



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



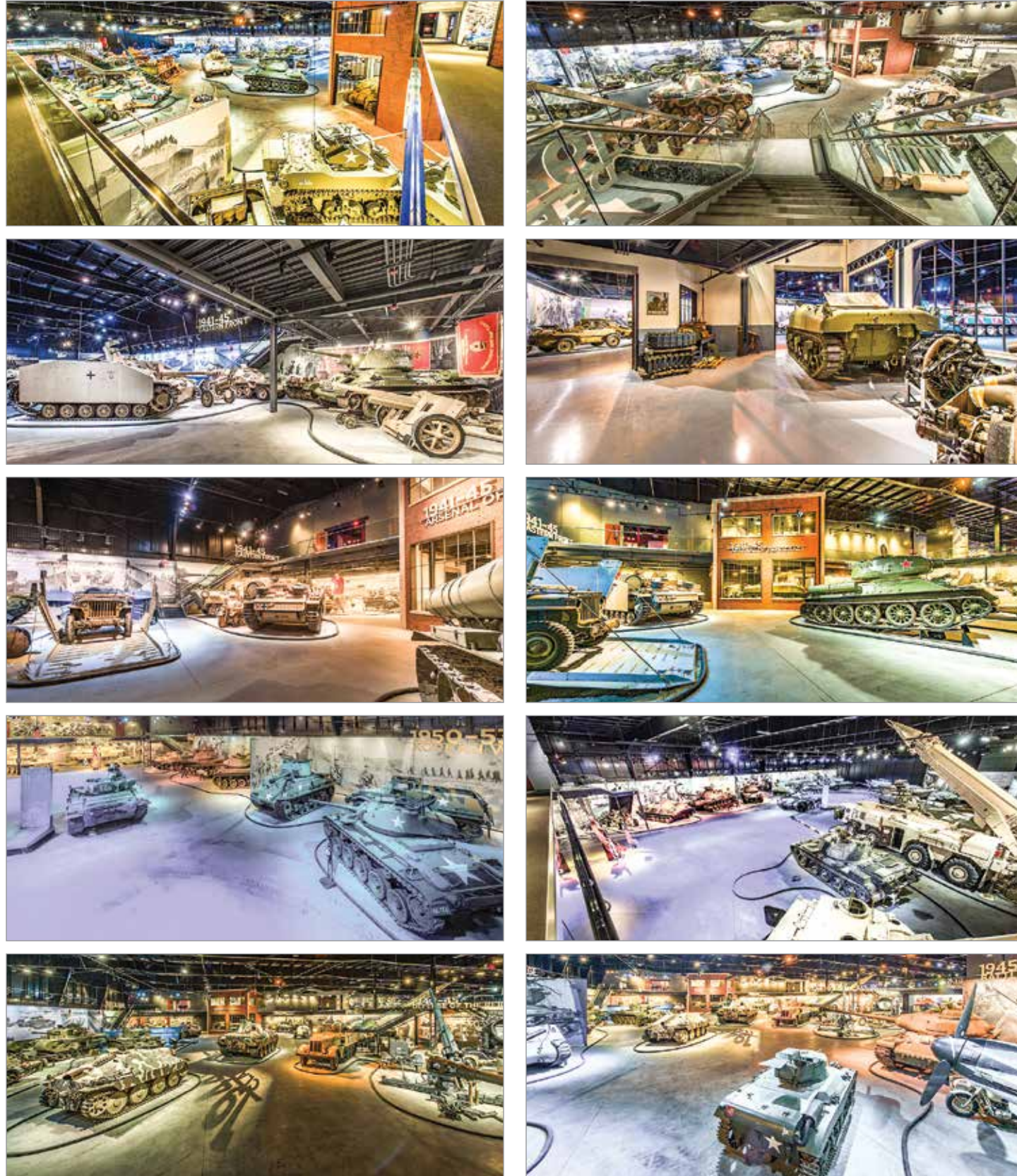
See you in Providence, Rhode Island September 15 – 20, 2021

While the VTA is in Providence, we will be spending the better part of a day
visiting the brand new American Heritage (armor) Museum

Featured Stories:	A Son's Search for Dad's Story	Page 34
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Photo Images of the American Heritage (armor) Museum

This is the armor museum where we will spend the better part of a day visiting during the 2021 Providence reunion



Letter from the President

USMC VTA 2021 REUNION – September 15 – 20, 2021: In 2009, Jacques Littlefield, the owner of the largest privately-held military vehicle collection in the US had a heart attack and unfortunately passed away. Less than a year later, his family decided to dispose of the collection so they conducted an online Internet auction and they sold all 200+ vehicles within a week. The Boston-based Collings Foundation purchased 89 of the vehicles and had them shipped via truck to the East Coast with the intention of opening a very special military vehicle and armor museum to augment their already existing Museum of Flight and their Antique & Classic Car Museum.

When the USMC VTA found out that this new and exciting armor museum was going to be built, we knew that our next reunion (after 2013 in San Antonio) was to be on the East Coast and so after an extensive and exhaustive search for "affordable" hotel rooms in the Boston area, we ended up finding a really nice family-owned (and modern) hotel in Providence, Rhode Island; which is about an hour south of Boston. In 2014 we went under contract with the hotel in order to conduct our 2017 reunion in Providence. Yes, we were already slated to be on the East Coast in 2015 (in Washington, DC) but we figured that a brand new armor museum would off-set being guilty of not finding a different geographical location for 2017. Then much to our chagrin, the the local township authorities disallowed the Collings Foundation the proper permits to build their new museum building and so the VTA had to change our 2017 reunion city (...to St Louis) ... and we asked the Providence hotel to change our contracted year to 2019. The hotel was very accommodating, So much so that we actually ended up changing our contracted reunion dates even one more time (2017 then 2019 and then 2021).

Finally in the spring of 2019 the brand new (and very exciting) armor museum opened in the town of Stow, Massachusetts ... (which is about 20 miles west of Boston). The good news is that the City of Providence, Rhode Island, is close enough to for us to visit "Bean Town" with little or no effort. Please go to the last five pages of this issue of our magazine for all of the details of our next gathering.

ANOTHER COMMENT ABOUT 2021 in PROVIDENCE: Two of the biggest fund raising events that the VTA conducts during our biennial reunions are the "Live" and the "Silent Auctions." We have been extremely fortunate that many of the past reunion attendees have donated really terrific items for these auctions. We want to encourage all of you to seek out and find unique items that you would be willing to donate and that the membership would be interesting in bidding on and acquiring. If you have something that it too large and unwieldy to hand carry on the airplane, we can have it shipped to Providence a few months before the reunion. Please let me know if you need the "Ship To" address.

USMC VTA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES AND LIFE MEMBER ANNUAL ASSESSMENT: It is now the year 2021. Your 2021 annual dues are payable. For Life Members, your Annual Life Assessments are due. There is a self-addressed envelope inside of this issue of our magazine that you can send in your payment check after you affix a postage stamp. If you want to pay online, the USMCVTA "Store" allows you to pay with a credit card.

John

"War is an ugly thing ... but not the ugliest. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth fighting for is much worse."

Stuart Mill in 1860



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ATTENTION ON DECK!!!

USMC VTA Buddy Fund

The Buddy Fund is not a physical fund but rather a commitment of the Marines of our Association to their fellow Marines who may have or are experiencing one of life's many challenges. In Boot Camp it was our rack buddy who we were tied to, in garrison it was our tank crew, and in combat it was every Marine who fought by our side.

Historically there has been in almost every Marine unit a "slush" fund that was there to help Marines in need to buy some food or gas until payday. On deployment it was used to purchase supplements to C-Rations. In the Vietnam Tankers Association, it is to recognize that one of our Marines is experiencing a difficult time.

Long time VTA member, Joe Liu has for years been the face of the Buddy Fund. Joe has sent something appropriate to those who have been hospitalized, lost a spouse or to the family of those who have moved on to "The Great Tank Park in the Sky."

What we want to do better is to keep track of those Marines who we should reach out to during a difficult time. If you know of such a Marine please contact Joe at 801.643.4027 or email pjliu@hotmail.com providing as much information as possible,

Member Info Changes

Terry Wallace

New Email Address:
terry.wallace704@gmail.com

Vincent Bartashus

New Cell: 717.461.1842

Michael Castillo

New Cell: 925.204.1571
No email address



ON THE COVER:
The American Heritage (armor) Museum
Yes, that is an M-48A3!!!

Our Readers Write

(Formally known as "Letters to the Editor")

Bruce Van Apeldoorn Remembers His First Reunion

I still remember the 2005 Philly reunion. It was my first and I was disappointed that I didn't find anyone I knew. Then you invited me to breakfast. That was the moment that I knew I was going to stay because there was at least one person who cared.

Semper Fi, Bruce

1973 Marine Corps Ball



Rick and Joy Lewis 1973

Rick was doing his duty as a DI at MCRD SD. Rick also notes: The "long hair" was the result of a two week leave. I saw the BN Sgt Major the day I reported back in and based on his suggestion, I got a "high and tight" that very day.

Gerry Hodum Passing

Wes "Tiny" Kilgore writes: I'm so saddened by the passing of Gerry Hodum. He and I were close friends, we worked in the S-3 together at 2nd Tanks. Plus, we were Career Planners in 2nd Tanks. I had talked to Gerry quite a while ago and so I knew that he was in bad shape according to his wife, Florida. Which



by the way, she shares the same name as my wife. Other than that, I came across some old pictures as my daughter was helping me get my affairs in order. I thought you'd like to share them. Left is me and Gerry. Middle is my crew at Mount Fuji in '63 at Brown's Island firing the M-103 tank. The last one is a funny sign from Chu Lai, Vietnam.

Mike Gillman Obituary

We just received the magazine with Mike's obit in it. It is great! Thank you! It came at the perfect time also, his wife (widow) is currently here visiting us and she is reading it as I write this. Again, thank you so much!

Chuck Boyer, Mike Gillman's son-in-law

Bruce Responds

In the last issue of our magazine you posed the question that if we ever referred to our tanks as "she." I had always considered my tank (C-22) to be the fifth crewman. The guy with all the muscle—our protector. I enjoyed taking it (the tank) from mine damaged to being an attacker of an enemy bunkers and defender of villages, roads & bridges; provider of a ride for grunts, medevac litters, ammo, >>

water & c-rats and it was the one who was responsible for my safe return to the States. The memories of my fellow crewman, to include C-22, are a source of daily remembrances of how significant my time on C-22 was and how it has formed my personality and impacted my life. Just one Marine's impression.

Maturing

Fred Kellogg writes: Maybe there is help for us as we get older. I met a guy at the gym the other day and started a conversation because he was wearing a military ball cap. He was in the Marines in 1946-1951. He was just finishing the bench press after several sets of flies—he is 91 years old!!! Humbling to say the least.

On this day in 1915

Doc Gene Hackmack writes: On this day in 1915, a prototype tank nicknamed "Little Willie" rolls off the assembly line in England. Little Willie was far from an overnight success. It weighed 14 tons, got stuck in trenches and crawled over rough terrain at only two miles per hour. However, improvements were made to the original prototype and tanks eventually transformed military battlefields.

The British developed the tank in response to the trench warfare of World War I. In 1914, a British army colonel named Ernest Swinton and Mr William Hankey, Secretary of the Committee for Imperial Defense, championed the idea of an armored vehicle with conveyor-belt-like tracks over its wheels that could break through enemy lines and traverse difficult territory. The men appealed to British Navy minister Winston Churchill, who believed in the concept of a "land boat" and organized a Landships Committee to begin developing a prototype. To keep the project secret from enemies, production workers were reportedly told the vehicles they were building would be used to carry water on the battlefield (alternate theories suggest the shells of the new vehicles resembled water tanks). Either way, the new vehicles were shipped in crates labeled "tank" and the name stuck.

The first tank prototype, "Little Willie," was unveiled in September 1915. Following its underwhelming performance—it was slow, became overheated and couldn't cross trenches—a second prototype, known as "Big Willie," was produced. By 1916, this armored vehicle was deemed ready for battle and made its debut at the First Battle of the Somme near Courcellette, France, on September 15 of that year. Known as the Mark I, this first batch of tanks was hot, noisy and unwieldy and suffered mechanical malfunctions on the battlefield; nevertheless, people realized the tank's potential. Further design improvements were made and at the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, 400 Mark IV's proved much more successful than the Mark I, capturing 8,000 enemy troops and 100 guns.

Tanks rapidly became an important military weapon.

During World War II, they played a prominent role across numerous battlefields. More recently, tanks have been essential for desert combat during the conflicts in the Persian Gulf.

Bob Peavey replied: The island of Tarawa would have never been taken had it not been for two M4s landing on a beach that were not in the original landing plans. One tank was named, "Colorado" and it swept the end of the island to the middle.

And from the book, Strong Men Armed – "The two Sherman's rolled over foxholes, blasted pillboxes open with their cannons and machine-gunned the escaping Japanese survivors. Once Lt Ed Bale's China Girl met a Japanese light tank in open combat and dueled her. The impact of the Japanese 37's on China Girl's hide left the steel lemon-yellow on the inside, but the 75's of the bigger Sherman left the Japanese tank a smoking wreck.

"The Marines on the left had a Sherman tank of their own to force their way across Betio. It was the smoke-blackened, dented hulk called Colorado and commended by Lt Lou Largey. It was the lone survivor if the four Marine tanks that had come into Jim Crowe's sector that morning. Colorado had been hit and set aflame, but Largey had taken her back to the beach to put out the fire, and by early afternoon Colorado was again charging pillboxes.

Colorado was on the left and China Girl was on the right and between them 3,500 United States Marines, and the sun was setting behind the tuft of the Betio parrot head."

I Got My S-Box!!!

Hooray! I received the Sponson Box in my mail box today. I'm always delighted when it comes. It's the best piece of mail received. It is truly a treasure to receive first-hand accounts and stories from those who served in the Vietnam War. I agree that it would be a sad day when others aren't recruited to participate in the Tanker's Association as first hand witnesses to the war. It's such an opportunity!

My copies hold a special place on the bookshelf in my house where only my favorite books are stored and displayed. It is not only that they hold my contributed short stories but more so they hold the memories of the brave men and women who actually served in the war. What a treasure!

It's also always an opportunity for me to let you know how much I appreciate your hard work and efforts to keep it going. I know it meant a lot to Steve as well. Hope you are well and enjoying life. Each day is truly a gift. Semper Fi—"Earned by few, envied by many" (so true!) The Few. The Proud...

Marcia Falk (widow of former member Steve Falk)

Hank Fuller Reports In

Providence, Rhode Island is 5-6 hours from where we live in Maine ... and Boston is about halfway in between: All Americans are welcome here in New England!!!! Jane and I were about to get on the plane to Seattle last October when as she was diagnosed with Lupus (which has attacked her



heart and lungs—she is better now) so we had to cancel our trip. We are looking forward to the Providence reunion this fall in "Little Rhody." Tree and I have been making some initial plans already. Stay well!

Did you ever get concertina wire in the sprocket?



John Wear writes: I do have an instance in the spring of 1968 when Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks HQ was at Cam Lo Hill. Every evening we usually had one or two tanks disburse to the Cam Lo District HQ for guard duty. One day it was getting to be dusk and my tank was trying to get to Dist. HQ for our assigned guard duty that night. We drove out of Cam Lo Hill's front gate and in a few minutes, we had crossed the Cam Lo River fording site. On the other side of the river at the end of the bridge, the grunts had already placed three rows of concertina wire across the road. As we approached the strung out wire, the grunts tried to get us to stop and turn around. I yelled down to them that we had to get to the District HQ for guard duty. Their LT did not want to make his men move the wire and then have to move it back. Finally, after much cursing and cajoling,

they moved the wire but part of the wire was still sitting on the road. As our tank moved out, over the tank's intercom, I told my driver to run over the wire...and of course, it got stuck in our drive sprocket. We dragged it for about a half mile through the village. The grunts were chasing us and screaming. We probably pulled 500 yards of wire out of the perimeter and down the road. Defecation occurs!

1st Tank Battalion Deactivation

Belmo writes: I've been invited to the 1st Tank Battalions Birthday Ball this November. The ball will be in Las Vegas ... if in fact they're able to have one. My US Marine tanker grandson will be leaving the battalion in around December or January in route to Quantico. His new assignment will be as a coach on the rifle range. He's pretty pissed off about all this and he's thinking about the Army as an option. So, his plan is complete his enlistment at Quantico and then if there's nothing that he finds interesting enough to stay in the USMC, he will either leave the Corps and consider being a fire fighter back in the St. Louis area or enlist in the Army as a tanker.

Gary McDaniel writes: We are rapidly disappearing. That said, because I was admin, I can't really call myself a tanker. In fact, I wouldn't make a good spot of rust on a tank tread, let alone be a tanker. That I am able to receive and correspond with folks like you...and real tankers, I consider myself fortunate.

The Corps has changed so much since I last fell out for morning formation; I wouldn't even know how to put on the gear they now wear. So much for the old saw "There's no such thing as an ex-marine." They wouldn't want me, certainly not take me. I look back with a fondness for those days. Days when we hitch-hiked from Camp Lejeune to D.C. Days when we could find a bed in the Soldiers', Sailors' Marines' and Airmen's' Club for a buck and then spend a weekend touring the Capitol and dating the girls. Those were the times when everyone loved the serviceman, would pick him up on the highway along with his AWOL bag, and treat him like a long-lost brother. I think it was 1968 when I last saw a serviceman hitching rides. We lost something when we went from the Draft to an All-Volunteer Force. I don't know how much longer we can afford the military we now have.

There was a lot to be said for getting a Private for \$78.00 a month. For those of us who did four-year hitches and got out, it was (for a lot of us) a tremendous education!

As for disappearing tankers, I am reminded of the song by Vaughn Monroe called "Old Soldiers Never Die." Check it out on YouTube. We are fading away!

Bruce Van Apeldoorn writes: I was with "C" Co. 1st Tanks Jan-July 1968 and participated in the Tet Offensive plus Operation Allenbrook. Several years ago, I commissioned an artist to sketch the below picture of C-22. The scene was on 5/26/68 after 1st Lt. Fredrick H. Williams Jr.'s body was removed from the vehicle. It was during an assault of a tree line containing a NVA bunker complex that the Lt. was shot by a sniper in a tree as he manned the sky mounted M60 machine gun. >>



Rick Lewis and Today's Grunts

The other day I got to the MCRD SD commissary around lunch time and a lot of Marines were at the deli ordering or just picking something up at the commissary for lunch. I ran into two Sgt. Maj's grabbing lunch and while standing in line to check out, the three of us got talking. When they found out I was a tanker, they both said, "Big, big, mistake."

