

River Currents

A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1
SPRING 2005

**ROOMS FOR THE REUNION
ARE GOING FAST! MAKE YOUR
RESERVATIONS SOON!**

FROM THE GALLEY

ALBERT MOORE, MRFA PRESIDENT

Folks, rooms are going faster than usual at the Drawbridge for this reunion! If you haven't made your reservations, plan on doing so ASAP, especially if you are seeking a poolside room in the main building.

There are only a couple of individual unit hospitality rooms left. If your unit wants one, call the hotel at 1-800-426-3841 (Sales). Ask for Teresa or Jennifer.

For regular rooms call 1-800-354-9793. Be sure to mention you're making room reservations with the Mobile Riverine Force Association. Reunion dates are August 31st to September 4th.

The 4th is checkout day. Room rates for the Main building are \$77.00 per night. Room rates for the Garrison building (which is detached from the main building) are \$67.00 a night. Our reunion rates are good for three days prior to the reunion and three days following the reunion. *Individual Hospitality Rooms in the Main building will be \$125.00 a day; the two in the Garrison building are \$118.00 each per day.*

We're in the planning stages with the Northern Kentucky Convention Visitor Bureau's Brenda Jackson about transportation for you ladies who want to go shopping and tour the area, a treat not available at our past reunion. Associate member Mary Werner (Brown Water Social Tour Director) has offered her assistance with this since she lives in the area and has many contacts. Mary and the Convention Bureau will also have tour packets, brochures and coupons available for the local area. The Convention Bureau is trying to arrange for free transportation. More on this will be available in upcoming issues of *River Currents*.

Start making reservations by calling 1-800-354-9793; for hospitality suites call 1-800-426-3841(sales), ask for Jennifer

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Behind the Barrel

Hello again, it's hard to believe that it has been nearly a year since I took the helm of the editorial duties of *River Currents*. As I promised you last year, there were no major changes and just a few adjustments — it does feel good to be back in print. It comes easy when you're part of a solid team of veterans of the Army and Navy; personnel who are dedicated to deliver the best damn quarterly newsletter of any military outfit. With this in mind, we want you to know that we intend to stay on course, but we need your help. I hope that you, the reader, will continue to share your stories. Please always remember that your membership is the backbone of the MRFA. And we would like to express our gratitude to those members who have submitted stories. Thank you!

If you have a story and need some help

putting it together contact me. I'll be more than happy to assist you and give you the by-line. Don't forget photographs. They are essential to any story.

On a practical note, please give us plenty of advance notice when seeking to list an item or to request coverage. Although it's a quarterly newsletter — deadlines mean we will be working far in advance.

In March 2004, Ms. Sandy Doyle, Senior Writer/Editor of the Naval Historical Center, gave *River Currents* permission to use the Naval Historical Center's on-line synopsis of the book *By Sea, Air and Land*. In our summer issue, we stated that we are looking at chapters 3 & 4 and realize that it's on our web site and the book has been donated to the MRFA Mobile Museum (courtesy of Albert Moore). On the other hand, not everyone has access. So those of you who have access to our web site take a look at chapters 3 & 4. If you see something

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER

805 KIDDER BREESE SE., WASHINGTON
NAVY YARD, WASHINGTON DC 20374-5060

Chapter 3: The Years of Combat, 1965-1968

By March 1965, the government and armed forces of South Vietnam were on the verge of collapse under the weight of the enemy's political-military offensive. Since the year-long American punitive campaign failed to deter the North Vietnamese, the Johnson administration decided that a massive effort was required to strengthen the South's stand against its Communist foe. The regular and paramilitary units were especially in need of increased American assistance. But in a departure from previous assumptions, U.S. leaders concluded that a rebuilding program would succeed only behind a shield of American military power. At the same time, they intended to make the cost of continued military action increasingly prohibitive for the Communists. In practical terms, this meant the use of the American Armed Forces (1) to interdict the infiltration of enemy supplies and reinforcements into the South and (2) to destroy Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units in-country so that a renewed nation-building effort

could proceed and, it was hoped, prosper.

This new direction in American strategy jelled during a meeting in Washington on 15 March 1965 of the U.S. foreign policy and military establishment. The President authorized the Pacific Command to carry out a systematic bombing campaign against North Vietnamese lines of communication, military installations, and logistic facilities south of the 20th parallel. Thereafter, the Rolling Thunder program focused less on influencing the enemy's will than on

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USS VANCOUVER (LPD 2) earned 11 battle stars for service in Vietnam.

Years of Combat

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hurting his actual physical capability to support the military venture in the South. Much the same occurred with the Yankee Team and Barrel Roll operations in Laos. The Seventh Fleet's naval air forces were given somewhat greater latitude in target, ordnance, and aircraft selection, in operational control, and in other tactical considerations. Reflecting the desire to concentrate greater resources against the Ho Chi Minh Trail, on 3 April the southern Laotian Panhandle was separated from the Barrel Roll operational area in northeastern Laos and designated Steel Tiger.

Even as carrier air squadrons moved to staunch the flow of men and supplies through southern North Vietnam and Laos, other fleet units moved to cut the enemy's seaborne infiltration into South Vietnam. This measure initially was motivated by discovery of a 100-ton North Vietnamese trawler unloading munitions on a beach in South Vietnam's Vung Ro Bay on 16 February 1965. Later evidence confirmed that since late 1963 the enemy had mounted a significant coastal infiltration effort. Meeting in Saigon from 3 to 10 March, representatives from MACV, the U.S. Navy, and the South Vietnamese Navy hammered out details of the establishment of a combined coastal patrol. The operation, named Market Time, was intended to complete the cordon being drawn around the South Vietnamese battleground. The decision for American forces to join in combat with the enemy in South Vietnam was also reached during this period. At first, ground troops were considered only as protection for the vital American air and naval installations at Danang against Viet Cong and regular North Vietnamese attack. For this purpose, on 26 February President Johnson authorized the deployment to Danang of two Marine battalion landing teams, a medium helicopter squadron, and headquarters elements of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

At 0600 on 8 March 1965, Rear Admiral Donald W. Wulzen, commander of the Seventh Fleet's Amphibious Task Force, issued the traditional order to "land the landing force." Soon afterward, *Vancouver* (LPD 2), *Mount McKinley* (AGC 7), and *Union* (AKA 106) began disembarking Marines for the movement ashore. When the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines crossed the beach between 0902 and 0918, it became the first battalion-size American ground combat unit deployed ashore in the extended Southeast Asian conflict. Even before the full 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade had

been deployed to Danang, American leaders were considering the use of these Marine and following Army units in active operations against the Viet Cong. The passive defense mission was shelved on 1 April 1965 when President Johnson authorized the Marines at Danang to move out and engage Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in combat.

Coupled with this decision was approval during March for U.S. carrier aircraft to strike enemy forces in South Vietnam. On 15 April planes from *Midway*, *Coral Sea*, and *Yorktown* (CVS 10) conducted the first such attack against Viet Cong positions northwest of Saigon. The ships sailed in a new carrier operating area southeast of Cam Ranh Bay, at 11N 110E, known as Dixie Station. An aircraft carrier was constantly stationed at Dixie Station between June 1965 and August 1966.

