



# Sponson BOX

*Voice of  
the USMC  
Vietnam Tankers  
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



## M-103A2 “Elephant” Tanks

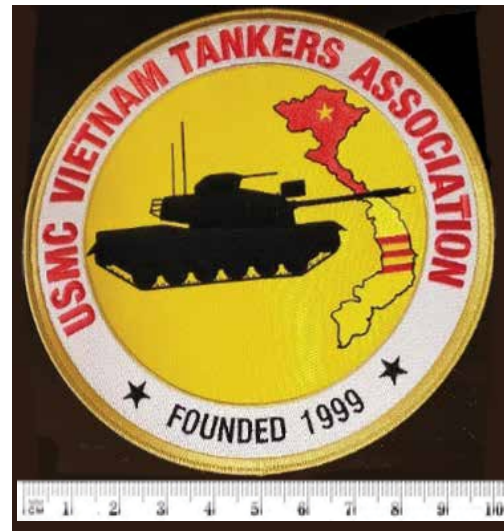
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**Reminder: 2021 Providence Reunion Sept 15 – 20**

# USMC VTA STORE

All prices include the cost of shipping

Please see inside back cover for more items



Large (10") VTA Embroidered Patch \$25



Small (3") VTA Embroidered Patch \$6



VTA Luggage Tags (Set of 2) \$8



VTA Mouse Pad \$8

4" VTA Window Decal \$5



VTA 21" x 21" Tanker Bandana \$7.50

You can purchase all of these items on line with a credit card at the USMC VTA website Store or Send checks or money orders with a note telling what you want to purchase to:

**Bruce Van Apeldoorn**  
75 Stanton Street  
Rochester, NY 14611-2837

If you have questions? Call Greg Martin at phone: 360-480-1206

## Letter from the President

**Providence 2021:** The next VTA reunion is just about six months away. If you have not made definitive plans to attend, we'd like you to please reconsider. With the COVID-19 "pandemic" on the wane and the immunization program in full swing, there really should not be a lot of concern for your health...unless of course, you are already in the extreme high risk category but then that would probably preclude your attendance in more normal times. If you do decide to attend, we will be visiting a brand new armor museum as one of the highlights of the reunion. Please refer to the Reunion Section that are the last 9 or 10 pages of this issue.

**Another comment about Providence 2021:** Two of the biggest fund raising events that the VTA conducts during our biennial reunions are the "Live" and "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 interested in bidding on and acquiring. If you have something that is 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.

**The USMC VTA Store:** We have featured on both the inside front and back covers two color advertisements of the items that we carry in our on-line website store. Most of the time we only sell items during our biennial reunions when the attendees happen to bump into the store that is set up in the "Torsion Bar" hospitality room. We would like you to consider purchasing items now if you'd care to.

**Marine stories:** The December 2020 issue of Leatherneck magazine featured yet another article about the son of a WW2 US Marine officer who was awarded the Silver Star for his leadership on the Island of Saipan.

The son knew nothing of his father's combat experience because the father, out of ignorance or out of fear of his wartime "ghosts," had never spoken of the war. Luckily for everyone after the war, the Marine officer kept in contact with many of his wartime buddies. The after his father's death in 2011, the son began contacting his father's Marine buddies and fortunately the father's story unfolded. The son then wrote a book about his father.

Editorial comment: Wouldn't it have made a ton more sense if the father had been able to overcome his self-induced emotional trauma and been able to speak to his family ... or (even better) if he had written his story before he died? Yet another reminder that we all have stories...most of us did not get awarded Silver or Bronze Stars...but we have stories about our time in-country Vietnam. Please get out some paper and a pencil and write!!! If you truly cannot write, then contact Frank "Tree" Remkiewicz at 209.996.8887 and arrange to conduct a podcast over the telephone. It's easy and fun. And you will get the job done! I am going to bet that your kids and grandkids will thank you for your efforts.

**And an annual dues reminder: Your 2021 Annual Membership Dues are payable now. And for Life Members, your 2021 Annual Life Assessment is due. The remit to address is on the back cover of this issue.**

*John*

**"If nothing is written then the man will soon be forgotten."**

-Author Unknown



### Executive Directors

**John Wear, President**

16605 Forest Green Terrace, Elbert, CO 80106  
719.495.5998 · E-mail: johnwear2@verizon.net

**1st Sgt. Richard "Rick" Lewis, Vice President**

5663 Balboa Ave (#366), San Diego, CA 92111-2793  
858.735.1772 Email: ricklent@aol.com

**Bruce Van Apeldoorn, Treasurer**

73 Stanton Street, Rochester, NY 14611-2837  
585.613.6564 Email: bvanapeldoornsr@gmail.com

**Ronald C. Knight, Secretary**

6665 Burnt Hickory Drive-Hoschton, GA 30548  
678.828.7197 Email: rckusmcvta@att.net

### Directors

**Lt. General Martin R. Steele, USMC (Ret.)**

16331 Ashington Park Drive; Tampa, FL 33647  
E-mail: mrsteele46@aol.com

**Fred Kellogg**

15013 NE 16th St.; Vancouver, WA 98684-3605  
360.609.3404 E-mail: kelloggfc@comcast.net

**Pete Ritch**

833 E Gulf Beach Drive, St George Island, FL 32328-2915  
850.734.0014 Email: goldendog@mchsi.com

**Greg Martin**

6514 - 81st Drive NE, Marysville, WA 98270-8010  
Phone: 360.480.1206 Email: usmctanker@comcast.net

**Col. William (Bill) J. Davis, USMC (ret)**

518 Mowbray Arch, Norfolk, VA 23507  
Phone: 757.622.6973 Email: billandjandavis@gmail.com

**Jim Raasch**

3116 1st Avenue NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405  
Phone: 319.551.1675 Email: jraasch47@gmail.com

### Committees & Chairmen

**SgtMajor Bill "JJ" Carroll**

Nominating Chair &  
CRCS/CR Representative  
Phone 651.342.0913 CST

**Bruce Van Apeldoorn**

Audit & Finance  
Phone 585.613.6564 EST

**CW04 Bob Embesi**

CRCS/CR Representative  
Phone 406.821.3075 MS

**Joe Liu**

Jerry Clark Memorial Buddy Fund  
Phone 801.731.7591  
Email: gjliu@hotmail.com

**Ron Knight**

Member Data Integrity  
Phone 678.828.7197 EST

**1st Sgt. Rick Lewis**

VA Information VTA History Project  
Phone 858.735.1772 PST

**Bob Peavey**

Fallen Heroes  
Phone 770.365.3711 EST

**Pete Ritch**

VTA History Project Chair  
Phone 850.734.0014 EST

**Greg Martin**

Webmaster National Recruiter  
Phone 360.480.12060 PST  
Email: usmctanker@comcast.net

Web Site: www.usmcvta.org

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John Wear - Editor & Publisher - johnwear2@verizon.net

Proof reading - Craig Newberry

Tuyen Pham - Layout and Design

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## Election of USMC VTA Officers

If you would like to run for a position on the Board of Directors of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association, you will need to submit your name and desired position. Elections will be held on September 10, 2021, during the business meeting of the reunion in Providence, Rhode Island. You must be a member in good standing to run for office. Only nominations submitted in writing by July 30, 2021, will be accepted at the meeting. Nominations will not be submitted directly from the floor. All who want to be considered for election must submit the request in writing to:

**Sgt Maj William Carroll, USMC (ret)**

**2725 Saddle Court - Unit 4**

**Stillwater, MN 55085**

**Phone: 651.342.0913**

Please Note: All requests must arrive no later than July 30, 2021.

### New Members

**Hines, Art P**

2311 Newburn Lane  
The Villages, FL 32162-3594  
Cell: 973.224.0414

Email: marinemets1@gmail.com

81 mm mortars, 2/9 - 1974 - 1981

MOS: 0341

DOB: 10/7/56

Wife: Frances

Recruited by: Greg Auclair

**Pronnette, Anthony L**

102 Egan St  
Shreveport, LA 71001  
Phone: 318.716.1375

Cell: 318.207.8753

Email: Alishabeyel@yahoo.com

A Co, 1st Tanks, '69 - '70

MOS: 1811

DOB: 11/28/50

Wife: Alisha Freta Beyel

Recruited by: Welcome Back!!!

**Tater, David B**

9377 Irish Road  
Goodrich, MI 48438  
Cell: 248.760.5238

Email: dbtater1@gmail.com

C Co, 3rd Tanks, 1966 - 1967

MOS: 1811

DOB: 6/20/45

Recruited by: VTA Website

### Member Info Changes

**Bob Lynch**

20 Gaslight Drive  
Apt 8

So Weymouth, Ma 02190

**Charles B Tubbs**

1435 E Venice Ave  
Suite 104 - PMB 141  
Venice, Florida 34295



ON THE COVER: The M-103A2 - 120 mm Heavy Gun Tank also known as an "Elephant Tank."

### Our Readers Write

(Formally known as "Letters to the Editor")

#### Bob Haller writes

One more thing, The Sponson Box is by far the best edition that was ever printed. It took a lot of work and dedication as does the planning for the reunion, I commend you and all those that are and have been instrumental in putting this all together, the delays, gathering information and everything involved. The past reunions have all been great times, I only wish I could have attended more of them than I have.

#### Armando Moreno writes

Thank you for publishing my article on our "100-year-old Marine." I will write an article and send it about my adventures at the Adak, Alaska, Marine Barracks. Should have sent sooner, but life got in the way. Later, grandkids on the way. What a magnificent piece of work you do on the "Box." You should be ever so proud to keep the candle burning!!! I, for you, am very grateful.

#### Roger Luli writes

Another great issue. I have shared Gerry Brouder's wisdom with my friends. I have another story in the works about 2nd Platoon Bravo Company. I sent it out to the people I mentioned in the story to get their approval and input. Only Dick Carey has responded so I will have to shake a few trees. Speaking of "Trees," I believe that is he on page 12.

#### Richard Cecil writes

I was saddened to see the Louis Rotar M-103 tank story was not printed in the latest Sponson Box. I really don't know what to think after Lou made all that effort to put it together. Like a lot of us his memory isn't as sharp as it used to be. That was the reason he involved his daughter in getting it worked up. In Robert Service, "Cremation of Sam McGee" there is a line I really like that goes: "A promise made is a debt unpaid and the trail has its own stern code."

*Editor's note: Lou's story is published in this issue with all of the other M-103 stories!!!*

#### Lee Dill writes

John, you do consistently produce an excellent product in the Sponson Box. On the day that it arrives, I take it from the mailbox to the chair by the window and read that fricking thing from cover to cover. I wish I would have saved them all, unfortunately I did not!! The VA magazine I skim and toss and Leatherneck, I may read it over a week - but Sponson Box = Done!!

#### John Hunter writes

A few comments on the latest Sponson Box. Great job as usual:

In March of 1966 about a dozen Marines from 1st. Tanks in Chu Lai, were transferred to 3rd. Tanks in Da Nang. Due to my old age, I can only remember a few of the names: Rick Smith, Bob Willoughby, Sgt. Norris, and myself. Over the years since I have been a member of the VTA, I have looked for the names of 3rd Tankers that were in Da Nang prior to our arrival there. I have not seen, a single name on our roster, or in any story in the SB, until now. On Bruce Apeldoorn's painting of C-22 he has listed the names of the crew members. Frenchy Lavigne, the loader of C-22 is a Marine I served with in Da Nang. He was a Lance Corporal in 1966, we were in the Flame Section, I was the driver of F-31, and I don't remember what tank Frenchy was on. I do remember he was a great guy from Georgia. He used to tell us he was from Bug Scuffle, GA. All of us from Chu Lai went back to the states at the end of May 1966, now I know Frenchy must have come back for a second tour.

Next, Gerry P. Brodeur's article of what it meant to be a Tanker in Viet Nam is outstanding.

And last but not least, your buddy Dale Dye: He had a radio program in Los Angeles in the 90's, on KFI-640 which was one of those 50,000 watt power-house stations. I will have to admit, I did not think he was a bull shitter at the time, but I should have figured it out. He said many times that he had retired from the Corps as a Captain because he had refused promotions that would have taken him out of the field, because he was a grunt. He said he wanted to stay in the field with his troops. While this is admirable goal, I now doubt its truthfulness. What Marine turns down a promotion?

#### Catching Up

It's been some time since we corresponded so I wanted to update you on my doings. I have received the latest Sponson Box and was pleased to see my poem re: "The Final Inspection" published. I also sent off a contribution check for the good of the good of the USMC VTA order. As I reread the poem, it became clear that I am adding years to my resume and may be having that conversation with God sometime in the years to come.

About 6 months ago I was experiencing some nagging pain in my upper left chest. My doctor ordered a CT scan and discovered that I had developed Non-Small Cell lung cancer. (I haven't smoked for almost forty years, but the damage has already been done.) I've been through radiation and chemo treatments which have reduced the tumor >>

by some 50%, and I'm now having immunotherapy treatments twice a month for the next year. I'm encouraged that we have a handle on the thing and I'll keep adding to my now 88 years.

Donna and I will be tested re: Covid19 next week and will start the Moderna vaccine also. There are some "perks" to being an old codger! Fortunately, we have only had a couple of mild cases in our extended families so far. Suffice it to say, 2020 was certainly a year of memorable events, all of which we hope are not repeated ever!

I'm happy that you are continuing to publish our magazine. While we will not be creating any more tank history, there are still many stories out there waiting to be told as part of our heritage.

Semper Fidelis, Ev Tunget...

#### A Note of Thanks

Guy Everest writes: Jerri, is still bedridden due to her contracting COVID. She had asked that I thank the VTA for the very nice flowers that you-all sent to her in the rehabilitation center. She had just gotten back from her morning exercises and it was a pleasant surprise to see the flowers in her room

#### Tom Hayes Makes an Appeal

An Open Letter to All MOS's Except 1811: As a proud member of C Co, 3rd Tanks 1967 - '68, and a great admirer of Dale Dye and Chesty Puller, I am tired of hearing all of the stories about 1811's. There were so many other MOS's that made up a USMC tank battalion.

Even though I didn't win a Medal of Honor or come close to the "shit" that tankers were exposed to, I did my share of patrols and ambushes. I was the company clerk with (then) GySgt Jim Langford...that crazy bastard!

So, my cry is to all other 0141's and any other MOS (3511, 2500, supply, ammo tech, etc.). Please, do any of you guys have anything to say about your Nam experience? Just think how many non-1811's served in Nam from 1965, '66, '67, '68 and part of '69 in tank outfits.

My hat is off to guys like Garry Hall who survived Ca Lu and stayed in my bunker at Cam Lo Hill while recuperating from his tragic night, losing PFC James and his tank. Like John Wear in Hue City. It is too bad your pal, Dale Dye, became far more famous than you...but you're still my hero! Also, my good friend, Bill Kilgore, MOS 2841. We were buddies in Nam. Let's hear some stories from you other guys!!!

Cpl Tom Hayes  
C Co., 3rd Tanks '67 - '68

#### Vietnam War Memorial

Hank Fuller writes: There is a movement in Lewiston, Maine, to erect a granite Vietnam War memorial to be completed by Veterans Day 2021. The coolest part of the



memorial is that they are going to prominently feature an M-48 tank. The names of 29 residents who died in Vietnam will be featured on the memorial. The top of the monument will be polished with the inscription, "For those who have served and fought for it, freedom has a taste that the protected will never know." The Veterans Council needs to raise \$6,500 and is appealing to the public to donate what they can. If any VTA member wishes to donate, please contact me.

Please contact Hank at phone: 207.442.7282 or email: hfuller1558@comcast.net

#### The "Boot" Lieutenant General



John Wear writes: Several years ago, a bunch of my Marine Vietnam veteran buddies from the Philly area traveled out to Gettysburg, PA to attend a memorial service and to pay our respects to a recently-departed Marine Vietnam veteran. I recall his first name was "Shamus" but I have since forgotten his Irish-sounding last name. Shamus had been quite active in "all-things-Marine" for many years up to and including pro-

ducing several flavors of BBQ sauce called "Gung Ho Sauce." Anyway, a large contingency of Active-Duty Marines were in attendance including the US Marine Burial Detail from Arlington and a three star general along with the general's entire contingent. Now that I think of it, the Sgt Major of the Marine Corps was also there.

One of my good buddies saw the impressive amount of "fruit salad" on the general's blouse and since my buddy had been a bomb loader for "fast movers" while in Vietnam, he went up to the general to shoot the shit. While they were chatting, my buddy noticed that the general's hat brass was tilted off center and so he mentioned it to the general. The general thanked him and then offered some lame excuse about his aide not inspecting him properly. During the course of conversation, my buddy found out that the general had become a Marine after my buddy had gotten off of Active Duty in the USMC so he called the general "Boot." They both laughed hysterically and had a nice time chatting.

#### Birthday Tank



#### A Note from "Together We Served"

To Bob Skeels: I hope you and yours are doing well with everything. I saw your video on The Vietnam Tankers YouTube channel and it was great. I really appreciated and enjoyed hearing how you had to be a grunt officer before going to Tanks. I joined the Marine Corps in 1983 as a Tow Gunner and was assigned to Tow Company 2nd Tanks. However, when I got there, I was reassigned to Delta Company as an OJT 1811 for 8 months and I really liked it. Anyway Bob, I just wanted to thank you for your extraordinary service as a Marine Corps Officer in Vietnam as I'm honored to be writing you this message. Vietnam Veteran Marines have always been my heroes and always will be. Take care and Godspeed to you and your family. Semper Fidelis, Tim Tray

#### New Member - Art Hines

I am inquiring as to how to subscribe to Sponson Box magazine. My name is Art Hines. I am a Marine, having served with 81's Platoon with 2/9. My buddy, 1st Sgt Greg Auclair, let me read his copies. Greg recently moved, and I would like to subscribe myself to Sponson Box, if I could. Thanks for your help.

