

FALL
2009

RED CLAY

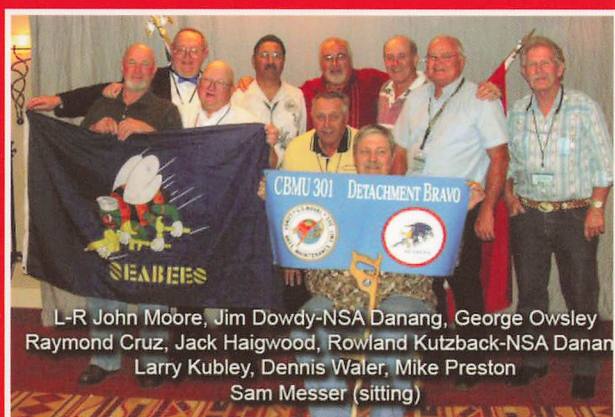
ISSUE
74



Back Row: L-R: Toby Rushforth-FAC, Jim Biltz-FAC, Chuck Thom-A-1, Ted Hill-A-1, Bruce Marcus-A-1, Jay Stone-Intel, Zip Rausa-A-1, Tim Kirk-Helo, Ed Kufeldt-Helo, George Rosental-Helo, Bob Shippen (Medic), Paul Longgear-USSF

Front Row: L-R: Bill McMurray-USSF-POW, Dale Pellot-A-1, Ron Bolt-A-1, Sam Robison-Helo, Joe Johnson-USSF, Allan Fleming-Helo, Al Nichols-A-1-POW, Dennis Thompson-USSF-POW

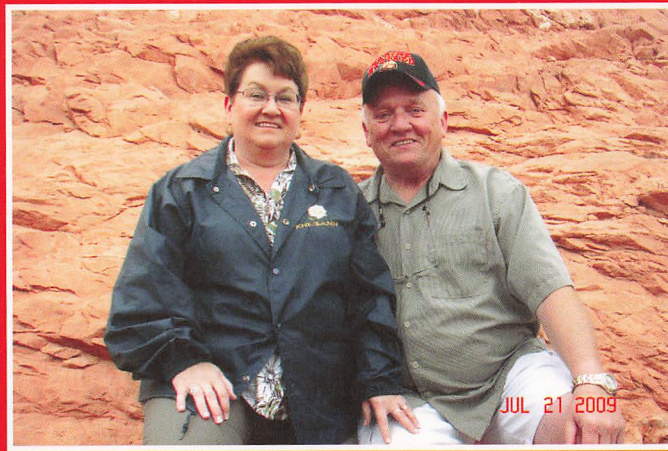
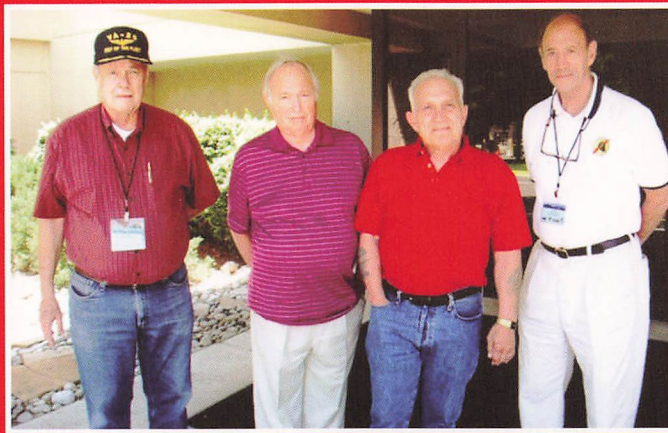
LANG VEI REUNION ARTICLE & PICTURES PAGES 76 TO 92



L-R John Moore, Jim Dowdy-NSA Danang, George Owsley, Raymond Cruz, Jack Haigwood, Rowland Kutzback-NSA Danang, Larry Kubley, Dennis Waler, Mike Preston, Sam Messer (sitting)



REUNION ARTICLE & PICTURES BEGINS ON PAGE 46 TO 71



EDITOR NOTE:

The reunion in Denver was a great success. I want to personally thank Russ Turner and his lovely wife Kathy for the outstanding job they did with organizing the reunion and taking care of the registration desk. We had almost a hundred walk-in attendees which were handled quickly & efficiently.

Thanks to the efforts of Toby Rushforth (Tass 20) we were honored to host the first get together of the survivors and gallant fighters from the battle of Lang Vei. This was the first time all participants (Ground Troops, Carrier Pilots, FAC's and Rescue Units) were actually together. Their exploits were written about in the book titled "The Night of The Silver Stars" **Thanks Toby.**

John Pessoni and I had a lot of new items designed for the KSV PX. You responded, and made it a huge success. Those funds are utilized to support our magazine and continually improve the merchandise we purchase.

Our members were also very generous in contributing and purchasing items for the Silent Auction. It brought in almost \$2,500 for the newly established scholarship fund.

REUNION COMMITTEE:

Thanks to all who contributed their time to make the Denver Reunion a huge success. Next year we will be in San Antonio and we hope to see all those who made Denver. (But Please Register Early). The membership cast their votes for the years 2011 & 2012. A team from Rochester Minnesota took the time to come to our reunion and present their case with reasons why we should come to their fair city.

They were successful, and the membership voted overwhelmingly to have the 2011 reunion in Rochester Minnesota and the 2012 reunion in Tennessee.

Russ and I traveled to San Antonio to select the hotel for the 2010 reunion. We toured 8 Hotels that fit our criteria. We narrowed the search down to two hotels, and asked the membership for a little help via the KSV website. The majority felt we should stay at a hotel close to the River Walk which is the City's main attraction.

We finally chose the Newly remodeled flagship of Holiday Inns, the El Tropicana which is located in the heart of San Antonio. The doors open directly onto the River walk. It is a real nice place and very military friendly. The 3rd Mar Div & 2/9 just had their reunion there. The reunion dates are from July 11-18 2010. All the details are included in brochures with this issue of Red clay.

On a personal note I want to thank the family of Forrest Leasure, who unfortunately passed away a short time ago. He was a Gold Star Life member of the KSV. His brother Delbert Leasure was a member of C Btry 1/13 and killed in action by a sniper on Hill 881S on 23 Feb 1968.

Forrest has provided the KSV with a \$ 25,000 gift in his will. Our founder Ray Stubbe has written his lovely wife and personal representative Linda to express our deepest gratitude. He will be remembered in the memorial section of each issue of Red Clay.

CHAPLAINS CORNER

**The 2009 Reunion
By KSV Chaplain Ron Rayner**

The 2009 reunion was a true success in my mind. The clearest indication of this was the smiling faces of the majority of the attendees. More than anything else, and this was mentioned at the Board of Directors meeting, the veteran reunion attendees did an excellent job of greeting and making new attendees feel welcome and comfortable. This was only my third reunion and I felt accepted, as well com-

MEMORIALS

THOSE REMEMBERED**REMEMBERED BY**

L/Cpl Wilbur Stoval HQ Btry 1/13 USMC KIA 09 Mar 68	Robert Holscher HQ BTRY 1/13
John W. Greene C Co 1/26 USMC	John M. Moon C CO 1/26
Forrest Leasure Gold Star Brother of Delbert Leasure KIA	The Khe Sanh Veterans

fortable with the people I spoke to. The reunion committee went far beyond the call of duty on this one, and provided an excellent venue and program. KSV Chaplain

I showed up for the Khe Sanh Veterans Reunion Memorial Service in Reno, Nevada, ten minutes early and talked to KSV Chaplain Owen Matthews. I mentioned I had been serving as a chaplain for the fire department I had retired from in Pontiac, Michigan. He said he was retiring after five years serving the Khe Sanh Vets as chaplain. Owen explained the job. He then asked if I would take over the job. After a discussion with then KSV President, Tom Eichler, I was then appointed KSV Chaplain by Tom. Newly elected KSV President David "Bulldog" Smith has appointed me to the position of KSV Chaplain for the next year.

I want to thank Tommy Eichler for being a hard working President, inspirational leader, and a great friend.

I am a non-denominational Christian. I believe all people are children of God and as a Christian I should be available to serve them, regardless of their beliefs. As a chaplain for the KSV, I most certainly serve all members and their families. What brings this subject up is the fact that the last prayer I publicly prayed at the 2009 reunion was the Blessing at the Saturday night dinner. I referenced "we" in the prayer, meaning the whole group and I ended the prayer by saying, "In Jesus' name we pray. Amen." Although, as a Christian that is how I normally end my prayers, I do not believe it is proper for me to say that when I pray for the whole group. A non-Christian member of KSV pointed this out to me in a most gracious manner after the prayer. I will strive in the future to pray in a manner that represents all present at the KSV functions.

"A person of character is someone who is respectful of others, their values, their customs, and their traditions."

Robert M. Sherfield, Ph.D.

THE EVERYTHING SELF-ESTEEM BOOK

It is my goal, in human relations is to emphasize everyone's common good traits such as in the Golden Rule. The following was on the program for the Memorial Service at the 2009 reunion. I believe being kind and fair with one another is the one thing

that we can pay forward to people in the present and future generations, **in memory of all who have sacrificed their lives serving in the Armed Forces of the United State of America.** We are free today because of their sacrifices.

Mankind's Golden Rule

A single theme runs through the scriptures of seven of the world's leading religions, expressed in astonishingly similar form.

Brahmanism: This is the sum of duty; Do naught unto others which gives pain if done to you.
Mahabharata 5:1517

Buddhism: Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.
Udanavarga

Christianity: "Do for others what you would like them to do for you. This is a summary of all that is taught in the law and the prophets."
Matthew 7:12 New Living Translation

Confusianism: Is there one maxim which ought to be acted upon throughout one's whole life? Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness ; Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.
Analects: 1523

Islam: No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.
Sunan

Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.
Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Toaism: Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your loss.
T'ai-Shang Kan-Ying P'ien

Whenever I speak or write as the KSV Chaplain, I may quote any number of scriptural or secular sources. The criteria are going to be whether or not the quote is helpful and makes sense. The above quotes on the "Golden Rule" are the perfect exam-

ple. I do not claim to have an abundance of original ideas, and I just plain like using quotes.

"The key to success in life is using the good thoughts of wise people." Leo Tolstoy

In my role as KSV Chaplain I plan the Memorial Service, send sympathy cards, get well cards and provide spiritual support and guidance. It is my job to be available and listen more than anything else. (home phone 248-634-8289, email www.eagleprep) I have found more than anything else, people need to be able to have someone to tell their story to, me included. I listened at this reunion and people listened to me. I have learned much about a major news event that I participated in forty-one years ago.

The knowledge I have gained from reading *Battalion of Kings* and attending the last two reunions has been tremendous. I want to thank the many reunion attendees who spent time with me and enlightened me on the large picture that was "The Siege."

I also want to thank 1/26 Chaplain and KSV founder Ray Stubbe for all that he has done. I stopped in Wauwatosa, WI and visited Ray on my way to the reunion. Ray was happy, healthy, and preparing to box in Kansas City in a national boxing tournament. He told me that he was turning 71 years old on August 15 and he would be retiring from the sport. He said that he was planning on attending the 2010 reunion in San Antonio, Texas.

I am looking forward to meeting more Khe Sanh Vets at the next reunion as well as old friends.

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind always be at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields and, until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.



DOC TOPMILLER REMEMBERED

By Michael Archer

ED NOTE: August 25th of this year was the anniversary of "DOC" Topmiller's death. Michael Archer (A Patch of Ground) had written a piece for a chapter in a planned sequel to his book, regarding a trip to Hill 881 taken by himself, Doc Topmiller, and Steve Orr. Michael, wishing to again honor Doc Topmiller, has graciously decided to share that experience with our membership.

MICHAEL'S TRIBUTE

Last year, our friend Robert "Doc" Topmiller took his own life just three weeks after returning home to Lexington, Kentucky from the Khe Sanh Veterans Association reunion in Reno. Many in this organization knew and respected Doc and still feel the void his death left in its wake.

August 25, 2009 marks the first anniversary of his loss, and we are still no closer to understanding what happened. Nevertheless, among the outpouring of shock and sympathy I found two messages that proved to be incredibly helpful to me, if not understanding, in better accepting this tragedy.

The first was from Wayne Karlin, former Marine helicopter door gunner in Vietnam, author of both fiction and nonfiction books about the war and its aftermath, and Professor of Literature at the College of Southern Maryland.

"I was shocked and saddened to get your email describing how Doc Topmiller died. Shocked, because I would have thought if there was ever a case of someone who seemed to have pulled through the memories in a positive way, he was that person. Especially, with the work he did, the way he dedicated himself to examining and extracting the significance of that terrible past and using what he learned to promote peace and healing."

We always saw the corpsmen (and that was what he remained as a scholar, so passionate to communicate the complex humanity of the Vietnamese: still a healer) as the strongest, the ones you could

turn to. There is some kind of sickening shift in the heart when you realize how each wound they touched, physical or not, became their own. I have always felt--and maintained to others--that the way to truly heal is not to forget, but to bring out the memories, articulate them, examine them, put them into your life in a constructive way. It's disheartening, but necessarily realistic -- a needed, but hated slap in the face -- to realize that there are no pat formulas, not even that one. That the war still has that power to reach over the stretch of 40 years and snatch such a good person back."

The second message was passed along to me by Khe Sanh veteran, and current Police Chief of Lewiston, Idaho, Steve Orr. In the course of training his officers, Steve has come to know and respect Dr. Kevin M. Gilmartin, former Marine, psychologist and author of *Emotional Survival for Police* who wrote:

"I can only imagine how shocking and painful a loss that was for you. I do hope you do not beat yourself up with a need to reconstruct minute to minute your last visit with Doc in search of seeing if you missed something that might have caused you to do something different. That was not the nature of your friendship with him.

It is also almost impossible to detect suicidal intent with the person who is considering suicide but not from a crisis-situation. I suspect Doc was a deep thinking philosophical man capable of very intense and self-contained contemplation who probably had reviewed and lived with his decision internally for years. This was not a spur of the moment impulse, or knee-jerk act. I guess a man who had seen what he had seen, and thought as deeply as he thought, probably had a psychological checklist of things he completed and when he reached the decision point took whatever action he felt compelled to take.

I imagine being a helper-healer, as he no doubt was, he would not want others feeling responsible for his actions even if others wish he had reached a different conclusion. It was his alone to make and, boy, that can be real hard for survivors to accept. The impulsive, superficial-issue based suicides we are pretty good at intervening with. Doc's

situation, I suspect, was not impulsive or superficial, but terribly tragic."

Doc Topmiller was indeed a "helper-healer." His deep sense of dedication to those injured physically and emotionally by the war would manifest itself daily across a broad spectrum, both in the United States and Vietnam. At the time of his death, he was in the midst of writing a book on the history of Department of Veterans' Affairs policies toward disabled veterans. Thanks to the efforts of some of Doc's university colleagues, particularly Professor Kerby Neill, the book will likely be published posthumously in the coming months. It is shaping up to have enormous potential value to policymakers in Washington, D.C. How fitting it is that, even in death, Doc is helping improve conditions for his fellow disabled vets.

Probably no example of Doc's compassion had a more profound impact on me personally, than his effort in 2007 to locate the remains of my high school friend, the last Marine to die on Hill 881S, LCPL Thomas P. Mahoney III. Below is a detailed description of those events, which I hope will further illustrate the enormous scope of Doc Topmiller's humanity.

TO FIND A WANDERING SOUL

By Michael Archer

On December 16, 2007, an extraordinary convergence" of Americans and Vietnamese occurred at the spot on the old Khe Sanh battlefield where Thomas Patrick Mahoney III, a fellow Marine and my childhood friend, met his end. Tom and I enlisted together in the United States Marines and, though assigned to different regiments in Vietnam, both fought at Khe Sanh in 1968.

During the abandonment of the Khe Sanh Combat Base in July 1968, Tom (who had recently received a "Dear John" letter from his girlfriend) inexplicably left the relative safety of the U.S. Marine position on **Hill 865 (End Note 1 Page 19)** and inadvertently walked into a unit of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) (**End Note 2 Page 20**) soldiers who were hiding nearby.

Now exposed, the NVA soldiers shot Tom and hast-

ily repositioned his body in front of their fighting holes. When Marines subsequently attempted to reach him, a fierce firefight ensued and lasted into the evening. Several of Tom's buddies were wounded in the rescue attempt. Sixteen others were wounded by enemy mortar fire on another part of the hill. As dusk fell, Lt. Frank Ahearn, Tom's platoon commander, appealed to the company commander Captain Robert Black to be allowed to remain behind with some volunteers and continue their efforts to recover Tom's body. This was an extremely dangerous proposition given the superior number of enemy troops in the area. In addition, Black had recently received a direct order by radio from **OPCON regimental commander (End Note 3 Page 19)** directing him to abandon the hill immediately and move by helicopter to support other Marines who were being attacked on nearby Hill 689.

As such, Black refused Ahearn's request and the Marines reluctantly obeyed. Evacuation of their many wounded took several hours. The last two off the hill, Captain Black, and an enlisted man responsible for coordinating the movement of aircraft in and out of the landing zone, were finally air lifted from the hilltop well after dark. So close was the enemy mortar and small arms fire to them, the helicopter did not completely touch down, and these two men were required to hang from the aircrafts skids for several hundred feet until the helicopter pilot locate a relatively safer spot on a nearby knoll to land and allow them to scramble onboard.

The only Marine not evacuated that evening was Lance Corporal Tom Mahoney whose lifeless and shattered body could not be retrieved without risking the lives of everyone. Tom would have the sad distinction of being the last U.S. Marine to die on that legendary mountain outpost. Hill 881S had been wrested 14 months earlier from an entrenched North Vietnamese Army regiment in a bloody four-day battle that resulted in hundreds of Marine casualties, and was held at great additional cost of life until the throbbing blades of the last evacuation helicopter receded in to the night of July 6, 1968.

On July 12, 1993, 25 years to the day the U.S. abandonment of the Khe Sanh Combat Base complex was completed after days and nights of fierce combat on Hill 689, a Joint Task Force – Final Account-

ing (JTFFA) team traveled to the site of Tom's death (at map coordinates XD 773441). After performing a survey of the area, but no digging, the JTFFA concluded that:

"A surface search of the U.S. record site yielded no remains or burial sites discovered at the site."

No other activity on Mahoney's case (#1224) was recorded again until July 2003, when the Joint Field Activity (JFA) Research and Investigation Team located a text at the People's Army of Vietnam Library in Hanoi entitled The History of the 246th Regiment, 304th Division, 26th Corps, Military Region 1 (Quang Trung, 246), in which there was a distinct reference to Tom Mahoney's death. After listing, on page 193, the names of five of their soldiers who moved into position near the top of Hill 865 on the evening of July 5, 1968, the narrative resumes describing events on page 223:

"Finally they arrived at the main entrance of the outpost on **Hill 845 (End Note 4 Page19)**. While sitting in the fortified positions they could clearly hear the voices of the Americans and smell cigarette smoke from the bunkers. They waited for the enemy all night long.

At 1400 on the following day (July 6, 1968), we saw one American walking outside the entrance to the outpost. His face was red and his eyes were blue like a mean animal. He was looking toward Mr. Luong's team. The sounds of AK weapons roared immediately, and the American fell. Mr. Luong and Mr. Long jumped out of their positions and dragged the American's body down. They placed the body in front of them to create an ambush for the other Americans coming out of their bunkers."

In August 2003, the Office the Secretary of Defense -Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (OSD-DPMO) made this report available to the public. I obtained a copy of it in late 2004, just in time to in-

clude the information in my book *A Patch of Ground: Khe Sanh Remembered* (Hellgate Press, May 2005). The release of *A Patch of Ground*, nearly 40 years after Tom's loss, generated an amazing outpouring of interest in his story from around the United States and in Vietnam. Some, who were with Mahoney at the time of his death, and had made valiant efforts that day to retrieve his body, were surprised to learn that Tom's remains had not been recovered by a Marine Reconnaissance unit a few days after his death, as they had been told by their Battalion Headquarters acting administrative officer.

By the end of the first year of the book's release, the series of often-implausible, often-poignant, interpersonal connections had grown so numerous and so complex that it would be impossible for me to adequately describe them here; though I hope to so in the forthcoming sequel to the book.

However, one important "reconnection," occurred in December 2004, when I sent a message to Robert "Doc" Topmiller. Doc had been a corpsman (medic) in the 26th Marines Regimental Aid station during the siege of Khe Sanh, as well as a close friend of mine during our tour in Vietnam. As often happened among veterans of this war, Doc and I lost contact after returning home. Doc had gone on to earn a Ph.D. in history and was now a professor at Eastern Kentucky University. Though our once 19 year-old Khe Sanh "Doc" (a title of respect used by Marines for their Navy corpsman) had now received the academic title of "Doctor" – he clearly delights in being referred to by the former designation.

Topmiller and I resumed our friendship as if the last 36 years had been but the blink of the eye. I soon learned he had earned a reputation as a world-class scholar of Vietnamese history; publishing two books, including a harrowing memoir called *Red Clay on My Boots: Encounters with Khe Sanh 1968 to 2005* (Kirk House, 2007). What emerged from the government's search for Tom Mahoney's remains would soon summon us to that country on an improbable journey, which before it was over, would require the full range of Doc's expertise and "connections."

The discovery of *The History of the 246th Regiment* in July 2003 triggered a second effort to locate

Mahoney's remains. During the last week in August 2004, the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) sent Detachment 2 of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) back to the area. The stated "Investigation requirements" for this mission were to "search for veterans of the 3rd Battalion, 246th Regiment," particularly Messrs. Luong and Long and the three others specifically mentioned in the PAVN military record. The reasoning being that if any of these men could be found, they might recall where Tom's remains were last located and if they buried him.

On August 26, 2004, three members of the VNOSMP went to Huong Tan village near Hill 865 and spoke with Mr. Nguyen Quoc Tru, secretary of the Huong Hoa District Veterans' Association and Mr. Ho Xuan Long, former political officer of the district military unit during the war. However, neither had heard of the men being sought. On August 27, the team met with the Veterans' Association of Quang Tri Province, but none of the soldiers they were looking for was on the rolls of that organization. On August 28, the team went to Military Region 1, in order to learn more about the 246th Regiment, 26th Corps. There, they were informed the 26th Corps had been disbanded long ago, and there was no information about the people named.

In completing his report, the VNOSMP team leader concluded:

"This is a very difficult case. There are no direct witnesses. The people who fought in this battle were main force troops. When they were done fighting, they left, leaving (responsibility for the area) to the locality. Furthermore the dead American was not buried, so there is no way to find the remains."

The report was transmitted to the DPMO in February 2005 and I became aware of its existence in December of that year.

It became increasingly clear from these three DPMO reports, particularly the most recent; that they appeared to be ignoring some important information. Captain Robert Black, Lt. Frank Ahearn and others who attempted to recover Tom's remains

that July afternoon in 1968, had provided a great deal of detailed information regarding the disposition of Mahoney's body and where it was last seen, including precise map coordinates. The information they provided in the days immediately following Tom's loss were included in a comprehensive report prepared by Lt. Stuart Dorow, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment Assistant Personnel Officer. This report included a map sketched by Dorow (who had not been a witness to the events) showing where he believed Tom's remains to be in relation to other points of reference on the hill. Despite the steepness of the terrain where Mahoney's remains likely existed, the JTFFA's reluctance to dig at the site, as early as 1993, was baffling.

Doc Topmiller had by this time become quite interested in Tom Mahoney's case, and upon reading the final VNOSMP report was exasperated by the results; particularly with their conclusion that "there is no way to find the remains." He was soon on the phone to me. Having been educated in the Catholic schools of Cincinnati, Doc was now a Buddhist and knowing me to be an avowed skeptic, he delicately suggested that we should "now try doing things the Vietnamese way and see what happens."

In researching his book *The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964-1966* (The University of Kentucky Press, 2002), Topmiller spent months living in Vietnam and gained an unusually profound understanding (for a westerner) of the subtle nuances in Vietnamese culture and religion. Their "way," he patiently explained to me, is one of unwavering ancestor worship and works essentially like this: The soul of a deceased person whose remains are not returned to his or her family is always sad and wandering. If the "wandering soul" can be contacted, often through the services of a telepath, there is a good chance that **The NVA referred to the combination Hills 881S and 865 as a single location they called "Hill 845." (End Note 4 Page 19)**

whatever physical remains still exist, can also be located with the assistance of the soul. If physical remains cannot readily be located, the "wandering soul" might then be enticed away from the area it now inhabits among unknown and unfriendly souls (as in the case of a battlefield) and dwell in a happier place where it would be prayed for and loved

until the remains were located. Once the remains are found and returned to the family for proper interment, the soul would then reside in that place where family members would honor and care for it in perpetuity. It is then that the once-wandering soul will dwell in peace and happiness — and the surviving family members' duty is fulfilled.

Doc, knowing I had no desire to return to Vietnam, cautiously continued pitching his plan to me: His contacts in Vietnam would make all the arrangements for hotels, guides, translators, drivers, the telepath and necessities for the Buddhist religious services. All I had to do, he urged, was show up — and keep an open mind.

After consulting with my wife Becky, I decided to go (she, was most adamant about not wanting to accompany us "on this one"). I then contacted two people who I strongly felt should join us. The first was Steve Orr, my best friend. Steve and I had survived the siege of Khe Sanh and the remaining eight months of our tours in Vietnam unscathed -- flying back to the U.S. side-by-side on the same Continental Airlines Boeing 707. Defying the norm for combat veterans of the Vietnam War, Orr and I remained close friends after returning.

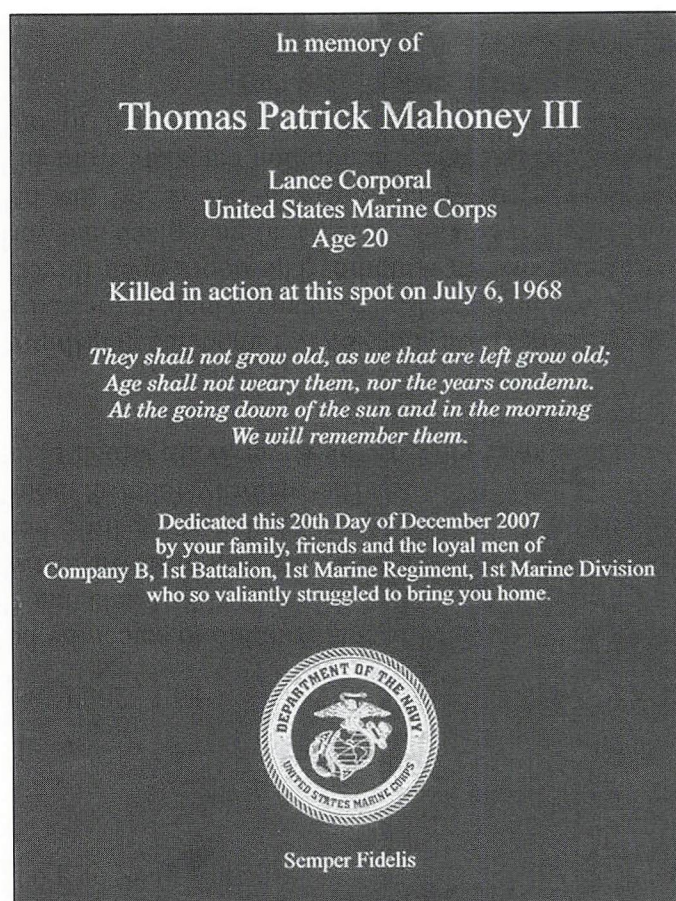
After I had explained Doc's idea to Steve, who, as fate would have it, had just accepted the job of Chief of Police for the City of Lewiston, Idaho, he unhesitatingly wanted to join us. He would reschedule his reporting date. Three old friends returning to Vietnam together after 40 years in search of the "wandering soul" of a fellow Marine was just too intriguing for him to miss.

The other person I contacted was Claudia Harris, Tom Mahoney's sister. The Buddhists who would be assisting us in Vietnam, Doc advised me, would expect a blood relative to make the journey. Connecting with Tom's wandering soul would be far more difficult without the presence of a close family member. In lieu of that, something from Tom's past which held strong sentimental value, might be of help.

Claudia graciously declined the offer to travel to Vietnam and climb Hill 865. I respect her decision and appreciate the encouragement and genuine appreciation she demonstrated for our efforts. Claudia

provided me with Tom's old baseball glove to take to the séance. It is a sad, sweat-stained relic; with a proprietary machine-stamped Ted Williams "autograph" on the front, though more authentically inscribed by Tom on the back strap with a patient redundancy of blue ink strokes; indelibly etched in lettering so large it could have been read from the bleachers. For me, nothing more embodies the hope and longing of an American boy from that era than his own ball glove: the sweet mingling of rawhide, neat's-foot oil and innocence. I tried to slip it on my hand, but it was far too small; suggesting Tom was, perhaps, 12 years old when it was still the stuff of his dreams.

In addition to the glove, I had two plaques made for the trip. One was an 8" x 12" polished black enamel tablet with gold-colored engraved lettering. I intended to bring this back from the hill and present to Lt. Frank Ahearn on behalf of the men of Bravo Company who tried to save Tom that day. The other plaque was an 8" x 6" rectangle of lesser quality, which I intended to bury at the site. Each contained the identical text: (See Picture)



On the morning of December 9, 2007, I found my-

self squeezed into an economy-class seat between Doc and Steve onboard a United Airlines 747 winging westward on a quest both chillingly familiar and strangely incomprehensible. I could not conjure up even the vaguest imagery of the events to come as I clamped my eyes tightly shut in an unsuccessful effort to sleep. Soon our airplane approached the International Date Line — and into tomorrow.

Shortly after 9 a.m. on December 13, 2007, Dr. Dinh Van Toan (pronounced Twahn) met us in front of our hotel in Hanoi. He had arranged for a taxicab and we were soon on our way to The Center for the Investigation of Human Capabilities (CIHC) at the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association Office in north part of the city. (Pic # 1) Toan, in addition to his responsibilities as a professor and head of the Geophysical Department of the Institute of Geological Sciences at the Vietnamese Academy of Science and Technology, also volunteers his time at CIHC and had arranged our meeting with the telepath. Our connection with Toan was the result of his brother having been a professor at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and Doc Topmiller's Vietnamese language tutor while he was pursuing his doctoral degree.

Not unlike many young Americans in the 1960's, Toan (then age 16) joined the military because he thought it would be a heroic undertaking. He also came to believe that if the North Vietnamese did not stop the Americans in the South, they would soon conquer his native North. Ironically, many young Americans joined the military then (me included) for similar reasons. We had grown up in a society where battle was generally considered a noble and exhilarating enterprise; amid the then widely accepted belief that the fall of China, and more recently Cuba, to communism was a trend that must be reversed at the next opportunity — regardless of where in the world that occurred.

Toan was assigned to the PAVN 24th Regiment as a 40mm antitank gunner and was part of the force that overran the Lang Vei Special Forces camp near Khe Sanh in early February 1968. During the subsequent siege of Khe Sanh Combat Base, he sustained multiple and serious wounds during a B-52 bombing and

was completely deafened for nearly a year thereafter. He was subsequently discharged from the army.

As gracious and engaging an individual as I have ever met, Toan is exceptionally fluent in English. After we had spoken for a while about Khe Sanh, he turned to us with an expression of unconcealed sorrow and haltingly uttered: "We are all very lucky to be alive." Toan's words perfectly articulated all our feelings at that moment. This simple yet profound observation, coupled with the knowledge that we had all simultaneously shared the often-horrific experience of the Khe Sanh battleground, was followed by a long silence while each of us fought back the unexpected tears welling in our eyes.

Several cleared throats later, we returned to making small talk and learned, despite his self-effacing demeanor, Toan is a world-renowned geologist currently engaged in seismic wave experiments with colleagues at the University of Texas, El Paso. This project, he explained, requires the team to detonate a series of one-ton explosive devices at different locations throughout Vietnam. Toan bemoaned the fact that there had been several delays in the experiment because it was difficult to find potential sites for the explosions that would not "disturb a local population." I did not say anything, but found that whole idea of people being especially sensitive to loud explosions quite plausible; especially among those "local" citizens who were alive during the war when we Americans virtually "carpet bombed" the country from one end to the other.

We arrived at the university about 9:30 a.m. The CIHC office was located on the same floor as the Department of Physics; an indication, I think, of the Center's stature within the university system. We were met by a female secretary and a professionally dressed woman in her mid-50's by the name of Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai. Ms. Nguyen is a journalist, who also acts as Deputy Director of the CIHC.

Doc, Steve and I were soon led to a meeting room and seated at a long table with Dr. Toan and seven members of the CIHC. Also in attendance, were two videographers, one from a local TV station, two office secretaries and the telepath Mr. Nguyen Buu Thuan (also pronounced Twahn). Doc later pointed out to me that his middle (clan) name of "Buu" indi-

cated he descended from Vietnamese royalty.

Thuan, I would also later learn, is a married 33-year old father of two girls, who became aware of his "gift" only 5 years ago after surviving an illness that nearly took his life. He was a bit vague on exactly what the illness was when I later asked him, but it apparently involved a high fever, listlessness and loss of appetite. It took him some time to understand his new telepathic capabilities, but he now dedicates almost all his time to helping locate the souls of missing civilians and soldiers. He has been hugely successful, and proudly rattled off some figures for me which included his identification of over 3,000 wandering souls and the location of over 1,000 graves. As such, he has earned a level of respect, just short of national celebrity status, among the Vietnamese.

Once Doc, Steve and I were seated at the table, we made our introductions and small talk while tea was served. Many of the older participants spoke English. The group consisted mostly of highly educated professionals, such as journalists, educators and scientists. They were admittedly excited about the prospect of Thuan reaching a wandering American soul. There was to be an international convention of telepaths coming to Hanoi soon and I had the distinct impression this group wanted very much to be able to present to the delegates in attendance at that convention the results of Thuan's "successful" effort to locate Tom Mahoney's soul. Video footage of today's meeting, Ms. Nguyen advised us, would be used as television advertising to promote the upcoming convention. Their excitement also seemed to stem from the fact that, while almost all Vietnamese believe in the ability of telepaths to locate wandering souls, they knew we Americans were, to varying degrees, skeptical. This, then, would represent a unique challenge for Thuan.

During this preliminary conversation, Thuan sat silently; occasionally staring at an atlas which he had opened to a page displaying a map of central Vietnam. Though not rude to us, Thuan had a definite air of detachment about him. It is difficult to explain, but when he looked at me, it was as if his eyes were focusing on something just behind my head. Ms. Nguyen, sensing that I found this a bit disconcerting, explained that Thuan was in the process of communicating with the spirit world and so

wasn't really observing much around him at the moment.

After several minutes, Thuan, through an interpreter, asked me several questions about Tom Mahoney including whether he had "a long face." The answer to such a question is, of course, entirely subjective. I did not answer immediately because I was trying to envision Tom's physiognomy. Doc then whispered to Ms. Nguyen that he had observed a folder in front of her which contained, among other documents, the copy of Tom's high school yearbook photo that, he (Doc) had sent to Toan the previous November. Ms. Nguyen, who appeared to have forgotten the photo was there, immediately produced it for Thuan. After studying it briefly, Thuan seemed satisfied that this was the same face as that of the wandering soul with whom he was currently communicating.

Once the face was identified, Thuan then seemed confused about Tom's exact age (The Vietnamese believe everyone is one-year old at birth). When Doc had sent information to Toan in November, he had assumed Mahoney and I were born in the same year — 1948. I then advised Thuan that Tom was born in 1947, but died in 1968 about two months before his 21st birthday. This information seemed to clear up whatever inconsistencies were bothering him.

Soon Thuan was writing what appeared to be driving directions on a piece of plain white typing paper. When he finished, took another piece of paper and drew an elaborate map. This process took about 10 minutes and Ms. Nguyen explained that it was okay for us to talk among ourselves quietly while he drew, because he was so focused now on information he was obtaining from Mahoney's soul; he could not hear us. We used this opportunity to ask questions, which the group was eager to answer. Toan acted as our interpreter for those in the group who did not speak English. Despite the fact that it was the end of the school year and Toan had an enormous amount of work to do back at his office, he decided to attend this meeting. I was delighted Toan stayed because the young man the CICH had originally asked to interpret for us spoke English in such an unusual dialect that I could scarcely understand him (Doc later jokingly speculated that the man appeared to have learned his English from a German who had learned his English from a Cajun).

After Thuan had finished drawing the map, he asked Toan translate it for us. The three of us could clearly see it was a drawing of the Khe Sanh Combat Base and the area south to Route 9. He pinpointed the ammo dump, airstrip, revetments, even the location of Doc's small regimental aid station (in its original location, before it was blown up and collapsed). Thuan pointed out the location of two cannon batteries and even some tanks parked on the southwest side by the U.S. Army Special Forces Forward Operating Base; about where I recalled once seeing them during the siege.

The three of us were asked how accurate we thought the map to be. We all spontaneously agreed it was probably 90 to 95 percent accurate for what it showed and for the relative location of those places. The attendees all seemed visibly elated by that news. Thuan even smiled a bit. I was asked to sign and date the original map and write on it that I believed the map, as described to me, to be about 95 percent accurate.

Thuan then began drawing another map of the area leading up to Hills 865 and 881S from Route 9. Since Doc had just been in that area last May, and had climbed those hills, I asked him to check the completed map for accuracy. Doc replied that as he understood the translation of the points of reference on the map as described to us by Toan, it was 90 percent accurate. I subsequently signed and dated the map and wrote on it that it was 90 percent accurate.

This map showed Tom Mahoney's remains to be at the very base of the hill, near a village not far from the home of a man by the name of Mr. Nguyen. This was at the very bottom of a ravine below Hill 865 and several hundred meters from the spot Tom was last seen. Though this immediately seemed highly improbable to me, I was resolved to keeping an "open mind."

Mr. Thuan then wrote out a list of reference points and the items we would find at the site of his remains. All that remained of Tom, he said, were 3 very small teeth (he illustrated the size by covering up all but the very tip of his right baby finger with his left hand). He said we would also find a canvass ammo pouch with a deteriorated metal M-16 magazine containing the remnants of bullets. Thuan illus-

trated, by pointing to the left side of his abdomen, that Tom had been wearing the pouch on that part of his utility belt. These items were to be found 1.6 meters below the surface. Thuan then repeated, for emphasis, that the teeth were very small. The significance he placed on the size of the teeth underscores what I had been previously told by others familiar with the search for such remains; to wit, the climate and soil composition of the country have, over the last 40 years, thoroughly decomposed all large bone. Most remains now being located are very small bone fragments, teeth or pieces of durable clothing, like boots. Thuan would later claim to have located many remains that had completely decomposed into only a thin layer of "black earth."

Thuan asked me to close my eyes and think of Tom for five minutes. As I did, my images of Mahoney raced in an unusually rapid manner, like someone quickly riffling through the pages of a book. I felt very calm and heavy-lidded during that time, but had no other unusual sensations such as that of "a presence" or revelation. Doc later told me that Thuan had been staring intently at me, nearly unblinking, for the entire time. When I opened my eyes, after what Doc said was about 4 minutes, Thuan then asked me if I felt unusually warm or hot (it was a relatively cool day in Hanoi). He said that Tom had "visited me" and I would get that same feeling when I was above the spot he believed the remains were located. I told him I was not getting the sensation he described. I was, however, perspiring, though I believed that to be the result of not having yet acclimated to the ubiquitous humidity.

At my reply, Thuan showed no frustration, but instead turned to the group and spoke quietly with them for several minutes. Toan then translated the conversation for us. On the following Sunday, December 16, Thuan was scheduled to escort two families to the same region, one to A Luoi near the infamous A Shau Valley and the other further west into Laos. The trip would take them past Khe Sanh and Thuan was willing to stop there on the way, in order to lead us to the spot where he believed the remains were located and "bring your friend (Tom) to visit you."