The Naval Command in Southeast Asia

As the Navy entered heavy combat in Southeast Asia between 1965 and 1968, a chain of command evolved which reflected the complex character of the war. In theory, Commander in Chief, Pacific was the commander of all American forces in Asia, including those assigned to Commander U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV). However, as the conflict in South Vietnam intensified, COMUSMACV came to exert the greatest influence over in-country operations. At the same time, CINCPAC's attention was occupied by the need to control and coordinate the bombing campaign in North Vietnam and Laos, the massive transpacific logistic effort, and other American military activities in the Far East.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet was the naval component of the Pacific Command and as such directed the Navy's activities in that ocean. Subordinate to Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) was Commander Seventh Fleet, who conducted those naval operations in Southeast Asia primarily external to South Vietnam. The fleet's Attack Carrier Striking Force (Task Force 77) mounted from the South China Sea the aerial interdiction campaign in Laos and North Vietnam. Commander Seventh Fleet's cruiser and destroyer units hunted the enemy's logistic craft along the North Vietnamese coast, bombarded targets ashore, and provided naval gunfire support to allied forces in South Vietnam. The Amphibious Force (Task Force 76) and its attached Marine units conducted numerous over-the-beach and helicopter landings in South Vietnam in search of the elusive Viet Cong. The Mobile Logistic Support Force (Task Force 73) labored to keep the fleet's combatants on station and engaged with the enemy.

The Carrier Force

From the South China Sea, the Seventh Fleet's Attack Carrier Strike Force mounted the Rolling Thunder bombing and Blue Tree tactical reconnaissance operations in North Vietnam; the Barrel Roll, Steel Tiger, and Tiger Hound bombing and Yankee Team reconnaissance efforts in Laos; and the ground support mission in South Vietnam. Except during the period in 1965 and 1966 when the aircraft carrier supporting operations in the South sailed at Dixie Station, the carrier task force was deployed at Yankee Station (after April 1966 at 1730'N 10830'E). Generally, before August 1966, two or three carriers operated in Task Force 77, and after that date the number was often three or four. On each ship a carrier air wing controlled 70 to 100 aircraft, usually grouped in two fighter and three attack squadrons and smaller detachments. However, the number depended on the size and class of the carriers, which varied from the large-deck 65,000-ton *Forrestal*-class ships to the 27,000-ton, World War II *Essex*-class ships.

The Navy's first-line aircraft for strike operations included the maneuverable A-4 Skyhawk, A-1 Skyraider, A-7 Corsair II, and the all-weather, day-night Grumman A-6 Intruder. The workhorse F-4 Phantom II, in addition to its attack role, flew fighter escort, as did the F-8 Crusader. Aerial reconnaissance missions were carried out by the heavy RA-5 Vigilante, the older RA-3B Skywarrior, and reconfigured Crusaders and Phantoms. Intruder, Skyraider, and Skywarrior variants also provided electronic countermeasure support in an enemy air defense environment that became increasingly lethal. Detection of enemy MiG's approaching the fleet, guidance of U.S. aircraft to and from their targets, and airborne communications support were all functions of the versatile Grumman E-2 Hawkeye. Ship-based helicopters such as the Sikorsky SH-3 Sea King and Kaman UH-2 Sea Sprite were key components of the search and rescue (SAR) system established to retrieve downed fliers both at sea and in enemy territory. Helicopters also transported ammunition and supplies from logistic ships to the combatants on station in a relatively new procedure called vertical replenishment. The UH-34 Seahorse Boling-Vertol, CH-46 Sea Knight, and Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallion troop-carrying helicopters provided essential mobility to the fleet's Marine units.

Fleet aircraft carried a vast array of ordnance, from Korean-era bombs to advanced missiles and precision guided munitions. For their strikes in North Vietnam, Laos, and South Vietnam, attack aircraft dropped 250, 500, 1,000, and 2,000-pound general purpose bombs, napalm bombs, and magnetic mines, and fired 5-inch Zuni and 2.75-inch high-explosive rockets. The carrier aircraft used Bullpup air-to-ground weapons, the newly developed Walleye TV-guided bomb, and



In July 1968, Mount McKinley (AGC-7) was the flagship of Commander, 7th Fleet Amphibious Force.



USS *Union* (AKA 106) was awarded nine battle stars for her Vietnam service.

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From the Galley

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Hesse, or Teresa Gorman Seifert, or Ann Wilson. You can also make your reservations by visiting www.drawbridgeinn.com/reservations.htm. Don't forget to mention the MRFA when making your reservations.

CHECK IN & CHECK OUT TIMES: Guest room check in time is after 3:00 p.m. Check out is no later than 12:00 noon. The Drawbridge will make every effort to accommodate guests arriving earlier than 3:00 p.m., but early check in is not always available.

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE: The Drawbridge Inn is handicap accessible. If you have special requirements, please call 1-800-354-9795. The Drawbridge also has medical personnel on staff.

AUTOMOBILE PARKING: Ample parking is available at no charge. RV hook-ups are available on a limited basis. Please call for rates: 1-800-354-9793.

AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION: The Drawbridge Inn operates regular shuttle service, at no cost to reunion guests, to and from the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (it's located in Kentucky near the state line). To contact the shuttle service, go to the bank of telephones in each baggage area. Pick up the telephone that says *Coach to the Castle* and a van or bus will pick you up shortly.

10% RESTAURANT DISCOUNT IF YOU WEAR YOUR NAME TAG: A 10% discount on all meals will be available to all members and guests who enjoy their meals in



Check out the Drawbridge's website at www.drawbridgeinn.com.

one of the Drawbridge's restaurants. You must wear your name tag to receive the discount, so be sure you and your guests have them. Don't forget to mention the discount to your waitress. Unfortunately, this doesn't mean a discount on the Saturday Buffet, just meals taken in the hotel restaurants. But, if you are staying for three or four days and have some or all of your meals at the hotel, this discount can add up to a great savings. Only at the Drawbridge will you receive a discount such as this.

HELP WITH REUNION TRAVEL: The MRFA recommends *Mann Travel Services* if you wish to use a travel consultant to assist with your travel plans for the 2005 reunion. Please remember this is for your travel planning only. *You still have to make your own hotel reservations, etc.* Use of Mann Travel is not required in any way, your choice of service is up to you. If you use Mann Travel please ask for Alison Robinson, Travel Consultant. Alison has been assisting me with my flights for a few years now, she's a nice young lady and very professional in her job. *When making your travel arrangements be sure to mention you're with the MRFA.*

**Mann Travel Services,
Alison Robinson Travel Consultant
800-849-2170 • 828-464-6926 • 828-465-3860 Fax
E-mail arobinson@mannttravel.com.**

Behind the Barrel

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you want highlighted in an upcoming issue, let us know. Contact Joe Rosner.

Meanwhile, you will find in this issue part of Chapter 3: The Years of Combat, 1965-1968 from the Naval Historical Center's online synopsis of the book *By Sea, Air, and Land*. Plus, we added some official Navy photographs.

For you Army folks, don't worry we will continue to provide more of the on-line version of *VIETNAM STUDIES RIVERINE OPERATIONS 1966-1969* by Lt. General William B. Fulton (Ret.) USA. We are seeking some balance between articles about the Army and Navy. So, especially our Navy folks, if you have an article or idea feel free to e-mail me at JoeRosner@wi.rr.com or send it by snail mail to 2434 55th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53144-4605.

A final word of thanks to all those who submitted articles and provided insight as we worked and planned this issue. Bravo Zulu! Or, for you Army guys, HOOAH! Keep reading.

—Joe Rosner, Public Relations Director
Board Member and Editor, *River Currents*

License Plate

\$750

Includes S&H



To order, mail your check or money order (payable to MRFA) to:
MRFA • 1857 County Road A-14
Decorah, IA 52101-7558

SORRY NO DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE!

Consideration Regarding Reunion Articles in River Currents

Over time we have posted reunion articles in our newsletter, just like the one in this issue. Military reunions are meaningful parts of our lives and many folks have expressed a desire to have their reunion article posted in our newsletter. We will accommodate whenever there is space available. However, we must limit them to just former military units of the Mobile Riverine Force and/or its supporting units who have joined the Mobile Riverine Force Association.