Semper Fi,

Art Hines

Email-Marinemets1@gmail.com

Phone 973.224.0414

Editor's Note: Art is now a proud member of the USMC VTA.

#### Doug Scrivner and Dale Dye

I just got done reading the article in Sponson Box about Dale Dye in Hue City. All I can say is BRAVO! my man. As a Flame Tanker and a Tanker-To-The-Marrow, I never knew one to avoid the fight. We supported the grunts in any way that was possible, and we never left their asses hanging in the breeze.

#### Devil's Disciples



John Wear writes: Look what I got in the mail today! Carl "Hokey" Hokanson made this exact replica of my Vietnam flame tank!!! Thank you Hokey!!!

#### I think I found my tank!

Carl "Hokey" Hokanson writes: While sitting home because of the "pandemic", I had just about finished reading all four volumes of our most impressive books, "Forgotten Tracks." As I read, I came across a photo of a bunch of tankers sitting on a tank. Looking closer, I noticed that the Xeon search light cover had painted on it two sets of foot prints with the word "IT." I said to myself, "What a small world!" When the tanks were shipped home from Vietnam, I went off shore and unloaded that same tank from the LSD and brought it back to the 41 Area at Las Flores. I took this photo back then and have it in my photo album to this day. >>

## Doggies Liberating Hue Tet '68?



John Wear writes: I found this photo on line of doggies appearing to take credit for liberating Hue from the NVA during the Tet '68 battle. I have it on very credible authority that other than the REMF pogues at the MAC-V compound, not one single US Army troop was inside of the Hue city limits from January 31 to March 1, 1968. Then when I think about the 7th Cav. I am pretty sure that they also claim credit for "liberating" Khe Sahn.

### Thank You!

I hope not to be a pest but I was just pleasantly surprised to find the "letter" from Steve to me that was written 50 years ago and that was printed in this most recent issue of the Sponson Box. How about that? I haven't come across another letter since that one last May.

I appreciate all the stories that you have published from Steve and from me. I truly hope they serve all the Marines who may read them. As always, there are so many well written articles. Treasures. I have a special place on my bookshelf for these issues. They allow me so much insight into what you all experienced in Vietnam. Unfortunately, Steve didn't share much about it for many, many years. He stuffed it down inside. I never understood what was going on deep within him. But I saw a new man evolve after the VTA reunions, after seeking help through the VA, and from writing and reading articles and stories in the Sponson Box.

So, thanks always for the Sponson Box and for all you do for your brother Marines. I'm happy to be able to peek inside each issue and continue to learn of the grit, the sacrifices, and the haunting memories of a time that carried over and effected so many lives including my own.

Marcia Falk – widow of VTA member Steve Falk

## JOKE



### Tankers Cook Out



Armando Moreno sent this photo of tankers putting to good use the extremely hot exhaust of an M-1 Abrams. Personally, I recall warming up cans of C-Rations in the fording stack of an M-48.

### Correction



Glen Hutchins caught an error. The Marine tankers in the above photo were Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks crewmen not Bravo Co. Sorry!!! ■

## Tracking Our History – Podcasts

Do you have writer's cramp? Are you camera shy? You Say It – We Write It!!!

Out of the approximately 500 USMC Vietnam Tankers Association members, roughly 50 have put a pen to paper and have written one, two or more stories of their time in-country Vietnam. Of which, virtually every single story has been ... or is about to be ... published in our Sponson Box magazine.

And out of the same 500 USMC VTA members, roughly 75 have faced the video camera during one of our reunions and have conducted a personal interview. Of which, every single one of them are available for viewing online at the USMC VTA website and/or on You Tube.

We have fairly recently discovered another far simpler, far easier and almost fool proof way to have members be able to tell their story in their own words ... and that is on our "Tracking Our History" Podcast program. How it works is that we schedule a

telephone interview with you and on that appointed day "Tree" gives you a call and begins a discussion of your tour in Vietnam. For the most part the program is totally up to you. The story is whatever you want to say. Then Tree can put music, sounds and other enhancements to your story and make it available to listen to on the USMC VTA website.

And once your story is recorded, we have a transcription program that is able to convert your spoken words into a written document. Once the project is complete, you have the author's rights to approve or disapprove the story for publication.

CONTACT:

Frank "Tree" Remkiewicz

Email: fremkiewicz@gmail.com

Phone: 209.996.8887

## WE NEED YOU!

Joe Liu, who heads up our Buddy Fund, wants to know... if you have a buddy dealing with one of life's challenges or who is sick or dying, Joe would like to get a card, flowers, or whatever is appropriate to them pronto. Please contact Joe on his cell phone 801-643-4027 or email pjliu@hotmail.com providing as much information as possible. Heck if it is you who is experiencing some hard times please call Joe.

## LORE OF THE CORPS

### The Battle of Saipan, Mariana Islands (June 15–July 9 1944)

#### Thomas Everett O'Neal

(28 April 1924–June 16 2007)

Enlisted in December 1941 in his hometown of Long Beach, California.

Rank at Discharge–Sergeant  
(November 8 1945)

Also re-enlisted for Korean War  
(1950–1953).

With 2nd Div. USMC participating in the assault and seizure of Ichon, capture and securing of Seoul, as well as the Wonsan–Hungnam – the Chosin Campaign.



Corporal Thomas O'Neal (2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division) rests against his M4 Sherman medium tank in the town of Garapan which was secured on 3rd July. Photographer- Sgt Bill Young (Yank Magazine)

# To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

"And when I get to Heaven, St Peter I will tell, "Another Marine reporting, Sir.  
I served my time in Hell."

## Corpsman Down

Just to let you fellas know Doc McCarthy passed away on New Year's Eve 2020. Cancer of the lungs did him in, Agent Orange was a part of it. Doc was the gentleman who wrote the article that appeared in the last issue of our magazine, What I Learned in Vietnam – "Not My Best Season."

Doc was in Nam in '67 – '68, Operation De Soto and some other big ops. Two Purple Hearts. He was just a little shit but a real bad ass! He put in six years in the Navy as a Corpsman then retired after going to the Air Force. Doc had four degrees, spoke four languages fluently! He taught school at the Air Force Academy. When his service was over he bought a Harley and hit the road hard. He was a biker's biker. Long hair, dirty looking and loved his "herb." He rode with the best of them. He did the POW / MIA "Ride to the Wall" in Washington several times. He played bass guitar in a band for years. This was a hell of a Marine (Corpsman) ... the old Corps.

*Sgt Maj Bill "JJ" Carroll reports that his tank platoon leader in Vietnam recently passed away. JJ wrote: "...In the process of contacting one of my former platoon leaders John Brock, I found out that he died of COVID."*

## John Biddle Brock 1943 – 2020

He died Tuesday, April 28 in Beverly, MA, from the Coronavirus. John was born February 20, 1943, the first son of Hope Distler Brock and Horace Brock. He graduated from Salisbury School and the University of Pennsylvania in 1965. He entered the Marine Corps and served as a tank commander in Vietnam. On his return, he went to Harvard Business School. After a career in the CIA, he pursued financial ventures. He was also active in supporting Veterans' groups. He is survived by two sons, Stephen Brock of Los Angeles and John Brock of NYC as well as a brother Horace Wood Brock and Hope Brock Winthrop. A memorial will be held this summer in Gloucester, MA. John was a former member of the USMC VTA but unfortunately he allowed his membership to lapse quite a while ago.

*Gene "Doc" Hackemack reports that his tank company skipper from back in 1966 passed away. "...He was my CO, Bravo, 1st Tanks, 1st Mar Div. Da Nang area. He was not a member of the USMC-VTA, although I urged him to join many times. I would visit him frequently in Springdale, Arkansas during my RV trips. His daughter notified me today."*

## Edward Everett Stith 1934–2020

Edward Everett Stith, 86 of Springdale, passed away on December 8, 2020 at Northwest Medical Center in Springdale. He was born on January 7, 1934 in Lawrence, Kansas to Everett Gaines Stith and Lucy Williford Stith.

Edward served in the United Marine Corps for twenty years, where he retired as a Major. He graduated from Ottawa High School and the University of Kansas where he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, and he earned a master's degree from George Washington University. While in the Marine Corps he was a Tanker and served in Vietnam as a company commander. Ed was one of the first Marines to go to computer school at IBM. He served in computers for 10 years as CO at Parris Island, Quantico and Cameron Station where he retired. Ed and family came to Arkansas where he raised cattle, chickens and rabbits. He was a lifetime member of Kansas University, the VFW and the Marine Corps League where he served as treasurer.

## John "Jack" Carty

Barrington, New Jersey–On August 29, 2020, Jack passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his loving family. Born in Philadelphia, Jack graduated from Camden Catholic High School in 1947 lettering in baseball and football for which he later was inducted into the first Camden Catholic Hall of Fame Class. After graduation, he began working at the Courier Post newspaper where he continued to work until his official retirement in 2006 as an Assistant Sports Editor and Columnist. He served honorably from 1950–1952 with the US Marine Corps during the Korean War. Most importantly, he was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather coaching many of his children's athletic teams. Jack was also a member of the USMC VTA.

## Amador Daniel Barrios



September 20, 1948–August 12, 2017

We are sorry to report that we could not find an official obituary for Dan.

## Reveile, Buddy Merle



October 21, 1950 – March 23, 2015

Buddy Merle Reveile was one of eight children born to John and Daisy Reveile. He was born on October 21st, 1950 and finished his race on March 23rd, 2015. His parents and five of his siblings preceded him in death. After serving a

tour of duty in Vietnam he returned to his home in Austin. He married Susan K. Sparks on June 12th, 1970.

In 1979 he opened Bud's Motorcycle Shop in East Austin. Buddy continues to live on through the lives of his wife, Susan Reveile, his four sons: Raymond, Stephen, Reuben and wife Cassie and Joseph, his seven daughters: Kelli and husband Aaron, Rebekah, Deborah and husband Ben, Hannah and husband Joseph, Elizabeth and husband John, Anna and Catherine, twenty-four grandchildren and one great grandson.

## Charles T. "Tom" Tuck



July 4, 1944 – June 12, 2020

Charles T. "Tom" Tuck, age 75, of Stuttgart, AR went to be with the Lord on Friday, June 12, 2020 at the McClellan Veteran's Medical Center in Little Rock.

Born July 4, 1944 to Charles Edward Tuck and Jeanette Davis Tuck, he graduated from Pine Bluff High

School in 1962, joined the United States Marine Corps in 1962 and served until 1966. Tom was an Ontos tank specialty mechanic and served in Vietnam. He was a Lifetime member of the Disabled American Veterans and the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. ■

## FIDELAS W. JARNOT Lieutenant Colonel U. S. Marine Corps Korea - Vietnam



Dedicated to God, Family  
and Country



Korean Service  
w/4 Stars



Navy Commendation  
w/Combat "V"



Vietnam Service  
w/3 Stars

Other MEDALS-RIBBONS: Combat Action, Presidential Unit Citation, Meritorious Unit Commendation w/Star, Good Conduct w/3 Stars, Navy Occupation Service w/Asia Clasp, National Defense Service w/Star, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, United Nations Service w/4 Stars, Republic of Vietnam Campaign/Device, Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation w/Palm

Fidelas served with distinction in two combat operations, as a Fire Team Leader in Korea, and a Tank Company Commander in Vietnam.

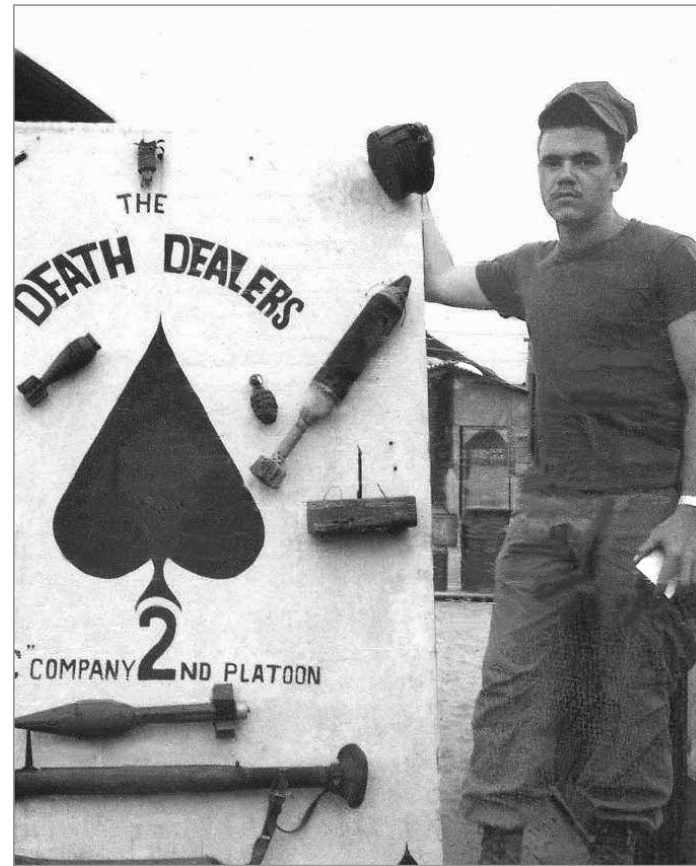


## Fidelas W Jarnot

According to the MCTA newsletter Col. Jarnot passed away on 12/01/2019.

## GUESS WHO Photo Contest

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



## **Last Issue Winner**

Last issue's winner was Hank Fuller who emailed me on Friday, Jan 8 at 5:22 PM to correctly identify Frank "Tree" Remkiewicz, 2nd Platoon, Alpha Co, 3rd Tanks in 1969.



## Tanks & Medals of Valor

### **Rene Cerda**

DHOME OF RECORD: Fresno, California

#### **Silver Star**

Awarded for Actions during the Vietnam War

Service: Marine Corps

Rank: Corporal

Battalion: 3d Tank Battalion

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

#### **GENERAL ORDERS:**

#### **CITATION:**

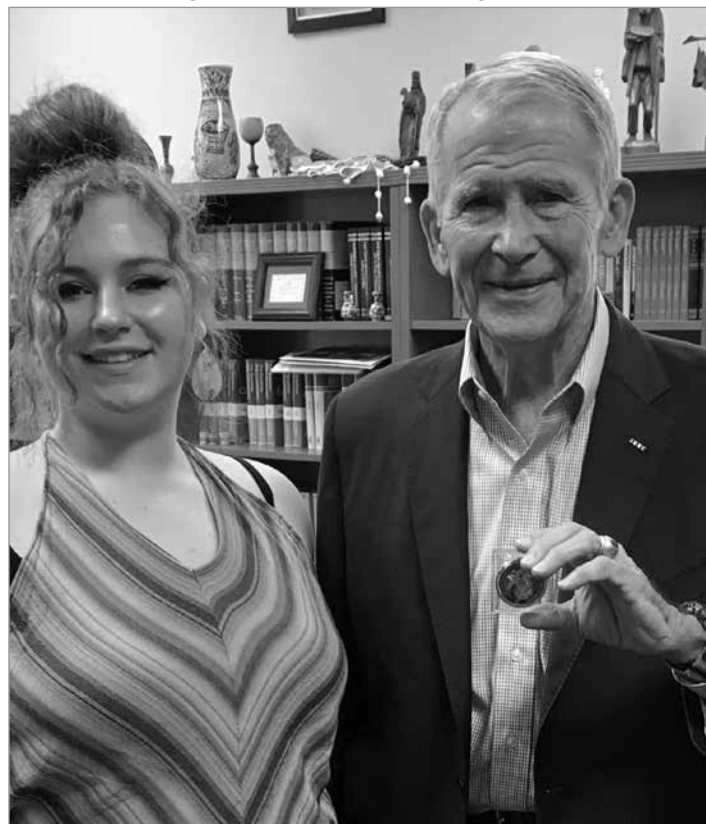
The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Corporal Rene Cerda (MCSN: 2318335), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with Company B, Third Tank Battalion, THIRD Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 19 May 1968, Corporal Cerda was the Loader aboard one of two tanks assigned to assist a friendly unit heavily engaged with a numerically superior North Vietnamese Army force near the Khe Sanh Combat Base. Arriving at the beleaguered unit's position, the armored vehicle immediately came under intense enemy anti-tank rocket and small-arms fire. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Corporal Cerda ensured that the 90-mm. cannon was loaded and the .30-caliber machine gun was operative. As the tank moved into the hazardous area, he ably assisted the gunner to deliver a heavy volume of suppressive fire upon the hostile emplacements which enabled two badly damaged vehicles to withdraw to positions of relative safety. Continuing to maneuver across the fire-swept terrain,



the tank suddenly sustained a direct hit from an enemy anti-tank rocket that seriously wounded Corporal Cerda and two of the crew members. Ignoring his painful injury, he continued to assist the gunner and load the weapons. Despite sustaining two additional wounds as hostile rocket-propelled grenades impacted upon a tank, he steadfastly refused medical aid and manually operated the machine gun that was damaged by the enemy fire. Fearlessly maintaining his dangerous position, he resolutely ignored the intense hostile fire as the armored vehicle was struck by five additional anti-tank rockets that penetrated the engine compartment and forced the crew to abandon their flaming tank. His heroic actions and resolute determination inspired all who observed him and were instrumental in the Marines accounting for over three hundred North Vietnamese soldiers killed. By his courage, aggressive fighting spirit, and unfaltering devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, Corporal Cerda upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service. ■

## What Members Are Doing

### Ollie North gets a VTA Challenge Coin



Bruce Van Apeldoorn writes: Yes that Lt. Col. Ollie North. And yes, he is holding a USMC VTA "Forever" challenge coin. He was asked to speak at church in New Bern, NC. As it happens, my middle son's family attends that house of worship. My granddaughter, Brina (pictured), asked me if I could attend. Since we have been under Covid-19 restrictions, it has kept us home. Plus the date of the event was 11/8 and I host the USMC Birthday Breakfast in our hometown. I told her that unfortunately I could not attend but I did send her a VTA coin and asked that she present it to the Colonel and wish him a Happy Birthday. Brina is a HS freshman who attends remotely and gets straight A's

### Sparrow's Choo-choo



Tom "Sparrow" Moad writes: Did anyone see my old friend Bob Schoose on the "Beyond Oak Island, Lost Dutchman" show? He's just a few miles from my house in Red Mountain, (CA). The photo is of his 20 ton locomotive that I was helping him fix.

