and families in the Huong Hoa District, Quang Tri Province, Vietnam.

Chuck and Laurelyn Gaede

Fundraising volunteers, 512-282-3449

Make checks payable to: Peace Trees Vietnam

P.O. Box 10697

Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Name

Address

City

State, Zip

"861"

Hal Croft, K Co 3/3

A poem with a reason but no rhyme

A few yards from the top of 861
 Pinned down in a deep, dark fog,
 So deeply dark we could only touch and hear.
 Hearing dying, wounded marines
 Hearing NVA taunts

Crawling toward his garbled groaning
 I grasped a taught leg as his voice
 Drew fire from the darkness.
 A Marine wrenched back and forth
 Bleeding from a sucking chest wound.

I pulled a poncho over us
 Lit small light to set our stage.
 He wheezed as a square of poncho
 Seemed to stop the bleeding as hours
 That were minutes passed.

The black marine whispered his way to death.
 And I rolled away to a hole
 And passed into a jealous sleep
 While sticky blood dried on my hands
 The fog kept me alive for tomorrow.

The fog faded to a gray dawn.
 Three black Marines with bare backs
 Bandaged white faced the far tree line
 Bought time as I bandaged a corporal
 Stunned by shrapnel and shock

More mortars, more shrapnel, more shock
 The corporal was dead.
 Hueys strafed the top of the hill
 More time for the few who could walk
 To drag the dead down.

My burden had no face
 Feeling only his boots, I never looked back.
 But felt the thumping of his head
 Like a sledge slamming my chest.
 A final thump at the LZ.

I spat at a chaplain who told us
 "Good job."
 Hands crusted with dried, brown blood
 Had done no Agood for the black PFC,
 The Corporal, or a faceless Marine.

'Twas the night before Christmas and I was on alert
 My perimeter was secure with trips set in the dirt
 The fog was playing games with me and images appeared in my brain
 The jungle grass was making noises I could not explain.

As I strained to see what was in front of me.
 Not a mouse or NVA but an ape was staring at me.
 I called on the phone to the CP
 Shoot the thing it don't matter to me.

My sight was true-my aim was clean
 I couldn't pull the trigger
 Being Christmas eve
 Off he went up a tree — then he did spot me.

He waved and said to me Merry Christmas
 So you don't believe, this tale—
 It's my tale and I'm sticking to it.
 To all a good night.

Jim Wodecki

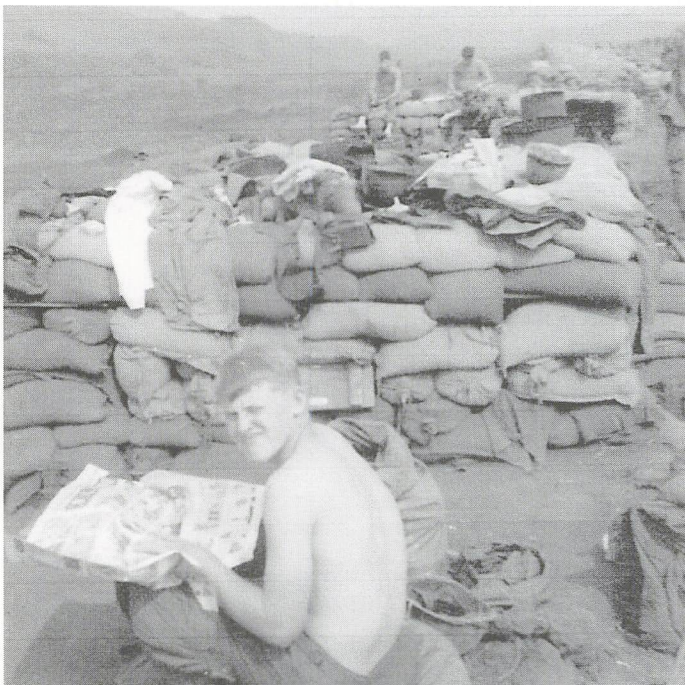
We Got Mail

Tom, thought you could use these pictures. We were at Khe Sanh from Feb – March, 1967. We were hit before Easter Sunday, and on Easter Sunday 1967

Larry Hester E Co 2/9



L-R: Sanchez, Nick Pettitear, Larry Hester, Carl Olsen, E Co., 2/9. March '67.



Carl Olsen, E Co., 2/9. KIA March '67.

Tom,

I returned to Vietnam in 2000 with VVRP (Vietnam Veterans Restoration Project). We worked on three projects — 2 in North Vietnam and one in Quang-Tri, near Dong Ha. I went to Khe Sanh and could only observe one small airstrip. Khe Sanh and Vietnam will always be part of our lives. I plan on going again someday. I enjoy **Red Clay** very much. I am paying for a Life Membership.

Charles Sepulveda, USA

14th Engr Bn, 18th Engr Brigade, Lam Son 719



Hi Tom,

Having served at Khe Sanh with MCB-4 and being a member of the KSV is indeed an honor. I proudly carry my KSV Life Membership card with me at all times. I have been trying to learn the identity of a Marine lieutenant that also had the responsibility for us Sea Bees as well as his own Marines. He was quite a handsome guy and always looking out for his men and the Seabees who built their bunkers.

He once went on R&R to Danang. He returned with soap, shaving gear, and a lot of other goodies. Our Seabee hut was located near the ammo dump & supply pit, near the old stone tower. During our first mortar attack, I remember all 13 Seabees cramming into a 20-foot slit trench that did not even have a roof. During the attack, this lieutenant came running by and stopped and inquired if we were all okay, without any regard for his own safety. He became an immediate friend to all us Seabees.

I remember on another occasion I observed a dog near the wire by the old tower. He looked like he was foaming at the mouth. I asked what I should do and was told, "Shoot it!" I did and never thought this little act would become a little mini-drama. In the first place, I learned that you do not shoot a dog suspected of having rabies. And you do not shoot a dog that turned out to be the mascot of another group of Seabees in an adjacent hut.

I went from being just another green inexperienced EO Seabee to a hated Dog-Killer. It also brought a few nights of having tear gas grenades tossed at our hooch, by other equipment operators. We also had to have a refrigerator brought up to Khe Sanh to store rabies vaccine. These memories are not much, but I would really like to find out the name of that lieu-



tenant. I heard he was killed leading a patrol in 1967. If that is true I would like to contact his family and express my undying gratitude. He touched so many of us with his acts of kindness, and I would like his family to hear of his unselfish acts. If anyone has any information I would appreciate any help.

Ward Jarvis
MCB-4 Seabees
Ph: 607-687-2723
Email: WHH069@AOL.COM



Welcome aboard, our newest Life Members

BALZANO, William C	McCREADY, Daniel J
CAUFIELD, Matt P	MILLER, William P
COMPTON, Ricky	MUNKACY, Donald P
CULLEN, Michael F	OHRT, Leonard M
CURRY, Parris D	PARKER, Marshall E
DILBERGER, Thomas J	PEARSON, Sam D
DURHAM, Ronald L	PLOCK, Kenneth A
ELKAN, Paul	PRENDERGAST,
FEYH, William H	Edward
FOGO, Wallace E	SHEPHARD, Charles B
GRAEME-GRIMES, Rhod	SIGMAN, James P
HANSON, Skip	SEPULVEDA, Charles
HANZLIK, Donald	SMITH, Ralph H
HARRIGAN, Joseph E	STAHL, Glenn
HONN, Gerald E	SULLIVAN, Robert J
HUMES, Michael D	TOMPKINS, Thomas J
JARVIS, Ward J	TOPMILLER, Robert J
JONES, Michael J	VANWINKLE, Harlan E
JORDAN, William H	WELKER, Gary
KRESTY, Edward J	WILLIAMS, John P
LINCOLN, Weldon	WORTHLEY, R.Randy

Recently Joined Members (*as of 1 Nov 04*)

ANDREWS, Russell M USN 1/1 1st M/T HM3
ASHFORD, Richard E USMC H Co 2/1 3Rd Plt
BERGREN, Wayne A USAF 20th TASS
BILBREY, Larry E USMC F Co 2/26
CAMPAGNA, Paul T USMC K Co 3/9
DENTON, David USMC H&S Co 3/26
JOHNSON, Fredrick R USMC H&H&S Co 2/26
McCALL, David B USMC E Co 2/26 Hill 861A
MILZ, Daniel J USN Senior Corpsman L Co 3/9
MORRISSETTE, Edward USMC F Co 2/26
GALVIN, Ricardo USMC
NESTOR, David USAF 20th TASS 0-2 Observer
SEEL, Martin E USMC F Co 2/26
SEGURA, Michael T USMC D Co 1/26
SLEPESKY, Michael USMC I Co 3/26
TOMER, Charles D USMC D Co 1/26
TOWNSEND, Peardie USMC

KSV in Iraq

An Interview With Cal Bright, KSV, B Co 1/26 now working in Iraq

by James Wodecki

How did I get here, and what qualified me for this job? I was hand-picked along with several others in the middle of 2003. We were picked for certain qualifications per our resume along with job descriptions, prior military status, and performance ratings.

We were all carefully screened for this assignment. Several were disqualified for various reasons. The list went from around 25 to less than 12. We were rated. I finished third. The top 5 were given various tests and TDY assignments and schooling for further evaluation. I did not get picked until March of 2004.

In July, I was sent to school in Los Alamitos, CA for basic military training; to HQ DLA for advanced military systems training; to DDC (virtual call center) for another week; and finally to CRC at Ft. Bliss (replacement/staging center) for preparations for deployment to Iraq. I flew from Ft Bliss to Bangor ME, then to Weiszbach, Germany, Arifjan, Kuwait, and finally to Baghdad, Iraq. Flying time took 27 hours with stopovers for refueling.

My position here in Iraq is as a multi-class expeditor, senior material management specialist, equipment specialist, item manager, federal stock class technician, 1-800 technician on everything the military uses, plus what ever else they can add to my job position/title, including gopher. I work 12-hour days, 7 days a week with no days off. I have been working daily since 1 August and will continue until I leave in February 2005. I will return the first of March for my second tour, which will go to the end of June. Hopefully I will make it back in time for the reunion



Cal Bright, ready to go

in Chicago.

Entertainment here is scarce. We have a complete gym, and you can jog around the base for exercise. We have a BX/PX (large and small) open 24/7, free laundry, large mess halls with everything you can possibly want to eat. I still managed to lose 15 lbs., walking around and riding the stationary bike. I walk wherever I go, but only on base. You are not allowed off base without armed escort. We do have a recreation center where movies are shown. There is a pool, but with 10,000 people on the base, there is always a long wait. We work 12-hour shifts with breaks for dinner. We sleep in a mobile trailer with five other people. It is very cramped and not comfortable.

My base pay has been lifted so I can earn as much as I want. Being a civilian, I am entitled to overtime, hazardous duty and shift pay for working after 6pm, and double time for Sundays. I get paid every two weeks, my usual 80-hour work pay along with 86 hours of overtime.

My job allows me to travel at least once a week. I go armed — usually with an AK, 870 shotgun, or M-16, and go out for a day or two.

There are many jobs available here — mostly high risk, high paying security jobs. If the guy is currently on military status, he cannot apply until he is discharged. There are many security agencies begging for outside help. Currently they are hiring non-US citizens as well. Leaf through a Soldier of Fortune magazine and search the want ads. For my position, you need to apply for a civil service position and wait your turn, which takes a lot longer than the security agency jobs.



Cal showing off to Iraqi workers

If you want to become a civilian contractor (security), don't go it alone. You can end up on the wrong end of a chopping block. You cannot trust any local Iraqis, Jordanians, Syrians or Iranians. They will not hesitate to kill foreigners seeking jobs. Think long and hard before coming here just for money. I don't recommend it. The tour for a security guard is usually at least 18 months, often longer in most cases.

Q. Those RPG's — are they the same they used in 'Nam on us and what are they doing with captured caches of weapons from Fallujah and other places?

A. The RPG's are pretty much like our LAWS. In Vietnam they had the B40 rocket. Here RPG's are a little bigger, more deadly and a bit more accurate. Most of the weapons recovered by US Forces are redistributed among the Iraqi Security Forces. Much of it finds its way back to the streets, where it is again used by the enemy. The desertion rate here is much higher than it was in Vietnam. When the insurgents attack an Iraqi force a lot of them just run or join in the attack. Sometimes it makes you wonder who you are really supporting.