Get Well Wishes

Member **Ken Kalish** has been sick and was in the hospital for some unscheduled heart surgery. He's home doing well. Ken served in RPS-523 67-69. You may contact Ken c/o 1614 118th Ln., Coon Rapid, MN 55448; or phone 763-862-1642.

MRFA Member **Frank G. Humphreys** just had a short stay in the hospital with some heart problems and is now home and feeling somewhat better. You may contact George c/o 4946 Monroe St. NE., Columbia Heights, MN 55421; 765-572-0394 a vietnam_vet@yahoo.com. Frank served in E/CO/3rd/39th 9thInfDiv, 1967-1968.

MRFA Member **Big Jim Meehan** was recently in the hospital for a leg operation but is now home recuperating. You may contact Big Jim c/o 3080 SW Shadow Ln., Palm City, FL 34990; phone 772-287-4361; jemtug@yahoo.com. Jim served in IUWG-1-Nha Trang, 1966-1967.

Regarding previous notices: I'm happy to report Edith Ethridge, wife of our general counsel, is doing well; Richard Toth has been moved closer to home from Las Vegas to a hospital in his home town in Phoenix.

You may contact **LCDR Jack Herrmann** c/o P.O. Box 252, El Dorado, CA; 530-620-8042; mjherrmann66@aol.com. Mr. Herrmann was ComRivDiv 92 in 67-68. I'm sure he would appreciate hearing from everyone by card or e-mail. I'm sure Mrs.

Herrmann will be checking it for him.

Member **Gary Speckman** has been diagnosed with colon cancer. He is being treated at the VA hospital in Minneapolis, MN. They think they found the cancer early enough that they can handle it. Contact him at: 11401 Elm Cir., Pine City, MN 55063. Gary served on T-91-5 and M-91-2 (1967).

It seems the older we folks get the more we see this, our members getting sick, and some passing on. We ought to think about each other more and stay in touch with our brothers of Vietnam, whether we served with them or not. Life only comes around once and we need to make the best of it. Sooner or later we all have some kind of health situation and hearing from fellow Vietnam Veterans means a lot.

Believe me, I know from my own experience what e-mail or cards will do for someone under the weather and for the families of someone who has passed away. The MRFA tries to assist by posting Get Well Wishes and Taps in our newsletter. We also post Taps on our web site. You may have noticed we also post the passing of the spouses of our brothers in the newsletter and on the web site. We also post the widows of our departed brothers, members of the MRFA. I guess what I'm trying to say is we all need to stay in touch with one another, even if it's only a note on a card or by e-mail or a short phone call. We can all remember our shipmate or platoon buddies. We're our lifelines of support and we're like family.

**Lest We Forget
ABM**

2005 Reunion Registration Form

Drawbridge Inn • Ft. Mitchell, KY • September 1-4, 2005

Name: _____

Unit in Vietnam: _____

Name(s) wife & family/guest(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-Mail: _____

Be sure to enclose your check or money order with this form. Send to the address below.

Registration fee (Member only, cost includes spouse or girlfriend) x \$35.00 each = \$ _____

Additional Family Members, Children, Friends Total _____ x \$10.00 each = \$ _____

Registration fee (Non-Members)* Total _____ x \$50.00 each = \$ _____

Saturday Afternoon Buffet (All) Total _____ x \$12.00 each = \$ _____

Grand Total Enclosed \$ _____

*Non-member is defined as a person who is eligible to be a member of the MRFA by having served in the MRF: TF-117, TF-116, TF-115, the 9th Infantry Division or any Army/Navy supporting unit who has not joined the MRFA. (A membership application can be found elsewhere in this newsletter). The registration fee covers the member and/or guest girlfriend, etc. All other fees apply to friends and/or children. Please send your check or money order (payable to MRFA) and the top portion of this form before August 24, 2005 to, **MRFA Reunion** • 106 Belleview Dr. • Conover, NC 28613. *There will be a \$20.00 charge for all returned checks. Cancellations prior to the reunion will be charged a \$10.00 processing fee.*

Reunion Hotel Registration

Registration will be in the London Hall Lobby. You'll receive your name tags and guest name tags as well as other material when you register. Gunner Stanley, MRFA board members and volunteers will handle your registration. Be sure to wear your name tag or badge during the reunion. It helps old timers with CRS remember you.

Registration Schedule

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

August 31 - September 2 • 9:30 am to 4 pm

Saturday, September 3 • 9:00 am to 10:00 am

Daily Events

Thursday

9:30 am until ???

MRFA activities begin wherever people congregate. Try the large hospitality room in London Hall.

9:30 am — Beverages and snacks will be provided by the Association daily.

9:30 am — Product sales begin in London Hall.

9:30 am — Video footage and slides to be shown. The Association will be furnishing the TV-VCR which usually becomes a raffle prize. The Association will also provide a slide projector. Everyone attending is more than welcome to bring your videos and slides to share. Bring your scrapbooks as well this always goes over well with your fellow members.

Friday

Same as above Daily Events.

7:30 am - 9:30 am — Breakfast buffet in Chaucer's with overflow in the Friars/Merchants rooms. You pay for your own. *You are not required to attend this meal, it's up to you where you eat, etc.*

5:30 pm to 7:30 pm — Dean's Pig Out in London Hall. *This is a free event for you and your guests.*

7:30 pm - 9:00 pm — Join us for speakers in London Hall following Dean's Pig Out.

Master of Ceremonies:
Master Chief Chet "Gunner" Stanley (MDV) USN (Ret.)

Pledge of allegiance:
Big John Richardson

3rd/47th Infantry
INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS—

Captain Joseph Hood, CO D-E Co's 3rd/39th Infantry 9thInfDiv, 9/68-8/69.

United States Federal Judge, Eastern District of Kentucky, **LT/COL Jim Noyes**, 3rd/47th (Afloat) C-Btry 9thInf Div, 1967-68.

LT Norman Wells, ComRivDiv-112 (66-68).

Mike Harris, Tango 152-1, 1968-1969, MRFA Unit Historian.

Buffet Menu

Our buffet menu will feature the following:

- Fresh cut mixed fruit
- Cole slaw and German potato salad
- Baked beans
- Grilled hamburgers & cheeseburgers
- Grilled bratwurst, mettwursts & hot dogs
- Sandwich fixins': lettuce, tomatoes, onions, etc.
- Assorted breads and beverages

Group Festivities To Follow

Big Jim Meehan and the **IUWG Da Da Boys**, **Miss Stella**, and **Doc Nelson**. Believe me, it will be an entertaining evening. If anyone wants to get up and Tap Dance, etc., go to it. And as always *Raffles! Raffles!* by **Thelma and Little Debbie**.

Saturday

7:30 am - 9:00 am — Breakfast buffet in Chaucer's, with overflow in Friars/Merchants. You pay for your own.

The breakfast menu will remain the same, and as before, you are not required to attend. You pay for your own, and where you eat is up to you.

Memorial Services

9:00 am - 10:30 am — Memorial services will be held by Chaplains from the 9th Infantry Division and the Mobile Riverine Force.

11:00 am - 12:00 Noon — London Hall will be closed so the Drawbridge Staff can set up for our lunch buffet. Josh's restaurant and lounge will be open, as will Chaucer's.

12:00 Noon - 1:30 pm — Lunch Buffet in London Hall. Cost \$12.00 per person.

7:00 pm - 12:00 am — *Delta to the DMZ* dance hosted by the MRFA and 9thInfDiv's own **Paul (The Groove Machine) Kasper**. All your old favorites of days and years gone by. There will be a cash bar made available by the Drawbridge.

