

RIVER CURRENTS



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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FROM THE GALLEY

ALBERT MOORE, MRFA PRESIDENT

We will be back at the Drawbridge Inn in Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky in 2005 from Wednesday August, 31st through Sunday, September 4th (check-out). Room rates are \$77.00 for the Main Building and \$67.00 for the Garrison Building (detached). These rates are good for three days prior to the reunion and 3 days following the reunion.

We are already in the planning stages with the Northern Kentucky Convention Visitors Bureau's Brenda Jackson about a bus for you ladies who want to go shopping and tour the area. This was not available at the past reunion. Associate member Mary Werner has offered her assistance with this since she lives in the area and has many contacts. As for, you members, I'm sure you can jump onboard the bus as well. The Convention Bureau is trying to work out a deal so that there will be no cost for the bus.

Individual hospitality rooms in the main building will be available at a cost of \$125.00 a day; with two rooms available in the Garrison Building at \$118 per day. More on this will be available in upcoming issues of *River Currents*.

You may start making reservations in September of this year. You may be wondering why we're posting this information now. Folks, it's to help you make plans for your reunion because some of you are federal workers who need to give a notice of 6 months or a year before taking vacation time. Some members also make the reunion their vacation time and take advantage of the extended room rates for 3 days prior to the reunion and 3 days following the reunion.

To make reservations, call the Drawbridge at 1-800-354-9793; or the Hospitality Suites at 1-800-426-3841 (Sales). Ask for Jennifer Hesse.

MRFA Welcomes New Editor

Beginning with the Summer issue of *River Currents* you will have a new Editor and Chief. Well, not really new, but he will be back. Your

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Gator Navy in Vietnam

During the Vietnam War, over 50 LST's served in Vietnam, with a good percentage of these serving in direct support of the Mobile Riverine Force TF-117, some earning as many as 15 Battle Stars. The T's of Vietnam were awarded 395 Battle Stars, 19 Presidential Unit Citations, 48 Navy Unit Citations, and 44 Meritorious Unit Citations.

The T's of Vietnam went into action on many different occasions and in many different areas of Vietnam from the DMZ to the Delta, some resulting in the loss of life. The USS Westchester County, LST-1167 was mined in November of 1968 with the loss of 18 Navy men, 5 Army men from the 9th Infantry Division, and 27 men wounded. The USS Coconino County, LST-603 was mined in 1967. The USS Hunterdon County, LST-838 was hit by recoilless rifle fire, leaving 2 men dead and 25 wounded. Tom Green County, LST-1159 was hit by recoilless rifle fire in January of '69 with the loss of 2 KIA and many wounded.

All of us who served on the rivers of Vietnam can remember these ships moving slowly up and down the rivers keeping us supplied with food, ammo, parts, fuel, medical support, and fuel. The LST's of Vietnam were one of many components that served in-country under very harsh, and often boring conditions; though like most in-country

Navy units, they received very little recognition for a job well done. Most people back home at that time didn't even know the Navy served in-country Vietnam, much less on the rivers. Even today when talking with people, if you mention that you served in the Navy in Vietnam, they ask what Carrier, or Cruiser. When you reply, "I served on the brown waters (on the rivers) in-country Vietnam or attached to one of the Naval Task Forces, or in direct support of the Army or Marine Corps," they look at you and more than likely say, "I was unaware the Navy served in-country during the War."

The ships we have listed are not all the T's that were hit or suffered loss of life while serving in Vietnam. So to all you T" Sailors who read this, don't feel left out if your T was not mentioned. We can only furnish the information we have on hand. We who served on the rivers, and the bases, know very well the part the LST's played during the Vietnam War. LST's were always known as the work horses of the fleet and they kept this proud tradition up during the Vietnam War and served with distinction.

We, the Army and Navy members of the Mobile Riverine Force Association, would like to send a belated thank you to all the men who served on the LST's of Vietnam. Thanks Gators. You did good...!!!!



LST's (L-R): USS Terrell Cty 1165, USS Windham Cty 1170, USS Washoe Cty 1165, USS Whitfield Cty 1168, half of Squadron Naha Okinawa.

RAID UNITS: U.S. NAVAL ADVISORS IN VIETNAM AFTER VIETNAMIZATION

RAID: River Assault and Interdiction Division. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). Naval Advisory Group (NAG) — ATF-211.

In the summer of 1969, President Nixon and his advisors had started to actively turn the war over to the Vietnamese in a program called "Vietnamization." The US Navy began assuming a large role in this process because a massive numbers of U.S. river assault craft had been turned over to the Republic of Vietnam. For a number of reasons; this created a need for US Navy and Marine advisors to provide technical and liaison support so RAID Units were formed.

RAIDS 70 through 75

The concept of RAIDs was integration of a completely self-contained Task Force capable of taking The fight to the enemy. The units consisted of river assault craft manned by the Vietnamese. The RVN marines or "Thuy Quan Luc Chien Viet Nam" formed a capable fighting unit. In addition, we had artillery and air support OV-10A "Bronco" aircraft of the VA 4 "Black Pony" squadron, COBRA gunships HAL-3 "Seawolfs" helicopter gunships, Douglas AC-47 "Spooky" gunships and close air support from Navy carrier air groups as well as USAF bases in Thailand.

By the fall of 1969 there was (5) RAID units operating from Tay Ninh in Operation Giant Slingshot and south to the heart of the U Minh Forest in Kien Giang and Choung Provinces. As advisors we in many instances operated alone with the Vietnam Navy and Marine units.

As American advisors (coven My), it was imperative that we maintain good relations as well as communications. When in the field we lived at our Vietnam counterparts did. They caught our meals from the canals by stringing a net across the canal downstream and dropping a few concussion grenades upstream... instant meal. Plenty of rice, soy sauce and Nuoc Mam which is made by layering anchovies or other small fish and salt and leaving this for nearly a year. The concoction ferments and the liquid is poured off and used. It's pungent. Some people say the sauce reminds them of old socks. Others say it's made from the fermented fish droppings. By living and eating as they did we gained their respect and they gained ours.

Our toughest engagement occurred at Dong Hung, a former village where we had estab-

lished a small fire support base. It was deep in the U Minh Forest, a notorious VC and NVA sanctuary. As November 6th, 1969 rolled in enemy activity increased, we started receiving nightly mortar and rocket attacks followed by ground probes. Our response to these attacks clearly demonstrated the fighting spirit of the new Task Force (RAIDs).

At approximately 0130H, the ATF-211 CP and RAID craft at Dong Hung came under intense attack from Mortar, 60MM Mortar, B41 Rockets and 57 MM Recoilless Rifle. At approximately 0300H two battalions of main force VC surrounded the CP and artillery positions manned by two companies of VNMC units from the 6th Battalion; RAID 72 and RAID 74 VNN and U.S. advisors. Under cover of a

heavy barrage of mortar; rocket and recoilless rifle fire, the two battalions of VC and NVA attacked and overran the CP, destroying tents, huts, bunkers and communication equipment; forcing withdrawal of VNMC staff, advisors and most of the troops from the west bank of the canal. The VNMC embarked in RAID craft on the west bank and all boats crossed to the east bank of the canal."