Both of them were grunts in Desert Storm and they talked about how much the tanks did when they were on the move across the desert. They also said that on the built up area, tanks were king. The "iron monsters" took out the bad guys behind 14 to 18 inch walls that their M-16's have no power against. Both SNCO's said that they pity the next time the grunts go into a built up area without tanks. So even that Active Duty Marines have their doubts.

Dave Ralston Running Story

Dave was very humbled by you all publishing his story. He likes that it is now a piece of history. He likes that he was able to give back for all he has been given. God's richest blessings to you!!

Debi Wease

Tank-A-Que



THE CMC GETTING RID OF TANKS:

John Wear writes: I discovered a bit of a mitigating comment... while I hate to see the Marine Tanker fade into the sunset, there

is a plan in hand to abate the lack of tanks and artillery on the battlefield ... and the lack of Marine CAS (close air support). The remaining Marine arty units will be manning supersonic laser guided missiles that have an explosive power not seen in combat before. That's one point.

The other point is that the plan is for every Marine grunt unit to have at their beck and call a drone that is armed with real-time cameras, missiles, machine guns and/or cannons. If the grunts need any kind of back up, they will not need to have an arty FO, a CAS spotter or tanks with them. They will be able to deploy the drone and take on the enemy like "Buck Rogers" might have done in the funny papers. The only drawback that I can see is that if the enemy troops have communication jamming ability that would preclude the Marines from calling in their super-duper drones.

Roger Luli writes

Just wanted to let you know that I really enjoyed the Oct – Nov–Dec issue of our magazine. It brought back some fond memories. Like Ev Tungent, I too served as AOIC in Recruiting Station Cleveland. I enjoyed reading his approach to recruitment. I remember our quotas were in excess of 200 men per month. Also, the Robert Shofner story mentioned the USS Francis Marion a ship that I sailed on during a NATO exercise in the Mediterranean. We attacked the Thessalonians.

I need some help contacting a fellow VTA member. I think that his name is Rick Walters. He and I did an interview together about the Ontos at the Washington, DC reunion. He was also at the Seattle reunion and said that he was selling his collection of Ontos. My VFW post commander is a squid but for some reason has the hots for Ontos. He wants one on display at our post.

Also, I need you help in solving the "Puzzle of the Purloined Paragraphs". Ken Zebal was a victim in his story "Qualifying" then most of the events of day four were snatched out of the "Ambush at the Khe Ran Bridge" story. Please–please–please don't take this as criticism you do a great job. I just wanted you to be aware.

Editor's Note: Oooops!

Not a Tank but Pretty Cool



Looking For

WHEN: June 8 – 9, 1968

WHO: Any tank crewman from 1st Platoon Bravo Co, 3rd Tanks, who was at the convoy ambush on the dates above.

WHERE: The pontoon bridge, on Rt. 9, between Khe Sanh and Ca Lu, Quang Tri Province, Vietnam

WHAT: Three tanks from 1st Platoon Bravo Co, 3rd Tanks were leading a convoy of trucks from Khe Sanh to Ca Lu and were ambushed by a NVA company-sized unit, near the pontoon bridge on Rt. 9. Tanks fired on the enemy and had to clear trucks and jeeps off the road in order to get to the pinned down grunts on and near the pontoon bridge. Sgt. Clifford Evans and around 14 other Marines were killed in the ambush.

If you have any information on this incident or the names of the crewmen on the tanks, please contact Jay Miller at Phone: 772.828.9044 or Email: jaymiller05@bellsouth.net

8 mm and 16 mm Films

My name is Scott L. Reda and since 1983 my company, Lou Reda Productions, has worked hard to preserve and share America's military history through film. Lou Reda has been a longtime collaborator with History Channel and National Geographic, producing shows such as Vietnam in HD and Brothers in War (Boys of 67). Included in the email

is an interview with Vietnam Magazine that details our goals and history. We are continually looking for footage to continue to help preserve and show our nation's history. Even if you personally don't have any footage, we hope to share our call with as many veterans as possible. If you are able to share the following message in any way possible it would be a great help.

We are looking for 8mm and 16mm film of the Vietnam War and the American home front. Upon receipt of your footage, we will clean and digitize to high definition, and return your original footage with a DVD copy. You will also be asked to sign a release form to allow use of in the future. For more information, please contact me directly at, scott@louredaproductions.com.

We greatly hope you will assist us in sharing America's past through film and preserving it for the future.

The link below is the Vietnam Magazine interview.

<http://www.redafilms.com/vietnam-magazine.pdf>

Scott L. Reda

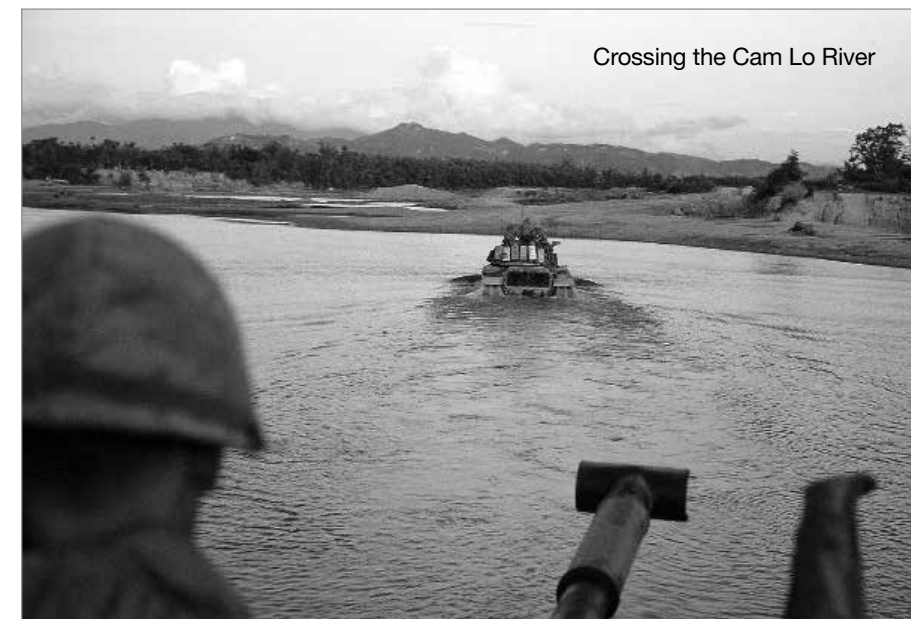
Lou Reda Productions

646.620.6181

www.redafilms.com

Lou Reda Productions is internationally known as a producer of top-quality non-fiction programming garnering immense praise in the form of People's Choice Award, Peabody, and nine Emmy nominations (including one win). ■

Photo from Vietnam



Crossing the Cam Lo River



To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."
—George Patton



Herb Wittington

I am sad to tell you that Herb Whittington passed away Nov. 1st of heart complications. God granted his wish to go quickly. While I am devastated to lose him, I am sure that he is having a fine time in Heaven visiting with his fellow Marines. If you hear a lot of thunder, it is probably them horsing around...

Regards,

Gwen Whittington



Larry Dewey Parsons

Larry Dewey Parsons was born on Friday, July 14, 1944 and passed away on Friday, March 06, 2020. Larry Dewey Parsons was a resident of Dana Point, California at the time of passing.

Roger Luli writes: If you know of someone who needs a little push to write their story, you can pass along this advice from a sadder but wiser jarhead. I reached out to Larry Parsons to get his feedback on some of my stories. You may remember him from one of my Ontos stories. I was shocked to find his obituary. What a punch in the gut. He died last March. My

advice is "Do not procrastinate." Our time is running out. Needless to say I am pretty bummed out right now but I thought you might be able to use this.

Roger added: He was an amtrac officer ... not a tanker. He then went to flight school and returned to Vietnam where he was the lone survivor of a crash. He walked back to safety and later when I asked him how he found his way to safety he said, "That was the longest I was without a hamburger and a beer since I was 18."



Eric M Hammel

The November 2020 issue of Leatherneck magazine reported that military historian and prolific author Eric Hammel, who wrote about the Marine Corps with such authenticity that many believed that he was a Marine veteran, died August 25, 2020 at the age of 74.

Some of Hammel's more famous books are a "76 Hours: The Invasion of Tarawa," "Chosin," "Ambush Valley," "Marines in Hue City" and "The Root: The Marines in Beirut." Leatherneck reports that Mr Hammel wrote over 50 books and over 70 magazine articles, most of which were about the US Marine Corps.

We are extremely grateful to the following members who reached deep into their pockets and made a financial contribution to the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association this past year. You are the lifeblood of the brotherhood and we thank you very much.

Above & Beyond

Anderegg Michael
Anderson Mark
Arena John
Baccarie John
Balleweg Joseph
Barry Thomas
Bartashus Vincent
Beirne IV Richard
Belmessieri Mihcae
Bisbee William
Blanchette Eddie
Blythe Bobby
Bolick Reed
Bonderud Robert
Brightwell LeRoy
Brummitt Dennis
Buning Richard
Byrne John
Carroll William
Castillo Michael
Chassereau Jr. Joseph
Clavan Robert
Clock Jenica
Cole Ben
Colucci Ronald
Coulter Richard
Cramer Monty
Cross Ken
Curti Stephen
Dahl Kenneth
Danner David
Dill Lee
Doty Donald
Eksterowicz Kenneth
English Richard
Everest Guy
Everhard Jr. Casper
Fenerty Thomas
Ferguson Sid
Fierros Robert
Fuentes Jr. Ramon
Gagnon Donald
Goger Fred

Hackett Timothy
Hambright Rhea
Hamilton Danny
Harper John
Hearne Jr. Gerald
Heffernan John
Henderson Rodney
Hildabrand Theodore
Himes Harris
Hobbs Gary
Hokanson Carl
Hunter Terrance
Hunter Dana
Hutchins Glen
Jugenheimer Richard
Kelley Gregory
Kellogg Fred
Kenna Sr Jack
Knight Ronald
Kozak Nicholas
Kropke Roger
Landaker Joseph
Landlitz Harlan
Ledford Jim
Lewis Rick
Lorance Richard
Martin Gregory
Mastrangelo Joseph
Masztak Donald
McDaniel Gary
McDonald Bryant
Mefford Gary
Monaghan Daniel
Montemararo Carmine
Murphy John
Newberry Craig
Nichols Timothy
Norman Jr Ollin
Olenjack Stanley
Oswood Richard
Owen David
Peksens Richard
Pellowski Terry

Peterson Gary
Pipkin Michael
Quinter Kent
Raasch Jim
Rasner William
Rasner William
Riensch Harold
Ritch Pete
Rose Sr. George
Ruby Jr Chester
Sanders Donald
Santos Ladis
Sausoman James
Schultz Ned
Shapiro Myron
Sharetts Ronald
Shaw George
Shaw Michael
Singer Robert
Stayton James
Stokes Robert
Thompson Ky
Thoms Guy
Trower John
Turner David
Ullmer Leland
Valdez Steve
Van Apledoorn Bruce
Van Dusen Dyrck
Wahl Jerry
Wallace Terry
Walters David
Waters Michael
Wear John
Wendling Jan
West Charles
White Jerry
Whitehead Kenneth
Williams Stanley
Woodward Stanley
Young Vernon
Young Sterling
Zitz Ken

If we inadvertently missed someone who participated in the financial well-being of our organization, we humbly apologize for the omission and ask that you please notify us of our oversight.

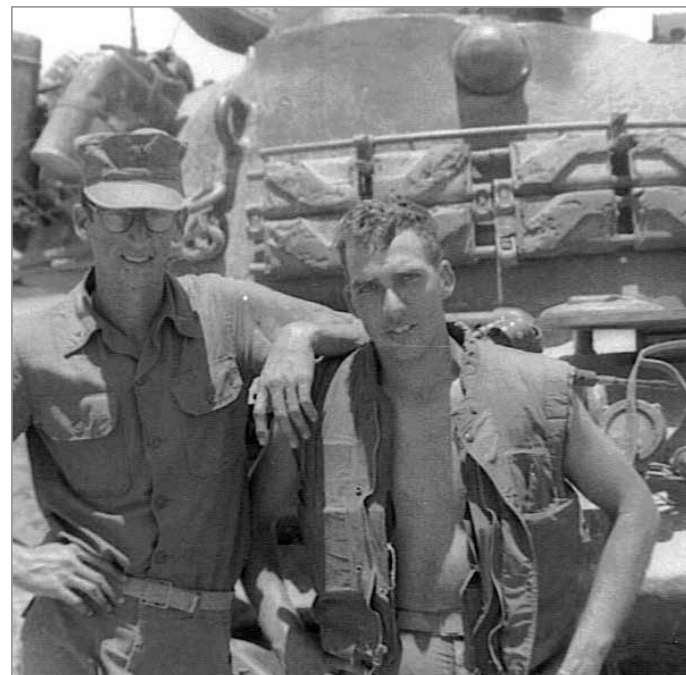
GUESS WHO Photo Contest

Can you guess who the person is in this photo? The first person to contact John Wear at 719-495-5998 with the right answer will have his name entered into a drawing for a chance to win a yet un-named mediocre prize



Last Issue Winner

Last issue's winner was Joe Tyson who called at 11:15 AM on Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020 and correctly identified Bob Haller on the right and John Shackley is on the left. Joe said, "I took the photo. It was Haller's camera." He added that he, Haller and Shackley had a mini-reunion in Washington, DC, a few years ago. ■



Tanks & Medals of Valor

Harold D. Tatum

DATE OF BIRTH: August 6, 1932

PLACE OF BIRTH: Dawsonville, Georgia

HOME OF RECORD: Sandy Springs, Georgia

Silver Star

Awarded for Actions during the Vietnam War

Service: Marine Corps

Rank: Gunnery Sergeant

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

GENERAL ORDERS: CITATION:

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Gunnery Sergeant Harold D. Tatum, United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with Company B, Third Tank Battalion, THIRD Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on 10 September 1967. While participating in Operation KINGFISHER in direct support of the Third Battalion, Twenty-Sixth Marines, during a sweeping operation, Gunnery Sergeant Tatum's section of tanks came into contact with the lead elements of attacking enemy forces. He unhesitatingly reacted to the situation and positioned his tanks to repel the brunt of the enemy attack, effectively preventing Companies I and L of



the Third Battalion, Twenty-Sixth Marines from being overrun. In the ensuing battle, Gunnery Sergeant Tatum's tank was penetrated by an enemy rocket-propelled grenade which set off several rounds of white phosphorous ammunition, resulting in an intense fire inside the tank. Disregarding his own personal safety, Gunnery Sergeant Tatum remained inside the burning tank and assisted in the removal of a mortally wounded comrade. As a direct result of his heroic and unselfish actions, Gunnery Sergeant Tatum received severe burns over 40% of his body. Gunnery

Sergeant Tatum's initiative, outstanding courage and selfless efforts in behalf of another reflected great credit upon himself and the Marine Corps and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.. ■

What Members Are Doing

Belmo's Grandson is a Sergeant!



Above is a photo that was taken at Marine Corps Air and Ground Combat Center 29 Palms on October 1, 2020. It is the promotion of what I believe is the last Marine Corps tank crewman to be promoted to sergeant in Bravo Company 1st Tank Battalion 1st Mar. Div. The brand new sergeant is my grandson T. J. Belmessieri. The Marines pinning on his new sergeant chevrons are Gunnery Sgt. Mateo his tank commander and me, his beaming grandfather. I cannot even begin to express what a proud moment it was ... or how special it was for me when my grandson, T.J. called and asked me to join Gunny Mateo in the pinning ceremony.

Regrettably because of other family demands here at home it was a very short trip and I was not able to spend very much time at "the Stumps." And as a result, I did not call anyone to tell them about this event. Another unfortunate situation was that his uncle, my son Dominic, was not able to make it out from St. Louis for the pinning.

Semper Fidelis
Belmo

Military Parade Warms Heart of 100 Year WW2 Marine

Arnold McLean, Marine hero of WW2, POW and survivor of the "Bataan Death March" was celebrated with a horn honking military parade in Orcutt, CA, on July 11, 2020.

McLean, in a wheel chair, sat near his house wearing a Marine cap, red shirt, American flag mask with a sword in his lap. The parade included local police and sheriff, with lights and sirens blaring, paramedics, motorcycles, fire engines, honking cars, trucks, and vans of all sizes, including



antiques. Some had kids with flags hanging out the back and through the windows. McLean, surprised by the fuss, raised a small flag of his own as over 100 vehicles drove by.

"He shouldn't be surprised," explains long-time VTA member, Armando Moreno, of the local chapter of the Marine Corps League detachment 1340. "He's a national treasure, a jewel." Moreno learned of McLean and contacted "Welcome Home Heroes," a group based in the Five Cities that supports veterans. Together they organized this event to honor McLean.

Back in the day, McLean, a young Marine with only a few weeks training, shipped out from San Diego to the Philippines in 1939. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, 12/7/41, the Japanese focused on taking the Philippines, with especially intense fighting in Bataan from January 7, 1942 to

the day McLean and 76,000 other Americans surrendered on April 9. They were ruthlessly marched approximately 65 miles with no food or water or sleep. Casualties were at least 5,000 and possibly as many as 18,000. The march was deemed a war crime by the Allied Military Commission after the war was over.

"We marched for 10 days," McLean recalled and "if someone fell over, they were bayoneted to death. At one point a Japanese battalion marched by us (the other direction) swinging their swords and many prisoners' heads and arms were cut off."

Asked how he survived McLean said, "I took each day as it came and the hell with tomorrow. Let tomorrow take care of itself. I never gave up and the ones that did aren't here."

After the Death March, prisoners were put on trains and eventually on ships to Japan to be used as slave labor until the war ended.

"We were taken on transport ships to Nagasaki, ten ships in a convoy and eight were lost by American torpedoes and bombs. I was on one of the two that made it." The allies had destroyed the other eight, not knowing of the prisoners on board.

Eventually McLean was taken to northern Japan where he worked in copper mines. They would be lowered into the mines jammed into ore cars with a single bar keeping them from falling off the sides. "Everyone would be hanging on to each other and if one fell off, everyone would go. They worked seven days a week," says McLean, "We got one ice cream scoop full, six ounces of rice in the morning as a whole day's food. We got a half a scoop if we stayed in camp ... and if we were sick, we got nothing." He said that the prisoners got up at 4 AM every morning and had to sing the Japanese national anthem. "I still know it," he said and he sang it out loud.

"I was able to receive one letter a month and it could only

be 25 words," says McLean pointing to one of the letters from his mother.

