

RIVER CURRENTS



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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SUMMER 2003

Memorable Firefight

BY BILLIE E. SCANTLIN

I will always remember the firefight in May 1969. We were en route from Tra Cu To Ben Luc, after having gone to Tra Cu to repair an LCM that had been damaged and was loaded with ammo. When the firefight started, we were in convoy of 13 boats (one LCM, 12 PBRs, Tangos and Alphas). The boat directly behind the LCM was Tango-13 and the boat commander told us on the LCM to hold fire (due to all the ammo on board) and they would draw the fire. The boat Tango 13 pulled alongside to protect our port side and took a direct hit from a rocket. By the grace of God, there were no injuries that night.

That was probably when I realized I belonged to a family that could never be separated by time or distance.

The entire tour of one year was a memorable experience of meeting, knowing and

loving people I met and those I never had a chance to meet. I still remember. I do not wish to forget, but I do all I can to keep re-living that time: but I can assure everyone that all those whose my path crossed with. I shall never forget. My life was changed by those people who were willing to go the extra distance to help and be there when needed.

For all of those I thank each and everyone with my life. I never got to personally meet or thank the crew of Tango-13. But I believe that had they not done what they did that night in May of 1969. I would not be here to enjoy my children and grandchildren. Even though I do not know their names or where they came from. I wish to say thank you. And you will live in my heart and mind forever.

Billie served on the USS Harnett Cty., LST-821, in 1969-70. You may contact him at RR-4, Box 47-7, Coweta, OK 74429; phone 918-486-7531.



FROM THE GALLEY

ALBERT MOORE, MRFA PRESIDENT

Fellow members just a few updates ... first the REUNION. It looks as if we're going to have another large turnout. I have noticed some folks who have been with us for awhile and are attending for the first time. As well as some of our new members. We also have a few widows, sisters, brothers and children of some of our deceased brothers attending. Some who were KIA in Vietnam and some who have passed on a few years back, and a couple recently. I want to thank each of you who have made reservations to attend the reunion. Your support is and will be most appreciated. Some of asked about speakers prior to our memorial service. We have some lined up, they will be announced later.

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR REUNION REGISTRATION FEE AND BUFFET FEE ASAP. PLEASE DON'T WAIT TILL THE LAST MINUTE CUT OFF DATE ON THE REGISTRATION FORM. SEE Y'ALL IN KENTUCKY.

MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Mobile Museum

The Association has been searching for a suitable location for our mini museum for several years. We were unable to find a location that we felt would be acceptable and convenient for our members. After much thought the officers and board members have approved the purchase of a forty eight foot fifth wheel trailer to be used as our museum and for much needed storage between reunions. The trailer will come equipped with interior lighting, generator, rear entrance ramp, side exit door and non-skid rubber flooring. We will later add shelving and display cases. Richard Corrick has agreed to haul the trailer to all MRFA reunions for the cost of fuel only. The officers and board members feel that this is the perfect answer for our museum and will also solve our much needed storage problem. The outside will display the Mobile Riverine Force and 9th Infantry Division insignia, the Vietnam Service Ribbon, and Mobile Riverine

Force Association Mobile Museum. On one side of the trailer we will list the names and units of all Task Forces 115/ 116/ 117, 9th Infantry Division and supporting Army and Navy unit KIA's. The trailer along with improvements will cost between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars.

Anyone wishing to make a tax-deductible donation to the Mobile Museum fund can do so by sending a check or money order payable to the **MRFA to our Treasurer, Charlie Ardinger, 1857 County Road A-14, Decorah, IA 52101**. Please indicate that your check is for the Mobile Museum Fund. Anyone donating \$100.00 or more will be recognized in the "River Currents" newsletter and will receive a certificate of appreciation from the Association. We hope to have the trailer ready with logos etc. for our upcoming reunion in Ft. Mitchell in August, so that those in attendance can have a tour. By the 2005 reunion the trailer will be ready for all hands to tour.

Roy Moseman, VP MRFA

Mud Puppies

BY ROBERT STERN

Anyone who pulled operations in the Delta will be able to relate to this event, which took place during operation Coronado IV in Rac Gia. We were being dropped to form a blocking force for an assault that was to take place early in the morning by the 5th Vietnamese Marines. We were being dropped by the Navy at 2200 hours during low tide. I was the first off the ramp to hit the mud and quickly sank up to my waist in the mud. The men who followed me off soon became stuck also.