### Greg's Flagpole



Greg Martin recently moved from Washington State to Arizona. Almost as soon as he moved into this new home, he put up a flag pole.

### Reunion



Joe Tyson writes: In the fall of 2019, Joe Tyson (left) Bob Haller (center) and John Saikley (right). It had been over 50 years ago that we were together in Nam as Marine tankers. At this reunion we stayed at Fort Myers in Virginia. It was John's first time visiting the Vietnam Memorial Wall in DC. We also attended the Evening Parade at HQ Marine Corps 8th and Eye.

### Clyde Hoch

Did you know that our very own Clyde Hoch was selected as, "One of the fifty great writers you should be reading," for his first book selected by the Author Show. His fourth book won a bronze medal at Reader's Favorite Award ceremony in Miami? He now has ten books in print, and one audio-book, all profits go to helping veterans. He has a documen-

tary on tanks called "Tanks a Century of Dominating the Battlefield." Clyde writes a monthly veterans column for a local newspaper.

He also started a veterans organization aimed at helping veterans. As soon as the "Veterans Brotherhood" hears of a homeless veteran they pick them up and put them in a hotel and evaluate what is best for the veteran for their future. Last year the Veterans Brotherhood helped just about 100 veterans. Some of them were living in cars with their wives and children. The organization was started to prevent veteran suicides but has far expanded. They now help pay electric and gas bills, auto repairs, and a host of other ways to help veterans. The Veterans Brotherhood is at the point where the VA calls and asks them to put up a veteran the VA can't do themselves.

### Press Release

## Clyde Hoch's Latest Book Chronicles a Life Confronting Challenges

*"I Am a Miracle" recounts his struggles coping with early poverty and military service disabilities—while offering encouragement and hard-won insights.*

Philadelphia, PA. — Long-time USMC VTA member and award-winning author Clyde Hoch has come out with his tenth book, one which reflects upon the major disabilities he himself has faced in life. While at the same time offering hope and encouragement to others in similar situations.

"I Am a Miracle" makes the case for a firm belief in God, the power of a disciplined approach to life and acceptance that big challenges are a part of many if not most lives.

Named by the publishing industry website The Authors Show as one of the Fifty Great Writers You Should Be Reading, his books benefit from insights gained as a Marine tank commander during the Vietnam War's years of heaviest fighting. An experience which nearly killed Hoch and left him with lifelong disabilities.

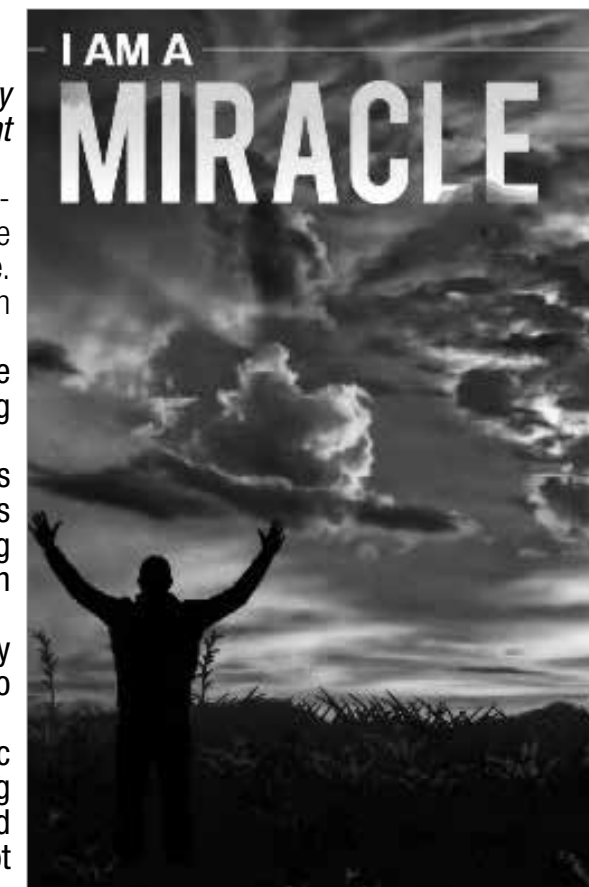
This new book relates the challenges of growing up in poverty and filth, with a hoarder father and a mother who ultimately had to give up on housecleaning.

"But it was ultimately traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which stood in the way of reintegrating myself into civilian life," says Hoch. The low point he reached, and the daily thoughts of suicide, are part of a downward cycle not uncommon among disabled war veterans, he notes.

"It is a miracle I am alive, and it's a miracle that I have what I have today—a home, a fine family and a fulfilling career. But it demonstrates convincingly that you truly are in charge of your own life and your own future," he notes.

He believes readers of all ages facing serious challenges can learn from and be encouraged by the words written in his book. Hoping to educate, inspire and motivate also led him to establish a non-profit group called The Veterans Brotherhood—to take homeless veterans off the streets and provide somewhere to turn to for help. A portion of his book's profits help fund this endeavor.

All of Clyde's books and documentary are available on Amazon.





## 'Semper Tanks': Marines Hold On To Tanker Spirit As 100-Year Legacy Ends

From the Stars and Stripes newspaper

The Marine Corps is ditching tanks, but its tankers are working to preserve their unique subculture, some with hopes that their special breed may one day be called on again.

"We are small and we are all really cut from the same cloth," said Maj. Ronald "JR" Valasek, an armor officer who launched a YouTube channel this summer where the tight-knit community can document its own legacy. "I will always be a tanker."

Dubbed "100 Years of Marine Corps Tankers," the channel was born days after the 4th of July, as tank companies were closing and their M1A1 Abrams tanks were being hauled away. The Marines who crewed them were being asked to retrain, change services or retire.

"It's a way for us to keep our stories alive," Valasek said in a phone interview. "The series is going to go for as long as I have interviews."

He was inspired to launch the weekly video series after realizing many current or former tankers have memories and feelings to share. It's been "like therapy," he said, adding that it had spurred old friends to reconnect off-camera too.

In parts oral history, pep talk and eulogy, the episodes occasionally open a window into the final days of the service's remaining tank units, slated to be shuttered by 2023 — one century after the Corps received its first six M1917 tanks from the Army.

Master Gunnery Sgt. Daniel Formella, operations chief at the North Carolina-based 2nd Tank Battalion, spoke with Valasek in late July, just hours after his battalion's M1A1s were loaded onto railcars at Camp Lejeune for the last time.

"It hurts seeing that [tank] ramp empty. Oh, it hurts," Formella said. "I've been trying to hold it together all week."

It's like losing a loved one, said Valasek, a 17-year veteran. Another heartbreak was knowing he and others will retire in a few years without the traditional ceremony on the tank ramp, standing under crossed 120 mm cannons, as their mentors and heroes had in years past.

The Marines got the news this spring, when Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger published a vision for the service's future without heavy armor and several other units. But it's a demise that's long been foretold.

"This day has been coming for ... 30 years," Chris Juhls, a retired gunnery sergeant, said in July. "It just so happens it's now, and there's nothing we can do about it."

Service wide cuts to equipment, units and personnel are partly meant to free up money for modernization without asking Congress for a bigger budget.

While Valasek didn't expect tank units to be unscathed, he was "personally shocked" that none survived. A veteran of the Iraq war who spent over six months fighting in Fallujah, he said "tanks were an absolute necessity" there during Operation Phantom Fury and subsequent operations. Many Marine infantrymen would not have made it home without them, he and others say.

*Editor's Note: If you would like to see any of the many interviews that have been captured and published on line, please go to YouTube and search for "100 Years of Marine Corps Tanks."*

*Also if any of the members of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association are interested in having your own Zoom interview with Major Valasek please contact him at:*

JR Valasek  
Phone: 910.381.0233  
Email: pickleusmc@hotmail.com

## Hidden VA Money: VA Programs You May Be eligible for

- Below are some programs or rules within the VA that could pay you and your surviving spouse in all matters financial. As you explore these programs, keep in mind, it may be in your best interest to see an accredited VSO or a qualified attorney familiar with VA law should you elect in pursuing any of the programs:
- Any veteran who is a senior citizen or his/her surviving dependents may be eligible to receive over \$2,000 per month (\$24,000 per year) in tax free income. The payments include annual cost of living increases.
- A veteran can easily qualify for a VA Pension even if his annual income exceeds the limits set by the VA. For this program, a veteran may need a highly qualified VA attorney to help.
- Recurring, non-reimbursed medical expenses of a veteran and the surviving spouse are deductible from gross income.
- Veteran family members can be paid as caregivers, which is also a tax deductible expense.
- If a veteran resides in an Assisted Living Facility the entire amount paid for the service is a deductible expense.
- Veterans 65 years-old or older, are presumed to be disabled. It does not have to be proven.
- There are many federal VA nursing homes, and private nursing homes with a federal VA Contract who will admit veterans for care even if the veteran does not meet the service connected disability requirements.
- Veterans who are 100% service-connected IU may be eligible for an additional monthly entitlement of \$62.50/mo. for catastrophic injury.
- DMAVA and the department of education jointly launched a program on October 5, 2002 to honor world war two era veterans who left school to join the military and have never received a high school diploma.
- Veteran family members can be paid as caregivers, which is also a tax deductible expense.
- If a veteran resides in an Assisted Living Facility the entire amount paid for the service is a deductible expense.
- If the veteran is deceased and the surviving spouse is applying for low income pension, the spouse can be of ANY age and does NOT have to be disabled.
- Reports indicate that a pension with aid and attendance is easier to obtain than Household Benefits.
- A veteran who is healthy but has a spouse who is disabled, may be eligible for Improved Pension (Low Income Pension).
- In order to receive service-connected disability rating a veteran's disability does not have to be related to combat.
- A VA rating of 70% or higher will allow a veteran-claimant to reside in a federal VA nursing home, at no charge. Other stipulations may arise resulting in minimal fees.
- When a veteran is rated at 100% disability or if rated as Individual Unemployability (IU), the veteran will receive the highest rating and the highest pay. Additionally, if a veteran is in need of additional aid of another person to help with activities of daily living (walking, bathing, dressing, toileting, etc.) there is an added supplemental compensation called "aid and attendance".

[Source: <http://www.veteranprograms.com/resources7.html> | David Austin | September 19, 2018 ++]

## Top 10 Overlooked Veteran Disabilities

- **Erectile Dysfunction** – Erectile dysfunction, or ED, is the inability of a man to have an erection hard enough to have sexual intercourse. It can also be known as impotence.
- **Agoraphobia** – The essential feature of Agoraphobia is anxiety about being in (or anticipating) situations from which escape might be difficult or in which help may not be available in the event of having a Panic Attack (or panic-like symptoms).
- **Keloids** – A scar that rises quite abruptly above the rest of the skin. It is irregularly shaped, usually pink to red in color, tends to enlarge progressively, and may be harder than the surrounding skin. Keloids are a response to trauma, such as a cut to the skin.
- **Sexually Transmitted Diseases** – (Especially those contracted in combat areas, i.e., Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia)
- **Pseudofolliculitis Barbae** – a common condition of the beard area occurring in men and other people with curly hair. The problem results when highly curved hairs grow back into the skin causing inflammation and a foreign body reaction.
- **Plantar Fasciitis** – Plantar fasciitis is the pain caused by inflammation of the insertion of the plantar fascia on the medial process of the calcaneal tuberosity. The pain may be substantial, resulting in the alteration of daily activities.
- **Pleurisy** – Pleurisy is inflammation of the parietal pleura that typically results in characteristic pleuritic pain and has a variety of possible causes. The term "pleurisy" is often used to refer to a symptom and a condition. It is more precise to use the term "pleurisy" for the condition and "pleuritic pain" to describe the symptom.
- **Tropical Phagedena (Jungle Rot)** – tropical phagedena, Aden ulcer, Malabar ulcer, and jungle rot (from Vietnam) as well as various native terms. It occurs on exposed parts of the body, primarily the legs, arms, and feet.
- **Hemorrhoids** – Hemorrhoids are swollen and inflamed veins around the anus or in the lower rectum. The rectum is the last part of the large intestine leading to the anus.
- **Sleep Terror Disorder** – Sleep terror disorder is also known as night terrors. Sleep terror is characterized by the following symptoms that a mental health professional looks for when making a diagnosis for this condition:
  - Recurrent episodes of abrupt awakening from sleep, usually occurring during the first third of the major sleep episode and beginning with a panicky scream.
  - Intense fear and signs of autonomic arousal, such as tachycardia, rapid breathing, and sweating, during each episode.
  - Relative unresponsiveness to efforts of others to comfort the person during the episode.
  - No detailed dream is recalled and there is amnesia for the episode. The episodes cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
  - The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition. ■

## V. A. News & Updates

For more VA information please go to our website  
[www.USMCVTA.org](http://www.USMCVTA.org)

### Ask Not Get Not I What Do You Need?

- Many veteran's that have VA benefits may not know that the VA provides complementary treatment items such as CPAP machines, hearing aids, custom fit orthotic shoe inserts, Marsona sound conditioning machines (for masking tinnitus), prescription eyeglasses, and many other items to help provide injury relief. Sometimes veterans have to ask for such equipment.
- A veteran that is struggling to fall asleep due to ringing or buzzing ears can ask a VA audiologist for a Masona sound conditioning machine that may help mask the tinnitus enough to fall asleep.
- A veteran with sleep apnea will have to participate in a sleep clinic and be tested. If sleep apnea is determined then, the VA will hand the veteran a high-quality modern CPAP machine that is much smaller than the older versions and easier to keep clean.
- Also, some VA clinics offer Chronic Pain Management and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which may be helpful for some veterans that are struggling to maintain relationships and experiencing declining work performance.
- The VA will supply a veteran who has been diagnosed with vitamin D deficiency-free vitamin D supplements if asked. Many veterans are vitamin D deficient. Vitamin D is extremely important for good health.
- Some veterans struggle with joint pain, and the VA will provide Voltaren topical gel for relief if asked.
- Some clinics provide ultrasound physical therapy for plantar fasciitis relief if asked.
- Veterans with VA benefits sometimes have to ask. There's no harm in asking for relief products. The harm comes when veterans don't ask for relief items. You are not taking away from another veteran if you ask for relief items. These items are stockpiled and do no good for anyone if they are not distributed and providing relief. Ask not. Get not.
- [Source: Together We Served | Steven Lucas | November 2020 ++]

## THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

*There is no greater danger in military strategy than shaping a nation's force structure to respond to one specific set of contingencies, giving an adversary the ability to adjust and adapt beforehand.*

BY JIM WEBB

May 8, 2020

On September 4, 2002, five months before the invasion of Iraq, this writer warned in an editorial for the Washington Post that "China can only view the prospect of an American military consumed for the next generation by the turmoil of the Middle East as a glorious windfall . . . An 'American war' with the Muslims, occupying the very seat of their civilization, would allow the Chinese to isolate the United States diplomatically as they furthered their own ambitions in South and Southeast Asia."

Eighteen years later we are struggling with the bitter leavings of that unfortunate result. We have spent trillions of dollars from our national treasury on wars and frequently amateurish nation-building projects in the Middle East. We have lost thousands of good people to deaths in combat, and tens of thousands more to wounds and debilitating emotional scars that will stay with them throughout their remaining lives. Our military leaders have conducted numerous fruitless and feckless campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria that, in the end, have only further destabilized one region while decreasing American prestige and influence in another. Our larger foreign policy has degenerated from post-Cold War transitional to post-Iraq situational, without the guiding principles of a clear national doctrine. The leadership in the Department of Defense, both military and civilian, has been reduced to feeling its way from one day to the next, simply reacting to crises large and small rather than guiding the international narrative, which America's global leadership managed to

do even during the most difficult days of the Cold War.

The Iraq War is largely behind us, having blown apart that country and empowered Iran. Afghanistan is no better than it was when we first committed military forces there nineteen years ago and indeed is probably worse, consolidating Afghanistan's firm position as a narco-state that is by far the world's largest producer of opium. Libya has deteriorated into a full-blown failed state. Syria is a devastating riddle, clouded by our own government's lack of transparency regarding the level of our national involvement. And the stability of East Asia, whose waterways carry the world's most vital sea lanes, has become increasingly fragile. After two decades of being treated by American leadership as something of a second-tier strategic backwater, it comes as no surprise that the region is in danger of steadily drifting into the autocratic and economic orbit of an increasingly powerful China.