It was cold in the prison camp and they each got two blankets except when the Geneva Red Cross would come and inspect. They would be given better clothes and two extra blankets and were told to say "Good" when asked how the treatment was. "A guard watched and if you didn't say, "Good," you got beat to the ground after they left," he said.

McLean went into the war weighing 200 lbs. and left weighing only 77. He spent two years recovering in a US hospital. He had no teeth, a bar in his arm, a shattered shoulder, and two shattered knees and a nose broken so many times he lost count. Shot twice, he was awarded two Purple Hearts among other medals.

After the war McLean worked 25 years for Boeing, survived three wives, had four kids and enjoyed much traveling. One of the Purple Hearts is buried with his dog. "I put a gown on him and pinned it to the gown. Someday someone in Lompoc will dig up some little bones and a Purple Heart," he said with a smile. "I really loved that dog."

Richard Carmer's COVID-19 Masks



Photo from Vietnam



Bravo Co, 3rd
Tanks crewmen,
1968

ATTENTION ON DECK!!!

As most of you are well aware, we have been obsessed with getting each and every member of the VTA to tell your story about your service in the USMC ... and even more specifically about your service in Vietnam. We have created a program that we hope will serve as your way to get your story out. It is called the USMC VTA History Project. The bottom line is that if you do not tell your story then when you die, you will be forgotten.

1. We have the Sponson Box magazine to publish your written story.
2. We have video-taped personal interviews that are featured on our website.
3. We have republished many of your stories in four volumes of "Forgotten Tracks."
4. We now have a new program whereby many of you who claim "I cannot write" are given the chance to talk your story. It is called a "podcast."

In order to listen to our podcast programs, please log onto the USMC VTA website: <http://www.usmcvta.org> and click on Podcasts with VTA Members. And enjoy!!!

Listen to one, two or all of them and you feel inspired to participate, please let Tree know. His email address is: Fremkiewicz@gmail.com or his cell phone number is: 209.996.8887. "Tree" is conducting one podcast every other week so the backlog is quite substantial but if after you have

V. A. News & Updates

For more VA information please go to our website
www.USMCSVTA.org

Your 2021 Military Retiree and VA Disability Pay Raise

Military retirees, those who receive disability or other benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, federal retirees and Social Security recipients will see a 1.3% increase in their monthly checks for 2021. The average VA disability check will go up about \$1.85 per month for those with a 10% rating, and \$19.68 for those rated at 100%. For Social Security recipients, the monthly increase will mean an extra \$18.07 per month for the average beneficiary. The annual Cost Of Living Allowance (COLA) is slightly less than the 1.6% increase from last year but in line with the historical increases seen over the last 10 years.

[Source: 13 Oct 2020—Military.com | By Jim Absher]

VA Long Term Care Update 01:

Options for Veterans—Veterans have many options for long term care services and supports — for a short stay or for the rest of their lives.

Nursing Homes

- Community Living Centers (CLCs or VA Nursing Homes) provide nursing home level of care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Community Nursing Homes provide skilled nursing care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week near a Veteran's home and family. These non-VA nursing homes are an option in many places where a VA Community Living Center may not be available.
- State Veterans Homes provide a mix of nursing home care, domiciliary care or adult day health care. They are in all 50 states and Puerto Rico and are owned and managed by state governments that set the rules about which Veterans or Veteran's family members are eligible.

VA Residential Settings

- Community Residential Care (CRC) is a VA program for Veterans who do not need hospital or nursing home care, but cannot live alone because of medical or psychiatric conditions. This is a private-pay option.
- Medical Foster Homes (MFH) are private homes and provide an alternative to a long-stay nursing home. This type of care may be an option for Veterans who have medical conditions that require 24/7 care and supervision.

Non-VA Residential Settings

- Adult Family Homes have a trained caregiver on duty 24/7 to help with activities such as bathing and getting dressed. This is a private-pay option.
- Assisted Living Facilities are like Adult Family Homes except that your room is in a larger building that is not a private home. This is also a private-pay option.

Note that some of the services listed under Home and Community Services, such as Hospice Care, and Palliative Care can also be provided in Residential Settings and Nursing Homes. To learn more about options and resources for Veterans visit www.va.gov/Geriatrics.

[Source: VA Geriatrics Monthly Bulletin | Stephanie Colombini | September 23, 2020 ++]

VA Loan Refinancing Update 04:

CARES Act Forbearance Effect on Eligibility in Loan Guaranty Circular 26—20—25, dated June 30, 2020, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) addresses the effect of a CARES Act forbearance, or some other COVID-19

credit relief, on the eligibility of a veteran for a VA purchase money or refinance loan. The guidance is effective immediately and applies to any loan closed on or after the date of the Circular, and will remain in place until further notice or when the Circular is rescinded. The VA advises that while lenders should continue to follow all applicable authorities regarding VA loans, the "VA is temporarily waiving certain regulatory and policy requirements in an effort to help Veterans and the private sector close essential housing loans."

Purchase Money and Cash-Out Refinance Loans

The VA states that while lenders must continue to follow VA underwriting standards generally, "lenders should not use a CARES Act forbearance as a reason to deny a Veteran a VA-guaranteed loan." However, when a Veteran has obtained a CARES Act forbearance, the Veteran, through the lender, must provide reasons for the loan deficiency and information to establish that the cause of the delinquency has been corrected. The VA will not consider a Veteran an unsatisfactory credit risk "based solely upon the fact that the Veteran received some type of credit forbearance or experienced some type of deferred payment during the COVID-19 national emergency." The VA advises that while deferred payments may not be considered for credit risk purposes, the lender should consider the monthly obligation if the debt will remain active after the closing of the new VA loan.

Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan (IRRRL)

Although IRRRLs generally are not subject to standard VA underwriting requirements, if the loan being refinanced is more than 30 days past due, the Veteran must meet VA underwriting standards and the VA must provide prior approval for the IRRRL. The VA announces in the Circular that it will not require prior approval regardless of the delinquency status of the current loan if:

- The VA has already approved the lender to close loans on an automatic basis;
 - The borrower has invoked a CARES Act forbearance relating to the loan being refinanced;
 - The borrower has provided information to establish that the borrower is no longer experiencing a financial hardship caused by COVID-19; and
 - The borrower qualifies for the IRRRL under specified VA credit standards (the standards set forth in 38 C.F.R. § 36.4340(c) through (j)).
- When a borrower seeking an IRRRL has obtained a CARES Act forbearance on the loan being refinanced, for purposes of the maximum loan amount, the IRRRL may include the following:
- Any past due installment payments, including those a borrower deferred under a CARES Act forbearance;
 - Allowable late charges, consistent with the note, the CARES Act, and all other applicable laws;
 - The cost of any energy efficiency improvements;
 - Allowable closing costs and discount points; and
 - The VA funding fee. With regard to the seasoning requirement for the current loan that applies when a Veteran is seeking an IRRRL, any periods of forbearance do not count toward the required seasoning. However, the mere fact that the current loan was subject to a CARES Act forbearance does not cause the loan to fail to meet the seasoning requirement. Pursuant to the Circular, a loan being refinanced is seasoned if both of the following conditions are met as of the date the borrower closes the refinance loan:
18 • The borrower has made at least six consecutive monthly payments on the loan being refinanced. For example, in a case where a borrower made five consecutive payments before invoking a CARES Act forbearance, such

borrower would need to make six additional consecutive payments, post forbearance, in order to meet the seasoning requirement; and

- The date of closing for the refinance loan is 210 or more days after the first payment due date of the loan being refinanced.

With regard to the consideration of a Veteran for an IRRRL and the imposition of fees on the Veteran, the VA makes the following statement: "VA encourages lenders to carefully consider whether an IRRRL is in the best financial interest of a Veteran. VA strongly supports and encourages the fee waivers that many lenders have adopted, including the waiver of origination fees, discount points, and premium pricing offsets, for Veterans affected by COVID-19."

[Source: JD Supra | Ballard Spah | July 4, 2020 ++]

Important DD Form 214 Update

The DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, is a document of the United States Department of Defense (DoD), issued upon a military service member's retirement, separation, or discharge from active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States.

The DD Form 214 is the most critical initial document needed whenever a service member applies for any veteran benefit. It is the capstone military document as it represents the complete, verified record of a service member's time in the military (active or reserve).

Some of the pertinent information on the DD Form 214 includes:

- Full name used while in the military
- Date and place of birth
- Military service number or social security number
- Date and place of induction
- Date and place of discharge
- Total military combat service or overseas service
- Awards and medals received
- Highest rank/rate and pay grade held on active duty
- Type of discharge (e.g. honorable, general)

The DD Form 214 may be requested by employers should a person indicate he or she served in the military. It is also generally required by funeral directors in order to immediately prove eligibility for interment in a VA cemetery, to obtain a grave marker, or to provide military honors to a deceased veteran.

On September 1, 2000, the National Defense Authorization Act enabled, upon the family's request, every eligible veteran to receive a military funeral honors ceremony to include the folding and presentation of the United States burial flag and the sounding of Taps, at no cost to the family.

Because of the importance of the DD Form 214, it is very important a veteran retain his official copy of the form. Many veterans have a copy recorded at their local county courthouse. This can be done at no cost to the veteran. Thousands of veterans have chosen to make card copies of their DD Form 214 to make it more secure, private, and durable.

According to many VSOs, all veterans should have in their possession their DD Form 214, or know where it is recorded. It is also important to inform family members of the location of this document. Knowledge and access to its location will help ensure a more timely process when applying for any type of veteran benefit.

Top 10 Disabilities Claimed By Veterans

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder | 6. Tinnitus |
| 2. Sleep Apnea | 7. Peripheral Neuropathy |
| 3. Diabetes Type II | 8. Depression |
| 4. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome | 9. Anxiety |
| 5. Irritable Bowel Syndrome | 10. Various Skin Disorders |

NOT MY BEST SEASON

BY "DOC" DAN MCCARTHY

Every year from mid-November through mid-January it's just not my best or most gracious of times...not at all.

The 2nd BN, 7th Marine Regiment (2/7) landed in Qui Nhon mid-July 1965. I remember it was hot as Hell; dry and dusty in some areas and then wet sweltering jungle in others. We moved from hill to hill, never staying on any of them more than about three days ... and those days were spent with day patrols and night ambushes. No tents, no "base camps" ... nothing. Nights were 50/50 watch from a dug-in firing position.

Our mission was to clear Highway 1 and sections of 19 in preparation for the arrival of one of the Army Regiments or brigades and their eventual movement to Plekieu. Of course, us snuffie grunts didn't know that. We did the usual "form up/move out" thing expecting to go search out and kill off as many of the Godless little bastards as we could. The mission as far as we knew was just that day-to-day movement. We encountered the enemy troops sporadically and pretty much at their choosing.

On or about 7 November we came out of the hills and jungle and got aboard another troop transport ship, the USS Paul Revere. That was our first break from it all. Most of us had not had a hot meal or shower since July.

We sailed north out of Qui Nhon and I remember it was raining most of the way. The ship allowed some quiet time, especially at night and I decided to sleep on deck. There were little nooks and crannies that sheltered me from rain and I could, for the first time since July, sleep peacefully.

On 10 Nov 1965, 2/7 made history. We made the first battalion size amphibious assault under fire since WW2! We landed in Chu Lai. That is when the real shit began.

From that date forward (and Alex Lee's book, "Utter's Battalion" chronicles it exactly as it happened), it was more of the same...moving every three days, patrols, ambushes, but, about every three weeks the battalion initiated a full scale operation somewhere in or around Chu Lai. The Ops took on special names: Blue Marlin, Harvest Moon (my "special" memory!), Indiana, Hot Springs, Utah (another bleak period for me...4 March 1966), and so many more. The battalion size ops came one after the other and again, we mud Marines had no clue as to where we were nor when it would be over. That was the worst part, not knowing when the humping and shooting was scheduled to end. We, by this time, most of us had a permanent "thousand yard stare".

On or about 7 December, we set out on Operation Harvest Moon. It was monsoon season and we humped paddies for a few days and then we were lifted on choppers to the mountainous area west of Chu Lai and we humped through muddy streams, had difficult times with mud slicked inclines that allowed one step forward, half a step back and so on. More than half the company was suffering from immersion foot. A few guys had to tape the soles of their boots together because we lacked the new jungle boots and the old leather boots fell apart under these conditions.

At one point, as were in a column order of march, I had to help one Marine walk. I saddled his pack and toted his M-14. We watched the entire column pass us by and we ended up about 500 meters behind. The gooks took their usual sniper shots at us, all missing and all more annoying than anything. At one

point, as we were slipping and sliding along a small path at the base of a hill, I decided I'd return some fire, if for nothing else than to let the bad guys know we were pissed! I cranked off about 30 rounds (emptied one magazine and loaded in a second and sparked off about half of it.)

After catching up, the battalion was setting a perimeter for the night. I made rounds of my Marines and literally half had feet swollen and raw making movement slow for them. If for no other reason than to get the damn unit moving faster (these guys slowed movement down), all of the corpsmen advised their company commanders that evacuating these guys was necessary. Evacuation was ordered and we started that evacuation at first light. It took a couple hours to get them out and we then began moving through the village of Ky Phu within minutes.

Golf Company was on point and as we passed through and away from the village and were in wide open paddies, the NVA Regiment we were chasing opened up, catching us in the open. The story is well described in Alex Lee's book.

To cut to the chase, I ended up the only guy running around because of calls for the wounded. I attended to quite a few, one dying in my arms...a moment I will never forget and one that haunts me since I always wonder if there was something I could have done better. As I crawled out from behind a paddy dyke to go after another WIA, my helmet went flying, as did my medical bag and I caught a round in my right hand. Another Marine crawled out to help and he, too, was hit in the right shoulder. The Marine we were dragging took nine

rounds but survived.

I ended up with some broken hand and wrist bones and a fever because of sepsis from the mud from the paddies. I was sent to US Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, Japan where a good buddy of mine from Corpsman School was permanently stationed. I linked up with him and he arranged to get my bed off the open ward and into the solarium. I ended up with my own sunroom and some peace and quiet!

On Christmas Eve my buddy came to the solarium at about 2200. He brought two six packs of Japanese beer, a bucket of chicken and a bottle of Johnnie Walker Red Label. We sat in dead silence watching the rain...and I mean it was total silence. I think that we knew that no words were necessary because we were both away from home at Christmas and the stark reality was that one of us came very close! I fell into a deep sleep thanks to the Japanese beer and a few hefty glasses of that Scotch whiskey.

Once my wounds were healed enough to discharge me from the hospital, the Navy gave me orders to

an aircraft carrier, the USS Hancock. Now, don't ask me why...probably some John Wayne illusion, but I decided that carrier was not something I cared for and I wanted to return to my Marine grunt unit. The Navy said my orders could not be changed and that they were final.

I decided that I would simply proceed without orders and see how far my penchant for Irish bullshit would carry me. I proceeded to walk away from the hospital, catch a bus to the US Air Force base at Tachikawa. I fast talk my way onto a C-130, and landed back in Nam! I was still without any orders of any kind!

I proceeded to hitch a ride on a six by headed towards 2/7. I was dropped in a small village and told the path to 2/7 was there. Now, I am in Navy blues looking like Popeye the Sailor Man! All alone, no weapon or gear and just strolling along like I was on Broadway Street in San Diego!!

I made it to the 2/7 area and went straight to the Base Aid Station (BAS) where I was greeted by the Chief and the Battalion Surgeon. Both decided

that, since I was already WIA, they would assign me to BAS. I liked that idea! My relative safety and comfort lasted all of four days when they took me aside and told me I would have to return to a line company because an operation was about to get underway and most of the corpsmen in BAS were FNGs and had no combat experience in the platoons.

That operation was Utah...a goat rope from day one! Three corpsmen were KIA, one was awarded the Navy Cross and one a Silver Star. One of my very best friends was one of the corpsmen KIA. I had swapped helicopters with him because some of his gear was not secure so I took his place and went ahead on the first wave. My platoon took 23 casualties! I blame S-1 for that...their intel sucked ass!!

Anyway, that is my funk every season from just before Thanksgiving until just after Christmas. I'll have another one on 4 March.

Semper Fi, my Brother...just thought I could rant to you on another sleepless night. ■

Photo from Vietnam



Bobby Joe and the "Magnificent Bastard," 1968

POEMS

While cleaning out some files I came across this poem which I may have sent some time ago. If so, feel free to deep six it. I'll soon be 88 years old, John, and while I'm in very good health I know my meeting with God is coming. I feel this poem mirrors some of my life experiences both during and after my Marine Corps career.

Semper Fi, Ev Tunget

The Final Inspection

*The marine stood and faced his god
Which must always come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining
Just as brightly as his brass.*

*"Step forward now marine,
How shall I deal with you?
Have you always turned the other cheek,
And to my church have you been true?"*

*The marine squared his shoulders and said,
"No lord, I admit, I really have not
'Cause those of us who carry guns
Can't act like a saint a lot!"*

*I've had to work most Sundays
And at times my talk was tough.
And sometimes I've been quite violent
'Cause the world is awfully rough.*

*Also lord, I never took a penny
That wasn't mine to keep.
And I've worked a lot of overtime
When family bills got too steep.*

*I've never ignored a cry for help
Though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes God, forgive me,
I've wept many an unmanly tear.*

*I know I don't deserve a place
Among most of the people here.
Many never wanted me around
Unless it was to calm their fear.*

*If you've a place for me here lord,
It needn't be so grand.
I never expected or had too much
So if you don't, I'll understand."*

*There was silence all around the throne
Where the saints had often trod,
As the marine waited quietly
For the judgement of his god.*

*"Step forward now marine
You've borne your burdens well.
Walk peacefully on heaven's streets,
For you've done your time in hell!"*

A Letter Home

This letter, written fifty four years ago from my (then) soon-to-be fiancé, Steve Falk, recently surfaced while my son was cleaning out a file cabinet at my home. I found it to be a welcomed surprise and timely gift for Mother's Day 2020. It also reminded me of all the uncertainties of the time and anxieties experienced.

The Marine Corps held all the cards for time and place for each of their Marines to actively serve or to have a time for leave and/or R&R. Perhaps this was the fine print in your "signing on" and very much the reality.

Many of you might have experienced similar anxieties not knowing if you were "coming or going" or having doubts about just what you did choose at the time. Without a doubt, many personal sacrifices were made and plans dashed by schedules of deployment.