Q. Are there any similarities between Khe Sanh and Iraq?

A. There are a few, but not many, unless you are on the so-called front lines. One big difference is the suicide bombers. They are everywhere, and they are getting more sophisticated, learning from Hamas and the PLO. You cannot travel on any highway or road (off base) in relative safety. You must be armed, must travel in pairs, or travel in convoy. I travel exclusively with a Marine escort, if I travel off base. I never go with less than 5-7 Marines with me when traveling. It is not like when I was in 'Nam. I actually feel I'm in a POW camp, and we are the armed guards as well.

Q. Are the women prettier than the Montagnard women?

A. You don't fraternize with the local women. Most of them are already spoken for (as in married) (mostly pre-arranged). I have seen several up close and NO THANKS! I have not seen one truly foxy local woman. On the other hand, many of our female soldiers and civilian contractors are nice looking. But, for every good looking woman, there are at least 10 men around them, so I just stay away. It isn't worth the hassle. Almost all locals working on base are Iraqi men. Contracted women are from all over the world, Philippines, Jordan (interpreters),

India, South America, Australian, Turks, British, and American.

Q. In the picture, those supplies look a mess, how do you find anything?

A. I was able to find many pallets of cargo destined for the agency I work for. Others were marked for another group, but I beat them to it, so we got another skid of water. I was able to load up a 40ft low boy trailer with no room to spare with equipment that I found.



Cal with fellow workers

Q. Big John Pessoni, wants to know how he can get a pair of those brown boots, size 13. He says they look comfortable are they?

A. I'll take my 'Nam jungle boots over these any day. These wear out in no time. Mine are wearing thin on the heel already and I've only had them since August. Tell Big John they aren't worth it, unless you get the ones that are standard issue for the special ops people. I don't have those, at least not yet.

Q. Can you send us back a captured RPG or some other souvenirs for the reunion?

A. You want an RPG, you better take a number. I would want a few first. By the way, you did notice what I was carrying in the photos. That is Mr. Ivan.

Q. Are you the old man there? Does anyone ask your advice?

A. I am actually younger than many Soldiers/Marines and Airmen over here, so I don't get asked, at least not before the local Marines found out I was a 'Nam vet. They really had questions when they found out I served at Khe Sanh. Today's Marines are just like we were — young mostly, tough and ALL ITCHIN for a FIGHT.

Q. In 'Nam, we had sappers hopped up on drugs. Are those suicide bombers on drugs?

A. The sappers in Vietnam were different from the ones here in Iraq. These guys actually think (no drugs or alcohol needed) that when they blow themselves up, they are going to a better life and will be with Allah. The former regime along with the PLO, Syria and Iran will pay their relatives up to \$25,000 for each one who gets blown up. They have no problem getting volunteers. They have their opium and hash but for the suicide bombers, there is no need.

Q. Thanks, Cal, for the interview. We hope to see you at the reunion in Chicago next summer.

Semper Fi

Jim "Jimbo" Wodecki



Publisher Note: PJ & Jimbo Wodecki sent supplies to Cal. Here is his response to their generosity:

Thank you so much for the two boxes of goodies. They just showed up this past couple of days and already are almost gone. The Marine security guard also says thanks for the pocket knives and D-ring key chains. Hmmmmm... Marines and knives! Interesting combo!

The attached Christmas cards were nice to receive and I couldn't believe that someone took the picture of me and Short Round. That picture means a lot to me, and I'm sure it means as much to Short Tound.

I have been real busy traveling lately, down into the Green Zone and out to Baghdad for the past week. It appears I will be transferred there sometime soon, not sure when. I will be working on station with the people I've been supporting for the past two months. They already have my desk, sleeping quarters and provisions ready for me, just waiting for the signal to go. When I get back, I can give more details, but right now I can't. It was like when I worked in the Choi Hoi out of MACV — only tell you just enough to get your interest

Still doing 12-hour days, 7 days a week. We had Thanksgiving off. I believe my next day off will be Christmas. Not so bad, two days off this year since the first part of August. We still are taking incoming, only averaging 3-10 rounds a day. A big difference from Khe Sanh. Camp Victory South is about 4 times the size of the Khe Sanh combat base, so to me, it's

nothing. I just go about my business without interruption while a bunch of these guys even some of the older ones run scared. I just laugh. Well, enough for now. Again thanks, guys. We'll meet in Chicago. I found out that I'll be able to get back home the end of June, so the reunion will be no problem. So take care and stay in touch. THANKS SEMPER FI!!

Calvin Bright

Material Management Specialist

DCST MNF-I CJ4

Camp Victory South

Building Zero

APO AE 09342

Calvin.Bright@vcmain.hq.c5.army.mil

DSN (318) 822 1739

News From Iraq

Submitted by Sam Messer

Written by Lt. Col. D.G. Bellon, USMC, RCT 1 HQ Co, UIC 40145, FPO AP 96426-014

Dear Dad –

Just came out of the city and I honestly do not know where to start. I am afraid that whatever I send you will not do sufficient honor to the men who fought and took Fallujah. Shortly before the attack, Task Force Fallujah was built. It consisted of Regimental Combat Team 1 built around 1st Marine Regiment and Regimental Combat Team 7 built around 7th Marine Regiment.

Each Regiment consisted of two Marine Rifle Battalions reinforced, and one Army mechanized infantry battalion. Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1) consisted of 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (3rd LAR), 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines (3/5); 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines (3/1) and 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry (2/7). RCT-7 was slightly less weighted but still a formidable force. Cutting a swath around the city was an Army Brigade known as Blackjack. The Marine RCTs were to assault the city while Blackjack kept the enemy off of the backs of the assault force. The night prior to the actual invasion, we all moved out into the desert just north of the city. It was something to see. You could just feel the intensity in the Marines and Soldiers. It was all business. As the day cleared, the Task Force began striking targets and moving into

final attack positions

As the invasion force commenced its movement into attack positions, 3rd LAR led off RCT-1s offensive with an attack up a peninsula formed by the Euphrates River on the west side of the city. Their mission was to secure the Fallujah Hospital and the two bridges leading out of the city. They executed there tasks like clockwork and smashed the enemy resistance holding the bridges. Simultaneous to all of this, Blackjack sealed the escape routes to the south of the city. As invasion day dawned, the net was around the city and the Marines and Soldiers knew that the enemy that failed to escape was now sealed. 3/5 began the actual attack on the city by taking an apartment complex on the northwest corner of the city. It was key terrain as the elevated positions allowed the command to look down into the attack lanes. The Marines took the apartments quickly and moved to the rooftops and began engaging enemy that were trying to move into their fighting positions. The scene on the rooftop was surreal. Machine gun teams were running boxes of ammo up 8 flights of stairs in full body armor and carrying up machine guns while snipers engaged enemy shooters. The whole time the enemy was firing mortars and rockets at the apartments. Honest to God, I don't think I saw a single Marine even distracted by the enemy fire. Their squad leaders, and platoon commanders had them prepared and they were executing their assigned tasks.

As mentioned, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry joined the Regiment just prior to the fight. In fact, they started showing up for planning a couple of weeks in advance. There is always a professional rivalry between the Army and the Marine Corps, but it was obvious from the outset that these guys were the real deal. They had fought in Najaf and were eager to fight with the Regiment in Fallujah. They are exceptionally well led and supremely confident. 2/7 became our wedge. In short, they worked with 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines. We were limited in the amount of prep fires that we were allowed to fire on the city prior to the invasion. This was a point of some consternation to the forces actually taking the city. Our compensation was to turn to 2/7 and ask them to slash into the city and create as much turbulence as possible for 3/1 to follow. Because of the political reality, the Marine Corps was also under pressure to "get it done quickly." For this reason, 2/7

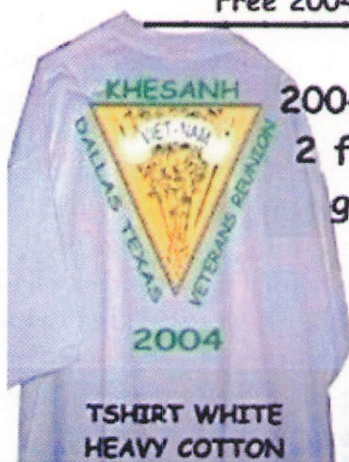
and 3/1 became the penetration force into the city. Immediately following 3/5's attack on the apartment buildings, 3/1 took the train station on the north end of the city. While the engineers blew a breach through the train trestle, the Cavalry soldiers poured through with their tanks and Bradley's and chewed an opening in the enemy defense. 3/1 followed them through until they reached a phase line deep into the northern half of the city. The Marine infantry, along with a few tanks then turned to the right and attacked the heart of the enemy defense.

The fighting was tough as the enemy had the area dialed in with mortars. 3/5 then attacked into the northwest corner of the city. This fight continued as both Marine rifle battalions clawed their way into the city on different axis. There is an image burned into my brain that I hope I never forget. We came up behind 3/5 one day as the lead squads were working down the Byzantine streets of the Jolan area. An assault team of two Marines ran out from behind cover and put a rocket into a wall of an enemy strongpoint. Before the smoke cleared the squad behind them was up and moving through the hole and clearing the house. Just down the block another squad was doing the same thing. The house was cleared quickly and the Marines were running down the street to the next contact. Even in the midst of that mayhem, it was an awesome site. The fighting has been incredibly close inside the city.

The enemy is willing to die and is literally waiting until they see the whites of the eyes of the Marines before they open up. Just two days ago, as a firefight raged in close quarters, one of the interpreters yelled for the enemy in the house to surrender. The enemy yelled back that it was better to die and go to heaven than to surrender to infidels. This exchange is a graphic window into the world that the Marines and Soldiers have been fighting in these last 10 days. I could go on and on about how the city was taken but one of the most amazing aspects to the fighting was that we saw virtually no civilians during the battle. Only after the fighting had passed did a few come out of their homes. They were provided food and water and most were evacuated out of the city. At least 90-95% of the people were gone from the city when we attacked.

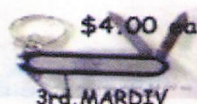
I will end with a couple of stories of individual heroism that you may not have heard yet. I was told about both of these incidents shortly after they

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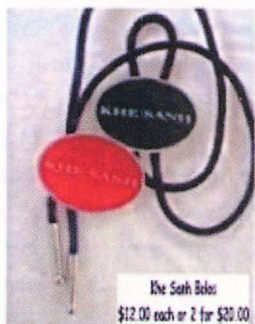
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occurred. No doubt some of the facts will change slightly but I am confident that the meat is correct. The first is a Marine from 3/5. His name is Corporal Yeager (Chuck Yeager's grandson). As the Marines cleared an apartment building, they got to the top floor and the point man kicked in the door. As he did so, an enemy grenade and a burst of gunfire came out. The explosion and enemy fire took off the point man's leg. He was then immediately shot in the arm as he lay in the doorway. Corporal Yeager tossed a grenade in the room and ran into the doorway and into the enemy fire in order to pull his buddy back to cover. As he was dragging the wounded Marine to cover, his own grenade came back through the doorway. Without pausing, he reached down and threw the grenade back through the door while he heaved his buddy to safety. The grenade went off inside the room, and Cpl. Yeager threw another in. He immediately entered the room following the second explosion. He gunned down three enemy all within three feet of where he stood and then let fly a third grenade as he backed out of the room to complete the evacuation of the wounded Marine. You have to understand that a grenade goes off within 5 seconds of having the pin pulled. Marines usually let them "cook off" for a second or two before tossing them in. Therefore, this entire episode took place in less than 30 seconds.

The second example comes from 3/1. Cpl. Mitchell is a squad leader. He was wounded as his squad was clearing a house when some enemy threw pineapple grenades down on top of them. As he was getting triaged, the doctor told him that he had been shot through the arm. Cpl. Mitchell told the doctor that he had actually been shot "a couple of days ago" and had given himself self aid on the wound. When the doctor got on him about not coming off the line, he firmly told the doctor that he was a squad leader and did not have time to get treated as his men were still fighting. There are a number of Marines who have been wounded multiple times but refuse to leave their fellow Marines. It is incredibly humbling to walk among such men. They fought as hard as any Marines in history and deserve to be remembered as such.

The enemy they fought burrowed into houses and fired through mouse holes cut in walls, lured them into houses rigged with explosives and detonated the houses on pursuing Marines, and actually hid behind

surrender flags only to engage the Marines with small arms fire once they perceived that the Marines had let their guard down. I know of several instances where near dead enemy rolled grenades out on Marines who were preparing to render them aid. It was a fight to the finish in every sense, and the Marines delivered.

