



# Sponson BOX

*Voice of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™

# MARINE CORPS MarineCorpsTimes.com MarineTimes

10 JUNE 2024

A GANNETT COMPANY



## Milo Plank Gets His Silver Star

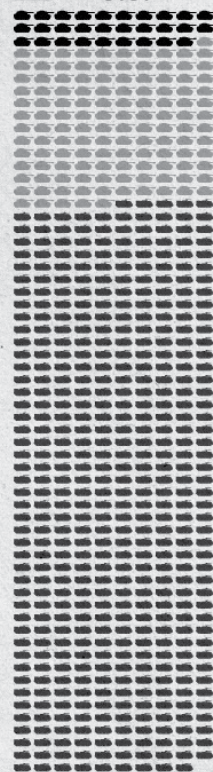
- Featured Stories:**
- Cover Story:** Six Decades Later, Marine Vietnam Veteran Awarded Silver Star ..... Page 36-39
  - Writing Heals Wounds. .... Page 25
  - Fond Memories of Boot Camp..... Page 42

# TOP 15 GLOBAL TANK FLEETS

Heavily armed and armored, the modern tank is a versatile and mobile weapons platform and a critical piece of contemporary combined arms warfare.



## 1. U.S.

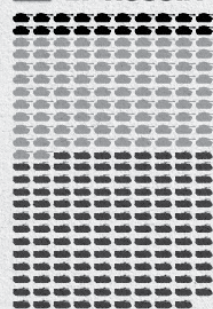


60,937

Russia, despite having lost almost 2,800 tanks in its invasion of Ukraine, has managed to keep roughly 2,000 main battle tanks operational, by increasing production and drawing from Soviet-era stockpiles.

Source: Oryx

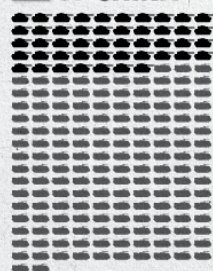
## 2. RUSSIA



23,928

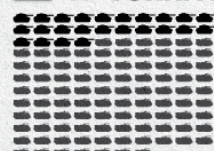
China, which has been rapidly modernizing its military, holds the third overall spot and the top place for the number of main battle tanks.

## 3. CHINA



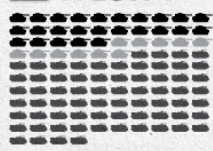
20,254

## 4. TÜRKIYE



11,702

## 5. EGYPT



10,389

**LEGEND**

= 100 TANKS

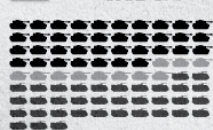
**CATEGORIES**

= MAIN BATTLE TANK

= IN STORAGE

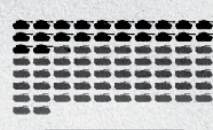
= \*ARMORED FIGHTING VEHICLES

## 6. INDIA



8,309

## 7. S. KOREA



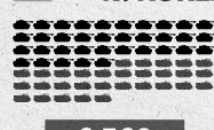
7,261

## 8. SAUDI ARABIA



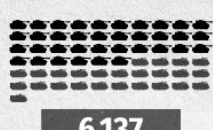
7,227

## 9. N. KOREA



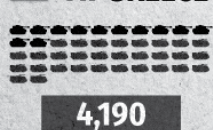
6,560

## 10. PAKISTAN



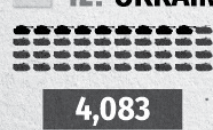
6,137

## 11. GREECE



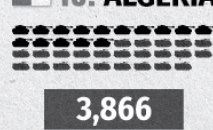
4,190

## 12. UKRAINE



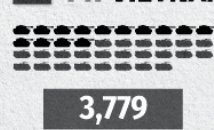
4,083

## 13. ALGERIA



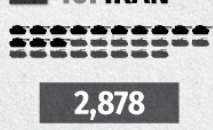
3,866

## 14. VIETNAM



3,779

## 15. IRAN



2,878

## Letter from the President

### If it is not written, you will soon be forgotten...

**HAPPY 25th ANNIVERSARY:** Just a reminder that the USMC VTA is 25 years old. What a great brotherhood! And what a fantastic "History Project" that is documenting our Marine Corps legacy for our family and friends. Please get your own story written and published ... or volunteer for a video or podcast. You can call me at 719.495.5998 to arrange any of them.

**2024 MINI- REUNION:** At the time that I am writing this letter, the Ft Benning (Ft Moore) gathering is just getting under way. I am sure that we all had one heck of a great time as we always seem to do. The next issue of our magazine will recap the event.

**PLEASE PAY YOUR 2024 DUES:** We post the same comment on every back page of our magazine: If your EXPIRATION date is 2023 or lower, your 2024 Annual Dues or Life Assessment are payable now. Please.

**WARNING!!!** We are getting very close to the point of running out of member's stories to publish in our magazine. There are over 400 active VTA members and less than 100 of you have penned even one single story about your deployment in SE Asia and/or your life as an Active-Duty Marine. Come on fellows! Most of us had 12 months and 29 days in-country (that is almost 400 days!!!). You had to have had at least one or two remarkable, notable, scary or maybe even funny experiences that you could write about and that the membership would love to read!!! It certainly does not have to be about blood, guts and gore. How about a nasty meal in the chow hall after eating Cs for weeks or maybe enemy incoming that disrupted a meal? Or a cold shower after a particular dirty operation? Or loading 90 mm ammo and dropping a round and thankfully it didn't go off? How about a grunt platoon sergeant giving you a hard time during a road sweep or an operation? Or how about your R&R to one of those exotic Far Eastern countries? Considering that the "Statute of Limitations" is long expired so your "confession" of your good or bad behavior on R&R should not have any legal ramifications!!! Write something!!! When we run out of member written stories, our quarterly magazine may very well just go away.

**GOD BLESS OUR CORPSMEN:** I recently watched an hour-long video with a FMF corpsman Vietnam veteran who ended his hour-long interview by talking about his first time visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in DC. He said that there were a large number of Marines names NOT on "The Wall" because he and his corpsmen brothers were there in Vietnam saving lives. OOO-RAH!!!

**SELF-ADVOCACY:** Far too many of us have gone through life not being our own self-advocate. That is, when something happens to us and we are not happy with what it is, instead of standing up for what we believe in, we simply allow it to happen and our seething anger simply sits inside of us and festers. I have found that many of us whose heritage is northern European, let the festering continue until it is unbearable and then "Mount Vesuvius" explodes often leaving "debris" all over everyone including ourselves. My point is that, if there is a problem, it would serve everyone, and especially you, to voice your concern (calmly and respectfully) to seek out a mutually satisfying solution at the time of the injustice. This is also a good lesson that you could teach your kids and your grandkids.

*"It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live."*

—Marcus Aurelius



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A Co, 3rd Tanks, '67 – '68  
MOS: 1802  
DOB: 07/15/1942  
Wife: Sandy  
Recruited by: Welcome Back!

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MOS: 1802  
DOB: 02/22/1943  
Recruited by: Welcome Back!

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MOS: 2141  
DOB: 08/02/50  
Wife: Jane  
Recruited by: VTA Website

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MILO PLANK RECEIVES HIS SILVER STAR

## Our Readers Write

(Formally known as "Letters to the Editor")

### Comments on the last issue:

**Bob Skeels writes:** It has been a lifetime regret that after what I was very fortunate to witness as an USMC officer in late 1968 for only a temporary 90 day duty assignment in that hellish Vietnam DMZ jungle war as their platoon leader that I did not fully honor and decorate every member of my frontline grunt platoon members for their witnessed deeds and performance in that intense war ... and to fully appreciate and comprehend the fact that they were each obligated to serve an additional 270 days in that intensity after I left this assignment and transitioned to my Marine Tank unit assignment.

Their motivation to serve and protect the nation and their families had to come from several factors:

- \* Absolute great military legacy
- \* Unifying American Flag
- \* A strong brotherhood promoting innate ethos
- \* A unified USA

The actual long overdue honor tribute was to come later in my life by two outstanding Marines and their two outstanding publications. Both Kyle Watts of "Leatherneck Magazine" and John Wear of the Marine Corps Tankers association USMCVTA.org) "Sponson Box" magazine. Both have a truly God-given writing gift and are masterful at what they do for the Marine community, the American public and for our great American history legacy.

I struggle very hard with the best way to adequately extend my pride, my thanks and to strongly salute these two Marine brothers, both Kyle and John...May God and this great nation bless them several times over for enriching the Marine brotherhood, preserving the great Marine Corps legacy and enhancing the great innate ethos of this great American fighting force.

**Rick Walters writes:** I really enjoyed the "90 Day LT" story. I noted the six Marines in the forward squad. 4th Marines were short of 0311's, too.

I should write a story about Fuzzy Runyon. He had a short tour, wounded a few times, final time was in the Quason's. It is very similar to your publication: once a year sweep, then abandoned, the NVA move-in, the next incursion had bunker's and 12.7 mm MG's. Fuzzy never saw an Ontos in Vietnam, although Ontos 226934 is owned by me. It is seen in schools battalion with him, 1968. The 26th Marines allowed him to carry a scoped M-14, and he routinely made 1,000-yard shots.

### Armando Moreno sends this powerful and beautiful image to share.



This symbolizes the beauty, the grace and the love for all those we have lost. We will never forget and we continue to honor them in everyday and in every way possible. I have a ballerina in the family studying at U.C.L.A. in medicine. She honors us all.

### Belmo got a new license place frame



Bought it on Amazon custom order:  
Military Best, 26509 John T. Reid Pkwy, Scottsboro, AL. 35768

-aal4usa@militarybest.com

Cost: \$ 29.95 Tax \$ 3.48

Shipping \$ 4.99 Total: \$ 38.39

>>

### Fred Kellogg comments:

To make you smile at the stupidity of toady's average American: Last night I watched an old "Tonight Show" with Jay Leno where he goes into the audience and asks young adults several easy questions. He asked a 20 something female, "What does AC / DC stand for?" She replied "After Christ / Devil Comes." Jay had to wait a moment because he was laughing too hard to talk. He told her, "NO. Its stands for Alternating Current and Direct Current." It's scary that these people vote.

### Tank Recliner



Submitted by Bob Haller

### Doug Scrivner's Front License Plate



### Umbrellas in Nam

**John Wear writes:** Someone sent me the above photo of a US Marine grunt trying to avoid the hot sun in-country Vietnam. The photo reminded me of the below photo of

Bob Haller sitting in the TC's clamshell.



### It's a Small World...

**John Wear writes:** My younger brother has a special events company that puts on a "Salute to Veterans" program. He's done it for nearly 35 years. It is a three-day event that

includes a major motorcycle ride that involved nearly 1,000 riders. The program culminated with a full-blown program on Saturday in mid-August.

During the Saturday program he often salutes a WW-2 or Korean War veteran. This year, based on several recommendations, he is honoring US Marine Vietnam veteran John Huntz for his participation during the Tet "celebration" in Feb. 1968. My brother has always wanted to recognize me but he did not want to be accused of "Nepotism" so he has never done so. Now that John Huntz will be honored, he's

going to honor his big brother at the same time.

This afternoon I called John and suggested that he and I get together to compare notes, etc. We are meeting for lunch on Thursday. When we spoke, he mentioned that he volunteers at the WW-2 Air Museum. When he said that, I had to tell him about the USMC VTA 2023 reunion in Colorado Springs and our visit to that most outstanding museum. He then told me that Ron Dudek had paid him a visit when the USMC VTA was in town. It's a small world!!! ■

### Interesting Tank Concepts



# PRAYING FOR SLACK

BY ROBERT E. PEAVEY

Two different wars were fought in Vietnam, the jungle-and-booby-trap one down south, and the WWII-like one up on the DMZ. "I was one of a handful whose Vietnam tour was evenly split between the First and Third Marine Divisions, and saw, firsthand, the difference 170 miles could make during the war's bloodiest year." Corporal Robert Peavey was a tank commander in I Corps (Eye Corps) on the DMZ when LBJ ordered a bombing halt over the North. His compelling first-hand account chronicles operations just south of the 'Z, operations that most Vietnam War histories have completely ignored. Peavey offers detailed, understandable explanations of combat strategy, strengths and shortcomings of standard-issue armament, and inter-service rivalries.

**Amazon online review:** I have read countless titles about the war on Vietnam, but never once about a Tank unit, and this book does not disappoint. From visiting a tank from the inside while I was serving, I already know how difficult life can be inside this massive weapon of destruction. The author, Mr. Robert E. Peavey, is really fluent with plenty of insights, and a great sense of humor, which, in a way, was the best antidote for the disease called Vietnam. His writing is easy to like, and the pages keep engaging the reader. As the many reviewers in Amazon have wisely noted, there were not too many Marine Tankers in Vietnam, so right there it makes the book kind of special.

The insights, detailed explanations of what entitles to have that line of work in the very ugly war that was Vietnam, the few and the proud once again shine in the face of adversity. Like the knowledgeable reviewers in Amazon correctly pointed

out, these tanks were vulnerable in the kind of war they were required to fight, not to say that their capacity to inflict damage was any lesser. Funny, poignant too, the book is a well-deserved read. First one for me, and not soon to forget how tanks also played their part in that far away land. 4.5 Stars!

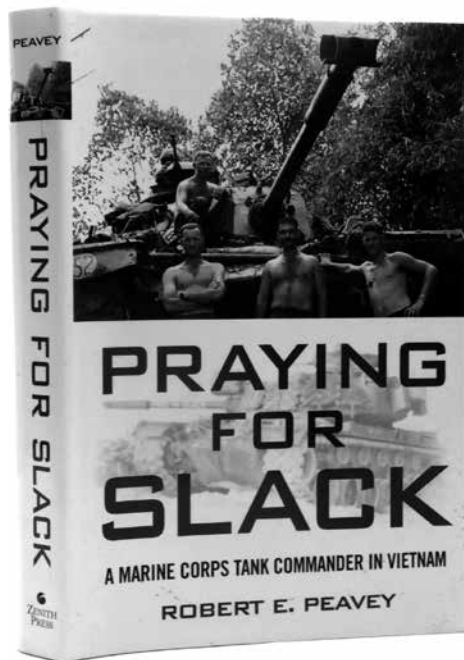
**Another online review:** Not many people think of tanks in Vietnam. We sent over 600 of these M-48 Patton tanks during the Vietnam War. They were very valued for not only the firepower, but for the protection against RPG's and mines (sound familiar?) and ability for "jungle busting". The Sheridan tanks (M-551) and Armored Personnel Carriers (M-113's) were not so well liked.

Robert Peavey was a gunner, later Tank Commander in 1968–69. His observations and experi-

ences are excellent. The absolute need for infantry & tank coordination are explained here, many tactical lessons that are still invaluable today, whether in urban, forest or open terrain.

There's humor, sorrow, incredible true stories about tankers fighting the heat, enemy and our own government (Johnson's cease fire rightly is criticized). A few maps and color photos help the reader understand the geography and tanker's life in a way only a tanker himself could tell.

Anyone who wants a great picture into the Vietnam War, armored history, and infantry should read this. Should be required reading at Armor and Infantry school. Also has a lot of important leader lessons—setting the example being one of the best. Definitely recommended. I've been waiting a long time to pick this one up, very glad I did. ■



## Three Guest Opinions

Editorial comments in the following article represent the views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Marine Corp or the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. We'd like to ask that anyone who thinks that they may be offended by what is written in this article, please skip over it and do not read it. The article is intended to be thought provoking and is not intended to be dogma.

### Force Design 2030: Operational Incompetence

Operational Incompetence Dangerously Crippled America's Expeditionary Force-in-Readiness

By Walter Boomer & James Conway—June 15, 2024

The United States Marine Corps is no longer capable of effectively conducting combat operations across the spectrum of conflict. Who is responsible? Over the past five years, some Marine Corps senior leaders have myopically reorganized and restructured Marine forces to perform regional small unit operations focused on a single enemy. The results of these efforts have become clear: the Marine Corps' ability to project force "in every clime and place" to maintain global deterrence and to fight and win the Nation's battles has been compromised.

Today, the Marine Corps is hard pressed to field a robust and resilient combined arms Marine Expeditionary Brigade (brigadier general level command) and unable to field a Marine Expeditionary Force (lieutenant general level command), such as those that fought in Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. As a result, the Marine Corps can no longer support those combatant commander requirements that call for major combined arms forces to engage in mid-to-high intensity sustained ground combat.

How did this happen? A flawed operational concept termed Force Design 2030 eliminated Marine Corps capabilities to maintain forces forward in global hotspots and fight and win across the warfighting spectrum should deterrence fail. But one needs to look deeper to truly understand the genesis of this destruction.

In theology and philosophy there is a theory known as "first cause": an acknowledgement that any event or outcome has a precipitating cause. What was the "first cause" for Force Design 2030? The culprit was a lack of operational competence in some current and recently retired senior Marine Corps leaders.

These officers' operational experience was developed during almost twenty years of fighting the Global War on Terrorism. Following the defeat of the Iraqi Army in 2003, our adversaries, while deadly, fought asymmetrically at the lower end of the tactical spectrum. In countering them, there was no need to employ strong combined arms capabilities. Absent were requirements to conduct armored operations; counterfire operations against powerful artillery threats; breaching, obstacle clearance, or bridging operations; and large scale coordinated combined arms maneuvers. Instead, operations were often conducted from fixed bases supported by contracted logistics. As a result of this narrow combat experience, it should be no surprise that capabilities not exercised during the wars against terrorists are those that have faced the Force Design chopping block. In their rush to restructure the Marine Corps for a limited mission in a known location (the sinking of Chinese Navy warships inside the Pacific First Island Chain), the advocates of Force Design essentially reduced Marine operating forces into tactical Stand-in Forces and Marine Expeditionary Units (colonel level command).

Stand-in Forces are small, single purpose units designed to be forward deployed inside contested areas on remote islands in the First Island Chain. Armed with short-range, subsonic missiles, these units are isolated and vulnerable. The Marine Corps has yet to articulate a viable concept for inserting, repositioning, and logistically supporting these tactical units, sans reliance on an ill-defined future Landing Ship Medium (formerly Light Amphibious Warship). This small, slow, and lightly armed ship is neither survivable nor likely to be built in numbers approaching Marine Corps requirements. While arguably ineffective in the Indo-Pacific Region, Stand-in Forces have virtually no utility outside it.

A competent warfighter would never have put forward an untested and unproven operational concept without first having determined its logistical supportability. The Corps has yet to find an answer to the logistics needs of Stand-in Forces, isolated and unsupported inside contested areas.

Marine Expeditionary Units are highly versatile and capable air and ground task forces. While built for global employment, they are not suitable for sustained combat against a determined enemy, as they lack the requisite firepower and logistics. Unless quickly reinforced or resupplied, they have limited utility in the close or rear battle.