Steve did come home on leave that November, 1966, before shipping out for California in December and then on to Vietnam in January 1967 with 1st Tanks, 1st Marine Division. We weren't together to celebrate Christmas but we were engaged to be married on his pre deployment leave and planned to be married when he returned home. In spite of the stress and anxieties, we were fortunate to have our plans work out. That was not the case for many.

Marcia Flak – the widow of VTA member, Steve Falk

Sweetheart,

Boy, am I in a fix. Everything is screwed up. I don't know if I am coming or going. Nobody will tell me for sure when I'll get leave and come home. It looks like I'll be here on Thanksgiving Day. The only thing they tell me is that I have to be in Pendleton on or before the 20th of December. Therefore, I might not leave here until the 30th or the 1st. I'd rather miss Christmas by a month than by a week. It will be so hard. I've never even thought of not being home for Christmas. But, I've got no choice, so there's no sense in running my garbage pit.

How's my best Pook tonight? I guess you're working right now. By the way, I got the money today. I don't know what to do with it. I guess I'll just carry it around until I get to cash them. I'm going to buy a trunk and maybe sent it home, maybe bring it. It all depends on when I get to leave here. The thing that's really bothering me is that I planned to be home this week. If I don't get out of here, I'll miss Thanksgiving and Tuesday there is a junk on the bunk inspection. As you know, all of my junk is home. I might screw myself up yet. I hope not. I'm going to have to ask for some definite answers tomorrow. I'll let you know.

Honey, I'm lost, really. All of a sudden I don't know what I'm doing or where I'm going. If I could just go to Nam and get it over with I'd be a lot happier. Of course, I'd rather not leave you at all. Nothing seems worthwhile. I've been working so hard and getting so little done. I don't have any time to myself. I'm on the road by 0500 and I'm lucky to get off by 1700 in the afternoon. And I just wish I could talk to you all day. I know I'll miss you bad when I go overseas, but at least it will all count toward the last second I'll have to miss you. When I come back, we'll be together for good, always and forever. I ask you only to try not to get too emotional about me going. However, don't keep it all on the inside, that's no good either. It will be hard, but so worthwhile. If I didn't join now, I would have been drafted later. If I don't go now, I'll go later. I think that it's best to get all this junk over with for good.

Well, babe, the kid is very tired and I have another long day tomorrow. Sorry, but I've got to go now. Be good and take care.

Love always and forever.

Steve

Vietnam Vignettes – 1966 – 1967

BY BILL "LURCH" LOCHRIDGE (2012)

Lurch's Note: Well, after my buddy told his stories, I thought I'd give it a try too. Some of them are funny, and some are perhaps a little more serious.

Rabies at Kilo Company April 1966

In mid-April, 3rd Tanks attached me, to become Assistant Platoon Commander under Lt Dix Garner, of 1st Platoon, Kilo Company, that was positioned down at Horse Shoe Lake. The Horse Shoe was just a few miles south of Marble Mountain. Dix was a great Platoon Commander until one morning, while making coffee with C-4, a small piece of it accidentally fell into his C-ration can-made-cup. He said something like, "Screw it" and drank it down anyway. Within an hour or two, we had to medivac him out to Charlie Med. He became very sick from ingesting that C-4. So, now I became the Platoon Commander.

Many of our company personnel had various types of pets. Our pet was a puppy named Point. We also had a monkey named Chico that belonged to my platoon Sgt. Chico was a real pisser at times.

One night, Capt Bob Brooks, who was Kilo's CO, went into the command bunker to listen to radio traffic. As he came in, just wearing his skivvies, his company dog, which was named Asshole, came out of a corner in the bunker and bit him in the leg. He yelled and threw the dog off his leg. Asshole ran back into his corner growling. Bob said, "Hey, what's with Asshole?" One of the radio operators that night said, "Skipper, we don't know, but he bit me last night too." Bob said, "Get the Corpsman down here now". The Corpsman came in and Bob explained what had happened. The Corpsman said, "Well,

maybe he's got rabies". Bob said, "Rabies, what the hell are you talking about? He's our Company dog". The Corpsman said, "Sir, I think we should crate him up and send him back to BN for tests. Bob said, "Okay, let's do it". So, Asshole went back to the 3/9 HQ, and several days later, we got the word that Asshole did in fact have rabies.

As a result, all company personnel, who had had contact with Asshole had to come into BN for personal interviews with a team of Navy doctors, so the very next morning, 23 of us formed up as the "Dog Platoon" and marched back to BN HQ. Arriving there, we saw a line of over 100 people who were waiting to see the doctors. I said to some Sgt, "What the hell is going on here?" He said, "Well, that BS Asshole broke loose in the BN area and bit a number of guys, other dogs, and Communications' pet cow, "Mooie." There we were, standing in the heat of the day to get interviewed about Asshole.

By the time it was my turn, I walked in, and the docs asked me, "Who bit you, Lt?" I said, "Not Asshole, but we had a puppy that played with him." Remember, many of us had "jungle blisters or whatever". I showed them my arms and they said to me that I needed to get rabies shots fast. "OK," I said, when do we start?" And they said, "Tomorrow." So, out of 120 people, 69 of us had to get rabies shots.

Every morning after that, the "Dog Platoon" formed up in the company area and marched back to BN for our shots.

All the shots were injected around our navels. One morning, a brash Sgt came in and lifted his shirt to show where he had outlined a target around his navel. He said to the Corpsman, "Hey, Doc. Hit me!" The Corpsman stood back, aimed the needle like he was playing darts in a bar and threw it at him. The needle actually hit the target. Everyone else there quickly said, "Oh, shit! Not me, Doc."

Each of us was required to get 12 daily injections, and then we had to come in for two extra booster shots a few days later. On my 13th shot, my abdomen swelled up like I was pregnant, but even though I looked like I should have been in a maternity ward, I was able walk off the swelling on my return trip to the company position. Thanks, Asshole!

The Laundry Lady

One evening, as I normally did, I moved our tanks into new positions. I was aboard one of my tanks and moved it about 100 yards or so to the north, where we over looked a small village. I had just got us into position, and all of a sudden, rifle rounds came zinging just over my head. I grabbed my Thompson submachine gun, leaned forward and fired off a complete magazine. All became quite. A company fire team went out to search the area. They came back and said, "Hey, Lt, you shot our laundry lady, but we have her carbine rifle." I really felt like shit because my first-ever kill was a woman. Oh well, such is combat.

A Fortunate Guy

BY TIM NICHOLS

Ed note: Tim Nichols made a generous donation to the USMC VTA with a request that we use the funds to help other members who may be in financial straits. Here are a few notes that he commented on:

Thanks John... I am a pretty fortunate Guy, as are all of us that made it

home in one or more pieces. It seems only right that every once in a while

I share a piece of that fortune. I recall back in 1967, while I was in Dong

Ha, I won \$300 in a black jack game and after I sent the money home to my mother, she was able to get a set of false teeth, maybe this donation will have a similar effect on another.

I first reported to tanks when they were still at Las Pulgas, in mid-1966. I reported to A Co, 5th Tanks as part of the 3/26.

We remained at Pulgas until we went on a float in October 1966. We would go back and forth from Pulgas to Flores each day but remained billeted at Pulgas till we departed for Viet Nam. I remember the night the first tanks were delivered to Las Flores, what an event! The old salts could

What you are about to read here may be very difficult for you to digest. For so many Vietnam veterans there is a very dark side of life. Many of us feel we are alive, but we are not living, we just go through the motions. Many of us feel no joy or emotion for our accomplishments. Many of us see another death as just another day.

Many of us feel those who died in Vietnam were the lucky ones. Life for us is a struggle so many times we feel is not worth the effort. There is a deep dark void that will never be filled.

You see a Vietnam veteran and he seems fine but believe me there is a dark place in his existence. The only way to understand is to have lived the experience he has lived. There is seldom real joy in his life. Being a Vietnam veteran has a long dark tunnel attached.

I just got off of the telephone with "El Presidente" John Wear. I phoned John to ask questions that I had about the "Great American Novel" that I had just read written by six time "Medal of Honor awardee," Wayne Dale Dye.

In Dye's story about Hue City

hear then coming from miles away. It took me a while to pick up the sound that would resonate for years to come. Capt. Burns was the CO. I went to Viet Nam with A Co 5th Tanks on the LSD 2.

First duty station in-country was Camp Carroll. I once served as a loader (don't forget, I am a 2847 – comm.) on Charlie Brown's tank, as we departed for Operation Buffalo and on the way back in I was driving.

I was also part of the team that retrofitted tanks to the new transistor radio systems. We did the conversion in the field. I hold the dubious record for smashing shit on my forehead in the

The Dark Side

BY CLYDE HOCH

Some of you think there is honor in being a Vietnam veteran, but most true Vietnam veterans see no honor. I am not talking about the ones who sat behind a typewriter in Saigon and partied all night. I am talking about those who spent most of their time in the field where every single second was life or death. Most of us feel every day since Vietnam was a precious gift but many are not whole. There is a scar that will never heal.

At times I hear someone talking about how bad they had it in the military and I usually do not say anything but want to tell them to get away from me.

I am not just talking about Vietnam veterans there are many veterans from many eras who live in this rabbit hole. I cannot imagine what it was like for our nurses who patched up the ones we

Book Report on "Citadel" by Dale Dye

BY TOM HAYES

during the Tet 1968 battle, he paints a picture of himself as a Marine "Rambo" and he has to jump on a flame tank – get inside – and yell at the TC to go forward. The TC, according to Dye, was afraid to attack a building filled with gooks because he feared an RPG

Dong Ha E-Club. And I was partly responsible for getting the first electric generator for the A Co compound. It was just enough to run a light in the Sergeant's tent; the comm. shack and the CO's tent, but it was something.

I was in-country from 11/66 till 4/68: Camp Carroll, C-2, Con Thein, Gio Lin, Khe Sahn and Dong Ha, and all points north. When I left Nam in April of '68 I returned to Las Flores and was there till I got out in Jan. 69.

As I say, I am a fortunate guy. Thanks for your help in helping those in need.

Tim Nichols
Cell Phone: 760.870.3926

sent back. These people have my greatest respect. I do not think I could have done it. I saw faces of death. They saw the faces of those whom they brought back to life.

Unfortunately, we will never know how bad someone feels until it is too late. Life is a precious gift, use it wisely.

The Veterans Brotherhood have come together with Films-4-Good to produce a documentary which will help everyone with post-traumatic stress disorder. You can view a trailer at: <https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee...>

If you would like to help veterans contact the Veterans Brotherhood at 267.424.4162.

Thank you!

Clyde Hoch
President of the
Veterans Brotherhood

ing through the buildings without exploding. In his story, Dye finally gets the flame TC to get into the fight. He does this by getting the tank to light up the entire building and kills all of the gooks. The grunts love that Dale Dye is a hero.

The truth of the matter is that Dye was a "combat" correspondent, not a grunt. And to be honest, I was really concerned about what the author was getting at. That's when I called John and mentioned the book and the author. I asked if the flame tank TC was John Wear. Well, I can tell you that I really touched a nerve. John knew all about the book and knew that Dale Dye is a total bullshit artist.

I really already knew this since Dye paints himself at a "Rambo" par excellence. He claims to have gotten

wounded several times ... with his thumb almost blown off in one fight.

WOW! What a guy! Never once does he mention any Ontos being in the battle. We all know that the Ontos were major contributors to the battle. Dye also rarely writes of tanks doing any good in Hue City. He never mentions anyone's name anywhere in the book.

John said that Dye sat in the rear and hardly did anything while he was in the city. John also said that he did not know any of the characters that Dye made up and wrote about. He also said that the story that Dye wrote about the US Marine tank being knocked out at the entrance gate of the Citadel and the entire crew killed was a fabrication to elicit sympathy.

I can see that John never forgot his

Why We Are Marines

BY MAJ GEN ANDREW DAVIS

To understand a Marine you must know:

We left home as teenagers or in our early twenties for an unknown adventure.

We loved our country enough to defend it and protect it with our own lives.

We said goodbye to friends and family and everything we knew.

We learned the basics and then we scattered in the wind to the far corners of the Earth.

We found new friends and a new family.

We became brothers and sisters regardless of color, race, or creed.

We had plenty of good times, and plenty of bad times.

We didn't get enough sleep.

We smoked and drank too much.

We picked up both good and bad habits.

We worked hard and played harder.

We didn't earn a great wage.

We experienced the happiness of mail call and the sadness of missing important events.

We didn't know when, or even if, we

were ever going to see home again.

We grew up fast, and yet somehow, we never grew up at all.

We fought for our freedom, as well as the freedom of others.

Some of us saw actual combat, and some of us didn't.

Some of us saw the world, and some of us didn't.

Some of us dealt with physical warfare, most of us dealt with psychological warfare.

We have seen and experienced and dealt with things that we can't fully describe or explain, as not all of our sacrifices were physical.

We participated in time-honored ceremonies and rituals with each other, strengthening our bonds and camaraderie.

We counted on each other to get our job done and sometimes to survive it at all.

We have dealt with victory and tragedy.

We have celebrated and mourned.

We lost a few along the way.

When our adventure was over, some of us went back home, some of us

Marine Corps language in describing the Dye book or in expressing his feelings for Dye. And of course, the book is a totally fabricated novel. And I thought that I was the only other person who could cuss like that!!! As John talked, I was pissing in my pants laughing.

John then asked me to write about our conversation for the Sponson Box. I then questioned the wisdom of featuring a story about this horrible book in our magazine that it would simply be an advertisement push for the book and for Dale Dye? John said, "Just write the story. OK?" So here it is.

I say that the novel "Citadel" is garbage and the author, Dale Dye is a phony. John Wear is still my hero.

started somewhere new and some of us never came home at all.

We have told amazing and hilarious stories of our exploits and adventures.

We share an unspoken bond with each other, that most people don't experience, and few will understand. We speak highly of our own branch of service and poke fun at the other branches.

We know, however, that, if needed, we will be there for our brothers and sisters and stand together as one, in a heartbeat.

Being a Marine is something that had to be earned, and it can never be taken away.

It has no monetary value, but at the same time, it is a priceless gift.

People see a Marine and they thank them for their service.

When we see each other, we give that little upwards head nod, or a slight smile, knowing that we have shared and experienced things that most people have not.

So, from myself to the rest of the Marines out there, I commend and

thank you for all that you have done and sacrificed for your country.

Try to remember the good times

and make peace with the bad times
Share your stories.

But most importantly, stand tall

and proud, for you have earned the right to be called a Marine.

I'm a Marine.

The Top and Me

Back in June 2011 retired 1st Sgt Jim Langford, USMC and I had an email exchange that went like this:

John Wear: Top, do you have any photos of your life as a Marine? Most especially when you were blessed by the all-knowing Marine Corps Gods to serve as the 1st Sgt of our glorious Marine tank company in a war zone? If you do and you have them in an album...please be sure to bring the album with you to the 2011 VTA reunion in San Diego. The Slopchute is a great place to share your sea stories and swap little white lies about our glory days.

Jim Langford: I Do!!! I Do!!! Now if only I can find them in this mess I call a home. Did I mention that I have been married 56 years to a most beautiful woman from India, who, unfortunately for me, had servants her entire life before me AND DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO CLEAN HOUSE?!! I really love that woman.

QUESTION: Do you remember the BIG Typhoon that hit us in Sept of '68? And how, afterwards, we moved closer to the mouth of the Cua Viet River and set up a position. And from which we saw the 1st Amtracs fuel dump blazing away, smoke billowing. I also have some pics of me with my bald head, Thompson machine gun and my hawk, in the command cupola of a tractor getting ready to take out a motorized patrol. These are some of the pics I have. If I can find them...

Semper Fidelis - "Little Jimmy" Lawrence

John Wear: Yes, Typhoon Bess. I only know that name after reading the official USMC publication called "The

US Marine Corps in Vietnam, 1968" where they talk about the storm in detail. I was with Charlie Co when we moved from Cam Lo Hill to Mai Xa Thai and we took over that bombed out village. Originally we were "blessed" with that for-shit drunk gunny who shot at the Vietnamese kids along the Cu Viet River and he was subsequently arrested by the MPs at the Dong Ha boat ramp. Anyway, my flame tank got dispatched to Cua Viet a day before the big rain. We were headed to "Charlie 4" but got caught up in the storm and spent one or two nights at the mouth of the Cua Viet with 1st Amtracs. I did not see Charlie Co again until Quang Tri. You must have replaced that horrible drunk gunny (who was supposed to be acting Company First Sgt). You & I must have crossed paths at Mai Xa Thai and I did not really know who you were until Quang Tri.

I'd love to see your photos...so find those fuckers or your will not be welcomed in the Slopchute! "That's an order Marine!!!" Hee! Hee! Hee! I love saying that to a SNCO!!!

-Your Johnny Boy

Jim Langford: Oh, yeah! I remember the incident with that gunny. What made me surprised was that, in an infantry company, it was automatic for the next senior SNCO to take over if something happened to the gunny. I never did, repeat NEVER DID, get one of the other SNCO's from the tank company to be the gunny. I threatened courts-martial, physical vi-

olence to their person ... (I am a big, very big, SOB), but nothing would take the SNCO's away from their platoons. After we got back to Quang Tri they gave me an MGySgt to be the Maintenance NCO. As you know that rank is a pay grade above a 1stSgt. It put me in an awful position at the time because I was a brand new top and Charlie was my first company!!!

I'm still looking, but you missed a great experience when Charlie was on the North bank of the Cua Viet River. I taught you 1800's how to be 0300's putting you out on ambushes, patrols, foot combat, et al! They loved it!!!

Semper Fidelis, You All

Little Jimmy Lawrence

COMMENT: This email exchange occurred just before the 2011 VTA reunion in San Diego, which was the home of 1st Sgt Jim Langford. Very unfortunately, the day before the reunion, Top Langford was stepping out of the shower, he slipped and took a very hard fall. As an aside, Top had lost one of his legs below the knee (to diabetes) a few years earlier and his prosthesis failed as he stepped out of the shower. Sadly, Top then spent the next week or so in the hospital and he missed our reunion. Top's lovely bride, his Marine officer son and his daughter-in-law did show up for the Farewell Dinner and many of us were able to tell Top's family how much we loved and deeply respected him. Then even more unfortunately, Top passed on to "The Great Tank Park in the Sky" in the summer of 2017.

The Ship's Laundry

BY KEN ZEBAL

At or about 2200 on 12 May 1965 the 3rd Battalion 3rd Marines mounted out from Camp Schwab, Okinawa for White Beach in Miller Buses

(cattle cars) and 6X6 trucks. The 3rd Platoon of Co "A", 3rd Tanks was attached to Battalion Landing Team 3/3 and motor marched from Camp Han-

sen to White Beach.