We heartily and gratefully accepted his offer. As the meeting ended, Steve and I felt a great sense of relief. Not as familiar with the Vietnamese people as

Doc now was, we had no idea how we would be received; particularly by the older ones who survived the war, and most particularly by those here in Hanoi who spent a good part of 9 years living in bomb shelters. The relief we felt soon turned to appreciation for the sincere amity and helpfulness of all those in the room. We cordially shook hands and said our goodbyes. Outside, on our way to catch a cab, we again thanked Toan and hoped he would join us for lunch. Knowing that lunch among men in Vietnam often involves drinking several beers, he gratefully declined — citing the enormous amount of work that required his attention — and hurried off toward his office.

Doc Topmiller was a highly trained and methodical historian renowned for his Vietnam histories. Steve Orr, now the Chief of Police of Lewiston Idaho, was for many years an accomplished police detective. I am a life-long skeptic. We are all veterans of the Khe Sanh battlefield and none of us is prone to what one might call "mass hysteria." With that said, we left the meeting amazed at Thuan's accuracy and knowledge of things known to us, but not otherwise previously published. I suddenly felt that we were being "summoned" to the hills of Khe Sanh by something beyond my recognition.

The three of us flew from Hanoi to Hue the next morning and waited for Sunday. We tried not to discuss things too much to avoid over-anticipating. We did however, set some rules. The most important of these being to avoid presenting Thuan with any verbal or nonverbal cues while on Hill 865. Doc and I both thought we knew precisely where Tom was last seen because of the extraordinary memory of Captain Robert Black. Black had assisted Doc in preparing for his visit to Hill 865 the previous May. It was not that we had any particular reason to be suspicious of Thuan; we only wanted to be sure that we did not inadvertently "taint" the process just in case we had to analyze later how some inexplicable event might have occurred.

On Saturday morning, our travel agent, Nguyen Thi Dieu Van, whose office is in Hue, received an email from Toan containing instructions on where to find Thuan the following day. It was decided we would pick up our own interpreter in Quang Tri City on

the way there and then meet Thuan in Dong Ha, which was a few kilometers farther up Highway 1, at the junction of Hwy 9. Dieu Van would also make arrangements for the Buddhist religious ceremony to be held at the site of Tom's remains. This would require her to shop for an assortment of flowers, fruits, prepared foods and beverages to be set out as offering in the hope of enticing Tom's wandering soul from the battlefield.

Toan also wanted to be sure that we understood there was to be no digging at the site located by the telepath. He did not want anyone to get in trouble with the authorities. Technically, we (foreigners) were supposed to check in at a government office in Dong Ha before proceeding to Khe Sanh. There we would be assigned an "official" guide. Doc, however, noticed during his last few visits to this area that the rules had become lax and he and his driver could freely pass the army's gated checkpoint on the highway just east of Khe Sanh town, as long as the vehicle had an unexpired government-issued chauffeur registration tag on the windshield.

Toan need not have worried, because we had never intended doing any digging ourselves, regardless of what happened. Steve, Doc and I had already discussed this issue at great length. Steve, as a veteran crime scene investigator, pointed out that such activity by non-professionals might inadvertently destroy or lose important evidence. In addition, a finding and report by the Joint Task Force would carry far more credibility in official circles than one produced by a group of Tom's friends.

Doc echoed Toan's concern that both the Vietnamese and U.S. governments would frown upon a group of Americans digging up part of Vietnam without permission. He also added that Dieu Van had warned him that our driver, Mr. Phouc, would, for legal, cultural and religious reasons almost assuredly refuse to carry the remains of a dead body in his car back to Hue — regardless of how minuscule they might be. Doc further concluded that smuggling such remains out of Vietnam and back into the U.S. would be problematic. I added to our discussion the practical consideration that we did not have the archeological expertise or proper tools, such as sifting screens, to locate the tiny fragments described by Thuan. Moreover, the thought of banging a shovel blade into an unexploded shell or gre-

nade was most unappealing.

Our driver picked us up in front of the Morin Hotel in Hue at 6 a.m. on Sunday morning December 16. It was raining steadily as we drove north on Highway 1 along the stretch of highway made famous by Bernard Fall as the "Street Without Joy." With the exception of a few houses and shops clustered at intervals along the way, the area appeared to be one long military cemetery. After the war the communists built numerous, elaborate and, to this day, well-maintained cemeteries for their war dead; while at the same time plowing up the cemeteries of their adversaries in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) with bulldozers. Such an act has catastrophic spiritual implications for the Vietnamese because now the ARVN souls will wander forever. Doc informed us that this was nothing new in Vietnamese history. Centuries ago, after a ruler ascended to the throne following an exceptionally bitter war, he ordered the bodies of all his enemies and their families exhumed and had his troops urinate on them.

I wanted to ask Thuan if he also searched for ARVN souls, but knew this was a politically-charged issue and decided to save him the discomfort of having to avoid answering such a question. I had already learned from my short time in communist Vietnam that it was never a good idea to discuss things with the Vietnamese that even remotely carried a political context.

We picked up our interpreter, Mr. Tam, at a travel agency office in Quang Tri City and proceeded further north to Dong Ha. I vividly recalled my last trip along that stretch of road. I was coming back from R&R and had hitch hiked a ride at Dong Ha on an ARVN truck heading south in the direction of my unit's location outside of Quang Tri City. Dressed in my summer service khaki uniform, a garrison cover, often referred to as a "piss cutter," pulled down tight over my head to avoid it blowing away and shiny dress uniform shoes, I sat alone perched high atop a load of grimy 55 gallon drums of diesel fuel — a target even the most myopic Viet Cong couldn't miss if he tried. Fortunately for me, none did.

After about 20 minutes, we arrived in Dong Ha and found Thuan in the parking lot of a hotel with the other group he was leading up to the mountains to

find their own lost soldiers. Thuan chose to ride in our van. It is here that I obtained most of my information about him and what he hoped to accomplish. When not in the process of communicating with souls, Mr. Thuan is friendly, confident and informative. During our ride, he advised me that his images of wandering souls were often vague and they sometimes behaved as if reluctant to be found. This is why he always needed to obtain as much information as possible to be sure he was dealing with the soul he was seeking.

When I asked him why he was doing this for us he explained that Vietnam had a "national problem" because there were still too many American remains, and consequently too many American wandering souls remaining there. Thuan then asked me how many U.S. MIAs there were. I told him there were about 1,800. He commented, with no hint of animosity, that this was an extremely low figure compared to the number of missing Vietnamese. He went on to remark that the U.S. government spends millions of dollars each year trying to locate these remains and was seldom successful anymore. He, and other telepaths, would be happy to locate all of them — at no cost.

In fact, telepaths cannot take any money for their efforts or the Lord Buddha will remove their "gift." Over the course of the day, Doc would ask Thuan several times if we could at least help pay the cost of his expenses for food and lodging. Each time he politely refused. The university apparently covers his salary and expenses. Thuan concluded by saying that Tom's was the first American soul he had attempted to reach, and would be pleased if it led to more "unhappy" souls of our war dead returning to happiness back among their families in the United States.

As we drove west on Highway 9, Thuan offered information about the countryside we were passing. As we drove past a large military cemetery west of Cam Lo, Thuan recalled that while once looking for a lost PAVN soul there, he came across three other souls wandering near the place where they had been killed. Two were Vietnamese (he did not clarify whether they were ARVN or PAVN) and the other was the soul of an U.S. Army artilleryman. Also near Cam Lo, I noticed that the rain had stopped. We were later to discover that it had not rained up at

Khe Sanh that day and so our hike up the hill would be a mud-free one. This was a relief, because the last December we had spent here (in 1967) the entire area was gelatinous, rust-colored mire.

Highway 9 is a high quality and well-maintained asphalt road (in better repair than most rural highways I have driven in the U.S.) which we cruised along through the less densely populated areas at about 40 miles per hour. As we began, our ascent into the mountains an infamous landmark called "The Rockpile," appeared in our windshield. The sight of this dark, distinctive, lone pinnacle, with its sheer rocky slopes tangled in vegetation, produced a simultaneous sensation of foreboding for us three Khe Sanh veterans. During the siege of Khe Sanh in 1968, The Rockpile had represented the western boundary past which no one ventured. Now, as we sped by it, the words of Dante came to mind: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here."

Within a few miles Montagnard hamlets began dotting the banks of the Da Krong and Rao Quan Rivers; growing in size and density as we neared Khe Sanh town. There were far more Montagnards, what the Vietnamese refer to as "Minority People," than I recalled having been there in 1967-68. I was elated to learn of their incredible comeback, considering the many thousands who were killed by bombs and artillery during the siege. The Montagnards still reside in clan enclaves, with their traditional houses built on stilts with woven reed walls and few windows. Doc reminded us that the Montagnards were still largely animists (though Christian missionaries had made some progress in converting them) and the architecture of their dwellings is designed to keep the evil spirits who inhabited the tall grass from entering at night and making mischief. Absurdly, nearly every one of these homes now has a TV satellite dish attached to its thatched or corrugated metal roof.

After successfully passing by the army checkpoint east of Khe Sanh, we drove into the town. I was astounded by the size and economic vitality of the place. It was a virtual metropolis compared to what it had been when I had briefly lived there in January 1968. About two kilometers into the town, Thuan ordered our driver to turn right onto a non-descript road that soon changed from asphalt to pounded red earth. After proceeding along the road for about 4

kilometers, Thuan asked our driver to stop at a Montagnard house where he questioned the farmer for several minutes about directions. We then proceeded another 500 meters, where he had us stop at a "Y" in the road, similar to the one he had sketched during our meeting in Hanoi.

Here Thuan appeared lost. He walked up one road for several hundred meters and then back. He apologized to us for the confusion, saying he often became temporarily disoriented when he arrived at a place that he had previously envisioned remotely — but he was confident he would work things out. Thuan now realized the Nguyen house he had described on his map in Hanoi, near where he had believed Tom's remains to be, was not accurate but merely a reference point on the way to the actual location.

Thuan then asked me where the "airfield" was located. When I told him it was about 2 kilometers in the opposite direction from Hill 881S, he politely disagreed (this odd exchange will be explained shortly). We then got back into the van and drove northwest for about another kilometer and into a fertile little valley at the base of both Hill 881S (to the northwest) and Hill 689 (to the south).

Suddenly, while I was not conscious of anything other than the incredibly beautiful scenery passing by my window, I began to weep -- silently, but uncontrollably. My first reaction was to hide this inexplicable onset of emotion from the others in the van. I made quick, surreptitious hand movements to wipe away the tears. However, after a few poorly stifled sobs, I realized everyone else in the car knew I was crying and were avoiding eye contact with me in order to make me feel less uncomfortable. I have no idea why I began weeping at that moment. Only that some vaguely defined yet overpowering sorrow had engulfed me. I was over the episode in about five minutes and later discussed it with Doc and Steve. Both told me they would have been more surprised had I NOT done something like that.

We soon stopped at the Montagnard hamlet of Lang Ta Tuc. While Tuan and Tam were speaking to the Montagnards about leaving our vehicles there, Steve Doc and I noticed a man from the other van who was about our age. He was wearing a 1960's-era gabardine dress uniform of the NVA, necktie and

highly polished leather formal dress shoes. There were no medals, insignia of rank or unit on his uniform. We introduced ourselves and learned he was traveling with family members to locate his brother, an NVA soldier who had been killed during the war near the A Chau Valley, about 20 miles south. Doc asked him if he, too, had fought in the war. The man replied that he had, against the Americans at Tay Ninh, located between Saigon and the Cambodian border. Despite the potential for an awkward moment, he was quite friendly and sympathetic with our mission and wanted to join us on our hike up the hill to pay his respects to our fallen friend. We agreed.

Once the group had reassembled, we began the hike up the hill. In addition to the NVA soldier, and we three Americans, our group consisted of Thuan and two fellow telepaths. One, a female, had attended our meeting in Hanoi on the previous Friday. The other, was a man who I had not seen before. Also with us for the climb was our driver Phouc, and Tam the translator. We also hired two Montagnard guides; one armed with a machete and the other a long-handled hoe, who I later each paid 200,000 Vietnamese Dong (about \$12 USD). This, Doc later told me, represented more than they might make in an entire month.

After leaving the hamlet and still on relatively level ground, we passed along the rim of several rice paddies and then into a small grove of coffee bushes. After crossing a 30-foot-wide stream, we began ascending a steep jungled trail for about 1500 meters, then on to a somewhat wider dirt road through open grassland for about another 2 kilometers. The road became increasingly steep as we approached the summit. The climb reminded us of how much respect we had for the incredible moxie of those Marine line-company troops who regularly patrolled these hills loaded down with gear; in stifling humidity under a searing summer sun (such imagery makes it clear why they tagged themselves as "grunts").

As we approached the steepest part of the climb, Doc talked of the April 1967 fight to seize this place and we were again humbled by the courage of the Marines who scaled these tortuous slopes in the face of withering enemy gunfire — sustaining nearly 400 casualties before all the hilltops were finally se-

cured.

Doc had made this climb the previous May and, using information from the July 1968 "Dorow investigation" of Tom's loss, found what he believed to be the place where Tom's remains were last seen. As we approached the top of Hill 865 from the west, we made sure not to give Thuan a clue as to where we thought the location might be. Though I had by now concluded that I would not be surprised if Thuan located the exact same site, I still wanted to keep the process as free of doubt as humanly possible.

So the three of us intentionally walked past the position where we believed Mahoney was last seen, part way down into the saddle between Hills 865 and 881S, and waited for the others to arrive. I took the opportunity to walk up to the site of the Marine main position on Hill 881S. Just northeast of that, the trail crossed a knoll before descending the hill roughly in the direction of Hill 881N. This knoll was the one to which the last evacuation helicopter on the evening of July 6, 1968 had carried Captain Black and the enlisted HST man hanging from its skids to safety.

Now, nearly 40 years later, the knoll was covered in a thicket of high trees and an abundance of dense jungle vegetation. It was a bit spooky looking into the shadows of that grove; yet for some reason I decided I needed to be in there - alone. So I left Steve at the top of Hill 881S and walked into the trees. When I was in the densest part, I stopped and said aloud: "Okay Tommy, if there is anything to all this, please make it known to me now." I then peered into the dark recesses of the forest for a few minutes; a bit frightened I would see something; yet unable to stop looking for movement. Nothing happened. It was a strange thing to do and definitely out of character for me. However it was a strange day; one that was about to get even stranger after we returned to Hill 865 where Doc was standing and watching Thuan and his entourage as they approached from the west.

As he passed the point that has been the location of the main gate into the fortification on Hill 865, also called the "western gate," Thuan stopped and squatted by the road and peered intently down the south slope. It was there, on Dorow's sketch, that Tom's

body was shown to have been last seen on. Thuan concentrated for about a full minute and then turned his head toward me, smiled enigmatically and gestured down the hill three times with his right forefinger as if to say: He is down there. While Steve was photographing all this, Doc and I remained poker-faced and whispered to each other out of the corners of our mouths like two inept ventriloquists: "Holy crap!"

Thuan then stood up and walked to the opposite, or north, slope, and looked down the hillside for a while. Then, as if confused, he began walking farther up the hill, past us in the saddle, and part of the way to the former Marine main position on Hill 881S. He was clearly looking for something specific. After about five minutes, he came over to me and, as he had done about an hour earlier when we had stopped our van on the road, asked: "Where is the airfield?" This question immediately lowered my expectations. I pointed in the direction of Khe Sanh Combat Base and replied, "Eight kilometers that way." Slightly frustrated now, Thuan asked to see the map he had drawn three days before in Hanoi. I took it out of my backpack and spread it on the ground, holding it down against a steady breeze that was starting to blow in from the southeast.

Thuan pointed to a spot on that map and repeated his question. I gave him the same reply. It seemed to me at the moment that he was confusing the Combat Base with this hill, and I was fast becoming disappointed. Thuan then slightly rephrased his question to the interpreter, who then asked me: "Where did the aircraft land here?"

It immediately occurred to me, Doc and Steve how difficult it is to precisely translate certain expressions from Vietnamese to English. This is exacerbated by the fact that no one in our group, except we three and the NVA soldier, had even been born by the time the war ended and so were unfamiliar with the expressions and jargon of that era. However, it was all now becoming clear and so I replied, "Do you mean the 'landing zone (LZ)?" Thuan became excited again, "Yes, was there a landing zone near this spot?" I replied that we were very close to what had once been the western-most LZ on the hill, the very LZ from which the evacuation of the Marines from both Hills 865 and 881S was to have taken place.

Seemingly reenergized, Thuan lept up from where he had been squatting at the map on the ground. His gaze traversed nearly 270 degrees of horizon before facing southwest and coming to an abrupt stop.

He then walked rapidly in that direction, up to the edge of the hill and, without hesitation, started down the slope. Doc, Steve and I watched as he made short switchbacks in the 2-foot high elephant grass. **He stopped beside a lone, nearly leafless tree approximately 50 feet down the slope, almost exactly where the Dorow sketch showed Tom's remains were located.** Thuan then looked up the hill at me, his eyes revealing no emotion other than earnestness, and said quietly: "Your friend is here."

Having uttered those four words, Thuan turned to his left, curled up on the ground and began to retch violently for several minutes. His assistant, who was standing nearby, advised me that this happened to him after every successful effort. After vomiting, Thuan became noticeably ebullient for the remainder of the day.

I was still confused because the location of Tom's remains, as described by Thuan in Hanoi three days earlier, was much farther down the hill. So I immediately asked him if "the three small teeth and ammo pouch" were at this location next to the tree. He replied that they were, indeed, right here — 1.6 meters under the ground. He then told me a "rocket" (again that could be at translation issue) as well as a bomb had struck Tom. Thuan walked down the slope toward the southwest about 20 meters and called to me, moving his arm over the top of his head in an arc. This, the translator said, was the direction from which the plane with the bomb had arrived.

Being a person who had never given much credence to spiritual or paranormal phenomena, I will admit to be astounded at that moment. Few people in the world knew the location of the 1968 incident, let alone what the area would look like 40 years later.

As if this were not amazing enough, while waiting for the Buddhists to bring their offerings down the slope for the religious service, Steve noticed a large clump of elephant grass, taller than the surrounding vegetation, about 12-15 feet southeast of the site.

He asked the Montagnard with the machete to hack down the high grass. As he whacked away the grass, we found ourselves looking down into an old NVA "spider hole." It was about 2 feet wide and measured about 3.5 to four feet deep, using the hoe handle to measure, with perfectly cut perpendicular walls on three sides, (the downhill side of the hole had been eroded away by water). We could clearly see striations on the interior walls of the hole left by the blade of an entrenching tool. What made this find appear so **astonishing** was that it corroborated the PAVN military record found in 2003 which described Luong and Long dragging Mahoney about 30 feet from the point he was originally shot, to a spot directly in front of their "fortifications," as bait for an ambush.

After everyone finally arrived at the site, we asked a Montagnard guide to hack away some of the elephant grass with his machete. I then laid the plaque on the ground and Doc, Steve and I had a moment of silence for Tom and other the Bravo Company Marines who will never forget the afternoon of July 6, 1968. The Vietnamese then began the Buddhist service, covering the spot around our plaque with an assortment of flowers, fruit, candy and other pleasing foods and smoldering incense sticks, in order to lure Tom's soul from the perpetual misery of the battlefield. Among these offerings were several stacks of imitation paper money, which was burned at the end of the ceremony, ostensibly for Tom's use. One of the two telepaths who accompanied Thuan from Hanoi chose the nearby "spider hole" in which to burn the money. I recall wondering at the time if his using that hole had some ritualistic significance; though more than likely it was selected to prevent the steadily increasing wind from spreading flames along the slope.

Once the makeshift altar of flowers, food, "paper money" and even a bottle of Vietnamese vodka was laid out on the ground, I was asked by Thuan to stand before it and think of Tom in order to help bring his soul to that place. While doing that, several of the Buddhists, including Thuan, Doc and the NVA soldier, sidled up to me and began praying; some rolling the stem of a single burning incense stick between the palms of their hands. I began to weep again, but this time it came on slowly and predictably, unlike the unexpected burst of emotion I had experienced earlier in the day. At the end of the

service, while the "money" was still smoldering in the "spider hole," some of the Vietnamese began picking up the offerings to take back, as was customary in the case of such temporary and remote altars.

One of the Montagnard guides began to dig and had gone down about 18 inches before we stopped him. Into that hole I placed, the smaller of the two plaques. The events of the day had so broadened my perspective that I no longer cared if someone knew the location the plaque and returned to dig it up. It now seemed to be such a trivial concern.

As I placed the plaque in the hole, Mr. Tam put the vodka bottle in there for what I guess he thought might make an interesting photo op. However, when he went to remove it, the old NVA piped up sternly and Tam immediately replaced the bottle alongside the plaque. I then asked Tam what the man had just demanded of him, and Tam replied: "He said, 'Leave it for the soldier.'" This NVA soldier's simple and spontaneous **words of respect were profoundly moving to us three Khe Sanh veterans.**

Standing there amid the waving elephant grass and swirling smoke, honoring the last Marine to die on the murderous slopes of this legendary hill, alongside a former enemy from a war nearly forgotten by most Vietnamese and Americans, was an image none of us will ever forget.

Just as the Montagnard was about to cover the plaque and bottle with dirt, Doc's billed cap, with the USMC emblem on the front, blew off his head in a gust of wind and landed upright in the middle of the hole. As he reflexively leaned down to pick it up, the Vietnamese cried out, as if in a single voice, for him to leave it there. They told us that it was not uncommon for wandering souls to be "playful." **Tom**, they continued, **was happy his friends had come for him** and had knocked the hat off Doc's head as a sort of prank (an act definitely in keeping with Tom's personality). So the hat was buried along with the plaque and vodka.

Before leaving that spot, Thuan lit five incense sticks and told me to carry them off the hill so that Tom's soul could follow the smoke. After about 15 minutes, and the incense sticks now being about half burnt, Thuan took them from me and snuffed

them out. He advised me to keep them "safe" and I would receive further instructions about what to do with them after returning to Hue. As we straggled off the hill, I looked back at the line of people who had met in this remote place (remote even for most Vietnamese) to help one lost soul among the countless of Vietnam. I will forever be touched by their sincerity and compassion. We stopped back up by the site of the western gate for a water break and to munch on some of the offerings for Tom. Never, in my wildest dreams, did I imagine I would one day be sitting on the ground near the spot of my friend's death, sharing a Ritz cracker with him, and trying to absorb the incredible proceedings I had just witnessed.

As we began to descend the trail to southwest, the ominous mass of Hill 689 comprised most of that horizon. I knew of its long and bloody history, from the day in April 1968 when forty Marines of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marine were killed in battle there, to a similar fate barely avoided by the 1st Battalion, 1st Marine regiment the day after Mahoney was lost. The crest of the hill appeared to be unusually devastated, unlike most of the others in the area; a dark and barren ellipse seemingly denuded of all but the meanest vegetation. I knew it still contained the unrecovered remains of Marines, who had suffered the same fate as Mahoney (even in the same week) and hoped to have the opportunity to ask Thuan if he sensed anything up there. However, Thuan was in a "zone" all the way down the hill, squatting periodically to stare off into the valley below, deep in concentration. At one point, he told me, sweeping his hand across 90 degrees of the small valley: "There are many ghosts down there." In the end, I did not find a propitious moment to ask him about the souls of those abandoned Marines on Hill 689.

On the way down the trail, Doc, Steve and I briefly discussed the possibility of the two Montagnards returning to dig for Tom's remains. Doc, whose Vietnamese language skills are good enough to understand most conversations, believed these Montagnards did not comprehend enough Vietnamese to understand the significance of the spot. They more than likely thought we were there to honor the place of Tom's death, rather than identify the location of his mortal remains. He further conjectured that, as animists, they are highly superstitious and deathly afraid of spirits. As such, they would probably not

venture back there if they fully understood the significance of that spot. Bottom line: They would likely go back and dig up the plaque, hat and vodka — but nothing else.

On the way to back to the village, Doc slipped on off a crumbling dike and flopped into a rice paddy. That night, over beers in the courtyard of the Morin Hotel in Hue, he tried to convince us that, as with the loss of his hat, Tom's mischievous spirit was responsible for his awkward plunge. Steve and I think not.

Two days later, on December 18, we visited a Buddhist temple in west Hue to thank the nun, Thich Nu Minh Tanh, for initially urging us to make this trip to Vietnam. She had just received a telephone call from Thuan, who provided her with instructions on what to do next. After removing our shoes and entering the temple, I was amazed to see, immediately off to the right, an elaborate altar dedicated to Tom Mahoney's wandering soul. His black-framed high school graduation photo was surrounded by offerings similar to the one's we had brought to Hill 865. Incense sticks burned perpetually, replaced hourly by young novitiate nuns. Thich Nu Minh Tanh asked me if I had brought along the five half-burned incense sticks from the hill, which I had done. She then proceeded to reignite each of them and have me place them in a holder on the altar. Tom, she said, will now be able to follow them to this place and his soul will reside here among his "friends" until such time as his mortal remains are recovered. If they are not, his soul will remain in this temple forever.

She then asked us to sit on cushions at a low, highly lacquered table that had been set up in the main part of the temple, just in front of the wide-open front doors. A novice soon appeared and commenced burning a great deal of incense in a brazier on the front step. Soon a haze of incense smoke floated in the wide doorway. Upon the table was a delightful variety of foods and nectars, including two round western-style layer cakes. One was decorated in frosting with the words "Merry Christmas - A lot of friends." The other read "Happy New Year — A lot of friends." All, a charming effort designed to lure Tom's wandering soul inside. We spent the next

several minutes silently contemplating the recent events. Shortly thereafter, eight nuns in yellow and white robes arrived from behind the main altar and for the next 30 minutes chanted an ancient hymn for the safe arrival of Tom's soul. Lost in the soothing cadence of the chant, I finally conceived the thing we had been hoping for all along — a sense of peace after 40 years.

After returning from Vietnam on December 22, 2007, I would receive a telephone call from Captain Robert Black. The Captain advised me that the sketch of the terrain produced in conjunction with the July 1968 investigation of the loss of Tom Mahoney had not been drawn by him, as Doc and I surmised, but probably by Lt. Dorow. While Dorow had not been an eyewitness to the tragic events of that afternoon, records show he had been charged with conducting the subsequent investigation. Black further indicated that this map must be inaccurate because Mahoney had definitely been dragged down the north side of ridgeline, rather than the south. After reexamining Dorow's map in light of Black's observations, it became clear the directional reference arrow of "North" on that map — was actually pointing east. Since Doc Topmiller had used this map during his visit to the hill the previous May, and we were now relying on it again during this December 16, 2007 visit, it is apparent that Mahoney's remains were last seen on the opposite slope, 30-40 meters due north of where we now believed them to be.

Though I was initially skeptical of the telepathic aspects of this journey, I cannot say that I am still — even though it appears Thuan picked the wrong location. During those three days, I forced my mind open to the possibility of there being such a reality beyond the empirical world. It was a good thing for me; one that felt far more logical, in its own way, than I would have earlier imagined. It was not what one might call "a life-altering event," though I do not know if such change would have happened to this "old dog" even if things had concluded on a more miraculous note. Yet the humility, sincerity and quiet dignity of these people and their genuinely compassionate effort to ease the misery of single soul, among millions, made me wonder during the long plane ride back to the United States if Lt.

Dorow's flawed map, with which I so confidently searched in all the wrong places, might not be a metaphor for my journey back to the place where my youth and innocence were lost. Perhaps there were two "wandering souls" on their way home.

The end of this story has yet to be told. If, because of our efforts, Tom's spirit now resides in a more caring and harmonious atmosphere within the pagoda at Hue — it is still but halfway to its final destination. Now that we have made the necessary corrections to Lt. Dorow's sketch and have had that information corroborated by Captain Robert Black, who was within a few meters of Tom's body on the afternoon of July 6, 1968; our next stop is to contact the OSD-DPMO and request they send a Joint Task Force team to the site. I also intend including the information provided by Thuan. While the contribution of a telepath may not have relevance to the Americans on the team, it will to the Vietnamese. Doc Topmiller so strongly feels we are near a resolution to this case, that he has agreed to return to Vietnam, at his own expense, to identify for the Joint Task Force team the exact location of the site, should they wish to dig.

In retrospect, I find it interesting that at our meeting of December 13, 2007 in Hanoi, Thuan's second map showed a hamlet just at the base of Hill 865. He originally said Tom's remains, which consisted of three small teeth and deteriorated M-16 magazine pouch, were near the base of the hill, not far from a farmhouse on the outskirts of that village. When we were extrapolating from Lt. Dorow's sketch that Tom's body was last seen on the southwest slope of Hill 865, then Thuan's map information seemed unreasonable since the nearest village in that direction, Lang Ta Tuc, where we had left our van, is over 2,000 meters away — a ridiculously long distance for human remains to migrate.

However, in light of the new information about Mahoney's last location, that information now appears more realistic. Only 50-75 meters below the steep drop-off near where Tom was actually lying on the north side of the hill is the head of a small and relatively flat valley. About 200-300 meters beyond that is the village of Lang Ruon. In 1996, the JPTFFA team went to "Ruon" and asked villagers there if they knew the whereabouts of Tom's remains. None said they did. However, given the force of the bomb

blast that damaged Tom's body, the steepness of the slope and the possibility of a farmer's hut now being on the outskirts of that village near the base of the hill; the location of the remains identified by Thuan on the second map fall within the realm of possibility.

There is not a day that goes by when I do not shake my head in wonder at the remarkable chain of events that has occurred since the publication of A Patch of Ground nearly three years ago. I have been a reluctant participant most of the way. Yet having witnessed for so long now the nobility of spirit demonstrated by Tom Mahoney's family, friends, fellow Marines, total strangers and former adversaries, I have come to relish the opportunity to do whatever I can to speed his destiny on to a successful conclusion — whatever that might be. Perhaps, in the end, we will find the story was never about a tiny piece of Tom still resting on some remote hillside in Vietnam; but rather about the tiny piece of him carried in the hearts of these most human of beings.

Mike Archer

1 The westernmost Marine position within the Hill 881S fortification, often referred to as Hill 881A, also has the geographic designation of "Hill 865." To avoid reader confusion in trying to distinguish between Hills 881S, 881A and 881N, I will henceforth refer to this position as Hill 865 (The numeric names given to these hills are based on their elevation in meters above sea level).

2 During the war, Americans most often referred to these troops as being in the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). The proper designation, however, is People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). While I will continue to use the term most familiar to the reader (NVA), be aware that some quoted references will refer to them as PAVN.

3 Col. Robert H. Barrow, Commanding Officer 9th Marine Regiment, later 27th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

4 The NVA referred to the combination Hills 881S and 865 as a single location they called "Hill 845."

ED NOTE: Photos of the trip back to Vietnam to Honor Thomas Patrick Mahoney III are on Pages 44-45

WISHING UPON A SILVER STAR

By Dennis Mannion
C1/13 & K 3/26

They came single file across the top of Hill 861 sometime after first light, passed within 5 feet of me, and headed down slope towards the northwest gate. It wasn't a gate in the literal sense but instead a narrow passageway that zigzagged through the protective barbed wire. As we watched them go, I said to my radio operator, "Screw that business! I'm glad that's not us going out there," and he emphatically agreed.

It was January 26, 1968 -- five days since the hill had been partially overrun by the NVA -- and this was the first combat patrol heading onto the very terrain that had been the NVA's main avenue of approach. The fighting hole that Dave and I occupied was atop 861 -- the FO team needed to be able see as clearly as possible -- and had great, unobstructed views especially to the west and north. Our little section of red clay real-estate was within 5 feet of a huge bomb crater left over from the Hill Fights, and anyone taking the shortest route across the top of the hill would inevitably walk in the narrow space between us and the bomb crater. Had we wanted to, we could have reached up and touched any of those Second Platoon, Alpha 1/26 Marines as they walked by but we did not; nor did we speak with any of them, because, after all, there was nothing to be said. Nor did we make any eye contact because they approached us from behind and our focus was on the dangerous terrain where they'd soon be. From where we stood shoulder-deep in our fighting hole, it was less than 50 yards to the gate, and as the patrol passed, the usual clinks and clunks of their 782 gear was masked by larger, distinctive clicks as charging handles on their M-16's were engaged and safeties thumbled off.

Since the 21st, Dave and I had called in numerous artillery missions northwest of the hill into the exact area this platoon was headed -- active machine guns, RPG's, mortars, and even, we thought, a recoilless rifle. It wouldn't take a combat patrol to convince us -- or anyone else -- that the NVA were still out there in good numbers and still active. However, someone higher up the chain-of-command decided that the location needed to be

probed and these Marines from Alpha were given that task.

Along with having unobstructed views, I also had my USMC issued, Bausch & Lomb 7x50 binoculars. The patrol was easy to follow as it moved out the gate, over a small knob of hill, veered to the left, and headed down into a narrow draw. The binocs were a help as the magnification made the Marines appear 7 times closer than they actually were, but they were not essential for me to visualize the trail, because I had made that same trek numerous times in late December and early January. The last time I had been on that same section seven days earlier, I had been so at ease that I wore my Converse Black Low sneakers instead of jungle boots! But that was pre-siege posturing, and this was now the real thing.

The patrol came up out of the draw and headed uphill into an area that had been heavily wooded just a few days earlier. When Kilo took over the defense of 861 in late December that trail was impossible to see once it entered the trees -- nor was it possible to see 861 if you were on that section of trail -- but now, after seemingly constant shelling and air strikes, most of the trees were gone and the trail was easily discernable through the shattered branches. As the line of Marines began their ascent, Dave yelled, "Jeez! Movement! Gooks!" I swung my binocs in the direction of his pointing hand, and 50 yards to the right of the Marines and hidden behind some splintered tree trunks, 2 groups of NVA began to emerge seemingly out of the ground. They were not advancing; instead they began to spread out parallel to the men of Alpha.

To this day I do not know which side fired first, but the Marines reacted quickly, turned to their right, dropped to the ground for cover, and began moving off the trail and up towards the NVA. The intensity of the gunshots from both sides increased. The distance from them to me -- just over 300 meters -- provided a weird, almost time-lapse experience as I'd see a grenade explode or a stream of tracers fired, but it was seconds later that those sounds reached my ears. The AK-47 fire was as intense as ours, but it was only the Marines who began to maneuver forward. They were halted for a time by the withering, return gunfire, pulled back to the trail itself, and then the 81mm FO in the bunker next to mine worked up a fire mission for them. Soon after

that, Marines began to move forward again and in my binocs I watched with fascinated horror as one individual stood and fired his M-79 grenade launcher. I expected the gunner to drop back to the ground while he re-loaded, but instead he kept moving forward. Every pull of his trigger sent another grenade in among the uprooted tree trunks and brought him further towards the NVA! He seemed oblivious to the bullets that were stitching the dirt around him as he progressed. Suddenly, he lurched violently backward, arms flailing up, the M-79 falling to his side. He landed on his back and remained motionless. By now, it was hard to see clearly even with the binoculars because the dust and smoke enveloped the entire slope. There was a discernable lull in the gunfire from both sides and the platoon

began to move back onto the trail. When they turned to their left, and began to move downhill, I knew they were coming back home.

I closely watched their slow but steady progress towards 861 and it was clear that 4 Marines in the middle of the column were carrying someone. I hoped for a survivable injury but I expected the worst as I had seen his movements when the bullet hit. It was only after the first few Marines zigzagged back through the gate that I lowered the binoculars from my eyes. No longer a combat patrol, the returning Marines began to individually spread out and move across the top of the hill and down towards the LZ. The four men carrying the grenadier passed directly between our position and the bomb



crater for the second time that day. There had been no time to place him onto an improvised litter of some sort -- so he was being held off the ground and carried up 861 by his arms and legs -- but I knew instinctively that there was no life left in this young man. He had forfeited everything to help his fellow Marines and I had watched it happen 7 times larger than life and less than 300 yards away. It is one of my specific Hill 861 memories that has never faded or blended with other events from those weeks and months even after forty-one years. Yet, in all that time I never knew his name.

I learned in May of this year -- 2009 -- from John Rauch, 2nd platoon Alpha 1/26, that the Marine's name was PFC Dwight T. Denning and that his actions that day earned him a Silver Star. I have been thinking about that name and that decoration a lot in the last months. I have read many accounts in other Silver Star citations but his is the only one where I actually witnessed the actions that cost him his life and earned him this award.

Growing up, I was taught to wish on the occasional shooting star -- still do -- and if I could wish on this Silver Star, I'd request a simple trade. The medal goes back into a storage container somewhere in the United States and Dwight Denning gets to progress towards old age with memories, holidays, relationships, and a life well-lived.

I know it can't happen, but I do wish.....I do wish.

Semper Fi
Dennis Mannion

I GET MAIL

Tom,

I would first like to thank you for your efforts on behalf of 1st Sergeant Bill Malcolm and his military service published in this summer's issue of Red Clay (Pages 22-23); I will get copies to his Mother.

On pages 64-66 the article (IN MEMORY DAY), listed the names of 123 veterans from Vietnam who died prematurely from Non-Combat related injuries and emotional suffering caused directly by the Vietnam War. GySgt Carroll Wilke was one of those men, and I felt compelled to pass on his story.

Gunny Wilke already with 20 years of service in the Marine Corps, suffered a heart attack in the Danang area on approximately 18 September 1967. He was flown back to the United States but expired on 20 September 1967. Due to the circumstances of his death he was not eligible for his name to be inscribed on the Vietnam Memorial. It obviously has happened to hundreds of other veterans, but was especially frustrating to me, since Gunny Wilke was from my hometown of Clifton, NJ. So it was a pleasure (a small one) to have his name read aloud at the wall where I felt his name should have been added a long time ago.

Rich Delotto

LATE OBITS

is with deep sadness that I must post of the passing of my father SSgt Robert H. Zeliff on Thursday September 17th, 2009, after a long battle with heart disease and diabetes. He served in country from 1967 to 1968 with the 5th Marines and with 1/13/HQ Comms. He was on active duty with the USMC from 1959 to 1969. He also served as a civilian employee at MCLB Barstow from 1975 to 1994, retiring as director of MWR. Semper Fi dad, we love you and will miss you. Chris Zeliff PO2 USCG, 1988-1998.



MOM & DAD

He was a USMC veteran, served 1959-1969 and in Vietnam in '67 and '68. He served at Cam Lo and

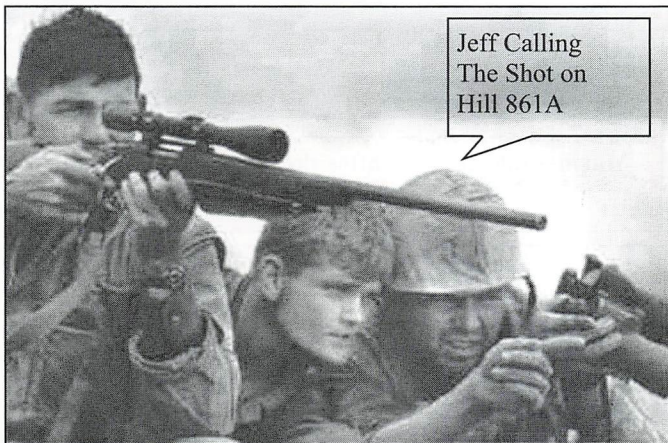
Khe Sanh combat base. He was at Khe Sanh during the siege and battle in 1968, medevaced out shortly after the offensive started. Dad turned down a purple heart, being 100% Marine he felt that getting peppered by shrapnel from a 120mm rocket was nothing compared to the price many of his mates paid.

He made it through a major heart attack at 38 and kept on trucking. Stroke in 2001 and several other surgeries over the years but time finally caught up with him. Above all he showed me to always stick to your guns and to your word. Integrity was important with pops.

LATE OBITS

Captain Alec "Jeff" Bodenweiser, USMC Echo Co 2/26 Hill 861A

Ed Note: I had the extreme pleasure of serving with, and fighting alongside 1st Lt Jeff "Bodie" Bodenweiser in Echo Co 2/26 on Hill 861A at Khe Sanh. He was also a personal friend and a wonderful & caring person. I spent time with Jeff at Quantico as his house guest, and to really describe him, "He was a Perfect Gentleman". I will miss him.