The adoption of Force Design and its supporting concepts suggest that Marine Corps leadership is predominately focused on a Pacific War with China and has given minimal consideration of how the Marine Corps may be called upon to meet the challenges presented by great power competition across the globe. The architects and proponents of Force Design apparently forgot that a war with China, if it comes, will be fought globally and not just in the South China Sea. China, through its Belt and Road initiative, has been cultivating access to key countries in nearly every continent by providing financial aid and building infrastructure that could support the Chinese military during a future conflict. Expeditionary forces will be needed to deter or defeat threats from China or its allies and proxies emanating from these strategic locations inside and outside of the Pacific region. This has been the Marine Corps role since the Barbary Wars in the early 19th century.

To implement Force Design, it was believed necessary to divest proven combined arms capabilities needed to prosecute a "single battle" approach to warfighting. Single battle is the understanding that battles and campaigns are fought by Marine Air-Ground Task Forces, supported by complementary logistics, seamlessly integrated for combat across the rear, close, and deep areas of the battlespace.

A full array of combined arms capabilities (including cannon, armor, close-in fire support from rotary/fixed wing aviation— not just missiles) is required to allow a commander to deliver long range and close >>

supporting fires in all areas of the battlespace; to maneuver the force by air or ground; to logistically support the force; to sense throughout the battlespace; and to effectively command and control forces. The divestitures of combined arms capabilities mandated by Force Design have jeopardized the Marine Corps' ability to conduct major combat operations without significant support and augmentation from the U.S. Army. Even with Army augmentation, the ability of disparate units to operate as an effective fighting force in combat is questionable absent extensive pre-deployment training and exercises.

Of all the flaws evident in Force Design and the Stand-in Forces concept, none is more consequential than the alarming reduction of amphibious assault ships. It has long been accepted that a minimum of 38 large amphibious ships are required to maintain three Marine Expeditionary Units forward, support the training and preparation of the next deploying units, maintain a surge capability of ships required to deploy an amphibious brigade for crisis response or contingencies, and allow for programed ship maintenance and refit.

The previous Commandant arbitrarily reduced the requirement to 31 ships. This was a strategic blunder from which it will be difficult to recover without immediate action by Congress. The reduced number is insufficient to quickly deploy an amphibious brigade and barely sufficient to meet global requirements for two forward deployed Marine Expeditionary Units and one forward based Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Another smoking gun is the lack of appreciation for maritime prepositioning. The rapid deployment of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade and especially a Marine Expeditionary Force is not possible without a robust and strategically located fleet of maritime prepositioning ships. Marine Corps leadership have remained silent as the U.S. Navy emasculated the three squadrons of maritime prepositioning ships, reducing capabilities from 3 squadrons of 17 ships to 2 squadrons of 7 ships. Previously, each squadron was capable of rapidly deploying weapons and equipment for a 16,500-man combined arms brigade with 30 days of sustainment. For operational context, the rapid and effective deployment of the Marine Expeditionary Force during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Iraqi Freedom would not have been possible without robust support from the

maritime prepositioning force.

To reiterate, the "first cause" in crippling the Marine Corps as the nation's 911 force was the lack of operational competence by some senior leaders. These generals are focused on Stand-in Forces and Marine Expeditionary Units—small unit formations that lack an offensive punch or staying power. They neglect the larger Marine Expeditionary Brigades and Marine Expeditionary Forces, which can conduct "single battle" operations in support of a combatant commander against a determined enemy with peer or near peer level capabilities at major theater of war levels.

We do not intend to imply that the entire generation of current and recently retired senior Marine Corps leaders are operationally incompetent because we know several who display exceptional competent to retire when they still had much to offer the Corps. And the law of averages tells us there must be at least a few on active duty, but they remain silent.

Force Design is an operational and strategic dead end. It invites defeat in detail. But even worse, renders the Marine Corps irrelevant because it offers virtually nothing to combatant commanders in a full spectrum war against a determined enemy.

The national defense desperately needs Marine Corps leadership and members of Congress to speak up and help rebuild Marine Corps capabilities to fight any foe, anywhere, and win. The American people deserve no less.

competence. We also know that the former Commandant asked some of the most operationally

General Walter (Walt) Boomer, USMC (ret.), is a career infantry officer. He was the Commander Marine Corps Forces Central Command and Commanding General I MEF during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. His last assignment was the 24th Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

General James (Jim) Conway, USMC (ret.), is a career infantry officer. He was the Commanding General I MEF during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the First Battle of Fallujah. His last assignment was the 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

GUEST OPINION

## What Will Replace the Marine Corps?

**We still need amphibious forces conducting ground operations. The Marines aren't prepared to do it anymore.**

**By Gary Anderson—June 18, 2024**

In his book on maritime power, *To Rule the Waves*, author Bruce Jones points out that, if the United States is to wage war with anyone other than Canada or Mexico, we need to do it with naval power. Ever since the invasions of Normandy and Okinawa, where the Army provided significant amphibious landing forces, the leading edge of the projection of combat power ashore has been the United States Marine Corps. That is no longer the case.

Since 2019, the Marine Corps has largely abandoned its amphibious capability in favor of a limited mission of deterring or fighting a war with China in the South China Sea, all to fulfill the vision of the former Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger. The concept is called "Stand-in Forces." To buy the anti-ship missiles required to carry out his vision,

Berger divested the Marine Corps of all of its tanks, much of its artillery, all of its heavy engineering and assault bridging and breaching capabilities, as well as significant aviation assets. But, as Jones points out, we still need some way of projecting naval power ashore. The question now is: Who will do it? There are several possibilities.

One candidate would be our special operations forces. They certainly have the combat skills to attack a defended shore. But there is a problem. If they are to obtain the tanks, engineers, and other heavy assets needed to assault a hostile beach, they will lose the agility that makes them "special" in the first place. Amphibious operations in today's hostile littoral environment take constant skill and practice. The Marine Corps used to have this because it and the Navy kept amphibious forces de-

ployed in the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, and the Western Pacific. These Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) practiced constantly for amphibious operations. If a crisis popped up, they could be brought together into a brigade-sized landing force and further reinforced quickly to the division or corps level if needed. For example, during Operation Desert Storm, the Marine Corps mustered two combined arms divisions for the ground assault and a brigade off the coast of Kuwait for an amphibious operation if needed.

Since then, Gen. Berger has released the Navy from its commitment to maintain the number of ships needed to keep up the constant overseas MEU rotation because he believed that the capability was no longer needed.

The army is a second option. Some army units could be targeted for amphibious assault missions, but the army considers itself the nation's force for fighting big wars on land. It has traditionally left the "lesser contingency" missions such as embassy and civilian evacuations and pop-up humanitarian assistance to the forward-deployed MEUs. Retooling the army to take aboard amphibious operations is not impossible, but it would be painful for the organization and expensive for the country.

A third option is to outsource amphibious operations to allies — after all, the British have recently shown interest in expanding their capabilities — however, economy of scale becomes a problem if large operations are needed. The British Army and Royal Marines combined would be hard-pressed to fill a good-sized soccer stadium. The Japanese have shown some interest in expanding their overseas expeditionary capability, but they would have some constitutional problems in developing

a serious amphibious capability. In any case, we would have to build a consensus on what wars we would jointly fight.

There is a fourth option. That is to rebuild the Marine Corps as a worldwide force constantly ready to take action. One of the mysteries of the Marine Corps' decision to concentrate on an anti-ship mission in the South China Sea is whether or not the joint force combatant commander responsible for the region even wanted this Marine Corps contribution. The current Indo-Pacific commander has not yet weighed in on the subject. A recent war game conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found the Stand-in Force concept to be duplicative and less effective than capabilities already possessed by other services and unable to contribute "heavily" in most scenarios.

There might even be some unanticipated goodness here. The capabilities that Gen. Berger discarded were Reagan-era legacy systems. The Marine Corps could experiment with newer and more capable tanks, artillery, and engineering systems and pick the best. In any case, we will have a dangerous gap in our national power projection capability for a number of years. In the future, we will have to be more careful in the power that we give a single service chief.

Gary Anderson is a retired Marine Corps Colonel who lectures on Alternative Analysis at the George Washington University's Elliott Scholl of International Affairs. He served as a Special Advisor to the Deputy Secretary of Defense from 2003–5.

Direct link: <https://www.frontpagemag.com/what-america-can-learn-from-israel-on-the-battlefield/>

GUEST OPINION

## What America Can Learn from Israel on the Battlefield

**Using the military to actually win a war.**

**By Daniel Greenfield—May 30, 2024**

America has never successfully liberated and held territory from Islamic terrorists. After thousands of dead in Afghanistan and Iraq: both countries are now controlled by Islamic terrorists. Many top current and former defense officials who oversaw both disasters, despite a track record of zero wins, have been criticizing Israel for not following in their footsteps.

Everyone from former Gen. David Petraeus to current Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. C.Q. Brown offer the familiar criticisms that Israel is not following the COIN or counterinsurgency model. "Not only do you have to actually go in and clear out whatever adversary you are up against, you have to go in, hold the territory and then you've got to stabilize it," Chief Brown argued. The problem with this model is that it failed and left a lot of widows and orphans along the way.

The United States spent over 50 years losing wars, prestige and young men by trying to follow the familiar strategy for defeating guerrilla armies through conventional warfare followed by efforts to hold and stabilize the territories. And what exactly do we have to show for it?

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) discarded this conventional wisdom for another approach. Rather than trying to hold territory filled with an enemy population among whom the terrorists move, it has used its manpower to attack concentrations of enemy forces, moving quickly and at times unpredictably, while refusing to get bogged down by trying to

'hold' any particular area. This strategy has frustrated the entire Hamas war plan which like that of Jihadis in Iraq and Afghanistan depended on using terror attacks to pin military units in place, forcing them to defend and patrol a territory, and then exploiting their weaknesses to launch ambushes.

Israel learned a hard lesson from Oct 7. It's not interested in playing defense anymore. Instead, the goal of the initial stages of the war has been to keep the terrorists' forces on the defensive. Complaints that Israel has to 're-clear' areas that it's already taken miss the point. The enemy population supports the terrorists and so the area can't be 'cleared' or 'stabilized'. But once Israel has taken control of terrorist infrastructure, it's better able to understand their operations.

When Israel 're-cleared' Al-Shifa hospital, it took by surprise and captured much of the leadership of Islamic Jihad and some Hamas leaders as well. Rather than a weakness, re-clearing is a strength because when terrorists return to territory that Israel is now familiar with, it can turn the tables and launch surprise attacks on those old positions. Israel is not fighting to take land, but to grind down enemy forces wherever they operate.

"The measure of effectiveness will not be enemy killed," Gen McChrystal told the Senate about his Afghanistan strategy in 2009. Mc-

*(Continued on page 16)*

# To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

"To live in hearts, we leave behind is not to die." —Thomas Campbell

## Virgil Vernon Melton, Jr. 1947 – 2024



Virgil Melton, Jr. was born July 8, 1947, and passed away unexpectedly on June 3, 2024, after a life richly lived in service and kindness. Virgil's earliest and fondest childhood memories were of being with his grandparents, hunting squirrels and fishing with his grandfather at Buck Creek, or just spending time at his store in Jackson. Virgil often talked about that being the happiest time of his life. They always had a special place in his heart, and he cherished those memories for a lifetime. Virgil's parents, Shirley and Virgil Melton, Sr., were special to him as well. He remembered his mother as a wonderful cook, and he was so proud of his father's military service in the United States Marine Corps. Virgil was a long-time and very involved member of the USMC VTA.

After graduating in 1966, Virgil continued his father's legacy by joining the United States Marine Corps. He served four and a half years in the Marines, spending twenty-one months in Vietnam. He was a recipient of the Purple Heart Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V", as well as receiving a combat meritorious promotion to E-5 Sergeant while in Vietnam. In the summer of 1967, Virgil was outside of his tank, guiding his driver through a trench area on the Ho Chi Minh trail when the tank ran over a land mine and blew Virgil several feet in the air. He was medivacked out and spent several months recovering from his injuries. When Virgil spoke of this incident, he always said that all he could think about were his fellow marines and how he needed to return to his platoon to be with his men. Virgil did successfully return to his platoon and spent many more months in heavy combat.

Upon returning to the United States, Virgil attended the Marine Corps Embassy Security School in Washington, D.C. After graduation, he was attached to the United States Department of State's Division of Protective Security where he was charged with providing personal security to foreign dignitaries visiting the President of the United States.

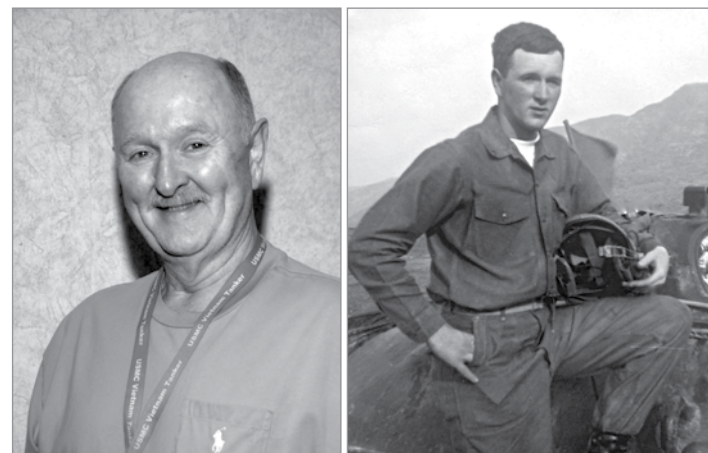
After an honorable discharge from the Marine Corps, Virgil attended the University of Texas at Arlington where he received a Bachelor of Science degree. He then was employed by Dallas County for 31 years as a police officer, detective and court administrator, finishing his career as Criminal District Courts Manager where he worked with 17 State District Judges.

## Jon Authur Morrison 1943 – 2019

Born on 6 November, 1943 in Waltham, MA. Died 1 August, 2019 in Ft Meyers, FL. Buried Moosewood Cemetery, Cotuit, MA. Sergeant, US Marine Corps. Served Vietnam. Purple Heart. Jon was a former member of the USMC VTA.

This obit if from Find a Grave.

## Robert Emmitt Peavey 1947 — 2024



Robert E Peavey, 77, of Calhoun, Georgia, passed away on Wednesday, June 12, 2024. He was born in Long

Island, New York, on June 11, 1947. He is survived by his wife of 8 years, Jacqueline Kohn; sons, Douglas and Ian Peavey, grandchildren, Tyler and Jett Peavey, brother, Sean Peavey.

Robert worked as a marketing VP for Eastman Kodak, handling customers such as NASCAR and Disney. He proudly served his country as a United States Marine in the Vietnam War. He will be honored in September during the meeting of the U.S. Marine Vietnam Tankers Association. To honor his wishes, his body was cremated, and no formal service will be held. Bob was a charter member of the USMC VTA and faithfully produced our "Fallen Heros" program since 2003.

## Guy Wolfenbarger 1946–2024



Guy Wolfenbarger, a US Marine Vietnam veteran, successful entrepreneur, property developer, mentor, husband, and friend to many, passed away at his home on June 11th, 2024. He was 77 years old. Born on November 4, 1946, on Grener Road on the west side of Columbus, Guy exhibited an indomitable spirit from an early age. After completing his first year at Mt. Olivet Nazarene College, he joined the United States Marine Corps, where he served with distinction as a tanker during the Vietnam War. Guy's bravery and dedication earned him numerous commendations, including a Purple Heart and the lifelong respect of his fellow Marines.

Upon returning from Vietnam, Guy channeled his relentless drive and work ethic into the business world. Starting with a small roofing company he purchased from his father, he founded a series of successful enterprises that spanned various industries and grew in scope. He became a prominent property developer, resulting in one of Ohio's largest privately owned

warehousing firms. He also pioneered e-waste and heavy metals recycling and always retained interest in commodities trading. Guy's keen business acumen and integrity made him a self-made man and a respected figure in the business community.

His distinct personality marked his journey. He was not just a successful businessman, a deep-sea fisherman, an urban farmer, and a friend to many, but a true original. His uncommon ability to turn ideas into realities in any circumstance was a testament to his exceptional character.

Guy had immense ambition and unyielding determination, leaving an indelible mark on the business world. His accomplishments were a testament to his astuteness and problem-solving skills. His ability to navigate the complexities of the business world with finesse was unparalleled, inspiring those around him to strive for greatness.

He was a true self-made man, building his business world from the ground up through sheer grit and relentless drive. His legacy as a shrewd businessman and visionary entrepreneur is well-established. He had an unquenchable curiosity and a storehouse of knowledge and experience that he was always eager to share.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Guy was a man who, in his own way, showed us the value of perseverance and resilience. Despite facing numerous challenges, he always pursued his dreams. His actions spoke louder than words, demonstrating the importance of these qualities in life and inspiring those around him to never give up. He balanced his business interests with fishing, travel, fine wine, and staying in touch with his Vietnam veterans. Guy was a very active and a long time, deeply involved member of the USMC VTA. He was also very generous in donating large sums of money to the brotherhood.

## Charles Gary "Butch" Hill 1943–2023

Charles Gary "Butch" Hill, 80 of Jasper, passed away on Sunday, October 8, 2023 at Walker Baptist Medical Center. His loving wife of 37 years was at his side.

Charles graduated from Dora High School in 1961. He was a member of the graduating class of 1966 at Jacksonville State University. The day after

graduation, he enlisted into the United States Marine Corps. Charles served as Second and First Lieutenant in the Vietnam War from August 2, 1967 thru July 31, 1968. He was in the 1st Marine Division, C Company, 1st Tanks. While in Vietnam, he received two Purple Hearts. In 1969, he was medically retired from the United States Marine Corps.

In 1969 after his retirement from the Marine Corps, Charles was employed by State Farm Insurance Company as an Auto Claims Adjuster. Later he became an agent and retired this year after being with the company for 54 years. Butch was a former member of the USMC VTA.

#### Anthony W. Pinnetti 1944 – 2024

Anthony W. Pinnetti passed away peacefully on 26 May 2024 at his daughter Angela's home in Florida. He was 80 years old and had been fighting cancer for several years. Tony served as a Tank Crewman (1811) in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1963 to 1967.

After recruit training at Parris Island Tony was assigned to 2nd Tank Bn. where he participated in a Caribbean cruise and OPERATION STEELPIKE before receiving orders to the 3rd Mar Div. On Okinawa he was assigned to 3rd Tank Bn before his platoon deployed with 3/3 to South Viet Nam. Tony was wounded during OPERATION STARLITE and later participated in numerous fire fights around Hill 69 and Hill 54 during the remainder of his tour.

After receiving an Honorable Discharge Tony returned to his native Brockton, MA where he worked in the construction business until his retirement to Tarpon Springs FL. Tony enjoyed an active retirement; riding his Harley, sailing and playing one of his guitars in the local night clubs – he was an avid musician. Tony leaves behind two daughters and a son.

This obit was composed by Ken Zebal.