I have called the enemy cowards many times in the past because they have never held their ground and fought, but these guys in the city did. We can call them many things but they were not cowards. My whole life I have read about the greatest generation and sat in wonder at their accomplishments. For the first time, as I watch these Marines and Soldiers, I am eager for the future as this is just the beginning for them. Perhaps the most amazing characteristic of all is that the morale of the men is sky high. They hurt for the wounded and the dead, but they are eager to continue to attack. Further, not one of them would be comfortable with being called a hero even though they clearly are. By now the Marines and Soldiers have killed well over a thousand enemy. These were not peasants or rabble. They were reasonably well trained and entirely fanatical. Most of the enemy we have seen have chest rigs full of ammunition, are well armed, and are willing to fight to the death.

The Marines and Soldiers are eager to close with them and the fighting at the end is inevitably close. I will write you more the next time I come in about what we have found inside the city. All I can say is that even with everything that I knew and expected from the last nine months, the brutality and fanaticism of the enemy surprised me. The beheadings were even more common place than we thought, but so were torture and summary executions. Even though it is an exaggeration, it seems as though every block in the northern part of the city has a torture chamber or execution site. There are hundreds of tons of munitions and tens of thousands of weapons that our Regiment alone has recovered. The Marines and Soldiers of the Regiment have also found over 400 IEDs already wired and ready to detonate. No doubt these numbers will grow in the days ahead. In closing, I want to share with you a vignette about when the Marines secured the Old Bridge, the one where the Americans were mutilated and hung on March 31 this week.

After the Marines had done all the work and

secured the bridge, we walked across to meet up with 3rd LAR on the other side. On the Fallujah side of the bridge where the Americans were hung there is some Arabic writing on the bridge. An interpreter translated it for me as we walked through. It read: "Long Live the Mujahadeen. Fallujah is the Graveyard for Americans and the end of the Marine Corps."

As I came back across the bridge there was a squad sitting in their Amtrac smoking and watching the show. The Marines had written their own message below the enemy's. It is not something that Mom would appreciate but it fit the moment to a T. Not far from the vehicle were two dead enemies, lying where they died. The Marines were sick of watching the "Dog and Pony show" and wanted to get back to work.

Dave

Two More Heroes

by Sam Messer

This is what Marines do, and always have done. They are your neighbors, the kid who delivers your paper, the cop who protects your block, the high school football star. They are the best: the few, the proud. They lay down their lives for their country. They don't deserve mocking; they deserve to be honored and thanked.

Please read this article about a Marine who sacrificed his life for his comrades in Fallujah:

Reprinted from *The Army Times*:

Marine Sacrifices His Life for Others in Grenade Blast

by Gordon Trowbridge

Fallujah, Iraq Sgt. Rafael Peralta built a reputation as a man who always put his Marines' interests ahead of his own.

He showed that again, when he made the ultimate sacrifice of his life Tuesday, by shielding his fellow Marines from a grenade blast. "It's stuff you hear about in boot camp, about World War II and Tarawa Marines who won the Medal of Honor," said Lance Cpl. Rob Rogers, 22, of Tallahassee, Fla., one of Peralta's platoon mates in 1st Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st

Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.

Peralta, 25, as platoon scout, wasn't even assigned to the assault team that entered the insurgent safe house in northern Fallujah, Marines said. Despite an assignment that would have allowed him to avoid such dangerous duty, he regularly asked squad leaders if he could join their assault teams, they said. One of the first Marines to enter the house, Peralta was wounded in the face by rifle fire from a room near the entry door, said Lance Cpl. Adam Morrison, 20, of Tacoma, who was in the house when Peralta was first wounded.

Moments later, an insurgent rolled a fragmentation grenade into the area where a wounded Peralta and the other Marines were seeking cover. As Morrison and another Marine scrambled to escape the blast, pounding against a locked door, Peralta grabbed the grenade and cradled it into his body, Morrison said. While one Marine was badly wounded by shrapnel from the blast, the Marines said they believe more lives would have been lost if not for Peralta's selfless act. "He saved half my fire team," said Cpl. Brannon Dyer, 27, of Blairsville, Ga.

The Marines said such a sacrifice would be perfectly in character for Peralta, a Mexico native who lived in San Diego and gained U.S. citizenship after joining the Marines. "He'd stand up for his Marines to an insane point," Rogers said. Rogers and others remembered Peralta as a squared-away Marine, so meticulous about uniform standards that he sent his camouflage uniform to be pressed while training in Kuwait before entering Iraq.

But mostly they remembered acts of selflessness: offering career advice, giving a buddy a ride home from the bar, teaching salsa dance steps in the barracks. While Alpha Company was still gathering information, and a formal finding on Peralta's death is likely months away, not a single Marine in Alpha Company doubted the account of Peralta's act of sacrifice. "I believe it," said Alpha's commander, Capt. Lee Johnson. "He was that kind of Marine."

More News from Iraq

by Hank Melanson

Another great Iraq SITREP from the CO, Task Force 2/24, call sign "Mayhem 6," Lt. Col. Mark A. Smith, USMC

Semper FIDELIS! Don.

Well, the New Year is upon us...and it is my most sincere hope that this letter finds all of you in high spirits for the blessings that surely will abound in 2005!

The New Year was welcomed by the Mad Ghosts in BIG fashion. We were part of a brigade-size operation, with our "newest, best buddies" from the 2 Brigade Combat Team and Colonel "Fighting' Mike" Formica, as we forayed into previously uncharted territory along the Euphrates River. This was the largest operation to date for the Mad Ghosts and was a "full-up" round consisting of helicopter-borne assault, mechanized assault and motorized assault. It involved virtually every element of the battalion. And, our brothers in the ING were tasked, for the first time, to operate in a field environment for an extended period of time (a task they performed extremely well, I might add!) The mission was precise: establish a cordon of the area and locate Anti Iraqi Forces (AIF) and capture them, and to disrupt their seemingly never-ending supply of ammunition and explosives, with which they fight their cowardly war of IEDs and VBIEDs. Now, with all the moving parts, there are about a gazillion things that could go wrong. NONE did! The Mad Ghosts and our brigade partners were flawless in execution. They swept into an area, coming from 360°, in the middle of the night, via helos, trucks, HMMWVs, tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles and at H Hour plus 20 minutes, a stretch of land approximately 16 km long by 10 kilometers wide was cordoned and owned by elements of the Mad Ghosts and the 2 BCT. Many Iraqis woke that day to a situation they had never seen! The systematic search was begun, and approximately 48 hours later, almost 100 insurgents had been identified and incarcerated and an unbelievable amount of cached weapons and explosives had been located and confiscated. Two VBIEDs were located that were in the process of being equipped with their explosives and were destroyed. This was all accomplished through a massive "team" effort, and I

would like to recognize some key players:

1. The Marines of the Engineer Platoon from Virginia. They hunt weapons caches like a dog hunts squirrel. Their tenacity in search techniques has ensured hundreds of explosives that saw their life cycle completed through a safe and controlled detonation at the hands of the engineers, rather than at the trigger of a fanatical Muslim seeking a one way trip to Virgin-land. I will never be able to say enough about the performance of these Marines and the unbelievable amount of work they have accomplished for this battalion. And, more importantly, I will never be able to say thank you in any manner of sufficiency for the number of lives they have saved! But, you know what? If you could see the light in their faces when they find a cache...I think they get all the thanks they ever wanted.

2. The Marines of the Truck Platoon from Pennsylvania. Now understand, these Marines are from Truck Co, 4th MarDiv, and as such are designed to be a "tactical" asset used primarily to maneuver fighting Marines to the combat zone. However, reality of counter-insurgency requires that they also be used in a combat service support role: picking up mail, repair parts, etc. These Marines have been tireless in their support and have logged some of the longest hours known to man. And for this operation, they seamlessly transitioned into Warrior mode, and delivered hundreds of Marines to the fight, at night, with night vision goggles (NVGs) and did so without incident. They also are on the Lt. Col. Smith List of Never-Ending Thank Yous.

3. HET 9 (Human Exploitation Team). These Warriors come from all over the Marine Corps, active and reserve, and are the ones who do the field interviews of our persons of interest. Simply said: they are the best in the Marine Corps, and all of Iraq. This group of Warriors has produced more intelligence, saved more lives (both in the Mayhem AO and outside) than any intelligence asset in the war. They are remarkable, sleepless, and define "dedication to duty." CWO2 Murphy, their OIC, was a casualty in October after being shot in the foot, and they have pressed on under the leadership of M/Sgt. Ertz in a manner that is nothing short of inspiring. Please allow me one second to digress: Murphy, you should swell with pride and tears right now, for YOUR Marines have been spectacular...and a testimony to your leadership and preparation. (Oh yeah,

and don't think for a second you are not in for a rash of — about your letter home following your injury describing your “ambush dance”...skip, shoot, duck, shoot, hop, shoot, swim with the fishes, shoot, etc., etc., etc.)

4. The COC Marines. COC stands for Combat Operations Center. These are the Marines that run the command and control systems. The radios and computers that on the modern digital battlefield are indispensable. Each of them does the work of 3 people, run long shifts and ensures the situational awareness and report/process execution that is critical in this counter-insurgency. For an operation like this one, I had both my forward COC and my Main COC in operation, and they were brilliant in their execution. They are and will always be the “unsung heroes” of the Mad Ghost deployment. (And for me personally, Cpl. Kostyn and L/Cpl. Blackford were a source of humor, the importance of which just cannot be understood unless you have attempted to command in a high stress environment. But for those who have, and for those who will, you will cherish the uncanny humor of such Marines...they helped to sooth the savage beast that is Gy/Sgt. Engram!!!)

5. The fighting Marines of Fox, Echo, Golf and Weapons, who take precision violence to the enemy, and a spirit for victory that knows no equal! H&S Co, who provides the security and support to all these operations, and conducts much of their own patrolling, and “hunting” of the Muj, and who have taken our FOB and turned it into a fortress. The Marines of this last paragraph are the Bn proper, and no Commander has ever had the privilege of leading a better one. My duty is their mission accomplishment and welfare...and my duty has been my honor. Now, with all of that said, let me finish by telling you the best part of the story of this Operation, which was code-named: Operation River Walk, for it goes without saying, we cannot do anything without a “code name.” It is just what we do, code names and acronyms. As successful as this Operation was, it like all others, shapes us for future operations. The hunt will go on and ELECTIONS WILL OCCUR.

I have stopped watching the news from the US totally. I no longer can take the maniacal rages it places me in as I swear ungentle man-like profanities at the TV in my dust-covered cubby-hole of an office, directed at “pundits” and “experts” who do not, in my very humble opinion, have a single clue

and who report every single incident that occurs here as if they are color commentating on a football game. Well, I can barely fog a mirror intellectually, but I think I know a thing or two about this war thing, and the vast amount that I don't know, I have certified geniuses like Major Dan Whisnant and CWO5 Roussell to teach me. And what I know...war is a slog. And a counter-insurgency fourth generation war is definitely a slog. The only weapon the enemy has IS the MEDIA, and the target is YOU! They are attempting to win this War by breaking your will. I pray that will not happen. Because...and this is the moral of the story, the best part of the story of Operation River Walk is what we discovered about the people. You see, our belief going into this operation was that this part of our Western zone (which we had not been able to foray into much due to other commitments) was the heart of a massive AIF insurgency, replete with popular support and headed by Wahabiists (yes, the very people who brought you the slaughter of 9/11). We found many of the Wahabiists and their caches. They are now headed to Abu Ghraib and their caches destroyed. But the people...no, what we found among the people was MUCH support for the US and what we are doing here. We found a genuine desire to live free and to ELECT who they want, not who the Imams and terrorists want. See, what we found is what we always find: a majority of people being intimidated, terrorized and oppressed by a radical, fanatical and clinically INSANE few.

We found people who want us to finish this fight, no matter how long it takes, and who were genuinely appreciative of our efforts. HUH, a little different than what you hear out of NY and Washington newsrooms. Gotta tell you, would love for my Marines to actually meet these “fighters who are resisting a foreign invasion of Iraq,” because they might actually fight the way Soldiers do. NO, what we meet time and time and time again, is radical Muslim extremists whose sole goal is the defeat of America and the spreading of their brand of medieval thinking that abhors technology, enslaves women, cheapens human life and seeks the establishment of their brand of religion, or death. So I say, let all the national media talking heads rave on. Rave on about every single act of insurgent violence and trumpet it as some massive blow to the MNF effort. Rave on about how we are losing. Rave on, as if you

really care about any of what you are spewing. Just, Rave On. The ground truth is known by those actually on the ground.