At White Beach we took on a full combat load of ammunition and loaded onto either Landing Craft >>

Mechanical-8s or Landing Craft Utility landing craft and headed to Landing Ship Dock 28, the USS Thomas-ton. My former Drill Instructor Sgt R. B. Johnson (an 1811) was there to send me, one of his recruits, off to war and it was a significant event for him.

We'd had several previous mount outs; one to the Philippines and a more recent one Camp Fuji. However, this was our first to South Viet Nam. We still had cold weather gear packed from the mount out to Fuji.

We approached the well deck and ultimately secured and dogged down our vehicles for the trip south. Then we quickly got settled in the berthing compartment, were assigned racks, secured our sea bags and got underway. Later, we were briefed by the ship's Captain over the 1-MC on our destination and mission at which time everyone became quiet and focused – only one member of our platoon, Sgt. Sam Kaleleiki, had actually been in combat -Korea.

The compartment was predictably crammed, hot and humid but no one

complained. After a while we received our shipboard duty assignments for mess duty, security, fire watch and laundry. I had well deck security which was really good duty because of the fresh air. Jim Thompson had laundry duty. Interestingly enough, Jim and I previously served in Co "C", 2nd Tanks and made two cruises together where I had security and he had duty in the ship's laundry so this was old hat to us. I forget who had mess duty.

After a couple of days at sea we fell into the usual routine of compartment cleaning, failing inspection, re-cleaning, PT, PM'ing our vehicles and spending a whale of a lot of time in the chow line.

Laundry call was sounded the day before we arrived off the coast of South Viet Nam. Each of us turned our laundry bag over to Jim which he took to the ship's laundry. In the meantime, Sgt Dan McQueary, the platoon Maintenance Chief, determined that we'd be needing short-sleeved utility jackets. This was way before jungle utilities and jungle boots. So, Sgt. Mac and

The Believers

BY BR MCDONALD

This incident happened to 1st Platoon, A Co, 3rd Tanks (the light section A -14 and A-15) around March or April, 1967. We had just gotten through doing our 30 days at Gio Linh, the northern most firebase which was taking the most incoming in the whole country at the time. I was now the light section leader and we were told that we were going to help an engineer group at Gio Linh. The engineers brought about 75 bull dozers and the Army sent two twin 40 "dusters" to assist us. The dozers started cutting what we called a fire break heading west to Con Thien. We also had about a company of grunts with us. That evening the grunt commander told me that we were going to cut a break between Gio Linh and Con Thien in order to stop gook infiltration. It took the gooks about three

days to figure out what was going on and my job was to sweep the area (with the grunts) that was going to be dozed that day. We were out about six hundred yards when the first dozer pushed up a mine and it exploded in front of it. The thing about this particular dozer was that the driver sat directly behind the blade...whereas, most of the other dozers were more traditional with the drivers behind the blade and the large engines. Unfortunately the driver was wounded and medevacked.

About the fourth night, the gooks started shooting mortars at us. The first round hit the grunt OP and took out the grunt commanding officer and most of his staff. The gooks didn't get off more than three rounds because when we had set up for the night, we made reference points and the first one that we made was a large stand of trees

our Platoon Sergeant, SSgt D.J. Clark got with the ship's Boson and asked if they could use the sail locker and sewing machine. Sure enough, the Navy helped us out and in a short while we lined up and watched in amazement as SSgt Clark and Sgt. Mac turned our long-sleeved utility jackets into short-sleeves. Little did we know what a huge help that would be but Sgt. Dan was always a very intuitive and resourceful NCO.

As Jim Thompson returned our laundry to us a funny thing happened. It seems that one of the members of the platoon had sent his Marine Corps sweatshirt to be washed – yep, you guessed right – it was a red one with the big emblem and all. So, on 19 May 1965 when the Commander Landing Force issued the order to land the landing force and the Captain of LSD-28 ordered all Marines to their debarkation stations, the 3rd Platoon, Co "A", 3rd Tanks attached to 3/3 assaulted the beach at Chu Lai wearing pink skivvies.

about 100 meters out. You could see the gook mortar flash at the base of the tree and since we figured that the gook spotter had to be in the trees, we shot HE with our 90 and got the mortar on the second round. The medevac came in and removed the wounded and dead. A gunny was now the CO.

The next day we were sweeping the bush and for some reason the twin 40's always followed our trail about 50 yards behind us. The gooks started hitting us with mortars and one round hit one of the twin 40's right inside of the open turret killing the entire crew. The other twin 40 hooked up the dead vehicle and towed it away.

The dozers were pushing up a lot of anti-tank mines and there were numerous explosions everyday but not one dozer was damaged. Both of our tanks had four man crews at the time

and I was always the lead tank. I had a new gunner assigned to me and he had just returned from the States. He had gotten emergency leave to get divorced and while he was home he had heard a killer song by the Monkees called, "I'm a Believer."

We were 8 to 10 days into the operation and sweeping out west when we hit a good sized mine on our right side. It lifted the tank up into the air and it had a large shock wave. Luckily the grunts were, as usual, walking behind us, walking in our tracks about 50 yards back. A-15 radioed me and asked if we were OK. I replied "Yeah." I added that we were going to need some cover to button up the track. A-15 came around us and drove about 30 yards in front of us and stopped. About that time an RPG hit their gun shield and they opened up with their

machineguns. A-15's driver was not a tanker. He was a tank maintenance man that battalion had turned into a tank driver since we were short tankers. He took some shrapnel in his back and I believe that that was his fourth or fifth Purple Heart. I remember him complaining that you were supposed to be sent home after you got your third heart but he was still in-country. Now that I think of it, I should never have said that he was not a tanker. He was a really good tank crewman...and he was a great person too.

When we had hit the mine, I looked down at my gunner and said, "Man, are you alright?" He just looked up at me and said, "Yeah I'm a believer." I responded, "We are all believers." And A-14 became "The Believers." The driver, the loader and I got off of the tank and started trying to put the track

back together. The bush was so thick that you couldn't see five yards in any direction. We were working as quickly and as quietly as possible when we heard movement behind us. I radioed the grunt gunny and asked him if his people were moving around. He told me that all of his grunts were about 50 yards behind us. I told him that we had heard movement to our right and wanted to recon by fire with our 30. The gunny told us to go ahead. I told the gunner to shoot the 30 into the bush to our right while we continued to put the track back together. When the gunner stopped shooting, the movement stopped as well. We got the track buttoned up and both tanks moved back to the cleared area for the night. Our relief came out the next day and we went back to battalion for repairs.

Marines Make a Corps, Not an "Army of One"

AUTHOR UNKNOWN-SUBMITTED BY JAY SETCHELL

How many times have you been asked, "What is it about you Marines?" This may help you explain what we share that is so special and what we have lived that makes us remember. To understand, you have to live our experience, share what we have all shared, and feel what we have all felt. It is about Corps values, and honor. It is about character. It is about a shared experience that changed our lives.

The common experience starts with DISORIENTATION. The Corps creates a vacuum in your life, it takes away your hair, clothes, and friends, and fills it with a drill instructor. He says things like get off MY bus ... do it NOW ... and as you stand asshole to belly-button on the yellow footprints, your identity disappears. The D.I. gives you a short lesson on the UCMJ, and you learn that rights belong to the institution, not to the individual. You will live in a squad bay and you will march everywhere. He speaks to you in the future imperative ... he says ... YOU WILL ... and you do! He gives you a new language ... deck, hatch,

head ... It is a language that is steeped in a tradition you don't understand yet. He takes away your right to speak in the first person, and he takes away your first name. Your platoon number is what's important now. Before your first meal you get 20 seconds to stow your gear, and you learn that the only way to get it done within the time limit is to help one another ... The TRANSFORMATION begins.

This is the culture of the Group, and its members are anonymous. Although you don't know it, your drill instructor will become the most important person you will ever meet, and your weeks of boot camp will become the defining cultural experience of your life. For the first time in your life you encounter absolute standards of right and wrong, success and failure. When you screw up, everyone stops, and they penalize you, immediately, so you won't forget. Disorientation and Transformation are followed by TRAINING.

The rules are simple:

- Tell the truth
- Always do your best no matter how

- trivial the task
- Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong
- Don't whine or make excuses
- Judge others by their actions
- and above all, look out for the group, before you look out for yourself.

During your training you are pushed beyond your limits, and you achieve. You learn to make excellence a habit. The common denominator among you and your fellow recruits is pride and accomplishment. Through your training you develop spirit, and you develop self-discipline. You learn the ingredients of CHARACTER: Integrity, Selflessness, and Moral Courage. And you learn the Corps Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. These are your roots. The Corps is a rigid code that will stay with you forever. It will define your character, and it will guide you for the rest of your life.

This is why there are no "EX-Marines". Once you can appreciate what you are about to become, you learn about those who have gone before you. You study our history, and learn >>

the lessons of countless heroes who acted, not for self, but for comrade, Corps, and Country. Marines are about taking care of each other, always have been, always will. It is our culture and it holds us together. As you learn the history, you become part of the tradition. You have a new appreciation of your God, your Country, and your Corps.

One final element completes your training—you become a rifleman. The magnitude of what you have accomplished becomes apparent to you at graduation, when you finally earn your title and are called Marine. What you know then, in your heart, but what you can't put into words, is that there is something very special about this organization that is unlike any other organization you ever have been a part of. What you can't put into words, but what you know in your heart is that the essence of the Marine Corps resides with the lowest in rank; The Marine is the Corps, and the Corps is the Marine. ... Your uniform says it all. When someone looks at you they don't see the name of your ship, a unit patch, or a branch insignia ... what they see is a MARINE. That's all that counts! You are a Marine! It is what matters to you, and it is what matters to ev-

ery other Marine. You know that you may never feel this important again, and you will spend the rest of our life living the code, and holding on to the feeling that every Marine is a rifleman, and that, the essence. But there is more to our story than our boot camp experience. There is our experience of sacrifice and our participation in the history & tradition of the Corps. We share stories and tell of the humor that got us through the tough times, but we also have stories we keep to ourselves, hiding the painful memories too personal to share. Shared experience and personal sacrifice are reasons the Marine Corps is a Band of Brothers. It is the reason we celebrate today. The feeling you have when you become a Marine lasts a lifetime. Whether you serve 3 years, or 30, your experiences will never be forgotten. You will never work as closely, or depend on others more, than you did in the Corps. The Corps is your family, you can never leave, and you are always welcome back. You are EXPECTED to come back!

This shared experience, and personal sacrifice is our common bond. It is why we love each other and our country so much, and why we cling to our traditions. Our celebration preserves and honors the memory of all who

have gone before us and it is an example, and a standard, for all who follow. In a time when there are so few proud and good examples to follow, when so little seems to count, our views, our beliefs, our PRACTICE of our tradition is, by others standards, EXTREME. We are perhaps all our country has left to guarantee that the principles upon which this nation was founded will survive. Many presidents, and congressmen, have tried to do away with the Marine Corps, but we are still here. Why? The answer is simple—America doesn't need a Marine Corps, America WANTS one! Marine, you are the reason she feels that way. Remember that, and feel good about it.

"It does not take a majority to prevail ... but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men."

—Sam Adams

"If we do not protect our troops, why should they protect us?"

—Major Frank Stolz

"Pray for Peace but chamber a round."

—Major Vickers

Photo from Vietnam



Mine Damage, Route 9, 1968

Bustin' Balls on the DMZ

BY JOHN WEAR

In the middle of the extremely hot and humid month of July 1968, much of 3rd Tank Battalion is ordered out on "Operation Thor". The far-reaching "search and destroy" operation involves all three battalions of the 9th Marine Regiment and all three platoons of Alfa Company's tanks plus several additional tanks from Bravo and Charlie Companies. It is a two-mile wide sweep that will make a complete 360 degree circle around the firebase at Con Thien. One element is the four gun tanks from 1st Platoon, Alfa Company that is lead by Lt. Coan and my flame-thrower tank. We are to accompany and support Foxtrot Company, 2nd Battalion of the 9th Marine Regiment (2/9).

In the pre-op briefing, Lt. Coan instructs the tank commanders (TC's) of his platoon that the brass is expecting a lot of enemy action during the op. The TC's are: Lt Jim Coan, Cpl. Jesus "Chewy" Bonilla (San Antonio, Texas), Sgt. Dan "Mac" McCartney (Hannibal, Missouri), a second tour "new guy" SSgt. Tim Tews (New York, NY) and me. The Lt. tells us, "Because this is the first large scale sweep north and west of Con Thien since the monsoons have stopped, we will probably hit lots of shit, many times. So I want you and your crews to be prepared. The military intelligence types say that there will probably be at least two, if not three regular NVA battalions housed inside reinforced bunker complexes that they have been building uninterrupted for well over four months." The other order that comes from above is that while we are out there, brass wants to assess the damage that the consistent B-52 "arc light" bombing raids have had, if any, on the NVA bunkers and supply caches that dot the countryside.

Sweet mother of Jesus! This is not what any of us want to hear! It is especially not-so-nice because we are operating with the 9th Marines. It always seems that when the hapless grunts hit the shit, the shit tends to hit them! And hard!

Early the next morning, we start the operation in order to avoid the heat of the day which really is a joke – it seems to always be hot and humid all day and all night every day. Just as our five tanks pull out of the main gate of Con Thien, we begin to catch incoming NVA 152 mm arty. What a nice way to start the day!

The incoming is especially bothersome because our tanks are trying to meet up with the grunt units that we have been assigned to support. It seems as if there are a zillion things happening all at once and it is necessary for me to keep my head out of the turret to see that Steffe, our driver, doesn't run our iron monster into anything or over anyone.



Incoming!!!

Not only are there our five tanks lumbering along the country side, but I see several tanks from the other two Alfa Company platoons moving to the left and to the right of the Con Thien perimeter. I also see at least five Army 8" self-propelled guns coming up the road from the "Washout." Behind the doggie arty there are five or six Marine 175-mm self-propelled cannons that are heading in our direction.



To our far right I see Marine 4 duce (4.2") mortars setting up in a field. This is the same field that we will have to cross to get where we need to go. But seeing all of this artillery showing up means two things: We will get a lot of heavy arty back up support ... but it also means that the brass is expecting us to hit the shit.

Then four C-124 cargo planes fly from the west and overhead at just above rooftop level spraying defoliant (Agent Orange) all over the place. They spray me and my tank as well as everything around us. I guess that no one told the Air Force that there would be nearly 5,000 Marines assembling on the DMZ today. So the "Air Farce propeller heads" just keep their scheduled spraying and they douse us with this shit. It is not very funny how twenty years later the VA will be paying out huge amounts of dollars for claims of poisoning from Agent Orange.

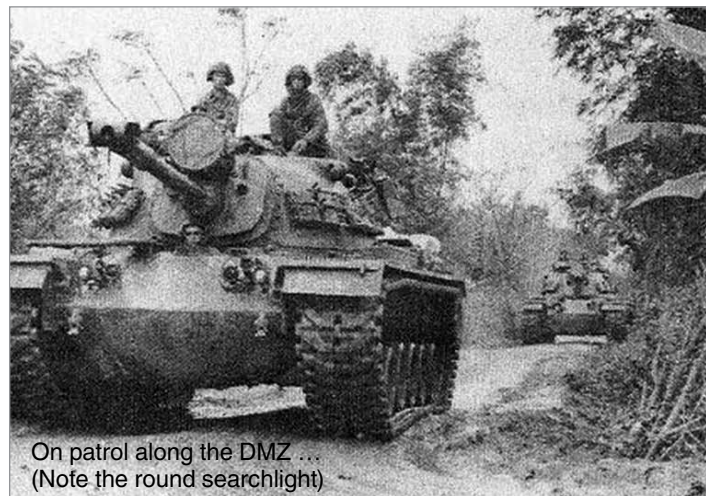
As an aside, 30 years later, during one of the very first VTA reunions, when I mention being sprayed by Agent Orange, my gunner, Carl Fleischmann said, "Don't you remember after the planes passed overhead, our tank was covered with the stuff? Between the diesel fuel that they used to mix with the AO, and the dust that was always covering out tank, we used to draw pictures and cartoons in



USAF C-124's Spraying Agent Orange

In addition to all of this tracked vehicle traffic, there are at least 40 six-by trucks loaded with grunts that are parked outside of the Con Thien gate and the grunts are disembarking and forming up to head west past the 4 duce mortars. And we continue to catch gook incoming!

It takes us about two hours for our tanks to catch up with



On patrol along the DMZ ... (Note the round searchlight)

the elements of Foxtrot Company 2/9 that we are assigned to support. Once we meet up with the grunts, our tanks begin to intersperse and line up with the grunts on-line, we are talking to one another over the radios.

All of a sudden the grunt's Fox 2/9 Company Commander, "Foxtrot Six Actual" comes on the radio and says, "All tiger (tank) commanders, stay the fuck off of my radio frequency and I mean now!" And of course what he means is, "You tankers cannot talk on my personal company radio frequency (period)."

Just to give him a little shit, each of us tank commanders come over the radio (one at a time)...

The first tank commander says, "Foxtrot Six, this is Alfa One Two. Over"

The grunt radio operator comes over the radio, "Alfa One Two, this is Foxtrot Six. Over"

The tank commander (Chewy Bonilla) then says, "Foxtrot Six this is Alfa One Two, that's a Roger on your last. Over."

The grunt radio operator comes over the radio, "Alfa One Two, this is Foxtrot Six. Out"

The next tank commander ("Mac" McCartney) comes over, "Foxtrot Six, this is Alfa One Three. Over"

The grunt radio operator comes over the radio, "Alfa One Three, this is Foxtrot Six. Over"

The tank commander then says, "Foxtrot Six this is Alfa One Three, that's a Roger on your last. Over"

The grunt radio operator comes over the radio, "Alfa One Three, this is Foxtrot Six. Out"

The next tank commander (Sgt. Tews) comes over, "Foxtrot Six, this is Alfa One One. Over"

The grunt radio operator comes over the radio, "Alfa One One this is Foxtrot Six. Over"

The tank commander then says, "Foxtrot Six, this is Alfa One One, that's a Roger on your last. Over"

The grunt radio operator comes over the radio, "Alfa One One, this is Foxtrot Six. Out"

I then call over the radio, "Foxtrot Six, this is Foxtrot Three One. Over"

The disgruntled grunt company commander comes over, "Foxtrot Three One, this is Foxtrot Six Actual, enough already! Get the fuck off and stay the fuck off of my radio freq. now!"