#### Gary Lee Owens 1945–2022

Gary Lee Owens a loving and caring husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend passed away on September 10, 2022 at age 77. He fought a courageous battle against Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Gary was born in Seattle and after graduating from Franklin High School joined the US Marines, serving primarily in Vietnam as a tank crewman. Following his military discharge Gary returned to the

Pacific Northwest and began a 27-year career with the Seattle Fire Department. He then spent several years working as a Deputy Fire Marshal for King County before retiring. Gary was an active member of the USMC VTA.

#### Michael Douglas Bundock 1949–2024

Michael Douglas Bundock–February 11, 1949–February 4,



2024, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family. Mike was born and raised in Petaluma, lived in Plumas Lake since 2014. Loving husband of Carol for 50 years, father to daughters Heidi and Casey, son-in-law Daniel, and grandfather to Mateo. Mike was a 3051 warehouseman with H&S Company, 1st Tanks in 1968. He was an active member of the USMC VTA.

### Your Attention Please!

We would greatly appreciate it that if you recognize a name in the obits that you, please send us an email note or give us a phone call telling us about the recently departed Marine. Anything that you recall might be posted so that others will know that he is remembered by others... plus we will have another record of his memory.

## Van Zandt County



ANDY REESE  
COUNTY JUDGE

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### Van Zandt County Press Release Death of Precinct 2 County Commissioner Virgil Melton, Jr June 6, 2024

In a tragic accident on Monday night, June 3rd, Van Zandt County Commissioner Virgil Melton, Jr., died from a tree falling on his vehicle while he was traveling home from his grandson's baseball game. The accident occurred on Farm to Market Road 279 in Edom. Virgil's wife Janice was also in the vehicle and taken by ambulance to the hospital where she currently is in Intensive Care Unit with serious injuries.

Virgil was sworn into the office of Precinct 2 Commissioner on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, serving Van Zandt County for over 17 years. He was respected by his constituents for his responsiveness to their needs, working to maintain the roads and bridges in his precinct as well as surrounding areas. He served on the Commissioners Court with the responsibilities for Van Zandt County business and administration.

Prior to serving as Commissioner for Van Zandt County, Virgil was the Criminal District Courts' Manager for Dallas County for 29 years, managing 17 Criminal District Courts.

Virgil was involved with the creation of the Van Zandt County Veterans Memorial in 2005 and has served on the board of directors ever since. Virgil served in the U.S. Marine Corps in the Vietnam War as a tank commander from 1968 to 1969, earning a Purple Heart and Navy Commendation Medal for valor.

Virgil has been involved in many community organizations including the Canton Lions Club and the Van Zandt County Republican Club where he served as a delegate to the Texas Republican Party Convention for many years.

Virgil and Janice were part of the founding members of Lakeside Baptist Church, and he served in the church as a deacon and member of the choir.

Van Zandt County has lost a true icon of the community He inspired many in the county and has been a mentor and roll model to many who have served with him. His legacy will live on with the people he has served throughout his years in Van Zandt County.

= END =



(Continued from page 11)

### Three Guest Opinions

Chrystal's strategy killed a lot of Americans instead. Israel is betting that McChrystal is wrong. It's measuring effectiveness in just that way.

Holding and stabilizing territory, the basis for the COIN model, bogs down armies in defensive modes, while Israel's approach is purely offensive and plays to its strengths. The IDF is bad at defensive operations, but quite good at rapid assaults. COIN would play to Israel's weaknesses and the strengths of the terrorists, much as it did with us in Iraq and Afghanistan, but discarding COIN has made the IDF's campaigns far more effective even if they're nowhere near the end.

COIN advocates cite their 'successes' against ISIS in Iraq. But those successes pitted one group of Islamic terrorists against another. They would like Israel to pit the PLO against Hamas, but not only is the PLO unwilling to fight Hamas (and lost badly the last time it tried to do so) but the end result would be the same disaster in which Iraq fell into the hands of Shiite terrorists.

The problem with COIN when applied to Muslim countries is that whoever wins, we lose. COIN in Afghanistan propped up an ineffective warlord and kleptocrat alliance that couldn't survive without our military support while COIN in Iraq turned over the country to Iran. Not only did both pathways lead to dead ends, but neither one is even available for Israel to utilize.

The Biden administration and some former defensive officials have proposed finding Muslim nations willing to help "stabilize" Gaza afterward. Not only aren't such nations available, but Egypt, which controls the Rafah crossing into Gaza, did everything possible to stop an Israeli advance in order to cover up the massive tunnels leading from Gaza into Egypt. Once Israel went into Rafah, Egypt cut off aid through its crossing into Gaza in order to manufacture another "humanitarian crisis" and allow Hamas to take control in Rafah again. That is what Israel's prospective Muslim "partners" are really up to behind the scenes.

But that was also exactly how America's Muslim partners acted. While America searched for Osama bin Laden, Pakistan was harboring him in one of its military towns. Qatar harbored Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of 9/11, and Saudi Arabia, which provided most of the hijackers (along with our other regional allies) rushed to defend the terrorists at Gitmo.

Israel has a more realistic assessment of those Arab Muslim "partners" than D.C. does.

Oct 7 was enabled by generations of peace accords overseen by D.C. beginning with the Camp David Accords, that enabled Egypt to recover territory that it had lost in a war without actually offering anything more than the coldest possible peace, and then followed by the Oslo Accords and the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza which turned over the territory to Hamas.

The Camp David Accords, the Oslo Accords and the withdrawal allowed Hamas to not only dominate Gaza, but connected it directly to Egyptian territory and forced Israel to refight the conflicts that it should have left behind in the 50s because there was no longer a security zone. If Israel still controlled the Sinai and Gaza, Oct 7 would have been impossible.

Oct 7 happened because Israel put diplomacy and its hope for peace ahead of its strategic imperatives. After Oct 7, it's finally putting strategic imperatives ahead of diplomatic ones.

Nation-building, currently referred to by politicians as a 'day after plan', is not on the agenda. Israel is not trying to "hold" or "stabilize" territory. Even if such considerations emerge later, it will only be when the situation on the ground has shifted significantly. The current focus is on destroying concentrations of Islamic terrorist forces and their infrastructure. Biden administration critics claim that the collateral damage from the war will allow Hamas to recruit more men, but the Israelis know that what really allows terrorists to recruit is leaving them in power. Allowing Hamas to control Gaza for 17 years is what built it an army.

Israel is out to destroy Hamas as an organized force. The goal of the war is to take out its leaders and reduce the enemy to its smallest possible components.

"If they leave and get out of Gaza, as we believe they need to do, then you're going to have a vacuum, and a vacuum that's likely to be filled by chaos, by anarchy, and ultimately by Hamas again," Secretary of State Blinken complained on CBS News. Chaos and anarchy, while not ideal, are still a better deal than Hamas. Given a choice, Israel would prefer to live next door to Haiti than Iran. Islamic terrorists fighting warring gangs over territory are far more preferable to terrorists' building rockets and missiles.

After Oct 7, Israel is applying a crude realpolitik to the problem. It's insufficient as a solution, but it's a whole lot more pragmatic than the nation building and counterinsurgency rabbit hole that swallowed up a generation of our finest fighting men with nothing to show for it except despair. Israel is trying to limit its casualties while maximizing its results. Our politicians and generals could learn a thing or two from that. The IDF is not being tasked with digging wells, winning hearts and minds or having three cups of tea with the terrorists. Its soldiers are tasked with pushing out and engaging enemy forces to expose their leaders and command structure.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, we used military force to achieve political and diplomatic aims, while Israel is using military force to achieve military aims. What a shockingly sensible notion. Perhaps our politicians and generals ought to consider it next time we get involved in a war. ■

### GUESS WHO Photo Contest

Can you guess who the person is in these photos?

The first person to contact John Wear at 719-495-5998 with the right answer will have their name entered into a contest for a drawing to win a yet un-named mediocre prize.



### Last Issue Winner

Last issue's winner was Terry Wallace who called at 12:53 PM on Friday, July 5... (when the S-Box was still in the mail to most members)... to identify Steve Falk.



If you feel that you have a photo that may stump the readership, please take a photo of it with your smartphone in ambient light and send it on email to [johnwear2@verizon.net](mailto:johnwear2@verizon.net)



## What Members Are Doing

### Ron Kalanick's Beauty



Here is my '68 Mustang where I am promoting VTA at Incline Village 4th of July Parade by Lake Tahoe. If you recall we ran an article about my purchasing this beautiful car when I got home from Vietnam. It is my pride and joy.

### Life is Good



**Ed Hiltz writes:** My wife and I are really enjoying retirement. However, since I have three grown daughters and grandkids, we are fortunate that we stay very active. One of my daughters has a condo oceanfront at the beach and also a vacation home in Florida so we do use them quite often. Actually, I am down the beach in Ocean City, Maryland. Here is my picture. Life is good.

### Gone but Not Forgotten

Bob Peavey with his son and two grandsons at the Rams Stadium 2023



### Mike Giovinazzo's Family

VTA member Mike Giovinazzo's family celebrates his daughter's 50th birthday.



## Looking For

### Doug Scrivner writes:

If you remember Eddie Mannix, A Co, 5th Tanks on Okie and B & C Cos 1st Tanks RVN 1967-1969, I need your help if you have any pictures of Eddie. I found out yesterday Eddie passed away in 2014. I looked for him for years & never hooked up with him. Eddie was a Lt. in his local Sheriff's Dept & passed away suddenly if a heart attack. Yesterday thru the miracle of my oldest daughter & the internet I got in contact with two of his daughters. Here's the problem, somewhere at some time, Eddie lost or did away with Vietnam pictures. While we were both on active duty, he was a good buddy of mine and I know that he had quite a few pictures. The only picture his daughters have was his picture at ITR with the helmet on. I sent them some of the pictures that I had and they seemed to be quite excited. I hope some of you can find some more. I would really appreciate it guys. Please call John Wear 719.495.5998 to reply.

### Please Help Get Me in Contact

Good afternoon. My name is Trinia Greene, and I am trying to reach Sergeant James "Jim" F. Johnson, Serial Number 2265467. He served in the USMC A Co, 3rd Tanks '68 - '69 alongside my dad.

My son, Gavin, is on the path to joining the Army and hopes to become a Ranger. He's been asking me questions about my dad's service, and it's been hard for me to provide him with much information. My dad didn't talk much about his time in Vietnam due to survivor's remorse and PTSD. We lost him in 2015 due to Agent Orange. I believe he coped as best he could by keeping his experiences to himself, trying to keep the nightmares at bay. We are incredibly proud of my dad, and he instilled a patriotic spirit in me, which I have now passed on to my son.

If Mr. Johnson is willing, I would greatly appreciate it if you could pass my contact information on to him. However, if this may cause any emotional distress, please feel free to disregard this request. I understand and respect that everyone copes in their own way.

Sincerely,

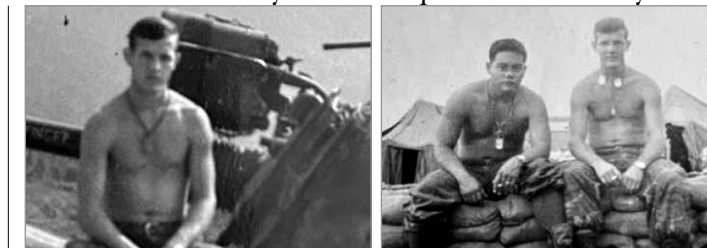
Trinia Martin Greene  
912.602.4902

105 Waters Edge Drive  
Kingsland, GA 31548

My Dad:

Otis Edward Martin Jr. "Marty" 2384268 USMC  
Alpha Co, 3rd Division, 3rd Tanks 68/69  
From Port Neches, TX

**Trinia Writes:** I only have a few pictures. Here they are.



### Identification Wanted



Can anyone identify these three tank crewmen? Garry Hall found the photo on Facebook's "The Nam" page.

The internet claims that they are C Co, 3rd Tanks (no year given) and the VTA website has: "Dog, Rich and Coop" as the identifier. ■

*Editor's Note: It would truly be outstanding if our membership felt compelled to write their own opinion of what they learned from their experience while serving in the United States Marine Corps in Vietnam instead of us having to use a "commercial" story.*

### Not a Great Welcome Home Feeling in 1967

BY BRUCE S BENDER

I was honorably discharged from the USMC in August 1967. I had enlisted in Florida but I went to New York (and received larger separation pay). New York offered me a life of uncertainty—torn between family and friends left behind in Virginia but the jobs and salaries were a lot better. I eventually found a job in the back office of a bank in Manhattan. It was a hostile work environment as they pounced on me after they found out I was a United States Marine. I had lots of arguments and one clown reported me to senior management for being disrespectful. A white haired 60-something executive in an office as big as a lobby in some buildings had me sit down and was nice to me. On his office wall I saw a picture of an airplane with a young guy on a wing. He was a WW2 fighter pilot (Navy) and after he heard my story, he gave me a business card with his home phone written on the back and told me to call anytime. He also promised to speak to my immediate supervisor. There seemed to be a lot of hostility towards all military on returning stateside after Vietnam. Mostly college kids and, sorry to say, lots of malcontents too! Would not trade experience of the four years in the Corps if I had to do it over again. I still got the sometimes attitude that gets me into arguments today—different international atmosphere, different type of enemy, different life style but still willing to intercede.

A fellow who calls himself "Captain Myers" replied: I volunteered for the draft during semester break in 1967. It allowed me to finish my full year of college as I could choose when to report (within 1 year). I was then accepted into the PLC (officers') program and over the next 3 years went from being a popular student-athlete to being hated by my peers. I completed PLC and my degree and I was commissioned in May of 1971. My former friends shunned me and I was happy that they would not serve with me as potential draftees. I was a 2502 primary and a marksmanship training / range officer, Human Relations Program Instructor and Drug and Alcohol Rehab Officer for the troops returning from Vietnam. The civilians hated us and most still do. To this day...don't thank me for what I chose to do. Semper Fi!!!

George Dalton commented: God Bless the servicemen and women who served and are still serving to protect America. The morons who belittled you and hated you should be sent to all those places you went to serve...maybe then they would understand what it takes to serve...Nah, probably not.

Wayne Stafford offered this: Marines are different. We just have to get used to it. It took just under 50 years to figure that out.

And Jack Durant replied: The people most vociferous in their condemnation still think that JFK and his side-kick LBJ were the

greatest presidents EVER. I have long stopped calling it the Vietnam War and now call it the "JFK-LBJ War." As for civil rights, LBJ blocked all civil rights legislation proposed by Eisenhower in the fifties and the negroes (the term for "blacks" at that time) laughed that he said that he would have the "N——'s voting Democrat for two hundred years."

### No Welcome Home!

BY ROGER DALE STEWART

When sent to Vietnam I lacked two months being 18. When I rotated back to the World, I was a man at the age of 20. Having the experience of combat, trusting another with your daily life and having the "power" of life & death in your trigger finger; with all that hostility and meanness inside of you; nothing can "top" that. Being given three choices of duty stations when leaving Nam—one of which was returning Stateside, I had better since. Choosing to go to Pearl Harbor as an M.P. for nine months was a fabulous decision because there I was locked up for 6 out of the 9 months. By the time I returned home, all that "stuff" was able to be tolerated as well as those things still within. If given the choice, I'd join the Corps again in a heartbeat. Three things in life have really helped me to grow up & be a man: The Marines, married life and prison life. Though I do not recommend the last two to anyone. SEMPER FIDELIS BROTHERS" – Stew

Another reader wrote: In your newsletter one person in a comment went to Thailand after the Vietnam War. My best friend is there too. He wound up in Pitaya Beach—(hope it is spelled correct) – He was fed up with bullshit here in the States and there is a big ex-pat community in Thailand. There is also a group of ex-pats in the Philippines. I'm sorry to say that I can feel for those who found it tough to exist here in America. I stayed here like many others and faced ... and still face ... some assholes who are still arm chair quarterbacks as to expounding information – and naturally all wrong, it seems. The world is not what it used to be—and now with ISIS and the nut job in North Korea—a President (Obama) who is a new experience for us—who wants radical changes (good and bad) for us. I have no answers – but I would enlist again in a heartbeat if I was younger and faced with the same decision parameters as I was against in 1963. I am proud of Old Glory and the USA. I still get riled about the wannabees who abuse our country for silly rhetoric. Thank you Sgt Grit for a place to rave and rant about a chance to voice our opinions. We do not always agree—but I enjoy the present and look forward to the future, never forgetting the past.

From the Sgt Grit Newsletter

■

## V. A. News & Updates

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

**JUST A REMINDER:** For many years, a retired US Army officer who lived for a very long time in the Philippine Islands produced a twice monthly emailed newsletter that recapped "All-things-Veterans Administration" which also included many other concerns for veterans. Unfortunately, the good man passed away about a year ago and his publication has ceased being published. As a result, our source for our own magazine's VA NEWS has dried up. We will try to search for another source but unfortunately, we may be seeing an end of that informative and useful section of our quarterly magazine.

### PACT Act Fraud Prevention

Have you recently been contacted by a company aggressively seeking to legally represent you in filing presumptive VA claims authorized by the PACT Act? If so, be wary as the company might be seeking a portion of your VA benefits.

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT Act) represents the biggest expansion of Veteran benefits in history, and many Veterans may be eligible to receive compensation for their service. The PACT Act adds 23 burn pit and toxic exposure-related conditions to VA's list of service presumptions, including hypertension, with the expansion of presumptions related to Agent Orange exposure by including Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American Samoa, and Johnston Atoll as locations for Agent Orange exposure. While this legislation brings great promise to Veterans, it's also a monumental opportunity for fraud. VA has received multiple reports of unaccredited law firms or companies targeting Veterans to offer their services to file claims for presumptive conditions. Unaccredited law firms and companies are reaching out to help for a fee as high as 40% of the Veteran's retroactive payment and 40% of the Veteran's first year of entitlement payments.

VA is committed to help protect Veterans from predatory entities, by educating Veterans, their families, and all partners about the types of activity and tactics being used against them.

To avoid being a victim of these schemes, here are some helpful tips to remember:

- Apply directly to VA. You may submit your application securely online via VA.GOV or in person at any regional office. You may file your claim directly with VA, and VA will help you gather the necessary evidence to support it. There are no costs or hidden fees to apply. Do not agree to pay an unaccredited individual or organization a percentage of your disability compensation payment or retroactive entitlement. If you need help filing a claim, there are accredited representatives to assist you.
- Be cautious of aggressive law firms or companies.

Firms may use frequent communications (phone, text, and media messages) to establish a sense of urgency.

- Be cautious of for-profit companies that use VA's name. They may alter their name to create a false association with VA and establish legitimacy. Examples include a website such as VAclaimsassistance.com that incorporates VA into its name.
- Review all legally binding documents thoroughly. Never sign a blank form someone else will fill out later or give them full discretion to act on your behalf. See the contents before you sign and keep a copy for yourself.
- Be wary of media advertisements regarding legal representation for presumptive VA claims. Companies advertising legal services may be predatory and financially motivated to obtain your VA benefits.
- If a company or individual is projecting misinformation or has questionable business practices regarding VA entitlements, file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at and the Better Business Bureau.
- To report suspected fraudulent activity, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) Hotline ([va.gov](http://va.gov)).
- Veterans and survivors who think they might be eligible should apply for PACT Act benefits right now. Go to [va.gov/PACT](http://va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MYVA411 for more information.