Sunday

Guests are asked to check out before noon.

Need More Info?

If you need more reunion information, you may contact one of the following board members:

- Reg. Chairman Chet 'Gunner' Stanley: 864-306-8400; gunnerstan@aol.com
- MRFA V.P. Roy Moseman: 706-549-0749; rmoseman@aol.com
- Bob VanDruff: 785-267-1526; bvdmrfa@networksplus.net
- Jim Toney: 580-638-2353; jimtonney@tds.net
- Charlie Ardinger: 563-735-5924; mrfamembership@mabeltel.coop
- Bob Pries: 513-755-1223; rpries@cinci.rr.com
- Albert Moore: 828-464-7228; mrfa@charter.net
- Joe Rosner: 262-653-0876; joerosner@wi.rr.com

Some of our members have asked why we have a buffet instead of a formal meal or dinner at the reunion (such as steak, roast beef or chicken, etc.). The reason is the cost. We try to keep our reunion costs as low as possible so the reunion will be affordable to everyone. Our Registration and Buffet costs are well below the majority of other Associations.

Recently I received a reunion notice for a ship I had served on, the registration cost was \$100.00 per person. They had three meals planned, all at over \$30.00 each. Two tours cost \$35.00 a person per tour and this was just for the bus. Reunions can be expensive but so far we have kept our costs well below average.

—Albert

Ads River Currents

We have received many requests from our membership to place Advertisements in *River Currents*. Books, Medals, Patches, Watches, Boat Models, etc. Also, everyone wants a photograph of his or her posted product.

We are unable to do this because of space limitations. The only thing that will be published will be the name of the product and telephone number, postal address or email address. This info is posted at no charge to you. Please remember, if you received this service in any other publication there would be a cost involved.

- **McGrogan's Military Patches:** 208-762-4481; macpatch@earthlink.net
- **Ships Histories:** 1-800 732-9333
- **Military Watches:** MRFA & 9th Inf.; 541-863-3144; seaweed@chiefsquarters.com; www.chiefsquarters.com
- **Boat Models: All Brown Water Boat Models:** George & Sharon Johnson, 2222 Ash Ave, Las Vegas, NV 89101 or e-mail sharonjohnson5@aol.com
- **Books:** www.mrfa.org
- **Challenge Coins & Military Key Fobs:** Frank Gubala, Fgubala@aol.com; 716-873-4821
- **www.9thinfantry.bravepages.com**
- **SEAWEDS SHIPS HISTORIES & PHOTOS** 800-seaweed, www-usseaweed.com

The only products that will appear in *River Currents* will be those sold by the MRFA.

MRFA & 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION MUSEUM ROOM

Anyone wanting to donate or show their memorabilia, please contact Bob "Doc" Pries. Doc and his 2nd/47th staff did an excellent job with the room for our '03 reunion. Please be aware that the MRFA cannot be responsible for any items left in the room overnight, so if you have something that you really value you may want to take it back to your private room at night. There were no problems with anything missing or accidentally mishandled at the last reunion, and the room is locked up and secured at night.

You may contact Bob (Doc) Pries at 9702 Frair Tuck Rd., West Chester, OH 45069; phone 513-755-1223, or email rpries@cicci.rr.com.

Bob Pries served as a medic with the B/CO 2nd/47th (Mech.) Inf., 69-70.

VA Representative

MRFA member Al Holtan will have a booth available in London Hall with brochures and other VA info. If you have any questions concerning the VA, please feel free to stop by and check in with the VA booth. Al has been a Veterans Representative for many years and has helped many Veterans. Al served with B Co., 4th/47th Infantry, 1969. Currently, he lives in Lake City, Minnesota. You can contact him by e-mail at aholtan@co.wabasha.mn.us.

MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Mobile Museum

The museum will be on the hotel grounds from August 31 to September 4. Board Member Rich Corrick will be handling all aspects of the trailer. The trailer will be open from 9 am till 5 pm. If you have never had the opportunity to see the trailer please plan on doing so, it's an awesome display. All the 9th Infantry Divi-

sion KIAs, Navy Task Forces 117-116-115 KIAs, as well as all in-country Navy Units and Coast Guard KIAs are listed on the outside of the trailer under their respective units. We have pictures of all the different units of the 9th and all Navy units posted behind plexiglas inside the trailer. *Rich Corrick served on R-112-1, 1966-1967.*



Thanks to Our Members The Memorial Trailer is a Great Success!

The MRFA would like to thank the following members for their generous donations to our memorial trailer. If you would like to make a donation, please make check or money order payable to MRFA. Send to: **Charlie Ardinger**, 1857 County Rd. A-14, Decorah, IA 52101.

RALPH TRESSER, USS BENEWAH
CHARLES E. ARDINGER, T-151-11
JIMMY TONEY, 3RD/60TH INFANTRY
RICHARD T. COOGAN, B & A COS. 9TH INF 15TH COMBAT ENG
ALBERT B. MOORE, USS BENEWAH
BRIAN J. MAHONEY, USS SPHINX ARL-24
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DAVID E. LULL, B-2 2ND/47TH INFANTRY
ROY D. MOSEMAN, C-2 4TH/47TH INFANTRY
MICHAEL A. HARRIS, T-152-1
WILLIAM H. WULFF, B CO. 3RD/47TH INFANTRY
ALFRED M. CADY, III, USS BENEWAH
LARRY C. ETHRIDGE, USS ASKARI
GEORGE FRANK HUMPHREYS II, E CO. 3RD/39TH INF.
PAUL EASTHAM, T-132-11
CHARLIE E. TAYLOR, C-3 5TH/60TH INFANTRY
REBECCA HANCOCK, ASSOCIATE
IN MEMORY OF AMY J. GILBERT AND KRISTIN WAGNER
NIECES OF JOHN J. READ USS COLLETON ABP-36
VICTOR E. UNRUH, T-151-1
JOHN W. BOLING, IUWG-1 UNIT 2
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Dean's Pig Cookout

Dean "Pig King" Ayres will again host his Pig Roast on Friday evening September 2nd in the London Hall Lobby.

This is a freebie from Dean Ayres (709th Maintenance) and the MRFA, at no cost to you, the members. We welcome all volunteers to help shuck corn, etc. If you would like to be one of Dean's volunteers, please contact him at Box 96, Phoenix, MD 21131; phone 410-527-1204; or email deanayres@comcast.net. Dean served with 709 Maintenance Co. 99 Combat Support Bn. 9th Inf. Div., 69-70. *Very special thanks goes to Jennifer Hesse of the Drawbridge Inn and the hotel staff for letting us do this — most hotels wouldn't allow it.*



Doc Soul

BY TIMOTHY S. GOINS

Bernard B. Fall, a French-American and professor at Howard University, wrote two very fine histories documenting the French military debacle in Indochina, *Street without Joy*, published in 1964, and *Hell in a Very Small Place*, published in 1966. The former concerns the French Colonial Army's futile and tragic efforts to clear Highway One north of Hué City, that highway being then under the firm control of the *Viet Minh*. The latter recalls, in extraordinary and nearly unreadable detail, the siege and catastrophic fall of the fortress of *Dien Bien Phu* during fifty-two consecutive days of siege spanning the months of March and April 1954. These two works are significant as they well document both the egregious errors made by the French in their misguided campaigns and, at the same time, unintentionally predict the preposterous failure of the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), to respect and learn from a history that was both recent and eminently palatable.