Fellow Marines, TB S 6-67 classmates, and all...My friend, and fellow Marine, A.J..(Jeff) Bodenweiser passed away. His battle was very courageous just as his fight was so many years ago against the NVA at Khe Sanh. We visited many times over the past few years, and I will miss him until the end of my days. Jeff was not only a great Marine, but also just a wonderful human being. His troops in Vietnam fondly called him "mother" because he did care about their welfare.

John A. Alstad

ELIZABETH LARSEN WIFE OF KSV LARRY LARSEN SUB UNIT 5

Mrs. Elizabeth Larsen, age 66, of Greybull, Wyoming passed away on Tuesday, September 22, 2009 at the Billings Clinic in Billings, Montana of natural causes. Elizabeth Larsen was born on April 8, 1943 in Council Bluffs, Iowa the daughter of Virgil and Ruby (Severn) Fetty. She was raised and educated in Wyoming. Liz married Harvey Kimbrough, having had three children. The couple later divorced. Elizabeth marrying Larry Larsen on September 5, 1969.

She graduated from beauty college in Casper, Wyoming. Larry got transferred to Riverton, Wyoming and Liz worked in a few beauty shops and also at a nursing home. The couple then moved to Jeffery City, and she opened her own beauty shop. The couple then were transferred to Hulett, Wyoming where she opened "Balloons and More" gift shop and also worked at a grocery store in the bakery. The couple moved to Dacono, Colorado, when she was not able to work because of her health. Larry retired and they moved to Greybull, Wyoming. Elizabeth was active in Jeffery City Fire Department Aux., Lions Club Aux., and the American Legion Aux.

She enjoyed doing crafts including, sewing clothing, and crocheting (she started when she was 6 years old). Liz collected recipes, stamps, coins, ducks, and frogs of all sorts. Liz had a green thumb and was very interested in all kinds of flowers. She was a collector of cartoons on life issues, so she could pass them on to family and friends. One of her favorite holiday's was Christmas. Liz's family was always foremost in her life, spending time with them was a great joy in her life. She had a very big heart and will be missed by all who knew and loved her. Elizabeth is survived by her husband of 40 years, Larry Larsen of Greybull, Wyoming; children: Christine Kimbrough, Benjamin (Brandi) Kimbrough, and Nancy Kimbrough, all of Gillette, Wyoming; brother, Walter Fetty of Fulton, California; sister, Leona (Bob) Adsit of Sheridan, Wyoming; brother, John Fetty of Gillette, Wyoming; six grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren.

A FEW PHOTOS FROM THE FIGHT FOR HILL 881N BY GOLF CO 2/3



Capt. James P. Sheehan talks on the radio just before the final assault on Hill 881 N on April 30, 1967. The Hill was one of several strategically important hills surrounding Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province in Vietnam's I Corps. The Marines were from Golf Co., 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division.



A Marine points out a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) position on the top of Hill 881 N.



A Marine runs for cover while under fire on the top of Hill 881 N.



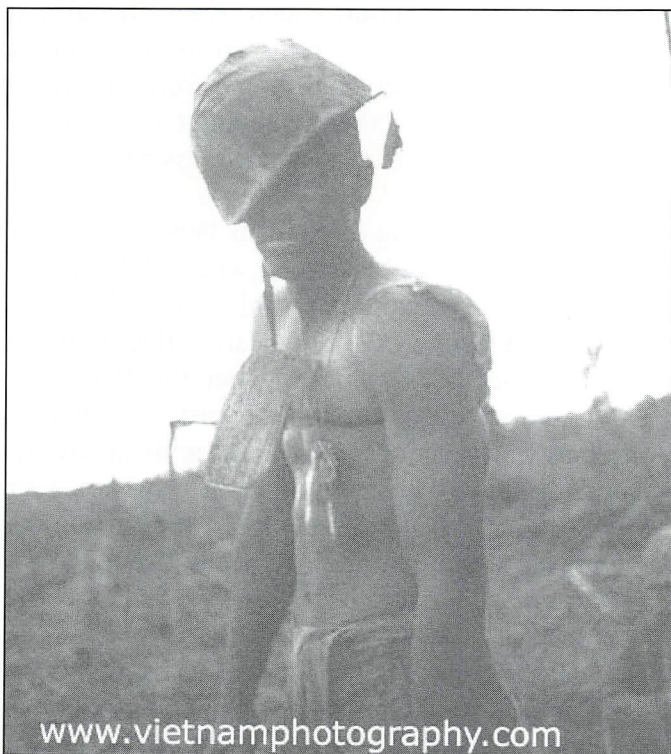
Marines take a break after the worst of the fighting had ended



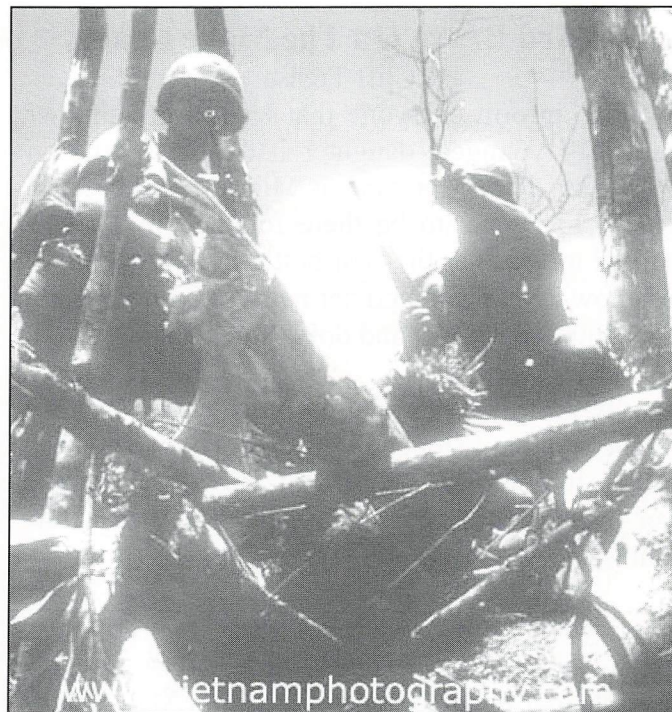
Navy Corpsman Dave Boucher Left, & Staff Sgt Ruben Santos treat wounded Pvt. William Vizzerra, 21, Phoenix, Ariz., near the crest of Hill 881 N



Marines use a poncho to carry the body of a Marine killed during the fierce battle for Hill 881N.



Marine J.K Johnson stands atop the bombed out face of Hill 881N



Marines at the top of Hill 881N after the fierce battle.



A Marine Officer Radioing in a report at the end of the fierce fighting



Marine Lt. Pete Hesser drags a mortally wounded Lcpl William Junior "Rock" Roldan down from the top of Hill 881N



A wounded Marine crawls along the bombed out face of Hill 881N

Bastard Bravo On The Move Again

By Cliff Treese

I want to inform everyone that I am a grandfather again. My youngest daughter had a baby girl on January 16, 2009. Her name is Mikayla Lynn Jean. I flew up to Penna. to be there for the birth. I was honored to feed her the first bottle. Her first daughter is now 2 years old and her name is Summer Rain Jean. Both are healthy and doing fine. (Pic# 1)

I finally got my 1978 Malibu finished and had the graphics put on. I stopped by Hooters of Melbourne, Florida, to get some pictures of my two cars for a flyer they made up for a Car Show we had a few months ago.

As everybody knows we lost Phil Mineer last July. After a lot of red tape and a final DNA test, his family held a funeral service for him in Mays Landing, NJ. (Pic # 2) The members who attended from B 1/13 were Mike Haight, Ron Shouse, Tom Keaton, and myself. Leroy Matlock from Echo Co 2/26 also attended. All of us were friends with Phil and all served in Khe Sanh together. (Pic # 2a) All of our wives attended the services with us. (Pic # 3) We met Phil's sisters and his brother (Pic # 4) along with his twin daughters. It was a nice service and we were hoping that more Khe Sanh Veterans could have attended. Phil was loved by many and will always be remembered by those who knew him.

During the third week of April every year, Wickham Park in Melbourne, Florida host, the Vietnam Veterans "All Veterans Reunion". This year Tom Keaton and Ron Shouse accompanied by their wives, Mary and Lynn respectively came down to enjoy the festivities. Tom's daughter Lisa also attended.

We started the day at the Palm Bay High School where we gave a little talk to the History class regarding Khe Sanh, and our experiences there. One student in the class who was confined to a wheel chair, and was wearing a Marine shirt. This boy was intrigued about Viet Nam and asked more questions than any other student.

By the end of the session he had everybody in tears informing the class how he came to be confined to a wheelchair, and his unbridled wish to become a Ma-

rine. After the Reunion ended, we gathered a few things to give to him. I returned to the school and gave him several personal things from the three of us. He was so happy that we thought about him, and that he started crying right in the class room.

Our next project the three of us tackled was something that we started last year, when Phil was at my house for the Reunion. I said that each year we would raise a new USA and Marine flag on my flag pole in front of my house. After the flag raising, (Pic # 5) we went to my back yard, and sat around the bar. Some of us went for a swim in my pool. Tom's nephew who lives in Palm Bay, is a retired Gunny Sgt from the Corps, who came over, while we all sat at the bar, and had a few beers. Ron was very tired and went to bed.

After he fell asleep, we decided to have some fun with him. Ron's Lizard walking stick was placed by his side, and four fox pelts were placed on him, and if anybody remembers the rats from Mobile, Alabama, that was also placed by his head. A very nice photo was taken of him and so he will never be able to forget his little nap. (Pic # 6)

On the 15th we all went to the local Hooters in Melbourne for a Car Cruise that I helped get started a few months before. While we were having a few beers, our wives went to the local Good Will store and did some shopping. My car was one of about 40 or 50 cars there. The week before I had won the best car voted by the Hooter Girls and won a 50 wings dinner and a free t-shirt. The three of us ate the wings while the women went shopping. I then talked to several of the girls and had them stand with Ron and Tom to take a picture.(Pic # 7) We had a great time and the sights weren't to bad either.

On the 19th of April we all went to Cocoa Beach for the Escort of the WALL to Wickham Park in Melbourne, to officially start the Reunion. My Malibu only has two seats, and Tom said he wanted to ride with me. (Pic # 8) So I talked to a friend of mine from Rolling Thunder Chapter 1 in Florida and got Ron a ride on a Harley for the Escort Ride. There was over 1400 motorcycles and more than 60 cars in the run. We came right down US 1 the Police had every intersection blocked for miles, and didn't allow any vehicles to cut in or go around the entire parade. The WALL was transported in a 5th wheel

trailer along with an enclosed trailer that housed the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard Mobile Museum items. As Tom and I drove down US 1 into Wickham Park, we were greeted with cheers and salutes from Marines and other vets, and civilians. It was a very proud feeling. After it was all over, I asked Tom if he enjoyed it and he said he had a great time.

Because of having the flags on the back of the car, I was one of the last cars in the parade. After some picture taking, all the vehicles were parked. We walked over to the area where the vendors, and the beer wagon were set up. Doc Holiday the local DJ, was already playing music at the stage area. We got a beer and started mingling with the Veterans that were milling around. Ron and I met several Khe Sanh Vets whom we had met last year, and introduced them to Tom. They hit it off like they had known each other for years. Since the WALL was escorted on Sunday, and the Reunion actually didn't officially open until Thursday, several vendors were opened for some early bird sales. On Monday volunteers helped assemble the WALL so it would be ready for the official opening.

On the 24th I took my Malibu over to the entrance to the vending area and put my car and my personal memorabilia on display. (Pic # 10, 10a, 10b, 10c I had it set up from 9:00 am until almost 9:00 pm,. Hundreds of people took pictures of the car ,and checked out the things I had on display.

The next day we all went up to Cocoa Beach to the Pier. We walked along the beach and just chilled. Ron, Tom, and I had a picture taken at the display where they make it look like you were surfing. After we left the Pier we drove down to Patrick Air Force Base, and went to the PX. We also drove around the Base and saw all the C-130's on the runway, and the Hueys setting outside the hangers. Last year when Ron came down we were at Patrick and saw Air Force One sitting on the runway.

We made several trips to the Reunion. The nice thing about this reunion is you can come and go as you please. There is no charge for parking, and there is much to do in Central Florida. Disney, Sea World, Universal, Daytona Beach, or any number of places that are within an hours driving distance. Cape Canaveral is just north of Cocoa Beach, and it

is a great place to visit. Also by Cape Canaveral is Port Canaveral where there is a lot of very good restaurants, and where many cruise ships sail out from. We all went for an Air Boat ride where we saw over 200 alligators. This place is only about 15 minutes from my house. It is about 100,000 acres of state land with about 200,000 alligators ranging from baby gators to 12-14 feet long. This is an experience that young and old will never forget.

Ron and Tom both had to leave on Saturday and both missed the Marine Charge of the Hill that is only done by Marines every year on the last full day of the Reunion. I went over to the Reunion after they all left and had a great time participating in the Charge and the singing by everybody there of the Marine Hymn. They have a fly over by many different types of Viet Nam era aircraft.

This is a Reunion that if one attended, would be remembered for a long time. It isn't just for the Veterans but their entire family. There are so many Hotels and Motels in the area that accommodations are no problem. There are three airports to fly into: Melbourne Airport, Orlando, and the Orlando Sanford Airport. The Melbourne Airport is local and only about 20 minutes from the Reunion area. The two Orlando Airports are about one hour from Melbourne.

On May 13th I left Florida with my Malibu on my trailer, and went to Pennsylvania for a rededication of a WWI and WWII memorial that a friend of mine and his son rebuilt on a new site. On my way I stopped at Concord, N.C. to see Lowes Motor Speedway. I stopped for lunch at Hooters and when the manager saw my car on the trailer, he had several girls come outside and take a picture up on the trailer by the car. (Pic # 11)

After I left there I drove to Ron's house in Winston-Salem, N.C. where I spent a day with Ron and Lynn, and then drove to Allentown, Pa. I got there on the 15th and went to my brothers house with the truck and trailer for the night. The next morning I drove to Jim Thorpe, Pa. to the Carbon County Votech School where I was met by my buddy Hal Resh who is the auto mechanics shop teacher.

We were met by a local newspaper reporter and photographer from the Morning Call out of Allen-

town. They were there to do a story and get some pictures of my car, and of the kids in the shop doing some work on the car. They did a front end alignment on the car and checked out a few other odds and ends. From there I took the car to Hals house where I left it on the trailer. The next day we went on a cruise and rededication for the Memorial that was torn down, and relocated to a new site in West Bowmanstown, Pa.

Since it was Armed Forces Day I was supposed to go to the local stock car track at Mahoning Valley Speedway run by an old friend Doug Hoffman and his wife. From the days when I used to race I would be the Pace Car for all the divisions that they had there. Unfortunately it rained and the races were called till the following Saturday. The following Saturday I trailered the car to the race track and unloaded it and parked the car in the staging area. It looked like rain again but I told everybody we were going to have the races. My younger brother races there and he said it was going to rain. It seemed like I was the only one confident about having races that night. I was told to take my car out to the start-finish line after the warm-ups were complete for the National Anthem. A short time after the song the Heat races started. They completed all the heat races, and after intermission I was called to the track for the first feature event. We no sooner got the cars lined up and it started to rain.

I pulled to the infield while the cars continued around the track to dry it off. Luckily the rain only lasted for a few minutes and the track was dry again in no time. Once again I was back out on the track and the races resumed. After pacing the cars for a few laps the starter waved me off and the first feature began. (Pic # 9) I pulled into the pits and waited by the staging area for the rest of the features one at a time. I had a great time and after the races were over many people came down to the pit area to see my car up close.

As I left the track the traffic on the road was all backed up and moving one car at a time. About 1/2 mile up the road I observed a DUI check point. As I got to the check point, there were about 20 cops all around. One of them looked at my truck and immediately said 'pull it over'. I asked him why and he said that my truck didn't have an inspection sticker. I told him that I don't need one that I live in Florida.

I must have said something that he didn't like, and he asked me if the truck is registered in Florida. I just looked at him and told him if the plate says Florida that must be where it is registered.

He then walked to the back of the truck and came back and again told me to pull it over. When I asked what for he told me that my tow chains weren't crossed and they have to be crossed in Pennsylvania. I pulled over and got out and crossed the chains and another officer came to me and asked what I was pulled over for. I told her and she said she had to see my license, registration and proof of insurance. After I showed her she told that I was good to go. I took the car to my brothers house and parked it in his driveway for two days. I then went to a WWII Battle of the Bulge luncheon and took the car on the trailer to show Lou Reda from the History Channel who was a guest at the luncheon. I sat and talked with several men who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and it was very interesting to hear some of their stories.

I visited with my children and grandchildren that week and attended my granddaughters second birthday on May 31st before heading back to Florida the following day. I again stopped at Ron's house on my way back to Florida. I got back home on June 2nd and it was great to be home.

Hope to see more of you in Florida at the Vietnam Veterans and All Veterans Reunion next April in Melbourne, Florida.



**NEW PX ITEM "SORRY CHARLIE PIN"
SEE ATTACHED PX BROCHURE FOR
ACTUAL COLORS & PRICE**

**A LOT OF METAL FLYING AROUND
Sea Knight pilot braved enemy fire to keep
Marines supplied during siege at Khe Sanh**

By Robert F. Dorr
Special to the Times

The chances of the Marine combat base at Khe Sanh, South Vietnam, surviving the 77-day siege that ended April 15, 1968, would have significantly lessened without Maj. David Althoff's bold flying, say Marines who fought there.

Althoff, now a 71-year-old retired lieutenant colonel in Tempe, Ariz., flew 1,080 combat missions and logged 1,000 combat air hours in Vietnam. He piloted the CH-46A Sea Knight helicopter, the initial version of the CH-46E flown by Marines today.

Althoff and crews from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 262 nicknamed Tiger Air; flew frequent supply runs to Marine mountain outposts that served as the eyes and ears of embattled Khe Sanh.

The flying was done at low altitude where, as Althoff said in a series of interviews, there was a lot of metal flying around

His aircraft was hit four times so that he had to land immediately and many other times when he could just barely make it back to a base. You could sometimes count 100 or 120 bullet holes in the chopper

Cpl. Travis Flowers, a member of Althoff's helicopter squadron, said, when we inserted a reconnaissance team into a hostile area, Major Althoff would tell the guys to keep their heads and arms inside the chopper because we were going in low and fast and he didn't want any of them getting something knocked off by a tree. He really meant it. You had to look up to see the trees.

Althoff repeatedly credits his crew with his achievements and survival because there would have been no getting out of a hot zone without them. Sea Knight crews shared the constant risk of being hit, something that doesn't come naturally to those trained in aviation.

The CH-46 had superb visibility forward, but there's no visibility aft. You need to rely on the crew chief for that, Althoff said.

You're going into a hot zone, he remembered. They're firing at you from 360 degrees. You start to take hits. You know you're taking hits. The crew chief is telling you, Okay, we're leaking here. The gas lines hit there. If they're shooting into the pit, the gas lines are under the gauges so they're leaking all over your feet. You can hear the bullets cracking into the fuselage.

Second Lt. Michael Mullen, another pilot in HMM-262, said in 1968 that Althoff was the squadrons idol. He would never ask one of his junior pilots to fly a mission he had never flown. When we went on a hairy mission, we went with the knowledge that it could be completed because [Althoff] had already done it several times before.

Althoff earned the first of his three Silver Stars on Feb. 1, 1968, as flight leader of a section of two CH-46s assigned to extract an eight-man reconnaissance team surrounded and pinned down by 100 North Vietnamese soldiers near Dong Ha.

Althoff holds numerous other military awards and was presented the Alfred A. Cunningham Award in 1968, making him the Marine Aviator of the Year.

A decade ago, he was inducted into the Arizona Aviation Hall of Fame. Althoff and his wife, Phyllis, have five grown children.

Robert F. Dorr, an Air Force veteran and author, lives in Oakton, Va. His e-mail address is robert-dorr@aol.com.



**NEW PX ITEM KSV CHALLENGE COIN
ENCLOSED IN PLASTIC FOR EASY DISPLAY
SEE ATTACHED PX BROCHURE FOR ACTUAL
COLOR & PRICE**

OBIT

William R. Hartnett, age 64 yrs., died suddenly on December 28, 2008. He was the husband of Carol (Ogden) Hartnett and father of William R. Hartnett II and his wife, Amy; of Charles R. Hartnett; and to stepson Ricardo N. White and his wife, Peggy. Bill was also a loving grandfather to Billy, Cura, Jovanna and Adrian Hartnett. Also to Justin, Rebecca and Isabella White. He is sadly missed by his brothers, John Hartnett and his wife, Jackie; Bernard Hartnett and his Marlene; and James Hartnett and his wife, Mary Ann.

Bill had a real zest for life. He was an extremely positive person with a wide grin and laughter that impacted the lives of all that knew him. Family was always a priority but he had a sincere willingness to offer and help anyone that needed it. He held a deep appreciation for possessions passed down through the family and enjoyed sharing stories about each item. He enjoyed watching NASCAR, spending time with his grandchildren, and fixing things. He was also a good cook and loved to help prepare holiday meals.

Bill retired In 2004 after working 35 years in the pharmaceutical industry. He continued to keep busy with projects and hobbies, the most recent being making beeswax candles with a couple of the grandkids. His kindness, selflessness and caring attitude will be remembered by all that knew and loved him.

Military Service

William R. Hartnett enlisted in the U. S. Navy in 1965. He went to San Diego California for basic training. After testing, they found he was well suited for medical service. The Navy sent him to Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland for further training. After intense field training for war casualties, he was sent to camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base, in North Carolina for combat training.

He left in 1967 for Vietnam, and joined Charlie Company, 1st Battalion 26th Marines. Bill's battalion was involved in fights with the NVA on hill 950, 861, 881N and 881S. One of the longest and fiercest battles was to protect the Khe Sanh Combat Base, which was under very heavy siege by thousands of North Vietnamese. The Marine's held fast under

fierce ground attacks of mortars and rocket fire day and night for days.

My brother William R. Hartnett was presented with the Presidential Unit Citation for heroic service along with other awards for bravery and outstanding service to the Marine Corps and his country. He also received the Combat Action Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with two gold stars.

We his family are very proud of his will to endure the great pain and sacrifices he made for us.

His Brother, TIM

POETRY

Hand to Soul

The navy medic
raised
His hand to me,
bloody

And bent.
I left my door
gunner's

post to take it.
We joined as
brothers for

seconds for
life. All
those he had
held, helped

and saved flowed
from
his fingers
through mine

and into my
soul....forever.

Bob Allyn
315th Air Commandos
12th SOS
1968

THE SALUTE

Raymond Cruz
CBMU 301 Det. Bravo

There are moments in time that make an impression for life. This is one of those moments.

One day this past summer 2005, I was returning from visiting relatives on the other side Washington the State. All should know of that traffic here in the Puget Sound area, is the worst. Driving that late afternoon, northbound on 1-5 between Fort Lewis and Tacoma, there was fairly heavy traffic moving about 50 mph and slower.

I drive an old, used, 1990 F-150 4X4 long Bed, with a canopy, that has huge flat iron bumpers. It can be used for pushing anything out of the way cruising at 50mph in the fast lane. The HOV lane on 1-5 in this part of the state, is on the left side of a 3 lane highway.

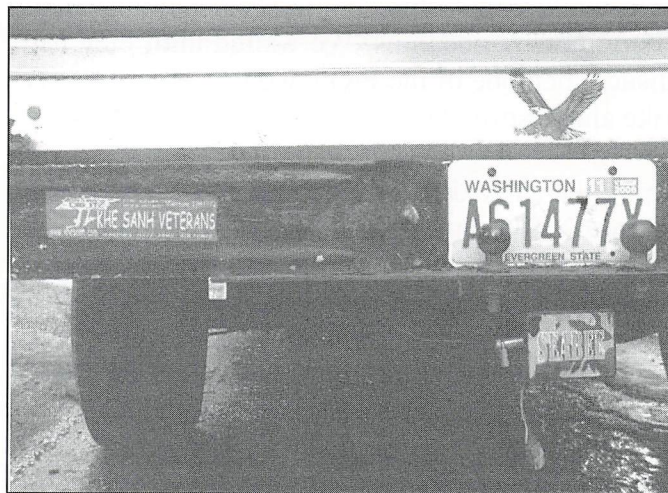
I observed a motorcyclist slowly coming up through traffic, in the HOV lane. As he pulls up along side me, I notice the bike is a black Harley softail. On the tank in Gold lettering is USMC. The leather jacket he is wearing has several patches; some are USMC with Semper Fi in red lettering, and on the Black helmet as well. The rider does not look old enough to be a 'Nam vet, but old enough to have possibly served in the first Gulf War. With hair flowing from underneath the helmet, he has the label of a proud Former Marine. Traffic begins to slow in the HOV lane and the motorcyclist is now riding to the rear of my truck. I notice him looking at the sticker on the bumper of my truck.

Now first let me say that almost every American recognizes the USMC logo that hangs on many vehicles. My little Seabee decal goes ignored except by another Seabee. For the most part am usually asked what does the little bee represents. On the rear bumper is also the Khe Sanh Vet "Home is where you dig it" sticker. On the hitch cover I have a cap with the word Seabee and a Seabee decal on the side.

In my mirror I see the leather clad ex-Grunt intensely looking at the stickers, then suddenly he looks forward and guns the bike in and between

other vehicles to pull up alongside again. This time he looks directly at me, stands on the pedals of the bike, while still moving in traffic. He faces me and gives me one of the most perfect Marine salutes, nods his head at me, and roars off. I was stunned and overwhelmed with mixed emotions. That is respect and honor.

I share this with you all, because that episodic moment honors us all.



ODD HAPPENINGS RECOLLECTIONS OF MY DAYS WITH GOLF 2/26 ON HILLS 558 & 560

By Robert M. Crabb

We move to hill 558, and hill 861. We dig in, running trenches and digging holes. This hill has very little trees or elephant grass cover, to hide our movement from the eyes of the enemy.

One night, an ambush went out at dusk. We had been running them in the gully just down the hill. Another Marine and I are standing in the twilight watching explosions in the gully near the ambush site. I remarked that our mortar section was doing a good job. We quickly discovered it was not our mortar section, but the NVA attacking the Marines at the ambush site. We dove for cover in our nearby holes.

Fortunately for us, they had changed the previous location where they had been setting up the ambush site, and no one was injured. That was the last ambush to go out until the siege was almost over.

"Get in your holes and just be ready", was the word

that came down from headquarters. Two jets came over and blasted a nearby hill where the NVA had Fox Company hung up.

Morton, the name we gave to the mad NVA mortar man, kept dropping 3-6 rounds a day on us. We could actually hear the rounds leaving the enemy's Mortars. When you hear that whoosh, you ran like hell for your hole.

We actually could observe the NVA building bunkers on nearby positions. We waited until they had finished then one of the F/O's would call in an Arty strike and destroy them.

During the early days on 558 and 560, jets returning from raids on North Vietnam, which still had their ordinance would drop them in the gulley near our hill where the NVA had been observed.

We first came under 122-mm rocket fire, on 558. I was standing with another marine, looking out at the valley. A 122 rocket coming in sounds like a tornado rumble then train crash. We had learned to hit the ground at all unexpected noises.

You lay in the dirt, trying to catch your breath. Slowly, move one arm to check your head, then the other arm, your side, your crouch, and then feel if your legs are still there. Then get up and see if anyone was hit. I hated those damm rockets.

When we first set in on 558, a lot of marines were constantly firing at NVA infiltrators trying to come up through a marshy area. At times a whole line began firing. I think they did it to get some new ammunition since we had been carrying our ammo long before we got to Khe Sanh. This practice continued until we were informed that ammo we brought with us was all we would be getting. Our command group took charge and began rationing out any ammunition we did receive.

I took to throwing empty C-rat cans full of dirt at all noises out front. Once in awhile we would throw a real grenade to keep the NVA guessing.

During the day, I would go to my old position and talk to the Cpl., bragging of my night adventure of throwing clods and cans at the NVA. The first time I said this, four 122-mm rockets hit the trench. Close

to where we were standing. I got up, checked myself and ran down the hill.

Next day, I am again BS'ing about the nightly Bob Crabb can attack, when another four 122 rockets hit the hill.

Before I ran off to my hole down the trench line I heard the Cpl say "Quit throwing those damm cans, I think you are the one pissing them off". Really, we see 3 or 4 by your wire at night." I then go back to throwing my Cans of dirt. Wishing I had an extra had a grenade or two.

Martin was a marine always hearing things move at night. He became pain waking his Cpl. up every night asking for permission to throw a grenade. Finally, just to keep him quiet, the Cpl said, "OK. Just one."

The noise was as if a heard of elephants were charging down the hill. The "Zero brain" marine was a hero that day, for breaking up a NVA ambush with blood trails leading off the hill.

Martin, looking around one morning sees his Cpl., nude stepping out of a sleeping bunker. I guess the Cpl. was trying to dry out his one pair of UT's or just air out. Martin goes over and tells another Marine, "I think those two are Gay".

I thought you knew about Golf Company replied the grunt, "the Air Force has whole bases that are only for Gay airmen, and so does the Army. I think the Navy keeps all the gay Sailors on a certain ship. So in the Marine Corps most Gay Marines are assigned to Golf Company".

Martin runs down to another old timer who keeps the joke going, telling him, "it used to bother me but it doesn't anymore, it's ok, none of our officers are Gay. So Martin goes to live with the Lt. for a week until the Lt. kicks him out to stay on the lines.

'When C-rations arrived, 3-4 boxes are handed out to each Marine. Usually, 4 boxes are good for only 4 meals. Where we where, those 4 boxes had to last 6-8 days! They always tell us, "Re-supply in 4 days."

To extend this, the first day chow comes, it is not

handed out until the next day. Marine Corps policy is bullets, bandages and beans. We did not seem to get much of anything.

Some Marines ate all 4 boxes in one day, then survived on coffee packets. Chow was handed out by the Squad leaders. They mixed up the boxes and turned them face down. And each man would pick four meals. Fruit came in 4 of the boxes and pound cake in 2 meals. There was always some trading going on. I tried to eat a little each day, big 8 oz can of something one day, crackers and old looking peanut butter the next. Everything was eaten down to the cream packets. I did get to know which suppliers had a better grade of food. Still cold Scrambled egg and grease was hard to choke down.

I was going to take up smoking, your going to die here anyway and it did seem to take the morning chill away but trading C-rat fruit for smokes broke out. I would rather have a small can of peaches than a Marlboro. With little food and a good variety of worms I slimmed down to 155 lbs.

We used a NOD to spot the C-rats supply, which was under Marine guard. They had to stop using grunts from the lines because they would not stop anyone from stealing extra chow. They instead used office personnel to guard the food supply. Threatening them with being transferred to a line company if they left anyone get away with any extra chow.

Our 1st Lt. is checking the minefield and steps on a little mine, which blows his heel off and is medicated I hear of this and scoot up to the CP not to inquire about the LT. foot but, "when are we dividing up his chow?" The CP thought I was crazy but I thought it was a fine joke.

February and March getting ready to be Over Run

In February-March there was a feeling that we would be over run. We heard rumors that NVA planes stationed in North Vietnam had been moved closer to Khe Sanh so not to be targeted by our bombers, and they could possibly make a run at us under cover of the fog. We begin to build air raid bunkers.

When Tank sounds were heard on the lines. (We set

up tank hunter killer teams.) We then get orders to burn everything you can not carry out. Field jackets, ponchos, rain gear, any extra clothes, all should go into the fires. "Stand down from that order", comes the word from headquarters and we go back into our defensive positions still anticipating an attack.

Our artillery begins to fire closer to our positions on the hills. There is nightly H&I fire doing nothing but keeping us awake. One Marine with only 45 days left on his tour stayed in his hole 24 hours a day. He just kept digging deeper and deeper. He said he already used up all his luck when on a previous patrol an NVA machine gun round went through the side of his flak jacket, hit his web gear and just caused a huge burn that resembled a zipper. No work details for him, he spent his time hiding and counting the days.

One foggy night the NVA hit Hill 861A. All hell broke loose, and a heroic helicopter pilot attempted to land on Hill 861A at night under fire. The next day we sent up replacements for their dead and wounded. They had no luck at all after they left their Hill they were down by a water hole, when an NVA rocket killed a whole squad including several corpsman.

I think the most dangerous time was coming back to the hills from the base. The planes did not stop on the runway, you just kicked off your gear, jumped from the plane and ran like hell to the trench line that ran alongside the landing strip. Those new to the experience, who stopped to retrieve their gear right away, were wounded. Killed most of the time.



**NEW PX ITEM BUTTON DOWN DENIM
EMBROIDERED SHIRT SEE PX BROCHURE
FOR COLOR & PRICE**

A MARINE'S CHRISTMAS STORY That Missed Last Years Red Clay

By Earl Clark

A Co 1/26

I find shopping with my wife excruciatingly painful, and try to avoid it as much as possible. How in the world someone can go into a store and not know what they want is beyond me. When I want something, I'm in and I'm out.

For instance, I was one of the last guys to get a flat screen television. I took note of all the ones I had seen at other people's homes, asked a bunch of questions and decided I didn't want any of them. I saw a commercial on TV about an LG "Scarlet" brand and chose that one. I'm in and I'm out.

Since this is a Christmas story I have to mention that I go with my wife to shop for our little ones, but only with certain parameters in place to keep peace in the family. We have to go in the morning when the doors first open in order to beat the mobs. People in stores at Christmas time are nuts. Ninety nine percent of the people have forgotten what Christmas is about anyway.

I sort of just go through the motions during the holiday season. I get into a blue funk. I think about you guys a lot and the brotherhood we shared when all we had was each other. I miss that. I think about our brothers on the Wall, too. I appreciate solitude and peace, and I enjoy being with my family – nothing more, nothing less.

We know what Christmas is all about.

For years my shopping for the grandchildren consisted of me purchasing or ordering something that had to do with the Yankees, Indy Colts, Arizona State or the Marines, be it clothing, toys or blankets and such. I still get some personal shopping in. I just bought a little T-shirt for my newest grandson that said, "Lean & mean just like grandpa," with a little guy next to a bulldog. Pretty cool!

Anyway, last Christmas we found ourselves pulling up in the parking lot just a few minutes after the doors opened and entered the store. My wife grabbed a cart and we began to walk toward one of the aisles. There were some chairs just inside the

entrance with several people sitting in them. I think they had the right idea, let someone else do the shopping while they sit and read, or whatever.

With my wife ahead of me, I had just passed these chairs when I thought I heard in a soft, barely audible voice, "Semper Fi." I kept walking a bit because I still wasn't quite sure what I heard. I had a Marine Corps baseball cap on so I stopped and turned just to be sure. A Marine never ignores or passes up a Semper Fi; I mean we're talking about the brotherhood here. Sure enough there was an elderly gentleman with this very old, beat up cap with the Eagle, Globe and Anchor on the front. I walked toward the gentleman, extended a hand and said, "Semper Fi, Sir." Without a doubt he was World War II Marine and I greeted him with the utmost respect. We had a short conversation about this and that, shook hands and exchanged a Merry Christmas to one another. He mentioned to me that he was here with his grand daughter doing a little shopping. I told him I would stop back by on our way out if he was still there.

After walking around aimlessly we found some items that we thought the children might enjoy wearing. We stood at the check out stand, paid for our merchandise and mercifully headed toward the exit. Sure enough, there was my brother Marine. The wife headed toward the doors while I veered toward him. I knelt down where our eyes could meet so as to not appear that I was standing over him. We both extended our hands to shake but ended up embracing one another. I wished him a Merry Christmas and he said to me, "Merry Christmas and God bless you." I walked away thinking this is one of those special moments you get to have in life when you are a United States Marine.

I caught up with the wife just as she was entering the parking lot. She asked me, "Who was that gentleman you were speaking with?" I put my arm around her and just said, 'one of my heroes.' She smiled at me and nothing else was said as we walked to the car. She knew.

I want to wish all my brothers and sisters a happy holiday season.

Peace.

ORDINATION CEREMONY FOR KHE SANH VETERAN RICH AHO-DELTA CO 1/26

Five Khe Sanh Veterans of Delta Company 1/26 came together to celebrate the ordination of one of their own to Deacon of the Catholic Church on August 22, 2009 in Winona, Minnesota. A total of eleven deacons were ordained in the packed Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Among the Deacons ordained was Khe Sanh Veteran, Rich Aho. The witnesses included Rich's wife Joann, his immediate and extended family including four of his Delta brothers, Tom "Moose" Russomano, Chuck Tomer, Ron Bellantone and Dan Fisher and their spouses Connie Bellantone and Geri Fisher.

These five Marines originally came together as replacements to 1st Platoon, Delta Company, 1/26 in late 1966 at Hill 55, and served together throughout their tours to Khe Sanh. Thirty years of professional careers and raising families separated them until finding each other at the Khe Sanh Veterans' reunions in Dallas, Chicago Mobile and Washington, DC.



Joann and Rich hosted a fine reception at their home following the ordination ceremony. At Sunday Morning Mass they listened to Rich's first sermon and as they left the Church an eagle soared high above the parking lot. A good sign.
Semper Fidelis
Moose, Chuck, Rich, Dan and Ron

STILL SAVING LIVES

CORPSMAN RECEIVES PURPLE HEART

By Sarah Fortney, National Naval Medical Center
Public Affairs

BETHESDA, Md. (NNS) -- A Hospital Corpsman assigned to National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) received a Purple Heart Medal presented Sept. 14 by the Marine officer whose live he saved when their convoy was ambushed in Afghanistan.

Holding back tears, Marine Corps Lt. Col. Ty Edwards presented Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Stephen Albright with the Purple Heart at the NNMC's Command Suite. "You're my hero," Edwards told Albright.

On Oct. 18, 2008, Edwards and Albright were on a routine mission to deliver supplies in Afghanistan when the humvee they were riding in was ambushed. At the time, Albright was driving the vehicle and Edwards was the team commander.

During the ambush, Albright saw Edwards on the ground, not moving — he had been shot in the head. Albright attempted to push the vehicle in front of Edwards to offer protection from the heavy rounds of fire.

Albright, who was shot in his lower left leg in the attack, treated Edwards, bandaging and applying pressure on his head wound and checking him for further injuries. As he continued to monitor Edwards' vital signs, Albright constructed a makeshift litter and a C-collar to stabilize his neck during the bumpy trek to a nearby helicopter pad. "Without him, I wouldn't be here," Edwards said.

Albright, who now works in Health Promotion Office at NNMC, was honored to accept the Purple Heart, he said, but didn't believe his war wounds constituted him receiving the award. Therefore, he chose to have Edwards present him with the award.

Edwards pinned the purple-clothed military decoration on Albright's uniform in front of family members and NNMC staff.

Albright's wife, Emily Albright, said it was difficult when he deployed to Afghanistan, but knowing he was able to use his skills to help others and make such an impact made it all worthwhile.

I was really scared for him when we heard the news [about the ambush]," Emily said. Over the last year, she has kept track of Edwards' progress while he

was in treatment at NNMC and the Tampa Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center. She said she is amazed at how well he has recovered.