### Hearing Aids Connect with Telehealth

*Fine-tuning with a telehealth visit saves a trip to the clinic*

If you use hearing aids, you know they need to be adjusted as your needs change. Fine-tuning your hearing aid can often be done with an app on a cellphone or smart device. Telehealth is an option for many of your appointments, including some for your hearing. Talk to your health care team and audiologist about how VA Video Connect can help you manage your hearing aids from home.

#### Get help with hearing aids

Many people need hearing aids as they get older. With VA Video Connect, health care providers give real-time hearing feedback. Hearing aid settings

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can be checked and adjusted remotely, taking into consideration your environment’s regular noise level and how often you wear the aids.

### Fixing your devices

Medical equipment can break, and you might need other accessories. Your health care provider can help you figure out what’s wrong. If you need help with your aids, you could use virtual visits to get help such as:

- A demonstration about using hearing aids
- Help with devices and accessory needs, like chargers or connectivity issues
- Learning how to clean your hearing aid or replace parts like a wax guard

### When to go to the clinic

For hearing tests and diagnostics, you’ll need to go to the medical center or a community-based outpatient clinic for testing. If you need a hearing test, make an appointment with your provider as soon as you can.

“We are seeing Veteran patients become more tech savvy, using phones for VA Video Connect, and remotely connecting to their hearing aids through virtual tools,” says Dr. Julie Brumbaugh, chief of Audiology and Speech Pathology Services at the Columbus VA.

If you’d like to try VA Video Connect for your next hearing visit, you can ask your health care team through a Secure Message.

### Using VA Video Connect

VA’s Office of Connected Care recently released updated versions of the VA Video Connect mobile app for Apple and Android. Update your VA Video Connect app for the best video experience.

Android users can find VA Video Connect on the Google Play Store. Apple iOS users can do the same on the Apple App Store. Learn more on the VA mobile app page.

If you have questions about VA Video Connect or need help, you can visit the Office of Connected Care Help Desk Portal or call the 24/7 Help Desk at 866.651.3180.

## How to Spot Deep Vein Thrombosis

*Learn the risks and warning signs*

Many things can cause pain or swelling in your leg. In fact, deep vein thrombosis can have the same symptoms as many other health problems. While it can happen to anyone, it’s more common among people over the age of 60.

You may be able to avoid serious problems by taking steps to reduce your chances of a blood clot forming in your veins.

### Understanding DVT

When a clot forms in a vein, deep in the body, it’s called deep vein thrombosis, or DVT. It typically occurs in the lower leg or thigh but can develop in your arm or another part of the body. If that clot breaks loose and travels to the lung, it’s called a pulmonary embolus, or PE. This can cut off the flow of blood in the lungs. A

blood clot in the lungs is a medical emergency and may cause death.

### How DVT develops

Blood clots develop when blood thickens and clumps together. The deep veins of the legs carry blood from the legs to the heart. When leg muscles contract and relax, blood is squeezed through the veins back to the heart. One-way valves inside the veins help keep the blood moving in the right direction. When blood moves too slowly or not at all, it can pool in the veins. This makes a clot more likely to form.

Blood clots are also more likely to form when there is inflammation or trauma to the vessel. Some people develop blood clots at a higher rate than others. This tendency is called a hypercoagulable state and may be inherited genetically. Other times it can result from medical conditions, like cancer.

### Risk factors

Anyone can develop a blood clot. Risk can occur if you’ve been traveling for a long time, been in the hospital and unable to move, or were in an accident. If you’ve experienced the following, you may also be at higher risk:

- Personal or family history of a blood-clotting disorder
- Having blood clots in the past
- Recent surgery
- Cancer and certain cancer treatments
- Smoking
- Sedentary lifestyle

However, anyone can develop a blood clot, even without any risk factors. Therefore, it’s important to know the signs and symptoms.

### Know the signs

Most people with a deep vein thrombosis will develop pain and swelling in their leg. The leg may be swollen, red, or tender to the touch. Occasionally a rope-like cord can be felt under the skin. Your leg may ache when you walk and feel better if it’s elevated.

If a deep vein thrombosis dislodges from the vein and becomes a pulmonary embolus, it can cause noticeable symptoms. You may feel lightheaded or faint, have shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or an elevated heart rate. A pulmonary embolism is a life-threatening condition and requires immediate treatment. If you’re having trouble breathing or chest pain, call 911 right away.

All blood clots should be treated to prevent long term complications, such as persistent pain and swelling in the leg, and to reduce the risk for PE.

### Diagnosing DVT

Deep vein thrombosis is easy to diagnose. Typically, a doctor will order an ultrasound of your leg to look for blood clots. The ultrasound uses sound waves to look inside your body. It’s painless and takes less than

15 minutes to complete. If you have a My HealtheVet Premium Account, you can view, download, and share your ultrasound images in the VA Medical Images and Reports section of your Blue Button Report.

If you have signs or symptoms suggestive of pulmonary embolism, additional testing may be required.

### Treatment for DVT

Deep vein thrombosis is treated using blood thinners. There are many types of blood thinners. Your doctor will choose the blood thinner that is best for you. Most patients only need to take blood thinners for a short amount of time, such as a few months. However, if your doctor determines you’re at high risk of developing another clot, they may recommend a longer treatment plan.

Contact your doctor using Secure Messaging (sign in required) to discuss hospital and at-home medication treatments. Your doctor may run some blood tests to check for clotting. My HealtheVet’s self-entered Vitals + Readings section makes it easy to track how you’re doing.

## VA to add male breast cancer, two other conditions to presumptive list

*By Leo Shane III—Jun 14, 2024, 07:00 AM*

Veterans Affairs officials will add male breast cancer, urethral cancer and cancer of the paraurethral glands to the list of illnesses presumed connected to military service in conflicts since 1990, speeding up disability benefits for individuals suffering from the conditions. The move is the latest in a series of cancers and respiratory conditions added to the department’s list of presumptive illnesses in recent years as part of the PACT Act, sweeping veterans legislation passed two summers ago which has impacted millions of veterans nationwide.

In a statement, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the decision to add the three illnesses are part of a broader push to “provide health care and benefits to as many toxic-exposed veterans as possible” and as fast as possible. Department officials did not say how many individuals may benefit from the new announcement.

## Know before you go: Manage your VA care while traveling

*Five tips to ensure your health care needs are met while you’re away—April 24, 2024*

For many, summer means more travel. And travel planning can feel overwhelming, especially if you have complex health needs. My HealtheVet, VA’s online patient portal, makes it easy to manage your health care while traveling. Whether you’re traveling in-state or out of the country, you can rest assured knowing you’ll have access to VA care regardless of where you are. Follow these five tips to ensure your health care needs are met while you’re away from home.

### 1. Notify your VA care team

VA highly recommends that you notify your health care

team four to six weeks before travel, particularly if you need medication refills or regular medical appointments. Send a secure message through My HealtheVet to notify your provider of your upcoming travel.

### 2. Ensure you have up-to-date documentation

It’s important to have up-to-date copies of all important documents, whenever you travel. Use My HealtheVet to print a health insurance wallet ID card to keep on hand while you travel.

### 3. Update your vaccines

Staying up to date on vaccines is important regardless of whether you’re planning to travel. Can’t remember when you were last vaccinated? Don’t fret. My HealtheVet makes it easy to view and download your vaccination history with VA Health Summary. If you see that you’re due for a vaccination—or if you’re traveling to an area that poses a risk for tropical disease—schedule an appointment with your VA provider as soon as possible.

### 4. Manage your prescriptions

Be sure to pack enough medication refills to last your entire trip and extra in case of flight delays. Always pack your medications in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is lost or delayed. Discuss your current medications and the plan for refills with your VA care team. My HealtheVet’s prescription tool makes it easier to manage your medication online.

### 5. Familiarize yourself with VA’s telehealth options

If you have a diagnosis that requires routine appointments, telehealth can help you keep up with those appointments while traveling domestically. Through telehealth technologies and programs, VA works to connect Veterans and VA providers regardless of distance. Speak with your VA care team about whether telehealth is a right fit for your care, then schedule your virtual appointments through the online scheduling feature on My HealtheVet.

## Everything you need to know about VA urgent care services

*This outreach kit can help Veterans get the health care benefits they’ve earned—March 5, 2024*

Many Veterans may not be aware of life-changing benefits they’ve earned—and deserve—through military service. This outreach kit about VA urgent care services includes flyers, social media graphics and suggested corresponding language, radio public service announcements (PSA), newsletter content and a sample blog post to help you spread the word. Please share this information broadly with your networks, family and friends.

Veterans enrolled in VA health care can use over 4,000 urgent care locations to treat non-life-threatening conditions.

VA covers urgent care services at VA medical centers and in network community providers,

• If you’re a Veteran enrolled in VA health care and >>

- You received care at a VA or in-network provider sometime in the past 24 months. Check your eligibility by contacting your local VA health facility. Or call 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800.698.2411) (TTY: 711). Select option 1, then option 3, then option 1. Family members can't use your urgent care benefit.
- What do to when you arrive at a community urgent care provider:
  - ☆ Confirm that the provider is in VA's network. Check for a posted sign or ask a staff member. If you go to an out-of-network urgent care provider, you may have to pay for the full cost of care. By law, VA can't pay claims for out-of-network providers.
  - ☆ Show your VA Health Identification Card and fill out the provider's intake form.
  - ☆ Tell the provider you want to use your VA urgent care benefit. Show the provider your urgent care assistance card if requested. The provider will call the phone number for your region listed on the card to check your eligibility.
- Find a VA-approved urgent care provider and pharmacy at [VA.gov/find-locations](http://VA.gov/find-locations) before seeking care.

Providers can change over time. Before seeking care, print this VA Billing Information Guide for you, your provider, and your pharmacy.

- If you need help using your VA urgent care benefit, call:
  - ☆ 1- 888.901.6609 if the provider is in Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., or any of these states: AL, AR, CT, DE, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, VA, VI, VT, WI, or WV.
  - ☆ 1-866.620.2071 if the provider is in any of these states: AK, AS, AZ, CA, CO, GU, HI, ID, MP, MT, NM, NV, OR, TX, UT, WA, or WY.

When to choose VA urgent care: VA and in-network urgent care providers can meet many of your health care needs. They may be able to provide some diagnostic tests, like certain blood and urine tests. You can often get care for minor illnesses or injuries much faster than in an emergency room. When to call 911 or go to the emergency room: If you need emergency care, you don't need a VA referral or approval to go to a non-VA emergency room in your community. ■

## Photo from Vietnam



## Short Stories

*Editor's Note: This story first appeared in our magazine in January 2014. We want to encourage all of our members to write their stories (good, bad, funny or not-so-funny) ... so that not only our survivors know & understand what we did in-country ... but so we will have the below healing process work on us...*

### How Writing Heals Wounds — Of Both the Mind and Body

BY MAIA SZALAVITZ—JULY 13, 2013

Talking about difficult experiences can be a way of easing the emotional pain of trauma, but the latest research shows that expressing emotions in words can also speed physical healing. The study is the latest delving into the mind-body connection to suggest that expressing emotions about a traumatic experience in a coherent way may be important to not just mental but physical health



as well. It showed that the calming effect of writing can cut physical wound healing time nearly in half.

Researchers led by Elizabeth Broadbent, a senior lecturer in health psychology at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, studied 49 healthy senior citizens, aged 64 to 97. For three days, half were assigned to write for 20 minutes a day about the most traumatic event they had experienced, and were encouraged to be as open and candid as they could about exactly what they felt and thought at the time. If possible, they were also asked to share thoughts or emotions that they had never expressed to others about what they had undergone.

The other participants wrote for the same duration about their plans for the next day, avoiding mentioning their feelings, opinions or beliefs. Two weeks after the first day of writing, researchers took small skin biopsies, under local anesthesia, that left a wound on the arms of all participants. The skin tissue was used for another study.

A week later, Broadbent and her colleagues started photographing the wounds every three to five days until they were completely healed. Eleven

days after the biopsy, 76% of the group that had written about trauma had fully healed while only 42% of the other group had.

"This is the first study to show that writing about personally distressing events can speed wound healing in [an older] population that is at risk of poor healing," says Broadbent.

It's not the first, however, to reveal the intriguing connection between state-of-mind and physical health. In previous studies, this type of emotionally expressive writing, as opposed to writing on neutral topics, reduced viral load in HIV-positive patients and increased their levels of virus-fighting immune cells. The practice also increased the effectiveness of the hepatitis B vaccination by increasing antibody levels generated by the vaccine and speeding wound healing in young men.

But in terms of psychological health, the results are more conflicting. A recent study found that writing about disturbing combat experiences may improve marital satisfaction among soldiers returning home from war zones while another paper in which patients with post-traumatic stress dis-

order (PTSD) wrote about their difficult experiences did not find that the practice reduced symptoms. Putting emotions down in words did, however, improve mood and reduce levels of stress hormone in these patients.

One way that writing about distressing events could give the body a boost is by promoting sleep. "We found that people who got at least seven hours of sleep most nights had faster

healing than those who got less sleep," Broadbent says. Sleep deprivation can lower levels of growth hormone, which is important for repairing injuries. And writing about their traumatic experiences also seemed to help participants to actually get more sleep. "Many people who have written about their negative experiences report that it allowed them to gain greater insight into what happened and to put the event into perspective," says Koschwanez, "This might reduce the extent to which the event troubles them and possibly improve their sleep."

The writing may also help the body by reducing stress; less anxiety means fewer stress hormones, which can interfere with chemicals needed for wound healing. While Broadbent's study did not find such a link, it's possible the researchers were not evaluating the right anxiety measures. "It might be that our perceived stress questionnaire was not assessing the right type or duration of stress," says Heidi Koschwanez, a study co-author and postdoctoral fellow at the University of Auckland.

It's also possible that emotional writing is not helpful for >>

everyone. In one study published last month, when people who typically are stoic wrote about their worst trauma, their anxiety actually increased. Those who were accustomed to being emotionally open, however, showed a drop in worry measures. That suggests that different people may have different ways of coping with traumatic events,

and that writing may be an effective outlet for those who are normally more expressive, while pushing people to express feelings when they are not inclined to do so can actually increase risk for PTSD.

For those who do experience relief from expressing their emotions, however, writing may become an import-

ant part of helping them to recover—both in mind and in body—from difficult situations.

“If you would not be forgotten,  
As soon as you are dead and rotten,  
Either write things worth reading,  
Or do things worth writing.”

Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard’s Almanack

## Cua Viet River Monsoon Adventure

BY JOHN WEAR

It’s September ’68 and the monsoon (rainy) season is upon us. One particularly rainy day two of our gun tanks and my flamer are assigned to escort the “tanker-grunts” on a “mini” sweep down the dirt road that passes along our side of the river.

As an explanation, our brand-new company 1st Sgt is a 15+ year grunt SNCO who joined our tank company to serve as out Top Sergeant. Since we have no regular Marine grunts at our new company HQ that is east of Dong Ha and north of the Cua Viet River, the Top has assigned one of the tank platoons to serve as our grunt security.

Our tanks and the tanker-grunts are to sweep to the west and then north along the outside of the company perimeter looking for enemy activity such as bunker building or trench digging and/or other attack preparation. We seemed to be working well together...as smoothly as I have ever worked with grunts. Perhaps since these tanker-grunts know the capabilities and limitations of our tanks, they know how to deploy us effectively. Thankfully by the end of the sweep we came up empty handed as the sun is setting. We end up at our hooch and choke down yet another evening meal of luke warm C-rations.

Three days later as evening is approaching at the end of another mini-

sweep operation, the rain storms are so severe that they cause flooding between the Company HQ in the abandoned village of Mai Xi Tai and our temporary position. There is nowhere for us go. While waiting for the flood to subside we have to spend two apprehensive days and sleepless nights in the same location. As we sit on our tanks watching & waiting, our position is overlooking an old gook cemetery which is about 200 yards in front of our tanks. All during the first night we see many shapes that appear to be enemy soldiers walking through in the cemetery. We know that we are a large enough force to attack and/or ambush them but to conserve our own ammo we plan to call in Marine arty or mortars. The second time that the enemy soldiers appear, we call the “ditty-dot” (radio operator) at our company HQ who in turn calls in mortars from a nearby Marine CAP unit (Combine Action Platoon) that is assigned to an active occupied South Vietnamese village along the ocean north of Cua Viet.

I key the intercom and ask my driver... “Hey Steffo, do you see those gooks in the grave yard?”

Steffo is peering through a Starlight scope from the driver’s hatch, “Yup, those are definitely gook soldiers.”

I get on the radio and call in, “Charlie Six, this is Foxtrot Three One, over.”

“Fox Three One, this is Charlie Six, over.”

“Charlie Six, we’ve got gooks in the open in front of our pos (position). Request six-zero or eight-one Mike Mikes or other arty fire most Ricky-tick, over.”

“Fox Three One, wait one, over.”

It seems like a century of waiting but in due course, Charlie Six comes back... “Fox Three One, this is Charlie Six. We have a Charlie Alfa Papa unit down river from you with a six-zero Mike-Mike that will begin to fire Hotel & India fire for you. Get on the Charlie Alfa Papa freq. that we gave you before you left our pos yesterday. Do you copy? Over”

“Charlie Six...I copy and Wilco. Thank you. Out”

I contact the CAP mortar battery and they pepper the area around the cemetery. The first round hit the side of one of the grave mounts and the gooks high tailed it out of the area. That is the last of them for the time being.

The next day the monsoon rains continue and the flooding is actually getting worse. Thankfully that same day we are “rescued” from our isolation by three Navy Mike boats that pull up behind our small enclave on the river bank. We load up the three tanks, all of the tanker grunts and head back to our company at Mai Xi Tai.

## Mess Duty

BY TERRY WALLACE

To say that I am handy around the kitchen would be a lie. I can cook some

things following the recipes, cut up what needs to be cut up, and follow

the cooking directions EXACTLY. That done, I serve the food proudly

with some expectation of approval. After all, it always appears just like it looks in the recipe photo. If it doesn’t taste good, it’s the recipe’s fault. When this happens, I curse and ceremoniously tear up the recipe and throw it away.

This is not to say I haven’t cooked some excellent meals. Sometimes the stars shine brightly for me, as in the case of my yet unpublished chili. While each batch is virtually identical, this go-to meal is truly tasty to both sweet and hot palates. Quality control is the key. Each time I cook it I follow the same recipe using the exact same ingredients. This method features an assembly line of chopped and prepared ingredients staged in the order in which they go into the pot. Timing the ingredients and steps according to the recipe usually makes it ready within the stated preparation time unless I miss a step. When this happens, the stars go out.