I say, "Foxtrot Six Actual, this is Foxtrot Three One, Roger your last. Out"

That is how to officially bust balls! I am sure that the Foxtrot skipper was fuming and was ready to ask the 2nd Battalion CO to have all of the fuckin' tanks to go back to Con Thien where we belong and to leave him the fuck alone!!! ■

Title: A Slight Case of Murder

BOB VAXTER

It was late in July 1979 when two detectives from the City of Portage, Michigan Police Department came to the Springfield Police Department where I worked. They brought a VCR tape of an armed robbery that had taken place in Portage, Michigan, asking if we recognized the perpetrators, a tall black male wearing a knee length animal skin coat and a nondescript man. The tall man pulled out a .45 semi-automatic pistol and fired one round into the ceiling, saying the bullets were jacketed hollow points, filled with mercury, capped with wax. He announced that this was a robbery and if everyone did as they were told no one would get hurt. He told the cashier to take out all of the bills and put them in a paper bag and give it to him. The first man handed the second man the paper bag and he left the store. He then had everyone walk into the cooler at the back of the store and advised them not to come out for 5 minutes or they would be shot. The subject left the store.

After watching the video, Officer Mileski said that the tall male was Charles "Chucky" Magee. The other one was Jerry Steiner.

Fast forward to the second week in August, 1979. I received a call to investigate a vehicle sitting in the middle of a field off Betterly road.

As I approached the designated location, I could see an older model, red Pontiac Firebird sitting in the field. I could see a set of car tracks on the dirt road turn, going through the weeds and brush. I saw a black male in the front seat with a hole in his head, obviously dead.

I contacted the dispatcher and advised him that I had what appeared to be a homicide, and to contact the medical examiner.

Shortly afterward the medical

examiner, the County prosecutor and an evidence technician arrived. I began taking photographs of the scene.

A wrecker came to the scene, covered the vehicle and body with a tarp and moved it to the police department.

A check on the license showed it was registered to a Donald Matthews of Kalamazoo, Michigan. A search warrant was obtained to allow us to remove the body. A wallet in the pocket of the victim showed him to be Donald Matthews. The medical examiner began examining the body for the possible cause of death. The blood oozing from the victim's left ear was an exit wound. Three round holes were located on the right side of the victim's head just behind the right ear. The medical examiner stated that until he could perform an autopsy the possible cause of death appeared to be a gunshot wound to the head. An ambulance was called to move the body to the morgue.

The crime tech for the Michigan State police and I began checking the automobile for evidence. It was noted that the backseat directly behind the driver seat was almost completely free of blood and brain matter while the rest of the car including both front seats were covered in it. This indicated the shooter had been sitting directly behind the driver. Upon opening the passenger door there was a complete right foot shoe print on the door panel. It indicated that the door had been forced open from the backseat.

That evening I attended the autopsy. The medical examiner, a forensic Pathologist, performed the autopsy. A hole in the ear on the left side of the victim's head was an exit wound. On the right side of the victim's head were three closely grouped large caliber bullet holes. Upon removing the victim's skullcap, bullet fragments

were scattered inside the brain pan. Also found inside the brain pan was approximately ICC total of Mercury and several pieces of wax. The medical examiner established the victim was killed with a .45 caliber pistol.

Given the caliber of the gun, mercury, and wax I was fairly certain who the shooter was. After all, I had seen a video of a robber waiving around a .45 caliber semi- auto pistol, and saying the bullets were hollow points filled with Mercury and covered with wax.

Returning to the police station after the autopsy I was advised by Springfield Officer Mileski that he had been working a stakeout Saturday night with a Battle Creek Detective. They had been watching the residence of Al Fleming. Mr. Fleming was at that time the man who ran the numbers racket in the Black community in Battle Creek. Officer Mileski said that at 9:30 PM on Saturday night, a red older model Pontiac Firebird had pulled into the driveway at Fleming's house. Three black males had gotten out of the car, Chucky McGee, Jerry Steiner, and an unknown male. They went into Fleming's house and were inside for 30 minutes. When they got back into the car the unknown male was driving. I showed Officer Mileski a photo of the shooting victim. He said it was the male that drove the car and was unknown to both him and the Battle Creek Detective.

At the autopsy the stomach contents of the victim were found to contain a partially digested cheeseburger and french fries

I drove to the only fast food restaurant, McDonald's in Battle Creek. I spoke with an employee that worked Saturday night showing him a picture of the victim. He stated it was the person who had come >>

through the drive through window approximately 10 min. prior to closing around 11 p.m. There were two other subjects in the car. The car was an older model red Pontiac Firebird.

I contacted the prosecutor and advised him of the evidence that we had obtained and the witness' statement. The prosecutor told me there was enough evidence to pick up Chucky McGee for questioning. The central dispatch center was advised that the subject, McGee was wanted for questioning in the murder. By Monday afternoon it had become obvious that Mr. McGee had disappeared from the Battle Creek area.

Tuesday morning, I was told the Calhoun County Sheriff's Department in Albion, Michigan substation had arrested Charles McGee for possession of the alleged murder weapon.

Wednesday morning at approximately 10:00 a.m., myself and Officer Mileski were advised by the central dispatch there had been an armed robbery at the construction workers credit union. The suspects were described as a black male, slender build, carrying AR-15 style rifle and a black female carrying a handgun. They had left eastbound on Upton Avenue in a red Oldsmobile convertible. While speaking with the witnesses at the robbery scene I was contacted by the dispatch center and told a Battle Creek police detective had observed a

black male and black female driving a red Oldsmobile pulling into a driveway on the northwest side of Battle Creek. The male and female were known to the detective as Jerry Steiner and JoAnn Witcher. The black male was carrying a black garbage bag with the barrel of a rifle sticking out of the bag. The female was carrying a brown paper bag filled with something unknown. The Detective advised that the house was owned by Witche. The Springfield officer was dispatched to the detective's location and the Battle Creek SWAT team was also requested.

With the aid of the SWAT team the house was searched and two subjects were found hiding in the attic of the house underneath the fiberglass insulation. They had in their possession an AR-15 rifle and a paper bag with approximately \$2,000 in it. They were taken into custody and transported to the Calhoun County jail. The vehicle they had used in the robbery was impounded by the Springfield police and taken to the Springfield police garage where it would be checked for evidence.

The vehicle was placed in the Springfield police garage. Myself and Officer Harry Zimmerman, crime tech for the Michigan State police post in Battle Creek began to search the vehicle and the registration showed it belonged to Charles McGee. In the trunk there was a rabbit skin coat that was pink in color as if it had been soaked with

something red and a pair of men's size 15 high top Converse tennis shoes. The originally white shoes were now colored light pink. The shoes and the coat were placed into evidence.

One week later I was notified both the shoes and the rabbit skin coat were stained with blood that tested to be that of the victim.

A report based on all the evidence obtained was sent to the Calhoun County prosecutor with a warrant request charging Charles McGee and Jerry Steiner with first-degree murder of Donald Matthews. Two days later after the issuance of the warrant both subjects were arraigned in the 10th District Court Calhoun County Michigan.

In summary, I had video of the alleged suspect wearing a rabbit skin coat and high top shoes robbing a store, using a firearm that killed Donald Matthews. The firearm used in the murder was shown to be in the possession of the suspect. Witnesses placed both the bloody shoes and the coat in the possession of the suspect after the murder. Blood on both the shoes and coat were the victim's.

McGee was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. Steiner was allowed to plead to felonious assault and sentenced to seven years in state prison. ■

of the crew, always be prevented. It's just what they do.

NEVER get into a fight without more ammunition than the other guy.

Combat Golden Rule: Check headspace and timing BEFORE the fight.

Tank radios will fail when receiving a "Do Not Fire" order from HQ.

A billfold in your hip pocket can numb your leg and be a real pain in the ass.

Cover your buddy, so he can be around to cover for you.

Letters from home are not always great.

The madness of war can extract a heavy toll. Please have exact change.

Share everything. Yes, even the pound cake.

Decisions made by someone over your head will seldom be in your best interest.

The further away you are from your friends, the less likely it is that they can help you when you really need them the most.

Sometimes, being good and lucky still was not enough.

There is always payback.

"Chicken Plates" (protective body armor) are not something you order in a restaurant.

If everything is as clear as a bell, and everything is going exactly as planned, you're about to be surprised.

The BSR (Bang Stare Red) Theory states that the louder the sudden bang in the tank, the quicker your eyes will be drawn to the gauges. The longer you stare at the gauges, the less time it takes them to move from green to red.

It really does get cold in Vietnam.

No matter what you do, the bullet with your name on it will get you. So too can the ones addressed "To Whom It May Concern".

If the rear echelon troops are really happy, the front line troops probably do not have what they need.

If you are wearing body armor, they will probably miss that part.

It hurts less to die with a uniform on, than to die in a hospital bed.

Happiness is a tank main gun.

If something hasn't broken on your tank, it's about to.

Eat when you can. Sleep when you can. Shit when you can. The next opportunity may not come around for a long time. If ever.

Combat pay is a flawed concept.

Having all your body parts intact and functioning at the end of the day beats the alternative.

Tank superiority is NOT a luxury

If you are allergic to lead, it is best to avoid a war zone.

It is a bad thing to run out of fuel, ammo and ideas all at the same time.

When you shoot your gun, clean it the first chance you get.

Loud sudden noises in a tank WILL get your undivided attention.

Hot garrison chow is better than hot C-rations, which, in turn are better than cold

C-rations, which are better than no food at all. All of these, however, are preferable to cold rice balls even if they do have the little pieces of fish in them.

WHAT is often more important than WHY?

If you grab the SOBs by the balls, their hearts and minds are bound to follow.

Boxes of cookies from home must be shared.

Girlfriends are fair game. Wives are not.

Everybody's a her... on the ground... in the club... after the fourth drink.

There is no such thing as a small fire fight.

A Free Fire Zone has nothing to do with economics.

The further you drive into Indian country, the louder the strange engine noises become.

You can try, but you cannot drive a tank through a 1,000 pound bomb crater.

Medals are OK, but having your body and all your friends in one piece at the end of the day is better.

Being shot hurts.

"Pucker Factor" is the formal name of the equation that states the more hairy the situation is, the more of the seat cushion will be sucked up your asshole. It can be expressed in its mathematical formula of S (suction) + H (hull exposure from defilade) + I (interest in staying alive) + T (the # of RPGs coming your way). Thus the term 'SHIT!' can also be used to denote a situation where a high Pucker Factor is being encountered.

Thousands of Vietnam Veterans earned medals for bravery every day. A few were even awarded.

Nomex is NOT fire proof.

There is only one rule in war: When you win, you get to make up the rules.

Living and dying can both hurt a lot.

Do not wear underwear. It can cause crotch rot or be used as evidence against you.

While a Super Sabot could be considered one of the four essential building blocks of life, powdered eggs cannot.

C-4 can make a dull day fun.

Cocoa Powder is neither.

There is no such thing as a fair fight—only ones where you win or lose.

If you win the battle you are entitled to the spoils. If you lose you don't care

Nobody cares what you did yesterday or what you are going to do tomorrow.

What is important is what you are doing NOW to solve our problem.

If you have extra-share quickly.

It's OK to take stuff off the body of a buddy, 'cause you know he would have wanted you to have it anyway.

Always make sure someone has a P-38.

A sucking chest wound may be God's way of telling you it's time to go home.

Prayer may not help ... but it can't hurt.

Riding a tank is better than walking. Walking is better than running. Running is better than crawling. All of these however, are better than extraction by a Med-Evac.

If everyone does not come home, none of the rest of us can ever fully come home either.

Do not fear the enemy, for your enemy can only take your life. It is far better that you fear the media, for they will steal your HONOR.

A grunt is the true reason for the existence of the tank. Every tank in Vietnam had one real purpose: To help the grunt. It is unfortunate that many tanks never had the opportunity to fulfill their one true mission in life, simply because someone forgot this fact.

"You have the right to remain silent," is always EXCELLENT advice.

If you have not been there and done that... you probably will not understand most of these.

Never forget!!! ■

EVERYTHING I EVER NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE, I LEARNED AS A MARINE TANKER IN VIETNAM

SUBMITTED BY GERRY P BRODEUR

Once you are in the fight, it is way too late to wonder if this is a good idea.

The "Tanker's Principle of War" is not to die for your country, it is to make the enemy S.O.B die for his country.

Tanks are cool!

It is a fact that tank tracks are instinctively drawn toward mines, deep mud, etc. While it may be possible to ward off this natural event some of the time, it cannot, despite the best efforts



MY FIRST COMMAND

BY LTCOL KY THOMPSON, USMC (RET.)

Editor's Note: I am deeply fearful that the below story is going to be written by many of our own children because, like the author's father, we do not want to "go there" and revisit the past in order to tell our own personal story of our time in Vietnam.

A Son's Search: Heroism Then and Now

BY MARC BLOOM

It's become something of a cliché. My father, Martin Jerome Bloom, who died in 2011, a Marine decorated for bravery in the Pacific during World War II, rarely spoke about his combat experiences. As kids, my brother, sister and I would have to practically beg Dad to tell us a war story. Those of the Greatest Generation held their feelings, and memories, close.

Was Dad fearful of getting in touch with old emotional wounds? Was he too proud to allow himself a moment of vulnerability even years later? Did he feel that, as a Marine who witnessed the worst of humanity in a cauldron of war, he had to just suck it up and keep his experiences well-hidden; better not to burden his innocent children?

Dad did reveal one personal episode from the war in which his life was spared because of a comrade's valor. In a particularly fierce battle in the Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls, a Japanese hand grenade landed in the middle of his huddled unit. One of the men jumped on the grenade, losing his life while saving the lives of my father and others. Many years later, unbeknownst to my father, I tracked down the hero's family in a small town in Pennsylvania and had a tearful conversation with the soldier's mother. I wanted to offer some thanks, or at least recognition, of her son's selfless act. I wanted a connection.

I weep for my father for not knowing from his lips all of what he went through for others, for the incongruity of it all. Dad was a quiet man to a fault, self-effacing, seemingly absent

of aggression. Is this the same person who fought for liberty on one speck of seared island earth after another – Eniwetok, Saipan, Kwajalein, Parry – who stuck his neck out under fire?

I weep for myself, that I could never sit down with my father face-to-face and implore him to tell us all about it. What could I really know about my father without that? Perhaps I didn't want to know. I might have felt small and inadequate, insignificant in the big picture. What courage did I ever need to marshal on behalf of a greater good?

At this time of crisis, when heroes are celebrated but not always understood, I dug back into an old family file marked "Marines" to see what I could turn up. I spread out some of Dad's old, fraying papers from the war, trying to match the man I barely knew, with the mission he served. A citation from the Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan presenting the Bronze Star Medal reads in part:

"For heroic achievement while serving as a Machine Gun Leader of Company E, 2nd BN, 22nd Marines, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, during operations against Japanese forces, on Guam, Mariana Islands, from 2 July to 10 August 1944..."

After enlisting on Dec. 15, 1942, my father did boot camp at Parris Island, SC, and paratrooper training at Camp Le Jeune, NC. He qualified as a rifle sharpshooter with special qualifications machine gun crewman. He served in the Pacific from July 9, 1943 to Dec 17, 1944.

To deepen my research, I read two

classics of a Marine memoir from the Pacific Theater, "With the Old Breed" by EB Sledge and "Helmet for my Pillow" by Robert Leckie. Both wrote of the wantonness of war and its savagery, of seeing men tearing one another, of taking a last, hard look at a dead enemy combatant, his hand severed, open, palm-upwards, clear, capable, solitary. Leckie also told of anguish too. Perhaps rather like something that clawed at my father's heart as well.

Marines like Sledge and Leckie can be found in my father's war diary, an unadorned 3-by-5-inch notepad, with jottings of friends and family to write to back home, battles fought, ships sailed on. One inscription reads, "Left Pearl Harbor Jan. 23, 1944, and arrived inside Kwajalein Lagoon, Jan 31." Another reads, "Attacked at sea June 15 by enemy torpedo planes and fighter planes. Shot down 4."

Twenty years ago, my father firmly in retirement, I contemplated an attempt to break dad's reticence by telling him I needed information for an article about the war. But then, at 78, he suffered a disabling stroke, unrelated to combat, and our family had all we could do to mobilize to keep dad as well as possible. He lived another 11 years, head high, strong and dignified to the end.

"My Marine," my mother would say.

Mine too. While I treasure his medals, I wish I had more.

Reprinted from Letters section of Leatherneck magazine – Sept 2020 ■



I arrived Chu Lai, 29 June 1965. I reported in to C Company Headquarters (Captain Joe Sanders) located in the 4th Marines CP area on the high ground, above the Marston matting airstrip. While technically an airfield, only A-4s were operating from it. The A-4 pilots told us that by the time they reached take-off speed the aircraft was shaking so badly—due to the uneven surface of the matting—that it was virtually impossible to read their instruments.

My driver and jeep (officers were not authorized to drive vehicles such as the jeep) soon appeared and we headed for the beach, passing the 3rd Marine Air Wing's storage tents where they kept their ski boat, surf boards, swordfish, and other beach "equipment." It seemed a page out of *Apocalypse Now*. While we conducted combat operations across the Song Tra Bong river, Wing personnel water skied out on the Bay. Occasionally I wondered what the VC might have thought as they watched these antics. Perhaps, with a few new lyrics, we would revive Kipling's, *Come you back to Mandalay*,

Come you back to Dung Quat Bay

Where the old Flotilla lay:

Can't you 'ear their amtracs clankin' from Da Nang to Dung Quat Bay.

Where the flyin'- fishes play,

An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer Chu Lai 'crosst the Bay!

This was my first command, I was a new 2ndLt and would be relieving 1stLt Ken Zitz as Platoon Commander, 3rd Platoon, Alpha Company, 3rd Tanks. The bigger picture organizational



structure went something like this; A-3 was attached to 3/3, but under the Operational Control (OPCON) and Administrative Control (ADCON) of Company "C", 3rd Tanks. This matrixed arrangement was a result of the wide geographical distribution of Alpha Company's tank platoons.

Ken had brought his Platoon ashore—well, almost ashore—from the LSD-28, USS Thomaston, on 12 May. The Marine Corps service tank, the M48A3, with fording kit installed, was capable of operating in 8 feet of water. Unfortunately, the Navy's Landing Craft Utility (LCU) (see photo) bringing Ken's heavy section (3 tanks) ashore is "alleged" to have gone aground while the craft was still 50 feet from the beach. Prompted by the Navy Coxswain, Ken directed LCpl. Andy Senecal, his driver, to head for the beach. The tank clattered down the bow ramp, into the water, went a short distance, and died; A-32, following in trace, suffered the same fate. The crew of A-33, last in line, having seen the first two embarked tanks in their section choke out with salt water, took a more cautious approach and arrived safely ashore. A-33 also profited from the fact that the LCU, having disembarked 2 tanks, had lightened its load by over 100 tons. It now drew less water and could approach the beach more closely. The two dead tanks were towed to the platoon area on the beach. They would be dead-lined for about a month as the supply system attempted to locate and ship generators for them. We were beginning to see the warts in the system as we transitioned from a peace time footing to war.