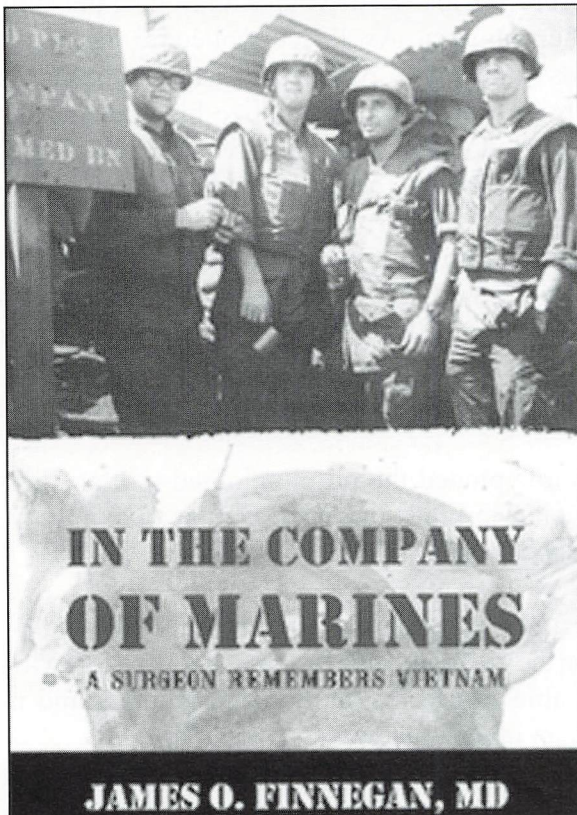
Anna Edwards, Edwards' wife, said she couldn't have asked for better treatment and support. She brought their children, Mason, 8, and Alaina, 6, and Edwards' father to watch him present the award to Albright. "It has been a challenging and difficult year," Anna said. "It's wonderful to see them together again and to know how much [this award] means to both of them."

NNMC Commander Rear Adm. Matthew Nathan congratulated Albright on his achievement and noted that the two are now both Purple Heart recipients, having both shed blood for their country.

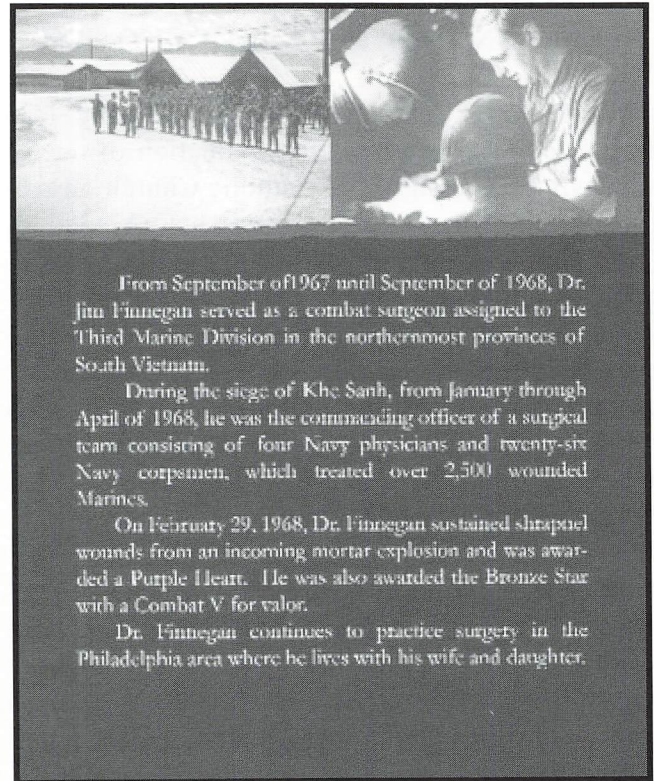
"They are why I stay in the service, to work alongside heroes like these two," Nathan said. "What a great opportunity it is to have you here now ... God bless you for what you do."

BOOK REVIEW

"IN THE COMPANY OF MARINES"



James Finnegan, M.D., says one of the happiest moments in his life was seeing the cover of his recently



From September of 1967 until September of 1968, Dr. Jim Finnegan served as a combat surgeon assigned to the Third Marine Division in the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam.

During the siege of Khe Sanh, from January through April of 1968, he was the commanding officer of a surgical team consisting of four Navy physicians and twenty-six Navy corpsmen, which treated over 2,500 wounded Marines.

On February 29, 1968, Dr. Finnegan sustained shrapnel wounds from an incoming mortar explosion and was awarded a Purple Heart. He was also awarded the Bronze Star with a Combat V for valor.

Dr. Finnegan continues to practice surgery in the Philadelphia area where he lives with his wife and daughter.

published book, "In the Company of Marines: A Surgeon Remembers Vietnam." The practicing surgeon, whose previous publishing has been limited to medical journals, has printed some of his stories and reflections from his year serving as a combat surgeon in the Vietnam War, part of which was during the famous battle of Khe Sanh. Over the years Finnegan occasionally wrote down the moments and memories from his year in Vietnam as a Navy surgeon assigned to treat members of the Third Marine Division in the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam.

The book was written for a small audience of family and friends but has gained interest from outside parties, including the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Va. At a dinner a few years ago, Finnegan found himself talking about his experiences in Vietnam from September 1967 to September 1968. His daughter commented that it was the first time she heard him talking about that time. "My own kids didn't know what I did," Finnegan said, adding that he then realized that "I really do want everyone to know" about his year as a combat surgeon.

That year included serving as the commanding officer of a surgical team in the heart of the siege of Khe Sanh, where he encountered daily bombard-

ments, constant danger, and saved, and lost, uncountable young American men. Finnegan, still a full-time surgeon at a medial clinic in Camden, N.J., harkens back to Vietnam as a “pivotal point” and “watershed moment” in his life and the lives of his friends with whom he still keeps in touch.

At that time in America, social unrest was at a boiling point, and although there are many unanswered questions about the war in Vietnam and the siege at Khe Sanh, which accounted for hundreds of U.S. deaths and thousands of injuries, Finnegan’s book focuses on his individual experiences and those of the men he encountered. At “Charlie Med,” the term used for some bases medical unit, Finnegan recollects, the doctors were always well-stocked with medical supplies. Navy corpsmen and those fighting on the lines all worked together for a common cause, even if they didn’t quite understand the whole picture. The cause was to keep each other alive.

Writing about the siege, which took place roughly from January to April 1968, Finnegan writes, “It soon became difficult to distinguish one day from another. The wounded arrived at all hours, sometimes one or two at a time and other times one or two dozen, totaling over 2,500 during the three months of the siege. It seems impossible to believe today, but we took care of each one of them in a timely and appropriate fashion. To this day we repeatedly affirm and reaffirm that no wounded Marine ever received anything but the best possible treatment even under unrelenting incoming fire.

I fear I may overuse the phrase ‘incoming fire,’ but it would be impossible to tell the true story of Charlie Med without emphasizing that much of the story unfolds while the base underwent almost constant bombardment by enemy gunners.” Finnegan was a Navy physician assigned to the Marines (standard as the Marines don’t technically have their own medical staff) but states in his book that he has always felt like a Marine, even if he can’t say that he really was one.

Still, many have recognized what he and other Navy physicians and corpsmen did in those jungles of Vietnam. Finnegan served in the Third Medical Battalion of the 3rd Marine Division. Recently, a man at Finnegan’s golf club whom he has known for

years saw his book in the golf shop and approached him, saying, “I’ll call you a Marine, and I was a Marine,” Finnegan said.

The war in Vietnam marked an advanced stage of helicopter technology in war, in which many casualties could be brought in at same time, and the quick transportation ushered in a new era of combat casualties – those who might have died earlier in the field were rescued, but sometimes in unthinkable, unsalvageable conditions. Still, holding Khe Sanh was so important to those overseeing the war that the medical unit was well stocked, even when it came to blood. If they needed something, they got it, Finnegan said, adding that once the Marines flew jets to Okinawa to get them some catheters.

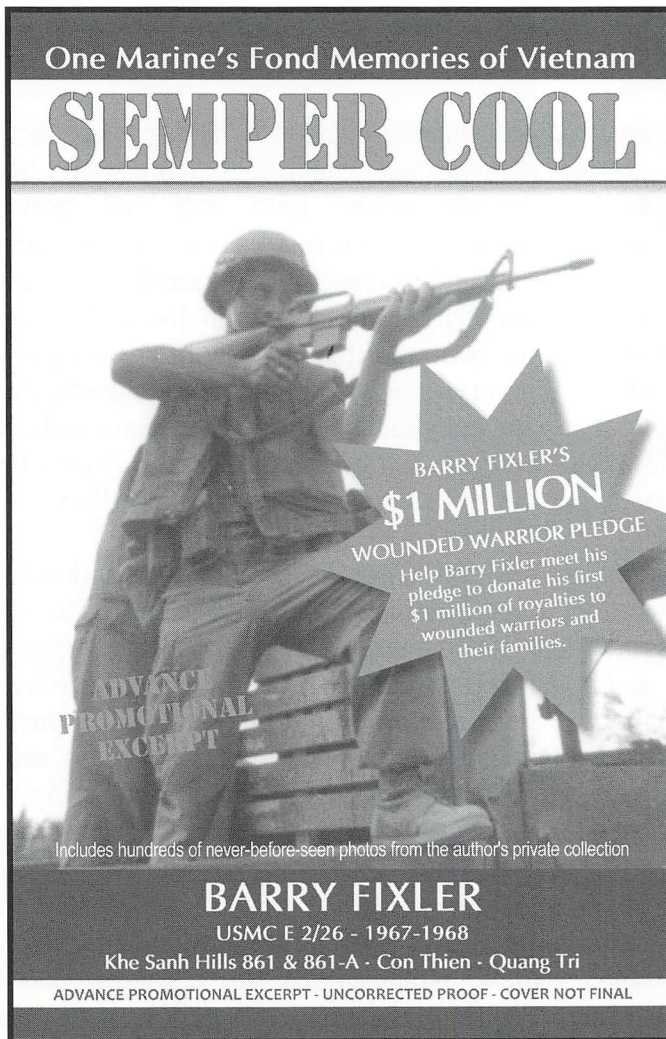
Death didn’t happen because of lack of care in the medical combat base, which included a triage bunker, operating rooms, helo pad and graves-registration tent. During this year of his life, death was all around Finnegan – inexplicable, gut-wrenching death. No doubt this included the possibility of his own and those to whom he had grown close. “The message is certainly there, but you can’t let that paralyze you,” he said of the chance of being killed. “You do what everyone else does.” And that is to get their jobs done while dodging artillery.

To this day, Finnegan keeps in touch with many men he knew back in that watershed year. The Marine magazines he subscribes to are filled with men and loved ones trying to find someone who knew them or their relative in Vietnam, and in reunions, so many people just trying to reconnect to those who can understand, those who were there. As for Finnegan, “I’m trying to get my act together and write another book because there are so many stories left out,” he said. “So many untold stories.” In the epilogue to his book, Finnegan writes, “Here’s what I know. Nineteen-year-old corporals do not declare war. Young lieutenants and captains who lead platoons and companies into battle do not choose those battles. They just fight them. Presidents and senators and congressman declare or authorize war. They seldom ever fight them. They love making speeches about them. Many of them have never served in the military. The majority have never seen combat. “Here’s what I wish. I wish there would never be another war.”

"In the Company of Marines" is available at the Readers Forum in Wayne, Ardmore Paperback Book Shop and online. URL: http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/articles/2009/09/09/main_line_suburban_life/news/doc4aa7d138962dc777698270.prt © 2009 mainline-medianews.com, a Journal Register Property

ANOTHER UPCOMING BOOK FROM A KHE SANH VETERAN

Advance Promotional Excerpt



ON SALE FEBRAURY 14 2010

Vietnam was a helicopter war. Choppers were the main trans-ports for food, ammunition, mail and men. Get in fast. Get out fast. That was the helicopter pilots' mantra. If the bad guys zeroed in on a landing zone with their rockets and mortars, the helicopters wouldn't land, not even to pick up our dead.

One day, during the siege of Khe Sanh, two of our guys got hit real bad. When that happens what you do is take the Marine who's seriously wounded and put him in a poncho, maybe 100 feet from the landing

One guy takes the poncho by the feet and the other guy gets it by the head and you run to the Medivac chopper. You try to coordinate it so you get there just as the helicopter touches down.

I was holding one of our wounded guys by the head end of his poncho, making eye contact with him. His entire body was soaked with blood. How he was still breathing I don't know. He was turned inside out. All of his organs were exposed, but he was still alive, and his eyes were fixed into mine.

"You're going to be fine; you're going back to the world," I said to him. "You're making it back fine. Back home. You'll be fine. You'll be fine."

But I was thinking, "Just die already," because the guy was already in shock, and he wasn't going to make it.

The helicopter was on approach and four of us ran out carrying the two wounded Marines. We were catching heavy fire from mortars and rockets. The two guys carrying the first Marine scurried straight inside the helicopter. I was last on the ramp, and as soon as I got there, the pilot started taking off because the helicopter was being riddled with shrapnel. The cockpit glass was a mess. Pieces of it were in the co-pilot's face. Mortar shrapnel sliced through the hull of the chopper.

I was barely on the ramp and the helicopter started lifting off. Next thing I knew, I was dangling from the ramp clinging to the poncho, and I couldn't reach anything else to hold.

I lost my grip. For one quick second, I opened my eyes and actually saw the tops of trees. I was falling from the sky, and the only thing I could think of was that I was above the trees.

I had enough time to tell myself to curl in a ball, like doing a cannonball at the swimming pool, and close my eyes and wait to hit the ground.

That's what I remember, waiting, waiting for the pain ... But when I hit I bounced straight up. Swear to God, just like a trampoline.

I was thinking, "What the ... ?!" I had no idea what I had landed on.

The first time, I must have bounced 10, 15 feet, but it felt like jumping out of a six-story building onto a trampoline. Like I hit and bounced up three floors, then two floors, then one.

At the same time my helmet flew off, and-how I was thinking to do all of this, I don't know-I tried to flatten myself out so I wouldn't be such an easy target for the enemy.

I was still wondering what I had landed on by the time I reached cover. Well, for about six weeks, none of us had wanted to get our mailbags. The helicopters would come and drop mailbags, but no one wanted to run out the hundred feet under fire to get them. We had to get our ammunition and food, but screw the mailbags. We weren't gonna get killed for mailbags.

So the mailbags piled up. They must've been stacked four, five feet high, and I'd landed right in the middle of them. That's why I bounced: Those mailbags that nobody wanted to risk their lives for saved, me.

The three guys who got stuck on the chopper made it back the next afternoon while I was eating C-rations in one of the trench bunkers where we slept. They thought I was dead. I could hear them talking to the other guys.

"We seen Fix get blown out of the helicopter! We seen Fix get blown apart." Their eyes saw me fly out the back of a helicopter in mid-air while under heavy fire, so they assumed I was dead. When they finally saw me sitting in the bunker they looked like they'd seen a ghost.

"But we saw you get blown out of the helicopter!" "That's right, but I'm right here. Yo! I'm fine." We always appreciated the mail.

This entertaining, sometimes disturbing and always honest military memoir, Barry Fixler, the mild-

mannered jeweler whose Valentine's Day shootout with armed robbers captured the nation's attention, tells his uncensored war stories from some of the deadliest battles of Vietnam.

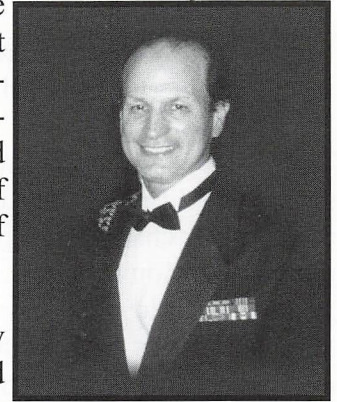
At 9:05 AM on February 14, 2005, Fixler found himself facing the wrong end of a loaded gun, again. Even though almost 40 years had passed since his last patrol as a squad leader in Vietnam, Fixler's combat instincts were still razor sharp. The widely broadcast surveillance tape shows Fixler turn the tables on his would-be killers and go on the attack.

To Fixler, the shootout wasn't heroic despite the numerous awards and citations he received, but rather a result of mental toughness he gained fighting in the trenches of Khe Sanh, rice paddies of Con Thein and Quang Tri, and jungles just south of the DMZ.

This is a story about a young man who enlisted in the Marines to gain his father's respect and discovered the value of life, extraordinary examples of brotherly love, and core values of America: leadership, responsibility, sacrifice, service, honor, and optimism.

EDIT NOTE: I ran the story in Red Clay with pictures of the Heroic shootout Barry had with the two Armed Robbers. He was just as Heroic when he served in my weapons Platoon on Hill 861A with E Co 2/26.

Barry is donating profits from the sale of the book to the wounded warriors program. He is a generous supporter of the program and holds many events at his place of business to raise funds.



RANDOM THOUGHTS ON A SUMMER NIGHT

By Earl Clark

The other day I was watching my ten-year-old grand daughter's fast-pitch softball team play for their league championship. The name of her team is the Funky Monkeys. Their uniforms are black and pink with little pink monkey faces on their white knee socks. It's just about the sweetest thing you'll ever want to see. The sun was just beginning to set as the game began, and what had been a warm day turned in to a gorgeous Arizona evening. I was at peace.

My mind acts like a tape recorder, many times in the fast-forward position, with images and thoughts racing past my eyes with lightning speed.

Does this happen to any of you, or is it just me? Sometimes I get into trouble when engaged in conversation and I lose track of the subject, or I move on to another subject without the other person knowing what the hell, I'm talking about. It drives my wife and sister crazy, and I'm sure I've seemed rude toward family friends, but I think they know what's going on.

Anyway, this occurred for a few moments during an inning of the game. I traveled far distances without leaving my chair.

The tape begins: My first thought was that it was good to be breathing and able to take in all the excitement around me, little girls with ponytails playing softball in America. How Norman Rockwell is that?

I then traveled back to Washington D.C., to 2004, when I had gone there with Operation Freedom Bird for the Marine Corps Birthday and Veterans' Day. I had the honor and privilege of being with Bruce Geiger and Tom Ford as we placed the Khe Sanh Veterans' Wreath at the Wall, but the night before I had been to the Wall to talk with our fallen brothers because there was something that was eating at me and I had to tell them.

I told them I was sorry for pissing away twenty some years of my life while looking at the world through the distorted, abstract visual presented by

the bottom of a bottle, and not leading the sort of life they would want me to. I was ashamed that I was given the opportunity to live my life, and blew it, when they were not able to.

I promised them I would change my life; I promised them I would be a better grand parent than I was a parent; I promised them I would be a better person and always try and do the right thing. I also promised them I would try and help people who needed it.

These thoughts are always with me each day. I knew just making these promises wasn't going to hack it with these guys. I had to do it. That moment has had a profound effect on my life.

My final thought the other night--while the tape's still playing--was to give thanks to My Shield for protecting me from being blown into oblivion by a 152mm artillery round.

The next thing I heard was the sound of my daughter's voice saying, "Dad, Dad, Mia's up to bat," and I returned to the present. She looked at me knowing what had just happened and held my hand. My children have witnessed this sort of thing before. It never goes away.

For those of you who took the time to read all this, I thank you and hope I didn't intrude on your day. I know some of this has nothing to do with Khe Sanh; yet for me it has everything to do with Khe Sanh.

Oh, by the way, my grand daughter had a single and an RBI. The Funky Monkeys won the game 3 to 2 in extra innings to win the league championship. Proud grandpa, indeed!

Semper Fidelis to all my brothers.

PROMISE FULFILLED

By Bruce Geiger

It had been nearly 41 years to the day I left the embattled combat base at Khe Sanh on 14 April 1968. The harrowing and deadly ordeal was finally over, although in the months that followed, new seedlings in my dark forest of nightmares would continue to emerge.

Seven weeks earlier I met Sgt. Manuel Floyd Marti-

nez for the first time since transferring into A Btry/1st Bn/44th Artillery as 2nd Platoon CO. I had flown into the besieged Marine base in February with supplies and several replacements to take command of the two Duster and two Quad 50 crews that had defended the northern perimeter of the base since the 77 day siege began. Sgt. Martinez was a sharp, confident, 22 year old squad leader who was admired and respected by the men he served with. My instincts told me I could count on this young NCO to effectively lead his crew despite the daily pounding by NVA artillery, rockets and mortars. Along with the other Duster and Quad 50 crews, he would stand fast providing the heavy direct fire support critical to the Marine effort to defend against overwhelming NVA ground forces planning to overrun the base.

After the grueling convoy back to Dong Ha, my men and I got a much needed break before we took on new assignments escorting convoys and mine sweeps and providing fire support for Marine and ARVN operations. Little did I know that exactly eight weeks later on a Sunday morning, Sgt. Martinez would be struck down by a sniper's bullet.

On the morning of Sunday 6 June 1968, Pfc. Morris Johnson was talking with Sgt. Martinez as they waited for word to 'saddle up' at Dong Ha. Sgt. Martinez was supposed to be off duty that morning but had been asked to fill in for someone else. He proudly showed Johnson a small wallet sized photo of his newborn daughter that he had just received in a letter from his wife. As they talked, they heard the music of 'Amazing Grace' being played on speakers by the Chaplain at the small chapel across the road from A Btry. Headquarters. Sgt. Martinez said he would sure like to go to church. At that moment, Lt. Nelson gave the word to mount up and climbed into the commander's hatch as Pfc. Johnson drove the Duster to his position in the convoy. Sgt. Martinez took a position inside the gun turret atop the other Duster.

About halfway between Dong Ha and Gio Linh, the operation took the tracks east off Hwy. 1 into the sand flats and small sand dunes. Not far off the road, they took enemy fire from an old village. As Johnson's track turned their guns to fire over the engine compartment, Lt. Nelson climbed out of the hatch in order to direct their fire. They had walked

into a vicious trap, a horse shoe shaped ambush. They were pinned down; the ARVN soldiers in chaos were of little help. Seconds later, their sister track radioed they had taken a KIA. Sgt. Martinez had been sitting in the fold-down seat to the right of the guns when a sniper, tucked behind a mud wall beside a pagoda, fired a shot that struck him in the head, killing him instantly. Morris Johnson listened to the radio message in disbelief.

Lt. Nelson had just moved around to the M60 machine gun when Johnson heard a snap. As he looked up, Lt. Nelson opened his flack jacket to look at his upper chest where a neat, small red hole appeared. He closed his jacket and then fell off the side of the track.

Sgt. Davis and Johnson dragged him to the protected area in front of the track where a medic checked him. Johnson was ordered back into the driver's compartment; Lt. Nelson was hoisted onto the front of the track to protect him from enemy fire. His shoulders lay over Johnson's head with his knees over the commander's hatch. Johnson drove the Duster out of the kill zone to an area where Lt. Nelson was unloaded onto a stretcher and medevaced by chopper within five minutes. The sister track, driven by Pfc. Monroe 'Barney' Barron, made its way back where Sgt. Martinez was lifted from the floor of the turret and handed to others on the ground. He was laid on a stretcher with a body bag draped over it. After a brief examination by the medical staff, the bag was zipped closed.

It took three different air strikes to break the attack that morning. F-4 Phantoms dropped napalm, scorching the enemy positions. Cobra gunships strafed and rocketed the area and ARVN prop-driven A-1 Skyraiders dive bombed and destroyed the pagoda and dug-in NVA positions.

Morris Johnson recalled the last words he heard from Sgt. Manuel Martinez were of the love he had for his family, especially his newborn daughter. He was touched by the music from the chapel as they sat and talked early that morning. It was so peaceful. Within a matter of minutes Sgt. Martinez would be dead, leaving behind a young wife and a precious child who would never know her father.

I felt terrible guilt upon learning of the death of my

young squad leader. A feeling of helplessness consumed me. The circumstances that placed me with another section that day were of no consolation. If I had only been there the events might have been different; he might still be alive. Most disturbing to me was the fact that I never got the chance to say goodbye. I promised myself that when I returned home I would visit with his family and pay my respects at his gravesite.

Over the years, not a week went by that I didn't think of Sgt. Martinez. Over the years I tried to locate his family but was never able to track them down. When 'The Wall' in Washington, DC was being built I visited the site whenever a business trip took me to the area. I remember standing in the rain before the walkway was finished, mud up to my ankles, tears streaming down my face, searching desperately to find his name.

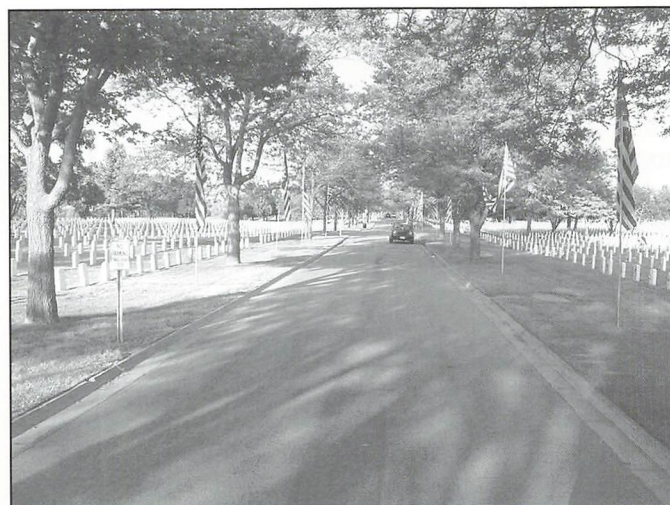
It wasn't until a visit years later that the addition of locator directories led me to his name on Panel 58W, Row 11. I have visited that panel on Veterans Day every year since, to touch his name etched in the shiny black granite and to tell him that I miss him and will never forget him. I will continue to do so for as long as I am physically able. Although I have lost too many brothers in combat, and visit to touch their names on 'The Wall', it is the memory of Sgt. Manuel Floyd Martinez that holds the most meaning for me.

Now 41 years later, I made my reservations to attend the Khe Sanh Veterans reunion in Denver, CO. After an internet search a few weeks earlier, I had confirmed that Sgt. Manuel Floyd Martinez was laid to rest at the Ft. Logan National Cemetery in Denver. I printed a map showing the location of his gravesite; the opportunity to visit and fulfill a promise I made so many years ago was finally at hand. I was apprehensive but remained determined on that Friday morning in July when I had hoped to borrow a friend's vehicle to make the ten mile trip from our hotel to the cemetery. Although my plan was to make the trip alone, my Marine friends Craig Tourte and David Tonick insisted on accompanying me on my pilgrimage.

Ft. Logan National Cemetery was much larger than I had expected, with nearly 100,000 internments. It was beautiful and well maintained. After a few

minutes of searching we located the gravesite at a peaceful spot beside the shelter of a shade tree. A rush of emotion came over me; I was thankful my Marine buddies were with me. I reached into my pocket to retrieve a shiny new Khe Sanh Veterans challenge coin, protected in a vinyl pouch, to leave as a remembrance. With the help of Craig's pocket knife I dug out a small slit at the base of Manuel's headstone and pushed the coin deep beneath the sod.

We stayed for a while gazing out over the legions of white markers that stood row after row at attention, on the vast green parade ground. We thought of those we served with who did not return and wondered who, if not us, would be there to remember these many thousands of brave men. After all these years I had finally stood at the gravesite of my brother Sgt. Manuel Floyd Martinez, to shed tears for his loss and to honor him for his bravery. I had finally fulfilled my promise.



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The Center for the Investigation of Human Capabilities (CIHC), Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association Office at the Vietnamese Academy of Science and Technology, Ha Noi, Vietnam



Me and Dr. Dinh Van Toan, renowned geologist, professor and director of the Geophysical Department of the Institute of Geological Sciences at the Vietnamese Academy of Science and Technology. Toan was assigned to the 24th PAVN (NVA) Regiment as a 40mm antitank gunner and was part of the force that overran the Lang Vei Special Forces camp near Khe Sanh in February 1968. During the subsequent siege of Khe Sanh Combat Base, Toan sustained multiple and serious wounds from a B-52 bombing and was also completely deafened for nearly a year thereafter.



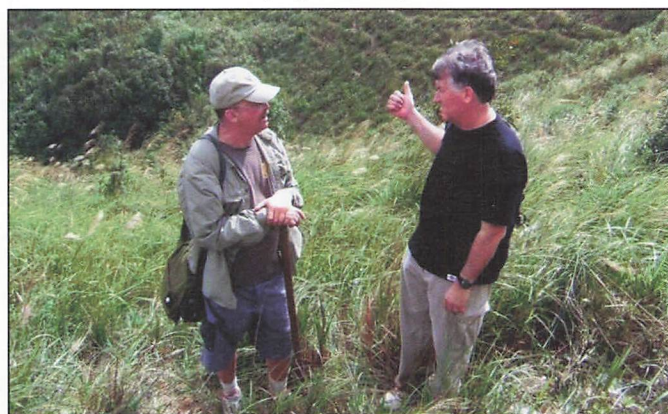
The telepath, Nguyen Buu Thuan (in light blue jacket) explaining to Dr. Dinh Van Toan how to translate to us in English a map he just drew. Note Mahoney's baseball glove on table.



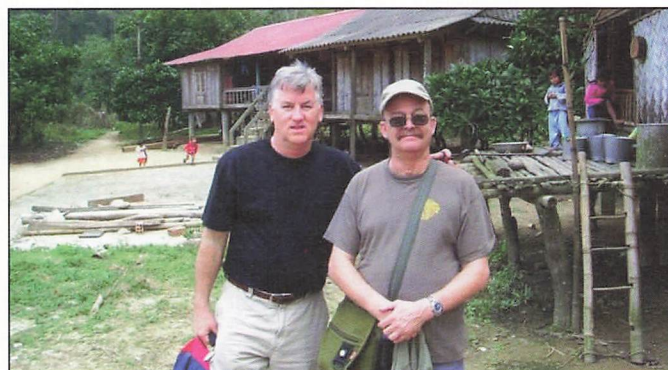
Plaque at Site



Paying our Respects



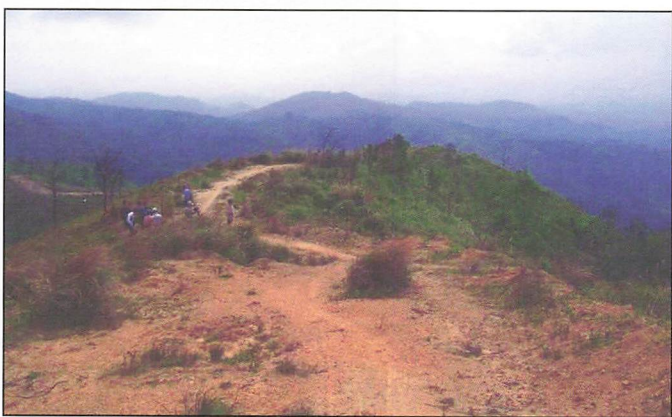
Doc & Mike trying to figure out what's going on



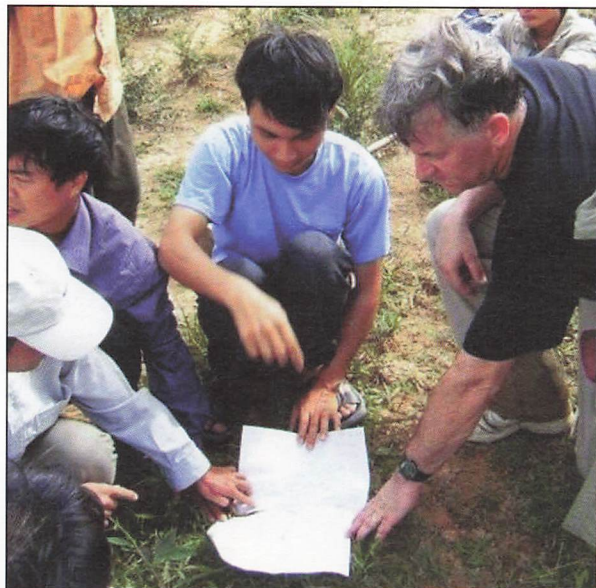
Me & Doc Topmiller in the Montagnard Hamlet of Lang Ta Tuc before Starting hike up 881S



Steve Orr standing on the SW slope of Hill 865. It was Steve's second visit to this hill; the last being April 14, 1968, the day 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines moved out to attack the NVA stronghold on nearby Hill 881N.



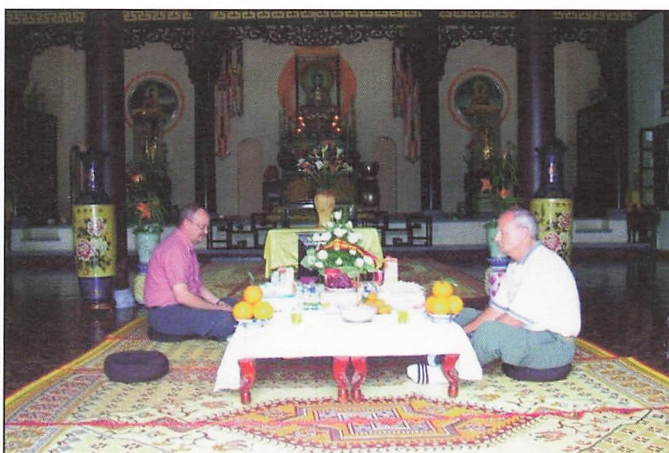
The group is just outside what was once the western gate into the Marine fortification on the western ridge of Hill 881S (often called Hill 881A and which I will refer to by its geographic name Hill 865 to avoid confusion by readers trying to understand the difference between Hills 881S, 881A and 881N). Tom Mahoney, was mortally wounded on this trail close to the spot where the people in this photo are standing. Two NVA soldiers immediately dragged his body off to the right and about eight meters down the draw. Because of an error in directions on a map drawn in late July 1968 for the USMC investigation of Tom's loss, we ended up holding his memorial service about 10-15 meters down the opposite (left) slope, near the last barren tree at the far left. Tom's exact whereabouts will remain a mystery



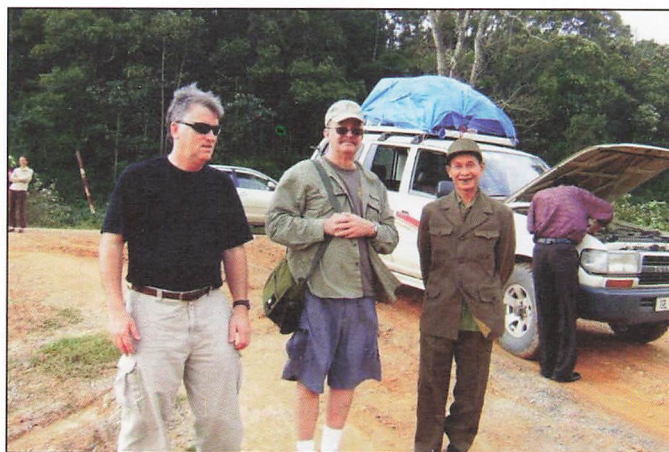
Thuan consulting the map he drew 3 days before in Hanoi



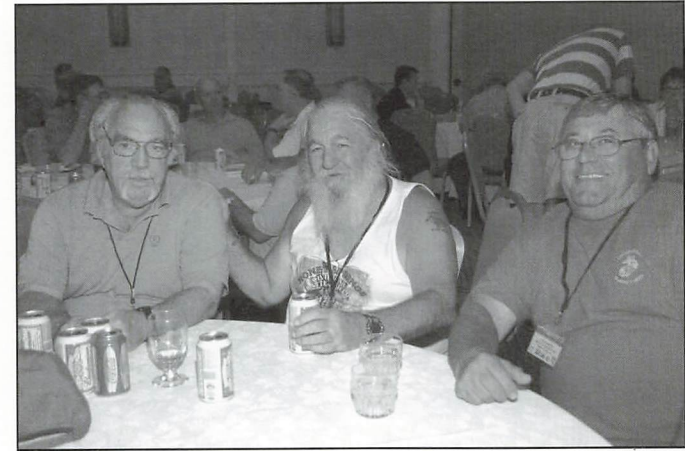
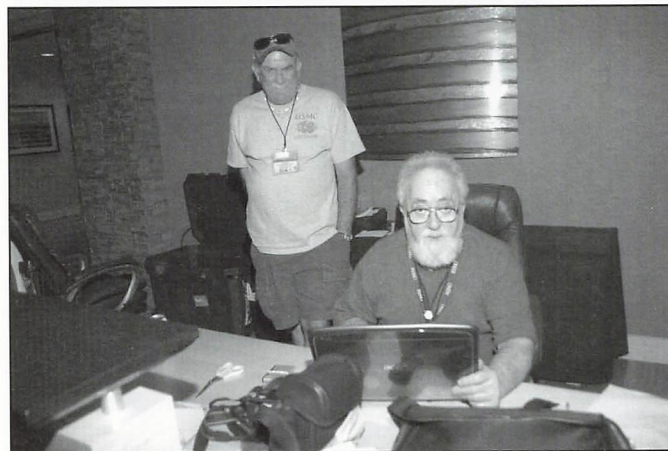
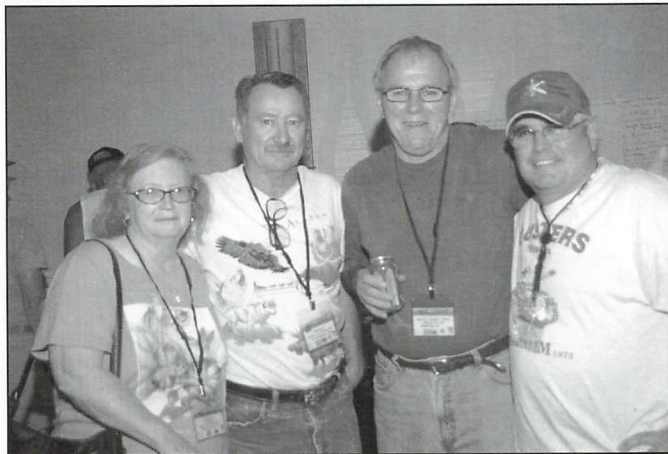
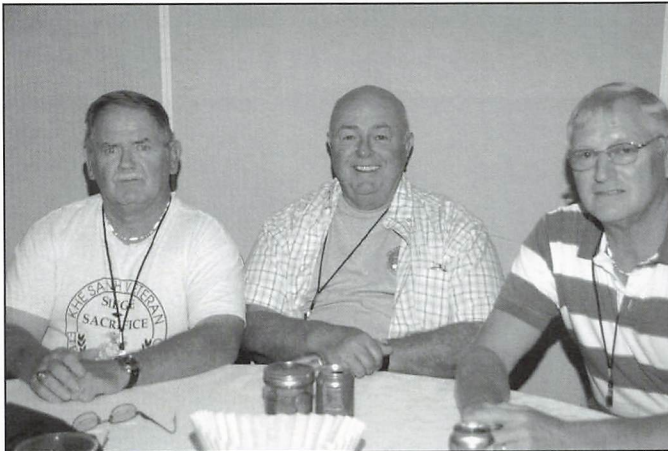
Thich Numinh at Mahoney's Altar Temple in Hue

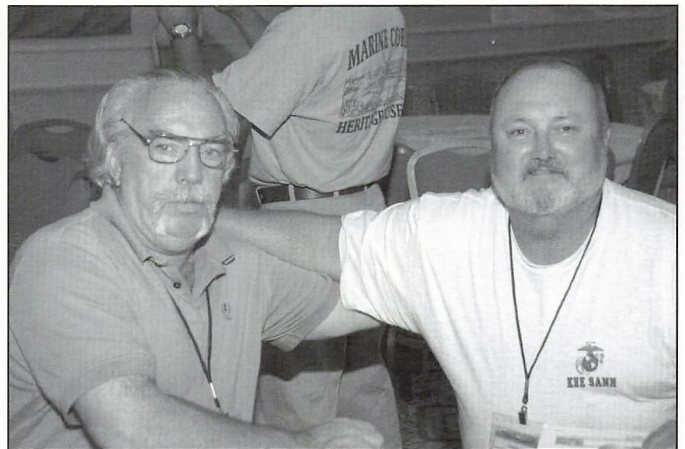
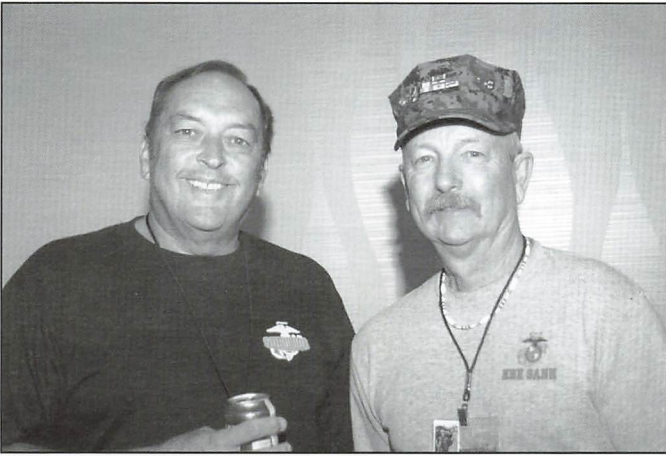


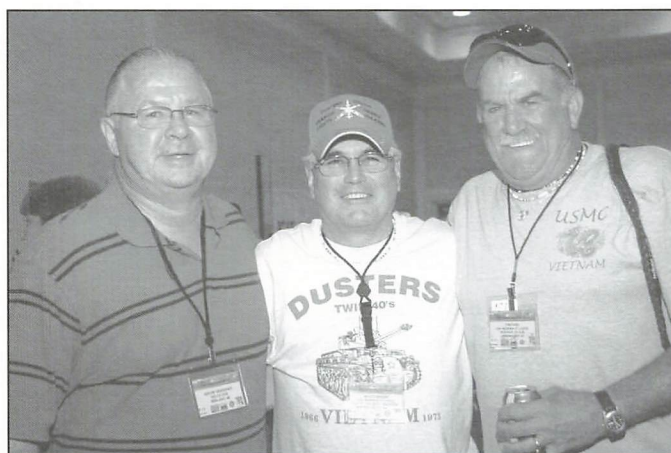
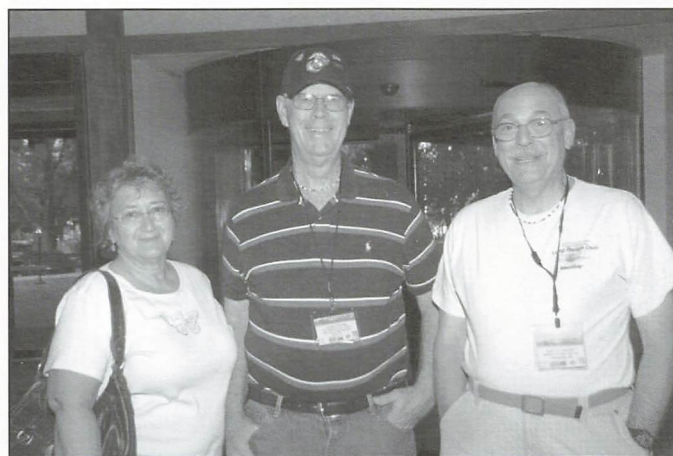
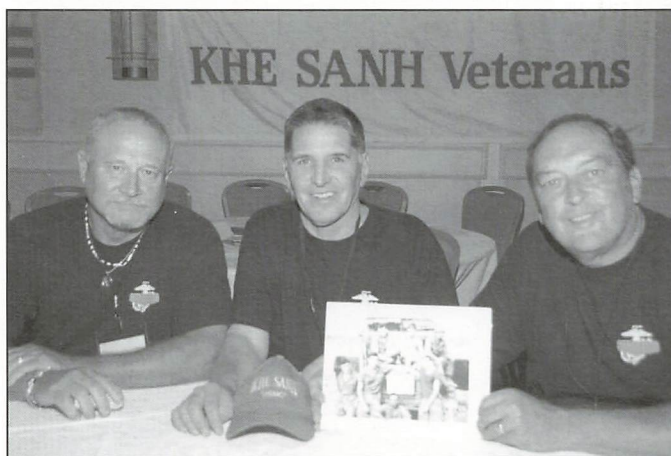
Doc Topmiller & Steve Orr at table of offerings prepared by the nuns to entice Tom's wandering soul into the Buddhist Temple where it would repose among "Friends" until his Mortal remains return to his family.