In the wake of two decades of costly strategic blunders and an inability to accomplish our national objectives it is nonetheless remarkable that along the way a trusting America consistently has given our top military leaders huge deference and frequent free passes. Our Post-9/11 generals and admirals are treated with a reverence approaching the esteem of those who led the country to victory during World War II. At the top they are the most educated generation of officers in our history, the result of mid-career opportunities for advanced degrees at some of our most prestigious universities while receiving full pay. As a prerequisite for promotion to flag rank they spend at least one

tour on a "J" staff, interacting with their inter-service peers and frequently learning the budgetary, programmatic and political nuance that prepares them for high-level military positions and lucrative post-career employment. And their judgments are rarely put to test by a congressional leadership and major media whose members risk backlash since so few have actually served in the military.

The convergence of these two realities is at the center of a growing unease with the implications of the recent announcement by Gen. David Berger, the new Commandant of the Marine Corps that the Corps will move from operational concepts in the Middle East and will re-engage in Pacific Asia. The decision to shift priorities back to this region comes as no surprise to those who closely follow national security issues since by now there is little argument that the United States should never have disengaged from Pacific Asia in the first place. What is surprising is that the new Commandant should be using a predictable re-emphasis on East Asia to propose changing the fundamental force structure and operational doctrines of the Marine Corps.

Interestingly, when citing his philosophical inspiration at the outset of his proposal, General Berger chose to ignore two centuries of innovative and ground-breaking role models who guided the Marine Corps through some of its most difficult challenges. The giants of the past—John Le Jeune, Arthur Vandergrift, Clifton Cates, Robert Barrow and Al Gray, just for starters—were passed over, in favor of a quote from a professor at the Harvard Business School who never served.

Many Marines, past and present, view this gesture as a symbolic putdown of the Corps' respected leadership methods and the historic results they have obtained.

Much more important is the potentially irreversible content of the proposal itself. If authorized, appropriated and put into place, this plan would eliminate many of the Marine Corps' key capabilities. It could permanently reduce the long-standing mission of global readiness that for more than a century has been the essential reason for its existence as a separate service. Its long-term impact would undo the value of the Marine Corps as the one-stop guarantor of a homogeneous tactical readiness that can "go anywhere, fight anybody, and win." And after the centuries it took to establish the Marine Corps as a fully separate military service, it could reduce its present role by making it again subordinate to the funding and operational requirements of the Navy.

General Berger bases his proposal on guidance in the 2018 National Defense Strategy which "redirected the Marine Corps' mission focus from countering violent extremists in the Middle East to great power / peer-level competition with special emphasis on the Indo-Pacific . . . Such a profound shift from inland to littoral . . . will also demand greater integration with the Navy and a reaffirmation of that strategic partnership." He then concludes that "Our current force design, optimized for large scale amphibious forcible entry and sustained operations ashore . . . are no longer what the nation requires of the Marine Corps."

In making his conclusions, Berger emphasizes two principles. The first is that the future force should be formulated based on "approved naval concepts." The second is that its operational practices should heavily emphasize a "hider versus finder competition" that exists in many of the highly structured DOD "war games" that he has experienced, calling the "reconnaissance / counter-

reconnaissance mission an imperative for success."

Based on a 2018 Department of Defense framework that is always subject to change, General Berger has thus decided to dramatically alter the entire force structure of the Marine Corps to a posture whose overriding emphasis would be short-term, high-tech raids against Chinese military outposts on small, fortified islands in the South China Sea. While it is certainly useful to develop contingency plans should Marines be called upon to conduct such limited tactical interventions, building a force around this concept is not a bold leap into the future. Rather, it reflects a misunderstanding of the past, as well as ignoring the unpredictability of war itself. Such scenarios are hardly a full reflection of "what the Nation requires of the Marine Corps." The General seems to acknowledge that when he states in his proposal, "We need better answers to the question, 'what does the Navy need from the Marine Corps?'"

The new commandant has hedged in recent interviews regarding the finality of his proposal with such comments as "this is not the end of the journey but rather the beginning," and "at some point within a 10-year period we need to make some fundamental changes." But his conclusions have been highly specific. They are already being passed down through the Marine Corps command structure, and soon will be reduced to hard numbers in congressional funding requests that usually cover a five-year plan.

In forwarding his conclusions, the General noted that he had already decided that the Marine Corps should divest (his word) its combat structure by three full infantry battalions, a 14 percent reduction of its most important combat elements, and all of the correlative support units that would be involved. Marine Corps analytical teams were also ordered to "avoid" criteria related to the possibility of "sustained land operations," thereby removing future considerations of the type of operational challenges the

Marine Corps has predominantly faced over the past one hundred years.

**His proposals include the following:**

—Divestment of all the tanks in the Marine Corps, such capability "to be provided by the U.S. Army."

—Divestment of three of the current seventeen medium tilt-rotor squadrons due to the divestment of three infantry battalions;

—Divestment of three of the current eight heavy-lift helicopter squadrons, which would still "satisfy our requirements as described in approved naval concepts";

—Divestment of "at least" two of the current seven light attack helicopter squadrons, since current levels are "operationally unsuitable for maritime challenges and excess to our needs with the divestment of three infantry battalions";

—Assessing the need for the F-35 aircraft, particularly in light of continued pilot shortfalls in "recruiting, training and retention as well as fiscal and industrial base factors";

—Assessing all ground tactical vehicle programs in order to adjust them downward in light of the reduction of three infantry battalions.

Depending on how limited one views the future responsibilities of the Marine Corps, this plan is erected on a fragile house of cards: that future Marine Corps operational commitments should be shaped by the reduction of front-line infantry battalions, whose casualties in any sustained engagement would quickly require replacements that may not be available if the battlespace expands; by subjecting Marine Corps commitments to the needs of the Navy; and by an unproved reliance on the augmentation of combat units such as aviation assets and tanks from other services that may not be available and who will not have trained with the Marine Corps.

The proposal was based on extensive war gaming, in which the new Commandant has great confidence. But it is axiomatic that experimental war games (like staff studies) >>

can be biased through subtle control of the methodology decided upon by those who design the war game. There is no greater danger in military strategy than shaping a nation's force structure to respond to one specific set of contingencies, giving an adversary the ability to adjust and adapt beforehand. Nor would it serve the country's long-term interests for the Marine Corps to careen from two decades of overemphasis in the Middle East to a fixation with narrow naval scenarios in places like the South China Sea.

If history teaches us anything in combat it is that the war you get is rarely the war that you game. As former heavyweight champion, Mike Tyson once put it, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." In World War I the Germans were convinced they would defeat France in exactly forty-two days. Prior to World War II the French matched this folly by building a string of fortresses along the Maginot Line, leaving open the thickly forested Ardennes, which their war planners decided was impenetrable by a large-scale German attack. In 1941 the British were convinced that no military assault could overcome its shoreline defenses against an attack on their naval base in Singapore, then known as the unassailable "Gibraltar of Asia." The Japanese army landed far to the north, then bicycled and marched its way down the Malayan Peninsula, attacking Singapore from behind and quickly smashing the stunned British and Australian defenders. Except for General Tomoyuki Yamashita the Japanese high command was not usually that brilliant. Its pre-war plan of fixed defenses on island redoubts throughout Pacific Asia backfired spectacularly, and their inability to adapt after their unexpectedly quick victories at the beginning of the war allowed American resilience and control over the sea and the air to destroy their gains.

None of these debacles were the result of a failure in new technologies. All were the failure of faulty planning and especially of the miscalculations of

those at the highest levels of command.

Our present-day Marine Corps serves as the nation's pre-eminent expeditionary force, deployable immediately in any scenario short of nuclear war. But before World War I the role of the Marine Corps was narrowly defined to shipboard duties, small "landing party" operations, and the protection of diplomatic legations ashore. Despite its well-earned reputation in those roles, from its founding in 1775 until World War I, total Marine Corps casualties in all of our country's wars amounted to only 332 Marines killed in action. Marines were truly "soldiers of the sea," an important but surrogate element of the Navy itself.

World War I changed that. The Marines quickly stood up two hardened and undefeatable regiments. During six months of heavy fighting they endured 2,457 killed in action and 12,379 total casualties, earning the revered title of "Devil Dogs" from their German opponents. Their discipline, unmatched marksmanship and ability to adapt and innovate on the battlefield also earned them a larger role among America's combat arms, from which has come a remarkable series of forward-looking contributions to our military and to our national security. But this evolution was not an easy one. The mid-twentieth century was marked with repeated efforts by competing services and politicians to either do away with the Marine Corps or to put it back inside the Navy box.

The Marine Corps first broke out of that box through its development of amphibious warfare doctrine during the 1930s after an intricate study of the ill-fated 1915 British landings and ground campaign at Gallipoli. The leaders of that period tested, trained and wrote the book on large-scale amphibious landings. During the island campaigns of World War II they demonstrated the Corps' historic combination of leadership, discipline, and command accountability. But although the Marine Corps perfected the techniques

of modern-day amphibious warfare, they did not own the concept. In fact, the largest U.S. amphibious operations in history, in Sicily and on D-Day at Normandy, were not conducted by the Marine Corps at all.

The most important evolution of the Marine Corps in our national security posture has been as an immediately deployable, fully capable expeditionary force, with an included mission of amphibious assault. And this has usually required "sustained land operations."

When North Korea suddenly attacked South Korea in June 25, 1950, Gen. Douglas MacArthur asked immediately for the Marines, not simply because they had amphibious capabilities but because he knew that whatever it took, they would be ready. By September 15 the Marines had called up thousands of World War II veterans, formed an invasion force, deployed aboard ship, crossed the Pacific and landed at Inchon. The Inchon landing was one of the most technically difficult maneuvers in American history, subject to fluctuating sea tides and well behind enemy lines. Inchon was followed by more than two years of sustained land operations, including the most memorable engagement of the Korean War, the First Marine Division's breakout from the Chosin Reservoir against vastly superior odds after the Chinese army crossed the Yalu River and surrounded them.

During and after the Korean War, Marine Corps innovation developed and perfected techniques of close air support and helicopter doctrine. During the late 1950s its leadership overcame intense opposition in order to retain fixed-wing aircraft so that the Corps could continue to field a fully capable, homogeneous force that could deploy immediately whenever called upon to do so, with every necessary combat component intact. This effort paid off in Vietnam with the quality of Marine Corps close-air support, a skill perfected only by continuous air-ground training.

In Vietnam the Corps fielded two

full divisions and part of a third in sustained land operations, engaging a determined enemy for six years of hard combat that took the lives of fourteen thousand Marines and brought more than one hundred thousand total casualties. In the 1980's they operated for more than a year in Beirut, Lebanon. They were among the first on the ground during Desert Storm, and again in Afghanistan and then again in Iraq. Such sustained operations as a highly integrated combat force, available to the country's leadership on demand, has become an inseparable part of the modern Marine Corps tradition.

History tells us that in the future there will be other engagements in other places, sometimes littoral, sometimes not. If so, the Marine Corps that will be called upon to respond will be bringing with them only the weapon systems, logistics, technologies and people that our top leaders are now deciding to fund and to build and to train.

What will such a commitment look

like? Where will it be? Will it involve "sustained land operations" rather than a "one and done" smack-down launched and quickly recovered by Navy ships? What kind of notice will our Marines have before being sent into harm's way? What will be the size of that commitment—a company, a battalion, a regiment, perhaps a division—and over what expanse? Will it be urban or rural, or maybe in the mountains? How long will it last? Will there be adequate helicopter and other assets to insert, relocate, provide fire support, resupply and sustain the Marines, weapons systems, and logistical necessities required even to begin such an unanticipated call to duty? With such drastic "divestments" as those now proposed, will there be enough infantry Marines in the pipeline to replace and sustain the casualty flow and weapons replacements from battalions that are committed, not simply on the first day or the first week but over a much longer period, perhaps under conditions where

our aviation assets and other mechanical systems are shot down, or crash, or wear out from such environmental erosions as heat, ice, sand, clay dust, monsoon rains, or the simple wear-and-tear of constant operations?

Technology can increase effectiveness on a battlefield but it cannot replace people or equipment. This is why these recent proposals should be examined with the utmost scrutiny. And it is for these reasons that our country needs a Marine Corps that has every conventional capability inside its proven tradition of "good to go" readiness.

Former US Senator and Secretary of the Navy Jim Webb served as a Marine infantry officer in Vietnam, where he was wounded twice and awarded the Navy Cross for "extraordinary heroism." He currently serves as the inaugural Distinguished Fellow at Notre Dame's International Security Center. ■

## POEMS

### Caught in the rain

oh how I long for those bygone days when I would get caught in the rain  
I remember how proud and tall I stood as I faced the music's refrain  
I liked how the world seemed to silence itself and the music was its only sound  
how sad it seemed when the music would stop and once again the world would rebound  
But twice a day it was guaranteed she would be honored at her rise and her fall  
and you could be sure that twice a day that the silence and sound would recall  
and since those days I have come to see her treated with disgust and disdain  
oh how I long for those bygone days when I would get caught in the rain

Written by Joseph P Keely

USMC VTA

May 16, 2016

**"Mobile Protected Firepower": The U.S. Army's New Light Tank**

FROM REALCLEARDEFENSE

In a press release, the U.S. Army announced that initial Mobile Protected Firepower (MPF) prototypes arrived at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The preproduction MPF vehicles will be put through their paces by paratroopers from the Army's 82 Airborne.

"We are incredibly excited to see the MPF platform entering into this phase," an Army Ground Combat Systems official stated, explaining that the "MPF represents an innovative and aggressive approach to system acquisition. The beginning of our SVA (soldier vehicle assessment) in January illustrates how hard the teams are working to keep the major events of this program on schedule," despite the ongoing pandemic.

The Army awarded two initial prototyping contracts to both BAE Systems and General Dynamics back in 2018. The contracts, worth \$376 million each, covered a total of 504 final production Mobile Protected Firepower vehicles, with initial deliveries scheduled for 2025.

In an effort to get final production vehicles to the Army as quickly as possible, the MPF program stipulated that existing technology and off-the-shelf components should be used when possible, rather than starting completely from scratch with a new platform design. And, here's what we know about the two contenders.

**BAE Systems**

BAE's prototype builds upon their M8 Armored Gun System, a replacement for the Vietnam-era Sheridan light tank. Though the M8 AGS program was canceled by the Army in the 1990s, BAE does not have to start from scratch and can modernize the older M8 design while fulfilling the Army's requirement for use of preexisting technologies when possible.

Their bid features a 105mm main gun, and scalable armor on a low-profile platform with an auto-loading system that allows for a rate of fire of 12 rounds per minute. Their

vehicle is designed to support light infantry and, according to the company, a total of three MPF vehicles can be transported by C-17 at a time. BAE also says that their bid offers the same level of protection as their Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle.

**General Dynamics (GD)**

GD's bid appears to be the larger of the two prototypes and is a mix of several of previous platforms. The chassis is based on the AJAX armored fighting vehicle, a General Dynamics product that is in service with the British Army, whereas the turret is a modified M1 Abrams turret and sports a smaller, 105mm main gun.

Company information touts their MPF prototype's high power-to-weight ratio supplied by an "ultra-modern diesel engine," and hydraulic pneumatic suspension that offers excellent mobility over a variety of terrain. Interestingly, the GD bid is to have a crew of four, forgoing an automatic loading system for a dedicated loader and may be a contributing factor to the platform's larger size.

**Postscript**

Initial Soldier Vehicle Assessment trials are scheduled for January 4th, and will continue until early summer. Rather than an actual test event, the trials provide soldiers the opportunity to provide feedback for MPF improvements and will serve to improve MPF tactics and techniques. The winner of the MPF competition should be elected by the end of 2022.

Caleb Larson is a Defense Writer based in Europe. He holds a Master of Public Policy and covers U.S. and Russian security, European defense issues, and German politics and culture

For more information click on the below site link:

[https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/12/17/mobile\\_protected\\_firepower\\_the\\_us\\_armys\\_new\\_light\\_tank\\_653533.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/12/17/mobile_protected_firepower_the_us_armys_new_light_tank_653533.html)

**The Horse Shoe Lake Operation**

Capt Bob Brooks left Kilo Company to become the S3 of 3/9, and our new CO was Capt Valdis V. Pavlovskis (aka "The Mad Russian"), who had been one of our Basic School instructors – one of Monte Morgan's favorite people – Ha!.

After a couple of weeks aboard, "The Mad Russian" decided that the company had to go on a sweep to clear the VC out of the Horse Shoe. So, one morning we lined up our tanks, our Ontos and the company, and we marched off into the sun. We had gone several miles south and then turned east toward the South China Sea. On a sand ridge, we were met by a bunch of Vietnamese women who began wailing and throwing stuff at us. Our Vietnamese troops, who were also with us, explained the women were acting this way just to slow us down, allowing the VC to evacuate the village. Capt Pavlovskis told me to return to a hill that overlooked the west of Horse Shoe Lake, and they would then proceed downhill into the village. Once there, they would turn north into the Horse Shoe village on the east side. He wanted my platoon to be the blocking force, so off we went.

Arriving at the west side of the lake, we had a perfect position. As Kilo Company entered the village, the VC began to run into the lake to escape. We watched them as they jumped in the water and started to swim north into the lake reeds. We started hitting them with 30 cal machinegun fire, but they simply went under the water. Seeing that, I decided I'd hit them with a 90mm HE round. We fired the round, and it skipped off the lake surface and exploded on the beach right behind Kilo Company. Right away, the radios came up saying that the VC had a BIG

gun in the village. That BIG VC round that I fired into the lake apparently scared the shit out of Capt Pavlovskis, and he immediately pulled the rest of our company out of the village. What more can I say?