Long before I was drafted, I had read parts of *Street without Joy*, intrigued first by the title but gradually seduced by the preponderance of such copious detail that the French order of battle began to read like absurdist verse. Such arcane acronyms as *BEP*, *GAP*, and *RALP*—barbarisms as Fall had called them—digested respectively the 1st Foreign Legion Parachute Battalion, the Airborne Battle Group, and the 35th Airborne Light Artillery Regiment. These consonants organized themselves into a litany that shortly began to disappear from the page and to reform in my dreams, a textural nightmare lacking vowels and thus utterly indecipherable.

When, years later, I re-read *Hell in a Very Small Place*, I was surprised to discover that the prose seemed sparse, the details so scarce that I now found myself evolving my own. These are the homogenous minutiae that now speak to my memories. French river craft sailing across an ocean of time, all the way from the Red River Delta until they run out of water three clicks shy of the Cambodian border, hopelessly aground somewhere northwest of *Tan An* at the edge of the Plain of Reeds. I share with my comrades the groan of the ramp descending against the high bank and the mad scramble to land amid the laconic boom of a Browning automatic rifle (BAR) that has not changed its voice in thirty-six years, not even in the last half century. I share the boom of an F-4 Phantom as it rolls off target and the pink heat of jellied napalm hissing into the canal that we must now cross, submerged to our chests and marooned by silt—Moroccan legionnaires, Riverine soldiers and sailors alike, sitting ducks in the midstream of history. But we knew, as has every soldier or sailor who has ever been in combat knows—including Moroccan and Algerian legionnaires—that when you are hit, you have fallen from the stream of history, and that your only hope is to call for a corps-

man or medic.

Doc Soul, as he chose to be known to us, was an Army medic assigned to my unit: Echo Company, 3rd Battalion of the 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division. His photograph, shared by Robert Lisko of the Recon platoon, a native Oklahoman, accompanies this piece. Doc Soul was an imposing individual and one of the finest, most fearless medics with whom I had the privilege to server. I first made his acquaintance on the afternoon of the 15th of March, 1968—the



Ides of March for those of you who have dabbled in Shakespeare—during the chaos following a Viet Cong ambush of Echo Company's Recon platoon. Recon's medic, Doc Adams, had been a casualty (KIA) early on in the action; we were without a medic and were confronted with numerous wounded as well as several more KIA's.

This was my first day in combat, actually my first full day with Recon. I was uninjured, through some fluke that had seen men to either side of me take hits, and I found myself surrounded by the injured and dying. I hadn't the faintest idea of what to do. My field dressings had been exhausted, and I had begun to tear my fatigue shirt into long strips in order to improvise bandages. It was getting toward dusk and the enemy fire was still quite heavy. Green tracers were sizzling everywhere. I could hear B-40 rockets detonating against the paddy dike that afforded us some cover to our front. The wounded men were firing back. I recall one wounded soldier (who eventually became a fast friend), firing an M-60 machine gun from the hip and laughing a hideous laugh. Our Platoon Leader, although uninjured, was elusive. I saw him once in the area of the most casualties, but he disappeared. In fact, none of us saw him after that—he was transferred out the unit the following day never to be seen by any of us again. His nickname was *Superboy*.

In retrospect, both from the immediacy of the following day and now from the more reflective vantage point of thirty-six years later, the battle on the 15th of March in *Dinh Tuong* Province evolved in classic form. Recon, the point platoon fell into an *L* shaped ambush: enemy in a wood line running roughly north to south across our left flank, a heavily armed element completing the short leg of the *L* in a group of hootches to our front and north. When the enemy initiated the ambush, a good third of the platoon was in the killing zone. Recon responded by charging the ambush and breaking its back. "Move up, move up to the front," I kept hearing as I struggled forward

from my position toward the rear of the platoon. Breaking the back of the ambush and sending the enemy fleeing into the open paddy to our north was not without cost. The field was littered with the injured and dying and our platoon medic was one of the dying.

As I feebly and ineptly attempted to apply my improvised bandages to the wounded, I looked up and beheld a tall figure approaching the hootches across the open field to our south. His helmet was tipped back on his large head, the chin straps undone, and an aid bag bounced on his hip as he strode resolutely toward my position. Green tracers snapped past him, one seeming to pass directly over his right shoulder, missing him by inches. He didn't flinch, didn't even break stride. This was Doc Soul.

With the appearance of Doc Soul, the chaos abated and the battle once more began to evolve. He did not seem distracted by the fact that his assistant was an FNG who was covered with other people's blood and who had tried to improvise field dressings by shredding his fatigue shirt into ribbons. He issued orders and I followed them. We loaded the injured into plastic ponchos and, one by one, transported them across the sniper-swept paddies to the awaiting dust-offs, the choppers themselves being under withering small arms fire the entire time. Doc Soul consolidated the wounded and established triage. He made the hard decisions as only one last dust-off was able to land due to the volume of enemy fire. His actions, both heroic and thoughtful, rebuilt continuity amid the chaos that had ruled the better part of that dreadful afternoon.

For thousands of years we have fought our battles using projectiles, some sophisticated, other primitive, all deadly reminders that we have not evolved very far in perfecting the art of ground warfare. Battles seem to take on capricious lives of their own, yet they always tend to evolve in ultimately predictable ways. And always there are men who arise in the seeming chaos of battle who, though courage and intelligence, re-establish the flow of events and return continuity to the battle field. They save lives. They impose order. They sort things out amid the cacophony of firefights. Doc Soul, soldier, medic, brother, was one such man. Through his efforts and selfless courage, the battle of the 15th of March evolved in our favor.

Bernard B. Fall demystifies the evolutive nature of battle, which in my mind projects itself upon the complete combat experience. Into the field we fly or sail, hoping against hope that the LZ or beach has been secured. But that is not always the case, and we are obliged to either adapt to the new set of circumstances or die. Often as not, we vigorously adapt but still fall. Survival of the fittest does not apply at all. Highly experienced master sergeants, some relics of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Doc Soul

CONTINUED FROM PAGED 6

Korean War, are struck down by rounds fired aimlessly by the enemy or worse yet by their own comrades panicking in the heat of battle. Veterans of countless combat assaults are killed or wounded before they have yet had time to raise their weapons. No, firefights, hot LZ's, and Riverine assaults are remembered by those who have survived them as deafening tableaux existing forever in grim statistics, events that after their conclusion must, as the British SAS are known to say, *be sorted out*.

I have since come to uneasy terms with the notion of evolution, which is to say that I have come to accept that the belief is untenable. James Joyce captured my heresy exactly. *The Theory of Evolution, in the light of which our society basks*, Joyce wrote while studying to be an elementary school teacher in the Italian city of Padua, *instructs us that when we were little we were not grown up*. Before I served with the MRF, I was not grown up; he had evolved, in heart and mind, beyond that of most men.

Joyce has been dead for a thousand years. Doc Soul is alive and I trust well. Bernard B. Fall was KIA north of Hué on February 21, 1967, after being mortally wounded by an enemy landmine while sweeping Highway One, the *Street Without Joy*, in the company of the USMC. He was just forty years old.

—Timothy S. Goins, Santa Fe, NM 87505
Tgoins8417@comcast.net
September 8, 2004

The American's Creed

William Tyler Page

"I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I, therefore, believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies."

William Tyler Page, Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, wrote The American's Creed in 1917. The House, on behalf of the American people, accepted it on April 3, 1918.

Ben Herrera

The Permian Basin Vietnam Veterans' Memorial comes at a time when the places and events of the Vietnam War have become dim in the memory and conscience of the country. But those memories still burn brightly in the minds of those who fought in Vietnam, and the families of those who did not return.

"It doesn't seem that long," says Ruben Herrera, of Odessa. "I was a PFC (Private First Class) in the Marine Corps. It was '69 and '70, the last part of '69 and the early part of '70. I was with Bravo-1-9, First Battalion, Ninth Marines, the 'Walking Dead'."