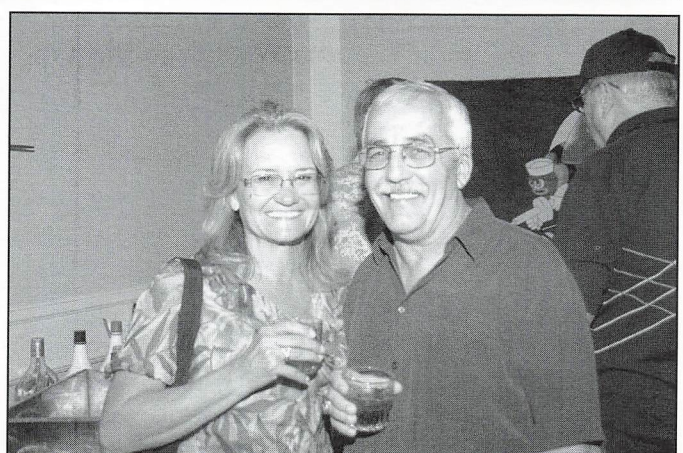
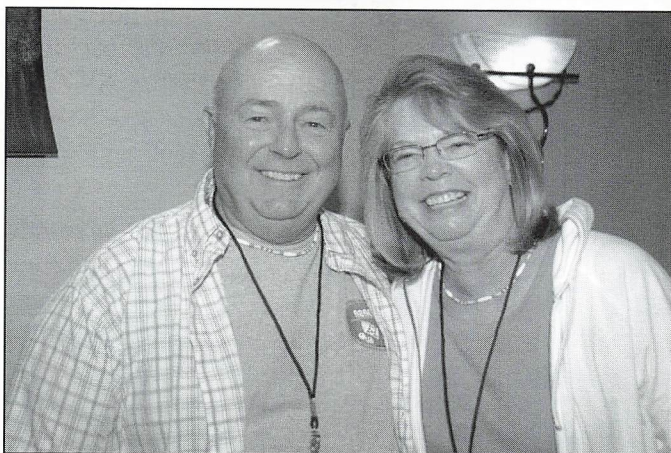
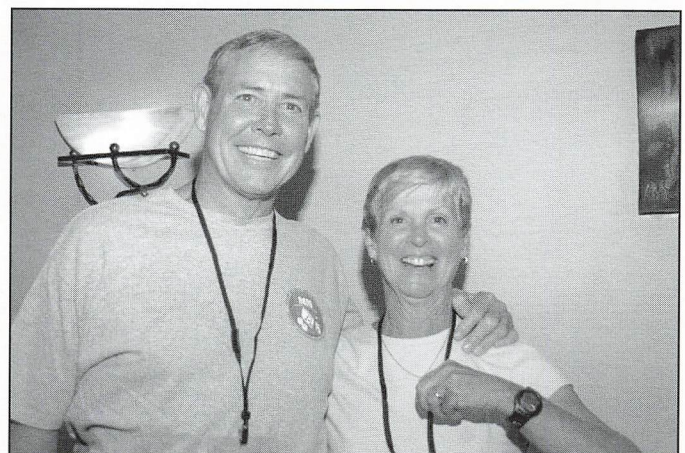
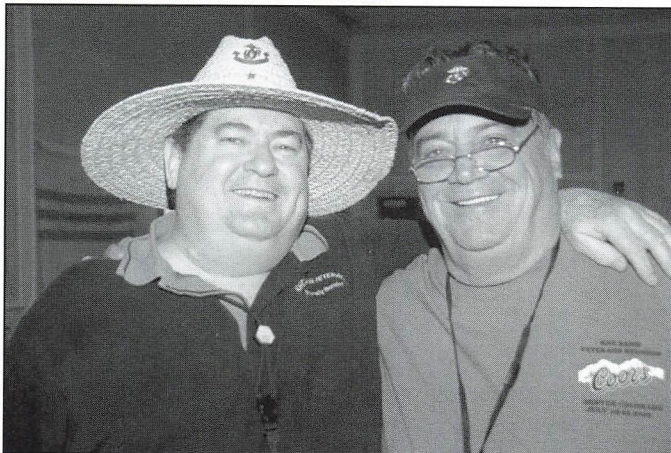
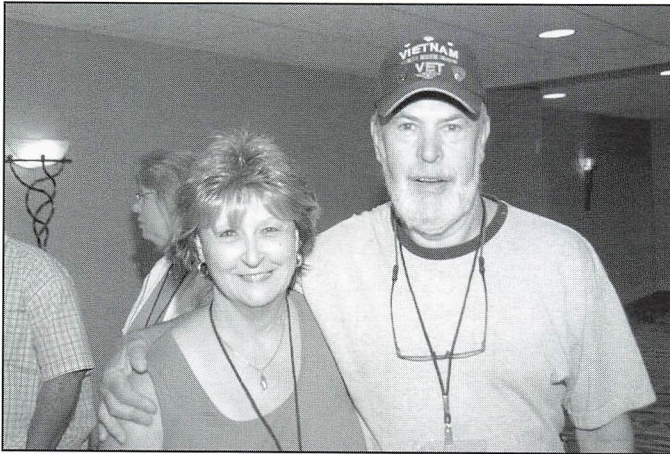


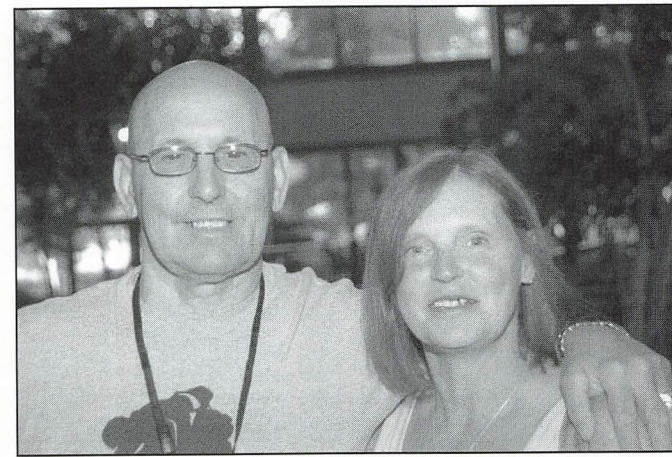
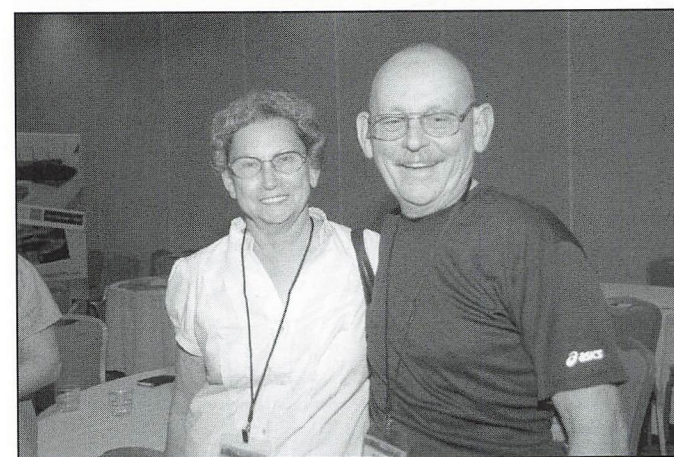
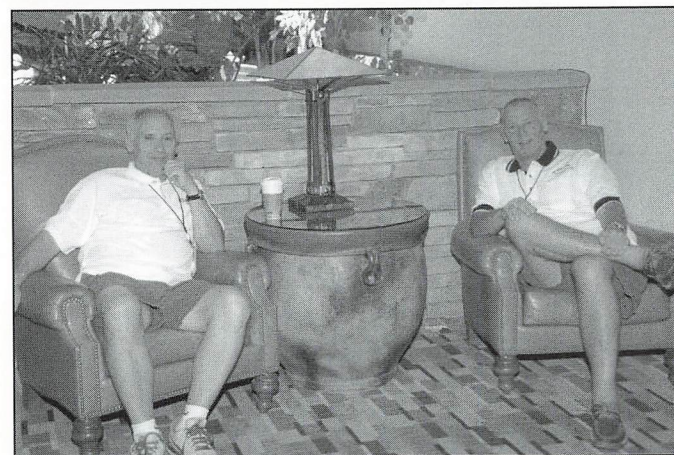
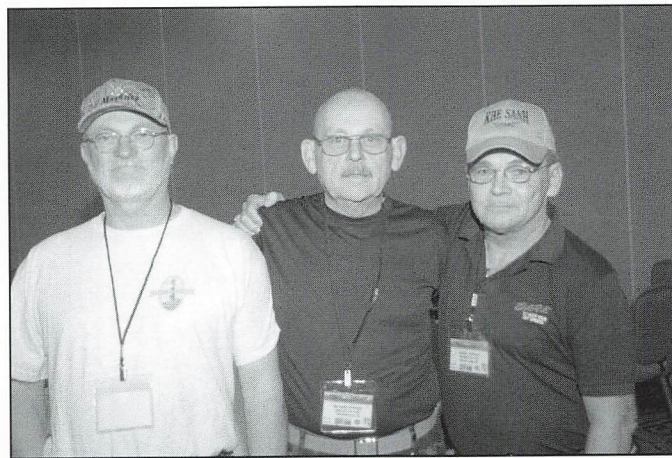
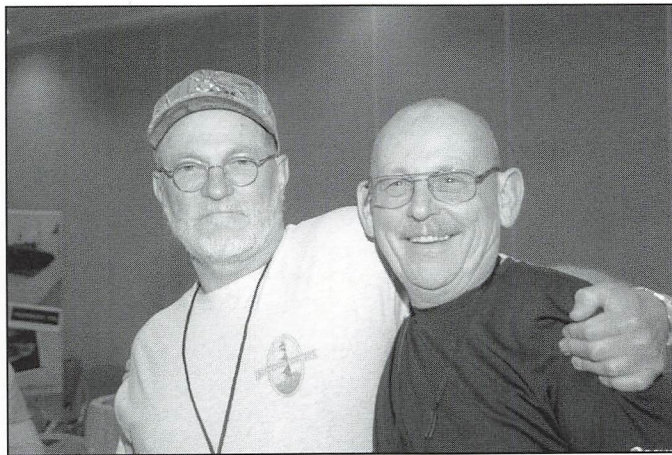
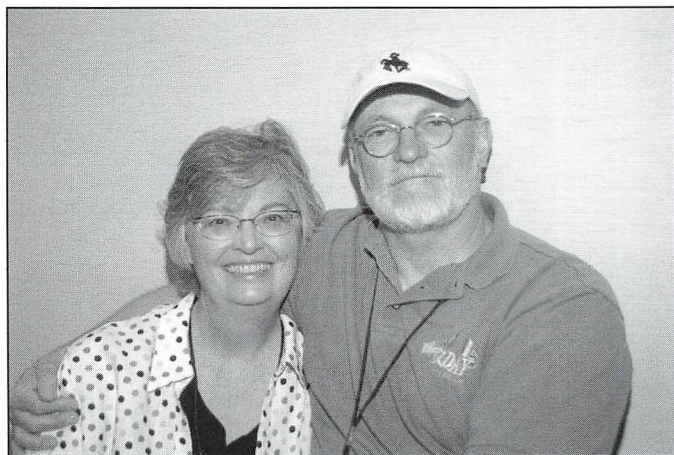
Me, Doc and a former NVA soldier taking a break on the road up to the base of Hill 881S on December 16, 2007. Thuan was taking him and his family to search for his dead brother who had been killed during the war around A Luoi, near the A Shau Valley, about 20 miles south of Khe Sanh. During the war, this NVA soldier fought against .

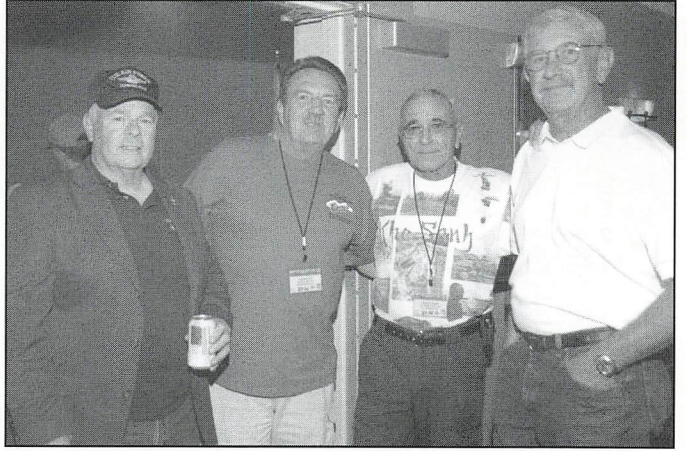
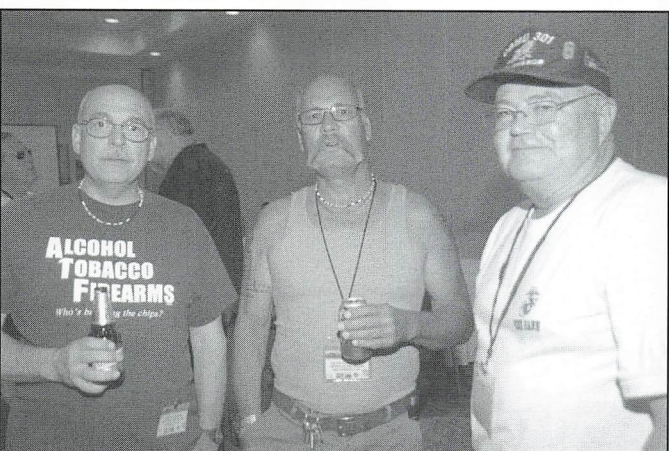
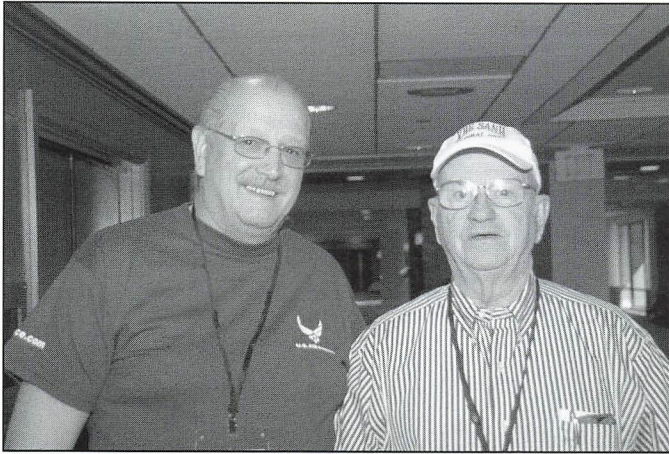


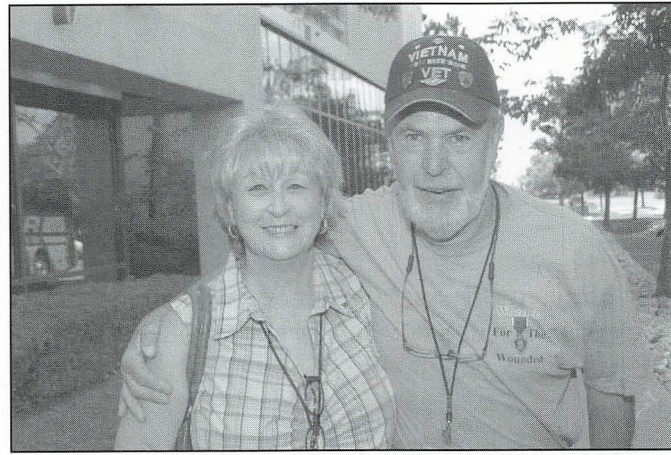
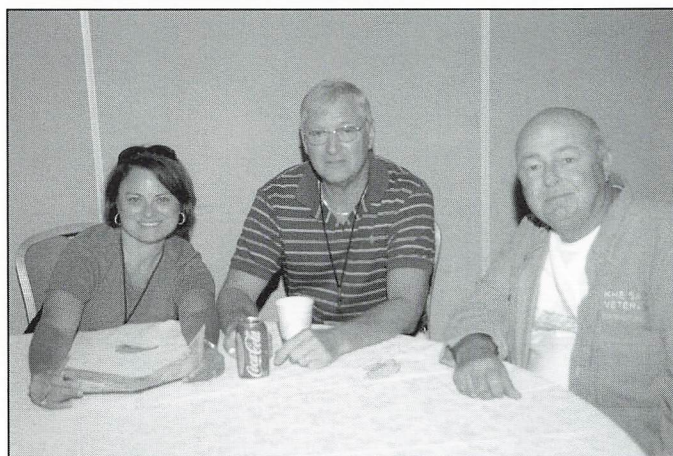


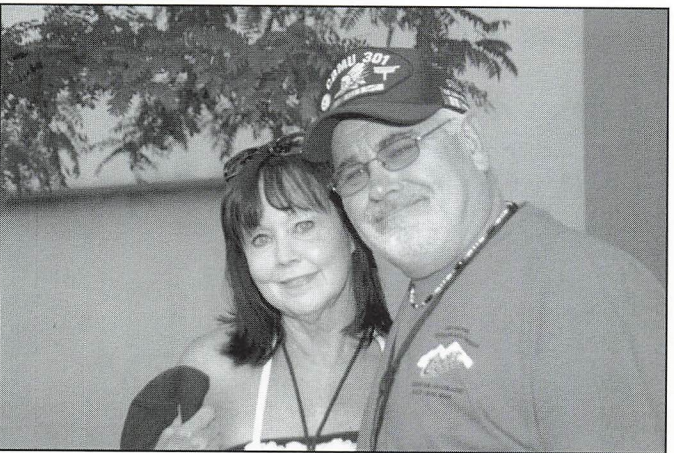
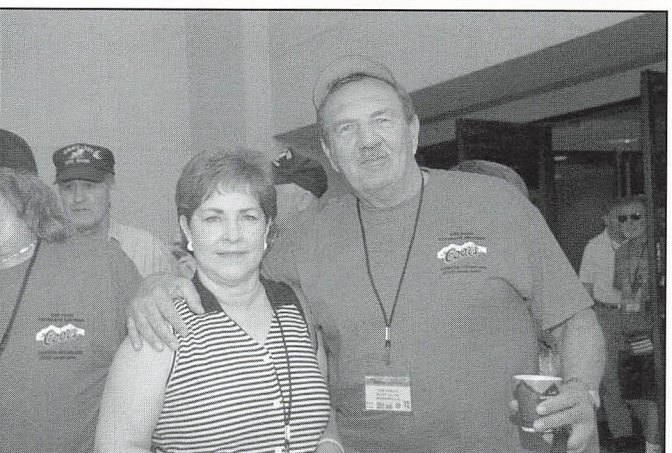
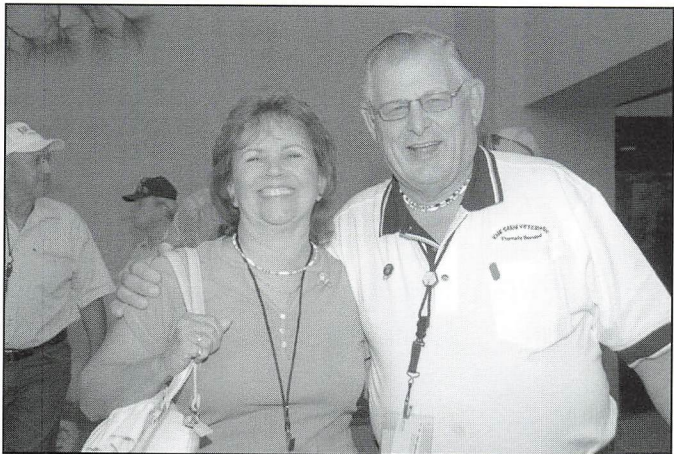
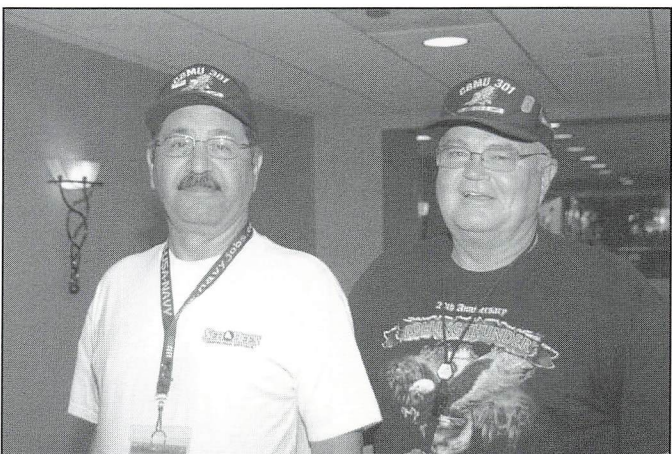


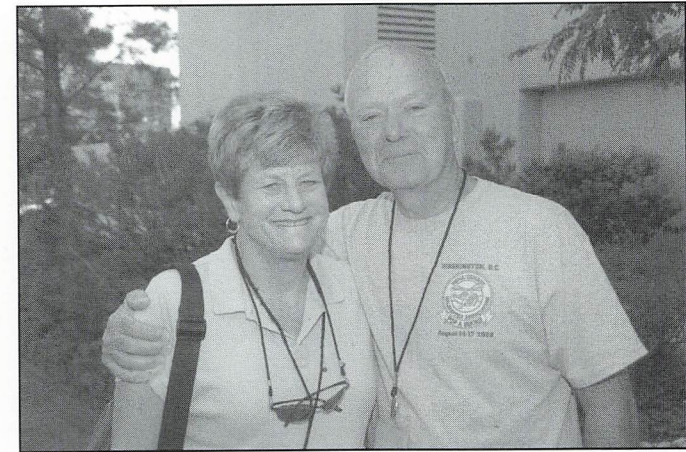
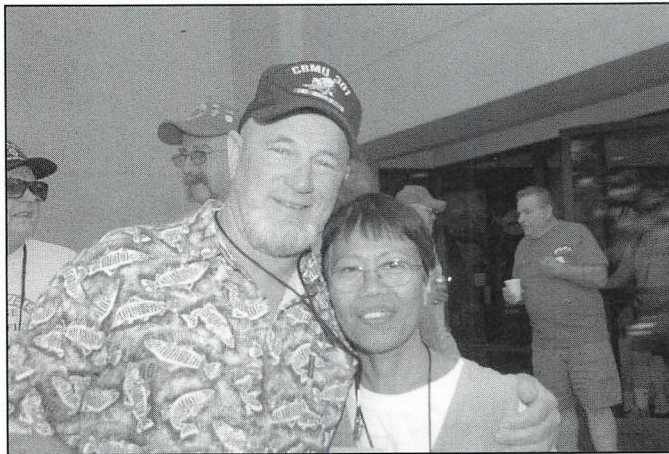
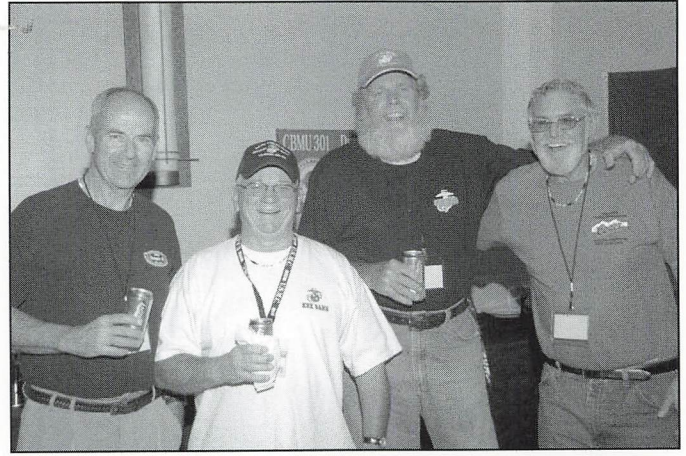


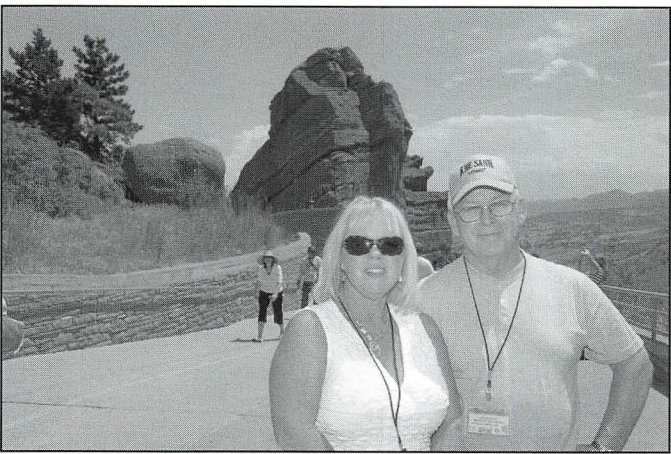
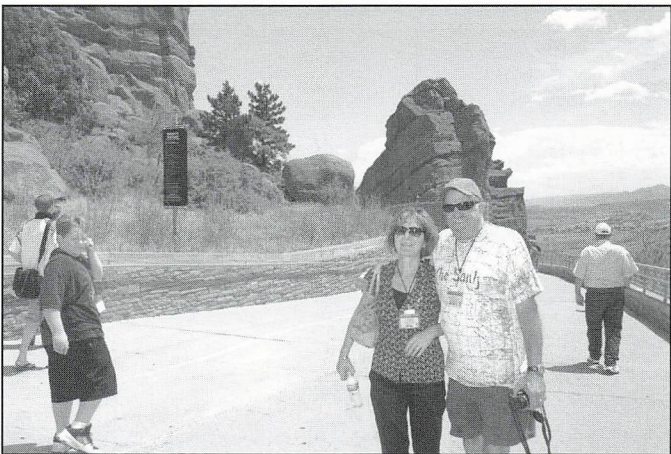
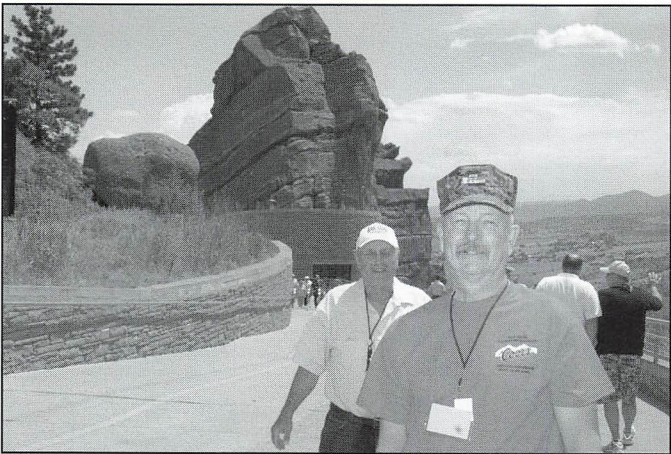
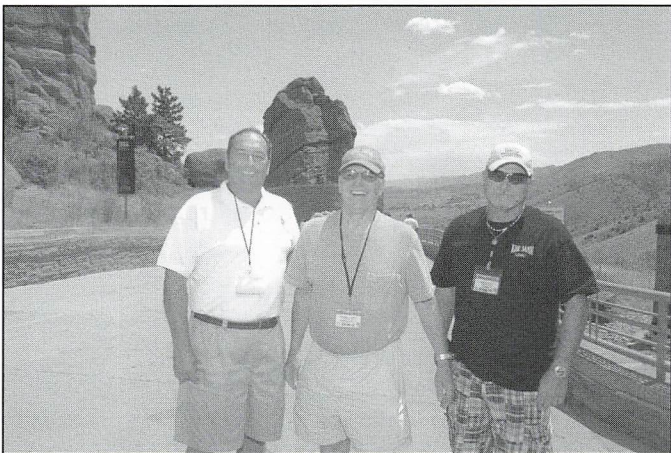
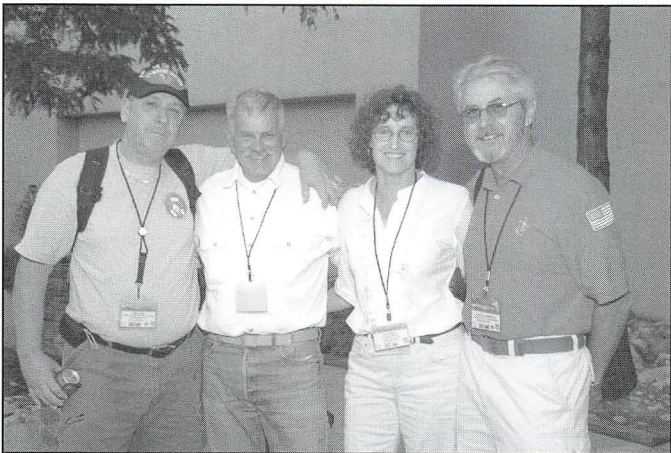


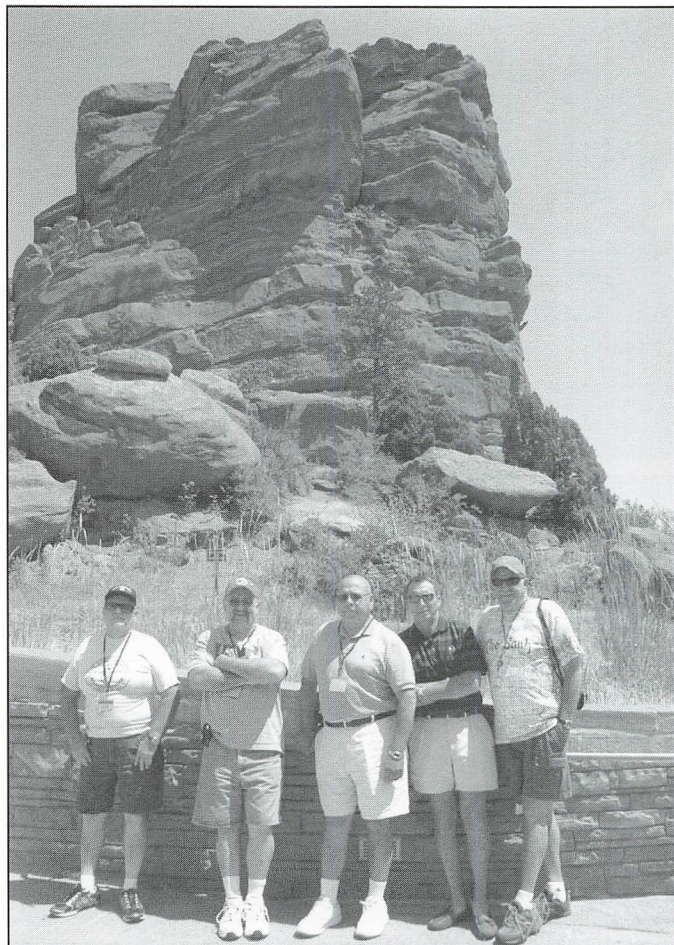


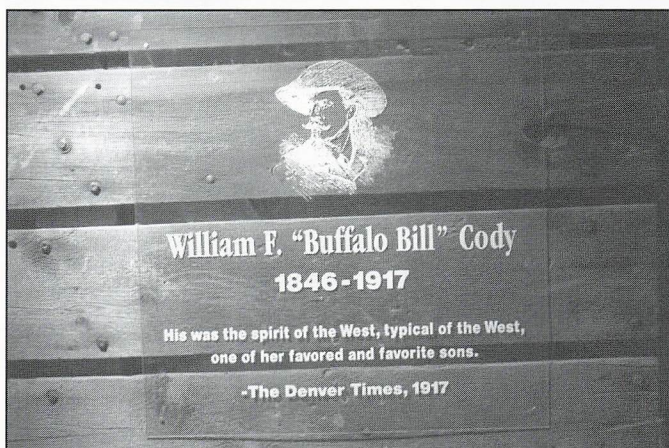
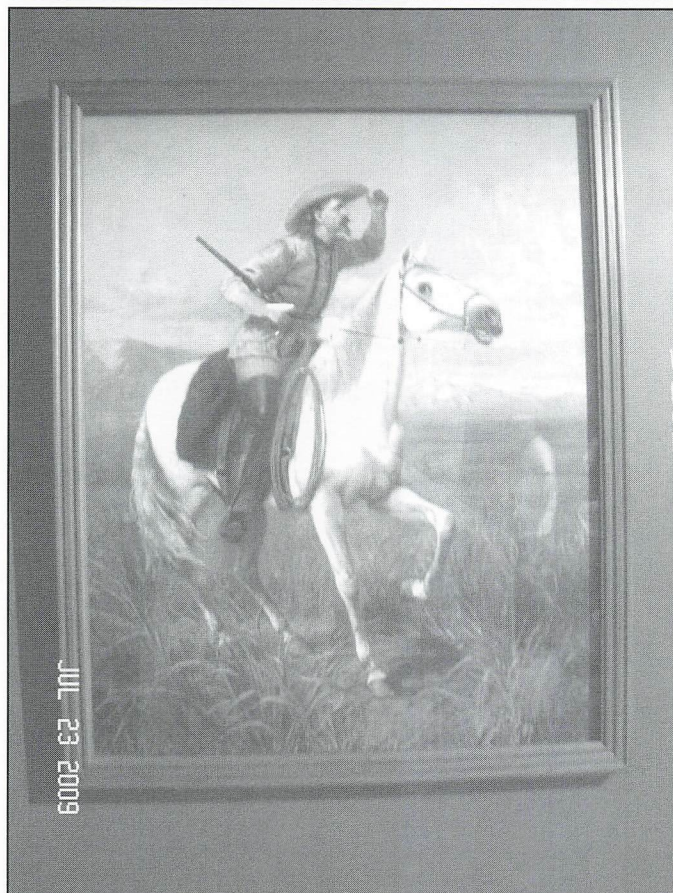
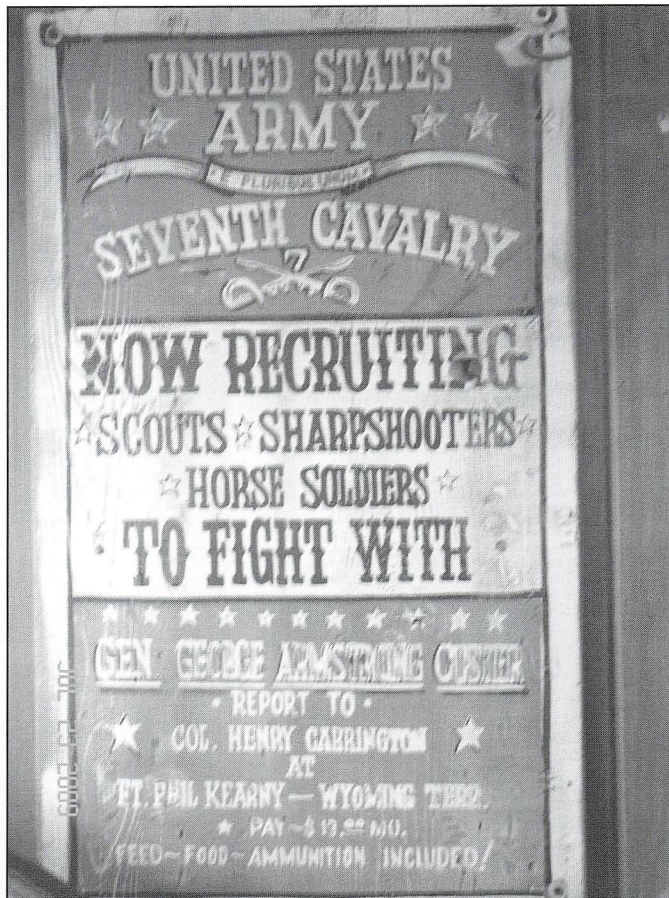