Some of the VNMC troops remained on the west bank in hand to hand combat. The fight raged on for five hours until approximately 0630 when the enemy withdrew. Of the 21 RAID boats, 19 had taken multiple hits by the enemy. "Casualties: VNN & VNMC: 44 KIA, 151 WIA; Enemy body count within the CP was 75 KIA. Although we were attacked in force and heavily outnumbered, the Vietnamese displayed bravery and gallantry in combat against a superior numbered enemy force that had not been witnessed prior to this action. Navy LT AL Bell our RAID 72 senior advisor, maintained communications with our Vietnamese counterparts throughout the night.* The NVA and VC, monitoring our communications with our Vietnamese counterparts had waited to attack until our FAC Observer aircraft had signed off for the night to return to base. This resulted in a loss of communications that prevented us from getting air support from Black Ponies, Spooky A/C gunships, and Cobra gunships assisting. Until their arrival after what seemed like hours of fighting, we had depended on the gun fire from RAID river assault craft

and the VNMC and VNN units that had moved to the east bank of the canal.

The Vietnamese sailors and marines with whom I served in the RAID units had what it took to carry the fight to the enemy, as well as repel enemy attacks such as described above. I was proud and humbled to be among their company. As my Vietnamese counterpart told me, "Mac, I'll die in this war." That stunned me, so I asked why he felt that way. His response was "You here one, maybe two years then you go home." He continued, "I am home. I'll die in this war."

I believe the Vietnamese Marines and Sailors deeply appreciated the U.S. support and would continue to depend upon our assistance. However, they knew that they must take over the war because the U.S. was pulling out. By March 1973, the U.S. had pulled out all combat troops. With the withdrawal, the U.S. promised continued financial and other necessary support. In 1975 all U.S. support ceased. Saigon fell to the Communist April 30th, 1975 this in no way diminished those who served and fought and died in Vietnam Americans and the Vietnamese who gave all. I was proud and honored to have served my country during the Vietnam war and with ATF-211 RAID 72 Naval Advisory Group. The RAIDs though a small chapter in the history of the Vietnam war I have always thought made a difference and with continued U.S. Support, I think the outcome of the Vietnam War would have been different. I do know when I returned to the U.S., we were winning the war. In Mekong Delta and 111 corps this success was largely a result of all who served in these areas throughout the war.

A few U.S. advisors I served with were LT C.A. Al Bell (Senior USN Advisor), Major Mike Cerreta (Senior USMC Advisor), Bill Arbogast (current member of MRFA), Dave Bell, Tom



Vriesenga, and others who were in the field as combat advisors, we were proud to be known as "Covans".

Lt. Bell was awarded the bronze star with Combat V for his action on November 6th 1969 during the battle at Dong Hung.

This information submitted by Bruce McIver, Tango-131-7, RAID-72 (69-70); Box 528, Tallahassee, FL 32302; 850-893-4432 email: raid72macvnag@aol.com

Do You Know How To Access Your VA Benefits?

by Paul Kasper

Rather than tell a "War story", how about a story regarding the way to obtain the benefits from the Veterans Administration.

Some of the health issues you have may be related to your time in service.

You need to read this at least twice — then save it to begin a claim or to file an appeal on a decision if you feel you need to upgrade your current status with the VA.

- Gather all the military, private and VA medical records (get copies made). Always keep a copy of anything you send off to the VA.
- Review your military medical records and make a list of every ailment that you had while on active duty.
- Cross reference all your military ailments with your civilian ailments. If the problem persists or a secondary issue has cropped up as a result of the issue that developed during your time in the military then you need to apply for that issue (as a secondary issue). Also if you were affected by Agent Orange, Project Shad, etc. anything that may have caused an illness affecting your health and ability to function normally.
- Go to the VA web site and download all the fast letters, memos and any other documentation that will support your case.
- Go to the DAV, PAV and any other VSO web sites and bookmark them (and download anything related to your claims). Also many sites have excellent Agent orange, Project SHAD and many other programs you may not know you were involved in (info including possible related Health issues duty locations, etc.).
- Get statements from all private doctors or other medical provider, have them state that your problems are DEFINITELY service connected. If the doctor uses the word possibly or probably the Medical Provider will have given the VA the excuse it needs to dismiss the doctor's statement. But, if all the doctor can say is probably, don't throw it away. If you get more than one doctor to diagnose the same condition, make sure you document it; then the reasonable doubt rule should apply and the probability is slim that the issue ISN'T service connected.
- Get statements from anyone who knows you and your issues. Have these individuals state how the problems affect you (example: It is hard to bend over, or squat, or hear, etc..) Did you know you can get statements from anyone that knows you, yes your wife, kids, parents, co-workers even the guy/gal walking along the street. All of these people can contribute! All their statements are evidence that must be considered. If you have them put their phone number down on the statement and request the adjudicator to call (not if they have any questions), the adjudicator is required to call.
- Go to <http://www.findlaw.com> or <http://www.veteransresources.net/database.html> and look up all Court of Veteran Appeals, US District Court, US Court of Appeals and Su-

preme Court decisions that affect your issues. Use these sites to support your other evidence. Do your own legal research! It does not hurt to overload the initial information. Better to be covering all sources than not to have enough to solidify your claim.

- If you have been going to a Vet Center, get copies of their records. They are independent of the VA medical system (CAPRI) so you need to get a statement or copy of your provider's notes from your treating health, mental or physical therapy worker.
- If you have gone to Voc Rehab, you were evaluated by them. Do a Privacy Act request and get all copies of evaluations and anything else (to include reports of contact [ROC]). The Voc Rehab evaluations carry some weight, since they are independent evaluations. Get copies of the contractor evaluations and the VA's Voc Rehab evaluations.
- Go to <http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/bookc.html>. Look up what your issue is and determine the percentage that you want to apply for. Now 98% of the Veteran Service Rep's (VSO's) will tell you not to give a percentage, but if you don't ask for a percentage and you are awarded 0% for an issue, you can't complain because they gave you exactly what you asked for. If the adjudicator denies your issue and you did not ask for a certain percentage, then you have to prove they didn't follow proper procedure (this is very hard to prove). Your VSO will tell you that the law can change. Great, if it increases then just fax, email (w/receipt) or mail in an updated request. If the percentage decreases, you don't need to do anything. The Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 allows the law that is most favorable to you to be applied to your claim so don't change your percentage.
- If you have been seeing a counselor at the VA Hospital or civilian counselor, then get him/her to write you a statement of how bad they think you are. Plus, write up a statement on your own, let the adjudicator know about your background, your stressors and how this effects your daily life. Always and I mean Always have this statement lean towards your being suicidal, wanting to kill people and your wanting to harm not only yourself but others. You should also ask ex's, friends, church members-etc anyone that might help verify and support your claim.
- Current law favors the Vet. The VA fights it but you can use this to your advantage. Invoke VCAA. Read, understand and learn what VCAA can do for you. If you are within a year of the VCAA letter you received, then you have rights to reopen old cases, don't let that pass. (VCAA=Veterans claims assistance act).
- Go the VA web site, <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/> or <http://www.veteransresources.net/database.html> to research all BVA opinions on your issues. These legal opinions as well as the courts opinions narrows the focus of how the adjudicator can look at the evidence.