And for those on the ground, we will win, we will bring freedom and democracy to a land that has NEVER known it, and we will suffer and sustain the hardship required to do it. We will do it and we will take the time required for such a massive effort in a world that wants a "drive-through window" war. We will do it in the spirit and with the best example we have: the spirit of 1776, when freedom and democracy was also brought to a land that had NEVER known it, a land that would become known as THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. We will win because, although the violence is a huge part of what we do, ultimately this global war on terror will be won by ideas. And YOUR Mad Ghost, YOUR Marine is the best example of what the best idea in the history of mankind has to offer. Their never ending decency and compassion has lit, and will continue to fuel for the people of Iraq what freedom is truly all about: respect, dignity, hope, love and a personal quest to find meaning in YOUR OWN WAY! For this, 10 of my most prized possessions and reason for my existence gave their last full measure of devotion, on the battlefields of Iraq, and for this, WE rave on!

May God Bless and Keep the families of 2/24...and may we all offer a special blessing on the families of our fallen heroes... and those of our wounded who struggle daily, particularly Regina Simon as she prays beside the bed of SSgt. Chad Simon, and is a beacon of strength and grace for us all. God especially be with you, Regina, and your wonderful husband Chad.

Lt. Col. Mark A. Smith, Mayhem 6
CO, Task Force 2/24

"Mayhem from the Heartland"

Or as the terrorists call us, "The Mad Ghosts"
Mahmudiyah, IZ

2nd Bn, 24th Marines, H&S Co, Bn Cmdr
Unit 43495 FPO-AP 96426-34

At Burial, Love and Remorse

Woodbridge Marine's Wounded Comrade Couldn't Save Him

by Ian Shapira Washington Post Staff Writer

Tuesday, November 23, 2004; as friends and relatives bade farewell to Lance Cpl. Brian A. Medina yesterday at Arlington National Cemetery, one mourner laid his crutches on the ground and put his fists on top of the silver casket carrying his comrade. Cpl. Andrew Ethridge, 23, leaned over, put his forehead on his fists and began crying. Gregory Medina, the father of the dead Marine, stood next to Ethridge, patting his back. "He was devastated and he was feeling that it was his fault, and I was telling him that it wasn't," the elder Medina said after the service. "He was saying: 'Sorry, I did what I could, I am sorry, I could have saved you.'" Cpl. Medina, 20, of Woodbridge was killed Nov. 12 in Anbar province, Iraq, one of two Washington area Marines to die there that day, according to the Pentagon.

Ethridge said in an interview that Medina had gone inside a gated home in Fallujah searching for weapons and was killed by insurgents' automatic gunfire. Ethridge, who was part of a team of Marines behind Medina's, heard the shots ring out and charged toward the house to save his friend, but he was felled by a bullet to his right leg. "I knew that with the amount of fire that was coming out [of the house], no one could escape that," said Ethridge, who roomed with Medina on Okinawa just before they were deployed to Iraq in September. Recalling how it felt to lie wounded, unable to reach Medina, he said: "I was just thinking that I couldn't get to him and that it was weird how getting shot didn't feel like I expected." Yesterday, about 75 mourners, including high school friends and teachers from Prince William's Gar-Field High School, paid their last respects to Medina, who had joined the military because of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. "He wanted payback. Something about that day hit home with him," said Medina's father, a construction inspector from Woodbridge and a former Navy Seabee. "But when he got to Iraq, I thought maybe he jumped into this too fast."

Medina was assigned to the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Marine Regiment, which is part of the 3rd Marine Division, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force,

based in Hawaii. He joined the military after graduating from Gar-Field High in 2002, his father said. Yesterday's funeral was preceded by a Catholic service at the Post Chapel, where the Rev. Robert McClanahan, surrounded by a U.S. flag and lighted candles, told mourners that the measure of a life should be taken by the quality of the years, not their number. Small one-page programs with a photograph of the Marine dressed in his uniform were passed out to mourners. Excerpts of great works and maxims were printed on the back. The first one, under the headline "Brian's Legacy to His Friends and Comrades," quoted the famous lines from Shakespeare's "Henry V": We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. Medina was laid to rest near the cemetery's columbarium, in the first grave of a new row, in front of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Gregory Medina, who sat next to his ex-wife, Lolita Converse of Newport News, accepted the U.S. flag. Medina was the 93rd service member killed in Iraq to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. He left behind three siblings, Jennifer, 19, Patrick, 11, and Andrew, 8, and a stepsister, Stephanie Converse. Harriett Rowe, a guidance counselor at Gar-Field High School who attended the funeral, recalled how Medina was well known for more than being an ROTC member. Medina, it turns out, was a sweet break-dancer. He learned the acrobatic hip-hop dance style while living in Italy with his mother during his first three years of high school. When he returned to the United States to live with his father during his senior year, Medina started a break-dancing club at Gar-Field. "When he started spinning on his head, I said: 'Brian, hold off. I don't think you should do that. I am not ready for you to break your neck,'" recalled Rowe, who was the club's adviser. "But he was real good and serious about it because he wanted to learn and wanted to teach." And people don't understand why I Love You Marines !!!

Sam Messer
CBMU301

My Son, The Soldier, Comes Home for Good

by Milton McNeely

An email forward that must be shared with you all. May our Lord Eternally Bless the Soul of this Soldier and all those who fall and have fallen protecting their Mates, Family and our Nation! Semper Fidelis, even unto death! Happy Thanksgiving, my friends. That we have such sons... and fathers... as this, is something to be truly thankful for. God bless all our boys, and their families. And may God bless and watch over my boy in Afghanistan on his third tour in a combat zone.

From Colonel Tom Sims (US Army Retired): My son, the soldier, comes home for good.

At last report, he had left Iraq and was awaiting a flight in Kuwait. With luck he will be in Germany today and then on to Texas. By the way, he is called "remains" but I know better. He is my son.

I want to tell you about him. Not because he is so great a guy, although I think so, but because he represents the thousands of sons and daughters America is sending to far away places to secure our peace and our liberties at home. Captain Sean Patrick Sims, commanding officer of A Company, 2-2 BN, 1st Infantry Division, was killed in action Nov. 13 in Fallujah, Iraq while clearing insurgent occupied buildings. A tough assignment, clearing an urban area. Dirty, dangerous work. Sean lost his executive officer the day before, and I read of the deaths of two Marine captains who were similarly killed in Fallujah.

It is sad when a father must write his own son's obituary. I don't know what to say. My son, like others falling in that conflict, was a hero who believed in his mission, his unit, and his men. He also believed leaders should be in the front leading, not following. And that is how he died. He was well liked and respected by his superiors and the men in his company, who sensed his concern for their well being. He was also concerned about the well being of the Iraqi people and did his utmost to guard them from harm. Sean was a devout Catholic, who lived the tenets of his faith on a daily basis. There is no doubt in our minds that Sean is now in heaven and in the hands of our Lord. We grieve for his loss, which is our loss, but not for his soul. If anything, we ask his intercession on our behalf as he is now

much better placed for that effort.

I don't know what to say or how to describe the sacrifice of your blood for this country. Having served in Vietnam twice, having a father who spent 36 years as a soldier through two wars, and a brother who served in Vietnam twice and is now 100% disabled from his injuries there, I am encouraged by the awareness of our countrymen for the sacrifices of our children. I am thankful for the realization by our citizenry that freedom is not free.

My son was not a rampant political supporter for any party, although he was probably more Republican by instinct. But he did have an abiding trust, and belief in the United States of America. He felt we are a moral nation, steadfast in our principles. This nation does not take its commitment of its sons and daughters to war lightly. But unlike many nations in the world, we do not shirk our duties to commit our blood to just and necessary causes. Because that is what keeps us free.

I think he understood something which seems to have been lost in the debates over weapons of mass destruction and poor intelligence estimates in this particular war. That is that sovereign nations must be held accountable for their actions. We cannot tolerate nations that hide behind borders and provide support to enemies who are intent on our destruction. We can debate on how this war developed and was executed. It can not be debated that nations now look carefully at their responsibility and accountability before providing such support. America has made its statement. If you support terrorism, we will find you and destroy you, whatever the cost.

My son understood this and believed what he was doing was right. But he also believed that you can't go in and destroy a country and walk away. He was anxious for the insurgents to be quickly defeated so we could start the nation-building that Iraq so sorely needs. He chafed at the delays and the debates in implementing aid. He was not a romantic. He understood well the backwardness of the country, the stranglehold of its religion and more challengingly, the social and political pressure of the tribal system. They all looked insurmountable when you add them up. But he had been raised in a tradition of grit and putting one foot forward at a time, so he was not deterred by the challenge. He was faced with a difficult, dirty and seemingly impossible task, but his response was not how do I get out of it but how do I

get it done.

I think his sacrifice to his nation can best be summed up in a message I received from a friend expressing condolences for his loss: His sacrifice was made to keep my family, my sons and my grandchildren as well as all Americans safe and free and for that we will eternally be grateful. That's nice. My son would agree. That's what he thought he was doing. In retrospect, the true hero here is his wife, who is left a young widow with a young son to raise. She is a woman of grace and grit. She will do well by her son and her warrior husband.

Regards,
Tom Sims
(Col. US Army Retired)

Khe Sanh Memories

Khe Sanh was so very long ago to me,
They now even have tours there for all to see.
No incoming, no trenches, no body bags at all,
Not even brave warriors would not let it fall.
Time passes, we get older, and memories begin to fade,
Unfortunately, the ghosts stay with us every day.

Eternally Bonded

Twenty Seven seconds for each mortar to fall.
From Hill 881N. "Incoming" we did call.
Twenty-seven years and the echo is still there.
Those haunting memories, sometimes so hard to bare.
Our lives go on, the older grayer we become.
But we remain Eternally Bonded, equally as one.

David "Doc" Steinberg

Where DOCs Come From

by HM2 David "Doc" Steinberg

I don't know how many enlisted in the U.S. Navy specifically to become a corpsman. I was in my 3rd year of college as a Psychology major at a University in Chicago, tired of fighting the SDS (Students For a Democratic Society, an organization that disappeared along with the anti-Vietnam protests once the draft was replaced by the birth year lottery...it must not have seemed so important once their butts were safe from the draft.) My Navy recruiter said that with my background I would surely end-up as a corpsman on a psych ward in a Naval hospital, far from that thing going on in Vietnam, which was just heating up in those early months of 1966.

I joined the Navy to serve as my father did for 4 years during WWII. I joined the Navy since my Uncle, for whom I was named, 1st Lt. David Steinberg, USMCR, was killed at Iwo Jima. To join the Marines would have been too painful for the family. I joined the Navy because I had 4 years of high school Army ROTC, attaining the rank of captain and winning a high school letter for being part of the Precision Rifle Drill Team that won the State championship. After those years of spit and polish, I refused to ever wear a uniform that had brass and needed to be shined with brasso (still cannot get that smell out of my nose to this day.) I joined the Navy because I entered as a HN Hospital Corpsman or E-3 right out of boot camp because of my college credits.

In June of 1966, I took my oath while standing on the 3rd baseline at the Chicago Cubs Wrigley Field ball park. The Cubs Team was lined up along the 1st baseline. Our gaggle of Navy enlisted, were called the Chicago Cubs Company. Our families were invited to watch us take our oath and we were allowed to join them watching the baseball game before we said our good-byes in the stands and promptly boarded awaiting Navy buses for the Great

Lakes and Boot Camp that lasted 8 weeks.

My knowledge of precision rifle drill and marching automatically put me in the position of ROPC, Recruit Petty Officer Chief (drill instructor complete with sword and responsibility for our Recruit Company). We won all the honor flags and I

marched the company to all classes and required tests (smoke house, gas chamber, swim tests 1-4, etc.) You know I never qualified for swimming, since I never was tested. Once I marched my men to the pool I was yelled at to get my men into the water by the numbers. Once the last group jumped in, I was yelled at to get to the other side of the pool and get my men

out of their *#% pool building.

On the last day of Navy boot camp, the men got their striker assignments throughout the Naval Fleet and on-shore operations. The Corpsmen were sent to Hospital Corps School for another 4 months. We learned medicine and healing from Navy nurses and doctors. We gave saline injections to one another as practice, and we laid out stretchers and practiced using field dressings and preparing for evacuation of the wounded, or sick. We were taught how to keep those aboard ships and on the ground safe from injury and disease through sanitation and preventive medicine (although nothing said about supervising the burning of the half barrels from the shitters.) The good news was that there were women. I mean Waves, those of the opposite sex, who were in our classes. The bad news was that we were competing for academic awards throughout Hospital Corp School and while I did place third, the first 2 places went to women.