As the company was moving back to our company position, an Ontos hit a mine. I had already gotten back in company area and was positioning my tanks when I heard the explosion. I literally ran back with a few other Marines to where the Ontos was hit. When we got there, I saw the Ontos that had been split in half by the explosion. I dove under the vehicle only to find that the crew had all been killed. Another Ontos was on our far right, but that Ontos crew had left their vehicle to try and rescue their brothers. Suddenly, the VC began firing on us, and they were even using an M-79 grenade launcher. I ran to the empty Ontos, got up on the top and began firing the 30cal machine gun until it ran out of ammo. I saw a VC running into a nearby rice paddy and grabbed an M-14 rifle. After setting the sights all the way to the top – for a distance of at least 600 yards or more, I opened fire. My first round missed its mark, my second round hit him, and he went down. Next thing I saw was a woman running to his side. I said, "Oh God, I'm going to let her go," and I did. She started to drag the VC back to the village. Perhaps, he was her son – who knows?

In the meantime, Capt Pavlovskis had really gone "hyper," but he didn't know what to say to any of us. Nevertheless, he didn't last long as the Company CO, for on July 4, 1966, the company got caught in a serious ambush near An Hoa, and he was relieved of his command because of his total lack of leadership.

**2nd Lt Bob Mattingly on Our Trip Back From Hoa An on Route 1**

One day, when I had come back to BN, Lt Bob Mattingly decided we should go down to Hoa An for a meeting. We left by jeep and proceeded down Route 1. After our meeting we began our return trip. About half way back to BN, a Vietnamese bus loaded down with people was ahead of us moving very, very slowly. Bob became upset and stood up with his Thompson sub machine gun, firing off a full magazine over the bus's roof. The bus ended up in the ditch, and we drove by, waving "Hello." Oh, well, it was just another Civic Action exercise to help win the hearts and minds of the people.

**TET Dinner 1967**

It was TET '67, and my interrupter, Lac, invited our 3rd Tank BN Civic Action members for dinner and celebrations at his house in "Dog Patch," which was near the Da Nang Air Base. We drove down to Lac's house and met his wonderful wife and children. We began by drinking a lot of Vietnamese Tiger Beer. Then dinner was served. What a display it was as we dug into the food. I asked Lac to identify the delicious food we were eating. After drinking a lot of beers, he finally made a chicken "cluck, cluck" sound. We all thought that was wonderful. Then we asked, "What else did we eat?" He then made the "Arf-arf" sound of a dog. "Oh, that's great! That tastes good" we said. And then we asked, "What else did your wife put in the pot?" Lac danced around the room scratching his under arms, making an "ooh, ooh" sound. OK, it was monkey. Hey Ray, what a dinner we had! And nobody got sick. >>

## New Captain Joins The Combined Action Group – early 1967

One morning, a new Captain showed up at our Combined Action HQ at III MAF. Several of us were sitting at our desks doing our work when this new Captain arrived at our door. He walked in, and we just looked at him. He said, "Don't you people stand to attention when a senior officer comes in"? We looked at this young Captain and got up. "How can we help you Sir?" He said, "I'm reporting aboard to see LtCol Corson, men". "He's in the back office. The Captain immediately knocked on Corson's door (which was always open) and walked in. LtCol Corson

had heard the commotion in our outer office. The young Captain came to attention and announced his name. Corson looked him over, and asked, "Captain is that 45 cal pistol loaded?" Whenever you came through the III MAF HQ gate, you unloaded your weapon(s). The Captain's 45 had its magazine in it. He said, "Oh Sir, yes it is loaded". Corson suggested he clear his pistol. The Captain pulled his pistol out of his holster, pulled the receiver back and removed the magazine from the pistol. He then pulled the trigger, and a 45 round went right through the Col's roof. When we heard a pistol's loud report, we all immediately ran

into the Col's office. What we saw was a trembling Captain, and he was actually shaking in his boots. It was not his best day in the Corps, but after several days, we totally accepted him into our shop. He ended up doing a good job as our new logistics officer, but even he could not deny that he had come on board "with a big bang."

Editor's note: We lost "Lurch" Lockridge a few years ago. He wrote prolifically and shared all of his many stories in the Sponson Box. It sure would be nice for YOU to consider writing at least one story of your own to share with the membership.

## Robert Lee Alexander

BY CLYDE HOCH

Alexander and I came into 2nd Tank Battalion at Camp Lejeune N. C. at the same time. We were both just out of infantry training. Alexander was much more outgoing than I. It was only natural we became friends. Alexander and I went on two Mediterranean cruises together.

We were to make a landing on Malta. The British had a base there and were pulling out and the US was moving in. It was the only place they liked Americans. We were not allowed to take our tanks ashore so, we had to get our stuff together for the remainder of the operation we were to be grunts, infantry. We left the ship by rope netting like you see in WWII movies. Now that doesn't sound too bad. I thought the boat that was receiving us and the ship would roll together as waves came in. That was not the case. At times the boat would be 30 feet below us and quickly it was right at our feet and would bang against the side of the ship. If you were caught there it would have cut you in half. I thought the only alternative for me was to jump about 15 feet. It worked.

It was pretty lax there and about 5 of

us were sitting drinking beer. I talked to a British soldier who said there was a town up the road about 4 kilometers that had plenty of bars and women. Women? We are 18 and 19 years old. Real size women? As we sat there, I suggested we sneak under the wire and go into town when it got dark. No one said anything. As it started to get dark, I thought to myself well maybe I had enough to drink and should hit the rack when one of the guys said well what is your plan? My plan for what? Going into town. I really regretted saying anything now.

Off we went under the wire and up a very windy road. It was very dark. There were about 4 feet high scrubs on one side and a stone fence on the other. We saw a jeep coming and knew this would not be good. I and 2 others hid in the scrubs. Alexander and the other one jumped over the wall. When it was safe, I went to the wall and called Alexander. Where are you? "Down here," said a voice out of the darkness. It was about a 15-foot drop. They climbed back up using trees. Alexander injured his ankle. We finally made it into town. I didn't know kilometers were so far.

We got totally wasted. Then for some reason one of the guys hit one of the girls. We all ran out and jumped into a taxi. It was too late the police were there. After about a half hour of haggling they let us go. I had no idea where we were or how to get back. No problem the taxi dropped us off right in front of our barracks. I expected our superiors to come rushing out, nothing. We hit the rack about 3 or 4 AM. At 5 AM they woke us and told us to get some chow we were going on a 20-mile force march. I couldn't even eat. It was very hot and up and down hills with a pack and helmet. I thought I was going to die but I made it.

When we finally got back, there was Alexander standing there with a big smile on his face. I said, "Where the hell were you?" He said, "Sleeping." I said a few choice words to him. He said he went to the corpsman and said he sprained his ankle jumping out of his rack that morning, and the corpsman told him he could sit this out. He didn't sit it out, he slept it out. I thought to myself why was I so stupid I couldn't come up with something like that?

## 'Greater Love Hath No Man:'

### Marines in Congress request Camp Reasoner sign be sent from Vietnam to the US

BY PHILIP ATHEY

MARINE CORPS TIMES

On a hill near Da Nang, Vietnam, sat Camp Reasoner – home of the Marine Corps' 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion and later 1st Reconnaissance Battalion during the Vietnam War.

The camp was named after 1st Lt. Frank Reasoner, the second Marine to receive the Medal of Honor during the war, and was marked by a stone that bore a hand-lettered message to the fallen Marine.

"First Lieutenant Reasoner sacrificed his life to save one of his wounded Marines. 'Greater Love Hath No Man,'" the stone said, according to the Marine Corps University.

On Monday 12 Marine veterans and members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo calling on him to begin negotiations with Vietnam to have the stone sent to the U.S. where the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion will host it on Camp Pendleton, California.

On July 12, 1965, Reasoner led 18 Marines with the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion on a patrol near Da Nang, Vietnam, when they ran into a large force of Viet Cong fighters.

As the 50–100 Viet Cong fighters opened fire on the Marines from "numerous concealed positions," Reasoner organized a defense, his Medal of Honor citation said.

"Repeatedly exposing himself to the devastating attack he skillfully provided covering fire, killing at least two Viet Cong and effectively silencing an automatic weapons position in a valiant attempt to effect evacuation of a wounded man," the citation read.

"First Lieutenant Reasoner is an American hero whose story deserves to be told for generations to come," Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wisconsin, said in an emailed statement Monday. "Retrieving this memorial is a way to not only honor his legacy, but to show our undying appreciation to those who served at Camp Reasoner."

The old camp, located roughly three miles from the Da Nang International Airport, is now a stone quarry, but the stone sign still stands at the old entrance.

"The hand-lettered stone and concrete sign served as a physical symbol of fallen comrades in arms to all those who entered the camp," the letter signed by all 12 Marine veterans currently serving in the House of Representatives said.

"As our nation continues its commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, the time is right to bring this important part of Marine Corps history home and help provide closure for the thousands of Marines and Corpsman who served at Camp Reasoner throughout the war," the letter reads.

Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Arizona, called bringing the sign to the U.S., "a striking and tangible memorial to a proud but difficult chapter of Marine history — our service in Vietnam, now almost half a century in the past."

"By bringing the sign home, I would hope that Marine veterans would be comforted by the return of an iconic symbol of their service and that active duty Marines would become more aware of the service

and sacrifice of their predecessors in the Corps," Gallego added in an email.

The 1st Recon Battalion Association is willing to pay for any of the expenses associated with the move and hopes the sign will be placed on Camp Pendleton as a memorial to "Lt. Reasoner and the five other Reconnaissance Marines awarded the Medal of Honor during the war," including Lance Cpl. Richard A. Anderson, 2nd Lt Terrence C. Graves, Gunnery Sgt. Jimmie E Howard, Pfc. Robert H. Jenkins Jr., and Pfc. Ralph H. Johnson, along with all those who served at the base, the letter said.

The battalion was doing everything it could to see the stone sign sent to the unit, 1st Lt. Cameron Edinburgh, a spokesman for the 1st Marine Division confirmed.

"If you were a reconnaissance Marine and you served in Vietnam, at one time or another you set foot in Camp Reasoner," Ed Nevglowski, director of the Marine Corps history division, told Marine Corps Times.

It is "just a Marine thing" to bring back important historical items in a unit's history, he added.

"The 1st Reconnaissance Battalion has demonstrated unwavering commitment to getting this sign home, and after learning about their effort, who better to help them complete the mission than the Marines serving in the House," Gallagher said.

"My colleagues and I stand ready to assist Secretary Pompeo in this diplomatic mission and ensure Vietnam veterans get the long overdue recognition they deserve," he added. ■

# GARY OWENS ELEPHANT TANKS



Photo of me, in front of "C" Company Office, Camp Peddleton California. Photo dated June 1964



Photo of "C" Company Street, Camp Peddleton California. Photo dated February 1964



Tank Park, Camp Peddleton, California. 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division. Photo dated February 1964. "C" Company Tanks.



Tank Park, Camp Peddleton, California. First Tank Battalion, First Marine Division. "C" Company Tanks. Photo dated February 1964



Photo of Tanks and Tanks Retriever at the Tank Park, Camp Peddleton, California. First Tank Battalion, First Marine Division. Photo dated February 1964

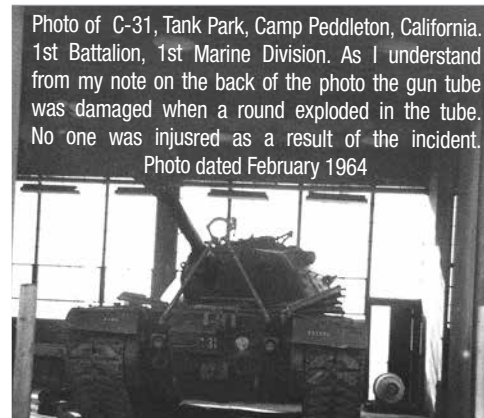
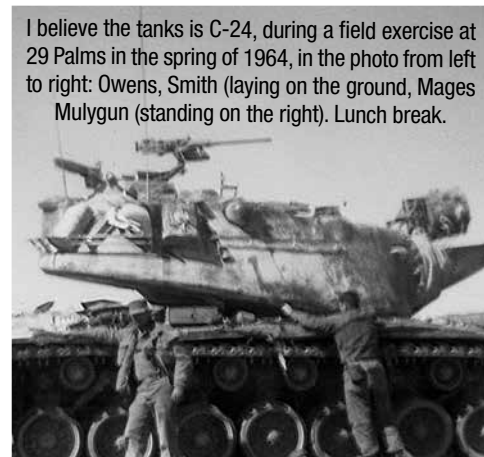


Photo of C-31, Tank Park, Camp Peddleton, California. 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Division. As I understand from my note on the back of the photo the gun tube was damaged when a round exploded in the tube. No one was injured as a result of the incident. Photo dated February 1964



Photo of Epting with C-21 during field exercise at 29 Palms. Spring of 1964



I believe the tanks is C-24, during a field exercise at 29 Palms in the spring of 1964, in the photo from left to right: Owens, Smith (laying on the ground, Mages Mulygun (standing on the right). Lunch break.



"C" Company tank, C-52. Camp Peddleton, California. February 1964.



Photo of C-24. Field exercise at 29 Palms. Spring 1964. I believe the person on the turret is Mages Mulygun



we snuck a flame tank in here

# M103 Heavy Tank



|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Type                      | Heavy tank                               |
| Place of origin           | United States                            |
| <b>Service history</b>    |  |
| In service                | 1957–1974                                |
| <b>Production history</b> |  |
| Manufacturer              | Chrysler                                 |
| No. built                 | 300                                      |
| Variants                  | M103A1, M103A2                           |
| <b>Specifications</b>     |  |
| Mass                      | 65 short tons (58 long tons)             |
| Length                    | 37 ft. 2 in (11.33 m)                    |
| Width                     | 12 ft. 2 in (3.71 m)                     |
| Height                    | 10 ft. 6 in (3.20 m)                     |
| Crew                      | 5 (commander, gunner, driver, 2 loaders) |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Armor</b>              | 127 mm (5 in) @ 60 degrees<br>254 mm (10 in)  |
| <b>Main armament</b>      | 120 mm gun M58,<br>34 rounds  |
| <b>Secondary armament</b> | 2 × .30-cal (7.62 mm) M1919A4E1 machine gun (co-axial)<br>1 × .50-cal (12.7 mm) M2 AA machine gun |
| <b>Engine</b>             | (M103A2) Continental AVDS-1790-2, V12, air-cooled, twin turbocharged diesel 750hp (560kW)         |
| <b>Power/weight</b>       | M103A2: 12.7 hp. (9.5 kW) / ton   |
| <b>Transmission</b>       | General Motors CD-850-4A or -4B, 2 ranges forward, 1 reverse                                      |
| <b>Suspension</b>         | Torsion bar   |
| <b>Fuel capacity</b>      | 280 US gallons (710 liters)   |
| <b>Operational range</b>  | M103A2: 295 mi (480 km)   |

The M103 Heavy Tank (officially designated 120mm Gun Combat Tank M103, initially T43) was a military vehicle that served in the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps during the Cold War. The last

M103s were withdrawn from service in 1974. The M103 was the last heavy tank to be used by the US military as the concept of the main battle tank evolved, making heavy tanks obsolete. >>

## Background

The heavy type tank had never encountered supporters in the US Army. During World War Two introducing a new heavy tank when US Army standardization was focused on the medium tank was seen as a problem. Besides this, heavy German tanks were faced by only a few M26 Pershing tanks without providing enough evidence it was really the answer to them. After the war infantry anti-tank weapons, air power and a new generation of US medium tanks based on the M26 seemed to be the future for US planners.

However, the Cold War started and the Soviet heavy tanks became the new threat. They had been designed to deal with the very same German heavy tanks US Army had faced. Some generals panicked in the Pentagon when they analyzed the IS-3 and IS-4 tanks with its strong sloped frontal armor and 122 mm. gun. To make things worse, intelligence analysts claimed they were the standard Soviet tanks and thousands of them were in service. The same analysis urged the British Army to induct in service the Conqueror tank, even the French wanted to introduce in service the AMX-50 heavy tank. It should not be forgotten that some generals in the U.S. Army had always regretted the decision not to build heavy tanks in World War Two. They remembered how Soviet heavy tanks had been pulverized by heavy German tanks, which had a big gun and thick armor. So it was clear for these generals a US Tiger was the answer for winning World War III. M-26 Pershing was considered a heavy tank in 1945, but it was now considered under muscled to match Soviet tanks.

In parallel US tests with 90 and 120 mm new guns ended with a more reliable gun, T122/123, and HEAT ammunition tests with the T153 round. This meant a bigger gun and round could be allocated to a new heavy tank design. US Army decided to go ahead with a new long-range 120 mm cannon design, capable of hitting enemy tanks at extreme ranges. This gun was consistent with US Doctrine as the new gun should allow decreasing US heavy tank hull armor, and therefore preserving mobility as new tank design should also maximize sloping effectiveness with an eye to save thickness and weight. The new T122 main gun matched the heavy tank request, combining them would give the heavy tank US generals wanted.

## Design and development

In December 1950 the Army made blueprints for a heavy tank reference design. In January 1951 the Army awarded Chrysler a \$99 million contract to produce the tank. Chrysler tasked Robert T. Keller, the son of Chrysler Board Chairman K.T. Keller, with overseeing the design of the tank and construction of the Newark tank plant that would be used to produce it.

The first T43 pilot model was completed in November 1951 at the newly built Chrysler tank plant in Newark, Delaware. Officials said the tank would "out-slug any land-fighting machine ever built."