My disciplined culinary approach is undoubtedly influenced by the Marine Corps. Everything a Marine does is organized (squared away). They are taught the right way to do everything. Nothing else is acceptable.

Mess duty is hated by most Marines unable to dodge being pulled smack dab into the mess halls while in the middle of an eight-week tour in Marine Corps Boot Camp, or later during training. Assigned to the mess halls, the recruits

are given white clothes and caps and work from before dawn until late evening. The jobs are rotated so that each recruit could learn every aspect of Marine Mess, which is indeed a mess.

We worked in serving lines, prep areas like the salad room, spud locker, and dirty jobs like scullery and pot room, where dirty plates and silverware were thrown at us. Regular Marine cooks supervised the operations, where there were only the right ways to do things.

The twelve-hour daily shifts were punctuated by serving in actual chow lines, where we salty recruit servers could lord our superiority over the newer recruits by hazing them in the same manner as the Drill Instructors would. One hand on the utensil, the other behind the back, we would dole out tasteless but nutritious lumps of food to the ravenous recruits, along with sneers and rude comments to the recruits when no Drill Instructors were looking. Hazing is no doubt a tradition in Parris Island, and mess duty gives an easy opportunity for the lowly.

There were breaks too. When no regular cooks were around, the pot room out back was a good place to hang out and grab a smoke if one could be procured. The large steel pots were steamed by hand in there, and the steam made everything invisible. The salad room was also good duty, since

most of the preparation such as potato peeling was done by the recruits with little supervision. Once, for a laugh, someone threw a pear and an apple into the potato peeling machine. An unsuspecting recruit might have found some surprises in the mashed potatoes, although a snickering recruit on mess duty would have never admitted it.

Mess duty popped up in almost every duty station after boot camp. A week here, a few days there, Privates and Lance Corporals were singled out and forced into feeding and cleaning up after the hungry Marines. Some of the unlucky ones pulled mess duty even when deployed in the war, provided there was a lull in the fighting and a mess tent nearby. On tanks we fed the grunts by delivering C Rations, nasty cans of 20-year-old congealed and tasteless slop guaranteed to meet minimum nutrition requirements.

My takeaways from mess duties are these:

1. Apples don’t go into potato peeling machines with the potatoes.
2. A pot might shine, but is never perfectly clean.
3. Stay away from scullery unless you like dishes thrown at you.
4. Never volunteer.
5. Cooks’ hours are Dawn till dark.
6. Stay away from mess duty whenever possible.
7. Repeat number 6.

## The Bunker

BY KEN ZEBAL

As a Corporal in the 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company 3rd Tanks we were in direct support of 2/3 which was located at LZ hawk. LZ Hawk lay astride Highway 9. We were several clicks north of Bridge 34 at the big horseshoe bend on Highway 9 and only a few clicks south of bridge 36 near the split where Highway 9 went west to Khe Sanh village and Lang Vei and the dirt road went north past the plantation



and Khe Sanh Combat Base. It could, perhaps, be best described as a target rich environment on a two-way range.

Generally speaking, 2/3’s location astride LZ Hawk was busy and tense due to the close proximity to enemy troops. As a rule, we only took incoming from time to time. Our incoming was nothing at all when compared to >>

the constant pounding of rockets, arty and mortars at Khe Sanh just a couple of clicks north. However, on one particular occasion we did have some incoming 152 arty rounds from the NVA strong hold at Co Roc across the border in Laos. So, like everyone else I leaped into the first available bunker which seemed unusually low and which also had a very small opening to boot. What immediately struck me was that no one else was in the bunker when I entered and no one came in after me. It was a really strange and surreal being alone in a bunker. It was pitch black, no one smoking or talking. It was just me waiting for the incoming to lift. After the incoming finally stopped, I noticed some itty-bitty red eyes in the darkness. I figured it was just a rat since we had an abundant rat population at the time. Nothing quite compares with the thrill

of catching some z's in a bunker between watches only to be awakened by a big fat rat running across your chest.

Before long some guys started sounding the all clear and I crawled out of the bunker. However, once I got out there was a small group of maybe 4-6 Marines standing around looking straight at me which caused me to wonder what was up. After I finally figured out that they weren't staring at me, I joined the group and we all looked at that small and very low bunker entrance. Lo' and behold after a few more minutes a monitor lizard waddled out. That fat critter was about 5 feet long, had a huge tail and looked like a prehistoric creature. I was beginning



to feel a little unsettled when some Corpsman came up to me and said it's a good thing it didn't bite me – which pretty much echoed my thoughts. You guys surely remember when there's in-

coming you don't wait around to pick and choose where you're going and one never knows who else is going to be there with you.

## Keeping the Bar High

BY RICK LEWIS

The current mess with the US Secret Service just goes to show what happens when an elite organization lowers its standards to meet some “woke” “inclusive” requirements. When I was on the drill field and nearing the end of my tour, it was not unusual for quite a few different government agencies to show up to recruit drill instructor for Secret Service, FBI, Treasury, California Highway Patrol ... and a few Marines got very special interviews with the CIA. Our boot camp series Gunny hated it since it took a lot of good Marines with combat experience from the Corps. In '72 – '74 you would be hard pressed to find a Marine on the field that was not a Vietnam vet. In my series I was the odd MOS 1811, all the other drill instructor were 0311's with a lot of Purple Hearts.

In my last year as a DI, I too was called in to interview with a bunch of

different government agencies. I was 6 feet tall, did not wear glasses, fired expert with the rifle and pistol and was a two tour Vietnam combat vet. However, for the FBI and Secret Service you needed to be single and agree not to get married for two years, just like going on Marine Security Guard duty in the Corps you can't be married. But the Treasury interview was very different. I asked what kind of job would I do? They replied, “When we serve papers or go to seize property, the agents need security force with them. That's what you would be doing. And more likely than not you'd be heading up your own team. The job required a lot of travel, and time away from home.” Joy and I had just had our first born and I didn't want to travel, so I passed.

At the end of my drill field tour, I had orders to 1st Tanks at Camp Pendleton. I was promoted to Gunny

the next year and headed over to 3rd Tanks on “the Rock” (Okinawa) for a year. But looking back at those that did leave the Corps to fill those government positions, they all met the very high standards. Recently you look at how the Secret Service rushed up on the stage to protect Mr. Trump. The one female agent was too short so she could not protect the upper part of Mr. Trump's body so the male agent had to put his arm up to cover Trump head from the shooters view. Then there was the large female agent by the car who could not holster her handgun because she could not control her adrenaline, you could see how she was shaking, totally out of control. The job of protecting the Leader of the Free World should not have the bar bent on requirements, whether male or female the bar should be the highest of all.

## The Sacrificial Lamb

BY LEE DILL

This story takes place in June, 1969. I had been on a number of dates during

the month I was home on leave. Nothing serious, just some people I never

saw again. This one girl lived in Glen Burnie and I had taken her out, maybe

three times. She called me and asked me to come to her house for dinner on my last night at home. I had no plans for the early evening, so I said, “Okay.” I arrived at 5 o'clock and we had the house to ourselves since her mother had already disappeared.

I walked in and sat down. She comes over explained to me what her mother said to her before she left... It was basically that I was going back overseas and I would play on her sympathy. In other words, I would try to get laid. So, I go from what's for dinner to this? Right now, I'm fascinated, I never expected this and I don't have time for this.

She explained more and said that

she didn't care what her mother thought. She said she would be willing to sacrifice herself in order to send me overseas happy. I think at this time I figured out that this was maybe the fourth or fifth sacrifice she was willing to make. And that I was not special, but apparently it was my turn and actually I was here now...

The shit really hit the fan when I said, “No thanks,” and that I'll be going. I told her that I had to say goodbye to the family, I really didn't have the time. Thank God that I didn't say that I don't have the interest. I think she would have exploded!

I actually think it was a set up. I

think this girl and her mother may have thought she was pregnant and they wanted someone to pin it on who better than stupid me – see ya in 6 months! By dumb luck and a tight schedule, I escaped,

I was home by six, Mom had dinner ready and I spent the evening playing with Keith, Paula and Mark, talking with Mom and Dad., I explained to them this tour would not be so bad I had experience now and I knew what I was doing and not to worry. I don't think they believed those lies but pretended they did... My second tour was far more exciting, than my first tour.

## In my Kitchen, Thinking of Combat Days

BY BRUCE COLE MORTON

In my kitchen, thinking of Combat Days

In some strange way,  
From time to time,  
I long for that deadly simplicity.  
Leaving all detritus\* behind,  
Carrying only essentials,  
Walking very carefully through chaos.  
One goal. Here. Now.  
Every sense focused.  
Nothing else important. Only my team.  
Competent. Capable. Focused.  
Alive. Really alive!  
Alive in the very present moment.  
Very simple:  
Something bothers you . . .  
Blow it away

\*Detritus: shreds and fragments, shrapnel and bones, broken weapons, empty cartridges, blood trails, a torn sandal.

## The Old Sarge

SUBMITTED BY GARY MCDANIAL

I don't run into the Old Sarge much anymore. Oh, on occasion I do see (or hear) him at the farm store. He is usually leaving as I am walking in the door. With a stern look, I can usually tell he is not up to talking, so I just say “Hey, Top” and move on. Those who have known him in the past are quick to tell me story after story. Legends, perhaps.

They say the Old Guy was a young

corporal back in the day and had charge of a new bunch destined for WESPAC. On this particular day, a hike up a rather large hill in the Los Pulges area of Camp Pendleton was on the schedule. (Editor's Note: The grunts called that hill, “Mount Mother F\*cker”). Knowing that there are always a few who do not want to make the walk, he asked if there was anyone who had any problems and wanted to

see the Marine Corps chaplain. Two stepped forward. The corporal dismissed the troops, took the two aside, listened to their stories, pointed to the boot on his right and said: “This is the Marine Corps chaplain, and it is going to be up your rear if you ever try to pull that again.”

Man of few words, he is. Probably always been that way. He goes back to the days when Marines would >>

insult their buddies by saying “Ah, your old lady is a First Sergeant.” Back to the days when the company gunny would say “Only drunken swabbees have tattoos, don’t show up with one while you are in my company.”

I miss those days. I look around, call, and search the internet for those that I knew when stationed with Force Troops at LeJeune.

Can’t find them. Spent time with Headquarters Company, Force Troops

and no one can be found. Same with my old Parris Island Platoon (257). The DI’s....long gone, for sure. Yep, most things I knew “back in the day” are gone! Seventy-five bunk squad bays are gone. Free movies with ten-cent popcorn and five-cent cokes are gone. Lineup for Liberty Cards at 1700 are gone. Thirty-day Mess Duty, probably gone. Paydays, when we were paid in cash and coin are gone.

The Old Sarge was reminiscing

## When Hope Is Lost

THE LORD DELIGHTS IN SHOWING HIMSELF MIGHTY IN HOPELESS SITUATIONS ON OUR BEHALF.

BY ROGER HELLE

As our vans rolled down the rugged highway in Vietnam, the sun shone brightly, and the temperature hovered around 100 degrees. Vietnam has two seasons: hot and wet! This was my 14th trip since first returning after the war in 1989. Once again, my family was with me, but this time they were going to visit the Montagnard tribes we had been working with since first returning.

We were traveling down Highway 9, heading toward the Laotian border. The villages around Khe Sahn, the scene of fierce fighting during the Tet Offensive, were close. This entire area of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) had seen heavy fighting from 1966 until the end of the war in 1975. The Montagnard tribes had recently begun moving back to their tribal lands.

We pulled off the highway and drove as far as we could on the rutted dirt road. Then we got out to walk the rest of the way to the villages. We stopped in Dong Ha, where we picked up our “local guide,” who we all knew was a member of the secret police. They always went with us when we traveled outside the bigger cities, suspicious of what we might be doing. As we drove along, the not-so-secret policeman kept softly speaking to me, saying: “I saw a miracle. I saw a miracle!” I smiled politely, having no idea what he was talking about.

As we approached the villages, Jim,

a team leader who had been there six months earlier, was telling a sad story that happened too often in post-war Vietnam. The team arrived to find the villagers in a panic. The village chief led the team to a home built on stilts. There, they found a critically injured man lying on a mat. He was the chief’s brother-in-law and had been hoeing a garden the day before when he hit a grenade buried in the ground. The explosion left him clinging to life.

Knowing we were a Christian group; the chief asked the team to pray for him. They gathered around the dying man and prayed for healing. They had all felt the man was going to die, as no medical facilities were close by. As we entered the village, pandemonium broke out, and a crowd quickly gathered around. Soon, the village chief arrived, shouting at people.

After a few minutes, the crowd around us parted, and a young man came standing by the chief. Jim turned to me and said, “That’s him!”

“Who?” I asked. Jim replied, “That’s the brother-in-law!” He stood with a huge, beaming smile on his face, dressed in shorts and a T-shirt. There was not a scar on his body. As a veteran whose body is covered with scars from a grenade, my mouth dropped in amazement.

To the team, this man’s situation was hopeless. But to God, it was just another opportunity to show Himself

about the “Old Days” some time back. A young lady overheard and said “Thank you for your service.” Old Sarge did not miss a beat. He replied: “Don’t thank me for my service, I learned to kill people for \$78.00 a month! You can’t get training for that price anymore.”

Yep, man of few words....and a lot of truth there!

faithful. Now I understood the policeman’s whispered words. He had witnessed a miracle by the Hand of God. Hundreds of villagers came to Christ after witnessing this miracle of God’s healing power.

Maybe you’re facing a hopeless situation in your life. Or maybe you look at our country and feel it’s hopeless because the forces of evil seem to be winning, and you have no hope. But God delights in showing Himself mighty in hopeless situations on our behalf. Don’t give up! Trust Him for your victory, for our nation. Something to pray about! Semper Fidelis

The author, Roger Helle was born October 2, 1947 in Toledo Ohio. Raised in a dysfunctional family, he and his twin brother, Ron, joined the Marine Corps in 1965 right after high school. He served as an infantryman in Vietnam, a Drill Instructor and a CID (Criminal Investigation Division) Investigator while in the Marines. Roger did three tours of duty in Vietnam where he was wounded on three different occasions. On his last tour, however, he was critically wounded. While lying in the hospital he heard the doctor tell his twin brother he was going to die and there was nothing else they could do.

## The Unexpected Finale for the Legendary Abrams Tank

BY RICHARD SACHEK—SEPT. 13, 2023

Last week, the U.S. Army announced that its cancelling plans to update its existing M1 Abrams tank in favor of developing an all-new battle tank called the M1E3 Abrams. The decision not to move forward with upgrading the classic M1 Abrams was based on observations made during Ukraine’s war with neighboring Russia. In particular, the Army is concerned that the existing Abrams is too heavy, fuel thirsty, and vulnerable to modern enemy weapons.

Currently, Ukrainian troops are utilizing Germany’s Leopard 2 tank, a machine that’s considered superior to the Abrams in some circles, and its performance thus far has been disappointing. Despite initial optimism that the arrival of the Leopard 2 tanks might be a great asset to Ukraine, Russian troops have already destroyed 15 of them, by some outlets’ accounting.

Since the new M1E3 Abrams is not expected to be operational until the early part of the 2030s, the U.S. is following through with plans to send 31 of the M1A1 Abrams tanks to Ukrainian troops anyway, in spite of the older tank’s potential shortcomings. The first batch of six to eight U.S. supplied tanks is expected to be deployed into battle this month.

Designed by Chrysler Defense, and named after Vietnam War-era General Creighton Abrams, the M1 has served as the main battle tank for U.S. military since the early 1980s. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the



M1 Abrams is its propulsion system: a 1,500-horsepower gas turbine engine. According to engine manufacturer Honeywell, the turbine is optimized to run on jet fuel, but can also perform sufficiently well using diesel, gasoline, or marine diesel fuel.

Although the Abrams’ unconventional turbine has a reputation for speed, reliability, and quiet operation, it’s also extremely fuel thirsty. That could be a liability in Ukraine, where the superior Department of Defense logistics that typically support the tanks are absent. How fuel thirsty is it? Try 0.6 miles traveled per gallon of fuel, or 10 gallons per hour burned when idling motionless.

In the protection department, the M1 Abrams lacks native reactive armor which — as the name implies — is designed to react with incoming weapons (typically exploding outward) to

reduce damage to the vehicle it’s protecting. Although sanctioned reactive armor upgrades are available for the Abrams, Ukrainian troops may take a more grass roots approach and kit the tanks with additional armor scavenged from damaged Russian tanks — an approach that’s already being utilized on the German Leopard 2 tanks.

In any case, retrofit reactive armor increases weight, which will further decrease fuel economy and mobility, especially in muddy conditions. Besides reduced weight, increased technology, and integrated reactive armor, the replacement M1E3 Abrams is also exploring an efficient hybrid conventional-electric propulsion system which would facilitate nearly silent, all-electric operation when necessary. Until then, the venerable M1 Abrams will soldier on.

## A Ukrainian tank crew says the Abrams is still being used on the front lines, but isn’t finding ‘tank-on-tank’ battles where it has the edge

BY MATTHEW LOH—WED, MAY 8, 2024

• A Ukrainian tank crew told state media they’re still using the Abrams tank on the front lines.

• The report comes after the Pentagon said Ukraine had pulled back its

Abrams tanks over concerns of drone attacks.

• A Ukrainian Abrams commander told Army TV that the tanks weren’t withdrawn but are used situationally.

A Ukrainian tank crew says the US-supplied Abrams is still viable on the front lines, but the tank-on-tank battles where it excels have been few and far between. Pentagon of >>



officials in late April told the Associated Press that Ukraine was pulling back its Abrams tanks from the heaviest areas of fighting because Russian drones were making them more difficult to defend. But a Ukrainian state media report is now pushing back on the assessment, citing the crew's commander saying that Kyiv hadn't fully withdrawn the heavy-duty armor.



praise for the American battle tank, a much-desired ground asset for Kyiv, with a gunman named Koka and a driver named Alexey complimenting its maneuverability and internal systems. The Abrams is touted as an effective tool against Soviet armor, with a winning track record against Russian-made vehicles, but has also faced challenges in Ukraine.

"It all depends on the situation. You see, we don't fight in a way that it's purely tank-on-tank," said the man, identified as Dmytro of the 47th Separate Mechanized Brigade, told Ukrainian military news outlet Army TV. The outlet is run by Ukraine's Defense Ministry. "If it was tank-on-tank, there would be no questions. The T-72 wouldn't even be standing next to it," Dmytro said.

Dmytro added battlefield circumstances have become "very difficult" due to Russia's advantage on the ground with personnel and equipment. "So we have to adjust our actions. These tanks are designed primarily for direct contact. Go out and destroy the opponent's vehicles," Dmytro added.

Army TV on Tuesday uploaded a video of Dmytro and his crew. It

was titled and captioned in English, standing out from the YouTube channel's usual coverage in Ukrainian. "WHERE IS UKRAINIAN ABRAMS: how the legendary American tank fights at the front," its title reads. Clips in the video showed the tank crew operating an Abrams M1A1 at an undisclosed location.