On the last day of Hospital Corps School, we were assigned to our new duty stations — some to ships, some to Naval and Marine bases and others immediately to FMF or Fleet Marine Force training to serve the Marines in combat. Wherever our assignment was, the training we received was adequate and professional. It was said to be equal to a 2nd year med student's and all were prepared to "Do Our Best"



"Doc" Steinberg at Khe Sanh

which is all we ever could do in times of peace or combat.

I spent the next year at St. Albans Naval Hospital, Long Island, NY. It was a big hospital and I served on many types of wards and clinics before being accepted to Operating Room Technician Training (setup the surgical suites, prepare and sterilize the instruments, circulate and scrub surgery) where you had to know the numerous surgical procedures as well as the surgeons, if you were to pass the proper surgical instrument at the proper time. We did surgery for combat and non-combat injuries and for all the retired and military dependents from all branches of the military.

I was actually seeing the end of the story I was about to live. These Naval Hospitals were where the combat wounded I later treated on Khe Sanh's Hill 881S for more than 3 months, and later in the bush along the Perfume River near Hue, and the triple canopy jungles off Hill 55 SW of Danang would end-up; that is, if they survived my field medical treatment, helicopter medevac to an in-country Medical Battalion, transfer to a Hospital Ship or NSA, Danang and then on to Japan, etc.

This is also where I saw the real tragedy of war. Not the loss of life or limb, but the reality of our fighting men and women returning to the "World." Many of the amputees did not realize the true extent of their life-changing wounds until they arrived at the hospital where they were to finally be reunited with their loved ones again after their trip to hell and back. Remember that once wounded, the future amputee was in a daze with immediate surgery of the limb — if beyond all hope or following unsuccessful debridement, uncontrolled infection and subsequently, the decision to sever the limb was necessary to save the life of the wounded person. Following months of surgery, stump revisions and getting around on crutches or in a wheel chair on some Ortho Ward in many places along the way back to our Naval Hospital, they remained with other amputees in the same circumstances. They joked around, played games and raced down the halls in wheel chairs doing wheelies. They had become accustomed to their life among the other wounded and helped each other out as they did in war. But "Oh Baby" they would tell me, I am back in the "World" and my gal and my family are coming to see me! They were still the young warriors who left for war

and they survived unchanged in their minds and surely they were getting along well, although they had never been tested outside of the accommodating environment that a Naval Hospital provides with ramps and other things that today we take for granted with Disability Laws and provisions.

The tragedy I referred to was more horrific than I would ever later experience in the field and later in many years as an EMT back in civilian life. The tragedy was yet days later when I again passed by that "Oh Baby, my gal and family are coming this weekend." Instead of being filled with stories of hope, he laid under covers, depressed and appeared to have given up. While a one-eyed man is King among the blind, these heroes finally saw the "World," but the "World" saw him completely changed, not able to move around as he did and stunned with the loss of future potential as was once imagined. The family mourned his loss of limb instead of being overjoyed at his very survival and his gal was kind, but he knew from her hollow eyes that she would not be back. I cried for him and promised myself that I would never forget this true tragedy.

I continued my time in surgery as a member of the Open Heart Scrub Team. I did my job and learned to be the best I could, receiving my new rank of HM3 or E-4. Each day other Corpsmen I knew in the Operating Room or in the hospital were receiving their orders to FMF training and 'Nam. The rumor was they needed so many because the life expectancy of a corpsman in Vietnam was about 7 days. However, I was an important member of a specialty surgical team and not every corpsman was sent to 'Nam. I was still there while others were shipped out. One day, a few of my buddies entered the Surgical Suite as I passed the instruments to the doctors during a long operation. I could see their sardonic smiles even under their surgical masks...Dave, it is your turn to become a "DOC" not just a corpsman...you got your orders to report to FMF training at Camp Pendleton, California, 1st Marine Division.

Now it was my turn. HM3 David Steinberg reported to the outskirts of beautiful Oceanside, CA. Thankfully, our new Marine Uniforms with the subdued Navy Rank on the sleeve did not have brass requiring brasso, but what is this stuff about putting our utility hat on a circular hat block and spraying the hell out of it with spray starch! Another entire

sea bag with all the utilities, khakis and greens, FMF Corpsmen do not rate the Marine dress blues. We still had our own blues, complete with fashionable bellbottoms for those formal occasions.

I wrote a song while I was in college that went:

*Today I received a letter it was from Uncle Sam,
It said "Greetings My Child," you are off to Vietnam!*

Well I picked up that letter and read those words of Woe,

Then quickly call my draft board to see if it weren't so.

Well, I told them I was classified as a "student,"

But they said so sternly, "By order of the President"

Without a choice I packed my bags and kissed my sweetheart good-bye,

And before I knew what was happening I lay under bomb-shelled skies!

Now listen to the moral for all you students classified 2-S,

Don't be so sure that you're exempt, for YOU may go next!

My first day in the chow hall line, I understood what they meant by rank has its privileges. I was called out of line and invited to dine with the non commissioned officers in their own mess area. In the Navy an E-4 Petty Officer is nothing and deserves nothing except less duty nights and weekends. I liked this Marine stuff.

We played jungle combat, qualified with the M-14, the .45 pistol, and practice hand grenade, dug trenches and shared a poncho tent half and pole with a comrade who provided the other poncho half and pole so we could sleep in a cozy pup tent...just like we would in 'Nam...are you kidding me? We manned fighting holes on top of a tall hill overlooking the Pacific Coast Highway and shivered all night due to the cool October Night...not the fear of Victor Charlie, who might be lurking in the hills of Camp Pendleton.

After 30 days leave home to Chicago, I flew to San Bernadino Air Force Base to catch a flight to 'Nam. The troops I had trained with, took the 22-day trip

to 'Nam by ship. I, HM3 Steinberg reported alone, since corpsmen were sent individually to Vietnam via Continental Airlines to Okinawa and then Flying Tiger Airlines to Danang. That 7-day life expectancy for a Corpsman in the bush must have been more than a rumor if they were sending us over one-by-one via express.

I arrived in late October of 1967 with most of my gear left in Okinawa. Slim chance that in 365 days, I would DEROS back to the "WORLD" and pick it up. I was thirsty as hell in Danang wearing those heavy green starched utilities from the states. I was thirsty and my American greenbacks would not even



Arota looking over maps towards Hill 881N

buy me a Coke until I ran into a departing "DOC" who swapped me for MPC, Military Pass Currency, available in green or red that changed often, leaving the Black Market with worthless wrong-colored paper.

I reported in and learned a few interesting facts, like its MIND over MATTER — They Don't Mind that I Don't Matter. First, due to heavy casualties among "DOCs in I Corp, my orders where changed from 1st Division to 3d Marine Division. Second, my hopes were shattered about spending my year in an OR Suite when the officer at the holding company told me that, he was very impressed with my rank and training in the Operating Room and confirmed that one day soon, after about 6 months with a Marine unit in the bush if I was still alive, I would have that opportunity. The next day I was on a 6-by truck heading north along Highway 1 to Camp Evans. There I was assigned to the BAS, Battalion Aid Station of the 26th Marines, who were engaged at Con Thien, Gio Linh and along the Cua Viet River. I had my own Willy's Jeep ambulance and got

my _ ton Military License to drive it everywhere and to fool around on the mule, a pallet on wheels that they would drop loaded with supplies dangling from a parachute. For us it was a go-cart. I remained with the BAS through early December, when we were ordered to pack-up the BAS, turn Camp Evans over to the Army's 101st Airborne, and move to Dong Ha where we were to set up the BAS in preparation for 3/26 to move to that base. We took over a few hooches and dug a bunker that even the rats would have been proud to share with us during incoming. We no sooner completed the bunker than we received word not to unpack, but move the BAS. It consisted of about 15 pallets, the Dang Ha air strip for shipment to a lovely, quiet, mountain local called Khe Sanh.

After nearly 15 days of sitting on the airstrip with the gear, our ride to Khe Sanh arrived. It was now early January and I reported with the gear to the far end of the base to Dr. Feldman. I was one of the Senior Corpsmen and did my daily sick calls by day and typed up death notices on the KIA's by night (Died in Thau Thien Province from whatever). Life



BAS 3/26 home of Doctor Ed Feldman

was good but the clock was ticking. We just didn't know it.

Something in the air was different earlier in the night before the ammo dump got hit early the next morning. We were told to burn all of our letters from home in case we were overrun. Overrun? That was a good bedtime thought as my eyes closed and those of us in the tent side-by-side on cots drifted off to sleep.

0530 or whatever...BOOM BANG BOOM...we all ran from the Corpsman Tent, and jumped into any depression in the red dirt — incoming, outgoing, the ammo dump was lit-up like the 4th of July. It was dark and we scattered to safety. I curled up like a ball under a pallet near the end of the Khe Sanh runway and fell back asleep. The morning sun and

the relative quiet woke me and I climbed out from under the depression I had clawed-out with my bare hands during the chaos. Yes, the pallet of 105 mm artillery rounds protected me just fine...was I nuts!

Later that day, I was told that there had been heavy Corpsmen losses on Hill 881S and that I should take a few things and as a Senior Corpsman, go up there and check things out. I flew in by Huey Helicopter and jumped off with my



Trenchline in front of Dabney's CP, Hill 881S

Unit 1 Medical Bag across my chest. It was a hot LZ with incoming still pounding the Hill. "Corpsman up," was the first thing I heard, and I crested the hill near a motor or gun pit where a Marine was on his back clutching his chest and gasping for air. After months at the BAS, here I was with my very first immediate casualty. He had a sucking chest wound. All my training came back to me and I quickly took the plastic bag from a field dressing bandage and was able to seal the air leak. I wrapped him tightly and a few Marines got him onto the saddle for a medevac.

I finally reported to Capt. Dabney and told him I was to check on the corpsman situation on the Hill for the BAS down on the Khe Sanh Combat Base. I asked him where the other DOCs were on the Hill. He told me that I was standing in front of him. I was immediately assigned to Lt. Lawrence Boudria of the 3rd Platoon, India 3/26 for all my days on the Hill and what was to turn out to be many interesting months through the summer after leaving the Hill in April. There was one other DOC on our side of the Hill and Dabney ordered me NEVER to be on the same side of the Hill as him EVER! As it turned out, the two of us were the only DOCs for a long time.

The story of the Hill and the DOCs like myself who survived the entire siege is best saved for another time...my intent is to show, where we DOCs come from. We are all Brothers, Eternally Bonded.

Christmas 67 at Con Thien

By Bob McLane

In the fall of 1967, hundreds of bicycles and small trucks carried thousands of tons of rice and bullets along the Ho Chi Min trail through the not so distant mountains to re-supply the hidden army we were fighting across the DMZ. Countless 500-pound bombs dropped from never-ending flight missions of B-52's had failed to stem the flow of supplies.

From as far as seventeen miles away, dozens of long range North Vietnamese artillery batteries hidden in caves along the border of the DMZ, pounded Con Thien night and day. I had been up to the isolated Marine base several times in November, riding shotgun on convoys delivering ammunition and C-rations. This time we were bringing hot turkey and cold eggnog. I volunteered to ride in the lead truck. I had heard stories of guys on a convoy losing their legs because of land mines. I decided to take my chances on the roof of the deuce and a half. I crossed my legs and rested my M-16 in my lap. I brought along a can of hard candy I had gotten from one of the cooks. I tossed pieces to the kids we passed along the road to Cam Lo. I remembered to yell Merry Christmas in Vietnamese. We rolled through the barbed wire gate around noon and immediately began unloading our Christmas cargo. I laughed at the other guys riding in the convoy. Their faces and uniforms were covered in red dust from the dirt road we had been riding on since we left Cam Lo and headed north. My own face was spotless. Riding on the lead vehicle had its advantages. Con Thien was a cluster of sandbagged bunkers surrounded by mine fields and razor wire. The six 105 howitzers of Fox battery were set up and ready to fire support for any patrols in the area. We were glad we had made the trip without any trouble. We had heard stories about how many times the Christmas "truce" had been violated last year. The cooks set up a chow line and started serving Christmas dinner. They were in a hurry to get this over with and get the hell out of there before something bad happened. The gunny walked over to me and held out a carton of eggnog. "This is for you, McLane." I looked at him and shook my head. "No thanks, Gunny, that is for the guys up here." He smiled at me and shook his head. "No, this eggnog is for you. Watching you riding on the roof of that truck this morning made me proud

to call you a Marine, in spite of your weird ways." The gunny didn't have to twist my arm. It was a hot day.