Like the contemporary British Conqueror tank, the M103 was designed to counter Soviet heavy tanks, such as the later IS-series tanks or the T-10 if conflict with the Soviets broke out. Its long-ranged 120 mm cannon was designed to hit enemy tanks at extreme distances.

In 1953–54 a series of 300 tanks, initially designated T43E1,

were built at the Newark plant. Specifics about the tank, including production plans and specifications, were kept secret. Seeking to keep the tank out of public sight, Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson nixed an October 1953 exhibition for the American Ordnance Association at Aberdeen Proving Ground. In May 1954 the tank was debuted publicly at a demonstration at the Newark tank plant.

In 1953 the Pentagon began a reversal of the President Truman administration policy of a broad production base in favor of Wilson's "single, efficient producer" concept. In September Wilson chose General Motors over Chrysler to take over production of the M48 Patton. General Motors would become heir to any additional T43 orders after Chrysler tank production wrapped up in June 1954.

Testing was unsatisfactory; the tanks failing to meet Continental Army Command's standards and the tanks were put into storage in August 1955. After 98 improvement modifications were approved, in April 1956 the tank was designated the M103 Heavy Tank. Of the 300 T43E1s built, 80 went to the US Army (74 of which were rebuilt to M103 standard), and 220 were accepted by the US Marine Corps, to be used as infantry support, rebuilt to improved M103A1, then M103A2 standards.

A House Government Operations subcommittee report in July 1957 called for the heavy tank program to be audited. Investigators had been unable to determine the cost of the program, which was estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The report said the Army had hastened production of the tank for war in Korea despite there being no need for it there. The tank was also unsuited to the rigors of the nuclear battlefield, the report said.

Following contemporary American design philosophy, the M103 was built with a two-piece, cast elliptic armor scheme, similar to the M48's design. It featured seven road wheels per side, mounted with long-arm independent torsion bars. The 28-inch (71 cm) track was shoed in steel backed rubber chevron tracks, allowing for a ground pressure of 12.9 psi. The Continental AV-1790 engine was placed at the rear of the tank, and produced a maximum output of 810 horsepower (600 kW) and 1,600 pound force-feet (2,200 Nm) of torque, fed through a General Motors CD-850-4 two-speed transmission. This allowed the 60-ton heavy tank to achieve a maximum road speed of 34 kilometers per hour (21 mph) and a maximum climbing gradient of 60%.

Initial production versions suffered a host of drivetrain mechanical problems. The Continental power pack, shared by the much lighter M48/M60 tanks, was insufficient to drive the much heavier M103. The resulting performance of the tank was dismal; being severely underpowered and very fuel intensive. This presented a host of logistical problems for the vehicle, most prominently the extremely limited range of just 80 miles (130 km). Though this was partially corrected with the introduction of the AV-1790-2 diesel unit, it would remain cumbersome and fuel-thirsty for the majority of its service life.

For ease of production, many of the large components of the tank were made from cast armor. This design scheme was also much more mass efficient than traditional rolled plate armor. Despite being better protected than the T29-series of prototypes which preceded it, the M103 was nearly 10 tons lighter, making it competitive with the

Soviet T-10/IS-8 tank. The frontal hull glacis was a compound pike, welded at the center seam, with up to 10 inches thick armor at the front. The turret was a massive single-piece cast design, fitted with heavily sloped 10-inch (250 mm) rolled-homogenous armor.

The M103 was designed to mount the 120 mm M58 gun, fitted in the M89 turret mount. Using standard Armor-Piercing Ballistic Cap Tracer Rounds, it was capable of penetrating 221-millimetre (8.7 in) of 30-degree sloped rolled-homogenous armor at 1,000 yards and 196-millimetre (7.7 in) at 2,000 yards. It could also penetrate 124-millimetre (4.9 in) 60-degree sloped rolled-homogenous armor

at 1,000 yards and 114-millimetre (4.5 in) at 2,000 yards. The commander could select from 34 rounds of either M358 Armor-Piercing Ballistic Cap Tracer Rounds or M469 HEAT shells, mounted at the rear of the turret and in the hull. With both loaders, the maximum firing rate of the gun was five rounds per minute, owing to the design of the two-piece ammunition. Using the electrohydraulic turret traverse, the gunner could turn the turret at 18 degrees per second, with 15 degrees of elevation and 8 degrees of gun depression.

The armor was made from welded rolled and cast homogeneous steel of varying thickness.

Editor's Note: Richard Cecil called me a few months ago and told me that he was sending me a story for the Sponson Box magazine. Below is that story. It appears as if Richard got the story from Michelle McManus, who is Lou Rotar's daughter.

# M103 HEAVY TANK

## THE BEST TANK THERE EVER WAS

BY SARGENT LOUIS ROTAR, JR.

I was 16 when I joined the USMC in July 1951. Parris Island was boot camp and for some reason I was given the MOS choice of armor or artillery. I picked armor because I knew that Korea was my ultimate assignment and the destination

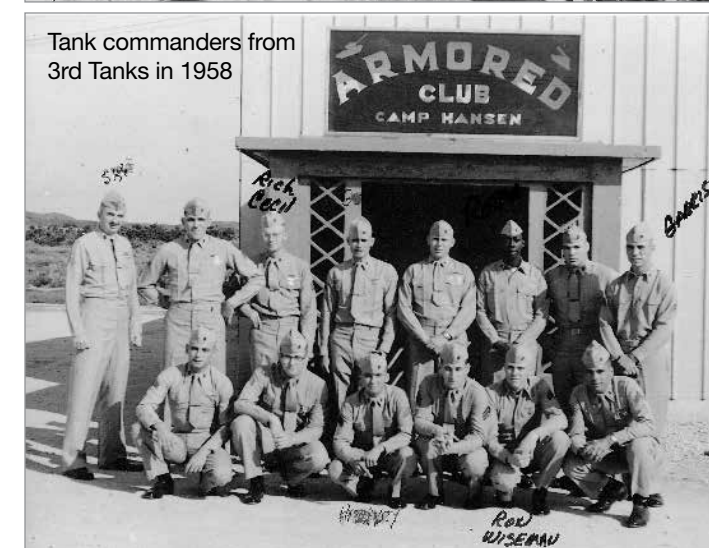
was cold. And brother, it was cold!!!

I returned to Camp Le Jeune after Korea and went into the M-4 flame tanks and then to the brand new M-48 tanks as the Battalion Commanders tank commander. Years passed and I ended up at Camp Del Mar on Camp Pendleton at the Tracked Vehicle School where we trained officers in the various type armored vehicles. From there I went to Okinawa, Japan as the company commander's platoon sergeant where we had M-47 tanks.

After returning to Camp Pendleton in 1960, that is where I met the M103, Heavy Tanks. In the past, whenever I had a tank, I tested it to determine its capabilities and its weaknesses. We replaced track, stalled a few times, and tested ammo capability. We also pushed to the limit the range finder and communications ranges of the tank and of my crew.



An M-4 Flame-thrower tank at Camp Le Jeune



Tank commanders from 3rd Tanks in 1958



M-103 Driver Lou Rotor

To me, the M103 was the finest US tank I experienced until the later newer (M-1 Abrams) tanks came into common use, which by that time, I had long left the Corps. I had been discharged in October 1961 and gone into civilian life.

As added remarks of this great tank, a photo of which I keep in my living room, the M103 tank was only as capable as its maintenance and crew. An example occurred in late 1960 when at Camp Pendleton we were ordered to take part in a demonstration for the Navy League Officers as "aggressors" in our three M103 tanks against the boat landing M48s. The M103 had no blank ammo and as my tank was the lead aggressor, the engineers took 120mm artillery powder and completed their work without telling us of what device or powder they used. Thus causing the problem.

The details of the start of the demonstration is old news to tankers. The following events can show how error can foul up things. A half-pound of TNT was placed on the front armor plates wired to the tank bow with a sand bag on top. The script was we would fire the first shot, then load the second and fire it. The second shot was never fired as when afterward I, acting as loader, opened the breech to eject the 1st casing started a series of life changing events. If it were not for our open tank commander hatch we'd all have been killed. The blanks were faulty! As the breech opened, it exploded into my face, hands



M-47 tank crewmen load their tank with ammo to prepare for Lebanon in 1958

and upper body. The explosion blew out the tank commander's open hatch, 60 feet into the air, launching the acting tank commander out onto the ground.

Inside of the tank ... at the gun breech ... it acted like a blow torch. Beside the crew, the electronics, radios, everything that could burn was hit by the fiery explosive force.

I threw myself away from the fire blast and ended up with my body over the sec-

ond shell case. This act inadvertently saved our lives a second time. They had packed the shell casing with toilet paper and artillery pellets and tape.

I could hear the Marine in the gunner seat screaming. He either couldn't or wouldn't get himself loose or out of the seat. The flames became less powerful and I was able to reach him and moved him to under the T.C. hatch where somehow I threw him up to another tank crewman, who finished pulling the gunner out. I then exited the tank for a delayed flight to the base hospital which you don't need to hear about.

I've enclosed some photos to assist in your understanding, that I was making 1st shot hits with my M103 at over 3,000 yards on stationary targets.

P.S. Armstrong Eaton was a good friend of mine who went to Nam in 1960-61 as a top armor mechanic. I'd love to hear if any of you know him or whether he made it home in one piece.

## M103A2 Heavy Tank

BY HERB STEIGELMAN

After finishing the tank Platoon Leader's Class on the West Coast I was assigned as 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company, First Tank Battalion at Camp Pendleton. Jim Collier was my company Commander. We had trained on the M48A3's at the school and all of a sudden I was an M103 Platoon Commander. I had never even seen an M103 and now I was supposed to be a Platoon Commander (?). Anyhow, I checked in to the company and Capt Collier assigned me to the third platoon. SSgt Martin was my Platoon Sergeant.

When we got to the tank park SSgt Martin showed me the M103. I thought "Okay, now what the hell do I do?" The M103 was to be the answer to the Russian IS-3 and IS-4

tanks. As we climbed into the turret I was amazed at the size of the place. You could almost have a card game in there. The company was scheduled for the tank gunnery range the next week and I found it had a crew of five. Two loaders (?)... Then I found out the tank had a separate round loading gun. The shell was loaded first and then the powder case. I soon learned that at times a pocket of air would get trapped in between the round and the powder. A loader would then hang from the rangefinder, swing up in the air and plant both feet on the powder case and kick the case and close the breach. That was always an adventure. The tank commander's position was behind and above the gun. There was kind of like a tunnel between the gun and the tank commanders'

position. You could actually stretch out and sleep there.

The first time on the gunnery range I found out that the M103 had a cant corrector that corrected for any tilt of the hull. Made for one hell of an accurate tank. I also found out that because of the weight (65 tons) the tank had a top speed of only 31 mph.

The M103 had a bad habit of breaking torsion bars. Particularly when the tank sat still for a few days. The guard at night was told to listen for a loud bang. Once he heard that, he was to shove an 8x16 block of wood under the belly. The sentry had to be quick and put it there or all the torsion bars would break and the tank would wind up flat on its belly. The block of wood would stop the tank from breaking any more. Because the tank weighed so much it also put a strain on the equilibrator. The seals would burst and the barrel of the gun would wind up pointing at the sky. The brains at the tank factory in Warren, Michigan came up with a solution and wanted to try it out. After the changes were made, the tank



was supposed to run 24/7 until the seals broke again. The TC and the driver were rotated every eight hours. After two weeks the engineers considered they had the fix and modified all the tanks in the company.

When President Johnson announced he was sending troops into Vietnam, I was on the rifle range qualifying. I went to

Capt (Major Select) Collier and told him I wanted to go. He said he would recommend approval but I had to talk to my wife, Lou first. I did. She reluctantly said, "OK" and I was transferred to Bravo Co. The S-3 of the battalion assigned GySgt Thorpe to be my Platoon Sergeant. Believe it or not we had the pick of the Battalion. That's why I wound up with Pop Kelly, Bob Embesi and T.J. Seva as tank commanders.

By the way, the first time I ever climbed into the turret of an M48, I was shocked with the lack of room and the pea shooter the tank had as a main gun.

## Life and Times with the "Ramp Queen" M103A2

BY CARL HOKANSON

January 1970, I had to report to Camp Pendleton, California, area 21 Del Mar, to attend USMC Tank School. While I was there ... and like most of us, I was taught how to become an "1811" tank crewman. All that I was taught in school however, was about the M48A3 90 mm medium gun tank. When we went to the firing range or anything else taught at the school, it was always with the M48A3.

So now, let's move forward to 04 February 1970. That was the day I left the Tank School at Del Mar with my orders to report to Delta Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade FMF. A cattle car pulled up to the school building, I got on and learned that my duty station was 41 Area "Las Flores" that was just up the road a bit.

Upon reporting to the Delta Company commander, I was assigned to 1st Platoon. As I walked into the squad bay, I was greeted by a corporal who asked, "Do you want a pop?" I dropped my duffle bag and put up my fists ready for a fight. Well, when this corporal saw me ready to fight, he said "Relax"

and quickly showed me a bottle of what we call "soda" in New Jersey! He was the first person I came in contact with, Corporal Arthur Christenberry. We became the best of friends and to this very day we remain lifelong friends.

The next day, Cpl Christenberry took me up to the "tank ramp." When I saw what was parked there, my jaw dropped and I was speechless! He looked at me and asked, "Are you alright?"

It took me a few minutes but I answered, "No!" He then asked me what the problem was. Pointing to this massive giant thing parked in front of us, I said, "What the heck is that?"

He replied, "That's the tank you're assigned to, Delta 1-5. And oh yeah, it's an M103A2 120mm heavy gun tank." I was still in shock! The whole time I was at School's Battalion, I trained on an M48A3 and by comparison, this thing was a monster! It was at this moment, I secretly asked myself, "What have I gotten myself into?"

It took me a few days to settle in and after about a >>



week, I began to feel comfortable. That is until the older (salty) Marines started to have a little fun with a few of us "newbies." I recall that I had been warned at Tank School not to fall for the "Squelch Grease" or "The High Energy Muzzle Blast" jokes but there was one they never told us about. There were a few cocky "newbies" among us and one of the tank commanders decided to have a little fun with one of them. The cocky one was told to go to the end of the ramp where the M88A1 Tank Retriever was parked and ask the guys there for the "sky hook." Well, the rest of us quickly discovered where cockiness gets you and what a "sky hook" was... a huge hook at the end of a cable used to lift everything! This guy had to drag the impossibly heavy "sky hook" all the way back to his tank and after expending a huge amount of effort to get it there, the TC told him to bring it back to the retriever! And so, a very valuable lesson learned: Don't be cocky!

Over time, I began to get used to my "Ramp Queen" as we had many long hours of driving training. Although the schedule might read "Driving training from 0900-1300 hours," I soon learned the Marine Corps didn't have any "set hours" and so it often turned into "night driving."

As good Marines, we learned to adapt and overcome. The TC would often tell us to bring a toothbrush, toothpaste and clean skivvies with us ... but we also made sure we had what was needed to get through what could be very long day/days. We loaded up the ammo racks with the necessary items but made sure to include lots of my favorite snack, beef jerky! All was good to go until the day the company CO came to inspect the tanks. Oops!!! Guess what? We unfortunately left the ammo rack filled with our personal items and of course... my precious beef jerky! That got me guard duty for a week!

Another time we had to take the "Queen" to Del Mar to have the optics checked. As we headed north along California Highway 5, we decided to have some fun. The driver was buttoned up and the TC took the override from the gunner and started following cars with the gun tube! Imagine the looks on the drivers faces as this gun tube was pointed at their car looking like it was ready to fire a round off! The TC had his fun but quickly stopped as to avert what might have been a massive multi-car pileup.

Other memories that stick out in my mind were when our tank company was at the tank firing range. I never saw so many 6x6's trucks driving our way. It looked like the "Red Line Express" and they were all loaded with 120 mm main gun ammo. It took us ALL DAY to unload them! When we finally finished, I overheard the company commander say "I would do anything for a cold beer right now."

Well as tankers, you all know we have to carry 10 gallons of motor oil and 5 gallons of transmission oil - But not Delta 1-5 crew! We did have one 5 gallon Jerry can of motor oil, one 5 gallon Jerry can transmission oil ... and the third can? Well, a crew member assigned to mess duty would fill it with ice, we'd smuggle beer up to the ramp and the Jerry can was then transformed into a cooler full of ice and BEER! Now back to

that CO wanting a beer... should I or shouldn't I? After thinking on it for a few moments, I handed him an ice cold beer. He was really happy to have that cold beer but when he came back to reality, I found myself with a week of guard duty!

Before leaving the firing range Corporal Christenberry, Staff Sergeant Richard Cecil and I took the tow cables and hooked them up to another tank that was going to be used as target practice. That tank was towed back to the tank ramp at 41 area Las Flores. The tank that the "Queen" brought back was an M4 Sherman. That tank would later become the "Leisure Lady" which is now parked in front of 1st Tank Battalion HQ at 29 Palms.

But the greatest time I had with the "Ramp Queen" came in February of 1970. CWO4 Robert Embesi took the 3rd Tank Battalion, a train-full of our "Ramp Queen" tanks, along with "Little Brother" M48A3's out to the Mojave Desert (to 29 Palms) to begin "Desert Operation #1." After 37 days of training, firing and competing against all the other tankers in the battalion, do you know who came out the best tank? Who came out #1? Yup, my "Ramp Queen" M103A2 Delta 1-5. I cherish the trophy we won that day and even now, all these years later, I am still proud to display it.