- You need to put together a narrative that reads like a graduate paper. You will refer to evidence that you collected (items 1-9) as well as you tell your story as to how you were injured or became exposed or affected by what you saw/heard. I would also compile all the evidence by issue. Yellow highlight what pertains to you and your issues. Cite this in your narrative.
- You are entitled to claim all periods of active duty, all periods covered under Vocational Rehabilitation and any injuries suffered under the care of the VA for the purposes of disability claims (issues). You need to list all periods of active duty, to include ADT and reserve time. There are limited benefits for non-active duty personnel. By stating the periods of active duty, and providing documentation (such as copies of orders), you will increase your chances of winning your claim.
- Go to your private doctor. Have him do the C&P exam the correct way. Go to the C&P office at your local VA Hospital (if you're too far away, have them either email or fax to you the exam criteria). Make sure he is a specialist (preferably board certified) in the field. Then show him the exams you were given by the VA as well as all your personal medical records on this issue. Ask him if he concurs with their exam. If he doesn't, get him to put it in writing and cite the different tests that he performed to support his conclusions. Thus you beat them at their own game. When you write it up, make sure you had the "COMPLETE" C&P exam done by a private doc and the VA doc's refused to perform the proper tests. Under the reasonable doubt rule, you have proven your case, and they failed to prove theirs.

The VA is like a willful child. You have to pull the child by the ear and lead it in the direction that you want it to go. If you let anyone else do this for you, then you're doing yourself a disservice. The VSO's are overworked and after you leave their office, will pull up a template and plug in the issues and submit a formatted claim. Which one do you think will have a better chance? The only way to speed up your claims is for you to be dying. There is no accelerated claim process. Trust me when I say this, your situation is no worse than most, I have seen worse. Some individuals claims had gone on for 22 years. I have heard of longer. My guess is you will get something but not what you expect unless you follow the steps I have outlined above. The money you get will be minimal compared to what you need. If you have a rating of at least 20%, then you should apply immediately for Vocational Rehabilitation (if you haven't already done so). Voc rehab will give you between \$500 to \$600 a month while your in school (full time) At the same time you can retrain for a new career.

You all know your stories, tell the VA how you were injured or became ill, cite the times you went to the medial facility, and later the follow-up care you have received from your

Phil Clark & A Day to Remember on the Tango's

Recently there was some swapping of stories on the associations e-mail list concerning the problems the ATC's had with their ramps malfunctioning. First of all my memory is not as good as it use to be and I was basically clueless as to where we were, where we were going or what we would be doing once we got there. These are a few instances I do recall vividly.

On February 9, 1969, 3 or 4 tango's (including T-131-1&2) and a CCB were conducting a search and destroy operation in the Kein Hoa – Dinh Tuong area (I think) I'm not sure but I believe there was an ensign or Ltjg. on the CCB. We started early in the morning from the (MRB) we dropped the troops off in an area and waited. The troops conducted their search and returned to the boats. We then proceeded upstream to Area B. This continued into the late afternoon without a hitch when we were loading up the troops to return to the base. I don't know how many of you are familiar with the Tango's ramp system. The winch is located in the engine room next to the port engine. A lever in the coxswains flat operated as multi plate clutch that connected the winch to the power takeoff. Those clutches could be finicky.

At this point the clutch on T-132-1 started slipping. The ramp was stuck in the down position. In the meantime the officer on the CCB was concerned about a possible ambush and was getting anxious.

We (the boat crews) had developed a technique for this situation. A tango pulls along each side of the disabled boat. Lines are tied to the tops of the ramps of these boats and to the lowered ramp. The disabled boat then uses its engines to hold its position against the river bank while the other two boats back out from the bank, pulling the ramp up until it can be latched into place.

This time however, the guy at the wheel was not a regular coxswain, he was being crossed – trained. I don't think the engines were revved

high enough and the disabled boat didn't stay beached. The current was very strong and the boat quickly drifted out into the river, about 200 yards from the shore. The lines on the ramps were thrown off and we started to re-group.

Then a voice came screaming over the radio to get that (bleeping, bleeping) ramp up NOW!!! When we heard the yelling on the radio, the guy at the wheel cranked the engines wide open.

I was watching from the bow of T-132-2 about 59 feet away. The ramp acted as a scoop filling the well deck with water. The troops were climbing up the sides as the water rose. It was like watching a diving submarine until the water reached the top of the well deck. The boat started capsizing as it continued toward the shore. Troops and the crew were jumping off into the river. The boat ran aground upside down against the bank. The remaining boats picked up everyone in the water. When we got to the capsized Tango, we heard banging from inside.

I remember Jim Guest EN2 (enginemen) from T-132-2) using a green garden hose as a snorkel to dive under the boat and into the inverted well deck where a few survivors were in a air pocket. All of them got out. One crewman, SN Mark Siedentopf and a couple of Army Soldiers were missing. Their bodies were later recovered downstream.

I have searched the net trying to find any information on this incident without success. I searched the dates at www.thewall-usa.com and came up with two names of men from Delta Company 4th/47th PFC Rafael Melendez and PFC Mister Reddix Jr. It's one of the few incidents I'll never forget.

Phil Clark served on T-132-1 and T-132-2, 1968-69. You may contact Phil at 4851 NW 21st St. #305, Loudermill, FL 33311, 954-733-3946 or e-mail: PCJmrfa@comcast.net

2nd/60th Hawk-eyed Point-men

Tan Tru— Because of two hawk-eyed, fast-acting point men a night combat patrol of the 9th Division thwarted a Viet Cong ambush attempt and killed five of the enemy.

As the 3rd platoon, Company A/2nd/60th Infantry moved through the rice lands near the Vam Co Dong River, a mile east of An Nhut Tan, the two point men detected movement to their right flank, PFC Ronald Bigelow of Yerno, CA. and Franklin King of Marion, IL. Quickly they signaled the remaining members of the platoon to get down. As the rest of the patrol took firing positions behind rice paddy dikes, and enemy force later estimated to be 15 men opened fire.

Calling for artillery support to illuminate the area and to block the enemy's retreat, 2nd Lt. Joel M. Shreenan of Buffalo, N.Y. maneuvered his platoon into position for an assault on the Viet Cong. With a heavy volume of fire, the patrol swept toward the prospective ambush site and found the bodies of three enemy soldiers. Two additional bodies were found during a later search of the area.

Captured were two AK-47 rifles, one 7.62 carbine, one RPG-2 rocket launcher, complete with two rockets, one 81mm mortar round and quantities of small arms ammunition.

Shreenan credited his point men with saving the platoon. If it hadn't been for the alertness of King and Bigelow, the story could have been reversed," praised the platoon leader. No American casualties were sustained during the encounter.

6th Kill Identified as Battalion Company

Tan Tru— The sixth confirmed kill from a recent night patrol by the 3rd Platoon Company A/2nd/60th Infantry, has been identified as a Viet Cong Battalion Commander.

A day after the firefight, a woman was picked up for routine questioning by national police in the Mekong Delta village, she admitted buying clothes for her husband's funeral, a local custom.

Further questioning revealed that her husband had been a Viet Cong major, commanding the 2nd Independent Battalion. His body had been dragged off after the fatal encounter with 2nd/60th patrol.

This information was taken from the December 13, 1967 issue; furnished by MRFA Member Jim (AL) Alspaugh; 535E 600 S-57 Cherubusco, IN 46723; 260-693-4022. Jim served in HHC C.G. Mess 9th Inf/Div., 1966-67.