The guys in Fox battery were like most Marines in any line outfit, they could use a shave and a shower. Most were shirtless in the sun. All wore helmets and flak jackets. So far the artillery batteries on both sides had honored the Christmas truce. The food disappeared fast and it was time for us to head south. I climbed back on the roof of the lead truck and waved good-bye to the guys in Fox battery. We rolled out of the gate. We made it back to Dong Ha without any trouble. Eleven months of war still lay ahead of me, but I never forgot the excitement and pride I felt that Christmas Day riding into Con Thien.

The Battle for Hill 950 06 June 1968

Shortly past midnight, approximately 19 very sudden, loud screeching rockets pierced the calm, silent, very dark summer jungle night, exploding on Khe Sanh Combat Base, killing two, and wounding eleven. Killed were Rodney C. Little who was sitting on an orange crate playing cards when the rounds hit, striking the nearby Seabee tent just across the roadway. A round struck the top of the tent pole so that it detonated as an air burst. Also killed was Senior Chief Equipment Operator Donald J. Barnes who had been sent to KSCB to maintain the heavy equipment used to construct roads and facilities at the rapidly-expanding base. June 5, 1967 was the first day of his second tour of Vietnam service. The Seabee camp at Dong Ha was later named in his memory. During the attack, Gunnery Sergeant James Wilkinson Moore, Jr., of H&S Co., 1/26, dashed from his bunker to go to the Seabee bunker, but was knocked back by the blast. Although he suffered torn cartilage, and bruises to his ribs, he still assisted in the evacuation of the wounded, and only after doing so would allow himself to be treated and evacuated.

At 0125 Hours, the SOG unit located at the Old French Fort just east of Khe Sanh village received 6 mortar rounds. The main attack, however, was an assault atop the very steep Alpha Relay on Hill 950. This hill's radio relay capability was used as a radio relay since the PRC-25 radios used by patrols mov-

ing on the steep hills and deep valleys were "line-of-sight." They frequently moved into positions where it would have been impossible to communicate with the headquarters on KSCB were it not for this high radio relay site. Approximately 40-50 North Vietnamese Army soldiers of the 6th Battalion, 95th Regiment, 325C Division, attacked 950 from Hill 1015 to its east.

A bunker occupied by (call sign) PINEFOLD RELAY, Cpl. David Buffalo, Cpl. Dale Lloyd Speir, and L/Cpl. Kenneth S. Howard, Marines from H&S Co., 1/26 on the north side of the outpost, were isolated throughout the attack. Cpl. Buffalo was on the radio, calling in artillery on the positions from where the NVA fired, while the other two Marines with him looked and listened for rockets from the north that were fired over the hill towards KSCB. Following the fourth volley of rockets, Howard heard grenades explode on the outpost, and Buffalo reported the outpost under attack. Speir observed an NVA soldier entering their bunker, and unloaded half a magazine at him. Howard observed three other NVA attempting to enter the adjacent bunker, left his bunker and opened fire on them. While outside his bunker, another NVA soldier tossed a grenade into the bunker containing Buffalo and Speir. It had been raining for about ten days and the deck of the bunker was soft mud. Buffalo was near his rack as Speir moved from side to side. "When the grenade went off I remember feeling something hot hitting me. Howard came back into the bunker. Neither of us knew at that time what had happened to Speir. It was at this time I whispered to PINEFOLD that I was hit and the camp had been overrun. They asked me to key my set, once for yes, twice for no, in response to their questions if it got too dangerous to speak. I told them to fire on the camp as it seemed we were the only ones left and in the bunker," said Buffalo.

Buffalo continued. "We found out later, Speir was already dead. The ground was muddy. I always thought the grenade that killed him and wounded me had sunk in the mud before it went off, and he had caught shrapnel in his chest because he wasn't wearing his flak jacket. I was saved because of the combination of the grenade sinking and my being on the top bunk, away from the major explosion. It could be true that Speir either fell on the grenade partially or it landed on him, but as I recall, he was standing. As the night wore on, I prayed that we would be safe

and made every promise in the book, if God would see me through this."

Cpl. Wethy told machine gun #2 that KSCB was under attack and then alerted Sgt. Richard W. Baskin, who was in charge of the security detachment atop the outpost. The area of Alpha Relay was very small; there were only 9 Marines from the Security Platoon, radio operators consisting of 6 Marines from 1/26, and 3 Marines from A Co 3Rd Recon. These 18 Marines occupied sandbagged bunkers covered only with ponchos to protect them from wind and rain. It was very easy for these people to just lob grenades in and be effective. Sgt. Baskin had been helo-lifted to the top of Hill 950 on Monday, 28 May 1967 to relieve Sub Unit #5 Marines. Including himself, he had nine Marines in his squad, consisting of two, four-man machine gun crews.

At 0150 Hours a flare was tripped about 30 meters out from the hills east side. One minute later, a RPG fired by the NVA sailed over the hill and detonated a trip flare on the west side of the perimeter. The eastern side of the hill began receiving hand grenades, a few RPGs, and a high volume of small arms fire. L/Cpl. Castillo yelled, "Incoming grenades, everybody get up, we're under attack!" A grenade exploded in front of his position on the west side of the hill. Sgt. Baskin yelled to Cpl. Wethy, the radioman on watch, to bring in artillery on the east side of the hill. Baskin ran out of his hootch and before anybody knew it, there were NVA swarming up the eastern side of 950 and grenades were going off all over the place. "People were screaming and hollering and there was a lot of confusion. At the time I was standing outside my hooch, Baskin dashed into his bunker and grabbed his M-16 but didn't bother with his flak jacket or cartridge belt."

During the initial attack, grenades hit a bunker containing 4 snipers. PFC David Stephenson managed to escape and while moving, was hit by NVA rounds, fell, and was pulled to safety by Cpl. John Roland Burke and PFC Thomas R. Back. A grenade exploded in their midst, knocking both snipers into the bunker and throwing Stephenson away from it. Burke was badly hit in the head, and although bleeding profusely, attended to L/Cpl. Carper, who was also wounded. Burke placed Carper on top of the rack and placed his body on top of him to keep shrapnel and other flying objects from hitting him. As Stephenson struggled to get into the bunker,

another grenade exploded, knocking him into the bunker. Burke, after rendering aid to the wounded, charged the enemy from his bunker and was killed by a deadly hail of enemy fire.

Sgt. Baskin saw three NVA soldiers throw the charges/grenades into the snipers' bunker and heard their screaming. Two managed to get out only to be cut down by the waiting NVA, despite his attempts to cover them. At this point, Baskin took a W/P grenade, pulled the pin, let the spoon fly and held it. "He finally released the thing, when he and the soldier were looking at each other. It hit him right in the chest when it went off. It was terrible. It just blew him off his feet. His partner there caught a fraction of it, and both of them were aflame. He may have been a lieutenant, and was just blown to pieces. He was like ash when I found him that morning."

Cpl. Powell's machine gun #1 was hit with grenades, seriously wounding Cpl. J. B. Powell, L/Cpl. Lawrence, and PFC's Monroe, and Stephenson. When their machine gun guarding the eastern sector of Hill 950 became unserviceable, the men decided to fall back towards L/Cpl. Balzano's position. L/Cpl. Larry Eugene Lawrence, gunner for the machine gun, covered their withdrawal. When they came under fire, L/Cpl. Lawrence fired point blank at the enemy, driving them back, allowing the three men to make it to safety. Lawrence was hit, fell, stood up again, and was killed. Sgt. Baskin saw him get hit. "I wanted to go out, but I just couldn't. There were NVA on our right flank who were penetrating right up through the center," said Baskin

PFCs David Stephenson, and George D. Monroe, staggered into the position manned by L/Cpl. Richard C. Green and PFC Jeffrey L. Arnold, just as PFC Monroe yelled, "Cpl. Powell has been hit." At that moment, two grenades were thrown into Green's hole, and although they exploded, no one was injured. A trip flare went off on the east side showing four North Vietnamese soldiers jumping up and down on top of the radio bunker. L/Cpl. William C. Balzano killed two with the machine gun, while PFC Arnold and L/Cpl. Green killed the other two with their rifles. Sgt. Baskin had moved into a hole in front of Green and Arnold to cover the southeast, as Castillo dashed from the hole containing Balzano's machine gun and took over Baskin's position, killing several NVA soldiers.

The hilltop was shrouded in dense fog. Trip flares

created eerie silhouettes. Sgt. Baskin heard Balzano firing his machine gun. As Baskin moved, Cpl. Powell, the gunner on the other machine gun position that had been overrun, came up to Baskin, fell at his knees and said, "Sarge, help me, I am hit in the back." Baskin grabbed him and dragged him to his hooch. They could hear rockets to the northwest over their heads heading towards Khe Sanh.

When Balzano's machine gun froze, he and PFC Arnold desperately attempted to repair it, breaking it down and checking each piece, but were unable to fix it. Balzano told Baskin: "I can fire one round, but can't get any sustained rate of fire out of it." Baskin heard PFC Steve Arnold say: "He's with Cpl. Powell and is seriously wounded. This was my first firefight and I know I'm in a position now where everyone's depending on me as I depend on everyone else." PFC Stupar dashed from the recon bunker, only to be shot and killed. The recon bunker was hit by a RPG that entered the bunker through an opening and exploded inside, killing the three occupants.

The NVA force clearly had fire superiority in addition to their element of surprise. Sgt. Baskin spotted the NVA setting up a machine gun atop the bunker in the center of the outpost using the sandbags for the base of their gun. L/Cpl. Green continued firing at the NVA, and at least five or six fell over the cliff. Marines not in the radio bunkers, or at the east machine gun position, withdrew to the southwestern side of the perimeter where Baskin established a 360 perimeter around one bunker and two other positions. Balzano, PFC Steve Arnold, Cpl. Powell, and PFC Monroe manned a machine gun position while Baskin, Green, and Castillo manned a bunker covering the right flank. A grenade exploded, peppering the backs of Castillo and Baskin.

By 0220 Hours, Baskin requested that artillery be fired on top of the hill. The request was granted. 4.2" mortars, 40mm dusters, and 106s blasted the hilltop. At 0230 Hours, 3rd Mar Div COC reported to III MAF COC: "The situation looks grim on the hill. One report received indicated the position was overrun; however, cannot tell complete situation at this time." Ten minutes later: "Three are reported still alive. All contact has been lost with Marines on Hill 950: appears position completely overrun."

At 0500 Hours, fog completely shrouded the outpost. NVA soldiers held the bunker containing the three radios in the center of the hill. Sgt. Baskin told

Castillo, "We got to get over there; we got to get that radio. Castillo picked up two rifles from dead NVA. Sgt. Baskin told him to spray covering fire as he maneuvered to the center and assaulted the communication bunker occupied by the NVA. "I knew it was either take that bunker or stay here all day, and who knows what may happen?" As Baskin, Castillo, Balzano, Green, and PFC Arnold went on line and assaulted the bunker, the NVA fled. "They showed their backs and we were happy; we knew we had them," said Baskin. They seized the bunker along with a NVA POW. Communication was restored with KSCB. The Marines heard the NVA dragging their dead from the position, and fired at them until they disappeared into the woods.

Cpl. Buffalo had worried about the antenna sticking out of his bunker. The NVA had evidently assumed no one was alive in this bunker. After throwing one grenade, they made no further assaults on it.

As the morning dawned, "I heard someone ask, 'What the hell is Vietnamese to stop?'"

I jumped out of the bunker and shouted "Americans, Americans!" Someone said, "Come the hell out of there," and I did with both my hands preceding the rest of me. I was afraid I'd be shot if I didn't. Howard came out after me. I couldn't walk, re-enforcements had arrived.

At 0945 Hours, KSCB received the radio call from Alpha Relay that all friendly were accounted for. At 1230Hours, weather broke, and helicopters landed elements of Co D/1/26 to secure and evacuate the WIA and KIA. A/Btry & W/1/13 had fired 3,206 rounds in support of the Hill 950 fight. Marines from D/1/26 scouring the area discovered an NVA WIA, PFC Nguyen Van Chat, of C-9 Co., K9 Bn, 95th Regiment, 325-C Division. The 20 year old NVA from Thanh Hoa in North Vietnam, stated that his unit of 100 men attacked Hill 950 with 50 AK-47s and 38 CKC-90s. PFC Chat disclosed that his unit walked two days and nights from the north of the vicinity of Dong La Ruong, with only six hours rest in the three days preceding the attack. C-9 Company was composed of 100 men (90 of which were combat effective). The mission of their unit was to overrun the Marine position and then retreat back to their base area at Dong Tri Mountain (Hill 1009, known as Hill 1015 on American military maps). The 325C Division began their infiltration into South Vietnam, crossing the Ben Hai River on 7 March

1967 and their first engagement was this attack on Hill 950.