It took me about 15 minutes to rock my body free and lay down on my belly to crawl out of the mud. By the time I made it to the river bank which was about 18 feet from where the boat dropped us, I was covered from head to toe with the thick grayish mud which had the consistency of glue mixed into oatmeal. The next man behind me was carrying a PRC-25 radio, which weighed about 25 pounds. He was

using the radio as a sled and a pick to pull him up to where I was out of the mud.

By the time our platoon was assembled on the riverbank, we resembled mud men from top to the bottom. We pushed inland to an area where there was a small settlement. We went into perimeter and did a sweep of the immediate area. By this time the mud was starting to harden and stink to high heaven.

I spotted some of the large water jugs that the villagers had to collect rainwater. I had a brainstorm that we climb into the jugs and wash off the mud. We took turns holding each other's gear and climbing into the jugs.

We cleaned off the mud and as soon as everyone had gone through, we moved on to our assembly area to set up for the rest of the night. The area chosen for us to set up in was a tidal flat. Most of us just dropped down where we were and set up watches to wait for the morning. Much to some peoples surprise, the tide came in and they found themselves sleeping in water. Some people went to sleep in trees and



during the night you could hear a tree branch break and a loud splash and a lot of swearing. I think anyone who spent any time in the Delta will never forget the mud, the insects and the leeches.

Robert Stern served in the E/Co 3rd/60th 04/67-04/68 and can be contacted at P.O. Box 531 Quakertown, PA 18951; 215-536-1012 robertl@enter.net.

Army & Navy ...

Still Looking After Each Other

If you were in San Diego in 2002, or have read some of the past newsletters you know that Ralph Fries has spent sixteen years researching names of the 2558 Navy, 7 Coast Guards Australian Navy, 2 US Army 458th Transportation Company, 11 US Army 328th Heavy Boat Company and 2,624 Army 9th Infantry Division casualties of the Vietnam War.

The Memorial/Boat display at NAB Coronado in San Diego, California was to display this complete list. Without going into detail the VUMMF committee decided that they did not want to display the names of the Army's 9th Infantry Division unless it could be proven that they were under the Navy's Command at the time they were KIA. Committee members and Mobile Riverine Force representatives, Don Blankenship, and Roy Heilpern, tried to explain that it would be next to impossible. There were just too many factors involved to know when and if a 9th Division soldier was under Naval Command at the time of his death. During several meetings and lots of letter writing, it was impressed upon the VUMMF committee that they had to include all of the 9th

Division casualties. It became obvious that the members of the committee would not include the complete list of 9th Division casualties. At this point, Don Blankenship and Roy Heilpern, made the decision to leave the memorial committee. They stated that "we were together in Vietnam and we are together today", "If you cannot include all the 9th Infantry KIA's then we do not want to be part of the VUMMF". Don Blankenship and Roy Heilpern resigned from the board of the VUMMF, as well as Ralph Fries, whom had resigned earlier. Ralph Fries has spent countless hours of his personal time and own money researching this list. It would be a shame for it not to be displayed in a place of honor. We are now working on a permanent location to display all the names of our fallen brothers. At this time we are not sure where it will be, but we can assure you wherever it is, they will all be together. I can't say enough about the job that Ralph, Don and Roy have done for the Association and I want to thank them from all of us for the hard work and dedication they gave us.

After hearing of the VUMMF refusal to post all the 9th Infantry Division KIA's on the Memorial Wall. Albert Moore made a proposal to the MRFA Board of Directors which was agreed upon. Since we already have two plaques on the CCB that represent all the units of the 9th

Infantry Division and the MRFA Navy, they also represent all who served, and all KIA's in the 9th Infantry Division and MRFA Navy. These are two beautiful bronze plaques. We would then list all the 9th Infantry Division KIA's and the MRF KIA's inside the CCB, with different Navy and Army unit plaques included. So what we will be doing is using the CCB as our memorial wall and as a place of honor for all who served and all who were KIA Army & Navy.

We will also have a moving memorial wall for the 9th Infantry Division and all Navy KIA's which will be at each reunion. This wall will list all the 9th Division and Navy KIA's, place of KIA and the date of KIA, with unit patches, etc. It will be more detailed than the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC and the one being built in Coronado. Ralph Fries has taken this task on and will make sure it is done in great fashion and manner. We appreciate all your support and hope you understand the reason on the above decisions. We the MRFA will not let anyone or group try and separate the 9th Infantry Division and our Navy brothers who fought, served and died together in Vietnam and we will remain together till the end.

Roy Moseman, Vice President, MRFA

Please see page 5.