VETERANS DAY 2004, Washington, D.C.

The MRFA and 9th Infantry Division will be placing wreaths at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Veterans Day, Thursday, November 11, 2004. we will be gathering at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at 8:30 A.M. on the 11th, and proceed to the Wall at 9:00AM.

We have blocked 25 rooms at the Quality Hotel and Suites in Arlington, Virginia for November 8th –12th. Room rates vary from \$89.00 (plus tax) per night (there 20 rooms available at this rate) To \$105.00 (plus tax) per night (there are five rooms available at this rate). For reservations call 1-888-987-2555 and refer to our group code MRFA4." Reservations under this code

must be made before the cut off date of October 18, 2004. so call early.

The Quality Hotel and Suites is located at 1200 North Courthouse Road Arlington, VA. 22201.

There will be no registration fee or dress code for this event. If this is your first trip to Washington, we suggest comfortable shoes because there are lots of sights to see by walking.

For more information you may contact Board Member Bob (Doc) Pries at 9702 Friar Tuck Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069. Phone: (513)755-1223 or email: rpries@cinci.rr.com.

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much: it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

History of YRBM-17 (Vietnam)

The YRBM -17 was retrofitted from the YFNB-24 in a small shipyard south of Yokosuka, Japan. The YFNB was what the Navy classified as a large covered lighter. It was a non-propelled barge with a length of 2560 feet and a beam of 48 feet. This construction took place from late 1966 to March 1967 and upon completion it was towed to Yokosuka for final preparations for duty with the Mobile Riverine Force in South Vietnam.

The sole purpose of the retrofit was to make the YFNB-24 a floating repair center for the specialized boats of the Navy's newly formed Mobile Riverine Force or River Assault Flotilla One in the Delta region of SVN. Generators and switchboards were added to supply the power to all the different shops that would be needed. This included engine repair, electronic, electrical, welding, machine shop and an armory for weapons repair. A modern galley and refrigerated storage areas an air-condition berthing spaces were also part of the retrofit.

In late March 1967 the YFNB-24 was towed to Vung Tau with a skeleton crew onboard. She was only in Vung Tau a short period just long enough to pick up the remainder of her crew and additional stores once this was completed she proceeded under tow up the Mekong River to the Army base at Dong Tam it was shortly thereafter that her designation was changed from YFNB-24 to YRBM-17, which reflect her mission (YRBM Yard Repair Messing Berthing).

During the first 6 weeks after her arrival a number of things had to be done to ensure that she could perform mission. The 100tin floating crane YD-220 and numerous barges were brought in so that the ATCs, Monitors and ASPBs could be hauled out of the water for hull and propulsion repairs. Communication gear had to be installed as well as water purification systems. At the same time, the Navy portion of the base was being constructed at a rapid pace, until the base galley and mess hall was completed the 17 was called upon to feed around 300 people 3 meals per day.

In June of 67 things started coming together for the crew of the 17, the new boats began arriving in ever increasing numbers. At first most of the work performed on the boats were modifications such as experimental mine seats for Tango boats and weather stripping around the gun turrets to help keep out rain from the up coming monsoon season. As the boat operations began the crew became very busy repairing the boats due to battle damage and normal maintenance.

The 17 and Dong Tam Base were not immune to enemy action. Five days after her arrival the 17 experienced her first attack. Mortar rounds walked across the basin and base but never found their mark. Every night concussion grenades were tossed in the water around the 17 to protect it from swimmers that might attach a mine to the hull. At first it was hard for the crew to get a good night's sleep, but after the mining of YRBM-16, in Tab Chau in November of 1967, it became a very comforting sound. After numerous mortar attacks they had an early warning system in place for these attacks. There was a small village at the entrance of the boat harbor at Dong Tam if any of the crewmembers saw the villagers leaving just before dark, they would pass the word to be on alert that night. As it turned out it was pretty accurate.

During the TET of 1968 the 17's luck ran out. The Dong Tam base was being hit two and three times a night by enemy fire. One night an unknown type of round fired from the Mekong River side of the base. It penetrated the large steel sliding door in the machine shop. It's effect was somewhat lessened as it hit a large storage rack of steel and brass shafts, but still threw off enough shrapnel to wound seven crew members, one seriously. On May 30th 1968 the 17 was hit again 1 120mm round wounding nine of her crewmen.

Early in 1968 the Navy finished installing floating dry docks on the Navy side of the basin and the 17 was moved in between them. This enabled the crew to perform their work faster as the ever in-creasing volume of work required. It was also during this time that the 17 began installing the flame thrower systems to the Zippo's. through out the rest of 68 and into early 69, it was pretty much business

as usual for the crew. It meant working seven days a week and making their best effort to give the boat crews what they needed to perform and complete their mission.

In late spring or early summer of

1970 the 17 was pulled out of Dong Tam and towed to Sasebo, Japan for a scheduled overhaul. On the way to Sasebo the fleet tug towing here were hit by a typhoon, causing considerable damage. Some of her superstructure had been torn away by the pounding of the sea. After her overhaul the 17 was towed back to Dong Tam. Based on the information I have this would have been mid to late summer of 1970. The 17 was towed up river to Tan Chau and given a new hull designation of HG-9610. There is know official record of the 17 ever existing as there is on some of the other YRBMs. To all who served on her, the memories are real and will forever be etched in our hearts and minds. We performed a very important function to the Mobile Riverine Forces in the delta and did so with pride and distinction. A special thanks to all of the 17 crewmembers who took the time to contribute information. Without it, this bit of history may have never been preserved. Doug Lindsey YRBM-17 67-68 (Dong Tam).

You may contact Doug at 2821 Conway Ct. Sacramento, CA 95826, 916-381-2727 or e-mail: vermin250@aol.com. His awards earned during the Vietnam War: Navy Unit Citation, RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm, RVN Civil Action Medal First Class, with Palm. RVN Campaign Medal with 60's device and Vietnam Service medal.

YRBM's of Vietnam

YRBM-16 — It was turned over to the SVN 10-1-1973. On Thanksgiving night 1967 at 1:15 am in the middle of the river at Ben Tre a bomb exploded against the hull of YRBM-16 killing 7 Naval personnel.

YRBM-17 — Information above

YRBM-20 — In active duty Pearl Harbor, HI. Has been in and out of commission since 1944.

This information submitted by Doug Lindsey, YRBM1717 (67-68); 2821 Conway Ct., Sacramento, CA 95826 916-381-2727; email vermin250@aol.com



9th Infantry Division Soldier Awarded Bronze Star "IRAQ"

1st/Sgt Cary E. Corbett was recently awarded the Bronze star W/Valor for actions taken beyond the call of duty, while serving as 1st/Sgt with the 442nd MP Co. 716th MP BN Iraq. Gary served with C/Co 3rd/60th 9th Infantry Division 1970. Gary has been a member of the New York National Guard since the mid 80's. Gary has also been a Deputy Sheriff in NY for over 30 some years. You may contact Gary at 2 Justos Ln., Rhinebeck, NY 12572, 845-876-2902 or e-mail: mgs442mp@cs.com.