One of the proudest days I had during my time in the Corps was when I became tank commander of Delta 1-2 and my name was printed on the sides of the turret, my own M103A2. But like all good things, that joy came to an end on 09 February 1971 when orders came down that the Marine Corps was doing away with all M103A2's. Consequently, I was transferred to Alpha Company 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division, where I became "TC" of A3-1. - I went from a "Queen" to a "Pawn!"

Semper Fi.

Cpl Carl Hokanson 2559945  
New Jersey 908.966.7852

# M-103

BY DAVE OWEN

In late April or early May of 1971, I was to report to TV Co. (Track Vehicle Company), SDT (Student Demonstration Troop ... not sure if it was 'troop' or 'training' ... and at the current time it had been disbanded), MCB (Marine Corps Base), Quantico, Virginia. The ride from my home in Missouri was interesting to say the least. My dad, a WW2 vet, offered to drive me there. Every exit and on ramp on I-70

would have hitchhiking hippies with signs "Washington DC" as they looked for free passage to the nation's capital so they could participate in the anti-Vietnam War protests. My dad being the gentleman he was would roll down the window and yell "Get a Job!!!" I hadn't been back stateside that long and was still leery of all that was going on. We made the trip kind of uneventful.

Upon arrival at Quantico, after all the goodbyes, I think it was a Sunday, I checked in. It seems that all of the aforementioned hippy movement would follow me. Their motivation was to take over Washington, DC. The District is surrounded by water and their intention was to block all bridges and have a massive demonstration. For those that don't know, Quantico is just south of DC. In comes the Marines. Track Vehicle Co. was called to protect the 14th Street Bridge. The whole company had left. On Monday I loaded up on a six-by and was driven to the tank park/company area.

I learned quickly that Quantico was a magnet for dignitaries and political assholes due to its proximity to Washington DC and it had weird ways like saluting cars with an officer colored decal. There was a scheduled armor demonstration for who knows, but with the disturbance in DC, it was determined that the demo should go on without interruption. I hadn't even fully checked in but was put on notice to "stand by." This is where the M-103 comes in.

I'm not sure I had even heard of an M-103 unless it was in passing at the Tank School, which was way in the past. I had much less ever even seen one. Due to the present



circumstances and due to my current recollection, there was a Staff Sergeant, a Captain and me present. Whatever the demonstration was I don't recall as I was still trying to figure out WTF. In front of some bleachers there was to be a flame tank, an M48A3 gun tank, an amtrac and this huge M-103. Well, the Staff Sergeant determined that the captain, who had never driven a tank of any kind, would

drive the M48A3 after a very short instruction. The Staff Sergeant would drive the flame tank, as he said, "I'm not driving that big SOB". That left me with the M-103. I told him I had not ever been around a M103 and he kindly said "Drive it."

It was intimidating to say the least. As I recall, the plan was, when the program was over the tracked vehicles would simultaneously back away from the bleachers to the right then proceed to the left in file out of sight and on to the tank park. I can't remember anything about the program or who it was for but whoever was in the bleachers couldn't have been military as we had no crew, no ground guides and it was pretty much a "cluster f\*ck." We did pull it off. I can remember blindly backing up wondering when I was going to see the back of the tank to the left of me so to get some sort of bearing. We had checked before to see that there was nothing behind us but when the backing started there was no way to tell what was back there.

I don't remember much about the M-103. It must have been very similar to the M48A3 as I was able to get it started and drove it. I do remember it being a little sluggish but Boy! What a smooth ride!

The hippy thing only lasted a couple of days and all troops came back to the area and all was well. As for the program that I had participated in, I think we left quite an impression. In the 16 months that I was there, I don't recall ever going back to that set of bleachers and the M-103 disappeared the next week. My encounter with the M-103 was very brief but very memorable.

# THE CONGRESSMAN'S VISIT

BY JIM COAN

After my tour in Nam with Alpha Co., 3rd Tank Bn., ended in the fall of 1968, I received orders to Camp Lejeune. When I reported in to 2nd Tank Bn., the only billet open was in the S-3 section. My boss was Major Green, the Battalion S-3. He'd always been a Marine reservist until he recently requested to serve on active duty. We did not get along. He



could never get my name right, always calling me "Lootin-ant Krone," even after I corrected him. And he liked to give me meaningless, busywork assignments. One evening after a long, arduous day at US Army Fort Jackson conducting live fire exercises with our battalion's tanks, the major handed me a manual and told me he wanted me to use it to prepare a "Tank Battalion in the Attack" presentation to be presented to the battalion command staff in the morning.

Of course, this was way above my pay grade, being only a first lieutenant at the time. At first I was speechless, and then it dawned on me that he was expecting me to fail; but, my OCS training kicked in and I replied, "Aye, aye, sir." Secretly, I wanted to show him up by trying my best to do a credible job, even if it was over my head.

The next morning, after being up all night working on my attack plan, I stood bravely beside my carefully diagramed maneuver sketches, pointer in hand, and tried to pretend that I knew what I was talking about. Our battalion commander, Lt. Col. Saul, sat stoically on his camp stool, taking in every word. When I was done, he arose and thanked me, then he called Major Green into his tent where he gave Major Green a royal ass-chewing for giving me that assignment. We all heard it. When our battalion returned to Camp Lejeune a few days later, I was summoned to the colonel's office. Expecting the worst, I was greatly relieved to learn he was taking me out of the S-3 section and giving me command of Charlie Company, which had the M103A2 "Elephant Tanks."

The colonel informed me that a congressman was com-

ing down from Washington D.C. for an official visit in less than a week. I was ordered to have one of my tanks and its crewmen ready for inspection by the congressional delegation. Each battalion stationed at Camp Lejeune would also have a unit standing tall along the parade route.

One of the tank commanders in my company had served with me in Vietnam, and I knew from experience that he was a dependable, top-notch NCO. So, the good sergeant maneuvered his M-103A2 "elephant tank" to the parade field and parked it on the parade route. He and his crewmen then spent the rest of that week getting the tank ready for inspection. They spray-painted the rubber treads, took brushes and cleaning solvents to their tank's suspension, ensuring that nary a speck of grease or dirt could be detected, and spray painted the tank's olive drab exterior. They went over every square inch of the turret interior with cleaning rags, polished every bit of metal, and repainted the turret deck glossy white. Their tank began to look like it had been transported by a giant helicopter straight from the factory and placed there.

The morning of the congressman's visit, I conducted an inspection of the five crewmen, ensuring that they were as squared-away as any group of Marine tankers could be—spit-shined jungle boots, starched utilities (no "Irish Pennants"), high and tight haircuts, and perfectly creased covers. I quizzed them on the tank's specifications to ensure that they were ready to answer any and all possible questions that the congressional delegation might ask.

The Lejeune band began to play as my Marines and I stood rigidly at attention. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a jeep travelling rapidly over the grass field across our front. A gentleman in a trench coat was standing on its rear platform, holding on to a metal bar. He smiled and waved at us as he zipped past. So much for our highly anticipated congressman's visit to Camp Lejeune.

The next morning, after being up all night working on my attack plan, I stood bravely beside my carefully diagramed maneuver sketches, pointer in hand, and tried to pretend that I knew what I was talking about. Our battalion commander, Lt. Col. Saul, sat stoically on his camp stool, taking in every word. When I was done, he arose and thanked me, then he called Major Green into his tent where he gave Major Green a royal ass-chewing for giving me that assignment. We all heard it. When our battalion returned to Camp Lejeune a few days later, I was summoned to the colonel's office. Expecting the worst, I was greatly relieved to learn he was taking me out of the S-3 section and giving me command of Charlie Company, which had the M103A2 "Elephant Tanks."

# THE ELEPHANT TANK

BY JOHN WEAR

April 1967 at Camp Las Flores on Camp Pendleton. I was one of many recent young graduates of the USMC Tracked Vehicle School based at Camp Del Mar that was also on Camp Pen. We were lucky to be assigned to the fairly newly created 5th Tank Battalion ... That is, versus being shipped directly to Vietnam. We had a



day or two of orientation and then after morning chow at the mess hall, we headed up to the battalion tank ramp for our morning company formation and then a day of preventative maintenance on our "iron monsters." I vaguely recall leaving the mess hall and casually walking up the sidewalk with several of my tank school buddies heading toward the tank ramp. As we were walking, we were discussing life in the US Marine Corps and listening to one or two of the "salty" tank crewmen who just returned from Vietnam. Of course, we "boots" were enthralled with any and all things that these "salts" had to impart on us. After all, we figured that when it was our time to finally to deploy to SE Asia, the more that we knew about tanks and tank maneuvers in combat, the better our chances to come back home in one piece.

It seemed like in no time that we were assembled into our platoons as the company gunny, Gunny Atnip, was giving us the word. The gunny was a very salty veteran of the Koran War and his physical appearance was one of an old "war horse." He was one of the typical Old Corps senior enlisted Marines who did not mince words. Two of the many subjects that the gunny covered in this morning speech are "drug abuse" and "queers" in the military. The statement that he made that morning which sticks in my mind even today is, "There is only one thing worse than a pill popper and that is a peter puffer."

After the company is dismissed, we fell out to get our tank assignments. The tank that I am going to serve on as gunner is C-11...the 1st platoon leader's tank. Even though the platoon leader, Lt Jim Spallsbury, will be commanding the tank when we are in the field, the "tank ramp" TC is a corporal, Jerry Cusack. He is a recently returned Vietnam Marine tanker that was promoted to corporal a week ago. I note that he is also not the most gung-ho Marine in the company ... but that is Ok since he loves to pass on "sea sto-

ries" and his tales of tanks in Vietnam seems to be virtually non-stop.

That first day, when we break for noon chow, Bob Peavey, my buddy from Tank School, comes by our tank and says, "Hey Sherm! Come with me. I have something to show you that you

will not believe."

He and I walk around the battalion maintenance hut and all of a sudden, we are directly in front of these mammoth gun tanks that I had never seen before.

"What the hell are those?" I ask Bob.

"Elephant tanks!" is his reply.

"What?"

"They are M-103 Heavy gun tanks. They have a five man crew and a 120 mm main gun."

"Wow!"

As we stare at these beasts, a very loud "POP!" sound comes from one of them.

"What the hell was that?" I exclaim.

"I don't know." Bob replies.

Then we head to the mess hall for lunch.

A few days later, Bob and I are talking about whatever young LCpl tank crewmen talk about when he says, "Do you remember that loud 'POP!' sound that we heard on the Elephant on the tank ramp?" He went on, "That was a torsion bar breaking all by itself."

"Say what?"

Bob goes on, "I was told that the body (hull) of the Elephant Tank is the exact same body (hull) as the M-51 Tank Retriever. And for whatever reason, they put that huge turret on top of the M-51 tank retriever body (hull). The suspensions on both tanks are the same. With the massive turret and 120 mm gun sitting on the M-51 suspension, the torsion bars tend to break from the extra weight. The M-51 specifications has the weight at 50 tons while the M-103 is 65 tons. That is an additional 30,000 pounds that the suspension must carry. No wonder the torsion bars break all of the time!!!!"

From that day forward, both of us scoff at these "Tank Ramp Queens" and we have little or nothing to do with them.

>>

Fast forward almost two years. I have just returned from my 12 months and 29 day tour in-country, Vietnam and I am back to 5th Tanks as a recently promoted Sergeant and the H&S Company flame-thrower tank section leader.

One day we are called out to the tank firing range to perform a demonstration of fire power for a bunch of visiting dignitaries. Three days before the live fire demo, we assemble several tanks on the battalion tank ramp. There are four M-48 gun tanks, two M-67 flame-thrower tanks and four M-103 Elephant tanks. We form a column and drive to the firing range that is up in the hills above Camp Las Pulgas. When our tanks arrive, there are a bunch of trucks waiting for us. There are five or six 5-ton trucks loaded with ammo boxes for the gun tanks, two gasoline tankers and a truck with a massive air compressor for the flame tanks. After the tank crews go through the motions of getting the tanks ready for the live fire exercise, we climb aboard the trucks and head back the Las Flores for the night. I do not recall how the tanks were guarded that evening but suffice it to say that they were.

The next morning after the company formation, we climb aboard trucks and are conveyed to the tank firing range. There are several bleachers on the top of one of the hills while the tanks that will be performing the live fire exercise are located just below the seating area. For the next few hours, the M-48s and the flame-thrower tanks expend their loads to an admiring and excited crowd of (mostly) young Marine officers and many civilians. Then the 120 mm gun tanks trundle up to their firing positions.

Please remember, other than my initial dismay over the torsion bars breaking, I have had exactly zero interaction with these monster tanks. As I am standing next to my "dragon tank" looking up the hill, I am about 200 yards from one of the M-103's as it lets loose with an HE round. The muzzle blast knocks my cover off of my head and the fire that spouts out of the gun barrel is as long as the gun barrel itself!!!

WOW!!! Am I impressed? You bet cha!!!

#### Bob Peavey Replies:

I don't remember us seeing our first M103. Yes, the M-103 hull was the same as the M-51 Retriever. The M-51 had 7 road wheels like the M103. The only differ-

ence between the Retriever and the M103 hull was the power plant. The engines were the same except that the Retriever was gas powered. Honestly I had never heard of the 103 being called an "Elephant" tank. Maybe it was to mock the largest tank fielded by the Germans which was called the "Elephant"; the German personnel referred to it as the "Mause" . . . "Mouse". I think there were 4 at the battle of Kursk all of which were destroyed or captured.

My mistake: There was an "Elephant Tank" that was really a tank destroyer (fixed turret). The "Mause" or Mouse was the largest tank ever fielded in WW11 and was a true tank.

*Comments on the US M-103 tank:* One of the flaws of M-103 vehicle was it did not have adequate reliability in retreat operations. US Army was aware that more Tiger tanks had been lost during WW2 retreat operations than during actual combat, and US Army in Europe could not afford that. In Europe it was found that the engine was underpowered, requiring replacement of engines and transmissions after only about 500 miles. The ammunition stowage was not convenient and repeated firing caused excess chamber erosion, tracks were easily thrown. Last but not least crew safety, comfort and ability to function were impaired by poor interior arrangement. M-103 career was over when US Army shifted to the Main Battle Tank concept, in which a single M-60 tank model fulfilled the breakthrough functions of M-103 heavy tank while retaining the mobility of M-48 medium tanks. By that time it was years since US Army had realized Soviet heavy tanks were not as potent as suspected, and thus the M103s were rather overkill and expensive to deal with T-54/55 tanks.

Kevin Flynn Comments: I just received the 2019 April-



A gunny with a two-part 120 mm round



May-June issue of the S. Box, I always enjoy reading the articles and letters. Every now and then a name I recognize pops up ... but not often! Mostly in the "Obits."

I was in Charlie Company in 1st Tanks (all 103's). In 1962 we had little fuel and less ammo. We used to exercise the gun tubes by pushing them against the maintenance building. I applied for Track Vehicle Maintenance School and went to school on the change over from gas to diesel. After school, was shipped to 3rd tanks and ended up in Battalion Maintenance.

The 103 was "always" a maintenance problem and after 3 or 4 rounds fired, was always out of battery and always dead-lined for lack of parts.

Third tanks C.O. in 64/65 was "Col. States Right Jones". He was the best and after the 1st Vietnam deployment he finally managed to get "most" of the parts we needed for the 103's (turret motors were a priority).

I was shipped stateside in "65" so the Vietnam Tankers Association is mostly Marines I do not know! (I'm a kid in the "Other Association").

P.S. The picture was taken in "29 Palms", the cartoon was done by Corporal Ballou. Our platoon was the aggressor tank platoon, on a major night amphibious landing at Pendleton. We sunk C23 when they crossed the "wrong bridge" on the Oceanside of the coastal highway. Interesting point was, as aggressors on the beach, we turned on our spotlights as the landing crafts were approaching the beach in darkness. A major panic ensued and the landing crafts could not "see" and started going off course. Headquarters immediately came up on our frequency and told us to shut down all spotlights! Getting C23 out of the drainage swale only added to the aggravation, but gave the tank retriever something to do!!

Semper Fi-Flynn KD - 083281 ■



Editor's note: For those of you who are concerned about leaving the safety of your home and who may have no intentions of traveling to Providence for our every-other-year reunion, please read this travel amid the pandemic story and maybe reconsider traveling.

## Travel During the so-called "Pandemic"

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

It may come as a surprise, but I never stopped traveling throughout the entire pandemic. I haven't missed a single month since March last year, and sometimes I was on several planes each month. I traveled to more than 20 states across the U.S. so that I could understand what was actually happening.

If we were to have believed the press and some scientists, millions would have been dead in the U.S. by now. We would have entered the greater depression already, and there would be no effective therapies for those with a severe reaction to COVID-19.

But my belief was that the economy was fundamentally strong, recovering very rapidly. I also knew some existing medicines were effective against COVID-19 and that our productivity levels were a lot more normal than most would believe.

But I needed to see it with my own eyes, which is why I traveled so much and spoke with so many people. And airports and airplanes are a great way to see what kind of economic activity is really happening.

My time spent in the "field" was critical to the economic and sector analysis that lead to such outsized gains in all of my research services. It's the kind of intelligence that we can't find sitting at home in front of a computer screen.

This is truer than ever before. We know very well that our search results are filtered and manipulated, our social media channels are censored, and we are presented with highly biased information on a daily basis.

These are all reasons why critical analysis can't happen through a Google search bar. And it's why my team and I need to get out there no matter what is going on. And what always makes me laugh about air travel these days is the sheer spectacle of it all. Pure theater.