Herrera's unit was based in Okinawa, and was later assigned to serve aboard the USS New Orleans, off the coast of Vietnam. Their nickname had not been given lightly, and it served as a grim reminder of what might lay ahead for all those who served.

"The unit that we replaced had gotten wiped out in the A Shau Valley," explained Herrera. "So what happened is, they nicknamed us the 'Walking Dead' because they got wiped out, and we replaced them."

The Memorial is a tribute to all Vietnam-era veterans. Not just those who served under fire in Vietnam, but all men and women who answered the call to duty during that time.

Built of stone and brick, decorated with

flags and landscaping, the memorial also serves as a lasting tribute to the men and women who gave what United States President Abraham Lincoln called 'their last full measure of devotion'.

Carved into the stone are the names of more than 200 West Texas men and Women who were killed, or are listed as missing in action in Vietnam. One of those names is PFC Benjamin Herrera, United States Army, and older brother to Ruben.

"He was infantry. He was with Company E, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, in Vietnam," said Herrera. He was born November 16, 1947, and he was killed August 10, 1968."

Military service, and the dangers it might entail, was nothing new to the Herrera brothers. Their father served during the Second World War, and Ruben's son is a United States Marine who served during the Persian Gulf War.

While proud of their military service, the fondest memories held by the family are those of the friendship and fellowship they shared at home, in the time of peace. The memories they have of Ben are no different.

"He was a hell of a baseball player! He gave you the shirt off his back. A hard worker

and devoted husband," recalled Herrera. "The last thing I remember about him is, right before he went, we got in the backyard and were wrestling. I still have a picture of it, where we were in 'bear hug', trying to knock each other down."

Ben was laid to rest in an Odessa cemetery, a site his family continues to visit, to reflect and remember. Herrera believes the Vietnam Memorial will serve a similar purpose, and therefore, definitely plans to visit the site.

"You bet, you bet. For the simple fact that it's there, and that's probably as close as I'll get to him right now."

BRAVO COMPANY FLAG FLOWN IN IRAQ

The caption says, 'This flag was proudly flown by the 16th EACCS on the E-8C Joint STARS Aircraft over the skies of Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom on 13 JUN 04 at the request of CPT Craig L. De Old, MI, USAR. This mission provided crucial Command and Control support for the US and Coalition Forces.'

Flown on behalf of B-3/60 in the Mobile Riverine Force Association.



Years of Combat

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

the Shrike antiradar missile to great effect. Fighters were equipped with highly effective Sidewinder and Sparrow air-to-air missiles and 20-millimeter machine guns. This array of ordnance helped to restrict enemy movement on the ground and to achieve strategic air superiority over coastal North Vietnam and the Gulf of Tonkin.

Although air power was the cutting edge of Task Force 77, surface ships were essential to the interdiction campaign in North Vietnam and Laos. In Operation Sea Dragon, begun in October 1966, cruisers, destroyers, and for one month battleship *New Jersey* (BB 62) ranged the North Vietnamese littoral sinking Communist supply craft, shelling coastal batteries and radar sites, and complementing the aerial interdiction effort by bombarding the infiltration routes ashore. While at first restricted to coastal waters south of 1731'N, by February 1967 the Sea Dragon force was authorized to operate as far north as the 20th parallel. This area was constricted in April 1968 when the bombing halt ended American combat activity north of the 19th parallel.

Steaming generally in pairs, the two to four American and Australian destroyers and one cruiser worked with carrier-based spotter planes, such as the A-1 Skyraider and Grumman S-2 Tracker, to find, identify, and destroy infiltrating vessels and shore targets. Often, North Vietnamese coastal batteries fired back. Although several of the 19 ships that were hit required repairs at shipyards in Japan and the Philippines, no vessel was sunk during the two-year-long Sea Dragon operation. Damaged ships were quickly replaced on the gun line and the coastal deployment was maintained. Periodically, this group reinforced the Seventh Fleet cruisers and destroyers providing naval gunfire support to allied forces in South Vietnam. The naval surface group conducted the Sea Dragon effort until the end of October 1968, when American combat operations in North Vietnam ceased.

The carrier task force at Yankee Station was assisted by other surface combatants as well. Around each aircraft carrier, two to four destroyers steamed in a protective screen to defend the ship from any submarine or air threat. To provide the deployed task force with distant warning of air attack, beginning in April 1965 the fleet created a radar picket station between the Communist mainland and Task Force 77 sailing in Tonkin Gulf. Normally, two destroyers stayed on alert at this forward station. In July of the following year, this deployment was formalized with establishment of PIRAZ (positive identification radar advisory zone), which entailed locating and tracking all planes over the eastern regions of North Vietnam and the gulf by a positioned surface ship

equipped with advanced radar and communications. The unit also vectored naval aircraft to and from their targets and warned them of approaching MiGs.

Throughout the Rolling Thunder campaign, the Navy maintained units in the Gulf of Tonkin to retrieve downed fliers from the sea and from North Vietnam and Laos. Normally, two destroyers were deployed to the forward, North SAR Station (20N 107E) and another two to the South SAR Station (19N 106E). To carry out rescues in North Vietnam's lethal environment, one UH-2 Sea Sprite helicopter equipped with self-sealing fuel tanks, machine guns, and armor was n e s t e d onboard a ship at each station. Another four s i m i l a r l y armed and armored Sikorsky SH-3A Sea Kings (the primary rescue helicopter) were based in one of the Yankee Station carriers. During major air operations, one or two SH-3As orbited over the destroyers. Each of the other aircraft carriers carried a detachment of three unconfigured UH-2 helicopters devoted to sea rescues. Air Force Sikorsky HH-3E helicopters, Grumman HU-16 amphibian aircraft, and A-1 Skyraider escorts also operated in the gulf. To provide the SAR helicopters with enemy ground fire suppression, communications, and other support during operations, the fleet kept four A-1, A-4, or A-7 attack aircraft airborne and ready for action. Under the overall control of Commander Task Force 77, the SAR Coordinator directed the Navy's effort from a North SAR Station destroyer. This officer guided the actions of the airborne on-scene commander and arranged for additional support when it was needed.

The fleet's search and rescue forces saved many American aviators from death or captivity. From 6 June 1964 to 1 November 1968, 458 of the 912 naval air crewmen downed as a result of combat or noncombat operations in North Vietnam, Laos, or at sea were recovered. While the retrieval of aviators from crash sites on land, when at all possible, took somewhat longer, the rescue at sea usually occurred within 20 to 30 minutes of the aircraft loss. The effort was not without cost, however, for 26 men were killed, wounded, missing, or made prisoner, and 33 aircraft were destroyed during SAR operations. This measure, however, returned valuable air crews to the fleet and improved the morale of naval aviators, who knew the Navy would do its utmost to rescue them from hostile territory or waters.

This psychological support was crucial because the air units of Task Force 77 carried out their missions in one of the world's most difficult operational environments. During the winter Northeast Monsoon from

November to March, the weather in the Gulf of Tonkin and over most of North Vietnam is characterized by dense clouds and heavy rainfall. Conditions are especially harsh during a weather phenomenon known as the Crachin. Thick clouds with ceilings as low as 500 feet blanket the area and are accompanied by fog and persistent drizzle. Conversely, during the summer Southwest Monsoon from May to September, the skies are usually clear and dry. These general weather patterns are almost reversed in South Vietnam and Laos. This situation allowed shifting of air resources to more favorable areas. Still, throughout the year high temperatures and humidity, typhoons, tropical storms, and thundershowers increased the difficulty and danger of operating in Southeast Asia. In addition, the enemy also used foul flying weather to his advantage.