Information received from LTC Noah Halfacre USAR Ret 6/31st Infantry Both Gary and Col Halfacre are MRF A Members.

9th Infantry Division Flame Throwers APC's in Vietnam Served Many Units — Affectionately Called “Zippos,” 1967

The 9th Infantry Division in 1967 had 4 Flame-thrower APC's assigned to the 15th Combat Engineer unit. HHC had control of its Flame Platoon. As far as I know they were the only ones in the III and IV corps at that time. The flame units generally worked in pairs accompanied by one 2 ½ ton service truck. We would go TDY to other 9th Inf Div units for operations and action. They also went to other branches and military units from other countries. My memory is not that great after all these years, but I do remember being TDY with several Marine units and Army units to include the 1st Cav, 1st Inf Div, 11th Cav, 196 Inf, 4th inf, 25th Inf, and many others and of course different units from the 9th Inf Div and the Navy Mobile Riverine Force. Our unit also served with the ARVN units to include the Special Forces. I also remember being with the Australian's and the ROK “White Horse” contingent and the “Queens Cobra's” from Thailand.

The “Zippo” flame thrower APC was called this as a nickname due to the flame by the crew for when the electronic igniters failed. We took out our Zippo lighters and lit the napalm coming out of the barrel. The majority of us had no hair on our arms for the duration of the tour. During WWII the tank, flame-throwers were called “Ronson's,” because they lit on the first spark. Enemy caused - or accident that is! The Flame unit was a converted M113a1 APC with 4 tanks (pressurized) with napalm. There was

greater flame fuel capacity than that of the portable types and gave a greater more effective flame before it's needed refilled. It's sus-



The First Zippo

tained capability of operation was measured by the number of effective shots that it delivered (4 or 5 burst of 6-8 seconds in length) in simple terms burst were thought as rounds of ammunition. The effective range of the flame-thrower APC was 150-170 meters.

Some of the areas we worked in Indian territory: Fishhook, Angles Wing, Boi Loi Woods, Cam Son Secret Zone, Dong Tam, My Tho, Operations Fairfax and Junction City 1968 TET Offensive are just a few areas we operated in.

We were the first and the trial unit for the Navy to decide to install flame units on their boats. In the summer of 1967 we received orders to report to the MRF TF-117 at Dong Tam. Early the next morning, we went down to the river bank and were informed of what the Navy wanted. We backed our APC down in the ATC (Armored Troop Carrier) and had to fire from the sides as the landing ramp protruded up in front and would have deflected the flame or weapons fire back at us. The APC backed into the ATC left only inches on each side of the craft and only two 2-3 feet of room in the rear. The boat crew normally had to remove the machineguns on the sides in the

well deck since there was not enough room for anyone to operate them plus with the heat from the flame it would not have been all that wise to operate the guns. There were two APC flame throwers in separate craft and a one 2 ½ ton truck used for service and the mixing of the napalm in another ATC. The APC's had a crew of two and the truck had 2 men appointed. After the initial test of the capabilities, the Army and Navy brass decided to use us on several operations and began building flame

boats for the MRF. I did not see the final Flame boat while in Vietnam but have seen pictures of them in operation and the newer design.

The History of the Flame Boat (Zippo)

The original Zippo was a converted LCM-6 landing craft WWII. It was modified with bar armor trigger plate (almost all craft in the MRF had this modification). This caused the premature denotation of a warhead from an enemy B40 rocket or recoilless rifle round and reduced the penetration of any other armor. It also became an area of storage space mainly c-ration and water cans. They also added Styrofoam spontoons along the hull to help compensate for the weight of the added armor and equipment. The Zippo boats were created by adding two army flame-thrower turrets and became very effective for burning back the vegetation from the edge waterways. This stopped the enemy from being able to setup ambushes in the cover. If a building such as a hooch or a bunker was within range it was also extremely effective in destroying them. The sight of a flame thrower also created fear in many a person. A crew of eleven was onboard and used other armament usually consisting of 50 cal machineguns or 30 cal's. The top speed was 8 knots being powered by two Detroit diesel engines on dual shaft drives.

History of the M113 Armored Personnel Carrier (APC)

From the beginning in 1960 the M113 APC with various adaptations have entered service in over 50 countries, there are various modifi-



cations to over 40 different variants. That does not include the field modifications or specific countries need due to type of combat or terrain. Many of the older style are being retired, but there is a new model with upgrades and modifications.

The original M113 were meant to be a vehicle that could carry 11 soldiers plus a driver and tank commander (TC) with armor protection across battlefield areas. The important thing was they were air transportable, air dropped, and could even float/power through water. This allowed military planners to add APC's into a much wider range of combat situations-to-include “rapid deployment” scenarios. The M113 were quickly recognized as the foun-



Zippo on the river, 1967.

also a 7.62 machinegun (M73) that was also electric firing (it failed a lot it either jammed or due to an electrical short) that was all the armament except for our side arms (m16 and a 45). During any action the other APC's or personnel would leave us and get far away in case we took any rounds or rocket fire. I guess the spirit of adventure leaves you when 3000 lbs. of pressurized napalm is nearby.

All flame guns had a high fuel consumption rate; the mechanized flame thrower had a

dition for a family of vehicles. Early versions included a command post (M577), mortar carrier (M106) and of course the Flame thrower versions described in this article (m132)

The M113 was changed over the years with many adaptations for each purpose: including the M132.

In 1960 it used a gasoline engine with a 209 HP and had a combat weight of 23,520 lbs. and a cruising range of 200 miles. In 1964 its weight increased to 24,595 and had a diesel engine rated at 212HP and a cruising range of 300 miles and now called the M1131. In 1979 it became the M113a2 and a combat weight of 24,728 with the diesel engine still rated at 212HP. The next change was 1987 when the M113A3 with the diesel engine putting out 275HP, and weighing 27,000 and top speed 41MPH while the other versions could barely achieve 37MPH—this is a real factor in battle every MPH can and does make a difference. They still maintain a cruising range of 300 miles.

Paul Kasper, C/Co., Flame Plt. 15th Combat Engineers; P.O. Box 310188 Enterprise, AL 36331; phone 334-347-9413; or email parker2@entercomp.com

I Am A Whisper on The Wind

I am a whisper on the wind, of times past, of places long forgotten, Valleyforge, Gettysburg, Batan, Pearl Harbor, Normandy, Seoul, Saigon, Loas, Kuwait, Iraqi. I am the heart of countless numbers of scarred and maimed American veterans, and the soul of the buried unknowns,

I am an integral part of each white cross in Flanders Field, and I am sealed within each name on 'The Wall'. I am part of each and every headstone of every American soldier in every cemetery around the world.

I am deeply enmeshed in each tiny undiscovered bone fragment of American soldiers, left behind on foreign soil. I am the unseen shadows, the unheard voices in those many empty cells that once held my brothers in unspeakable torture.

I am the unbearable pain in the hearts of every mother, father, wife, husband, brother sister, and child, of missing American soldiers from all wars. I am within each and every teardrop shed by these family members for their unaccounted for loved ones.

I am the essence of each and every drop of blood shed in the past or in the future, by an American soldier in the name of freedom. I am the lifeblood of the colors of the American flag, blue for my loyalty and unwavering dedication, white for my steadfastness, and red for my pride and love of country.