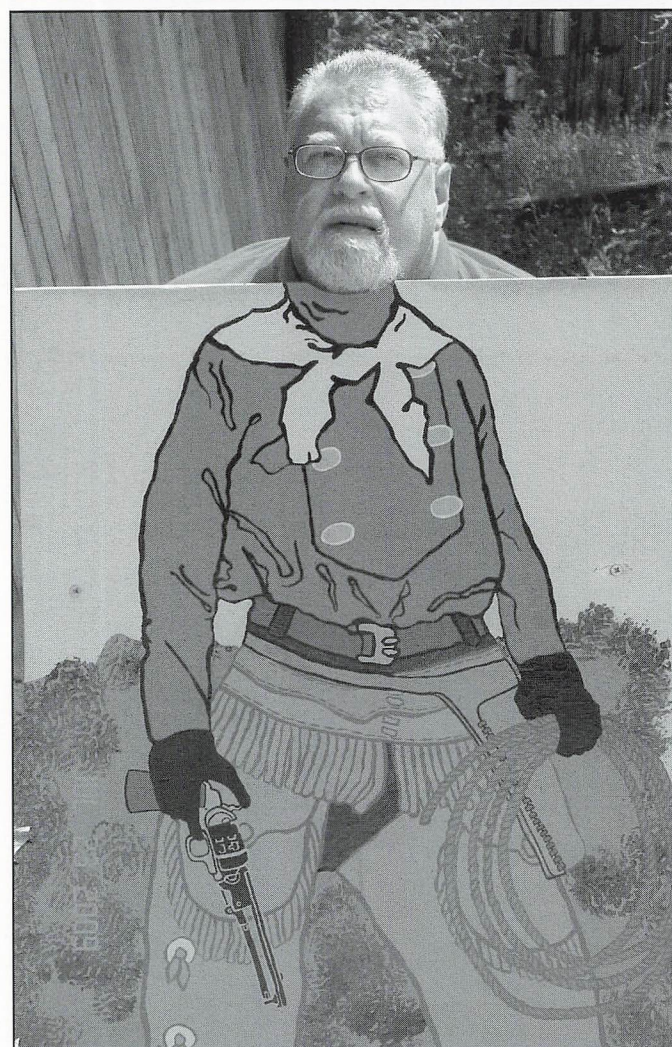


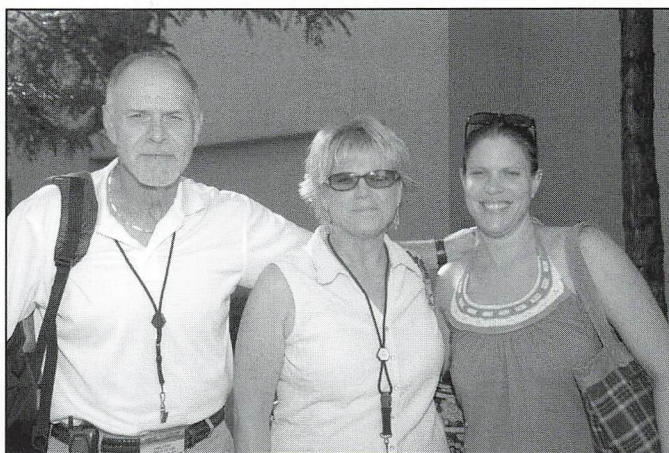
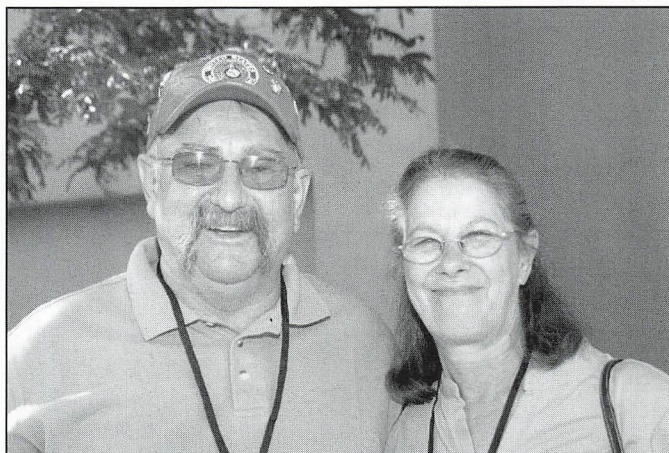
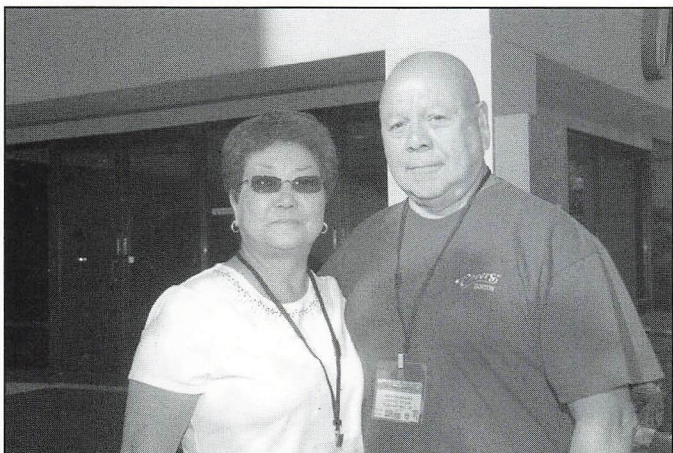


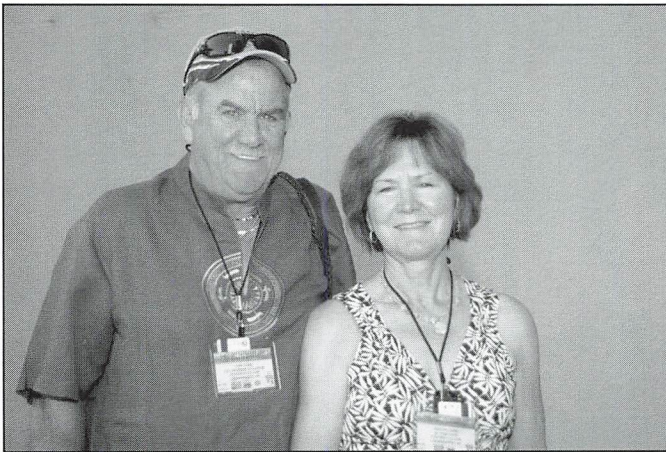
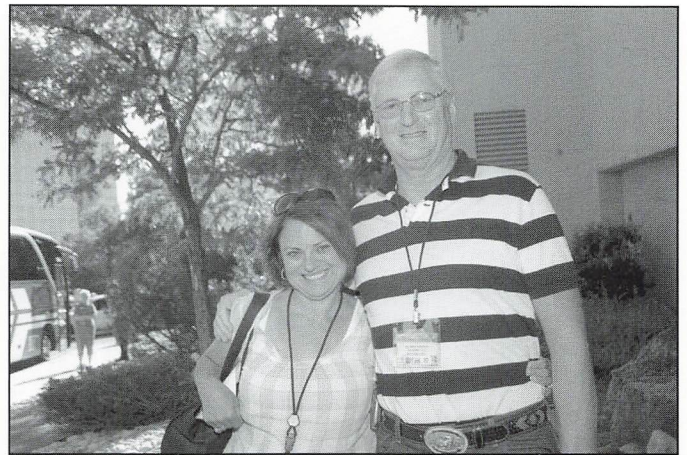


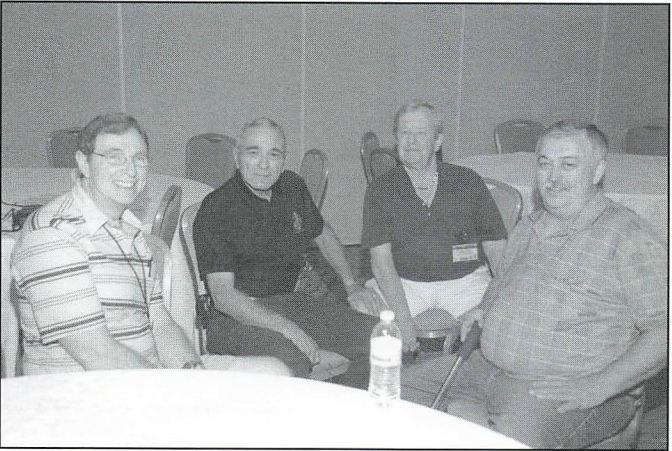
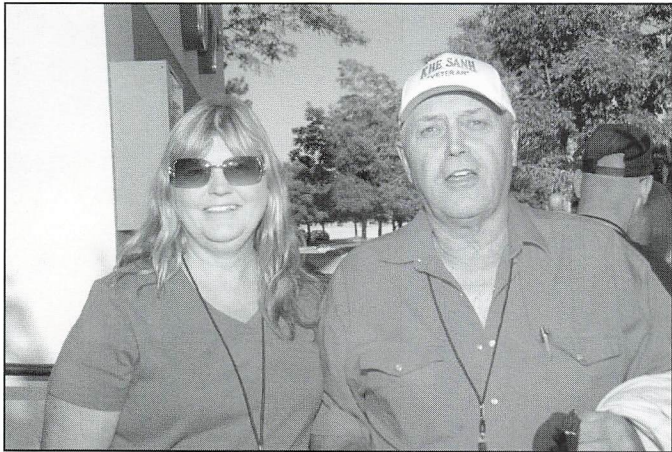


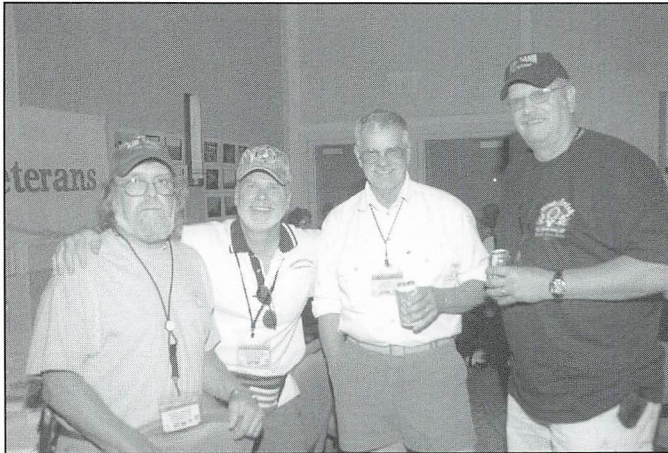


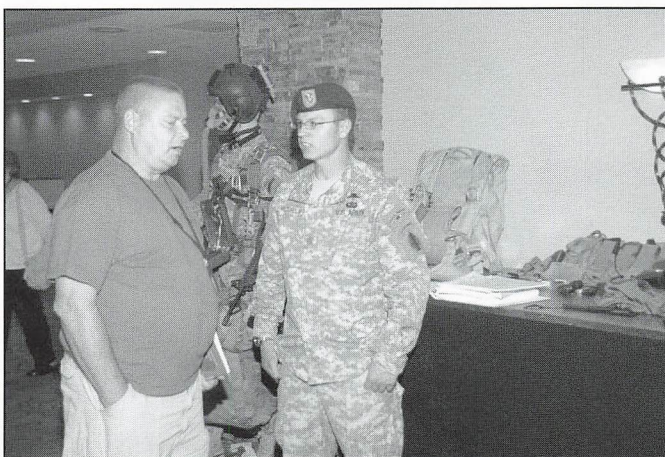
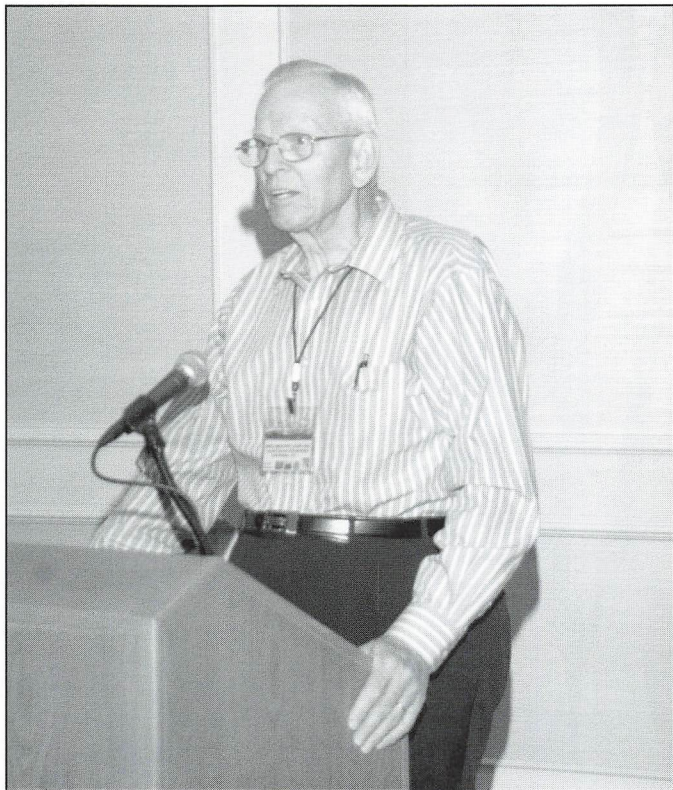




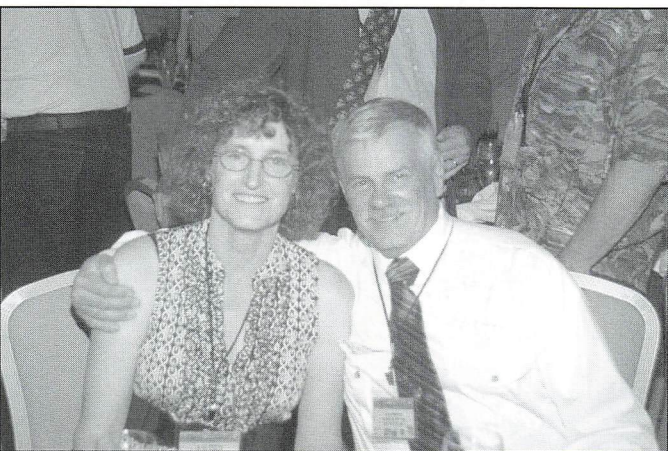
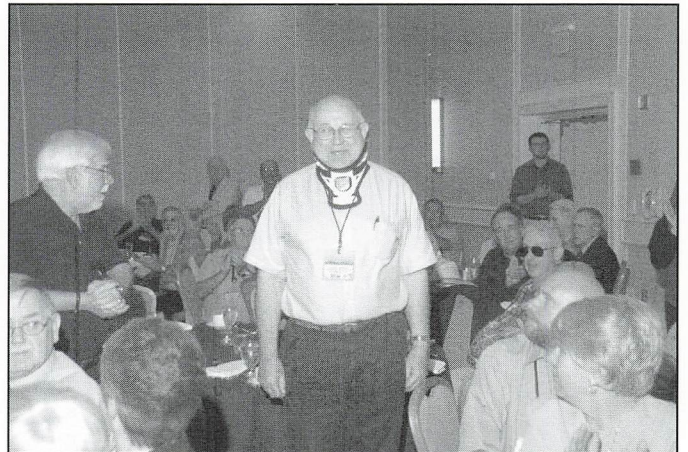


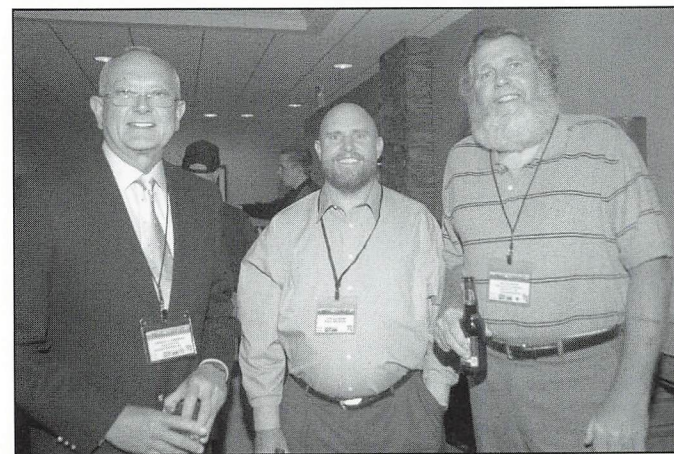
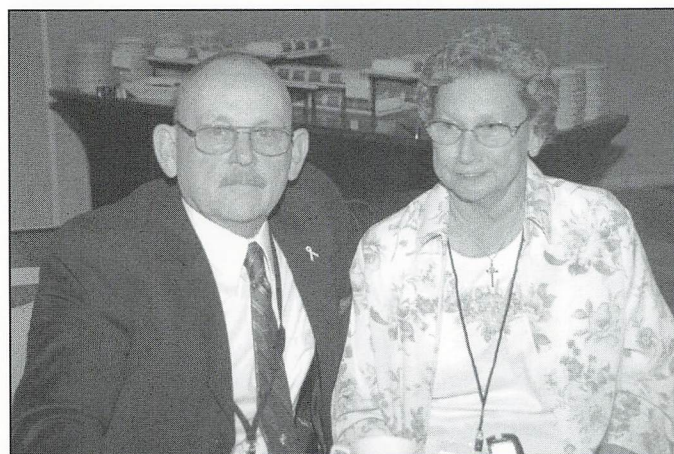


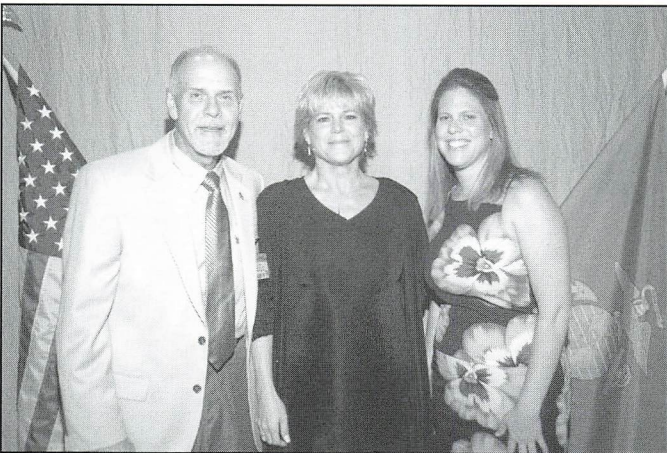


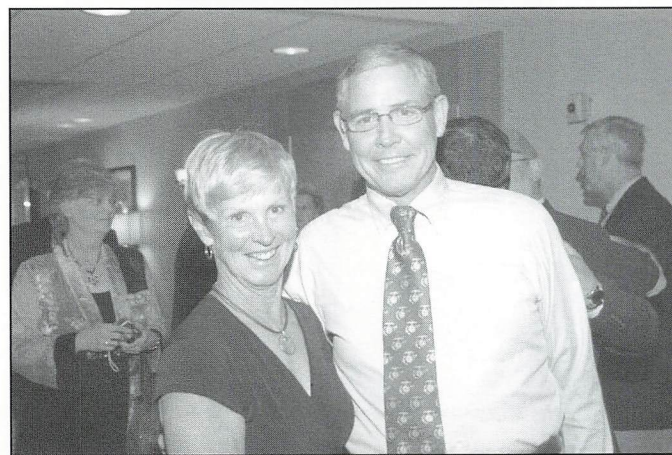
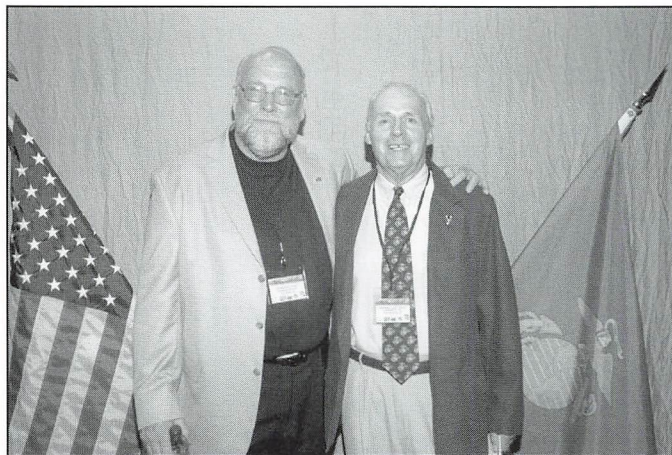


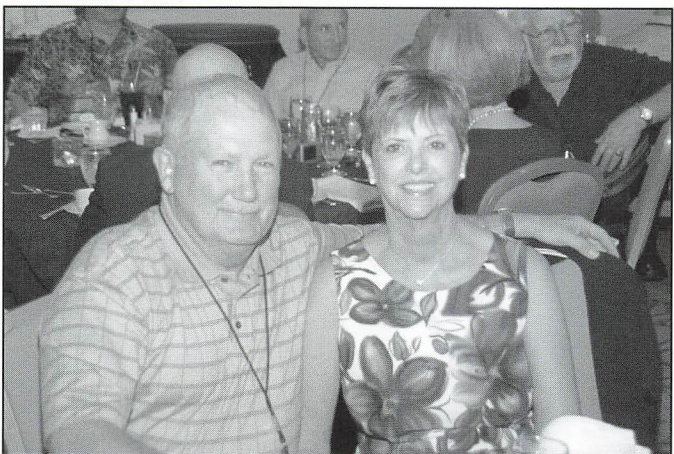
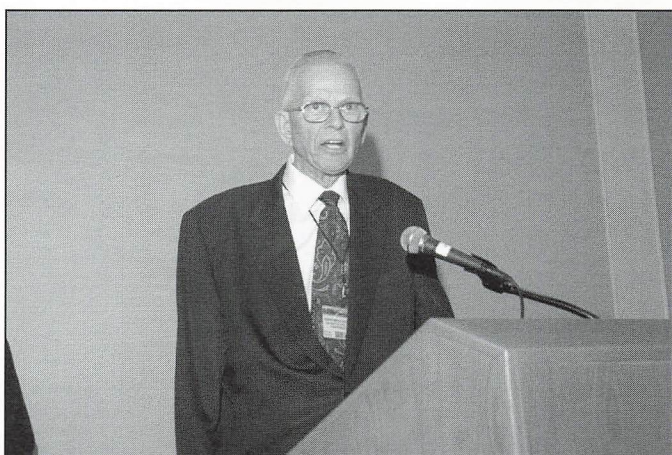


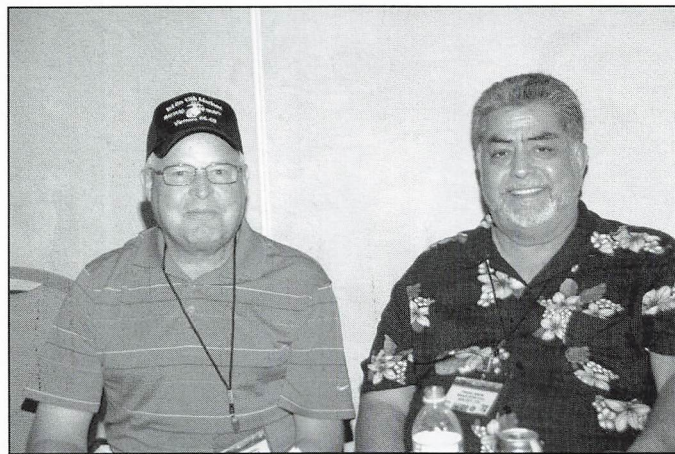
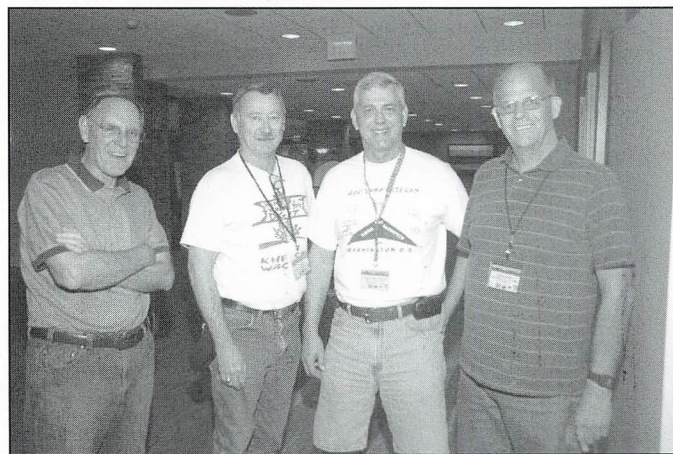
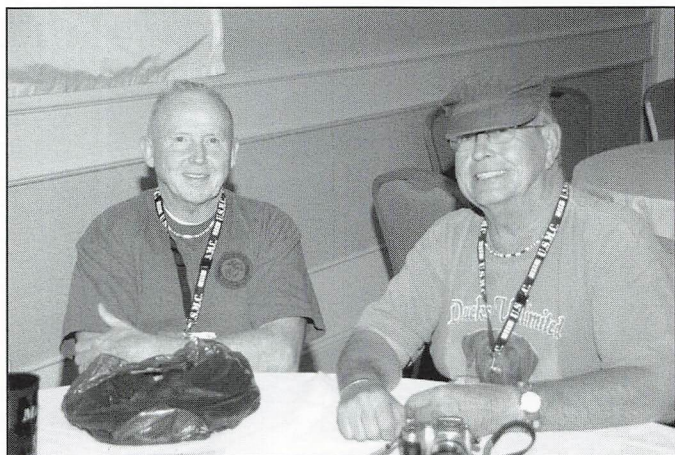
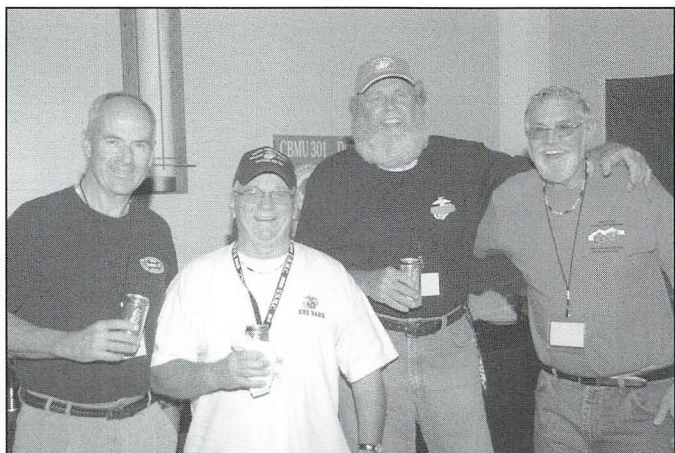












POETRY

**Hand to Soul**

The navy medic
raised
His hand to me,
bloody

And bent.
I left my door
gunner's

post to take it.
We joined as
brothers for

seconds for
life. All
those he had
held, helped

and saved flowed
from
his fingers
through mine

and into my
soul....forever.

I Guarded Your Body

I guarded
your body and
unloaded bags
of black
plastic from a
chopper. all
I wanted was
to help you move
on. the
ceiling
fan hovers over my
bed. did I do
my best?

Bob Allyn
315th Air Commandos
12th SOS 1968

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

Alleged Marine Faker Kept High Profile

September 22, 2009
Associated Press

SABILLASVILLE, Md. - On a sultry day in July 2008, Marine Sgt. David W. Budwah strode in his battle fatigues to the front of a picnic pavilion to tell three dozen young boys what he did during the war. With his clear gaze, rigid posture and muscled, tattooed arms, Budwah looked every inch the hero he claimed to be. He said he was on his second tour of duty in Afghanistan when a homemade grenade exploded, wounding his face and arm when he dove to shield a buddy from the blast.

"We're here to make sure of the freedom you have every day," Budwah told his audience at Camp West Mar, a wooded American Legion compound about 60 miles northwest of Washington.

But the Marines say Budwah is a liar, a fraud and a thief. They are court-martialing the 34-year-old Springhill, La., native, alleging he was never in Afghanistan, wasn't wounded and didn't earn the combat medals he wore - or the many privileges he enjoyed.

Budwah joined the Marines in October 1999 and spent nearly all of the next six years with a radio communications unit in Okinawa, Japan, according to the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Va., where Budwah has been stationed since February 2006.

Phony heroes aren't unusual. Thousands of complaints pour in annually to the FBI and civilian groups about impostors flaunting store-bought medals. Their very prevalence exposes something else - a nation so eager to embrace its war fighters, especially the wounded, that it sometimes fails to discern between the real heroes and the fakes.

"In every society in history, the warrior is glorified," said phony-hero debunker B.G. "Jug" Burkett of Plano, Texas. "The second you say you're a war-

rior who has performed heroically in combat, everybody perceives you differently."

Burkett, 65, a Vietnam veteran and author of the 1998 book, "Stolen Valor," said the urge to honor the wounded can cloud a person's judgment.

"I tell reporters that when you've got a guy who's vocal - 'Let me tell you how I won my Silver Star' - your antenna should go up," Burkett said. "The real guys typically don't talk about it."

Budwah's case is remarkable because he is an active-duty Marine facing military justice, not a civilian charged with wearing unearned medals. Of nearly 3,100 courts-martial last year in the four major armed services, only 27 were trials for wearing illegal decorations. Just two involved Marines.

Prosecutors say Budwah wore unauthorized medals and accepted VIP invitations to rock concerts, major-league baseball games, banquets and other events meant to fete wounded warriors.

He faked post-traumatic stress disorder in hopes of leaving service early and was sent to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, where he bluffed his way into 33 events from late July through November 2008, according to charges obtained by The Associated Press through an appeal of its Freedom of Information Act request.

Bethesda hospital spokesman Chris Walz said the staff tries to involve as many patients as possible in such activities, which range from free NFL tickets to speaking engagements like Budwah's at Camp West Mar.

The charges include making false official statements, malingering, misconduct, and larceny. Budwah faces up to 31 1/2 years in prison and a dishonorable discharge if convicted on all eight counts at a trial set for Oct. 20. at Quantico.

Budwah, who declined to enter a plea at his Aug. 5 arraignment, denied wrongdoing in a brief telephone interview in April. "The allegation is not even true," he said, declining to comment further.

Defense attorney Marine Capt. Kelly Repair and prosecutor Marine Capt. Thomas Liu also have de-

clined to comment.

Recent prosecutions of active-duty service members include Dontae L. Tazewell, a Navy hospital corpsman sentenced in January 2008 in Norfolk, Va., to two years in prison for wearing an unearned Purple Heart and other decorations. Tazewell falsely claimed he had rescued six Marines and recovered the bodies of four others in Iraq.

Prosecutors portrayed him as a failing sailor so desperate to remain in service that he fabricated the story.

Navy corpsman Robert White, got 45 days in the brig after pleading guilty in December at Great Lakes Naval Station, Ill., to wearing a Purple Heart he bought. A former girlfriend testified White obtained the medal after he was shunned by his peers for assaulting her, the Navy Times reported.

People fabricate military injuries for many reasons, including laziness, greed, sympathy and psychosis, said Loren Pankratz of Oregon Health & Science University, who wrote about PTSD impostors in his book, "Patients Who Deceive."

"A more common theme would be somebody who would represent sort of the antihero - the guy who's given his all and yet been abused and misunderstood," Pankratz said.

Burkett said others are simply con men.

Walter E. Boomer, who served as assistant commandant of the Marine Corps from 1992 to 1994, vaguely remembers meeting Budwah in November when they were guests at a Grand National Waterfowl Association benefit on Maryland's Eastern Shore. They shot at ducks, drank and dined with other VIPs and shotgun manufacturing executives.

"I accepted his story at face value," Boomer said. "Nothing that I recall would have set off alarm bells."

Budwah again managed his way to the center of attention at a September 2008 boxing event in Glen Burnie, Md. Organizer Scott Wagner said the highlight of the night was when he brought Budwah and dozens of other military hospital patients into the

ring for a standing ovation.

"Were they injured or not? I don't know and I really don't care. If half of them were injured, I still feel good about it," he said.

A year after Budwah's speech to the youngsters at the American Legion camp, Spencer Shoemaker sat stunned in the family's kitchen as he read the charges against his Marine idol for the first time.

Shoemaker, then 10, was so impressed he had his picture taken with Budwah and kept a treasured newspaper clipping about the visit. He said Budwah's talk made him want to join the Marines.

"Well, it's better that I know," the boy said after a long silence. "It did tear me down, but I'll still join the Marines."

His father Michael, a construction worker, seethed at the news about Budwah.

"He scammed America," Shoemaker said. "He scammed a kid."

BOOK REVIEW

ED NOTE: Jeremiah Workman was An honored guest at the Khe Sanh Veterans Washington DC Reunion, and I sincerely believe he finally came to grips with the demons that were troubling him, after being with our members and realizing he was not alone.

"SHADOW OF THE SWORD"

A MARINE'S JOURNEY OF WAR, HEROISM AND REDEMPTION

By Jeremiah Workman
with John R. Burning

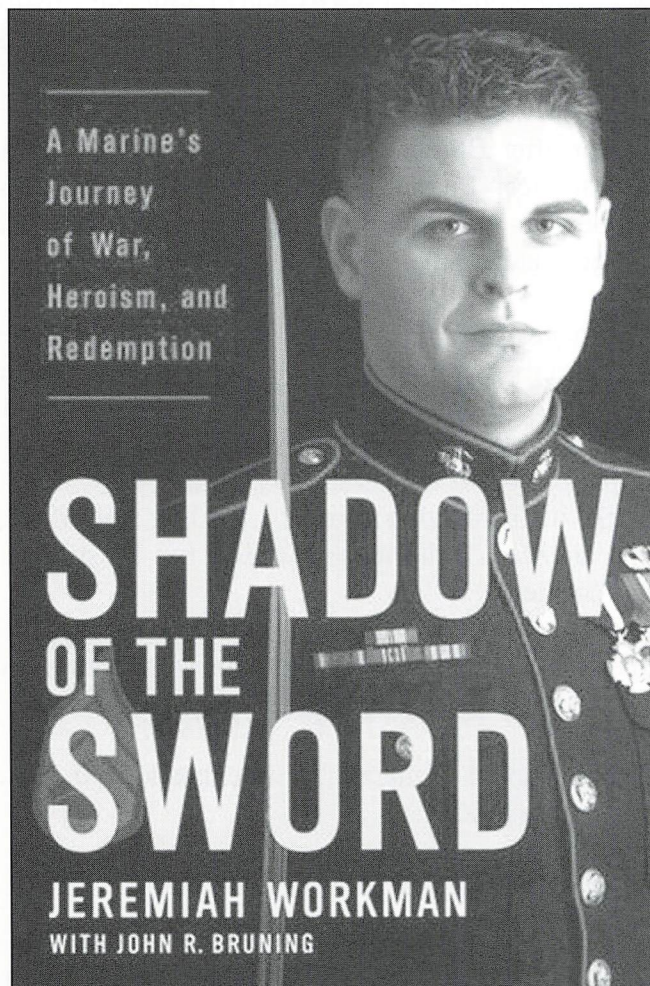
Presidio Press, \$26, 272 pages

REVIEWED BY JAMES C. ROBERTS

Marine Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Workman's "Shadow of the Sword" is the story of two battles.

The first battle was intense, but, compared to the second, relatively brief. On Dec. 23, 2004, during the Battle of Fallujah, then-Cpl. Workman's platoon

came upon a house occupied by 40 heavily armed insurgents.



Five of the Marines climbed the stairs to the second floor and were immediately pinned down by superior forces. Workman led his squad in three separate assaults to rescue the five trapped Marines, repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire during the hours-long battle. In his second assault, he was seriously wounded by an enemy grenade that left his arms and legs lacerated by shrapnel. Despite his wounds, Workman led a third attack. Here is how he describes his situation after hours of battling the insurgents:

"I feel myself falling down the stairs. I hit a step two or three above the landing, unable to breathe. A sudden onrush of smoke fills the landing. Everything flammable now burns with a hellish glow. It casts crazy shadows through the smoke. ... "Allah Akbar!" An insurgent's victory cry. Where's my weapon? I still can't breathe. My lungs feel compressed, like a balloon a child has squeezed hard and drained of all helium. ...

"I try to get to my feet, but I slip and fall. I have no balance. I'm reduced to crawling on my hands and knees. I tumble to the landing and sprawl chin-first into the broken glass under the window. ...

"The shouting fades until it merges with the sound of my heartbeat in my ear. ... Like a dream, a scream pierces the background noise. They're coming for you, Jeremiah. ... I try to breathe but my muscles refuse to work. I'm suffocating. The last of my strength starts to flow away. ... I'm left in darkness now, unable to even gasp for air ... Finish this. Get up there and die as you intended. Don't let them shoot you like a dog, on all fours ... my cammies are torn and blackened. My hands and arms are slick with blood. The hum of background noise becomes a staccato melody of gunfire. I listen to it, unable to find the will to move, unsure if I am even conscious. ... Am I dying?... Consciousness slips away like a ship in its death throes. A wave cascades over me. I feel loose, adrift. Free. I float away into the blackness."

Exhausted and only semi-coherent at this point, Workman was dragged from the building by a Marine officer. Workman's efforts contributed to the elimination of 24 jihadists, and his heroic actions saved two of the five trapped Marines, but three were killed.

In recognition of his heroic action, Cpl. Workman was awarded the Navy Cross, the nation's second highest award for valor.

Although celebrated in the Marine Corps, in his hometown and indeed nationally as a hero, Cpl. (now Sgt.) Workman was engaged in a second, desperate battle, however. The enemy this time was as lethal in its own corrosive way as the jihadists he had faced in Fallujah — post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is a battle that continues to this day, almost five years later.

Much of the book is a brutally honest account of Workman's daily struggle against this insidious disorder which, as the author reveals, has destroyed or crippled the lives of hundreds of thousands of combat veterans of America's wars.

In the aftermath of the battle of Fallujah, the specter of the three dead buddies he was unable to save

came to haunt Workman, causing first nightmares, then persistent insomnia, anxiety and depression.

He resorted to self medication with alcohol, then prescription drugs, including the powerful sedative Clonopin, that enabled him to sleep but left him groggy and dazed much of the time.

Workman became subject to wild mood swings when the Clonopin wore off, going from passivity to wild rages. He was relieved of his duties as a drill instructor and was ostracized by fellow Marines. His pregnant wife, traumatized and exasperated by the ordeal their marriage had become, left him.

Then, on a cross-country heroes bus tour with Vets for Freedom, Workman discovered that many of his fellow heroes were suffering from PTSD as well.

His feelings of isolation lessened, he sought counseling and focused on saving his marriage and becoming a dad to the son he had fathered. With enormous effort, he broke his dependence on Clonopin and gradually got control of his anger. He and his wife began talking on the phone with increasing frequency and they eventually confessed that they still loved each other.

The story has a happy ending, at least provisionally. Jeremiah and his wife, Jessica, have reunited and he dotes on his son, Devon. He has an associate college degree (the first in his family to achieve this) and hopes to have his bachelor's degree in two years.

Professionally, things are going well for Workman as well. He has been assigned to work with a program at the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Va., that treats injured Marines including those suffering from PTSD. He has become an expert on the disorder and the statistics he cites are astonishing.

Workman notes that 25,000 World War II veterans are still being treated for PTSD, 65 years after the war's end. Thirty percent of Korean War combat veterans continue to suffer from PTSD and almost 500,000 Vietnam War veterans — 30 percent of those who saw combat — were affected by PTSD. "For a shocking number of our veterans," Workman writes, "The wars they fought never ended. Never." The percentages for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are even worse. Workman reports that approxi-

mately 300,000 of the veterans of these conflicts suffer from PTSD or major depression while another 320,000 have suffered from traumatic brain injuries that often cause symptoms akin to those of PTSD.

The military had prepared to treat only 8,000 cases, however, rather than the almost 700,000 cases that actually resulted. As a result, the system was overwhelmed, with the VA reporting 600,000 unprocessed claims at one point. That situation, fortunately, has improved dramatically as a result of a policy change at the top. The military has dramatically expanded its treatment program for PTSD and aggressively encourages those who have the symptoms to seek treatment. The Marine Corps has adopted an official policy that no Marine suffering from PTSD will be denied a promotion because of it.

Still, Workman notes, because of the stigma of PTSD, an estimated 60 percent of PTSD sufferers decline to seek help, insisting on fighting "the shadow war" in solitude, in many cases self-medicating themselves with drugs and alcohol. Workman's mission is to battle this stigma by speaking about PTSD around the country — and by writing this book.

"They called me a hero, and yet, I needed help," he writes, hoping by his candor to encourage others suffering from PTSD to come out of the shadows. Despite his struggles, however, he refuses to succumb to victim status. He has no use for political correctness, is a staunch defender of the U.S. mission in Iraq and Afghanistan and is proud of his service in the Marine Corps and would do it again. The way to deal with PTSD, he shows, is to acknowledge the problem and confront it.