Approximately one month later, A-31 with a new generator and 2nd Lt Thompson as Tank Commander (TC), embarked on a Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM). The LCM, smaller than the LCU, has a single ramp in the bow and could only transport one tank (see photo). The object of this exercise was to test an idea, proposed to 3/3 by 2nd Lt Thompson, to embark a tank aboard a landing craft and provide fire support to an infantry unit sweeping the area for Viet Cong (VC). As infantry advanced, they would maintain contact with the tank as the LCM cruised along the shore, with its main gun trained over the side of the craft. Fire missions could/would be called in from the shore by radio or flashing light, and targets marked with smoke. The Platoon was fortunate to have a Communications Technician (Comm Tech), Cpl. Chris Vrakilos, who had learned, perhaps from navy >>

signalmen during a previous deployment, how to read the ship's light signals. The concept worked. While it required training and practice, we showed that it could be done.



But then dejavu! The cruise home to our section of beach was uneventful. We arrived off the beach and the Under-Water Demolition (UDT) swimmer went off the ramp to check the depth. He reported a little over six feet of water. I told Senecal, the driver, to ease down the ramp and head for the beach. With a lurch, 52 tons of A-31 roared off the ramp and headed for the beach. When I looked down at my boots, I saw water over the fighting deck. As soon as we cleared the surf and stopped on the beach, I climbed down from the TC's hatch and found Senecal, (see right photo) looking sheepish and sitting in water up to his neck. He'd never closed the driver's hatch! When Sgt. Donald J. "DJ" Clark, the Plt. Sgt., and Sgt. Dan "Mac" MacQueary, the Maintenance Chief, (see left photo) arrived and saw Senecal I thought they would kill him. Mac, having just put replacement generators in A-31 and A-32 and got them back on-line, was surely thinking, "Oh shit, here we go again." We spent the night, all night, dumping 55-gallon cans of fresh water in the hatches and watching it flow out the bottom of the hull where all the hull plugs had been removed. It took hours to flush out A-31 to Sgt. Mac's satisfaction, and it was a real learning experience for a young Second Lieutenant.

Bah Mouy Bah and the Kool Aid Caper.



Life on the beach at Chu Lai was really pretty boring, the only variety coming from periodic patrols with infantry from one of 3/3's rifle companies and the occasional trip out to "the 'ville" with its little shops where the locals could buy tooth paste, etc. It had been incorporated within 3/3's Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) and was considered safe. One prize item that our little forays to the 'ville offered was ice! The troops, when off duty, were authorized two beers a day and 3/3 was buying a Vietnamese rice beer, Bah mouy bah, which translated was "33". A sister brand was Bier LaRue 33, know affectionally as "Lash LaRue", after the principal character in a TV western series then popular in the States. The name could also be applied to one's digestive system

as, "Lash had me in the head all night." We would make daily runs out to the 'ville to buy ice with our Vietnamese money which were called Dong, in Vietnamese. To this day, I couldn't tell you how they made the ice, but it came in large hollow rectangular blocks, covered in saw dust and wrapped in burlap sacks. You certainly wouldn't want to suck on a piece of this ice, but it did a commendable job of keeping our Lash and 33 cold or at least drinkable.

The leadership of the 3rd Platoon, realized that a bored Marine could be dangerous to himself and others when working on a 52-ton piece of heavy equipment that can break your back or crush your body in a heartbeat. I asked my parents and my girlfriend to buy Kool Aid and encourage their friends and classmates to do the same. Soon thereafter I received quite a number of shoe box boxes filled with Kool Aid packets in a multitude of flavors. I asked DJ what might be the best way to distribute the packets. He recommended we give each man three packets, and they could be handed out at pay call. As pay day was twice a month, this gave the Marines several choices as to how he consumed his Kool Aid. For example, one could binge drink it, consume one a week until the next pay day including a spare, or if lucky at cards, he could increase his holdings significantly. Kool Aid was even being loaned. Pay day came and our troops queued up on the beach in the hot sun; the line shuffled forward until each man reached the pay clerk, who, armed with a .45 caliber pistol that rested on the table next to him, counted out each man's money. This was tradition, but wait, here was something new! Sitting next to the pay master's rep was one of our guys, who drew three packets randomly from a laundry bag. No one could complain that this wasn't a "blind draw" and gave them to the man standing in front of him. I think virtually everybody was dumbfounded. "What's this?" most said. A few, perhaps seeing future trading opportunities asked if they would swap for another flavor. DJ stepped in, "Take what you've got and move along." He turned to me, "If we let them pick what they want, it will be the same as with the C Rations.

Meal, Combat, Individual also known as Combat Rations, C-Rations, C-Rats or C's.



C-Rations were the meals issued to those of us in combat and living under combat conditions. As with all things in life, individuals had their favorites and C-Rations were no different. C-Rats gained some curious superstitions during the Viet Nam War. For example; the Ham & Lima Beans meal, when eaten cold was detested by Marines who called it "ham and motherfuckers". Amphibious tractor (amtrac) personnel believed that the halved apricots were bad luck during combat operations. The peanut butter issued in a B-1 unit although unappetizing to some was consumed by those with diarrhea as it was certain to help stop the problem. Likewise, there were C-Rats that were beloved by all including spaghetti and meatballs, meatballs with beans (beans and balls)

and beef slices with potatoes and gravy. C-Rations were generally distributed by the case, a large, heavy rectangular cardboard case weighing 25 to 26 pounds and bound with bailing wire. Each case contained 12 individual rations arranged in two rows of six rations. Individual meals were boxed according to the menu and organized by their Box Unit (B1, B2, and B3).

Each case also contained four paper wrapped P-38 can openers which were considered one of the greatest inventions devised by the hand of man. Most of us still have one safely tucked away in a cigar box with other memorabilia.

MENUS

- The Meat Unit came in many varieties; M1 was either beefsteak, chicken or turkey loaf, chopped ham & eggs, and ham slices in juice. M2 was either beef chunks with beans & tomato sauce, ham and lima beans, beef slices with potatoes and gravy, or beans with frankfurter chunks in tomato sauce, and spaghetti with meat balls in tomato sauce. M3 was either beef in spiced sauce, boned chicken or turkey, chicken with noodles in broth, or pork steak cooked in juices. Beans with frankfurter chunks ran a close second to ham and lima beans as the most disliked meal and were lovingly referred to as, "beanie weenies" or "beans and baby dicks."

- The Bread Unit came in three different varieties: B1 had seven crackers and two chocolate discs and peanut butter spread, B2 contained four hardtack biscuits "John Wayne cookies", a cookie sandwich, and cheese spread and B3 had four cookies and a packet of cocoa powder and Jam spread, most frequently used with the bread found in a D3 can.

- The Dessert unit had fruit such as sliced apricots, quartered peaches, sliced pears or a fruit cocktail and the ever-popular pound cake.

- Each individual meal had an accessory pack. The pack contained salt, pepper, sugar, instant coffee, non-dairy creamer, two pieces of candy-coated chewing gum, a packet of toilet paper, a four-pack of cigarettes, and a book of 20 cardboard moisture-proof matches. Immediately after the Viet Nam War, the cigarette 4-packs were discontinued – go figure.

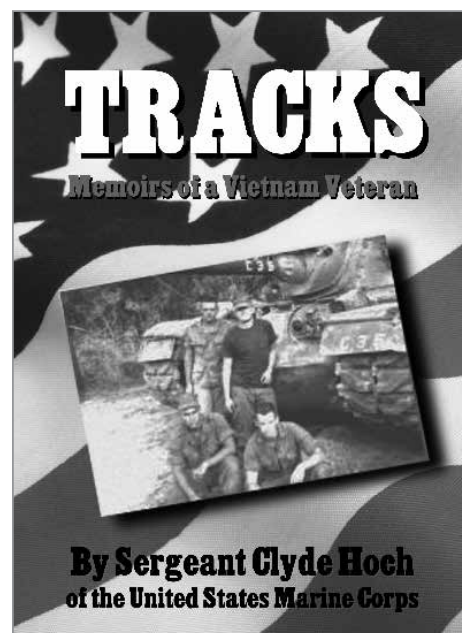
At chow time the senior tanker would turn the C-Rat case upside down and rearrange the individual meals within the case to ensure a blind choice. Some of the third herd had memorized where their favorite meal—and undoubtedly someone else's favorite—resided. It was after the crew had drawn their meals that the horse-trading for preferred items began such as trading pound cake for pears or ham and motherfuckers for beans and balls.

As the platoon commander, A-31 was my tank, an M-48A3. The M-48A3 was long in service (introduced in 1948) but still considered mission effective. The crew: driver, Andy Senecal, the gunner, Charlie Denton, and the Loader was someone who's name has been forgotten over the years. I was pleased to learn that the crew was generally well trained. Every now and then though one of those "Oops!" moments might arise and, in this case, it involved Charlie. We'd been on standby all day, prepared to assist a company-size operation on the far side of the Song Tra Bong river and forever and for whatever the reason, Denton had assigned himself as loader that day.

In late July, LtCol William D. Hall, the CO of 3/3, accompanied several of his companies across the Song Tra Bong in amtracs on a mission to look for signs of increased VC activity. Hall had previously sent two reinforced platoons across the river, but they had not been up to the task. Hall then sent a reinforced company and then several reinforced companies before personally going over with the multi-company operation in July. I suspect that when the author, Otto Lehrack, wrote in his book *The First Battle*: "In late July. Lieutenant Colonel Hall joined his Marines in crossing the river to investigate reports of enemy activity", Lehrack was using a double entendre. Despite having sent Marines across the river in ever increasing numbers Hall had never been on the far side of the river which put him at a distinct disadvantage. He lacked a personal appreciation for the terrain and he also lacked personal knowledge of the physical lay-out of those villages where resistance had previously occurred. As in the past, the "South Side" VC did not capitulate despite Lt Col. Hall having come to their side of the river. They put up a stiff resistance and 3/3 lost several Marines KIA (among them, 1stLt. Douglas Wauchope, (the first Marine officer KIA in Viet Nam) along with a number of WIA. In addition, the "tractor rats" got one of their LVTP-5s stuck in a rice paddy near one of the villages. The rice paddies throughout Viet Nam presented tanks and amtracs with formidable obstacles. Every village seemed surrounded by them because the paddies provided each family with their food staple—rice. What a tactical vehicle driver saw in the dry season was a thick crust that during the early rainy season would become a nutrient rich mud-like material into which the rice shoots were planted. During the dry season this crust was two to three feet thick and sufficient to support a man or water buffalo but not a 52-ton M-48A3 tank or a much lighter 32-ton LVTP-5. Making the rice paddy even more awkward for these heavyweights was the void below the crust. Once a vehicle broke through the paddy's crust and dropped into the void the majority of its hull became subsurface was more often than not, inaccessible and stuck through the dynamic of hydraulic adhesion. However, much must be done before any attempt to "un-stick" the vehicle occurs. The first effort must be spent manually uncovering suspension components that are more than likely under paddy mud and inaccessible. The next steps such as replacing road wheels and repairing track that would enable the vehicle to either drive out or be pulled out were even more difficult in the 90 plus degree heat and 90 percent plus humidity. Most Viet Nam heavy vehicle recovery efforts also required some level of ramp building to allow the entombed vehicle to egress either under its own power or be towed out of the quagmire. This naturally required a recovery team to have freedom of movement around the stuck vehicle. Regrettably for the tractor rats, we had learned from chatter on the battalion tactical network (Tac Net), that VC snipers had, by accurate, aimed fire, turned the area into a kill zone. For whatever the reason, LtCol Hall had been unable to neutralize these snipers and until that occurred, the LVT would remain a big, green and immobile target. The day had not gone well for 3/3's CO and it was about to get worse. ■

The Mud Flats

BY CLYDE HOCH



Finally, we were on our way to the Mud Flats. After several miles of dirt road, we met up with a Korean Marine patrol and headed into the bush. After about an hour we came to a small stream. It looked like a good place to cross, as it was well used by others who had crossed. We had a USMC engineer attached to us just for this operation and for this purpose. It was a perfect place for a mine. It was about mid-day and hot, and we were tired and hungry.

The night before, some of the guys were at the enlisted men's club at C Company Headquarters. The club consisted of a plywood hooch. It had a plywood floor, a plywood and tin roof, and plywood sides about four feet up. The rest was screening on the sides. They were the same as we lived in back at headquarters. They were up off the ground a couple of feet, which was necessary in the monsoon season. The engineer was at the club and told the guys that when this operation was over, he wanted to turn in his mine detector because it would cut out for just a second every once in a while. I thought this was a good time to open a can of C rations. C rations in Vietnam were mostly left over from World War II and were not bad for the first week of eating them. They consisted of a variety of different meals plus peanut butter and crackers or cheese and crackers, always a five pack of smokes, Chicklets, and toilet paper.

I sat on the top of the turret eating my cold C rations and watching the engineer sweep for mines. There were two Korean Marines next to him, one on each side. I saw the explosion. I

did not see the engineer as the blast engulfed him. I saw the two Koreans both fly in the air and do a cart wheel in harmony. Both Koreans were dead and one was put on the back of each of the two tanks. There were pieces of bloody clothing that was smoking all over my tank from the engineer. All that was found of him was placed in a poncho, rolled up, and put on the back of my tank. I was told it was an antitank mine, and it left a very large crater. All were dead, and there were no wounded so there was not a big hurry to get a Medevac in. We crossed at a different spot and were on our way. Soon we arrived at a small compound of sand bagged bunkers and a sand bagged perimeter. Nothing was above ground. Home sweet home! There were openings at each end of the compound where we parked the tanks. There was no vegetation for about two hundred yards around the compound. Each tank crew had a small bunker of its own. The first few days were uneventful, and we were just getting used to our new friends. What a cultural difference! We were about 14,000 meters from our nearest friendlies. We didn't know exactly where they were located or who they were. Here we lived underground. We withstood countless attacks from mortars, rockets, and small arms. I do not recall anyone being seriously wounded from these attacks. Most of our wounded came from operations outside the compound.

On many occasions the North Vietnamese talked to the Koreans with loud speakers. Always during these sessions the Koreans had a strained look on their faces, a look of fear. I would sometimes ask the Koreans what the North Vietnamese said. They would tell me they said, "We are the same type of people, don't support the evil Americans!" I would worry that we may have an uprising from the Koreans. The North Vietnamese would do this sometimes for hours. I was glad when they stopped.

The Mud Flats were the base for many search and destroy missions. Some of the ones we were involved in were major operations, but we didn't know the names of or the results of the operations. The Korean Captain was fairly tight lipped with information to us so I had no idea what the big picture was. A big thing for the big guys in the rear was enemy body counts. We sometimes took credit for a kill or two, but most of the time we didn't care about kill numbers. I have a certificate that credits me with six enemy confirmed kills. There were many more. The area where we spent most of our time

was called the rocket belt, where rockets were launched for Da Nang. Rockets usually came in two varieties, one hundred twenty millimeters and one hundred forty millimeters. They were set up on bamboo platforms and usually launched in sets of four—usually twelve in a session. Then another group would start.

On one evening we saw a set of four rockets launched about two hundred yards away. We fired the ninety millimeter main gun at them with a standard high explosive round. We saw two more rockets launch. Again we fired. We saw one more rocket launch, and all was quiet. I cannot say for sure that we prevented some of the rockets from reaching Da Nang, but from our perspective, it sure looked like it.

An excerpt from the book "Tracks Memoirs of a Vietnam Veteran" by Clyde Hoch. The book is available for purchase on Amazon.com

Clyde Hoch's memoir, Tracks: Memoirs of a Vietnam Veteran, takes the reader through enlistment, boot camp, training, missions and returning home. Clyde Hoch of C Company, First Tank Battalion, First Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, served in Vietnam for a little over a year in the late 1960s. I was particularly moved as he described the children he saw in Vietnam, and especially the two that touched his heart. Before he was deployed to war he was sent on a Med Cruise mission to the Mediterranean where he discovered what poverty truly looks like. He realized he had no idea of what hunger really is as he watched the people rush to garbage barge and eat the discarded food. He also shares his memories of boot camp, the drill instructors, and how the recruits were denigrated with name calling and constant punishment for the simplest infraction. He and a few of his friends had decided to become Marines, but Clyde was the only one who followed through.

I respect and admire those who have and currently are serving in the military to protect our country. One of things that stands out in this memoir is Clyde Hoch's attitude. He shares some horrific memories but does so in a calm and respectful way. I learned so much about the military that I never could have imagined. Author Clyde Hoch kept his story light but honest, and brought his experiences to life in vivid detail. Not all vets are willing to share their experiences and I am glad Clyde chose to share his. Tracks: Memoirs of a Vietnam Veteran is an emotional and interesting memoir that I recommend to anyone interested in this critical era of American history.

Reviewed by Anne Boling for Readers' Favorite ■

My Visit To The American Heritage Museum

BY GREG KELLEY

On July 26, 2019 at approximately 1100 hours, I arrived at the American Heritage Museum in Stow, Massachusetts. This is the new home of one of the finest assemblage of tanks in the country and I was feeling pretty damn fortunate to be able to drive just an hour and a half from my home to see it all. Yes, it was a short drive, but my journey to the museum began over a year earlier when John Wear asked if I could look into it as a possible bus trip/tour for our 2021 reunion. He had already begun scouting possible target cities, and there was some strong scuttle-butt that the Jacques M. Littlefield Collection of tanks that was located in northern California was being acquired by the Collings Foundation out here in Massachusetts.

The scuttle-butt was dead on. A very large portion of the Littlefield collection was indeed purchased by the foundation. But it wasn't until after many months of legal battles with the town of Stow that the Collings foundation was "allowed" to construct the giant building that would house their massive collection of tanks. In the fall of 2018, they began transporting their tanks across country (by truck). Then came the arduous task of putting together the museum. The museum finally opened to the public on



May 3, 2019.

When I drove up, I was waived into a parking location by a veteran. Everyone working there that I saw was a veteran and that was comforting. Once inside, that comfortable feeling engulfed me. I had planned to meet up with one of the museum's key staff persons: a fascinating guy named Colin. Colin was a couple of years my senior and had spent some 20 plus years in armor; both in the US Army and in the British Army. Colin became my personal tour-guide and led me in.