I am the spirit of those names on the black Granite Wall, of all those unaccounted for in every war, of those who went away to war as gallant young men and came back, older than time...OR NOT AT ALL.

God Bless America the land of the free and the home of the brave...

Author Unknown

Old Memories: The Bridge Goes Somewhere

Lee Kolstad

Reading the story entitled "The Bridge Goes Somewhere" in the Winter issue of *River Currents* brought back some old memories. I was in D-CO 15th Engineers, and we had the task to cut all the bridge stringers and substructure that connected the bridge to the shore. By doing this, the bridge (A French Eiffel bridge) was now only supported on the abutments. A local US advisor along with ARVN engineers then came up the canal in powdered floating bridge pontoons. They were only half inflated with a large stack of cribbing on top. As the pontoons came into place, the right amount of cribbing was removed so the pontoons could be positioned under the bridge. An air compressor was turned on to inflate the pontoons. As they inflated, the bridge began to rise off the abutments. When the proper clearance was established, the bridge was then floated up river.

I think this might have been the same bridge but who knows. It was in support ARVN Marines and we did have to get the boats up the canal. The time frame was also around the end of 1967.

Another bridge removal project we did in the delta was to remove a blown Eiffel bridge from a canal. (Many of the steel bridges in the delta were of the Eiffel bridge variety and erected by the French during their "visit" there.) It was the day before the TET offensive. I don't remember the location but our task was to cut the bridge completely in half. We then attached 4 cables to one half and had a "sky crane" come in and lift that half out of the canal and place it along the bank. We quickly attached cables to the second half but we were informed that the chopper was running low of fuel. Because of this, the second half only got moved sideways in the canal and not completely out. This operation did, however, remove the blockage from the canal and open up to sampans traffic. It is amazing to me how the "locals" always knew what was going on because as soon as one piece of the bridge was lifted out, they began arriving in their sampans to go up the canal. Needless to say, we didn't complete the task the next day because of the TET offensive.

MRFA member Lee Kolstad served in Co. D, 15th Engineers from 8-67 - 3/68. You may contact Lee at 3717 Cholla Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85028; phone 602-996-4361 or e-mail lkolstad1@cox.net.

From the Galley

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

new Editor and Chief will be Joe Rosner. Joe, along with George Marthenze and Doug Brown were the founding fathers of *River Currents*.

You may notice some changes with the newsletter but I don't expect to see many. Everyone does things a bit differently.

Joe served on Monitor 6 in RivRon 15 in 1969-70.

Please send all correspondence to Joe Rosner (c/o *River Currents*) at 2435 55th Ave. Kenosha, WI 53144-4605; or use his e-mail address: joerosner@wi.rr.com.

Please give Joe all the support you given me over the years, it will be most appreciated.

Sirs – River Currents

Just a short note to thank you for all you do. Over the years, I have shared my copy of *River Currents* with my local Navy friends and some younger folks. They enjoy the newsletter. Many of the Navy folks had little knowledge of the MRF and its operations, and I have been delighted to train them up (most of these folks were on carriers or far out to sea).

River Currents also helps me explain what we were all up to 'in the war'. The young people of today have not had much exposure an education on the Vietnam story and I am truly gratified that they have a keen interest. Thanks for all your hard work.

Sincerely,

Maj/General Walter Bryde U.S. Army (Ret.)
(FA) 3rd/34th Artillery 1968-69; 106 Aberdeen, Williamsburg, VA 23186-0001

I'm not leaving the Association, just cutting back on some of my work load.

DEAN'S PIG OUT

Since the Pig Cookout at the last reunion went over so well we have decided to have it again in '05. This is a freebie from "The Pig King" Dean Ayers (709th Maintenance) and the MRFA at no cost to you, the members. We welcome all volunteers to help shuck corn, etc. We'll post Deans address, phone number and e-mail information in an upcoming issue of *River Currents*. So, whoever wants to volunteer can and should contact Dean. I also want to thank Jennifer Hesse of the Drawbridge Estates and the hotel staff for letting us do this — most hotels wouldn't allow it.

ATTENTION

New Items In Our Catalog!

We have new items for everyone! Sweat Shirts, T-shirts, Hats, etc. **Plus a 10% discount on all products till March 1st 2004.**

Some of you may ask why isn't my unit or ship listed on a shirt or a hat. We go by the number of orders received by a unit or a ship. There is a cost involved when we order new products there is a digitizing cost, etc. If it's a very complicated logo that requires a lot more stitches, etc. it costs more. So we have to have enough orders to cover our cost. We can't have a hat or shirt created for just one or two orders. There are minimum quantities involved. We have to have at least a minimum of 24 hats or shirts to start up a new product.

Bob VanDruff Products Chairman
Visit the products page: www.mrfa.org

USS Maricopa County, LST 938, Found In Vietnam

Dear Frank,

As a photographer I thought you might enjoy these photographs. I returned to Vietnam in September of 2003 for the first time since I left in June 1971. I worked in the shipyard in Saigon with the Vietnamese command, managing the operations of the yard. Our advisory group had been there since the mid 50's. Many of the ships we overhauled and maintained were the LST's - one was the ex-Maricopa County LST-938 was now designated as Hai Quan (HQ) 501. It was one of the ships which did not make it to safety at the close of the war and was captured. I photographed her at the piers of the same shipyard I worked in while I was there in September, 2003. I was unable to get into the shipyard and rented a speed boat to cruise the river front to get some shots for a diorama I am building of the yard. The shots of the 501 was almost worth the trip by itself.

The ship above was the USS Maricopa County LST-938. She was commissioned in 1944 at Bethlehem shipyard Co. Hingham, MA and participated in the Asiatic Pacific Theater for the remainder of the war. Following World War II LST-938 she performed occupation duty in the Far East and saw service in China until mid-May 1946.

The 938 was assigned to Naval Reserve training in Bayonne, NJ. And later Gulfport, MS. Until decommissioned in December of 1949. She was laid up in the reserve fleet in Green Cove Springs, FL.

From '49 till re-commissioned, 14 December 1951, renamed USS Maricopa County, LST-938, 1 July 1955. She was decommissioned



(Above) LST-938, as seen in 2003; (Below) LST-038 in 1946.

on 29 February 1956; laid up in Atlantic Reserve Fleet Green Cove Spring FL; struck from Naval Register 1 June 1962; transferred to South Vietnam 12 July 1962, renamed DaNang (HQ-501). Final Disposition captured by the North Vietnamese around the time of the fall of Saigon, 29 April 1975, renamed Tran Khanh Du (HQ-501) still active.



The information and photographs were furnished by Steve Loomis 357 E Thomas Rd A-104 Phoenix, AZ 85012-3210.

The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just.

— Abraham Lincoln

Ambushed GIs Spray Village in Line of Fire

Aug. 8th 1968

American River Forces of the MRF fighting their way out of two ambushes in the same spot five hours apart accidentally sprayed a Mekong Delta village with automatic weapons fire, killing 16 South Vietnamese and wounding 120. U.S. headquarters said one Riverine Convoy was attacked yesterday afternoon and another last night as they moved along the Can Tho River near the village of Cai Rang, 83 miles southwest of Saigon. Both times some of the American counter fire went over the enemy positions along the river bank and hit the village.