For Jeremiah Workman, the battle against PTSD continues on a daily basis, yet he is optimistic about the long-term outcome, made more determined by the love for his wife and son.

At the end of the book, he recalls kissing his infant son on the forehead and vowing, "I will never give up the fight, Devon. That's my promise to you."

Then he adds, "I follow my son into a deep and comforting sleep."

FAC Support 1968: Battle for Lang Vei - Khe Sanh Hill 64!

By Toby Rushforth (Charles P. Rushforth III)
20th TASS, 1967-1968

It was late last Century, in fact, late in 1999, that I first became aware of the Khe Sanh Veterans' Association. I couldn't imagine how I missed it over all those years. I had been a Forward Air Controller, flying O-2 aircraft out of Hue Citadel and Danang AB in 1967-68. That was a very vital time in my life, as it certainly was for all of us.

I looked forward to my first Khe Sanh Veterans Association Reunion in San Diego, during September, 2000. In preparation, I had a baseball cap embroidered with a FAC badge and my radio call signs. The idea was to help anyone who might have something in common, come up and talk. That way I wouldn't have to go around tapping everyone on the shoulder to introduce myself and explain how an AF FAC ended up at a mainly Marine and Army/Special Ops type Reunion. I was somewhat prepared, because I had traded some correspondence with Ray Stubbe about the Association and about combat operations in and around Khe Sanh. I had also read his book, "Valley of Decision," and recognized a number of operations in which I had taken part. So, the idea of maybe getting to talk to guys that were on the ground during the Siege, while I was overhead, was curious and exciting.

My first KSV Reunion:

After I had checked into the Hotel in San Diego, I prepared for the cocktail hour around the pool in the courtyard. As I passed a profusion of guys, with lots of red on hats and shirts, bearing unit designations, it was a very comfortable feeling (for a guy who was virtually a total stranger to all). As I strode out by the pool, I hadn't gone more than 25 steps before I heard someone yell "Covey!" Geez! Did that feel good. I turned to be greeted by Jim Speer who had been on the USAF Combat Control Team there at KS. He was well acquainted with a number of FACs that we knew mutually, who had been in and out of KS early in the Siege. It was a neat way to start out the Reunion, as I noted with some satisfaction, that my "hat trick" had worked. Jim had apparently been to previous Reunions and quickly began to fill me in.

As the conversation moved between people, places and events, I mentioned that I had been at Lang Vei the morning it was overrun. Jim quickly pointed out a fellow a couple of tables away and said he was there during the battle. I thanked Jim and quickly moved over to stand next to this fellow who was engaged in conversation with a couple others. There was a certain intensity, yet off-handedness about him. I must have moved in such a way that he got a hint I was waiting to talk with him. He briefly paused and looked up at me. I asked if he had been at Lang Vei when it was overrun. He looked at me with both surprise and curiosity and said, "Why yes I was." I explained that I was an AF Forward Air Controller who had been there that morning after the North Vietnamese had overrun the camp. As we ran through a quick Battle chronology of that fateful morning of 7 February, 1968, he talked about how he had evaded during the battle, and showed up later in the PM after much of the process of evacuating survivors was about concluded. At that point, I blurted out: "Wait a minute, you aren't 'Spunky Hanson 28 Bravo' are you?" He looked startled and said "yes I am." I paused, then said "we had assumed you were killed by the North Vietnamese!" It's hard to explain, but this turned into quite an emotional moment. Who knows how and where that wells up from? Let's go back to recount events long past.

My FAC perspective of the Battle for Lang Vei:

I had been in country and at Danang AB for a few months and by that time, was feeling pretty confident about myself as a Forward Air Controller. By that I mean I had not only survived getting shot at pretty regularly, but managed to live through some episodes of "the stupids" in which I was lucky not to have killed myself. Early in the tour, I sometimes even wondered if I wasn't as much a threat to friend as to foe. In any event, at this point, Captain Rushforth was more of a steely-eyed predator (in his own mind).

In January '68, along with other FACs, I was shifted from the "Tally Ho" mission, above the DMZ to "Operation Niagra" over Khe Sanh and its approaches. As we became better acquainted with our new mission area, it was clear that something unusual was in the offing. Signs of enemy activity on

the approaches from the North and West were particularly revealing.

On the night of 25 January, the Laotian community at Ban Houaysan (otherwise called "Elephant") was overrun [several miles West of Lang Vei, along Route 9]. Among the intelligence reported by us FACs was that there were tracked vehicle impressions all along Route 9, both East and West of "Elephant." In fact, it was later reported by a FAC that we had killed a tank during that battle (however, the tank quickly disappeared). After the battle, the Laotians and their Vietnamese (ARVN) Ranger liaison retreated to the Special Forces Camp at Lang Vei.

7 February, 1968: Lang Vei:

This account of happenings on 7 and 8 February, 1968 is from my diary and reflects the facts as I knew them and my feelings at the moment.

Well! Gerry Harrington and John Buckles had their work cut out for them last night. Lang Vei was being overrun by a large enemy force supported by at least 9 tanks. They said it was an unbelievable sight, walls of tracers, explosions, what looked like flame throwers, yelling on the radios and tanks rolling right over the tops of friendly bunkers. They had difficulty sorting out targets on the ground, but said they did have a B-57 drop some what we called "funny bombs" (a frag and hot chemical explosive pattern) on tanks breaching the Camp's Southwestern perimeter. They thought the tanks were disabled by that strike?

I got up about 0500. After a fairly inclusive Intelligence briefing on what little was known about the battle, I moved quickly for the flight line and finished the preflight. Aircraft # 396 was in good shape. It had a standard wing load, two pods of 2.75" white phosphorous rockets, a total of 14. The sense of urgency began to grow as I made the radio calls and taxied for takeoff at Danang. The weather was not that good. I'd have to climb on instruments to get on top and cruise to the Khe Sanh area, then figure out how to get under the clouds and over to Lang Vei. I took off at 0710. After about 40 anxious minutes enroute I used heading time and distance to get down through the clouds West of Lang Vei. Cloud bases were ragged at about 1000 feet above

the terrain. Following Route 9 back to the East, I approached the Camp, and checked in with "Covey 688," a FAC from Ubon, Thailand who was currently in charge of air operations over the battle area. I could see his O-2 ahead, between cloud layers (forming a sort of fishbowl), circling over patches of occasional trees and brush, which were intermittently visible. Columns of smoke drifted up through the low clouds that were virtually settled on the Camp and the rolling terrain around it. It was about 0800 as I fell into loose trail formation with 688 to listen and try to figure out what was happening. I would be taking over shortly.

Our Special Ops personnel, call sign "Spunky Hanson," were holed up in their Tactical Operations Center (TOC). They were talking to 688 via FM radio. The NVA were swarming all over the TOC, throwing satchel charges, plus smoke and frag grenades down the ventilation shafts and any place they could find access. Spunky Hanson 15A and some CIDG, who had stormed the Camp to rescue the troops, were pinned down by machine gun fire. 688 told them to withdraw so he could bring in some A-1, Skyraiders (Canasta Flight) with lots of guns and ordnance to get the NVA off the TOC. He had the A-1s hold while he dove his O-2 through a "sucker hole" to see if the A-1s could work under these conditions. The terrain was actually in and out of the clouds, an extremely treacherous operation to attempt. I virtually held my breath waiting for him to pop up through the clouds, all the while fearing a flash and column of black smoke would appear instead.

After what seemed like forever, his O-2 popped up through the clouds and he began to talk with the A-1s. It was very risky. They would be in and out of the clouds and in the tree-tops. All the Canasta pilots (4) agreed to give it a try. They formed a "daisy chain" behind 688 and one after the other, dove through the hole in the clouds to see if 688 could lead them close enough to engage the NVA on the TOC. After a short time 688 came back up through the cloud deck. Now we had four A-1s in a tree-top free for all, ripping up the landscape, mainly with their guns, strafing the TOC and area around it. I again held my breath, while from an altitude of about 800 feet, except for the drone of my engines things seemed ghostly quiet. Time was suspended. Again, the tell-tale smoke of an air ground disaster

was almost an expectation. When the A-1s came back above the clouds, time started again.

Spunky Hanson, in a quiet tone, said they were apparently successful, as the enemy activity on the TOC had ceased, at least temporarily. I was greatly relieved that the Canasta flight got the job done and were all still flying. It was an amazing feat of airmanship. The A-1 guys were all balls. It was not hard to envision those four A-1s ripping through the treetops, in and out of the cloud bases, high-G turns at treetop level, firing away at the TOC and somehow not hitting each other.

By now, the inside of my cockpit windows was getting pretty well covered with my grease pencil notes about what was going on and who all the players were. That was a pretty standard practice for FACs, trying to keep track of what is happening on the ground while managing all aspects of the air support.

The clouds were beginning to break up, revealing much of the Camp. The TOC had a tank on its side adjacent to it, and the trail/road coming up from the river, down by Route 9 (at the Laos border) had two tanks knocked out at about the Camp perimeter. I took pictures of the Camp and the tanks with my Intel Nikon Telephoto. At about this point, 688 had an engine acting up and had to depart for home. I took over the air operation. The A-1s, bless 'em, were still able to loiter and had napalm and 250/500 lb. bombs remaining.

Meanwhile, we had been trying to coordinate a rescue effort from Khe Sanh. First word was that a ground team would not be sent, because the NVA had certainly set up ambushes at advantageous points along the way. It was also stated that a Helo-Assault Evacuation would not be attempted for awhile due to weather conditions. As disappointing as this was to us, it made our course of action clear. We had to conduct a holding action to keep the NVA away from the TOC until help arrived. Perhaps Spunky Hanson 15A and the local troops could fight their way in?

It wasn't long before Spunky Hanson (SH) came up on "Fox Mike" (FM) again, relating that the NVA were back. "They're all over us out there. Give 'em everything you've got," SH said. At this point, he

seemed calm and almost resigned to his fate. Initially the fighters were pressing so hard to be effective that after release, the bombs didn't even have time to arm and hit the ground as duds. In one case that may have saved us an A-1. I had aligned myself, coming right "down the chute" behind him on his bomb run. His bomb release was very close to the ground, a dud, which kicked up the dirt. The dirt then briefly swirled behind as the A-1 flew through the dirt plume. If it had gone off, it might have nailed him. The A-1 pilots quickly adjusted and managed to keep the NVA occupied with their remaining ordnance.

I asked SH if they could come out and make a run for it. "We've got badly wounded people down here that can't move, some may even be dead. We're not coming out until you come and get us." We periodically continued our calls for reinforcements and hoped for a helo evacuation task force. It wasn't happening and we were hearing words like it wasn't going to happen for awhile. I couldn't understand what the problem was? It was frustrating!

Meanwhile, Spunky Hanson 15A was having a hell of a time getting the CIDG and Elephant people to move against that machine gun and mortar fire. SH15A, a Sgt Ashley, went back to get a 37MM Recoilless Rifle to bring fires upon the NVA positions. He subsequently knocked out at least two of the NVA gun positions with the weapon. Even then, he and the Bru / Elephant troops were again driven back. At about this time, I noted a green smoke on the Northeast perimeter of the Camp. Even from 500 ft., I couldn't determine its origin. Was it a friendly trying to let me know he was there? Was it the NVA trying to spoof me so I wouldn't bomb him/them? I never did figure that one out, but elected not to bomb that area unless I determined it to be the enemy, or absolutely had to.

Hobo 01 and 02 then arrived to replace the Canasta Flight. I had them work on the West side of the compound, around the TOC with CBU (cluster bombs), napalm and strafe. They did a terrific job, but the NVA were still not ready to back off.

At this point, my own front engine overheated, coughing and sputtering from being run at full throttle for hours. That really caught me in the gut. I could just see a forced landing among the NVA

down there, after beating them up all morning. Not good!

Major John Seats, another Covey FAC (Bruce Goodhue I believe) took over for me and continued the holding action, while waiting for the reinforcements we assumed would be coming sometime soon. The engine continued to shudder and sputter, but held together well enough to climb out of the area enroute to Danang.

The landing was uneventful, and I proceeded directly to the Intelligence debriefing room where I was told to call directly to Headquarters 7th Air Force in Saigon. A Colonel answered the phone and began the debriefing. When I mentioned tanks, he fired off and as much as called Captain Rushforth a liar or maybe just mistaken? After all we had been reporting that day and for weeks prior, I thought it incredible that he was questioning me like this. He was so adamant I became adversarial in tone, if not in words, and described the vehicles as "ya know, they have tracks on both sides, this thing that looked just like a turret on top, with a big long thing sticking out of it (like maybe a big gun)!" Not only that, I was only 500ft. above them. To my amazement, he still wasn't buying it? I played my Ace of Spades -- "I have pictures!" "Pictures," he shouted! You get them right over to the photo lab and we'll divert a plane to pick them up immediately! I did, and he did, like within the hour. I'm sure the pictures were great on the briefing circuit (they came out well), but we never heard about them again.

Note: So far, the most comprehensive account I have read, of what happened on the ground during this battle is "The Night of the Silver Stars," by William R. Phillips, published in 1997 as part of the Naval Institute Special Warfare Series. It was indeed a night of heroism and gallantry. Among decorations the defenders received: a Medal of Honor, a Distinguished Service Cross, 19 Silver Stars and 3 Bronze Stars with "V" for valor as well as numerous other awards and decorations.

8 February, 1968: Hill 64, Alpha 1 Firefight and day after Lang Vei:

These are the thoughts and experiences recorded on 8 February, the day after the Lang Vei Battle. Back

in my quarters at 2200, after a full day at Khe Sanh, then debriefings and planning.

0550: It was hard getting up. The bed (eat your heart out guys) really felt good. Got mission briefing for the KS area and things had apparently gotten quiet. The expectation was that the NVA were repositioning for another direct assault in strength, on Khe Sanh. The weather at Danang, enroute and on the Khe Sanh plateau was poor. At Personal Equipment, Scottie, was in rough shape, really bleary eyed. He'd been up for about 24 hours. I had some maintenance problems, but pressed on. Aircraft #331 was really in pretty good shape. (Note: this is the O-2 currently on display at the USAF Air Museum at Wright Patterson AFB.)

0645: Take off and climb enroute was all weather until on top at 10,000 feet. Using the same procedure as yesterday, I went out into the flatlands in Laos so I could let down through the clouds without hitting anything. I broke out of the clouds at about 1000 feet above the terrain, found Route 9, and followed it back toward Lang Vei. Joe Johnson, Covey 251, was in the area ahead of me and we began to coordinate areas to Recce so we wouldn't be hitting each other in the low clouds.

Lang Vei appeared to be abandoned. There were several hundred refugees on Route 9 between Khe Sanh City and Lang Vei, headed West? Guess they know where the action will be. The Marines didn't know who they were and were seriously thinking of putting artillery on them. I had to make sure - low pass on the tree tops - ooops! Damn trees all around me, zipping by the wings. The tops were defoliated and I hadn't seen them - very tall. The refugees were mainly women & children carrying belongings, etc. - old men, some younger. That sure tore at me. Those poor people just don't know where to go - getting it from both sides, one way or another. So - so sad! I felt as though I could actually see it on their faces.

Garden Valley 14 Actual at Khe Sanh called - need air to hit mortar and rocket positions just WSW, off the runway, on the ridgeline. Joe Johnson, Covey 251, went out to the West, along Route 9 at about the border to escort some fighters into the area through the cloud layers. We got Canasta 403, a flight of 4 A-1Hs (Navy). They were loaded with

bombs (250lb & 500lb) and 20MM strafe. After pre-briefing the fighters, and discussing tactics, I marked the ridgeline targets with one of my 2.75" "Willie Pete" (white phosphorous) rockets and cleared them in "hot." We quickly got two secondary explosions indicating that the bombs had indeed found worthy targets. However, at this point, Garden Valley 14 Actual asked us to hold off on the airstrike and to my amazement, briefed me on a firefight on a nearby hill last night.

HILL 64: Garden Valley 14 Actual described the hill and events as they knew them. The hill wasn't apparent on my map, but there was no doubt that there was still a firefight of some sort going on just to my South. The NVA assaulted the hill in force during the night (mortars, rockets and ground assault) and there was ferocious hand to hand combat as the night wore on. The main base supported the marines in the hilltop defensive positions with direct fire on the East face of the hill (toward the main base) from heavy weapons. However, the NVA simply moved to the back side of the hill to continue the assault.

Garden Valley 14 Actual had not talked to the defenders for some time. Apparently their radios were destroyed or lost in the battle. GV14A said "We don't know what is going on up there. We don't know if our guys are still defending in the trenches, or whether they were driven out of the trenches and are trying to get back in?" My immediate reaction was "How come you didn't tell me this sooner? Here we were dropping bombs on a ridgeline, when we had nearby troops in contact?" Couldn't dwell on that. Had to get busy.

I decided that the only way to sort out who was where, was to make a low pass and look in the trenches. From about 1500 feet, I could see explosions and tracers on the hill, but not much more. I planned to get that little sucker going as fast as I could, in a dive from the base side of the Hill where there were fewer NVA. I dove, at full power, on the Eastern base of the hill, then snapped it up over the defensive trench lines in about 90 degrees of bank at about 150-200 feet. As I flashed over the trenches at about 230 knots I saw troops in hand to hand combat, grenades going off in the trenches, and about a grand total of 60 troops. The NVA were caught off guard by the pass, but hosed me down real good

anyway. As I dove down the opposite side of the hill I thought, "how do I get back to altitude with this little thing without giving the bad guys a great tail shot at me hanging on a sky hook? I flew away for a while, dodging trees, then began my climb while I tried to digest what I had seen.

The predominance of the guys in the trenches were wearing flak vests, and a number had on US style helmets. "That's it!" The good guys are still duking it out in the trenches with the bad guys. I notified GV14A of my conclusions and told them we were going to start putting the fighters on the exterior of the hill and its North and West approaches. I briefed the A-1s on the situation and what we were going to do about it. I had them come in from the North to strafe the bases of the hill and work the strafe up the hill toward the trench lines. These guys really got down in the weeds for this one, so they could see the whites of their eyes. The A-1s looked beautiful, terrific, skimming through the treetops, blazing away. Sure wish I had one of them. Next it was the bombs in the trees and brush along the Western base of the hill. Seemed like this suppressed the NVA for awhile, but they were soon up and at it again. I know we got a mess of 'em, but they were still ready to join the fight.

We had put in an emergency request for prop aircraft that could operate in these mountains, ridges, valleys in this weather. The A-1s were always preferred, because they could carry so much ordnance and loiter for 4 hours or so (depending upon how far they had to travel). Joe Johnson, again went West to rendezvous and escort them back to the battle area. However, we were getting short on fuel.

Bruce Goodhue, Covey 226, arrived and took over air support for the Hill. He had some A-26s en-route (twin engine, WWII, Korea vintage). They are also great for close air support, working close in bad weather, and being able to hang around for awhile.

As Joe Johnson and I were preparing to leave, we spotted some troops in the open on the backside of the hill headed for the adjacent ridge to the West. With great satisfaction we both unloaded 27, 2.75" white phosphorous rockets on them. We were on target, but had to RTB (Return to Base) due to lack of fuel, and did not get a good assessment of the situation after our attack.

En-route Danang: I get a crazy feeling flying around watching those poor guys in the trenches getting blown up. How would I feel if I was down there. Hard to think about. Got a touch of that invincibility complex again too - I was awful low and they were shooting like hell. I'd have given anything for a mini-gun. I was about fired up enough to strafe with my M-16 out the cockpit window. Maybe we shoulda gone to Dong Ha for a load of HE rockets from the Army guys? Hell! For awhile there we were about the only ones that could fly in that weather (500'-1000' overcast, scattered to broken scud from 500' to 1700').

Had trouble letting down into Danang for landing. The base was shrouded in a thick overcast. Their radar was overloaded, so I had "Panama" GCI Radar vector me down over the South China Sea. Broke out of the clouds at about 500' above the water. Hmmm! An aircraft Carrier right over there! If I had come through the clouds a little further to the left, I might have made a real mess. Really had to piss bad - went right there on the O-2 maintenance ramp.

Called the Tac Air Control Center to debrief, got something to eat and went back to Intel for a detailed debrief for the rest of the troops. My pictures of the tanks at Lang Vei yesterday came out very well and are a great hit on the briefing circuit. Blah!

Yesterday, Spunky Hanson 15A, a Sgt Ashley, was killed on the 5th assault to rescue the troops in the TOC at Lang Vei. There were more than 9 guys rescued, not sure exactly. Tony Sazanovics was the FAC in charge for the chopper evac, yesterday afternoon. He did a hell of a job. They got the crap shot out of them, but got all but one of the troops out? They also got some CIDG and Elephant people out, though I understand it was ugly. Initially the Helos couldn't take off because they were overweight with people hanging on the skids. Had to knock (shoot?) some off or lose the whole mission and get everyone killed.

During all this Tony Sazanovics was contacted by a Special Ops troop who had apparently been evading after the Camp was overrun. His call sign was "Spunky Hanson 28 Bravo." SH28B came out of the trees at the old Lang Vei Camp to where Tony could see him. The Helo Evac force was already

fully (over) loaded and pulling out to head for Khe Sanh. It became apparent that the Helos were out of the picture and Tony was preparing to land on the torn up, bombed out, airstrip at the old Camp. However, a large number of NVA arrived first and chased SH28B back into the trees and brush. Tony related that it looked like a lot of shooting during the chase. Last transmission from SH28B was "They're coming up from the other side of the strip." No way SH28B will come out of that alive. If Tony had tried to land for SH28B, it would have been nothing short of a miracle if they made it off the ground. The front prop had only 10" clearance and the ground was too irregular. It would have caught in the dirt and debris.

Meanwhile, today on the hill West of Khe Sanh, Bruce Goodhue worked some more A-1s (Canasta flight), A-26s (Nimrods) and T-28s (Zorro) on the NVA around the hill. They did a great job. When it was over, the good guys were able to get up, clear the outpost, and walk off the hill. After discussions with the relief force from the main base, they went up and reoccupied the hill. After the battle, first glance showed about 50 NVA bodies, plus plenty of captured weapons. [Understand that later a total of 150 NVA bodies were found, along with a number of machine guns, etc.]

Fingerpaint 50 (Marine FAC) did trap 2 tanks in the river Southwest of Lang Vei, and Covey 672 had some "tracked vehicles" pinned down near "Elephant." Hope this weather breaks soon. If it does, we could really clean their clock.

POSTLOG: At the KSV Reunion in San Diego - September, 2000

So here I am, with a lump in my throat and a tear in my eye, shaking hands with Spunky Hanson 28 Bravo - after all these years. His name is Dennis Thompson. I have since found out that he was captured and escaped several times during the next few days. He was a rather belligerent cuss and not amenable to being a prisoner. For this, he got lots of broken bones and worse. After a nightmarish 6 month trek to Hanoi, he was incarcerated with the other POWs, until the end of the war.

Dennis is a retired Command Sergeant Major of the Special Operations Command and, wouldn't ya'

know, he was the featured speaker at our KSV Reunion Banquet. We've gotten a lot better acquainted since then. Dennis has a line on all the survivors of the Lang Vei Battle and some of us who supported in one way or another. We plan to meet this September in Las Vegas.

On the other hand, we have been trying very hard to find Tony Sazanovics, the FAC who was flying over Dennis when he was captured. No luck yet. We'd also like to find that "Covey 688," from Ubon, who was there at Lang Vei that morning.

So why do I like Reunions? Gee, hard to figger out! This is only one story.

Note: For those that haven't read it, the best account I've found of the Battle for Hill 64, on 8 February 1968, is in Chapter 16 of Eric Hammel's book, "KHE SANH, Siege in the Clouds." It was only during the reading of this book that I began to realize that the 8 February, 1968 entry in my diary was about "Alpha-1" in this Battle.

**Battle for Lang Vei Special Forces Camp,
RVN Survivors' Reunion,
Denver Colorado,
In Conjunction with the Khe Sanh
Veterans' Reunion, 21-23 July 2009.**

SUMMARY/OVERVIEW:

This is an account of the "Reunion" of U.S. Forces involved in the Battle for the Lang Vei Special Forces Camp on 6-7 February, 2009. A main feature of this "Reunion" is that although some attendees had fought together over 40 years ago, they had never met personally. In particular, the A-1 Skyraider pilots had never met any of the people they supported and worked with in that battle. There was an initial Reunion of many involved in the battle in Las Vegas in 2004. Most of the Special Forces survivors attended, as well as a few who provided Forward Air Control (FAC), Helo assault and artillery support. As at this second Reunion, this account begins with some summary and background information on Lang Vei and the forces that fought in that Battle. This provides an initial idea of who was at the Reunion.

Next, there is some information on how the Reunion actually happened. The Reunion attendees then related their experiences during the battle in the following order: A briefing on the history of the area and the events leading up to the current war was given by Jay Stone, the Air Intelligence Officer from VA-25 (the A-1 Squadron aboard the carrier, "Coral Sea"); The Special Forces in the ground battle, The Forward Air Controllers (FACs) who directed the air support, the A-1 Skyraider pilots that provided direct air support, the transition part of the battle as the survivors repositioned for rescue, and the helo rescue assault team that actually pulled survivors of the battle out of Lang Vei. Note: In this account, of the Battle at the Reunion, there is really no attempt to rewrite the book on the Battle for Lang Vei in any detail. That would be impossible. This article is simply to characterize the Reunion and what it meant to those that attended. Similarly, only a few of those who fought in the Battle are mentioned by name. The real (7 hours of) detail of the Battle related by the Reunion attendees, has been captured on a set of DVDs that will be provided to veterans of the Battle. Each individual story told at the Reunion was remarkable, even spell-binding.

BACKGROUND:

In January, 1968, the Lang Vei Special Forces Camp, on the Laos border West of Khe Sanh, was preparing for a pending assault by North Vietnamese (NVA) troops. It was seen as potentially the beginning of the major NVA assault of the Khe Sanh "Siege" in early 1968. Lang Vei was defended by 24 Special Forces and several hundred indigenous personnel. That assault began late at night on 6 February 1968 and lasted for about 20 hours. The assault was conducted by a very large force of NVA regulars, led by about a dozen NVA PT 76 (Russian built) tanks. It was the first time the NVA used tanks in the Vietnam War. They ultimately overwhelmed the troops in the camp. This account provides some brief highlights of how portions of that battle were recounted at the Reunion by the men that fought in it.

**THE SECOND LANG VEI REUNION,
July 2009:**

After the first Reunion in 2004 it seemed that an-

other would eventually happen, but it wasn't really coming together until, in early 2008, a "Skyraider" pilot named "Speed" Ritzman, found the website <http://www.langvei.com/>, established by (Sgt.) Rich Allen, one of the Lang Vei vets. In subsequent emails it became clear that the Skyraider pilots of VA-25, from the carrier, "Coral Sea" were indeed the A-1 support provided to Lang Vei all day on 7 Feb 09. Eventually it evolved to a proposed Reunion associated with the Khe Sanh Vets (KSV) Reunion in Denver during July 2009.

Tom Eichler, the KSV Association President, made an offer we couldn't refuse. The Association would host the Lang Vei Reunion during the few days prior to most Khe Sanh Vets arrival. The Lang Vei Reunion would likely not have happened if Tom hadn't offered KSV Association hosting of the room, the set ups, the lunch, the video recording (Msgt Dave Meyer) of the several hours of discussion and a photographer (Sid Patricio) to capture some still photos of the event - even the name tag registrations for which Tom is so well known. The Lang Vei troops were deeply and uniformly grateful for this wonderful, heart warming support.

Attendees:

In the end, many, but not all Lang Vei Vets were able to attend. Five Special Forces survivors (2 of which had been POWs), Two O-2, Forward Air Controllers (FACs), 7 A-1 Skyraider pilots (one of which had been a POW) and their Intel Officer, plus 5 or the Helo "Hatchett" force that conducted the rescue assault in the late afternoon of 7 Feb 09. That totals 20 vets performing various air and ground missions during the Lang Vei Battle.

THE GROUND TROOPS PERSPECTIVE (from 5 USSF Survivors):

Weather: Overcast clouds near the surface, and layered up to about 10,000 feet. The clouds over the battle, were prohibitive for initial close air support. It was only after about an hour of daylight that they began to slowly disperse.

The Battle began late at night on 6 Feb 09, when tracked vehicles were heard and subsequently tanks

were discovered "in the wire," followed by NVA assault forces. Defenses were quickly breached and the battle ensued within the Camp. There were problems with "Light Anti-Tank weapons (LAWS)" that often misfired and/or were ineffective at stopping the tanks. As the Battle progressed, the cohesion of the Camp defenses was fractured and the USSF and indigenous troops ended up providing individual pockets of resistance that apparently confused and even delayed subsequent NVA ground operations. In the end, while some friendly troops became holed up in the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) bunker, others were separated and evading on the Camp perimeter. Meanwhile, several of the USSF and a number of indigenous troops were located outside the Battle at the main Camp in the nearby "Old Lang Vei Camp." After daylight, they made a total of 5 assaults throughout the day of 7 Feb in an attempt to rescue those that were trapped in the TOC. Sfc. Eugene Ashley was subsequently posthumously awarded the "Medal of Honor" for his part in that action. This was one of three major thrusts of the ground battle after the Camp had been overrun. 1. The friendly troops trapped in the TOC 2. The troops from Old Lang Vei trying to rescue them. 3. USSF troops and other "friendlies," evading in and about the perimeter of the main Camp. There were US Special Forces troops from each of these portions of the battle present at the Reunion to relate their part of the story.

The most desperate situation was in the (mostly underground) TOC bunker where, through the early morning, the NVA were swarming like ants at all points of access, with: grenades, small arms fire, explosives, gas, the works.

FAC - AIR SUPPORT PERSPECTIVE (from 2 FACs that were there):

The two FACs at the Reunion each supported air ops at Lang Vei, for up to 3 hours. Covey 252 for most of the morning, starting at dawn, and Covey 685, in the late afternoon leading up to the rescue assault at about 1700. The on scene FAC, directing air ops at dawn, was Covey 688, along with a "Canasta Fight" of A-1 Skyraiders. Covey 688 was in contact with the friendly forces in the TOC, when (Sp4c) Frank Dooms radioed that the aircraft must attack the NVA on the TOC right away or they were finished. Covey 252, an attendee at the Reunion,

was also flying overhead and captured some telling pictures of this part of the battle. At that point, Covey 688 led the Canasta flight (led by "Zip Rausa") down into the lower clouds to accomplish this task. While in and out of the clouds at tree top level, the A-1s strafed the NVA forces until they withdrew. This was a particularly impressive close air support feat!

Since, for a number of reasons, there was no immediate prospect of a rescue operation, the entire air support operation for the rest of the day was to shoot up and bomb the NVA to keep them away from the TOC until there was a prospect of rescue forces arrival. It was also to support the several assaults by the troops from the "Old Camp" that unsuccessfully attempted to reach the TOC to evacuate the troops trapped there. Throughout this period, it was not known in the TOC, that there were additional USSF survivors of the battle evading outside the TOC.

CANASTA FLIGHTS - A-1s FROM THE CORAL SEA: (7 PILOTS and the Squadron Intel Officer attended the Reunion)

This portion of the Reunion was led off with special recognition of "Speed" Ritzman, the A-1 pilot who, with great anticipation, helped initiate the process for, and coordination of the Reunion. He passed away on 16 June, just prior to the Reunion.

The A-1s from the Coral Sea were providing the primary air support for the Lang Vei battle, starting at about day break on 7 February, 1968.

Initially it was Zip Rausa, with his flight's first attack on the NVA besieging the TOC, then a scheduled progression of A-1s from the "Coral Sea" throughout the day. There were also a few other fighter aircraft dispersed throughout the rest of the day. During this part of the battle, the A-1s responded to FAC directions by chasing the NVA away from the TOC and by supporting the assault force from "Old Lang Vei," attempting to relieve the TOC. When the troops trapped in the TOC decided to make their move to escape (rather than spend another night in the TOC), the A-1s were for the most part out of ammunition, or "Winchester" as

fighter pilots often refer to it. That being the case, the A-1s were put into the mode of making "dry runs" to chase off the NVA as the troops from the TOC tried to make their way to "Old Lang Vei" to rendezvous with the Helo rescue "hatchett" force.

TRANSITION TO THE RESCUE EFFORT:

In later afternoon, when HHQ suggested that the troops in the TOC might need to remain there for another night, Lt Longgear, the senior officer in the TOC, emotionally stated with lots of expletives, that they are not going to do that. They are coming out (of the TOC) NOW!

One of the very memorable moments of the Reunion is when Paul Longgear, the first to exit the TOC, related making eye contact with an A-1 pilot, Ron Post, that was just then passing by the TOC entrance, in a bank at ground level. Paul said that at the moment, he "knew" they were going to make it. Just after that, Paul experienced another life changing event that was virtually spellbinding to those present. Due to his wounds and exhaustion, he had fallen and was having trouble getting moving again. Only Paul can tell it, but he had an encounter with GOD, in which, he was twice asked, "What are you going to do now Paul?" Overcoming paralyzing fear, Paul got up and continued. At the time, he took note that the NVA on both sides of the route were just watching, not shooting!? Fear of the A-1s? Intervention? Professional respect? All of that? Who knows?

THE HELO FORCE RESCUE ASSAULT (5 Rescue force personnel attended):

After much procrastination, maybe even confusion at senior staff levels, a grass roots "helo force" pulled itself together for the rescue assault. Three USSF SOG helo crewmembers from FOB 3 at Khe Sanh and 2 USMC crewmembers from VMO-6 recounted their rescue attempt. One pilot reflected that as they made their approach to land for the pickup, a young NVA troop stepped out, right under their nose and sprayed them with a clip from his AK-47. Fortunately, none of the hits were vital and they pulled the helo out of what would certainly have been their "final landing."

The rescue itself was heart rending. Although the surviving USSF troops were loaded on the helos, the indigenous troops swarmed the helos and grabbed anything they could to survive. The helicopters were all overloaded and unable to take off as the NVA ground fire increased in intensity. The aircraft were taking many hits. To save the mission, those hanging on to the helos had to be beaten, even shot off the skids.

Dennis Thompson, one of the troops who had been evading outside the TOC almost made it to the rescue helos. He was perhaps within 60 feet of the helo when a force of fresh NVA troops arrived, chasing him away, to be captured later and held as a POW in Hanoi. Dennis' recollection of the rescue force departure creates quite a mental image: The overloaded helos, trying to become airborne and get away from the ground fire were thrashing through the trees and brush like wild animals. Stuff was flying off the rotors all over the place. Then bodies were falling like rain.

REUNION WRAP UP:

The proceedings of the Reunion were indeed captured in 7 hours of video and numerous still photos. These will be provided to Lang Vei vets as soon as they are finalized into a set of 3 DVDs.

The Reunion was very meaningful to attendees. Typical comments were:

"As one of the VA-25 guys present at the reunion I must tell you it was a life changing event. Hearing in detail the ordeal the USSF men had to deal with is the stuff of legend. The fact that they were so beholden to the Spads for helping clear their way to freedom made all of us feel very humble and very proud. I can't speak for all the Canastas but for me the reunion was a singular event which I, and my family, will never forget. "

"I have nothing but admiration and respect to everyone that participated in the battle for Lang Vei. I just wish we could have had this meeting at Lang Vei on or about 10 Feb 68. Thanks to each of you that came. You are my heroes."

As William Phillips, in his book "The Battle of

Lang Vei -- The Night of the Silver Stars" related: "The United States Army expressed its thanks for a job well done during the Battle. Every one of the Special Forces present received an award for valor. The 24 Green Berets received one Medal of Honor, one Distinguished Service Cross, nineteen Silver Stars, and Three Bronze Stars with Combat V. The rescue force from MACV-SOG at FOB-3 received recognition for their heroism with one Distinguished Service Cross, Two Silver Stars, seven Bronze Stars with Combat V and two army Commendation Medals with Combat V.

The DVDs on which the entire Reunion was captured are in the final stages of editing, by Msgt Dave Meyer, USMC, Retired, who filmed the entire days activities. They will be distributed to veterans of the Battle.

ED NOTE: Toby Rushforth sent the following information from Lt Commander William "Speed" Ritzman which was posted on Rich Allen's Lang Vei Website. Speed had a lot to do with the planning of the Lang Vei Reunion prior to his death on 16 June 2009, just 5 weeks before the Denver Reunion.

**William H. Ritzmann, Jr. Lieutenant
Commander, USN(Ret),**

for which "thank you" is far insufficient....

*If it wasn't for the air support from these
fine men, I would not be typing this today.*

(RA)

Last November, Attack Squadron 25, (VA-25), United States Navy, held a reunion in Pensacola, Florida. We, the veterans of the squadron, are under the impression that VA-25, (now re-designated VFA-25), has the longest continuous service of any squadron serving aboard Aircraft Carriers in the Navy today. The history of the squadron may be found at; <http://www.fistofthefleet.org/>

First, although I ventured into "Harms Way" periodically, ("it was my job"), I always considered; Medics/Corpsman, Rescue Helo Pilots and Crewmen, Special Forces/Seals, and Forward Air Controllers on a higher rung of the "Ladder of Risk" than I ever was. Again, thank you for your service to our country.

Secondly, the research of the on-line documentation, (including the post war testimony of the North Vietnamese), that we did to prepare our presentation at last November's Reunion, persuaded some of us that the Battle of Lang Vei was arguably as pivotal as say, the Battle of the Bulge in WWII. Therefore, we are kind of proud we were able to do what we were trained for in support of your efforts.

Sadly, I do not have any photos of the Lang Vei area on the battle day. Nor do I think any of my squadron mates had any time to snap any pics either. The type of runs we made under the overcast were too much of a handful to permit me the use of a camera. Due to the number of assets that were there when I arrived, I was directed to make a single pass, and salvo my two Mk 117's and six Mk71's "on the bunker". I did however, notice two of the tanks that were destroyed and numerous bodies on the ground. I could not tell whether those bodies were friendly, enemy, or alive during my one pass.

I have attached a pic, "NL405onCVA43". I believe it was taken to recognize the young man, Ltjg. Ted Hill, as the pilot of the last A-1 Skyraider attack mission in the U.S. Navy. After his mission on February 20, 1968, all other Close Air Support and Res-



cue Combat Air Patrol missions were flown by the USAF Sandy Skyraiders. A few days later, the Coral Sea and its Air Wing departed for home via The Sea of Japan to "show the flag" during the USS Pueblo incident.

The picture is from the USS Coral Sea, CVA-43, taken circa February 21, 1968. The occasion was a

presentation to Ltjg. Ted Hill, for piloting the final combat mission of VA-25, in the last U.S. Navy, A-1H/J Skyraider, Canasta 405, Bureau (Serial) Number 135300. The pic includes all the VA-25 squadron pilots and the other officers in the squadron.

Presenting the award to Ltjg. Ted Hill, (6-4,1500), (standing center), are (standing left), Cdr. Cliff Church, CO VA-25, (3-1-0945) and (standing right), Capt Bill Shawcross CO, USS Coral Sea, CVA-43.

In the picture I have been able to identify the fourteen squadron pilots who flew in the six missions in support of the battle. I've italicized the numbers of their flight, the position in that flight and a time. (ie. "(1-2-0100)", indicates the first flight - wing position - approximate time each flight came under the FAC's control). The listing below, identifies each pilot that flew in our six support missions.

Sitting on the wing are (l to r) Lcdr. Carter Moser, Lcdr. Ralph Smith, (5-1-1330), Lt. Al Nichols, (5-2-1330), Ltjg. Bob Hagen, (3-2-0945), Ltjg. Bruce Marcus, (4-2-1215), and Lt McGee.

Standing in same order, CDR Stu Skelton, XO, (6-1-1500), Lt. Zip Rausa, (1-1-0730), Ltjg. Dale Pellot, (2-2-0930), Lcdr. Speed Ritzmann, (4-1-1215), Ltjg. Larry Gardiner, (1-2-0730), Ltjg. Chuck Thom, (2-1-0930), Lcdr. Ron Bolt, (6-3-1500), Lcdr. Jack McDermott, and Ltjg. Jay Stone. Missing from the photo is Lt. Jack Jordan, (6-2-1500).