Enemy air defenses caused aviators more concern for by 1968 the Communists had developed a defensive system that was well-armed, coordinated, and supported. On the ground throughout North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Laos, the enemy trained skyward thousands of small arms, automatic weapons, and antiaircraft artillery. North Vietnam alone contained 8,000 weapons of many calibers, concentrated around key targets. Beginning in early 1965, surface-to-air missiles (SAM) were added to this defensive arsenal, and by early 1968 over 300 SAM sites dotted the North Vietnamese countryside. The entire defensive system was tied together with a sophisticated network of communications, air alert stations, and early warning, ground control-interceptor, and fire control radars. New and replacement weapons and ammunition were amply supplied by sympathetic Communist countries. The loss in Southeast Asia of 421 fixed-wing aircraft from 1965 to 1968 attested to the strength of these defenses. The aviators killed, missing, or made prisoner totaled 450. The operating environment was especially dangerous in North Vietnam, where 382 Navy planes were shot down, 58 of them by SAMs.

Although only accounting for eight of the Navy's aircraft during this three-year period, the North Vietnamese air units posed a constant threat to U.S. operations, thus requiring a diversion of vital resources for protection. The enemy air force varied from 25 to 100 MiG-15, MiG-17, MiG-19, and MiG-21 jet fighters. The country's jet-capable airfields included Gia Lam, Phuc Yen, Cat Bi, Kep, Kien An, Yen Bai, Son Tay, Bai Thuong, Hoa Lac, and Vinh. The U.S. Navy engaged in its first air-to-air encounter of the war on 3 April 1965, when several MiG-15s unsuccessfully attacked a flight of F-8 Crusaders near Thanh Hoa. On 17 June, two Midway F-4 Phantoms registered the first kills in the long conflict when they downed two MiG-17s south of Hanoi. By the end of the Rolling Thunder effort on 1 November 1968, naval aviators had destroyed 23 MiG-17s and 8 MiG-21s.

The next segment of *By Sea, Land and Air* will be *Rolling Thunder*.



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Lanny Snyder for David "Doc" Hearne T-92-6 Chet "Gunner" Stanley for Jerry Pappy Ashcraft (cox'sn) CCB-111-1

John Philip for LTC William B. Cronin KIA April 27, 1967 CO 2/47th / Colonel Arthur D. Moreland USA Ret. 2/47th 4/67-12/67

Fred Gottwald for Sgt. Walter J. Garstkiewicz C/Co/3/60 & C/Co/6/31st KIA-1-9-1970.

Gene Cooper for Steve Brichford FT2-68/69 / Jerry Roleofs 67-68 USS White River LSMT-536

Bill Brennan for Tom Swanick GMG3 USS White River LSMT-536

David Lynn for Howard Burns (QM2) Robert Bouchet (SM2) Herman Miller (GM3) 8-11-68 IUWG-1-3

Brothers of the 2nd/47th for all Army and Navy KIA's Bruce McIver for Doc Zeth Lane (RAID) RivRon-13 Adam Metts for Donald L. Bruckart Tango-111-2 KIA March 31, 1969

Jim Morse for Mark W. Weachter CTO-3 COMNAVFORV 1971-72

Robert G. Thacker, In memory of Earl T. Pelhan, Jr., SSG KIA, Delta lo 15th Eng, 9th Inf Div, D Co. 15th Combat Eng., 03/68-08/69

CCB Working Party

If you live in the San Diego area and would like to assist in the restoration of CCB-18 by being an MRFA volunteer (on the Working Party), Army or Navy, you may contact: Charles Campbell at 677 G Street, SP#1, Chula Vista, California 91910; 619-427-6835; cicec@cox.net or Everett Jones, 1947 Gotham Street, Chula Vista, CA 91913; 619-421-3721; oneerj@pacbel.net.

WEB SITE: MRFA & 9thInfDiv

www.mrfa.org Mike Harris is our web master. He does a great job with the web site. We have lots of VA and KIA info. Just about anything you want on the 9th and the MRF and other in-country Navy units Mike has somewhere on the site. He also has patch, book and tour info on the web site. You may contact Mike Harris if you want a book, pictures, etc. posted on the site. Mike makes the final decision on what is posted on the web site. Contact him by e-mail mekong152@charter.net. Mike served on Tango-152-1 68-69.



MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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*One flag, one land,
one heart, one hand,
One nation, evermore!*

— Oliver Wendell Holmes

PLEASE NOTE:

YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE is printed on the front of your issue of *River Currents*.

TAPS

Those gone, but not forgotten...



BMCS *Raymond A. Lang* USN (Ret) passed away Sunday, January 23, 2005, due to complications with a brain tumor and lung cancer. Senior Chief Lang was a founding member and plank owner of the Association. Chief Lang will always be remembered for his winning smile and ways. He always carried himself in true military fashion and with dignity and was always a delight to be around. Chief Lang was one the few last remaining association members to have served in World War II, Korea and the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam War Chief Lang served as boat captain on Monitor 112-1, 1967-68. Ray Lang served his country for 30 years with pride and distinction and will be missed by all his shipmates of the Brown Water, Navy and Army.

Chief Lang was one of the truly last old sailors of our lifetime, his likes will never be seen again. Farewell BOATS! You may contact the family c/o of son Ray Mikalauskas, 204 W. Cottesmore Circle, Longwood, FL 32770; 407-788-6609.

Pride Diehl (pictured here) passed away in July 2003. Pride served with HCC, 2/47th 4.2 Motars, 12/69 - 9/70. At the time of his death he lived in



Ohio. His brother Hugh lives in Alaska. No address was provided.

Member *Barry Curbow* passed away in 2004. Barry served with IUWG-1-Unit 3, 68-69. You may contact the family c/o 704 N. Delmar, Rilesville, MS 38771; or phone 612-756-2968.

Member *Michael Stephenson* passed away May 14, 2002. Michael served on the USS Union AKA-105. You may contact the family c/o mother Mrs. Maureen Stephenson, 3775 Lakewood Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45246-3121.

Member *Billy Scantlin* passed away January 27, 2005 after a long battle with cancer. Billy served on the USS Harnett Cty. LST-821, 1969-70. You may contact the family at: Rt 2, Box E, Haskell, OK 74437; (918) 483-7436. May Billy rest in peace.

We have been notified by member Tex McKean that his wife *Louanna McKean* was killed in an automobile accident Christmas Eve 2004. Our condolences go out to Tex and his family. You may contact Tex at 13168 Stone Henge, Sugarland, TX 77478; phone (281) 491-1961 or e-mail mckean@alltel.net. Tex served on the USS White River LSMR-536, 12/66 & 12/68.

The Mobile Riverine Force would like to extend it's most sincere sympathies to all the families.

Notes from the Membership Chairman

I just want to let our members know a few things about your membership.

If you move, please send us your new address. This helps keep the MRFA postage costs down and our database up to date.

On your membership cards, there is only room for one unit and one date.

If you want to give us more information, please send this separate from your membership card info and we will enter it in our database. We also start a member over, if his dues have elapsed. A continuous member is one whose dues have never elapsed. In other words, if your dues have elapsed for a year or two and you renew you will not be considered a continuous member.

Any time you have questions about your membership, feel free to send me an e-mail at mrfamembership@mabeltel.coop or, send by regular mail to:



Membership Chairman (MRFA)
1857 County Rd., A-14
Decorah, IA 52101

We'd appreciate your support on this. A number of members move and leave no forwarding home addresses; then later contact

the Association wanting to know why they are not receiving a newsletter, etc. We can't help you if you don't send us your new address. Also, remember to update your email address as well.