Dmytro said his team had, in the last few days, deployed their Abrams to take out Russian infantry and equipment, including a T-62 tank that had been disabled by an exploding drone. It's not immediately clear when the video was filmed. The Pentagon's press office did not immediately respond to a request for comment sent outside regular business hours by Business Insider.

Army TV's video was lavish with

In late April, one anonymous defense official told the AP that Ukraine was not deploying the Abrams in combined arms warfare, though its crews had been trained for such scenarios. At least five Abrams tanks have been reported lost in combat, with another three damaged.

The US promised in January 2023 to deliver 31 Abrams tanks to Ukraine, which received its first batch in September that year as part of the initial rounds of aid provided by the Biden administration. A renewed tranche of supplies and weapons, which Ukraine says it desperately needed to defend its positions against Russia, was held back for months due to political infighting on Capitol Hill. Congress eventually voted through a \$61 billion package to Ukraine.

## The Tank Is Dead?

BY TYLER DURDEN-FRIDAY, FEB 09, 2024

### Lessons from the battlefields of Ukraine

Hundreds of expensive tanks of both sides are being destroyed on the battlegrounds of Ukraine by cheap UPV drones. These include the Russian T-90MS Tank (worth about \$4.2million) and the German Leopard 2A6 Tank (about \$6.3 million). They are being destroyed by ubiquitous Chinese UPV drones, and their local variants, that sell for about \$3000. The U.S. has also supplied Ukraine with 155mm howitzer rounds known

as Remote Anti-Armor Munitions (RAAM). Each shell scatters nine 2.3kg magnetically activated mines. Tanks with limited vision, especially Russian tanks, often hit these mines, damaging their tracks, and making them sitting targets. They are all then finished off by precision artillery and antitank guided missiles.

Several military experts have argued that tanks will always have a place because "lighter infantry organizations lack the combination of firepower and mobility to achieve early battlefield dominance

and immediately exploit success." They are likely correct. However, most of their previous examples they give are combined arms battles of the 20th Century. Equally, there is no doubt that against lightly armed foes like Hamas in Gaza, they can seize key objectives. However, Ukraine presents a different experience.

Primarily, the losses for both sides in Ukraine are extraordinary.

Moscow invaded Ukraine with an estimated fleet size of 3,417 main battle tanks, around three and a half times that of Ukraine. Russia lost roughly



60%, about 2,000 of these by mid-2023. The Moscow Times reported in July, citing the Kiel Institute's Ukraine Support Tracker. They claim that Ukraine has lost the same number of tanks, but there is no source for that claim. GitHub—an American AI platform, estimates Russian tank losses have remained above 3:1 over Ukraine since the start of the war. Of course, that figure is relative, considering the Ukrainians had a similar fleet bot begin with.

### What about replacements?

Considering new tank production, recovery of old tanks from long-term storage and the need to make good steep armor losses in 2022, the Kremlin can afford to write off 50 or so tanks a month without depleting its overall arsenal of around 3,000 front-line tanks. Around Avdiivka alone, the Russians are losing 60 tanks a month. And that number could grow as the 239th Tank Regiment rolls into battle—and runs into the same minefields and artillery and drone kill-zones that pulverized the tank units that came before it.

### And they keep on coming.

The Russians plan to roll more tanks toward Avdiivka. "The concentration of the 239th Tank Regiment of the 90th Tank Division is ongoing southwest of Avdiivka," the Center for Defense Strategies, a Ukrainian think-tank, reported. The 239th is the third Russian tank regiment on the Avdiivka front, after the 80th and 10th. On paper, the 239th has a hundred or more tanks in several battalions altogether

manned by a few thousand people.

### Which tanks are performing best on the battlefield?

The old 42-ton Ukrainian T-64 Tanks (worth about \$1.12 million) are heavily armored and are performing well. The German Leopard 2A6 Tank (62 tons) and the British Challenger II Tank (64 tons) are both faster and superior to the Russian tanks. "They have better armor protection using advanced active protection systems, fire control, optics, and munitions," Seth G. Jones, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) noted. Still tank on tank battles are very rare. The most powerful American tank in Ukraine's armory, the M1 Abrams tank has not seen action simply because at 73 tons it is too heavy for the muddy Ukrainian roads. It is also too expensive to maintain.

Ironically, one of the best American tanks on the battlefield, is not actually a tank. It is a Bradely Fighting Vehicle (worth about \$2.4 million). The M3 Bradley (27.6 tons) equipped with BGM-71 TOW missiles is more than a match for many Russian tanks. There are several Telegram videos of Bradely's destroying Russian armored columns. Originally developed as an infantry carrier, it has a V shaped base and is very protective of its crew. The Russians who partly destroyed and captured one, after the Ukrainian crew escaped, were amazed at the protective inner compartment.

### Which raises the issue that few of us want to visualize.

We, of the Xbox generation of immersive video games like Call of Duty and the World of Tanks, see exciting explosions but never burnt and injured realistic victims. In real life tanks crews are burnt, injured, concussed, and suffer long-term brain damage. There is a small consolation for Russian tank crews, as the ammunition is stored right next to the crew, and death is often instantaneous.

### So, what is the future for the tank?

If there is infantry, there will be tanks. Big tank battles, however, will not be common.

In the short term: Tanks that are lighter in order to ease the logistic, with V-shaped floors, crewless turret, with minor heat signature, APS systems against drones (like Trophy or light Droneguns), more equal armor thickness all around since now top hitting kamikaze drones and missiles are the main enemy, not other tanks anymore. They would all be armed high-trajectory indirect-fire weapons like rockets, missiles, or mortars. Many tank models would also have additional secondary weapons like rotary multi-barreled autocannons, machine guns, anti-infantry explosive strips on the sides, side-firing ports for internally carried soldiers or crew, etc. They would also have various types of advanced computer brains, communications, systems, and sensors.

Increasingly they sound like the relatively inexpensive M3 Bradley and the variants America are about to produce.

In the long term: Tanks will be AI controlled and/or remotely controlled, crewless vehicles, with light armor and focus on mass production and low maintenance.

The Russian T-14 Armata is the first MBT designed with eventual automation in mind. The Russians are developing a robotic addition to the Armata platform, called the Tachanka-B, and even >>

retrofitting existing manned units for automation. The crew compartment will be replaced with additional fuel and ammunition.

Possibly: Single human pilots will be commanding entire units of robot tanks and planes from support stations or command vehicles near the front. The human operator/commander will

give the detachments of robot's mission directives and the robots will execute the directives autonomously. This will be more combat efficient and less prone to electronic jamming. The robots will communicate with all other robotic and manned assets on the field to coordinate their attack and improve efficiency, human input will gradually decrease in the

race to improve the operational efficiency of these new robot armies.

Futuristic and fantastic?—Maybe—Long live the tank.

Here is a link to the original article: <https://www.zerohedge.com/technology/tank-dead>

## MORE ON BOB HOPE

SUBMITTED BY RICHARD CARMER

On his deathbed they asked him where he wanted to be buried. Bob Hope replied: "Surprise me."

I had forgotten that he lived to be 100, and also didn't realize it has been over 20 years since he died.

ON TURNING 70—"I still chase women, but only downhill."

ON TURNING 80—"That's the time of your life when even your birthday suit needs pressing."

ON TURNING 90—"You know you are getting old when the candles cost more than the cake."

ON TURNING 100—"I don't feel old. In fact, I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap."

ON GIVING UP HIS EARLY CAREER (BOXING)—"I ruined my hands in the ring. The referee kept stepping on them."

ON GOLF—"Golf is my profession. Show business is just to pay the green fees."

ON PRESIDENTS—"I have performed for 12 presidents but entertained only six."



ON WHY HE CHOSE SHOW-BIZ FOR HIS CAREER—"When I was born, The doctor said to my mother, congratulations, you have an eight pound ham."

ON RECEIVING THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL—"I feel very humble, but I think I have the strength of character to fight it."

ON HIS FAMILY'S EARLY POVERTY—"Four of us slept in the one bed. When it got cold, mother threw on another brother."



ON HIS SIX BROTHERS—"That's how I learned to dance. Waiting for the bathroom."

ON HIS EARLY FAILURES—"I would not have had anything to eat if it wasn't for the stuff the audience threw at me."

ON GOING TO HEAVEN—"I have done benefits for ALL religions. I would hate to blow the hereafter on a technicality."

## President Milei rides tank in Argentine Independence Day parade

BY RAFAEL AZUL—14 JULY 2024

On Tuesday July 9, Argentine President Javier Milei attended a military parade in Buenos Aires, Argentina marking the 208th anniversary of Argentina's independence from the Spanish monarchy in 1816. He had also attended the anniversary in Tucuman of the declaration of independence which was issued on the same day in 1816 in that northwestern Argentine city.

Both events were staged amid the Milei administration's escalating offensive against the working class. This has taken a more and more concrete form as the regime maps out Milei's version of a new "National Reorganization Process," the official name adopted by the military dictatorship which ruled Argentina following a CIA-backed coup in 1976 for its Nazi-inspired agenda.

Last week's military parade, was led by veterans of the 10-week Malvinas War that took place in April 1982, 42 years ago, and included a large banner in memory of the Belgrano Battleship, which was sunk by the British, sending over 300 sailors to their deaths.

President Javier Milei and Vice President Victoria Villareal ride tank in Independence Day parade



The small group of aging veterans was followed by 7,000 active-duty troops of the Argentine Armed Forces. At one point, as a group of tanks were rolling by, Milei and his vice president, Victoria Villareal, climbed onto one of them, having their pictures taken alongside a rifle that seemed to point at the crowd of spectators. They rode for about 100 feet.

According to the Buenos Aires daily Clarin, the tank in question was one of five recently modernized by the Argentine Army, assisted by Elbit Systems, an Israeli firm. The tank in which Milei and Villareal rode has been equipped with state-of-the-art digital and electronic controls that increase speed and efficiency in combat.

In April, the Milei administration arranged to buy 24 F-16 US-made fighter jets from Denmark to "modernize" the Argentine Air Force. There are also plans to buy US made Lockheed P-3 Orion airplanes as well as Navy vessels.

These upgrades take place in the context of the creation of a naval base (in partnership with the US Navy) and an infantry training center in southern Argentina, along the Beagle Channel. In 1978, Argentina and Chile nearly went to war over the islands in this channel. Milei has also renewed interest in territory claimed by Argentina, Chile and the UK on the Antarctic continent.

In January, Milei presided over a restructuring of the armed forces command, retiring 22 generals and creating a "unified logistic command" in which

the military would play a direct role internally, as part of the country's repressive apparatus, not just combatting drug trafficking and alleged terrorist attacks, but patrolling borders and repressing workers and students.

These changes, together with the upgrading of military equipment are considered essential as part of the government's declared aim of becoming a "global partner" of the US-led NATO alliance.

In truth, the entire parade, including both the nostalgic references to the Malvinas War and the provocative tank ride, was a manifestation of, and goes hand-in-hand with, Milei's and Villareal's nationalism and militarism, including their support for the bloody dictatorship that ruled the country between March 24, 1976 and December 1983.

This year on March 24, Argentina's Day of Truth and Justice, the Milei administration issued a video with claims that the military junta led by Gen. Jorge Videla had taken power as an unfortunate but necessary reaction to the crimes of subversive groups, such as the Montoneros and the ERP. It also made the unsubstantiated claim that the number of workers and youth disappeared by the junta, tortured, and, in many cases, thrown out of airplanes to their deaths, was far less than 30,000 (as is widely believed), but closer to 4,000 "subversive monsters." The video directs its fire against the Nestor Kirchner government for prosecuting the dictator Videla and other leaders of the dirty war of repression and murder.

Ten hours ahead of the military parade, at dawn on July 9, in the historic city of Tucuman, Milei assembled provincial governors and political leaders for the signing of a 10-point social contract meant to transform Argentina's economic and political institutions along neo-liberal lines. The meeting took place in the same hall where in 1816, the nation had declared independence from the Spanish crown.

The document, known as the May Pact, was signed by 18 governors (out of 23), the mayor of the city of Buenos Aires, and by Milei himself. None of the signers, except for Milei, belong to Milei's political party. No matter, Peronists, Radicals and members of other right-wing bourgeois parties joined in endorsing the Pact.

Its ten points include: the sanctity of private property; slashing public spending; tax and tariff reforms "to simplify the lives of all Argentines" and promote trade; reduction in government subsidies to the provinces; "modern" labor and pension reforms; and unrestricted international trade to make Argentina a "player in the world market" once again. At the request of some of the governors, an additional point was added that ensures and "a useful and modern" educational system for all primary and secondary schools.

To manage the agreement's implementation, Milei's administration will create a May Pact Commission with representatives from the provinces, the trade unions, and the private sector.

In a recent speech, Milei called on Argentines, in the name of "liberty," to put aside partisan differences and work together to establish a new economic order. The events of July 9 exposed the lie behind this unity appeal. As was the case with the 1976 military tyrants, Milei's version of the National Reorganization Process aims to concretize, under the false flag of liberty, a repressive corporate dictatorship over the working class.

Editor's Note: This article was emailed to me by Don Whitton, the former Sgt. Grit. ■

# Six Decades Later, Marine Vietnam Veteran Awarded Silver Star

BY TODD SOUTH MARINE CORPS TIMES—JUN 10, 2024

When Lance Cpl. Milo Plank Jr.'s tank platoon rolled off landing craft and onto beaches south of Chu Lai, Vietnam, in August 1965, nobody fired a shot at them. But later that day, as he drove his M48 tank, rumbling through a meadow alongside two other tanks, a burst of machine-gun fire slapped its metal shell, wounding the crew's loader who'd been standing in the turret's hatch.

A fire team of infantrymen — the eyes and ears of the three-tank unit — were behind him, some of them were wounded too. A corpsman rushed up. But Plank knew they'd need help getting the wounded sergeant out of the turret. He peeked out the driver's hatch, shoving his .45-caliber pistol out first, and only a few feet away saw a Viet Cong fighter raising his rifle toward the turret to fire on the men outside.

What the 18-year-old did next wouldn't be recognized for 58 years. On May 29, in Boise, Idaho, Marine Col. William Chairsell pinned the Silver Star Medal on the blue sport coat lapel of the now 77-year-old Plank. It is the third-highest military valor decoration.

The teenage Marine was one of hundreds who participated in Operation Starlite — the first major, solely U.S. military offensive operation of the Vietnam War. The Marines had been



**Marine Corps Veteran Lance Cpl. Milo W. Plank Jr. received the Silver Star for his gallantry in action on Aug. 18, 1965.**

the first ground troops sent to South Vietnam in March, only five months before.

From Aug. 18, 1965, to Aug. 25, 1965, infantry, artillery, armor and aircraft of the III Marine Amphibious Force swept into the land surrounding the Van Tuong village complex. It was nine miles south of the strategically vital Chu Lai Air Base and where intelligence had reported the Viet Cong's 1st Regiment launched its operations. Plank's three-tank team with A Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, was part of that force. By the end of the eight-day operation the United States would see 45 men killed in action. U.S. officials reported more than

600 enemy killed, while Viet Cong claim only 200 perished or were captured.

The lance corporal had mere seconds to react to the man raising a rifle at his comrades. He fired his pistol so close to his own face that the slide smacked it, causing him to bleed. For a moment, he thought he'd been shot himself. The man disappeared. Plank raised further out of the hatch and saw another Viet Cong fighter and

fired at him too. Then he saw a third, whom he also shot. He then saw where they were coming from: a 6-foot-deep by 4-foot-wide trench covered in brush running parallel to his tank.

"I thought it was clear but there was still some activity in trench, could hear movement, see brush moving," Plank said in a 2019 interview for the U.S. Marine Corps Tankers Association



**Viet Cong prisoners await being carried by helicopter to rear area after Operation Starlite.**

oral history project. Standing atop his tank he could see down in it. Hearing chatter and movement, he knew but couldn't see who was in it.

"I fired my pistol up and down where I thought they were, fired all three magazines, the ruckus settled down," Plank said. Out of rounds he looked to the rear, where he saw fellow Marine, Cpl. Robert O'Malley, tending to the wounded in his infantry squad. The corporal's back was to the trench, brush continued moving as the crouched Viet Cong were moving down the line and toward them.

"I screamed at him, 'They're coming down the trench this way,'" Plank said. O'Malley popped up and began firing his M14 into the trench. The corpo-

ral then leapt inside the trench and continued firing. Plank could hardly believe the man's bravery. He hopped back inside his tank and yelled for more ammo.

His crewmate tossed a 50-round box of .45-caliber rounds up to him and he began shoving them into his three empty magazines, ready to go back out to help O'Malley, even if it meant going into the trench armed only with a pistol. Plank could hear the M14 ripping on automatic fire and the blast of hand grenades. But within the scant minutes it took to reload and reemerge he saw O'Malley haul himself out of the trench, carrying an armful of enemy weapons.

"He had wiped them all out, saved a

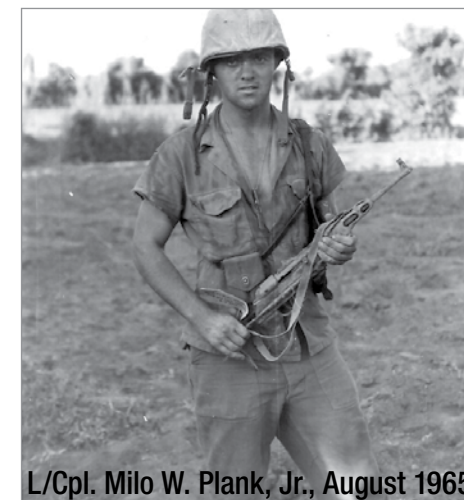
lot of lives," Plank said. After O'Malley and his squad evacuated the fight, Plank's tank team continued — each of his crewmates were injured during the operation. Some were killed in action in the following days; one tank was completely disabled while others were shot up so bad they hardly were operational. Plank would celebrate his 19th birthday on the final day of Operation Starlite.

A little more than a year later, O'Malley would receive the Medal of Honor for fighting off the enemy as his wounded squad mates were evacuated from the firefight. Nearly six decades later, Plank received his medal for actions that saved the corporal's life.