WOW! Okay, Double-WOW! The tour starts with a short, ten-minute introductory video in the small theater where the president of the foundation gives thanks to "all who served", and a quick look back to the founding of our country, our Declaration of Independence, and the weapons used to fight for that independence. Then into another room depicting 1st World War battles and the earliest tanks. Incredible that the floor trembles as the bombs explode on the screen! You then enter into the vastness of the tank museum. The walk begins with the earliest tanks and other tracked vehicles and ends with the latest. It is incredibly awe-inspiring! Each tank, and each vehicle, firearm, uniform,

and other display is in mint condition. The care and dedication to the preservation of these exhibits is seen and felt throughout. The staff present and explain with a certain pride. It was all so very heart-warming. Colin explained not just the various tanks, but the planning of the museum and the "why" and "how" each piece was positioned. I wanted to stay longer to continue talking to the staff, all of whom I met were great and full of knowledge. When I departed and Colin and I shook hands, I felt I was shaking hands with a new friend.

Driving home later that day, I couldn't help smiling. I was smiling because I knew that when we pay our visit here in 2021, we will depart feeling the time that we spent were an absolutely fantastic few hours!

You can whet your appetite by checking out the website @ The American Heritage Museum. However, I can honestly say the pictures don't do it justice.

Oh, one last bit of info: Yes! They DO have an M-48A3 and an M-60!

USMC VIETNAM TANKERS
ASSOCIATION
2021 PROVIDENCE REUNION

USMC Vietnam Tankers Association Reunion

Wednesday, September 15 – Monday, September 20, 2021

Crowne Plaza Providence–Warwick

801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, RI 02889

Reunion room rate: **\$119 per night** ...This is the 2017 room rate!!!

This room rate is good for three days before and three days after the reunion dates.

And that room rate also includes a full hot breakfast that will be served in our hospitality room.

The \$119 room rate does not include a 13% room tax.

We will be about an hour south of Boston, so if you want to avail yourself of the massive amount of American history, come early or stay a few extra days and tour "Beantown" (Boston).

The hotel provides complimentary Sauna, Exercise Room and Business Center

No cost Wi-Fi and Internet access and free newspaper in the lobby

The Crossings Restaurant and Alfred's Lounge are on premises.

In order to make your room reservation the Crowne Plaza corporate phone number is

1-800-2CROWNE or 1-800.227.6963

Be sure to mention: Group Code **"TNK"** or **"USMC Vietnam Tankers Reunion"** when making your room reservations in order to get the discounted room rate.

If you would like to book their room online, they can go to www.crownehotelwarwick.com and put in the 3-letter

group code (TNK) or by simply clicking this link: [USMC Vietnam Tankers Reunion](#)

All room reservations must be made by **8/30/2021**.

Crowne Plaza Providence–Warwick (Airport) is 2 miles from Providence TF Green Airport.

And is 62 miles from BOSTON-LOGAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Hotel has a free shuttle bus to and from the Providence Airport.

The bus runs every ½ hour from 6:30 AM to 11:00 PM

Shuttle Bus Details: When you arrive at the TF Green Airport you can call the hotel directly at 401.732.6000 to have the shuttle come pick you up ... but only after you have all of your luggage in hand. Walk outside of the Luggage Claim area to the second curb where all of the hotel shuttles pick-up and wait there.

Pets: We are a dog friendly hotel. There is a \$50 pet deposit per stay. After your stay; we do a deep clean for our next guest. Due to this extra cost; there is a \$50, nonrefundable cleaning fee per stay. With the exception of service animals with documentation, we do not accept other kinds of pets.

Parking: If you do drive, there is plenty of free indoor and outdoor parking ... including parking for RVs ... but there are no RV hookups.

HONOR THE PAST BY BEING PRESENT

Things to do in Rhode Island

A note from the RI Convention and Tourism Bureau

Rhode Island may be the smallest state in the nation, but it packs plenty of excitement into its borders. The state's miles of coastline, rich Colonial history and acclaimed restaurants create a memorable reunion destination. With nearly 400 years of history, Rhode Island has many stories to tell, and an array of things to do for all tastes.

Providence, RI combines the charm of a New England town with the sophistication of a big city. Compact and walkable, Providence is heralded for its world-class dining scene and beautifully preserved historic architecture. The

historic Federal Hill neighborhood spans iconic Atwells Avenue and the surrounding streets. Visit DePasquale Square, an Italian style piazza and gathering space for music and dancing, tossing coins in the fountain and congregating with old friends. While Italian food and culture are constants on the Hill, the restaurants have evolved to represent worldly flavors and cultures.

Other can't-miss attractions in the capital city include a stop at the RISD Museum and Roger Williams Park Zoo, dubbed "the finest zoo in New England" by the Boston

Globe. Want something truly unique? Sign yourself up for a Providence Ghost Tour. Let experts guide you by lantern light through this walking ghost and haunted history tour of the East Side of Providence while telling stories that will be sure to send a chill down your spine.

Warwick, RI, just 10 minutes from Providence, is home to shopping, golf courses and 39 miles of scenic coastline. The Warwick Mall features more than 80 retail locations, 12 restaurants, and a 12-screen Showcase Cinema. If you want to spend some of your free time in the green, Harbor Lights Golf Course plays nearly 6000 yards from the tips, making it an enjoyable challenge for golfers of every skill level. It's rolling fairways, expansive, undulating bent grass greens and stunning views of the Narragansett Bay

make this a unique public 9-hole golf course.

To the south in Newport, you'll find remarkable tales of history among the 11 historic properties and landscapes presented by the Preservation Society of Newport County. These mansions trace America's architectural and social development from the Colonial era through the Gilded Age. Meanwhile, the private collection of more than 75 automobiles at the Newport Car Museum focuses on seven decades of modern industrial automotive design and celebrates cars as works of art. From the 1950s to the present, separate exhibits of Ford/Shelby Cars, Corvettes, American Muscle and more have been carefully curated.

To start planning your reunion in Providence and Warwick, visit GoProvidence.com

NOTICE: We are trying something a bit different for this reunion. We have hired the best and most heralded local touring company to help you plan your two "Open Days" which will be Thursday afternoon and all day Sunday. The company is offering a list of really exciting and fairly inexpensive tours and after you sign up and pay for the tour, on the appointed day the company will take you on their own vehicles. The complete list of tours will be featured in the April issue of our magazine...or you can go to our website (<http://www.usmcvta.org>) and view the offering.

To: USMC VTA Members
From: Ted Stricklin, President
Experience Rhode Island Tours
www.experienceri.com

We can't wait to have you here in Rhode Island this coming September! Only 48 miles long and 37 miles wide, you will discover that the smallest state in America is full of big surprises!

While you are here, you will have the opportunity to come with us and explore our quaint New England villages, scenic islands, magnificent beaches, picturesque lighthouses, gorgeous capital city, spectacular mansions, and much more.

In 2017 our company was named "Stars of the Industry" by the Rhode Island Hospitality Association, and in 2020 we were awarded the prestigious Traveler's Choice Award by TripAdvisor, which is given to the top 10% of attractions worldwide.

We have planned out two wonderful days of sightseeing for you which will include several options for you to choose from, including a Lighthouse Cruise, Rhode Island in a Day, Newport: Rhode Island's Spectacular City by the Sea, and much more. In the spring issue of this magazine, we will introduce all of the tours we will be offering while you are here. The unique beauty, culture, and history of this place make it a reunion you will not want to miss. We can't wait to show you what's great about the Ocean State!

VTA VIDEO INTERVIEWS IN PROVIDENCE

If you would like to participate in the VTA History Project video interviews, during our reunion in Providence, please contact Pete Ritch at Phone: 850.734.0014 or e-mail at goldendog@mchsi.com.

We already have several interviews already scheduled and we want to insure that anyone who wants to participate can do so. We want to emphasize that first time interviewees will be given priority. Once complete, the interview videos will be posted on the VTA website. To view the 75 interviews from previous reunions, go to the VTA website, click on "Members Stories" and then "Interviews." ■

Please note that when you arrive to the reunion hotel, your Welcome Bag will contain this restaurant listing that will include the restaurant address and telephone number for making reservations. And it will include directions to drive there.

Also please note that the restaurants that have an asterisk, the free hotel shuttle will take you there.

Local Restaurants

At the Crowne Plaza Hotel:

Alfred's Lounge and The Crossings

~ American Cuisine ~

*Chapel Grille (Eclectic-Upscale)
401.944.4900

*Buffalo Wild Wings (Casual)
401.739.1392

*Chelo's by the Airport (Casual)
401.737.7299

*Dave's Bar & Grill (Casual)
401.739.7444

*Greenwood Inn (Moderate)
401.738.3334

*IHOP (Casual)
401.738.0003

*Longhorn Steakhouse (Casual)
401.737.6943

*Not Your Average Joe's (Casual)
401.739.5637

*Red Robin (Casual)
401.736.0700

The Shanty (Casual)
401.732.9464

1149 (Upscale)
401.884.1149

Chelo's on the Waterfront (Casual)
401.884.3000

Gregg's (Casual)
401.467.5700

The Grill on Main (Casual)
401.885.2200

Meritage (Eclectic-Upscale)
401.884.1255

Sienna (Eclectic-Upscale)
401.885.8850

Spain (Upscale)
401.946.8686

T's (Casual-Breakfast&Lunch)
401.398.7877

*99 Restaurant (Casual)
401.463.9993

*Fat Belly's (Irish Pub -Casual)
401.681.4905

~ Seafood Cuisine ~

*Crow's Nest (Casual)
401.732.6575

Blu on the Water (Moderate)
401.885.3700

Finn's Harbourside (Moderate)
401.884.6363

Iggy's Doughboys & Chowder House (Casual)
401.737.9459

Top of the Bay (Moderate)
401.921.3663

~ Italian Cuisine ~

*The Ripe Tomato (Casual)
401.732.9464

*Macera's Italian Restaurant (Casual)
401.463.5303

*Bertucci's Brick Oven Pizzeria (Casual)
401.732.4343

*Uncle Tony's Pizza & Pasta (Casual)
401.463.7785

La Masseria (Moderate)
401.398.0693

~ Mexican Cuisine ~

*On The Border (Casual)
401.826.2987

Chipotle (Casual)
401.732.3233

Chili's (Casual)
401.821.0310

~ Asian Cuisine ~

*Haruki (Sushi-Casual)
401.463.8338



2021 Providence Reunion Schedule

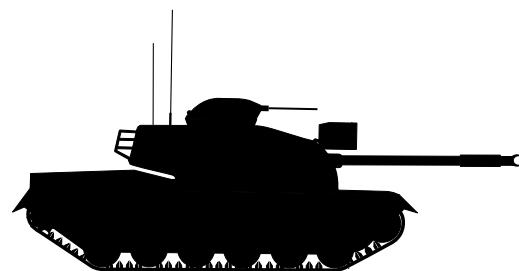
Wednesday, September 15 – Monday, September 20

Wednesday (Sept. 15)	0900 – 2330	Arrival Day – Register and pickup Welcome Packet outside The Torsion Bar hospitality room (In the Atrium). Sign up for VTA History Interviews; Writing Workshops and Outside Tours
	0900 – 2330	The Torsion Bar is Open Lunch & Dinner on your own
Thursday (Sept. 16)	0600 – 0815	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Torsion Bar)
	0830 – 1200	Ladies Coffee (In the Torsion Bar)
	0900 – 1200	Reunion kick-off and VTA Business Meeting (In the Bristol Ballroom) Enter to win a FREE hotel room for reunion! <i>Must submit ticket before 0900 in the meeting room and be present for the drawing to win.</i>
	1200 – 1630	Free Time and lunch on your own
	1100 – 1630	The Torsion Bar Open
	1700 – 1800	Italian Buffet Dinner (In the Plaza Ballroom)
	1800 – 2000	Live Auction! (In the Plaza Ballroom)
Friday (Sept. 17)	2000 – 2300	The Torsion Bar Open
	Wear your reunion T-shirt today!!!	
	0600 – 0815	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Torsion Bar)
	1000 – 1015	Load buses to tour American Heritage Museum (In the front of the hotel)
	1045 – 1545	Tour Lunch on your own
	1545	Load buses for return to hotel
	1600–1700	Return to hotel
1700 – 2300	The Torsion Bar Open Dinner on your own	

(See reverse side)

2021 Providence Reunion Schedule

Saturday (Sept. 18)	0600 – 0815	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Torsion Bar)
	1000 – 1015	Load buses to tour Boston (In the front of the hotel)
	1200–1500	Tour Boston including USS Constitution, Bunker Hill and Faneuil Hall (for lunch on your own)
	1515	Load buses to return to hotel
	1530 – 1630	Return to Hotel
	1700 – 2300	Torsion Bar Open Dinner on your own
Sunday (Sept. 19)	0600 – 0815	Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Torsion Bar) Open Day–All Day Interview Schedule Posted in Torsion Bar Lunch on your own
	1000 – 1600	The Torsion Bar Open
	1630 – 2130	FAREWELL BANQUET (PLAZA BALLROOMS) <i>NOTE: Dress for this function is a shirt with a collar, dress slacks, shoes and socks. Coat & tie optional. Wearing of military ribbons or medals on a jacket is highly encouraged.</i>
	1630 – 1745	Cocktails – Cash Bar
	1800 – 1815	Presentation of Colors and remarks
	1815 – 1900	Dinner Served
	1900 – 1905	05 minutes – Head Call
	1905 – 2130	30 minutes – Guest Speaker 45 minutes – Fallen Heroes 05 minutes – 2023 Reunion
	2130 – 2400	The Torsion Bar Open – Last Call.
Monday (Sept. 20)		Departure Day



OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM 2021 Providence Reunion

Crown Plaza Warwick

September 15 – 20

**Want to save \$30?
Mail your registration before July 30**

Please Print all information

Member's Name: _____

Guest's Name (s): _____
and relationship

Address: _____

Town: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Cell Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Vietnam Tank or AT Bn: _____ Co: _____ Years in-country: _____ to _____
(Circle "Tank" or "AT" above)

Are you a first time attendee? YES _____ NO _____ MOS _____

Would you like to participate in our personal interview program? YES _____ NO _____

Your USMC VTA membership dues must be **current** in order to attend the reunion. If your membership is delinquent please mail your dues with this registration (or the dues will be collected at the sign-in desk). No partial payments of the registration fee are accepted. Fee covers planned food functions (banquet), bus transportation & lunch, meeting facilities, hospitality room, beer & sodas and other expenses associated with the cost of hosting the reunion. Registration fee does not include your sleeping room, taxes or air fare..

Reunion Refund Policy: If you find that you cannot attend the reunion after you have pre-paid your reunion fees, the USMC VTA will refund your total reunion fees if you notify us prior to Aug 30, 2021. If you notify us of your cancellation after that date, we are sorry but we cannot make any refund offer.

Pre-July 30 Form

NAME(S) as you want them to appear on your reunion name tag

Men's T-Shirt Sizes S – XL = \$15 each
(\$5.00 extra for XXL & XXXL)

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

○ _____ ○ SHIRT SIZE _____

TOTAL REUNION FEES

My Registration Fee:\$170 \$ _____
(After Aug 30th the late registration fee is \$200 each)

My T-Shirt \$15/\$20 \$ _____

Number of guests _____ X \$170 = \$ _____
(Early registration fee for each guest is \$170.00 and late registration is \$200 for each guest)

Guest T-shirt _____ X \$15/\$20 = \$ _____

SUB TOTAL = \$ _____

Optional: Would you like to donate a few dollars to help with expenses? \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

You must make your own hotel room reservations by July 30th to get the low room rate! Call: 1-800-2CROWNE or 1-800-227-6963 and be sure to mention both the "Crowne Plaza Warwick" and "USMC Vietnam Tankers Reunion" for the special room rate of \$119.00 per night. The special room rate is good for three days prior and three days after the reunion dates as well. Please note the regular hotel room rate is \$190 per night.

CAUTION: Do not confuse the above hotel booking deadline date with the early registration offer which has an July 30th deadline. HOTEL REGISTRATION MUST BE MADE SEPARATELY BY YOU BY JULY 30, 2021

HOW YOU CAN SAVE \$30.00
Submit this form along with your payment by Aug 30th to purchase a reunion t-shirt and save \$30 off of the Reunion Registration Fee of \$200.
Send check or money order made out to: **USMC VTA** and the completed registration form to:
USMC VTA
c/o Ron Knight
6665 Burnt Hickory Drive
Hoschton, GA 30548-8280

Collings Foundation Museum of Flight

These are just a small sampling of the exhibits that we will see



PME-262 WW2



P-51 WW2



B-17 WW2



B-24 WW2



B-25 WW2



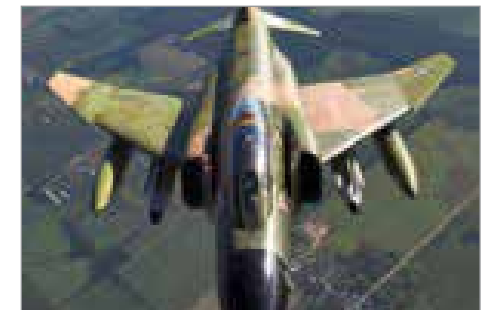
P-49 WW2



T-33 Korea



UH1 Vietnam



F4D Phantom

Antique and Classic Car Museum



1914 Stutz Bearcat



1926 Chevy Woodie



1928 Pierce Arrow



1937 Pantheon



Al Capone's 1940 Cadillac



Indy 500 Race Car

USMC Vietnam Tankers Association
16605 Forest Green Terrace, Elbert, CO 80106-8937

Please note: If the last two digits of "EXPIRES" on your address label is "20" then your 2021 VTA Membership Dues or your Annual Life Assessment are payable now.

Make your check out to: USMC VTA for \$30* and mail to:
USMC VTA c/o Bruce Van Apeldoorn, 73 Stanton Street, Rochester, NY 14611

*Over & Above donations are always gratefully appreciated.

YOU ARE MARINES.
YOU'RE PART OF A BROTHERHOOD.
FROM NOW ON UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE,
WHEREVER YOU ARE,
EVERY MARINE IS YOUR BROTHER.
SOME OF YOU WILL GO TO WAR. SOME OF YOU
WILL NOT COME BACK. BUT ALWAYS
REMEMBER THIS, MARINES DIE:
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR.
BUT THE MARINE CORPS LIVES FOREVER.
AND THAT MEANS
YOU LIVE FOREVER