For example, on the left is what we see when we walk into the check-in area at an airport:

And then, less than an hour later, on the right is what our world looks like:



Shoulder to shoulder. And yes, so many of my flights over the last six months have been completely full, or nearly full... even the middle seats. And then 30 minutes later, after the small bags of food and drinks are handed out, the passengers remove their masks and eat. It's hilarious. And absurd.

We're all shoulder to shoulder, in a pressurized cylindrical tube, flying at 33,000 feet, breathing the same recycled air. And we're wearing face coverings that are scientifically proven to have little or no efficacy at stopping the spread of the virus.

The truth is that no one in a high-risk category should ever travel by plane. This is what the medical community should be advising. If we have parents or grandparents in high-risk categories, we should not let them travel by airplane. Put simply, it is one of the single best places to catch COVID-19.

I had COVID-19 in March, and I probably caught it on an airplane when I flew back from San Francisco to the East Coast from a conference. I've built natural immunity.

And knowing what I know about COVID-19, I'd still be flying if I hadn't already had it.

Have a great weekend and safe travels.

John Wear writes: In September 2020, I traveled by commercial airlines to Providence, RI, to recon and assess our hotel facilities for the USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn. biennial reunion to be held the following year (Sept 2021). The airport and the planes were exactly like the photo... every single seat on all four flights were occupied. And I did not "catch" the disease.

Maybe after reading the above story and then understanding how the world out there functions with little or no problems or major issues, perhaps you might reconsider breaking out of your self-imposed exile and get back to enjoying life... Let's hope that we can see your smiling face in Providence!!!



## 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.

The \$119 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.

Providence is 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) on your own.

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](http://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.

### 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](mailto:goldendog@mchsi.com).

We 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."

### VTA "TRACKING OUR HISTORY" PODCASTS IN PROVIDENCE

If you would like to participate in the brand new VTA History Project podcast interviews, during our reunion in Providence, please contact Frank "Tree" Remkiewicz at Phone: 209.996.8887 or e-mail at [fremkiewicz@gmail.com](mailto:fremkiewicz@gmail.com)



Military Vehicle and Armor Museum



Antique and Classic Car Museum



Museum of Flight

## Experience Rhode Island Tours

**NOTICE:** We are trying something a bit different for our 2021 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 Sunday afternoon. They are offering the below list of really exciting and fairly inexpensive tours. After you sign up and pay for your tours, on the appointed day the company will take you on their own vehicles. There is a choice of one out of three tours on Thursday and one out of five tours on Sunday.

How to sign up:

You can sign up for the Experience Rhode Island Tours now...

Phone: 401.886.0733

Email: [info@ExperienceRI.com](mailto:info@ExperienceRI.com)

Or you can wait until you arrive at the reunion hotel, they will have a sign up table next to the Welcome Table.

### Thursday, September 16, 2020:

#### Rhode Island and the American Revolution

Smallest in size but biggest in courage, Rhode Island was the first of the original thirteen colonies to declare independence from Great Britain! On this inspiring tour you will learn the story of Washington's most trusted general in the Continental Army, stand at the sight of America's "First Blow for freedom", visit the home of one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and much more! Come with us and you will see the role we played for liberty!

Tour length: 5 hours

Cost: \$55

Time frame: 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM

#### Rhode Island in a Day

We want to show you what's great about the Ocean State! Only 48 miles long and 37 miles wide, the smallest state in America is full of big surprises! As we take you on this gorgeous journey, you will explore the things that make Rhode Island so attractive, including our quaint New England villages, scenic islands, magnificent beaches, picturesque lighthouses, spectacular mansions, and much more. Beginning in historic Providence, this tour will take you through charming Wickford, stunning

Newport, Bristol – America's most patriotic town, and many other places. Amazed by what you learn, and struck by the beauty that you see, you are going to love Rhode Island in a Day!

Tour length: 5 hours

Cost: \$65

Time frame: 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM

#### Newport: Rhode Island's Spectacular City by the Sea

Come away with us to one of America's most special places! On this tour your host will take you on a journey through early American history and stunning wealth unlike anything you've ever seen. You will travel along breathtaking Ocean Drive, see and hear the stories behind the marvelous summer homes of many famous Americans, including the Kennedys, Vanderbilts, and modern day celebrities such as Jay Leno and Judge Judy, explore the cobblestone streets of colonial America, enjoy the picturesque inner harbor of the sailing capital of the United States, visit the famous Cliff Walk, and much more. Filled with interesting stories and fantastic sights, there is no better way to experience Rhode Island's spectacular city by the sea!

Tour length: 5 hours

Cost: \$75 (includes mansion tour)

Time frame: 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM

We have been told by the Rhode Island Visitors Bureau that the Newport tour is a "must" for first time visitors to the area.

### Sunday, September 20, 2020:

#### Discover Providence

Join us for this delightful tour of one of America's favorite cities! As you relax comfortably on our climate-controlled tour bus, we will take you to the most exciting neighborhoods in Rhode Island's capital city, and tell you the story of this special place, its celebrated citizens, and what it has contributed to America. From Brown University to Federal Hill, you will admire the most beautiful settings in the city, and discover places you will want to go back to and explore on your own. Along the way, there will be opportunities for you to get out, take pictures, and see things up close. Enjoyed by all ages, get ready for one of the most enjoyable tours you have ever taken!

Tour length: 2 hours

Cost: \$30

Time frame: 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Or 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM

#### Lighthouse Cruise

With over 400 miles of coastline and more than 30 islands, Rhode Island is home to many beautiful lighthouses. Join us on a tour boat for a narrated cruise past ten of those lighthouses and many famous Rhode Island sights in the middle of sparkling Narragansett Bay. There is no other sightseeing cruise like this in New England!

Tour length: 2.5 hours

Cost: \$45

Time frame: 12:30 PM – 3:00 PM

#### Providence by Road and by River

Come with us on this outstanding land and river tour of Providence! First, you will relax aboard a climate controlled tour bus as we bring you to Providence's most delightful neighborhoods, and tell you the unique story

of this intriguing city. Then, you will enjoy a pleasurable trip down the Providence River on a tour boat while your guide shows you the city from this beautiful perspective. Combining great stories with the best scenery, you will love this road and river experience!

Tour length: 3 hours

Cost: \$50

Time frame: 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

#### Providence's Very Delicious Lunch Tour

Tour our wonderful capital city while also enjoying one of the most delicious lunches you've ever had! This progressive lunch and tour showcases some of Providence's most unique spots for great food! Featuring a collection of rising culinary stars and local favorites, you will love this dining and touring adventure all over the city! With more restaurants per capita than any city in America, and home to the largest culinary school in the world, Providence is a foodie's dream. As you travel by tour bus, your host will take you to different neighborhoods around the city and give you a lunch and tour experience to remember!

Tour length: 3.0 hours

Cost: \$65 (includes lunch)

Time frame: 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM

#### The Italian Experience

When you come to Rhode Island, you come to one of the most Italian states in America! On this delightful daytime excursion we will immerse you into the wonderful Italian community of our capital city. First, you will enjoy a delicious and informative walking food tour through the classic markets on Federal Hill, where you will learn all about Italian cuisine and culture. Then, you will enjoy a lovely ride down the Providence River on a Venetian gondola as your gondolier serenades you with Italian love songs. This day is bellissima!

Tour length: 4 hours

Cost: \$75 (includes lunch)

Time frame: 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM ■

# Providence/Warwick, Rhode Island



## Getting Here

### Green International Airport (PVD)

Only 10 minutes from downtown Providence, Warwick's Green International Airport is easily accessible to Boston, Cape Cod and Southeastern New England. A popular alternative to Boston's Logan Airport, Green features up to 120 flights daily via major carriers, and convenient connecting options to the rest of the world. The InterLink transportation system offers scheduled rail service from the airport to Providence and Boston. For more information, visit [pvdairport.com](http://pvdairport.com) or call 888-268-7222.

### Boston Logan International Airport (BOS)

Boston Logan International Airport features nonstop air service from more than 100 worldwide destinations. Located less than 50 miles from Providence, Logan offers convenient transportation options from Boston, including bus service pick-up within steps of all five of its airport terminals. Peter Pan's 10 daily departures leave directly from Logan to downtown Providence, and Amtrak and commuter rail service is readily available from Boston.

### Airlines

|                      |              |  |
|----------------------|--------------|--|
| Air Canada           | 888-247-2262 | <a href="http://aircanada.com">aircanada.com</a>       |
| Allegiant Airlines   | 702-505-8888 | <a href="http://allegiantair.com">allegiantair.com</a> |
| American Airlines    | 800-433-7300 | <a href="http://aa.com">aa.com</a>                     |
| Azores Airlines      | 508-677-0555 | <a href="http://sata.pt/en">sata.pt/en</a>             |
| Delta Air Lines      | 800-221-1212 | <a href="http://delta.com">delta.com</a>               |
| Frontier Airlines    | 801-401-9000 | <a href="http://flyfrontier.com">flyfrontier.com</a>   |
| JetBlue              | 800-538-2583 | <a href="http://jetblue.com">jetblue.com</a>           |
| Norwegian Airlines   | 800-357-4159 | <a href="http://norwegian.com/us">norwegian.com/us</a> |
| Southwest Airlines   | 800-435-9792 | <a href="http://southwest.com">southwest.com</a>       |
| Sun Country Airlines | 651-905-2737 | <a href="http://suncountry.com">suncountry.com</a>     |
| United Airlines      | 800-241-6522 | <a href="http://united.com">united.com</a>             |

### Car/Shuttle Services & Limousines

|                             |              |  |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--|
| Airport Taxi & Limo         | 401-737-2868 | <a href="http://airporttaxiri.com">airporttaxiri.com</a>         |
| All Occasion Transportation | 401-312-0945 | <a href="http://alloccasionlimo.com">alloccasionlimo.com</a>     |
| Arrow Prestige Limousine    | 401-383-5600 | <a href="http://arrowprestigelimo.com">arrowprestigelimo.com</a> |
| Lyft                        |              | <a href="http://lyft.com">lyft.com</a>                           |
| Peter Pan Bus Lines         | 401-751-8800 | <a href="http://peterpanbus.com">peterpanbus.com</a>             |
| RI Public Transit Authority | 401-781-9400 | <a href="http://ripta.com">ripta.com</a>                         |
| Sentinel Limousine          | 401-434-2700 | <a href="http://sentinellimo.com">sentinellimo.com</a>           |
| Uber                        | 617-297-8184 | <a href="http://uber.com">uber.com</a>                           |
| Zipcar                      | 866-494-7227 | <a href="http://zipcar.com">zipcar.com</a>                       |

### Car Rentals

|            |              |  |
|------------|--------------|--|
| Alamo      | 401-737-4800 | <a href="http://alamo.com">alamo.com</a>             |
| Avis       | 401-736-7500 | <a href="http://avis.com">avis.com</a>               |
| Budget     | 401-739-8986 | <a href="http://budget.com">budget.com</a>           |
| Dollar     | 866-434-2226 | <a href="http://dollar.com">dollar.com</a>           |
| Enterprise | 401-732-5261 | <a href="http://enterprise.com">enterprise.com</a>   |
| Hertz      | 401-738-7500 | <a href="http://hertz.com">hertz.com</a>             |
| National   | 401-737-4800 | <a href="http://nationalcar.com">nationalcar.com</a> |
| Payless    | 401-737-5015 | <a href="http://paylesscar.com">paylesscar.com</a>   |
| Thrifty    | 401-732-2000 | <a href="http://thriftyri.com">thriftyri.com</a>     |

### Nonstop Flights: Green International Airport

#### DOMESTIC

|                |                          |                    |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Atlanta        | Ft. Myers                | Punta Gorda        |
| Baltimore      | Miami                    | Raleigh            |
| Charlotte      | Minneapolis/<br>St. Paul | Savannah           |
| Chicago*       | Nashville                | Tampa              |
| Cincinnati     | Newark                   | Washington, D.C.** |
| Denver         | Orlando                  | West Palm Beach    |
| Detroit        | Philadelphia             |                    |
| Ft. Lauderdale |                          |                    |

#### INTERNATIONAL

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| Cork, Ireland         |
| Dublin, Ireland       |
| Ponta Delgada, Azores |
| Shannon, Ireland      |
| Toronto, Canada       |

\*Midway & O'Hare  
\*\*DCA-Reagan Washington National and Dulles

25% of the nation's population is located within 500 miles of Providence and Warwick

### Train Service

Providence is located on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor between Washington, D.C., New York City and Boston. High-speed Acela Express train service transports passengers from New York City to Providence in about two and a half hours. For tickets call 800-USA-RAIL or visit [amtrak.com](http://amtrak.com).

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) runs low-cost commuter trains to Providence from Boston and other points in Massachusetts. Call 800-392-6100 or visit [MBTA.com](http://MBTA.com) for schedules and fares.

### Bus Service

Peter Pan Bus (888-751-8800 or [peterpanbus.com](http://peterpanbus.com)) and Greyhound (800-231-2222 or [greyhound.com](http://greyhound.com)) have stations in Providence. Megabus (877-462-6342 or [megabus.com](http://megabus.com)) offers round-trip bus service between Providence and New York City. For local public transportation, the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) runs buses and trolleys statewide. Call 401-781-9400 or visit [ripta.com](http://ripta.com).

### Driving Directions

Located at the intersection of I-95 and I-195, Providence is 50 miles from Boston (about a one-hour car ride) and 185 miles from New York City (about three hours by car). For a detailed map of the area, please visit [GoProvidence.com](http://GoProvidence.com).



# 2021 Providence Reunion Schedule

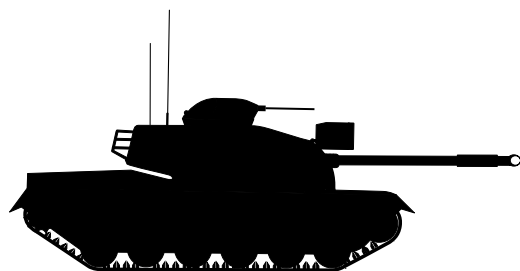
Wednesday, September 15 – Monday, September 20

|                                |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Wednesday</b><br>(Sept. 15) | <b>0900 – 2330</b>                                | <b>Arrival Day</b> – Register and pickup Welcome Packet outside The Torsion Bar hospitality room (In the Atrium).<br><b>Sign up for VTA History Interviews; the new Podcast Program and the Outside Tours</b>                 |
|                                | <b>0900 – 2330</b>                                | The Torsion Bar is Open<br><b>Lunch &amp; Dinner on your own</b>  |
| <b>Thursday</b><br>(Sept. 16)  | <b>0600 – 0815</b>                                | Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Torsion Bar)   |
|                                | <b>0830 – 1200</b>                                | Ladies Coffee (In the Torsion Bar)  |
|                                | <b>0900 – 1200</b>                                | Reunion kick-off and VTA Business Meeting (In the Bristol Ballroom)<br><i>Enter to win a FREE hotel room for reunion!</i><br><i>Must submit ticket before 0900 in the meeting room and be present for the drawing to win.</i> |
|                                | <b>1200 – 1800</b>                                | <b>Free Time and lunch on your own</b>  |
|                                | <b>1300 – 1630</b>                                | <b>(NEW!) Podcast interviews</b><br>(Schedule posted in Torsion Bar)  |
|                                | <b>1200 – 1700</b>                                | The Torsion Bar Open  |
|                                | <b>1800 – 1830</b>                                | Italian Buffet Dinner (In the Plaza Ballroom)   |
|                                | <b>1830 – 2000</b>                                | Live Auction! (In the Plaza Ballroom)   |
| <b>Friday</b><br>(Sept. 17)    | <b>2000 – 2300</b>                                | The Torsion Bar Open  |
|                                | <b>Wear your reunion T-shirt today!!!</b>         |   |
|                                | <b>0600 – 0815</b>                                | Complimentary breakfast buffet (In the Torsion Bar)   |
|                                | <b>1000 – 1015</b>                                | Load buses to tour American Heritage Museum (In the front of the hotel)   |
|                                | <b>1045 – 1545</b>                                | Tour<br><b>Lunch on your own</b>  |
|                                | <b>1545</b>                                       | Load buses for return to hotel  |
|                                | <b>1600–1700</b>                                  | Return to hotel   |
| <b>1700 – 2300</b>             | The Torsion Bar Open<br><b>Dinner on your own</b> |   |

(See reverse side)

## 2021 Providence Reunion Schedule

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



## 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 July 30, 2021. If you notify us of your cancellation after that date, we are sorry but we cannot make any refund offer.

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 July 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 August 30<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.**

**YOUR HOTEL ROOM RESERVATIONS MUST BE BOOKED BY AUGUST 30, 2021**

**HOW YOU CAN SAVE \$30.00**

Submit this form along with your payment by July 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

**USMC VTA STORE**

All prices include the cost of shipping  
 Please see inside front cover for more items



VTA “Forever” challenge coin \$25

USMC VTA 20th Anniversary challenge coin \$25



Set of Two Pillows (one each design) \$20

VTA Drink Coasters \$14 set of 4 (One each design)



You can purchase all of these items on line with a credit card at the USMC VTA website Store or Send checks or money orders with a note telling what you want to purchase to:

**Bruce Van Apeldoorn**  
**75 Stanton Street**  
**Rochester, NY 14611-2837**

If you have questions? Call Greg Martin at phone:  
 360-480-1206



**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.



## **USMC VIETNAM TANKERS ASSOCIATION 2021 PROVIDENCE REUNION**

September 15 - 20, 2021

Please see Pages 38 - 46 for details