The following gallant defenders of 950 who were KIA were:

BARNES, EOCS Donald Joseph NMCB-10
BURKE, CPL. John Roland H&S 1/26
HUBBARD, BUL3 Charles A. NMCB-4
LAWRENCE, L/CPL. Larry E A/3rd Recon
SHERRELL, CPL. David Frank A/3rd Recon
SPIER, CPL. Dale Lloyd A/3d Recon
STUPAR, L/CPL. Michael Nick H&S 1/26
WITHEY, CPL. Howard Hugh A/3rd Recon

Khe Sanh Vets Return to Vietnam with Gold Star Moms

by Bruce Geiger

In August 2004, four veterans including three Khe Sanh Vets returned to Vietnam as escorts for Operation Gold Star, sponsored by the National Dusters, Quads & Searchlights Association. Beginning with the first return trip in July 2000, the DQS organization has raised over \$50,000 to bring twenty Gold Star Mothers to Vietnam to visit the sites where their sons gave their lives. Generous contributions have been made over the past five years by numerous veterans groups including the Khe Sanh Veterans and by individual members. On the four trips made to date, many veterans and several wives have made the trip at their own expense (approx. \$2700 each) to escort the Gold Star Mothers throughout Vietnam. They have served as a support



The Whole Gang. L-R: Anna Roble, Bill Griffith, Betty Van Dusen, Carol Tabor, Jim & Sandy Smith, Joe O'Neal, Bruce Geiger, Betty Pulliam, Janice Dahlke

group for the mothers and provided background knowledge of the many battles and diverse locations in which they served during the conflict.

The Operation Gold Star IV group met in LA the evening of Sunday, August 16th, 2004 after arriving from their home airports. Escorts for the group included Khe Sanh vets, Bruce Geiger, Jim Smith and his wife Sandy, Bill Griffith, and DQS vet Sam Hopkins. Gold Star Mothers participating on the trip included Anna Roble, Janice Dahlke, Virginia 'Joe' O'Neal, Betty Pulliam, Carol Tabor, and Betty Van Dusen. We boarded a China Airlines flight after midnight for the thirteen hour trip to Taipei followed by another three and a half hour flight to Saigon where we began our in-country adventure with "Happy," as our in-country travel guide.

Our first two days were spent in Saigon, where we did some sightseeing and got a chance to rest a bit from our long flight. On our second morning we traveled by tour bus about a half hour south of Saigon to the Ben Luc Bridge, the site where Janice Dahlke's son Randy Mueller (D- 2nd/47th Inf, 9th Inf Div KIA – 3 Mar 69) was killed. There is a new bridge at the site alongside the old bridge that crosses the Phan Co River, a tributary of the Mekong River. We stopped and held a ceremony honoring the young soldier who was killed while guarding an engineering dredging operation at the bridge. We had a beautiful ceremony alongside the river at an old bridge guard house and concrete quay that stretched out about 10 meters into the river. We attracted a number of Vietnamese onlookers who politely stood and listened as we stood around a special flower arrangement that we had made in Saigon. Information researched by DQS in advance about her son's unit and operations were shared with the group. Mrs. Dahlke also shared remembrances of her son. This set a very positive tone for the five remaining ceremonies, and was a very uplifting experience for all the mothers and us veterans. After the ceremony, we took pictures and gave the locals some American flags and flowers as souvenirs.

In the afternoon we did more sightseeing, strolled around the Saigon streets near the hotel, and shopped before dinner. We departed Saigon the next morning after breakfast for the next leg of our journey to the beautiful mountain city of Dalat, stopping along the way for pictures (and a traffic violation) at Bien Hoa airfield, which is now a huge industrial

park complex. We had lunch in the mountain town of Bao Loc after which we visited the nearby Dam Bri Falls, which is among the most famous in Southeast Asia. After getting drenched at the falls, we returned to Bao Loc to warm up with a cup of fresh Vietnamese coffee, and arrived early that evening in Dalat where we spent the next two days sightseeing, learning a bit of Vietnamese history, and shopping. We visited two ethnic Montagnard villages, a Buddhist monastery, and the Bao Di summer palace.

From Dalat we traveled east through the "Song Pha" pass and saw the huge Japanese built hydro-electric plant and pipeline on our way to the coastal town of Phan Rang. There we visited an ancient, ethnic Cham Tower before traveling to Cam Ranh Bay where we stopped at the airport. Thirty-seven years earlier this had been the place where I and tens of thousands of US troops first arrived in Vietnam. We traveled along a brand new coastal highway from Cam Ranh Bay to Nha Trang where we would spend the night. Nha Trang is truly the Riviera of Vietnam's beach resorts. Hotels are all along the oceanfront. Tourists and Vietnamese vacationers were parasailing, boating, and basking on the seemingly endless, white, sandy beaches.

In the morning we traveled north on Rt. 1, then northwest along Rt. 14 to Pleiku via Buon Ma Thuot. We passed through the Ia Drang Valley near Chu Pong Mountain where the 7th Air Cavalry fought the first major battle of the war in 1965, becoming the subject of a famous book and more recently the movie "We Were Soldiers." We had dinner and stayed the night at the Pleiku Hotel. After breakfast we stopped at the site of a former Army/Air Force base (101st Airborne) on our way to Kontum and then to Dak To where we visited a war monument (Russian T51 Tank) and stopped to pet and play with a friendly calf. We drove on to Ben Het near the border (8km) with Cambodia and Laos along the Vietnamese side of the Ho Chi Minh trail. We then returned to Kontum to visit a Catholic orphanage, and visited with kids from infants to teenagers. We also met the ARVN Captain, who on our first OGS trip in 2000 invited us into his home to share his prized rice wine. We took photos, left lots of candy, and gave a generous donation. Our trip continued back to Pleiku, then east along Rt. 19 through the Mang Yang Pass to An Khe, and An Khe

Pass to the coastal town of Qui Nhon where we checked into the Seagull Hotel and had dinner before retiring after an exhausting day.

The following morning we traveled north toward Bong Son (Binh Dinh Province) and stopped at Phu Cat, a former US airbase which is now shared by a brand new civilian airport terminal handling two flights a day. We drove north to Phu My, former site of a base camp where Carol Tabor's son Richard Eugene Tabor (E-1st/503rd Inf, 173rd AB KIA - 7 Jan 71) had been stationed and held our second remembrance ceremony nearby off Rt. 631 in a small village near where he had been killed. Local villagers observed inquisitively as we remembered our fallen brother. We rewarded their friendliness and hospitality with candy, pens, American flags, and flowers from the ceremony. We returned south to Qui Nhon for an afternoon of shopping at the local mall which looked like those in any small US town. After checking into a different hotel, we went for a swim in the South China Sea before dinner.

The next leg of our trip took us north along Rt. 1 through Quang Ngai City near the road to My Lai where the infamous massacre occurred. We drove north past the former Marine base at Chu Lai, now an off-limits Vietnamese military installation, before stopping for lunch at the Phoy Hoi garden restaurant in the beautiful town of Hoi An. After lunch we toured the local silk factory where we saw the entire process in the silk worm life cycle, as well as the spinning and weaving of silk yarn into cloth. Silk tablecloths, napkins, scarves, etc. were a real bargain, and we did lots of shopping here. Several miles farther north at Danang, we stopped at Marble Mountain to take pictures and visit the largest marble factory (one of twelve) where we shopped for beautiful, hand carved marble items. Although it began to rain, we visited China Beach where we held a brief memorial ceremony on behalf of a Gold Star Mother who was unable to make the trip. We collected some China Beach sand as a remembrance for her before checking into the beautiful Saigon Tourane Hotel in Danang. In the evening we had dinner at the Apsara restaurant which featured ethnic Cham musical entertainment and a replica of an ancient Cham tower. Back at the hotel, most of the group turned in for the evening, but a couple of us headed out to find dessert at a local ice cream parlor, the "Indochine Gardens." They were showing "Tom

& Jerry" cartoons on a big outdoor screen.

After breakfast we drove by the former "Freedom Hill" in Danang, where there had been a large military installation including a USO and PX. We made our way over to Rt. 1 near the sea and up to the Hai Van Pass, stopping to take photos of the beautiful coastal scenery. Visible from the lower roadway of the pass was a Japanese tunnel project in its final stage of construction through the mountain that will soon divert most commercial trucking from the arduous 21 km. trek over the pass. On the northern coastal side of the Hai Van Pass, we stopped at the beautiful Lang Co beach, which was a 101st Airborne Hqs. known as Eagle Beach during the war. We had refreshments and bought souvenirs before driving past the Lang Co lagoon on the west side of Rt. 1 and the Tam Giang lagoon, where three major tributaries converged from the mountains into a large estuary. Here, a major shrimp farming industry thrives in the coastal plain. We stopped at Phu Bai, the former site of a large military airfield and base, where a new civilian air terminal has recently been completed, and from which we eventually would fly to Saigon before returning home. Further north we drove into Hue City, then along the beautiful Perfume River, and checked into the Saigon Morin Hotel, the finest of all the hotels we stayed in.

After a breather and lunch in Hue, we traveled north to rural Rt. 49, where we headed west about 35 km. into the Ashau Valley and LZ Ripcord. Virginia O'Neal lost her son Samuel Stephen Lance (A-1/506th Inf., 101st AB KIA - 1 May 70) in the vicinity of Ripcord during Operation Texas Star that was launched to regain the initiative in the mountain area east of the Ashau Valley. At the base of Ripcord in a relatively uninhabited area, we held a ceremony in remembrance of the sons of Joe O'Neal and several Gold Star Mothers who were unable to make the trip. Our guide pointed out former firebases including LZ Bastogne and others which were accessible to US troops only by helicopter during the war. We returned to the Saigon Morin Hotel and went out to a local restaurant for dinner. Afterward, a couple of us took cyclo rides around the city, and I visited the famous DMZ Bar where thousands of returning veterans had autographed the walls. We rode along the Perfume River before heading back to the hotel for the evening.

The next morning we headed north again, where



**CHICAGO, THAT "TODDLIN" TOWN
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ROSEMONT, ILLINOIS 60018
RESERVATIONS PHONE 800-996-3426**

Tuesday 12 July Registration Day \$ **35.00 Per Person**, Under 18 No Charge, fee includes Free shuttle all week. Shuttle ticket also entitles member to a selected gift from KSV- PX and entry in Raffle for 1 of 4 raffle prizes. To be announced at reunion.

Wednesday 13 July Registration, Free trips to various sites in Chicago Land Area. Transportation to BBQ at "Jarheads" Famous Marine Bar. Other activities on Schedule (**Free**). PX, and Hospitality Room Open

Thursday 14 July Registration, Free trips to various sites in Chicago land Area. BBQ at Hotel outdoor pool. (**Free**) Other Hotel activities TBA. PX, and Hospitality Room Open

Friday 15 July **Free** Trip to Navy Pier for shopping and amusement park. 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Pay at sight if you choose to take ship cruise with dinner & dancing, 7:00pm-10:00 pm. **Fee TBA** PX and Hospitality Room Open. Hotel Bar with Live Band 50's Music.

Saturday 16 July Registration from 11:00am-12:00pm. General membership meeting 9:00am, PTSD Meeting immediately follows. Annual Memorial Banquet 6:00 pm, all you can eat buffet style. Beef Chopping Block, Various Chicago food, salads and deserts. **\$35.00 per person.**

Sunday 17 July Memorial Services at 9:00 am **Free Shuttles to Airports**

"SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR REGISTRATION & MAILING INSTRUCTIONS"

ROOM RATES \$ 89.00 PLUS CITY TAX

Please Be As Complete As Possible For Printing of Name Badges

LastName_____NickName_____FirstName_____MI_____

Address_____City_____

State_____Zip Code_____ + 4_____

Phone: AC () _____ - _____ Email_____

Unit:_____

Attending With:

Last Name_____First Name_____Relationship_____

Last Name_____First Name_____Relationship_____

Last Name_____First Name_____Relationship_____

Last Name_____First Name_____Relationship_____

Special Needs: _____

Total Cost Per Person **over 18** Registration **\$35.00** X _____ = _____ \$ _____

(example $\$35.00 \times 2 = \70.00)

Banquet **\$35.00** X _____ = \$ _____

Total Check Amount \$ _____

NOTE: After 30 June 2005, the registration fee will be \$ 40.00 Per Person over 18 YOA

The parking fee for all vehicles is \$ 3.00 a day. This fee is not from the Hotel, but assessed by the Village of Rosemont.