In the ambushes one U.S. boat was damaged and beached and eight Americans were wounded. Casualties to the ambushing Viet Cong were unknown.



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Please Note: This form may be used for New Memberships, Renewals and Changes of Address. Be sure to check the appropriate box.

Dates Served in Unit (mm/yr - mm/yr)

OUR MEMORIAL TRAILER IS A GREAT SUCCESS!



The Officers and Board Members of the MRFA would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the folks who made contributions to our Memorial Fund. We think it's a great way to honor our fallen comrades.

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Make check or money order payable to MRFA. Send to MRFA 2906 Starlite Dr. Topeka, KS. 66605. You may contact Bob or Nancy VanDruff by calling, 1-785-267-1526 or e-mail bvdmrfa@networsplus.net. You can also check our products web site out at www.mrfa.org.

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If you'd like to make a donation to our memorial trailer, please make checks payable to MRFA and send to: **Charlie Ardinger**, 1857 County Rd. A14, Decorah, IA 52101.

SEEKING: MEKONG

(MEKONG) Former PIO Officer for the 9th Infantry Division Ray Funderburk served in the 9th Inf. Div. 1967-1968 Ray was not a desk jockey having received two (PHs) he went into battle with the troops. Ray is putting together a pilot for a television series called MEKONG. It will be a documentary with little embellishment, true stories, incidents that really happen, no Hollywood bull—, and certainly no water skies. (Apocalypse Now) Ray wants real stories, humorous or sad, again real stories not B.S... Ray will give meaning to Vietnam through MEKONG. Ray wants to open the sealed lid on the box of human suffering and take a look inside, where thousands of wonderful stories remain untold. Rays says we owe it to those men. No one has told their story yet. Ray won't use actual names but will be as accurate as to places and things. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

Ray needs your thoughts about what he's attempting to do to show producers and directors in Hollywood. How you feel about this project will go along way towards getting it approved. Send Ray e-mails and articles by postal and relate your thoughts.. Please send to Ray Funderburk 2006 N. Beach Blvd, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520; or email him at ray@funderburk.net Folks this includes all our

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, contact either:

Charles Campbell at 677 G Street, SP#1, Chula Vista, CA 91910 (619-427-6835; ccicec@aol.com) or

Everett Jones, 1947 Gotham St., Chula Vista, CA 91913; 619-421-3721; oneerj@pacbel.net).

members Army and Navy.

Please do-not send e-mails and articles to the MRFA this is a project being put together by Ray we're just passing the word.

Seeking...

CHARLES W. SRADER

If you knew Charles W. Srader, A/CO3rd/60th, KIA July 16, 1968, Vinh Long Province. Please contact Rose Ann Duffy (daughter) 3736 Warwick Blvd. #102, Kansas City, MO 64111, 816-561-1030 or e-mail: RoseAnn9@kc.rr.com.

BEAR CAT

Jim Alspaugh is seeking anyone who served in the Commanding General Mess at Bear Cat Dec-66 To Dec-1967. Contact Jim at 535E. 600-S-57 Churubusco, IN 46723, 260-693-4022.

CHARLES HOLLAND

David Holland is seeking anyone who knew his cousin Ralph Charles Holland, A-CO-5th/60th (Mech) Infantry. Ralph was KIA 12-19-67 in Long An Province. Please contact David Holland C/O P.O. Box 8271 Hermitage, TN. 37076 615-797-3440 email- tnpatrol@yahoo.com.

NEW PRODUCTS PAGE ON WEB SITE www.mrfa.org

The MRFA products help and assist with keeping the MRFA up and running. There's patch and book, tour info on the web site.

You may contact Mike Harris if you want a book, etc. posted on the site. Mike makes the final decision on what's to be posted on the web site. If you have questions, please e-mail them to Mike at mekong152@charter.net

Reunions...

PLEASE NOTE: Reunion notices are placed as a courtesy to MRFA members. Posting of notices for non-members will be billed at \$25.00 per announcement, per issue. We're sorry for any inconvenience this may cause to any of you, but our membership must come first. Thanks for your understanding.

USS GUIDE

MSO-447, October 28th-31st, 2004 Drawbridge Inn, Ft. Mitchell, KY. Contact person: Harold Foster 925 Estates Dr. Kerrville, TX 78028. 830-895-7752 or e-mail hfoster@kctc.com

9TH INF. DIV. 39TH CAV PLT ACV

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jackkavanaugh@hotmail.com

USS SNOHOMISH CTY LST-1126

August 16th-19th 2004 Las Vegas, NV Contact person. Joseph C. Miller 7351 Maynard Ave. West Hills, CA. 91307. 818-340-0463 E-mail jcsrockie@dslexreme.com

5TH BATTALION / 60TH INFANTRY ASSOC REUNION

June 17-20, 2004 Dallas-Fort Worth Marriott Information on website www.5thbattalion.org
POC William Metzler etz560@frontiernet.net
707-374-1377

NAVY MINE SWEEPER OCEAN ASSOC.

MSO's, MSC's, MSB's, MSL's, June 2-5 Drawbridge Inn, Ft Mitchell, KY. POC: Larry Fugh 7209 Lismore Ct., Orlando, FL. 32835; 407-292-2394; email flafoo@aol.com.

VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

570-603-9740. E-mail vnwnatl@epix.net Web Site <http://www.vvnw.org>

Get Well Wishes

Rodney Hofferkamp B/CO/4th/47th is battling Colon cancer. You may contact Rodney at 5790 W. Wood Rd. Decatur, IL 62522, 217-963-2406.

Member Larry Hunter was recently in the hospital and was very sick but now home and doing somewhat better. Larry is a MRFA board member. Larry served on the USS White River, LSMR-536, 1967-68, You may contact Larry at 6363 Wnding Way, Maineville, OH 45039, 513-677-2581 or e-mail: lhunter536@aol.com

Member Charlie Taylor 5th/60th recently went through triple heart bypass surgery. Charlie served as company commander C/CO 5th/60th, 6/67 - 6/68. You may contact Charlie at P.O. Box 275 Skull Valley, AZ 86338, 602-778-0933 or e-mail: ctaylor@futurone.com

Member Charles Campbell BM1 (Ret). Was recently in the hospital where he received a pace maker for a heart condition.. Boats is now home doing well. You may contact Boats c/o 677 G St. Sp#-1. Chula Vista, CA. 91910. 619-427-6855 CCICEC@cox.net Some of you may no Charles as Co Boat Captain on CCB-18 on display At Coronado.

Advertising in River Currents

We're starting to receive many requests from the membership to place advertisements in *River Currents*. Books, Medals, Patches, Watches, Boat Models, etc. Also everyone wants a photo of their product posted. We're unable to do this for space reasons. From now on the only thing that will be published will be the name of the product and phone number or postal address, or an email address. If you, the member 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**
- **Indochina & Vietnam Tours ... 1-360-570-2096**
indochinatours@olywa.net
- **Military Watches: MRFA & 9th Inf ... 541-863-3144**
..seaweed@sorcom.com... www.chiefsquarters.com

- **Boat Models: All Brown Water Boat Models George & Sharon Johnson, 2222 Ash Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89101 • sharonjohnson@aol.com**

- **Books: www.mrfa.org**

- **Military Plaques 800-516-9510 ... E-Mail YourAwards@aol.com**

- **Supplier of Challenge Coins & Military Key Fobs ... Fgubala@aol.com ... 716-873-4821**

The only products that will be featured with photos and such are products that are currently sold by the MRFA.