## The Process Used for Milo Plank's Silver Star

BY KEN ZEBAL

The DoD USC Title 10, 1130 process to recommend someone for a decoration goes something like this: First get an OPNAV 1650 form by contacting your local Marine Reserve or active-duty unit. Then find at least two witnesses to the action being cited and ask them to make official witness statements. Once the form is complete and the witness statements are signed and notarized, it's time to contact the nominee's U.S. Congressman or U. S. Senator. They must sponsor the award since the nominee is not in the military chain of command anymore. Your elected officials contact the DoD's



**L/Cpl. Milo W. Plank, Jr., August 1965**

Congressional Liaison unit. In this case the U.S. Marine Detachment in that unit. The next step is to contact HQMC Code MMMA located at Quantico. MMMA will assign a civil servant to your case and be your end-to-end point of contact. That person will be the single most important contact you'll have throughout the entire process. The MMMA POC verifies the 1650 form, Summary of Action, witness statements, proposed citation and then requests the National Personnel Records Center located in St. Louis send them the recipient's service record book. Since NPRC, by their nature, seems generally not able to provide a timely response your local elected sponsor's office may, in all probability, end up writing a letter to NPRC. Once the SRB is at MMMA the recipient's eligibility is verified and a package is prepared for submission



**A-32 on 18 August 1965**

to the HQMC Awards Board. The HQMC Awards Board may approve, downgrade or upgrade the proposed award or reach out to you or the witnesses for information. If the board approves the award, it then goes to CMC for endorsement. Once CMC endorses the award it goes to the Secretary of the Navy where it gets boarded again. The SecNav Awards Board may approve, downgrade or upgrade the award. Once approved SecNav informs CMC of their decision. CMC then informs the originator (you) by letter and steps are taken to make a formal presentation. >>

In Cpl. Plank's case it was roughly a 4-year process. Most witnesses were either dead or didn't remember anything which created significant stress. The NPRC was painfully slow (1 year) which they blamed on Covid until Ms. Bev Jensen from Senator Crapo's office wrote them a letter which resulted in them sending his SRB to MMMA the very next day. The HQMC Awards Board was also about a year behind which they too blamed on Covid. Our HQMC/MMMA POC (Mrs. JC Hughes) was absolutely outstanding in all respects, she didn't quibble over the Summary of Action but did suggest a few very valuable changes to the Citation. She is a true professional and has since been promoted.

Milo's support team was comprised of Col Ed Cercone, USMCR (Ret.), LtCol Ky Thompson, USMC (Ret.), me, Ms. Bev Jensen, Senator Crapo's Constituent Services Manag-



L/Cpl. Milo W. Plank, Jr.  
29 May 2024

er and Mrs. Jennifer (JC) Hughes of HQMC/MMMA did the majority of the work and coordinated everything.

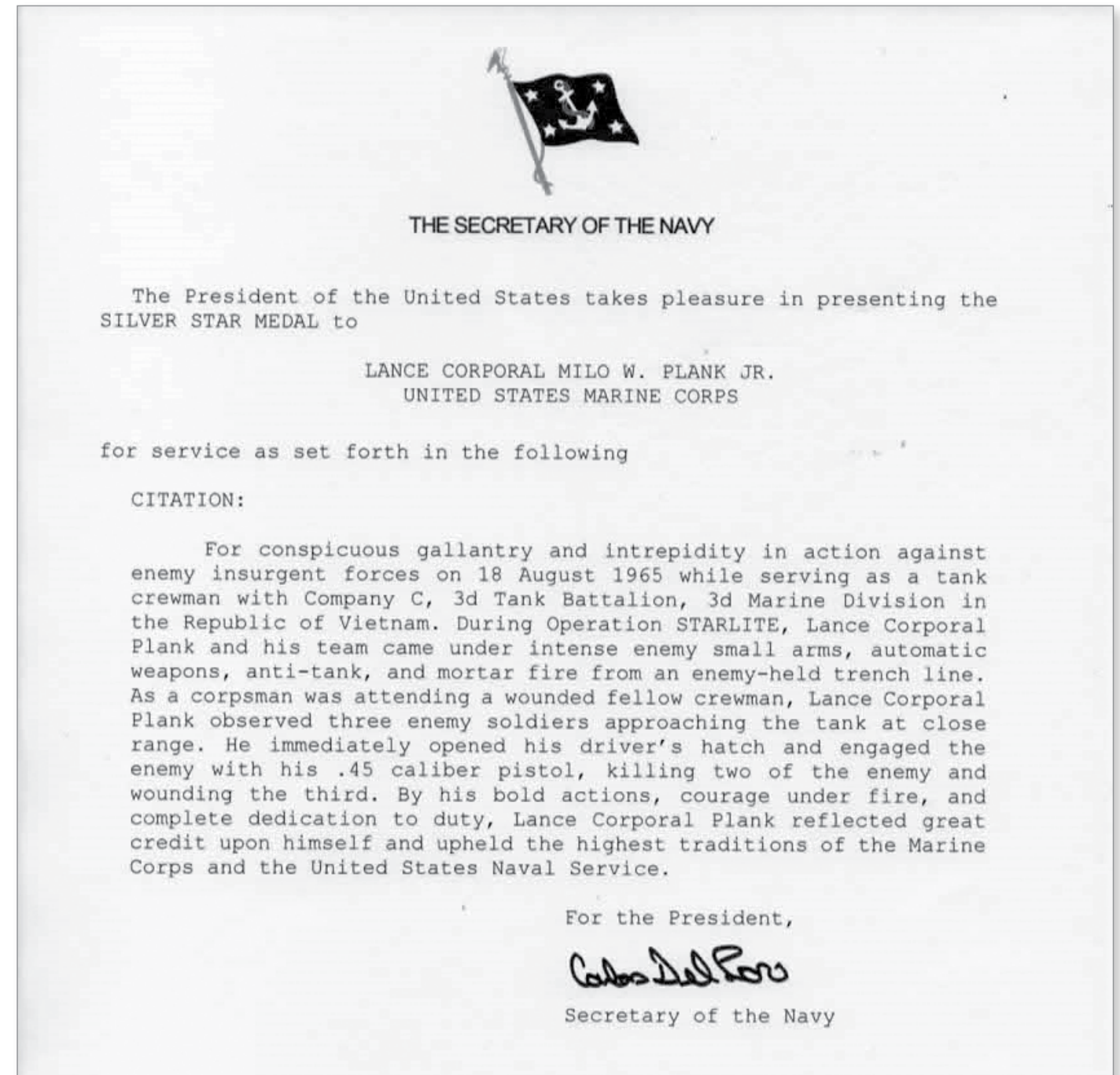
Once HQMC notified LtCol Thompson of SecNav's decision, I, in turn, unofficially notified Milo and both Ms. Jensen and Mrs. Hughes. The POC for coordinating the award presentation was the 4MARDIV Chief of Staff who was very active in his outreach to us and very responsive to all calls and questions – totally supportive and great to work with.

You may find it interesting how Milo's award progressed. Initially Ed Cercone, Ky Thompson and I discussed nominating Milo for a medal. Ky suggested that we should submit Milo for a Bronze Star (V) for heroic achievement, so off we went. We were really happy that after all the waiting to learn that HQMC approved the Bronze Star and then pleasantly surprised when we learned that the SecNav Awards Board upgraded it to a well-deserved Silver Star. ■



Colonel William (Trey) S. Chairsell III  
CHIEF OF STAFF  
4TH MARINE DIVISION

Sergeant Major Christopher J. Adams  
COMMAND SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER  
4TH MARINE DIVISION



# More Stories from John “Hugie” Hughes

## C-RAT PEANUT BUTTER

The small tin of peanut butter that came in a number of the C-Ration meals were manufactured at Cinderella Foods in Davidson, GA. I always felt a fondness for the peanut butter as it reminded me of my father's mother, who was born and raised in Davidson until her family moved to Dothan, AL in the early 1900's. Several of my aunts and cousins still lived there in 1968. Some worked at Cinderella Foods. And there were many children of old Confederates still living.

That peanut butter was great for loose bowls, though some thought it could cause loose bowls. Probably because they didn't pour off the oil that always floated on the top. The canned cheese could stuff you up pretty good too.

After Nam, I only ate C-rats, maybe half a dozen times while playing war back in the States. I retired from Active Duty in 1970 and thought little of Cinderella Foods and its peanut butter until the late 1970's or early 1980's when Cinderellas Foods found itself being investigated by the federal government.

Somehow before major inspections could commence, the peanut factory burned down to the ground leaving no evidence of wrong doing, if there was any. Old southerners weren't going to be screwed over by the damned Yankee government again.

## NUNG “MERCs” AND INCOMING MORTARS

One night at the “C-4” outpost a company of Nung's came into the pe-



rimeter to rest for a while. Nungs were Chinese mercenaries working for the Saigon government, as I understood it. These guys were official by the Australians from what I heard.

I never saw them because they arrived after dark and after resting and eating, they moved out before dawn. I had had the early watch. But soon I discovered signs that they had been there. Being Orientals, they climbed up on the seats of the head and left little muddy sandal prints all over it. One of the grunts and I cleaned it off as best as we could and then sat down to do our business.

No sooner had we got seated when “Whizz-bang! Whizz-bang!” of mortars! And the grunt and I have a foot race with our trousers around our an-

kles to get to the closest bunker!

That was the one and only time that I was at the “C-4” compound that we took incoming. I suspect that the Nung's left nasty little sandal prints all over the NVA shitters too.

## JANUARY 19, 1968

### Ha Loi, five clicks north of Cua Viet

“C” Co, 3rd Tank BN

2nd Lt John PO Marken, “C-1/3”

LCpl John W Benedict – Jacksonville, FL

LCpl William P Burgon – Columbus, OH

LCpl Michael B Morris – Lawton, OK

This was the first and worst battle that I was ever in. Lt Marken was killed in the TC position when he fell down into the tank with a bullet through his head. I have talked about this in the interview video that I did in 2013 during our San Antonio reunion, if I remember right. There is a scene in the movie, “Fury” that brought on PTSD after the battle cleanup. Two of the dead young Lance Corporals that were on my right and left fenders and blocked the vision ring so I had to stick my head up out of the cupola every now and then. Luckily nobody shot it off. The third Lance Corporal may have been alive when they loaded him behind the turret but evidently, he didn't make it.

## CUA VIET AND THE US ARMY

One morning in early '68 we brought “C-21” down to Cu Viet to fill up our fuel. It was easier to bring the tank to the fuel than vice versa. As we arrived on the north shore of the mouth of the river, we could see the

place was being heavily shelled by the NVA. The reason that it was readily apparent as there was Army gear and supplies all over the ramp. It may have been the North Vietnamese welcome to the fun part of the war. This was also the time that our crews made their PX run so we were somewhat miffed at the whole business.

There was a lot of ammo going off and fires burning out of control but no soldiers in sight. However, on the southside of the river a Mike boat was landing a couple dozen sailors. I mean, dixie cup, dungaree wearing sailors that were brought ashore from the fleet to get the fires under control since they were far better trained in such things, I suppose.

About the time that they were forming up to get to work, what was later decided by experts like myself to be a pallet or more of 8-inch rounds went off. I'm a mile away across the river and it knocked me on my butt!!! It also formed a mushroom cloud like a mini-Hiroshima. I crawled into the little bunker on the north shore and watched shrapnel as it rained down for 3 or 4 minutes.

We then came out of the bunker and looked across the river to a scene of devastation. Luckily the fires had been blown out by the shock waves of the blast. The sailors were nowhere to be seen. As the beach where they had been forming up was at a slightly lower elevation than the ramp. We figured they had hopefully not been wiped out to a man. The Mike boat gone so we figured that they retired after the fires were out. Either that or they all ran back to their ships...walking on water.

As it seemed to be settling down across the way, some of us caught a ride on an amtrac or should I say IN an amtrac, as there were still occasional explosions though the NVA shelling had ceased. I figured that the 8-inch shell (A-bomb) explosion had freaked out the NVA gunners as well.

In about an hour the rest of the crew brought the tank over. In the meantime, there not being a dog sol-

dier in sight, we appropriated a lot of “abandoned” equipment. As I remember, the guys found a pallet of beer (36 cases!) which they took in to custody to keep it from falling into the wrong hands.

As this was a pretty normal day at Cua Viet (aside from the “nuke”) we got back on the tank with our plunder, got on the Mike boat, crossed the river and drove home to “C-4.” Of course, through the surf so we spent the next day greasing the suspension, again. I still wonder sometimes, what became of those swabbies.

## ANOTHER ENGINEER STORY

At “C-4” the Dye Marker bunker where we lived was also the home of two combat engineers who were assigned, like our tanks, to C – 1/3. After the battle on Jan. 19th, we stayed in the field for some reason. As the sun was setting, one of the young engineers, the one from Pennsylvania, came up to the tank to bum a cigarette and shoot the breeze for a minute. A few minutes into the bull session, this guy pipes up and says, “The captain says that I got nothing to worry about.”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“Yeah, I found an old fighting hole over there on the line. The captain came by and saw me sitting in the hole and asked me, ‘They don't shoot engineers?’ So, I figured that I got it made.

There really were some strange dudes in the old USMD.

## THE GREAT TANK BATTLE OF “CHARLIE 4”

In February '68 Tet was going great guns but things at C-4 were a bit quiet considering we were surrounded by several divisions of NVA moving past us to the west and several million kraits, sea snakes coming up to lay eggs.

Word had also come down about the Lang Vei Special Forces camp west of Khe Sanh and the NVA's use of tanks in the attack. The next supply run brought our tanks a half dozen SHOT and HEAT 90 mm anti-tank rounds to effectively engage the Russian-built tanks that the NVA used

and were expected any day. The grunts of Charlie, 1/3 also received several crates of LAW disposable AT weapons that had proven effective on the PT-76 tanks at Lang Vei. The company mortar men were issued the AT weapons as well as the designated company anti-tank platoon.

A week or two went by with little action. Then one morning we received a radio report that some “airedale” had spotted tanks out in the dunes to our west. We mounted up immediately with HEAT rounds in the gun tubes and grunts riding outside loaded with multiple anti-tank rockets. We traveled west for about 20 – 30 minutes and as we entered a tree line when all of a sudden, an NV soldier leaps up from a bush. I'm the tank's gunner this day so I start moving the coax machine-gun around to engage. Then the TC grabs the override and suddenly my sights are pointing up toward the sky. Somebody has not lined up the range finds with the gunner's sights (which I know for the fact I was dead on). The young VC moves out smartly and we lose sight of him. The grunts bail off of the tanks and we all move out on line into an open area in the dunes.

As I am looking through the gunner's sight, there is a “wiz-boom!” an NVA arty round lands about 100 yards in front of us. A couple of seconds later, “wiz-bang!” ... another round 100 yards behind us. We are bracketed!!! The grunts load up quicker than they dismounted and we “didi mau” out of there.

The captain calls us back in. We have seen no tanks but maybe something is going on out there that we upset somebody. Later we hear that a jet engaged and destroyed an enemy tank coming out of a vile. I sometimes wonder if some air jockey saw us and made a big deal about attacking NVA tanks. Was it NVA 152 or American sidewinders? ■

# Ahhh...Fond Memories of Boot Camp

BY GREG KELLEY

Like 95% of all Marine Corps enlistees of the time, my home was not a happy one. So, when the Marine recruiter came to our high-school in January of 1966, I grabbed a handful of flyers and forms and snuck them home inside my books. I remember sitting on my bed, looking through the various possible fields, and setting my sight on tanks. After all, the last "Sgt Rock" comic-book had Sgt Rock tossing a grenade down the gun-tube of a German 88 that had been beating the crap out of us.

The recruiter had explained how we could join while still in school through the 120-day delayed entry program. There was a war going on in Vietnam, and a lot of our class wanted to go. Two of my friends and I enlisted via the "buddy-system," guaranteeing the three of us would be in the same platoon in boot. The day we enlisted was February 11, 1966. We graduated high-school June 6, and we were standing in the yellow footprints at Parris Island around midnight on June 9. Boot-camp was difficult, but I think a lot of guys had a harder time than I did. I was pretty athletic and in good shape back then, having spent three years on the track team and a couple of years on the gymnastics team. Plus, my two gym coaches were pretty regimented in their practices. "Gym" back then started up by everyone lining up and counting off by fours, and then forming up for 10 minutes of calisthenics before an intense workout. Looking back, it was almost a "prep" for boot-camp.

## Empty your pockets into the tray in front of you!

After the blitzkrieg where we were all screamed at and commanded to be "asshole to belly-button" in those yellow footprints, we were run inside of a receiving hall and lined up each in front of a wooden tray. "Empty ev-

erything in all your pockets into the tray in front of you!" Now, I had been warned by my recruiter to not bring ANYTHING personal with me, and definitely no pictures. Well, the DIs walked behind us as we stood at attention, checking all the junk that had been emptied. They stopped at one unlucky recruit who had placed a picture of his fiancé in the tray. Next thing we knew all three DIs were at this guy's throat. "Who's this slut?"

"Sir, that is not a slut, that's my fiancé" The poor guy was doomed.

"Your fiancé? Why would you marry a slut? Hell, me and a couple of my buddy's gang banged her a few weeks ago, and she liked it."

Well, the guy snapped, and tried to swing at the DIs, but they clubbed him in the gut and dragged his ass out of the building. It wasn't until years later that I thought that maybe that "recruit" was just a "plant". Just another DI? There to polarize us with fear. I'll never know.

## The BAM (As in Broad Ass Marines) episode

About half way through boot, I was selected together with three other boots for a work detail. We were driven over to the (BAM) Women-Marine training area, and tasked with cleaning out junk and furniture from an old barracks. When lunchtime came, we were marched into the WM chow-hall and seated with our trays at a small table over and out of the way a bit. Well, as none of us had seen a woman in a few weeks, it was only natural to be watching as they paraded through the chow-line. I was mesmerized, and had locked onto a particularly enticing set of cheeks when BAMMM!! A nightstick hit our table with such force that all our trays actually lifted a bit and crashed down! I wheeled my head back to center, and found the flaring nos-



trils and flushed face of a very large red-haired WM drill instructor not a foot from mine! She was pissed with a capital P. She leaned on the table closer to me and stopped her face an inch or so from mine and yelled so loud it rang my ears: "You better stop eye-fucking my women! You got that?!!"

I was frozen! In a split second, I had gone from dreamland into a nightmare. Here was this red-haired 220 lb. monster screaming at me from an inch away. "Yes, ma'am!" I stammered!

## The 'God bless the drill instructors' episode

Because my buddy George and I were the same height, we were in the same rack. He was upper and I was lower. He was having a hard time with boot-camp and wanted out. I told him it was impossible to escape, and to just keep trying. I figured out a way to get some of the crap out of our systems, and I think what we ended up doing helped him make it through. What did we do, you ask? Well, every night as we all lay in our racks at attention, we had to sound off the following at full throttle: "Gung-ho, loyalty, discipline, perfection, platoon 1001". Then, followed by: "God bless the Marine Corps! God bless the drill instructors!"

When the whole platoon got to the "God bless the drill instructors" part, we instead yelled out "God bless the cock suckers!" It meshed right in. Doing this at the top of our lungs, gave us a bit of satisfaction. Good thing our rack was at the far end of the squad-bay!