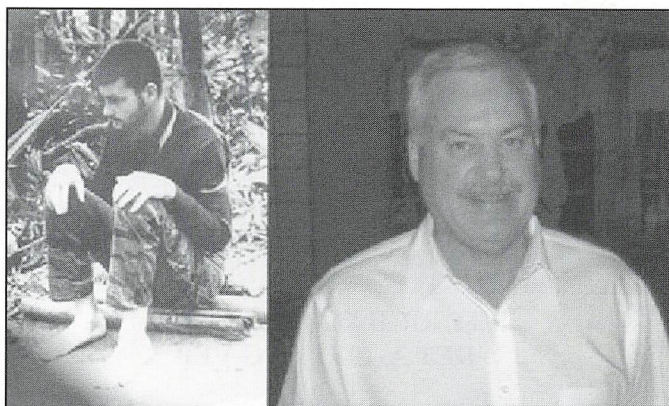
As an aside, that airplane was in the flight that scored the first air-to-air cannon kill of a North Vietnamese MiG in June of 1965. Since Canasta 405, (Bureau Number 135300), flew the last Skyraider attack mission, it was retired and now sits in the Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola. (They still allow us that flew her to climb into the cockpit when we visit.)

Toby, It would appear from your e-mail that Bruce Marcus and I checked in with the FAC about 1215, which would be after you departed at 1100. It's doubtful we shared air space with you then. My log book indicates I flew Canasta 405 in the pic above on that mission.

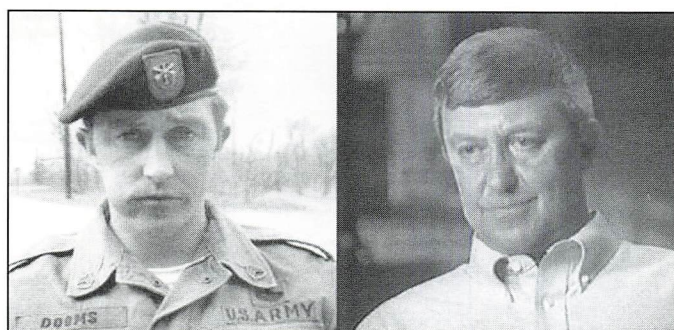
THEN & NOW



**CAPT ZIP RAUSA A-1
SKY RAIDER PILOT USN RETIRED**



**SGT WILLIAM G. MCMURRAY JR.
DET A-101 LANG VEI (POW)**



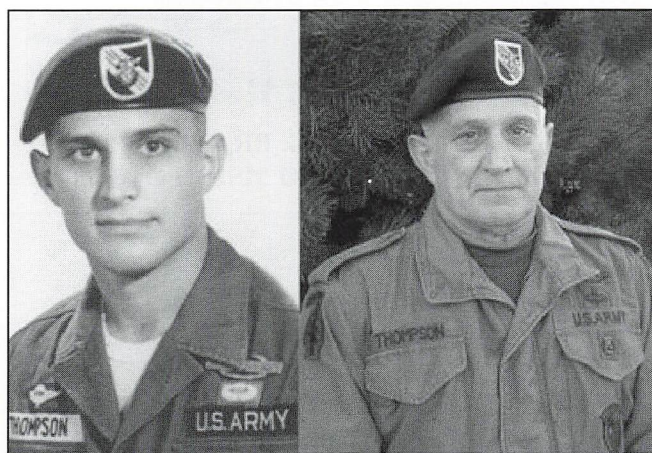
**SGT FRANKLIN H. DOOMS DET A-101
LANG VEI TOC COMMUNICATIONS**



**CAPT TOBY RUSHFORTH USAF FAC
PILOT RETIRED LTCOL USAF**



**SFC EUGENE ASHLEY JR. DET A-101
LANG VEI (KIA) AWARDED (MOH)**



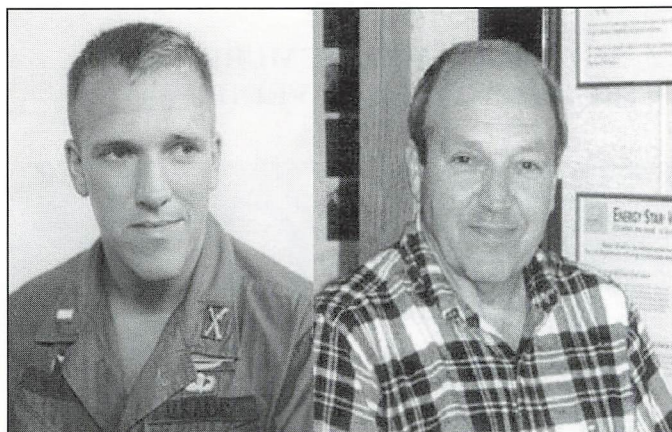
**SSG DENNIS L. THOMPSON DET A-113
12TH CO MSF (POW)**



SGT RICHARD H. ALLEN
DET A-101 LANG VEI



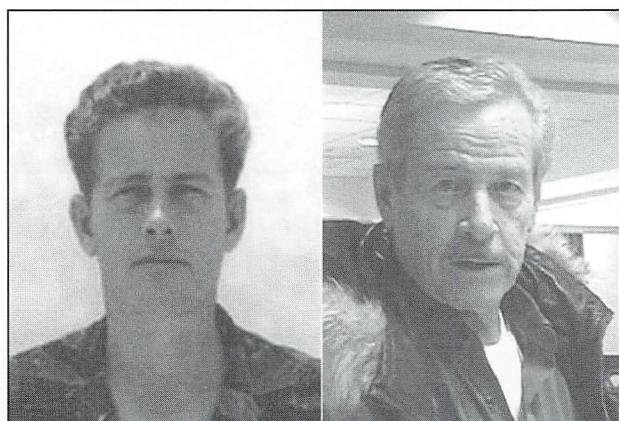
CAPT FRANK C. WILLOUGHBY
DET A-101 LANG VEI (DECEASED)



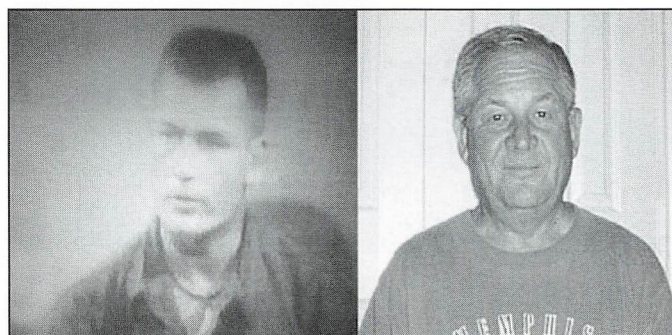
LT. MILES R. WILKINS DET A-101 LANG VEI



LTCOL DANIEL F. SCHUNGEL
DET A-101 LANG VEI (DECEASED)



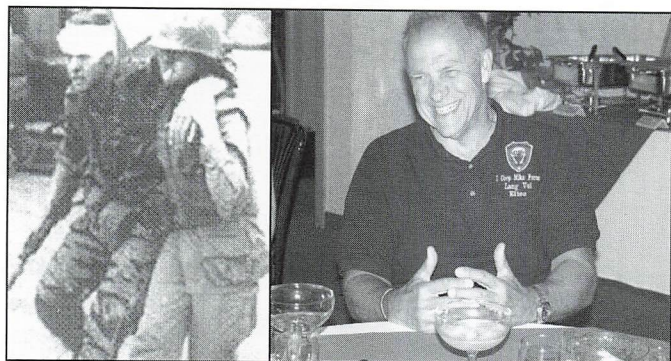
SFC HARVEY G. BRANDE
DET A-113 12TH CO MSF (POW)



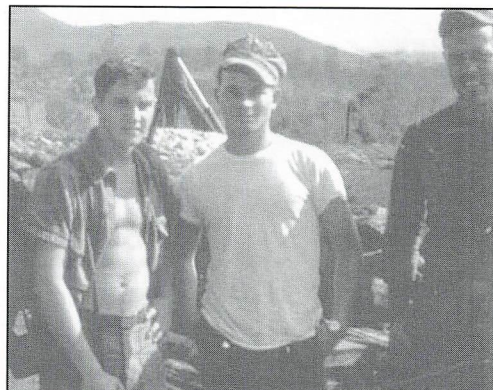
SSG PETE TIROCH DET A-101 LANG VEI
DECEASED



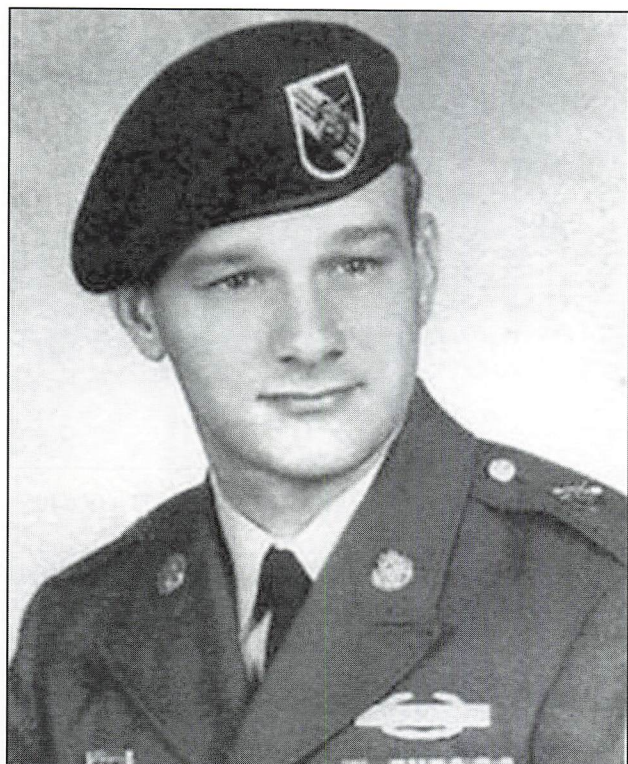
JOHN EARLY DET-A-113
12TH CO MSF



**1ST LT PAUL R. LONGGEAR DET A-113
12TH CO MSF USA RETIRED LTCOL**



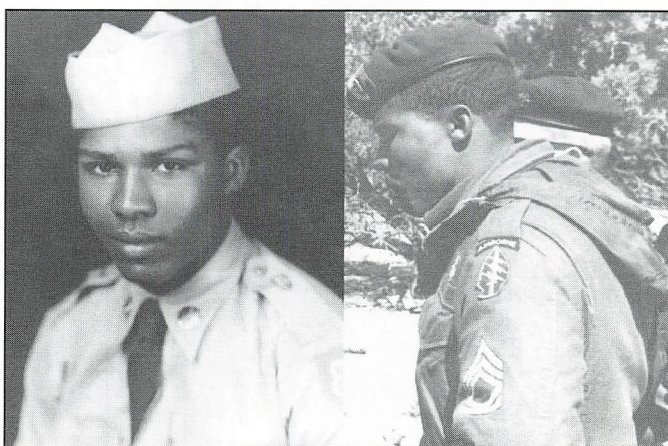
**SEABEE TEAM THAT BUILT THE TOC THAT
LASTED THROUGH THE BATTLE**



**SGT DANIEL R. PHILLIPS
DET A-101 LANG VEI (MIA)**



1ST LT THOMAS E. TODD DET A-101 LANG VEI



SFC KENNETH HANNA DET A-101 LANG VEI KIA



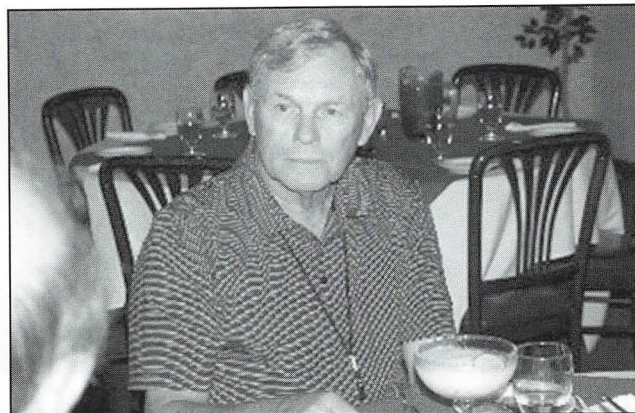
**SFC CHARLES W. LINDENWALD Jr. DET-A-113
12TH CO MSF (KIA)**



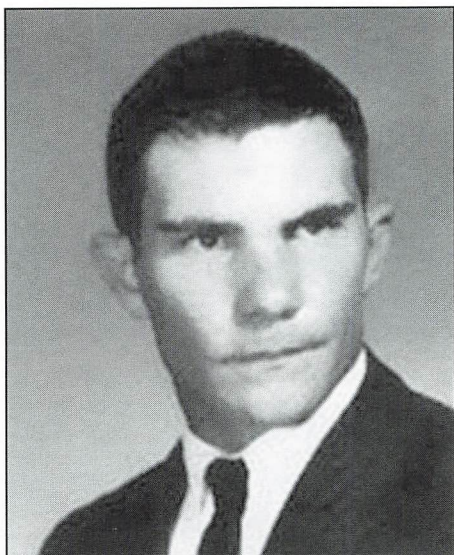
SFC JAMES W. HOLT DET A-101 LANG VEI



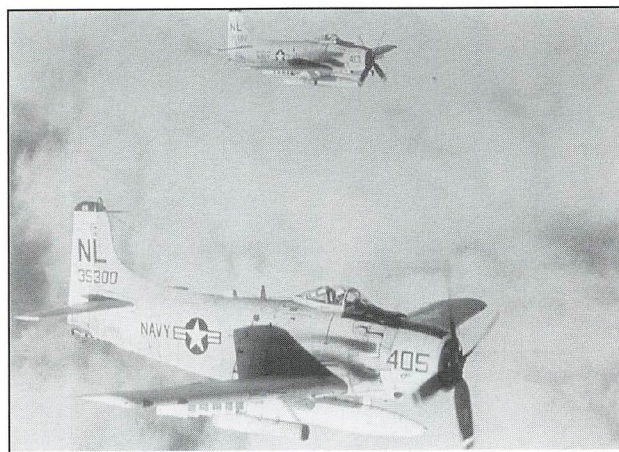
**SSG EMANUEL E.. PHILLIPS DET A-101
LANG VEI DECEASED**



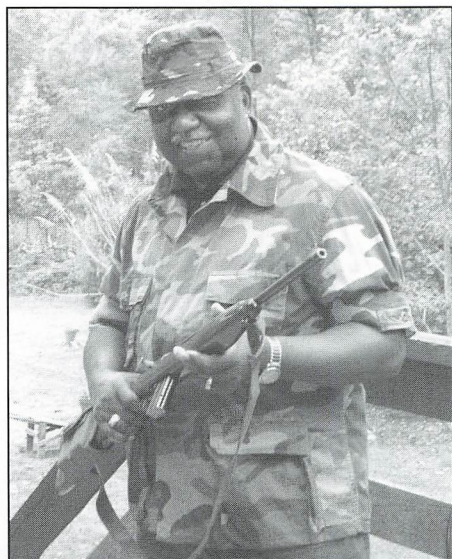
CAPT JIM BLITZ FAC COVEY 685



**SGT JAMES L. MORELAND
DET A-113 12TH CO MSF (MIA)**



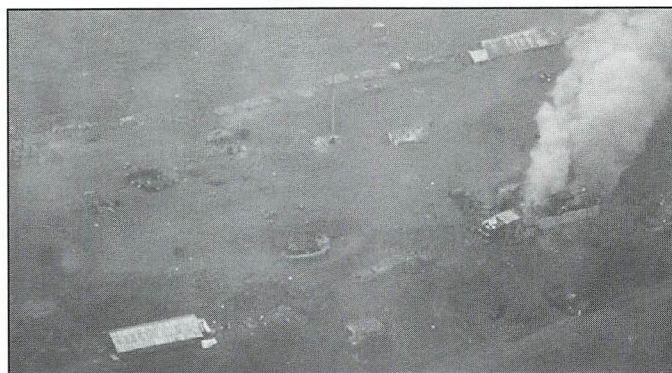
2 SKY RAIDERS SPEED RITZMAN PILOT OF #405



SSG ARTHUR S. BROOKS DET A-101 LANG VEI

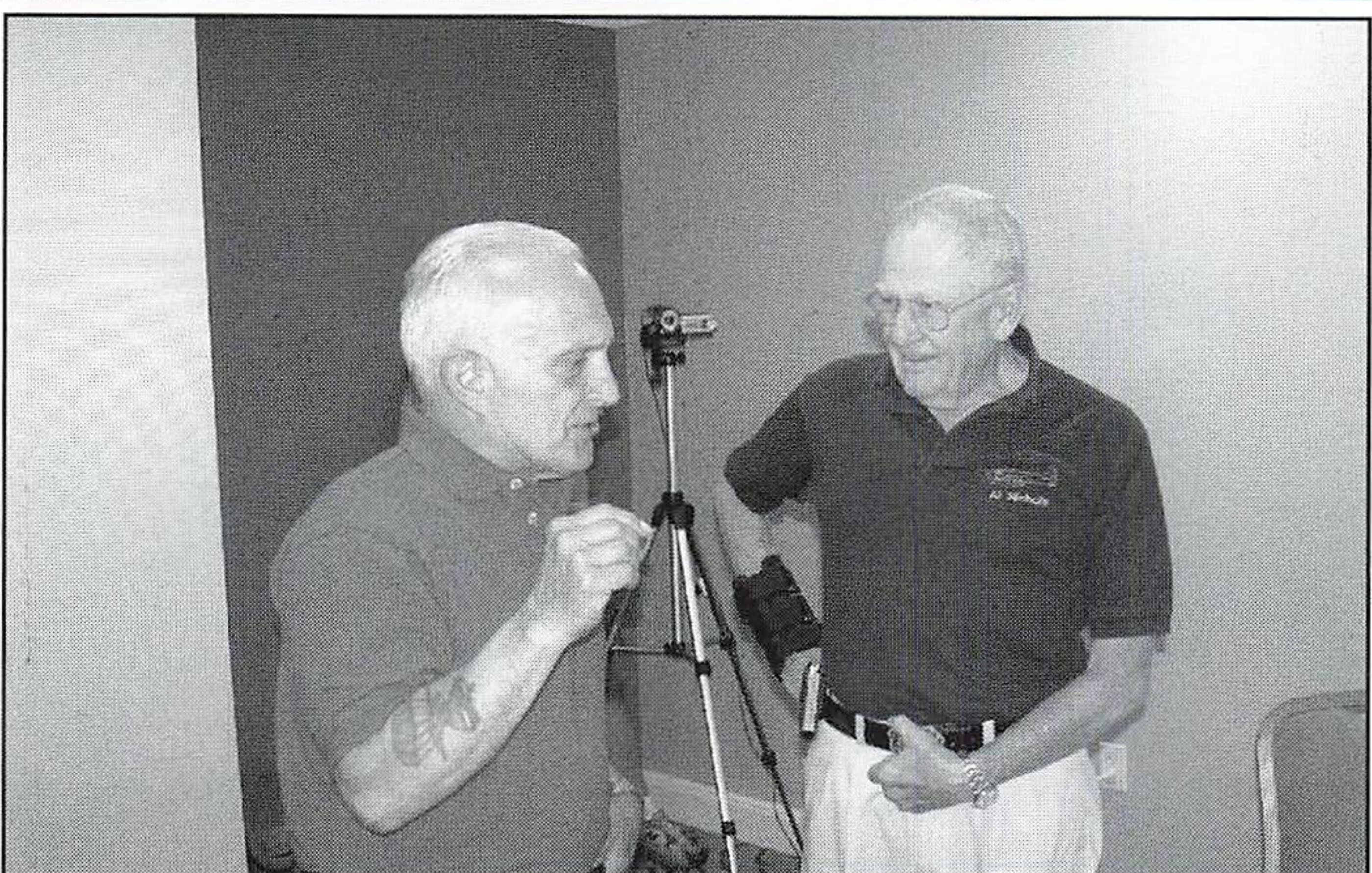
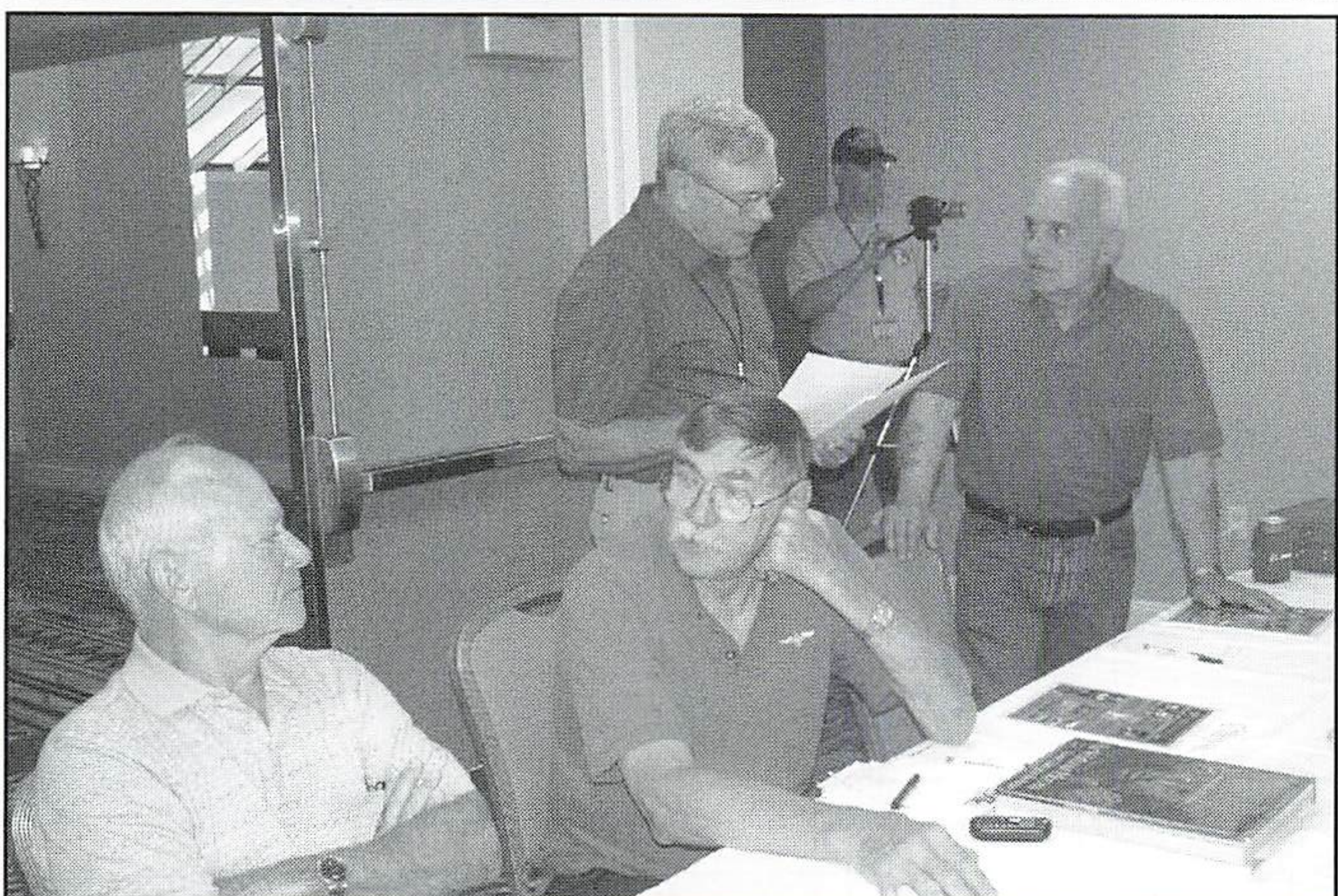
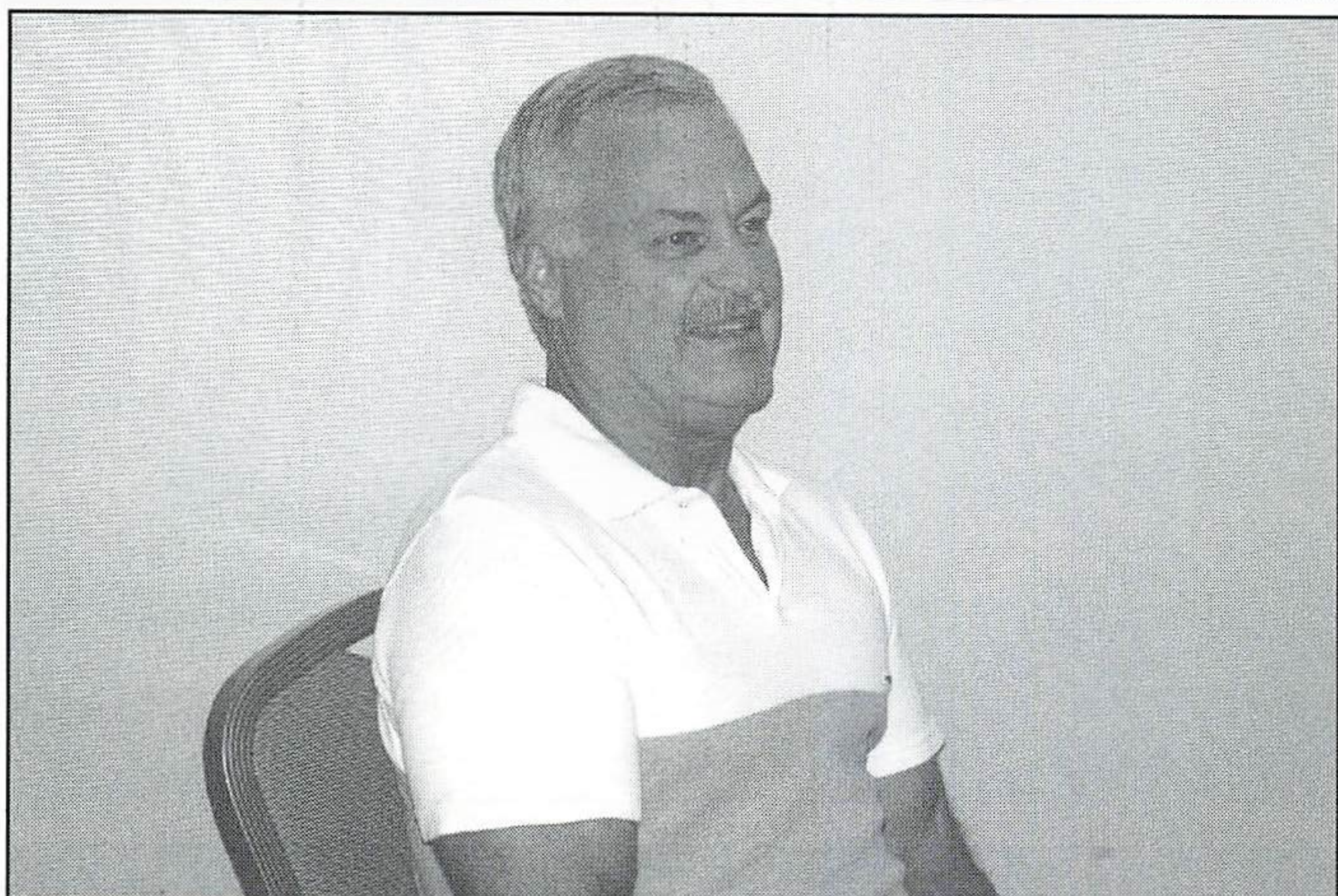


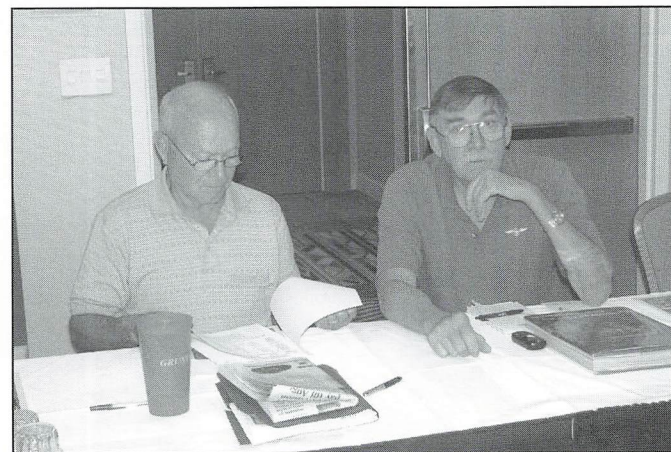
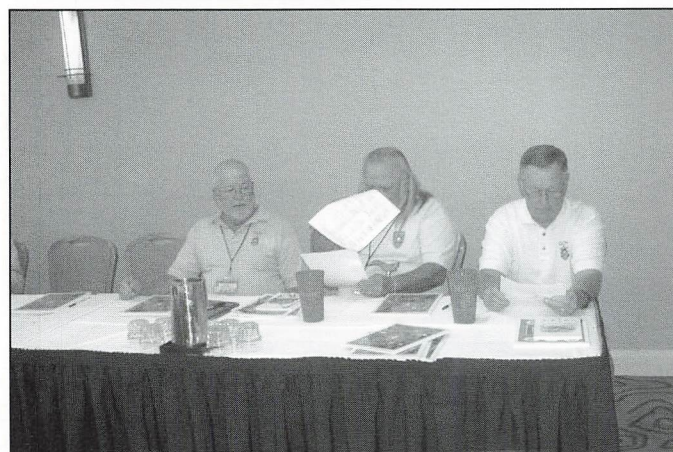
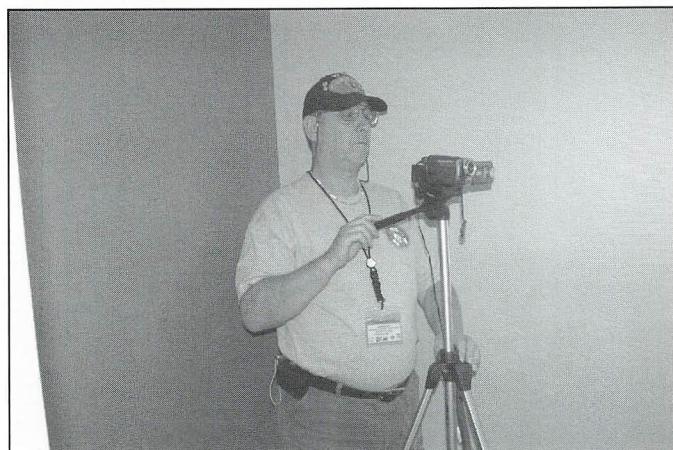
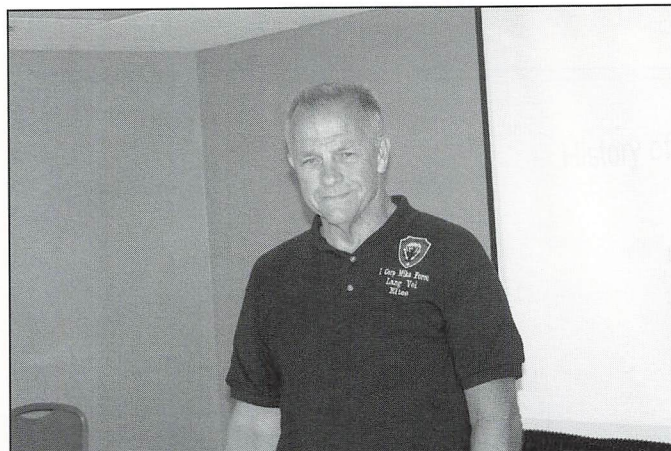
CONVENTIONAL O-2 FAC PLANE



Taken By Toby Rushforth with hand held camera during the battle of Lang Vei. Destroyed tank left of flagpole and the TOC where SF & indigenous troops are trapped.

LANG VEI DENVER REUNION PICTURES JULY 2009







KHE SANH VETERANS, INC. SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

GOVERNING RULES FOR OPERATIONS OF THE KHE SANH VETERANS, INC. SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION:

1. The purpose of the Khe Sanh Veterans, Inc. Scholarship Foundation (KSVSF) is to provide financial aid to graduating high school students who plan to attend an accredited institution as a full time student or who are currently enrolled full time in an accredited curriculum following high school graduation.
2. Scholarships will be awarded to applicant students who have at least one parent, legal guardian, or grandparent who is a paid member in good standing of Khe Sanh Veterans. Inc., a 501 (c) (19) charitable organization.
3. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT TO SEE THAT THE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS ARE FULLY COMPLETED AND SENT DIRECTLY TO THE SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR BEFORE 6/1/2010 AT THE ADDRESS BELOW:**

Mr. Dan Fisher
KSVSF Committee Chairman
6050 52nd St. North
Oakdale, MN 55128-1317

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Applicants must be the legal child or grandchild of a paid member of Khe Sanh Veterans. Inc. who has been a member in good standing for a minimum of three years. This includes deceased life members of KSV, and those Khe Sanh Veterans listed as KIA in Vietnam if family members are associate members of KSV Inc. Children of KSV associate members are not eligible.

Information provided by each candidate on the attached application forms will focus on the following qualities considered for selection to KSVSF financial aid: good grades, Character, Citizenship, leadership potential, and financial need. A point selection system is included in the application forms. Examples of these above mentioned qualities could be in the classroom, in extracurricular activities, or in service to the community, church or nation.

A Scholarship Foundation Review Committee will serve the President of Khe Sanh Veterans, Inc., and will accept, review, and grade each correctly completed application. This committee will provide a scholarship financial report and short summaries of the selected candidates at the annual KSV reunion for publication in the "Red Clay" Newsletter.

THE AWARDS

The award will be \$300.00 per school year for a maximum of 4 years per student. A new application will be required for each year applied.

The KSV Scholarship money will be awarded upon presentation of proof of registration for the appropriate term. Proof of registration should be sent to:

Mr. Dan Fisher
Chairman KSVSF Committee
6050 52ND ST N
Oakdale, MN 55128-1317

1. The money is to be used to help defray costs of tuition, fees, and books at an accredited institution of the candidate's choice as a full time student.
2. If a recipient of the KSVSF scholarship does not enter a post high school institution during the next school year, the award for his/her benefit shall be cancelled and the money awarded to an alternate applicant.
3. An alternate of each scholarship award is to be chosen at the time of selection of recipients.
4. The Treasurer of Khe Sanh Veterans, Inc., will send a check for the award amount to the selected students upon fulfillment of proof of registration sent to the Review Committee Chairman when it becomes available.
5. The recipient of a scholarship shall be notified no later than the end of the month of June of the current school year.
6. Scholarship Applications must be received by the Committee Chair on or before April 21 of the current school year to be attended.
7. KSV, Inc. Scholarship recipients must agree to maintain a standard of personal performance both in and out of school that conforms to the moral standards set down by Khe Sanh Veterans, Inc., members.

Criteria: Point Selection System /Maximum of 100 points

- a. Scholastic achievement / grade point average. Max = 40 points (attach last school GPA transcript)**

GPA 4.0 = 40 points

GPA 3.5 = 35 points

GPA 3.0 = 30 points

GPA 2.5 = 25 points

- b. Extracurricular activities. Max = 35 points total**

Military Veteran = 15 points

Student Government = 10 points

Community related services = 5 points

Other (i.e. work experience, sports) = 5 points

- c. Short essay (60 words) on education goals and self= 10 points**

- d. Financial Need. Max = 15 points (the Fund is designed to help those in need of educational financial support).**

Khe Sanh Veterans, Inc. Scholarship Foundation Application Form

(A Copy Is Enclosed in this Magazine .Please Keep For Further Reference)

Date: _____**1. Applicant Information:**

Name: Last _____ First _____ MI _____
Address: Street _____, City _____ St _____ Zip _____
Home phone: AC _____ / _____ / _____ E-mail address: _____
Birthdate: Day _____ Month _____ Year _____

2. Sponsor Information (Khe Sanh Veteran. Inc. Member):

Name: Last _____ First _____
Relationship to applicant _____
Branch of service _____
Unit served at Khe Sanh _____ Dates _____

3. School Information:

School name: _____
School Address: Street _____, City _____ St _____ Zip Code _____
Phone number: AC _____ / _____ / _____
Curriculum/intended course of study _____
School year to be funded _____

4. Applicant Personal History**a. School Activities participated in: (athletics, publishing, music, art, offices held, etc)**

b. List school honors, prizes, community activities participated in, military service, volunteer service to community, church, or government.



- c. ENCLOSE THIS APPLICATION FORM, A SMALL PICTURE OF YOURSELF, GPA TRANSCRIPT, AND A BRIEF PERSONAL SUMMARY (60 WORDS) TELLING OF YOUR VOCATIONAL PLANS AND FINANCIAL NEED, ADDRESSED TO THE SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN.

BE SURE TO RETAIN A COPY OF ALL FILLED FORMS FOR YOUR RECORDS!

I SWEAR, THAT THE ABOVE STATEMENTS ARE CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Signature of Applicant

Signature of KSV Parent, Grandparent, or Guardian

Note* APPLICATION DEADLINE June 1ST OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR

- **IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE DATA PRIVACY ACT, ALL INFORMATION GATHERED HEREIN WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

KHE SANH VETERANS, INC. SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION COMMITTEE

APPROVED:

Dan Fisher, Chairman, KSV Scholarship Committee

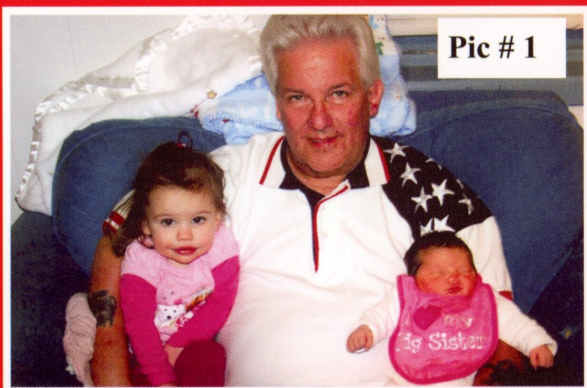
David Smith, President KSV



FIVE OF US WITH PHIL'S SISTER JEANINE



WIVES L-R LYNN SHOUSE, LINDA TREESE, BECKY MATLOCK, MARY KEATON, JAMIE HAIGHT



POP WITH SUMMER & MIKAYLA



FLAG RAISING



PHIL MINEER'S FUNERAL SERVICE



AT PHIL'S SERVICE L-R MIKE HAIGHT, RON SHOUSE, LEROY MATLOCK, TOM KEATON, CLIFF TREESE



RON PASSED OUT WITH HIS FRIENDS & WALKING STICK



8

CLIFF & TOM IN PARK



10b

RACE CAR INTERIOR



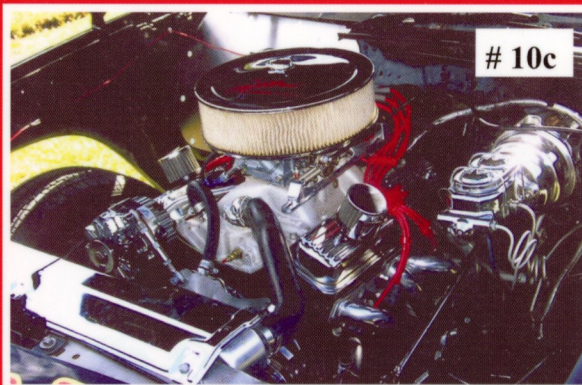
10

PARKED IN WICKHAM PARK CLIFF & MALIBU



9

LEADING RACE CARS AS A PACE CAR FOR ALL RACING DIVISIONS



10c

MALIBU ENGINE COMPARTMENT 350 V8



10a

TRIBUTE ON TRUNK FROM A MAN AT DALLAS REUNION



11

AT HOOTER'S NEAR LOWE'S MOTOR SPEEDWAY CONCORD NC



7

THE WIVES WENT SHOPPING