The MRFA products help and assist with keeping the MRFA up and running. There's patch, book and tour info on the web site www.mrfa.org; or you may contact Mike Harris if you want a book or item posted on the site. Please note that Mike makes the final decision on what will be posted on the site. Email him at: mekong152@charter.net.

TAPS*Those gone, but not forgotten...*

Sgt. James "Jungle Jim" Eder B/CO/4th/47th passed away in January of 2003 he was from Stoneboro, PA.

MRFA member **Shawn Huber** passed away December 1st 2003 from cancer. Shawn served in D/CO 3rd/47th 9th Inf Div 1968-69. You may contact

the family c/o Colleen Huber 29960 Thornhill Drive, Sun City, CA 92586, 909-678-6684 or e-mail: cocobien@inland.net

MRFA member **Bill D. Cook** passed away in December 2003. Bill served on Alpha-111-



7 6/67 & 6/68. You may contact the family at 12415 SW 15th Ter. Yukon, OK 73099, 405-324-0250 or Ed Newland, 3504 Cromwell Plano, TX 75015, 972-612-1545. Ed served with Bill on A-111-7.

MRFA member **William "Bill" Patton** recently passed away. Bill served in the 709th Maintenance 9th Inf Div 1967. You may contact the family at 23 Dorset Ct. #-D, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598, 845-628-8532.

Kevin Cholik passed away on December 3, 2002. Kevin served on the USS Benewah APB-35 (Subic Bay) 1972.

BMCS Malcolm Shelby, US Navy (Ret.) passed away peacefully in his sleep on January 15, 2004. Boats served on Tango 111-11 (1967). You may contact the family at 12528 Ophelia Dr., Pensacola, FL. 32506.

Dave Schenker passed away in 1989 due to cancer. Dave served on ComRivFlot-One staff as a RD3 in 1969. You may contact the family C/O Fred Schenker U.S. Army Ret. 795 Burnside Dr. Gettysburg, PA. 17325. 719-334-4841 frschen@adelphia.net

Lt. Roger Jensen passed away on the 11th of February, 2004 in Hastings, MN. Roger served as the XO on the USS Benewah APB-35 1966-67. This is all the info we have as of this printing.

In Memory Of

This section is for the members who wish to sponsor the MRFA by placing a notice in memory of one of their fallen comrades. In some cases the name of the sponsor will precede the name of the person who was KIA or who has passed on since Vietnam.

Jack Benedick for C/CO/4th/47th 66-68 C/CO/3rd/60th 69

E/CO/3rd/60th Inf KIA 4-7-68

James J. Byrnes for members of the *Junk Force*, Dung Island

James Roselli for Mark Schoenberger B/CO/3rd/39th Inf.

David R. Lynn For Howard Burns (QM2) Robert Bouchet (SM2) Herman Miller (GM3)

8-11-68 IUWG - 1- Unit 3

Bob Sutton For Lt/Jg James F. Rost KIA 11/17/1969

Frank T. Buck SKCS Ret For Son ENFN Frank H. Buck KIA-12/28/67

T-92-10

Lanny Snyder For David "Doc" Hearne T-92-6

Chet "Gunner" Stanley for Jerry Pappy Ashcraft (cox'sn) CCB-111-1

John Philp For LTC William B. Cronin KIA April 27, 1967 CO 2/47th

John Philp For 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 LSMR-536

Bill Brennan For Tom Swanick GMG3 USS White River LSMR-536

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

Claim Your Benefits

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

private doctor. Invoke the REASONABLE DOUBT clause as well as VCAA. Site VBA and Court of Appeals legal cases that support your claim that you are entitled to a certain percentage rating.

YES, review the ratings percentages. Think of your worst day (pain, etc.) and rate yourself on that basis. After a few years your pain will probably be at that level, unless you can get the symptoms reversed somehow.

I listed every time I went to the doctor, provided a copy of that medical record, highlighted the medical record and bunched them together in a group so the claims examiner did not have to hunt for the information. I IDIOT proofed the claim! I wrote my claims and other peoples claims (and they received almost everything they have asked for) because I looked for the weaknesses in the claim and found the law or regulation that supported that weakness.

I also looked up medial studies to support my claim and provided those studies (were my case might be weak or a secondary issue) to help in the adjudication process. I especially like VA or DoD or National Institute of Health medical studies. Its hard to argue with yourself when yourself (the government) has come to the conclusion that the problem exists and what the symptoms are (which are the same symptoms your reporting).

Remember, the service organizations receive thousands of requests for representation. These organizations use canned letters that are ok, but not necessarily in your best interest. If you provide them with most if not all of the research, it will make their life easier when

FRIED RICE**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 ½ cups uncooked white rice
- 3 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 small onion chopped
- 1 clove of garlic chopped
- 1 cup small shrimp – peeled and deveined
- ½ cup diced ham
- 1 cup chopped chicken cooked chicken breast
- 2 stalks celery chopped
- 2 carrots peeled and diced
- 1 green bell pepper chopped
- 1 egg beaten
- ¼ cup soy sauce

DIRECTIONS:

Cook rice accordingly to package. While rice is cooking, heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Pour in sesame oil and stir in onion, fry until golden, then add garlic, when garlic is lightly browned, mix in shrimp, ham, and chicken. Fry until shrimp is pink. Lower heat to medium and stir in celery, carrot, green pepper, fry until vegetables are crisp-tender. Stir in beaten egg and cook just until egg is scrambled and firm. When rice is done, mix thoroughly with vegetables and stir in the soy sauce. Adjust seasoning to you preference and serve immediately.

Makes 8 servings.
Albert

they go to write the cover letter. They will know what cases to cite and can do a better job in supporting you (if you choose to use them).

I constantly hear/read about the VA messing things up, but I never hear of anyone taking the bull by the horns and doing anything about it. Most people rely on the VA to do the right thing. Or you rely on the service organization to do the right thing. Don't count on them. You have to be responsible for your own actions.

Having done the prep work for the appeals, I can state one good reason why they take forever. You as the veteran did a lousy job of documenting what was needed to win. You had enough evidence to raise doubt in their minds, but not enough evidence to justify or prove you have an existing issue and if the issue was aggravated by the service, or voc rehab or your visit to the VA. Follow the steps below to gather as much evidence as possible. If that fails, the BVA paralegals have 3-5 4" binders full of address and other resources that they can call upon to develop your case. If you want to win, you have to do a better job at preparing your case.

My Turn: If you follow the steps listed above, would you let me know how well you did on your claim.

Thanks. To date, I have a 90% success rate.
Parker2@entercomp.com
Paul Kasper
<http://vietnamresearch.com>

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

Webmaster Mike Harris has posted more great info on our web site: www.mrfa.org. We now have 9th Infantry Division and MRF Medal of Honor Recipients and all 9th Division KIA list, as well as more great stuff. Mike has worked hard to make this what we consider the best site on the web. You can reach him at mekong152@charter.net. *Thanks for all your hard work!*

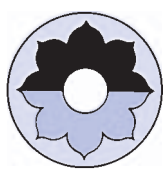
MRFA Web Site

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