## What does MOS 1800 stand for?

Our final school circle came graduation day, and it was then we were all handed our MOS. My buddy Malcolm was an 0300. My buddy George was "intelligence". (Leave it to the Corps to stick George into Intelligence. He was so dumb; he couldn't tie his own shoes)

Then, I heard "Kelley, 1800." When our head DI shook our hands one-on-one, and called us Marines for the first time, I asked him what MOS 1800 meant. "Tracked vehicles", he answered. I can't remember how big my smile was, but I remember feeling like the luckiest guy in my platoon! ■

Editor's Note: I was trolling the internet and found this story written by one of the US Marine tankers who not only was a brave warrior but a deeply engaged member of the USMC VTA. I then sent an email to Guy Wolfenbarger seeking his permission to publish this story. The next day Guy's secretary responded that very unfortunately, Guy had passed away this past June. He will be missed.

# Flame Tank F-23 in Ambush Valley

BY GUY WOLFENBARGER

On September 5th I got word to be ready to move out the next morning to relieve F-21 that had lost air pressure. Mike Co. 3/26 and an escort from Bravo Co. Tanks left Camp Carroll in the rain. I met up with F-21 and Bravo 25 on the road outside of Charlie 2, and Bravo 25 took the lead back to CP. The church yard where 2nd Platoon Bravo 3rd Tanks had been working with 1/9 was the bad lands. I had worked it earlier in July with Alpha Co. 3rd Tanks in Operation Buffalo. Since then, I had been in the area 4 or 5 times. The brush was really thick and the rice paddies overgrown.

On Operation Buffalo on July 6, we took out a Catholic church at Thon Tan Hoa known as the Four Gates to Hell. The church yard was a land mark for the NVA to sight in on. Why anyone would set up their CP there is beyond me. Nah Toa An Hoa church yard was on everybody's map. 2nd Lt. Drnec was new in county and had not seen action or been in this area before.

The night of September 6th was quiet. The next morning a good friend from Columbus, Sgt. Larry Flora, threw a mud ball at my tank as he was going by.



He gave me a thumbs up and that's the last time I saw him alive. 2nd Lt. Drnec made me mount my 50 cal. back in the cupola. When it's in the cupola it is worthless mounted on its side with only 50 rounds of ammo. Lt Drnec didn't get the big picture. A flame tank only has a 30 cal. and 60 seconds of napalm. With the 50-cal. mounted on a tripod on top the tank commander has some real fire power.

India Co. 3/26 made contact before 1200. I got word from the tank commander of B-25 to move out, but stay in behind his tank. 2nd Platoon B Co. tanks was a heavy section made up of three gun tanks plus a flame tank, F-23.

2nd Lt. Drnec wanted to know what

I was doing. I saw the lead tank start to mire down in the paddy, so I stayed on high ground. That he headed straight out into the paddy was not good tank tactics. I didn't answer him on the radio. I stayed on high ground. The gun tanks fired a few rounds, and mortars started raining down. I dropped my 50 cal. out of the cupola and mounted it back on the tripod. The gun tanks moved on through the paddy and made it into the brush. As we got word to start to pull back, I saw NVA in the brush. They were in full battle gear and headed east.

My gunner L/LCpl Wayne Chapman was working the area with the 30-cal. coax. We had been on several operations together. On Operation Buffalo Wayne was my gunner. Wayne knew what to do. He had air pressure up and was ready to fire napalm. I don't think Lt. Drnec had seen a flame tank in action. Controlling napalm was easier than a load of diesel fuel. Napalm would stick and burn where diesel would roll in a big ball of fire. If you had a load of napalm mixed for two or three weeks it would gel-up and stick to the side walls of the 350 gal. napalm tank. After firing old napalm, we would get a load of diesel fuel and use it to break up the gel. >>

We had a fresh load of napalm and all air tanks full.

If he had only backed into the paddy and pulled forward, he may not have been hit. I saw two RPG teams to the right rear of B-21. The turret on B-21 swung around and fired at the RPG team. The Lieutenant said that they had been hit in the engine compartment and couldn't move. I moved up to cover B-21 and again requested to spray the tree line with napalm. The Lieutenant said, "No, the order was to fire into the tree line." The two gun tanks fired canister rounds and 30-cal into the brush. The Marines were pinned down in the open paddy and behind us. The mortar fire continued till it was almost dark. The night was going to be a long one.

C-2 and Con Thien fired illumination rounds all night. We had it all going for us all night long. Puff came on station and covered the area in front of us most of the evening. Just after dark three Marines yelled up from the side of the tank. I told them to crawl under the tank and now I had three more sets of eyes for the long night ahead. With my crew and the grunts under the tank keeping watch I felt safer. I trusted Pappy and gave him the order to fire napalm if we got hit during the night. I really trusted him and my driver. They were really great tankers. Pappy said he needed 30 cal. ammo. I got two cases of 30 cal. out of the gypsy rack. I was down to 500 rounds of 50 cal. myself. I grabbed 5 gallons of water off the back of the tank and some C-rations.

Around 2200 my driver cooked up some coffee and chow for us down in the driver's compartment with heat tabs. Taking turns at watch we settled in for the rest of the night. About 2300 my gunner saw movement about 30 yards in front of us. An illum went off just above the rice paddy, and we could see a foot moving in the tank track ahead of us in the rice paddy. The next morning when Kilo Co. came out to join up with us a grunt unloaded his M16 on the NVA RPG member. We slowly moved back toward the CP picking up KIAs and WIAs on the way. Sgt. Flora was load-

ed on the right front fender of my tank. As we moved back to the supply road, I passed out all the water and C-rats I had to the grunts. We made our way back to Charlie 2. When we got back to Charlie 2 and I loaded up with 50 cal. ammo and M79 ammo for a M79 I had picked up along the way. We took more incoming mortars on the supply road.

The afternoon of September 7th was quiet. We settled in and we settled in to a new CP area. I ordered more 30 cal. and 50 cal. ammo from 3/26 supply officer. That night was quiet, and I set up in the battalion CP. The morning of September 8th was quiet. Battalion was having a morning meeting when we got more incoming. Lieutenant Drnec jumped up on my tank and wanted in. I told him no, there was no more room. He opened the TC's hatch and jumped in on top of me. After a couple moments he decided that sitting beside 350 gallons of napalm wasn't a good idea. When the shelling lifted, he opened the clam shell and stuck his head out. He hit the release with his shoulder and the clam shell smacked down on his head. I helped him get out of the turret, and my crew and I thought it was pretty funny. The rest of the day and night was reasonably quiet.

September 10th early in the morning supplies came in by chopper. The grunts always could get great stuff, and we loaded up on fresh fruit and goodies. As always, the grunts didn't ever move out early. It took them till 0800 to 0900 to get it together. Around about 0830 we tied down all the supplies from the LC and were ready to move out. B-22 and B-25 were the lead tanks. We started hearing heavy machine gun and AK-47 fire in the area ahead of us. B-22 threw a track or something and stopped on the side of the hill. B-25 moved out past B-22. I kept as close to B-25 as we could until we moved out of the brush. B-25 went up the next hill and began firing. I stayed at the east and south of the open paddy. My gunner opened up on the NVA out in the open paddy. It was something out of Hollywood. The NVA stood up out of nowhere and started across the rice paddy. With my 50cal.

and 30cal. they were sitting ducks. We were at war now, real war.

In the book *Ambush Valley* by Eric Hammel, page 207, India Company (3-26) and Lima Company (3-26) platoon commanders tell the story as they saw it. B-25 was ahead of me, slightly to my left with a lot of grunts between us pinned down with heavy mortar and machine gun fire. There were too many friendlies for us to fire any napalm. I saw smoke coming out of B-25. It had been hit, and the corpsman and the grunts were helping the crew out. The driver pulled down next to my tank and yelled that the NVA were coming down over the hill.

Several RPGs came towards B-23 and my tank. I told my gunner to light up and my driver to move out toward the top of hill so we could fire. Before we could fire, I saw an RPG coming like a football. It struck my turret on the left side setting off the secondary fuel that we used to light the napalm. Fire immediately came around the napalm bottle and my driver was burned across his back and escaped through the driver's hatch. My gunner had his arm burned and we both got out through the TC hatch. As my tank exploded, I started to jump off the rear, but I still had my com-helmet on. The com-chord jerked my head back and I landed on the deck. I thought I'd been shot. I got up and to my surprise I wasn't wounded and jumped to the ground.

The driver of the gun tank saw the explosion and jumped out of his tank leaving it in gear. We were a few yards behind the gun tank when it started to roll down the hill with motor still running. The corpsman took my gunner and driver back up the tank trail we had just made. I made my way to a bomb crater where I found several Marines, some of whom were wounded. I had my 45 and one clip. From that time on it seemed like an eternity until we could make it back to the CP. Just at dusk I got back to the CP.

My flame tank burned all night long. The gun tank rolled down to the edge of the open paddy. It continued to run all

night. They tried to resupply us to take out wounded, but the choppers received heavy fire. Around 2200 the company commander of 3-26 decided he needed to disable the gun tank. I went to the edge of our perimeter with a rocket man who had LAAW and showed him where he should hit the tank turret to seize it up. When he fired the rocket, his aim was high. The rocket ricocheted off the turret high into the air. As the grunt

started back into the line he was shot by one of the grunts on line. Luckily the shot hit his flak jacket and knocked him down. The next thing all you could hear were four-letter words and a lot of yelling. We made our way back to where the gun tank-wounded were. It was a damp cold night.

The next morning the driver of B-25 and I made our way back to his tank. We found the NVA had been inside the

tank and taken some of the c-rations off the back. We moved out, back up to the battalion CP. As soon as we met up with B-2 we headed out to the supply road where we met up with A Company Third Tanks and headed toward Charlie-2. At Charlie-2 the place was full of reporters. We took B-25 back to Camp Carroll. ■

*This is a follow up story from the feature article about Bob Skeels and "Mutters Ridge" in our last issue...*

## FINAL MISSION OF 1LT STEVEN P. BRODRICK

Taken from [coffeldatabase.org](http://coffeldatabase.org) and [wired.com](http://wired.com)

On December 7, 1968, three companies of Marines from 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, boarded helicopters for a campaign designed to retake control of a hill in an infamous area known as Mutter's Ridge. The operation would take place approximately seven miles northwest of Cam Lo Village in Quang Tri Province, RVN. Artillery, air strikes, and tank attacks had long since denuded the ridge of vegetation, but the surrounding hillsides and valleys were a jungle of trees and vines. When the companies touched down and fanned out from their landing zones, the North Vietnamese retreated. They were pulling back to a large bunker complex where a showdown with the Americans would soon take place.

After three days of patrols, isolated firefights with an elusive enemy, and multiple nights of American bombardment, Company F received the order to take some high ground on Mutter's Ridge. It was December 11, 1968. Its sister company, Company H, was to heavily patrol the ridge and surrounding areas while Company F moved up the hill. At 8:25 AM, elements of F Company took 60mm mortar and small arms fire. The Marines called in 81mm support fire, and an aerial observer came on station and reported having the enemy in

sight. As Company F pressed forward, the lead elements came under small arms and automatic weapons fire. The enemy was well-entrenched and dense vegetation made it difficult to spot the enemy fire. It was later discovered that Company F had fought its way into a large, well-laid out bunker complex. Having fought their way in, they found it extremely difficult to maneuver its way out, due both to the fire of the enemy and the problem of carrying their wounded.

Company H was on a neighboring hill, still eating breakfast, while Company F was engaged with the enemy. Company H was dispatched to reinforce Company F. It took until noon to reach the area of contact. When the point platoon finally crested the top of the ridge, they confronted a battlefield with wounded Marines everywhere. The Second Platoon leader, future FBI director and Special Counselor 2LT Robert S. Mueller, ordered everyone to drop their packs and prepare for a fight. They assaulted out across the top of the ridge, quickly coming under heavy fire from small arms, machine guns, and a grenade launcher. The battle atop and around Mutter's Ridge raged for hours, with the North Vietnamese fire coming from the surrounding jungle. LCPL Robert W. Cromwell, the lance

corporal who had just become a father, was shot in the thigh by a .50-caliber bullet. The bullet had nicked one of Cromwell's arteries, and he bled to death before he reached the field hospital. His death may have saved the life of a fellow Marine—the night before Cromwell switched weapons with another, trading his M14 rifle for a M79 grenade launcher.

During the battle the following day, when a grenadier was called forward, Cromwell was the one who moved up. As the fighting continued, the Marines atop the ridge began to run low on supplies. LCPL John C. Liverman was ferrying ammo from one side of the ridge to the other. LCPL Liverman, who was already wounded, came under fire during another run. He was mortally wounded after being hit in the head. Nearby, two Marines sheltered behind a dead tree stump, trying to find any protection amid the firestorm. Both of them were out of ammo. A Marine named Sparks crawled back to Liverman to try to evacuate his friend. He got him up on his shoulder when he was shot and went down. As he was lying on the ground, he heard a shout from atop the ridge, "Who's that down there—are they dead?" It was 2LT Mueller, leader of Second Platoon. The wounded Marine hollered back, "Sparks >>

and Liverman.” “Hold on,” Mueller said, “We’re coming down to get you.” A few minutes later, Mueller appeared with another Marine and slithered the two wounded Marines into a bomb crater and battle dressed their wounds. They waited until a helicopter gunship passed overhead, its guns clattering, to distract the North Vietnamese, and Mueller hustled Sparks back toward the top of the hill and comparative safety. An OV-10 attack plane overhead dropped smoke grenades to help shield the Marines atop the ridge. Mueller then went back to retrieve the mortally wounded Liverman. Mueller later received the Bronze Star for bravery. The deaths mounted. CPL

Agustin Rosario was shot in the ankle, and then, while he tried to run back to safety, was shot again in the back, this time fatally. Rosario died waiting for a medevac helicopter. Finally, as the hours passed, the Marines forced the North Vietnamese to withdraw. By 4:30 PM, the battlefield had quieted. As night fell, Companies H and F held the ground, and a third company, Company G, was brought forward as additional reinforcement. It was a brutal day for both sides; 13 Americans died and 31 were wounded. As the Americans explored the field around the ridge, they counted seven enemy dead left behind, in addition to seven others killed in the course of

the battle. Intelligence reports later revealed that the battle had killed the commander of the 1st Battalion, 27th North Vietnamese Army Regiment, “and had virtually decimated his staff.”

The 12 lost Marines and one Navy corpsman on Mutter’s Ridge included from Company H: Cromwell, Liverman, Rosario, and CPL James O. Weaver; from Company F: HM3 Dan M. Bennett, 1LT Steven P. Brodrick, PFC Raymond H. Highley, LCPL Gerald C. Hoage, CPL Thomas C. Rutter, PFC Bobby G. Simpson, PFC Daniel Tellez, LCPL Roy J. Weatherford Jr., and CPL James Woodward.

## Steven Parker Brodrick

Home of Record: Selma, California

### Silver Star

AWARDED FOR ACTIONS DURING Vietnam War

Service: Marine Corps

Rank: First Lieutenant

Unit: 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment

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

#### GENERAL ORDERS:

#### CITATION:

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to First Lieutenant Steven Parker Brodrick (MCSN: 0-103916), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as a Platoon Commander with Company F, Second Battalion, Fourth Marines, THIRD Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 11 December 1968, Company F was conducting a search and destroy operation near Mutter’s Ridge in Quang Tri Province, when the Marines were attacked by a North Vietnamese Army company utilizing mortars, hand grenades and automatic weapons. Although several of his squad and fire team leaders were wounded, First Lieutenant Brodrick unhesitatingly commenced



an aggressive assault against the hostile force. Exposing himself to the intense enemy fire, he skillfully maneuvered his platoon across the fire-swept terrain, providing the necessary covering fire for other elements of the company to move into assault positions. Disregarding the hostile rounds impacting near him, he was fearlessly moving among his squads, shouting words of encouragement to his men when he was mortally wounded. His heroic actions and calm presence of mind under fire inspired all who observed him and contributed significantly to the accomplishment of his unit’s mission. By his courage, bold initiative and selfless devotion to duty,

First Lieutenant Brodrick upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country. ■

## DEROS DELAYED

How long were you in Vietnam  
How long were you in the fight  
I've been fighting since I got home  
And I was there again last night

Habits learned are habits kept  
Always staring into never land  
Cautiously searching here and there  
Never knowing quite where to stand

Hiding among the crowd in plain sight  
While listening to the roaring sounds  
Too many voices exploding in my head  
Forces me to seek a safer ground

Hoping no one sees the panic in my eyes  
As I gather up my family and run  
Leaving a meal or a place we've been  
Before its all finished and done

Then I'm left to explain myself  
As to why I reacted that way  
And as usual I stand there confused  
Tongue twisted without a thing to say

I can probably blame it all on Vietnam  
Or you can call it whatever you may  
Vietnam has taken me where I don't want to go  
And it's kept me longer than I wanted to stay

Boon 4/30/2018



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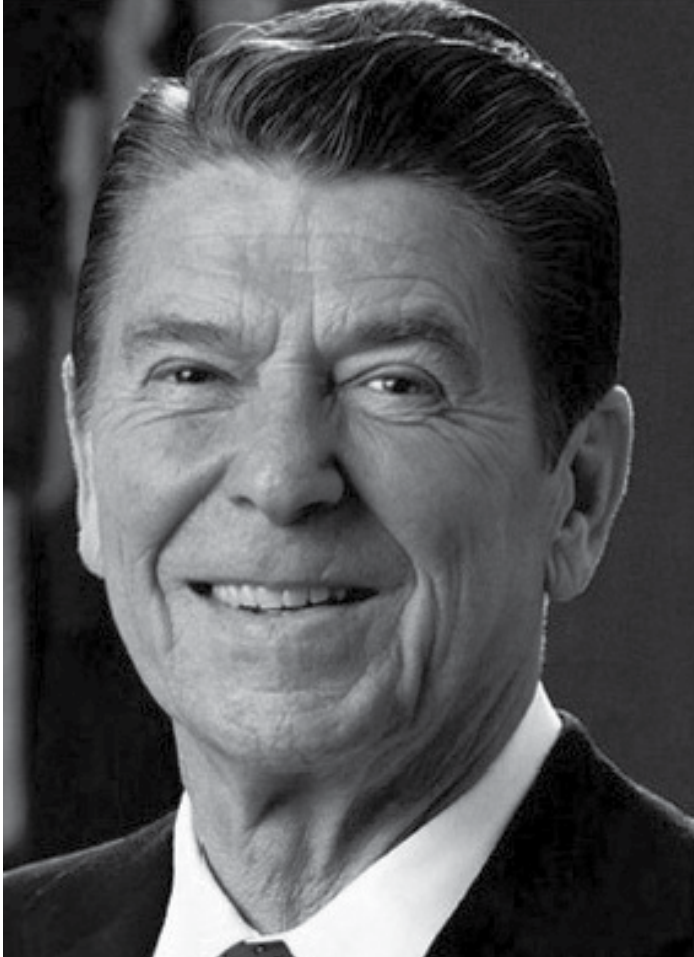
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The signs of the Vietnam War protestors said “Make Love not War!” It didn’t seem to me that they were capable of either.

— *Ronald Reagan* —