There are many restaurants within walking distance of the Hotel, and a brand new Mall literally across the street. The Hotel has also promised special meals each day in which we choose the menu. Or you can use our own shuttles to make your own little trips, to the places of your choice. They will also be making trips to the Local Casinos if you are feeling lucky.

Mail Checks To: The Khe Sanh Veterans C/O
James Wodecki
2200 McGarity Ln

we stopped at Camp Evans, former base camp and Hqs. of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, where I spent the last three weeks of my Vietnam tour in September 1968 before returning home. We traveled north on Rt. 1 past Quang Tri City on our way to Dong Ha from where we would visit most of the Marine firebases in and around Leatherneck Square on the DMZ. We had lunch in a rather dingy roadside restaurant across the Dong Ha Bridge on Rt. 1 before heading north through Gio Linh and across the Ben Hai River about 15km. into the former "North Vietnam." Our destination was the seaside village of Vin Muoc, where the entire village of several hundred people moved underground into a network of tunnels for three years, to avoid the heavy bombing north of the DMZ. They dug many miles of tunnels, three levels deep at the edge of the sea, reaching a maximum depth of nearly 70 meters. Several of the Gold Star Moms joined us to explore a stretch of the tunnels which had been fortified and dimly lit to accommodate a growing tourist trade. In addition, the village had added new walkways, exhibits, and a brand new museum building to replace the "shack" which was there when we visited in 2000. On our return trip across the DMZ, we stopped and walked back across the old "Freedom Bridge" which had also been shored up and replanked since our 2000 visit. Water buffalos grazed warily nearby but would not let us get too close.

After passing back through Gio Linh, we headed west just below the DMZ toward A3, and then to Con Thien where we stopped to climb the hill. The 1.5 km climb up a narrow cow path to the concrete French bunker was a bit too difficult for the mothers. Having spent much of the last three months of 1967 on the hill at Con Thien, I was determined to climb to the top alone where I found the bunker overgrown with vegetation. From this vantage point at the top of the hill, I was able to locate both of my Duster positions. I took a Ziploc bag of soil. I also saw an oxcart, pulled by an ox, and got a couple of photos before my digital camera battery died. Predictably, my spare was on the bus at the bottom of the hill! Our tour bus drove south from Con Thien across the new Cam Lo Bridge (one year old) to the intersection at Rt. 9, and then east back to Dong Ha and our modest hotel on Rt. 1. After dinner I took a stroll up Rt. 1 through a relatively quiet Dong Ha which now stretched several kilometers in

each direction from Rt. 9.

We arose early, ate breakfast at the hotel, and began our day with a short bus ride to a residential area to visit the last remnant of the huge Marine base at Dong Ha, an old reinforced concrete, aircraft hanger where the airfield had been during the war. It was located behind a group of houses in a residential backyard, and had become a play area of sorts for the local kids. It was here that we had chosen to hold a remembrance ceremony for John Phillip Van Dusen, (USN Seabee KIA – 20 Sep 68 at Camp Barnes, Dong Ha) the son of Betty Van Dusen. John was also a Khe Sanh veteran, having supported operations at Khe Sanh earlier in 1968. He was killed during a mortar attack at Dong Ha. A number of Vietnamese quietly observed our ceremony in the hanger, and afterward were eager to talk with our group. It made for a very rewarding experience, and we gave them American flags, pens, candy, and flowers as a token of our appreciation.

We traveled a short distance west on Rt. 9 just outside the Dong Ha Marine Base to the location of a former compound defended by 1/9 Marines in mid-1967. We held a remembrance ceremony here for Dale A. Pulliam, the son of Betty Pulliam (C-1/9 Marines, 3rd Mar Div KIA – 14 May 67) during a ground attack. Dale had also fought in actions at Khe Sanh and Con Thien.

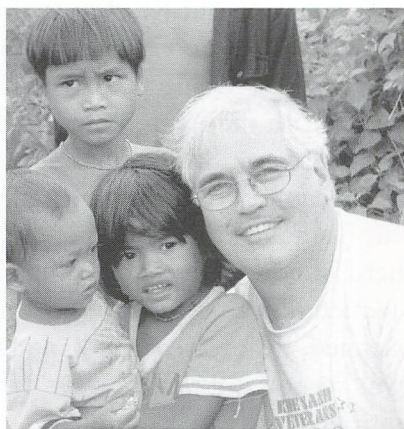
Continuing out Rt. 9 west through Cam Lo, we stopped at Camp Carroll to explore the former Marine base where C-1/44 Dusters were based, along with the Army's big 175mm guns that supported operations throughout the DMZ. Bill Griffith and I came across a former NVA soldier who had cut his hand with a machete while tending to his herd of cows. It was bleeding and dirty, so we coaxed him to return to our tour bus where we cleaned, disinfected and bandaged the wound. He was so grateful that he gave Bill Griffith his NVA pith helmet for a few dollars.

We drove further south from Camp Carroll to a town called My Loc where I had a memorable "encounter" with a large water buffalo. For as long as I can remember, I have had an insatiable desire to pet one of these beasts, and this handsome specimen was accommodately tethered by a hemp rope, tied to a steel pipe that was driven into the ground. I handed my camera to Sam Hopkins, and slowly approached the grazing animal along the rope. It was

very nervous, but I whispered reassuringly to it as I bravely inched along the rope, getting close enough to stroke his wet nose just before he jerked his head and snorted at me. When I went back to Sam and the camera, I discovered he had missed the shot. I again showed Sam what to do, and approached the now irritable beast with irrational confidence. As I again got within a few inches, holding the rope tightly in both hands, the beast decided he would have no more of this and bolted to my left. The rope instantly became taut on my right side, and jerked my legs out from under me before snapping from the pipe. It zipped through my hands before I could unclench my fists, leaving me with nasty rope burns and torn blisters. Of course by now, everybody from our group and the surrounding hamlet had seen what happened and was horrified. A few of the guys helped me clean and dressed my wounds at the bus, and needless to say, I was duly teased throughout the remainder of the trip.

Further west on Rt. 9, we stopped at the Khe Gio Bridge to honor one of our C-1/44 Duster comrades, Sgt. Mitchell Stout who on 12 March 1970 had thrown himself on a satchel charge to save his buddies during a sapper attack on the bridge defenses. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the only Air Defense Artillerymen ever to receive our nation's highest military decoration.

We traveled out Rt. 9 past the Rockpile westward toward Ca Lu where we were delayed at a bridge construction site as rock was blasted with dynamite charges. We took the opportunity to visit a Bru



Bruce Geiger with children at Ca Lu.

Montagnard village alongside the road. The shy kids hesitantly allowed us to take pictures, but gleefully mobbed us when we brought out the candy and toys. Bill Griffith was like the pied piper, finally getting them to line up to bring some order to the chaos. Some of the Gold Star Mothers held the babies and played with the children. We gave gifts to some of the elders, and finally got on our way when the roadway was opened.

It was somewhat overcast when we arrived at the outskirts of Khe Sanh.

We drove up the road to



Khe Sanh village

the former combat base through lush coffee groves and came upon the new museum building that had been constructed since our last visit in 2000. We placed a large flower wreath and held a ceremony honoring the many men who had served here. Those of us who fought here took a few minutes to tell a bit of the history of the "Hill Fights," the "Siege," and the later dismantling of the base. While others



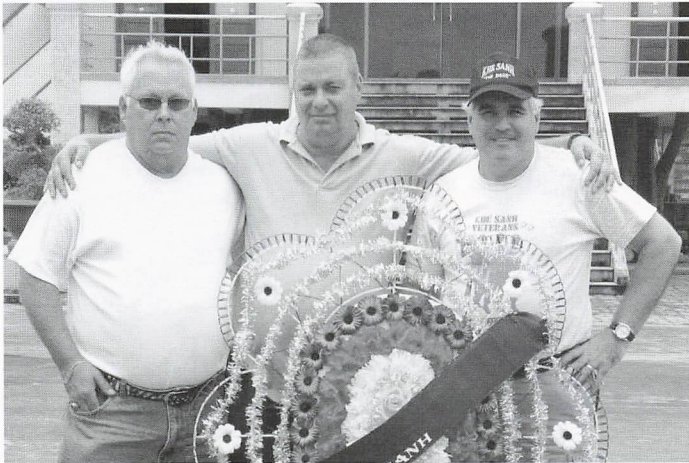
Gold Star Mothers with memorial wreath

toured the museum, I was determined to find my former Duster and Quad 50 positions that I had been unable to locate on my 2000 visit due to erroneous information about the original runway location. This time I humped through the heavy vegetation to the coffee groves where the original runway had been located, and was ecstatic to find the 'blue sector' perimeter where my gun positions had been dug in during the siege. I took another Ziploc bag of red clay, took a moment to remember my Marine friends who did not survive this place, and headed back to our tour bus.

Our tour bus traveled back out to Rt. 9 and headed west through Khe Sanh village past Lang Vei, to the town of Lao Bao at the Laotian border. We stopped for lunch at a very nice hotel restaurant, where we had an excellent view of Co Roc Mountain where the NVA gunners had dug in their heavy

artillery to fire on Khe Sanh and the surrounding hills during the siege in 1968. After lunch we drove near the border crossing with Laos, where we bought some souvenirs from the local kids before stopping in a large, modern mall to do a little shopping. We backtracked on Rt. 9 and stopped for photographs at Lang Vei, the site of the former Army Special Forces camp that was overrun in January 1968 by the NVA using Russian T76 Tanks for the first time in the war.

By this time it was late afternoon, and we headed back along Rt. 9 to a spot between Ca Lu and the Rockpile, which was as close as we could get to LZ Margo, where the son of Anna Roble, Joseph Edward Roble (E Co., 3rd Bn/26th Marines, USMC KIA – 16 Sep 68) was killed during a heavy mortar attack while defending the Command Post and LZ.



Bill Smith, Bill Griffith, Bruce Geiger

Ironically, one day earlier Joseph Roble had saved the life of Bill Griffith, who was severely wounded during an intense firefight with the NVA, and today Bill Griffith was among the Operation Gold Star group standing in Vietnam beside Anna Roble at a remembrance ceremony in honor of her brave son. For his actions, Joseph Roble was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with 'V' device for heroism at Arlington National Cemetery in a 1998 ceremony. We gave American flags and candy to the many Vietnamese onlookers who had been quietly observing from the road.

We returned to Dong Ha, where we had a late dinner and retired for the evening. In the morning, we traveled south where we stopped in Quang Tri City at the bridge site of a monument honoring the prisoner exchange in 1973 between North and South Vietnam. In Quang Tri city, we visited the site of the

old Citadel that was all but completely destroyed when the NVA stormed across the DMZ in 1975. From Quang Tri City we traveled south

to Hue where we took a cruise on the Perfume River. After the cruise, several of us visited the more famous Citadel that had been the scene of intense fighting at the start of the Tet offensive in 1968. We ate dinner in town and spent the evening at the Saigon Morin Hotel. In the morning we drove to Phu Bai Airport where we said goodbye to our tour bus driver and his son, and caught a flight to Saigon. Our last day in Saigon featured an afternoon of high energy shopping which included a trip to the lacquer factory and to the many shops on the streets within walking distance from our hotel. On our last night in Vietnam, we took a dinner cruise on the Saigon River and reminisced about our two-week pilgrimage. The next morning we had a fabulous breakfast before departing for the airport where we said our goodbyes to our guide 'Happy' and boarded our flight to Taipei. Some nineteen hours later we arrived in Los Angeles where we lugged souvenir-laden luggage through customs, said hurried goodbyes, and scrambled to catch flights our own home towns.

We had little time together as a group at the culmination of our journey to reflect upon the intense emotions we had experienced over the past two Anetta_00weeks. The mothers were overwhelmingly grateful for having had this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. As I reflected upon this trip, I was reminded of a symbolic gesture carried out at each of our remembrance ceremonies during all of the four Operation Gold Star trips to Vietnam. It has been described by the mothers as "walking in their footsteps." At the conclusion of each ceremony honoring their fallen son, the Gold Star Mother, joined by a veteran, placed their footprints in the soil to symbolize having walked in the footsteps of her son who gave his life on this Vietnamese soil. This gesture along with the entire two-week experience enabled each of the mothers to complete an important missing piece to the difficult task of dealing with the loss of their sons. For each of us serving as veteran escorts, it had truly been a labor of love.



Remembering Our Unsung Heroes

Our brave Marines in the face of an inferno after a direct hit on the ammo dump by the North Vietnamese gunners. They attempted to save ammunition that would be badly needed for the defense of Khe Sanh.