Some of you change ISPs and don't let us know. Then you contact us wanting to know why you have been taken off the MRFA & 9th e-mail lists. Please, keep us updated on any changes you make to your home address or e-mail.

Thanks,

*In Brotherhood,
Charlie (Boats) Ardinger
Membership Chairman &
Treasurer (MRFA)*

NO HOLLYWOOD GRUNTS

BY RICHARD DAHL

On a hot humid morning in March 1969, I arrived in Dong Tam South Vietnam, assigned to Alpha Company 3rd Battalion 60th Infantry 9th Infantry Division. The 3rd/60th I was to learn was part of the Mekong Delta's Mobile Riverine Force a Army and Navy unit. I was waiting on a small boat to take me out to one of the large ships in the middle of the river named the *USS Colleton* APB-36.

I boarded the small boat and we made our way up the narrow muddy brown water river arriving at the *Colleton* around an hour later.

The *Colleton* was a big ship, and it was the most ugly ship I had ever seen. It was dark olive drab green and it resembled a huge green dumpster sitting in the middle of the river. The *Colleton* was anchored in the river near the city of My Tho. I wondered what the government had done with all the beautiful aircraft carriers that I had seen in the enlistment brochures. I grabbed my gear, and stumbled onto the pontoon tied up to the side of the ship. Upon departure I found myself standing in the middle of the pontoon wondering what to do next. I noticed there was numerous Navy personnel moving about the pontoon, and I was in the Army and was confused.

And, I thought maybe I had been dropped off at the wrong place. I picked up my gear, approached one of the sailors and asked if he knew where Alpha Company 9th Infantry was located. He did not say a word just smirked and pointed toward a ladder going up the ship I went onboard and after asking around was pointed in the right di-

rection. I opened a door to the sound of Johnny Cash music, and confronted a PFC who looked as if he had just woken up. He was sitting at a small desk. I told the clerk that I was eager to join the unit so I could start doing my part for my Country.

He snickered and shook his head "Let me see your orders," he said. I was starting to think nothing was too important around here, and it was evident he did not care if I existed. "Report to the 3rd platoon right down them steps, and find a guy named Spanky" he mumbled. I was under the impression that maybe I had found a way to join up with little rascals.

I was a typical 19-year-old kid who wanted to serve his country, and I wanted to be a good soldier I was living in kind of a fantasy world when I got to Vietnam. I was thinking that to go to war was the same thing as watching a Sunday morning movie. I thought of John Wayne as the courageous Marine who served. And Audie Murphy who acted in war and cowboy movies doing heroic actions. Murphy was actually a decorated war hero and the most decorated soldier during WWII. And I wanted to experience the same things that Audie Murphy went through.

I went down the steps and met Sgt. Spanky he looked like death warmed over. I became an active part of the war a couple of days later. We were flying by helicopter to a village near Ben Tre. I remember while flying in the chopper my heart was pumping fast as I looked at the other guys who had been there longer than I had. They

looked back at me and shook their heads as if I was some kind of stupid joke to them. I was just another new guy who did not know anything, and they suspected I might do something stupid when we landed. They did not want to be anywhere near me.

As we started to descend into the rice paddy, gun ships sprayed the area with machine-gun fire and what seemed to be multiple colored rockets. I thought this might be what was known as twilight's gleaming. One of the guys looked at me and told me to do what ever he did after we jumped off. He said that if I did, I may be lucky and live. I thought that was a good reason to follow what he said.

As we got off the choppers, I was very clumsy and the blades from the choppers created a din. The water from the rice paddy swirled around as if I was in some type of typhoon. I felt stupid. This was not like the movies and television.

The choppers were almost out of sight and I could now hear the explosions and gunfire. I knew we were being ambushed. I heard someone yell "Medic!" I was really scared now. I guess I was just being human. I ran over to the medic who was running around feverishly overwhelmed by the many wounded. He had a piece of brown medical tubing hanging out of his mouth, and he had tears streaming down his face. He was looking at me as if to say "What should I do next?" I never saw soldiers on television or in the movies cry or be scared. I guess this was reality.

We patched the wounded up the best we could and put them on medivac choppers. Some of them waved as the choppers left, and some just lay there motionless. I never found out who lived or died.

I know a part of me died that day. It has been over 25 years since I was in Vietnam, and I realized that war was not a game. I also learned those movies and television was not reality. The "Grunt" or 9th Infantry soldier was expendable in Vietnam; we were used to flush out the enemy, and then the artillery and air strikes finished the job.

The above was written September 8, 1994; Richard Dahl served in A/CO 3rd/60th, 69-70.

Contact Richard c/o 1093 Firefly Dr., Machesney Park, IL; phone 815-871-3466; ddhl48216@insightbb.com, mobilriverine.com

Note: Today you still see the military using its air power and artillery first. They have learned to be more cautious with human life. I am glad the military is being more protective of our soldiers in each branch of the military. And remember they are all human and have family or some one that waits for their return.

All my brothers who have gone on ahead, I hope you all are resting in peace. And to my brothers still with us peace to each and every one of you.

"You're not forgotten"

Richard Dahl, An Ole Soldier of Vietnam



Air Cushioned Vehicles Reunion

A reunion was held this past August for the members of the 3rd Bde 9th Inf Div 39th Cav ACV (Air Cushioned Vehicles). This event took place August 1-3 in Williamsburg, VA. It was the first time in over 30 years for many of them to have seen or spoken to each other. The attendees felt that it was really great to get together with their wives and old buddies and get caught up on what everyone has been doing with their lives. The 39th Cavalry operated southwest of Saigon, stationed at Ben Luc in the Plain of Reeds, in an area known as the Parrots Beak region of Cambodia. On August 3rd they went to the Transportation Museum at Ft. Eustis, VA. The staff there was excellent and even provided a ladder for them to actually get back on the craft after all these years. Needless to say it was quite emotional for them and they're forever indebted to the gracious staff of the museum. The unit's mission was to perform dismounted recon, troop insertions and extractions and night ambushes. Originally comprised of 3 hovercrafts the unit lost its first, 901 in January of 1970 to a "dud" B52 bomb. Luckily there were no KIAs. The second craft, 902, (shown here) was lost to a landmine on August 3, 1970, while on a mission. This re-



sulted in 3 KIAs. Unit, 903, is on display at Ft. Eustis, VA. So they were on 903 34 years to the day of losing 902. The 3 surviving crewmembers of 902 were present: Gord (Sandy) Sanderson, Tommy McCauley and Jack Kavanaugh. They plan to hold another reunion and would like to locate and make contact with all former members who served so proudly with them in Vietnam.

Anyone that served on the Army hovercrafts should contact Jack Kavanaugh at (902) 535-2228 or jackkavanaugh@hotmail.com. Anyone that served on the Navy hovercrafts should contact Mike Granat by e-mail at: waterlineusa@earthlink.net.

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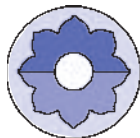
MRFAs DUES INCREASE FROM YOUR OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Fellow members and associates the price increase will be there. Using a minimal cost increase to help delay some of our costs in postage and mail-offers and Board of Directors on November 18, 2004 to increase our yearly dues and the 3-year membership dues. We have remained at the same cost to it is still a good deal and certainly everyone understands a price increase. Hopefully, we will not have to increase the membership fee for another 12 and products also going up, as well as years. Folks, we have held off on the dues increase as long as possible. We hope this does not put a burden on anyone. If you have renewed your dues before the new year then those that apply or renew will have the date of January 1, 2005, your increase in rate, we will not go back and ask membership, we will not go back and ask members that just joined for more than 1 year.

Albert Moore, President MRFAs
Roy Moseman, Vice President MRFAs

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