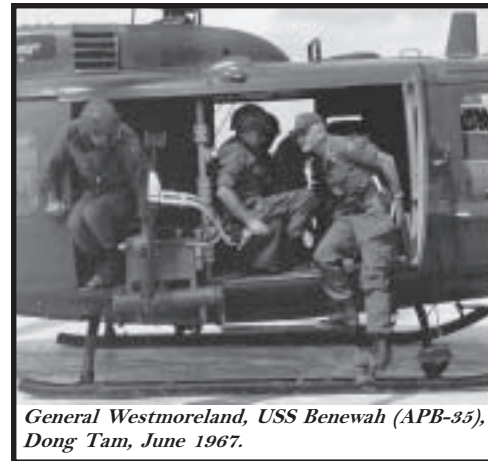
Vietnam Vet Commands Iraq War

Known as a "muddy boots soldier", four-star Army General Tommy Franks is the supreme military commander of U.S. and British troops in the Iraq War.

Franks first saw combat during the Vietnam War, where he earned 3 Purple

Hearts as an artillery forward observer and fire support officer with the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong River Delta. After the war, he graduated from the University of Texas in 1971. Franks, 58, has led the U.S. Central Command since 2000.

His devotion to enlisted personnel is summed up in his quote to the *Associated Press*: "I remember when I was a private. I remember the days when I was taken care of and when I was not taken care of".



General Westmoreland, USS Benewah (APB-35), Dong Tam, June 1967.

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

Richard Relf, USS Jennings Cty. LST 1-8-03. Richard had been a member of the Association since 1996. You may contact the family at 2918 Forest Circle, Seffner, FL 33548; phone 813-657-3436.

David A. Lopez, 1st Sgt. U.S. Army (Ret.) Passed away on February 27, 2003. David served in E/CO (recon) 3rd/60th riverine infantry 1968-69. David served in the Army for 35 years retiring in 1985. You may contact the family at 1891 Regal Av., Medford, OR 97501. David was a Plankowner of the MRFA.

Homer G. Helms passed away 11/15/2002. Homer served on Alpha-152-3 1968-69. You may contact the family c/o Vearl C. Helms, 1253 Huntsmoor Dr., Gastonia, NC. 28054; or phone 704-865-6028.



Floyd Payne passed away November 12, 2002. Floyd served with HQ/CO 3rd/60th 1966-67. You may contact the family at 33825 Granby St., Aurora, CO 80014; phone 303-690-5241.

BMC Doyle K. Steen USN (Ret.) Passed away April 20, 2003. Chief Doyle served in RivRon-13 1968-69. You may contact the family c/o Mona F. Steen, 532 Lavender Ln., Virginia Beach, VA 23462; by phone 757-499-2832; or email blazer821ton@cox.net.

Tom Bohl (T-131-8) passed away 1-6-92 from cancer caused by complications from Agent Orange. You may contact the family c/o Tom Bohl (son), 500 Dogwood St., Great Falls, MT 59405; by phone 406-268-8196; or email bohlmeover@bresnan.net.

Veterans Day 2003 – Bloomington, MN

The Mobile Riverine Force Association and 9th Infantry Division will hold its gathering for Veterans Day at the Days Inn located directly across from the Mall of America (1901 Killebrew Drive, Bloomington, Minnesota) November 6-8, 2003. Wreaths will be placed at the 9th Infantry Division and Mobile Riverine Force Memorials at Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

The Days Inn is just minutes away from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport with complimentary shuttle service to both the Airport and Mall of America. The Days Inn has ample free parking for those who drive or stay in their RVs. You may make your reservations by calling 1-800-558-5051. Be sure to mention you're making your reservations under the Mobile Riverine Force Association and give the dates of the gathering. The Days Inn

is handicap accessible. If you live in the area and just want to visit, please feel free to stop in and visit with your brothers and sisters of the Association. You won't regret it!

Room rates:

\$69.00 per night for a room w/ queen size bed
\$79.00 per night for a room w/ 2 double beds.

The Mobile Riverine Force Association will have a hospitality room. There is no dress code or registration fee for the gathering. If you plan on attending, please send your name, unit, guest's name, city, and state info to Charlie or Georgina Ardinger (info below). This will assist us in who will be attending and also so we can have a name tag prepared.

For more information on the gathering, please contact:

Charlie and Georgie Ardinger

1857 County Rd. A14
Decorah, IA 52101
1-563-735-5924
E-mail: georgie@rconnect.com

Veterans Day 2003 – 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, Tuesday, November 11, 2003. 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 9:00 A.M.

We have blocked 25 rooms at the Quality Hotel & 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 or 1-703-247-1006 and refer to our group code "MRFA3." Reservations under this code must be made before the cut off date of October 17, 2003, so call early. The Quality Hotel & 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, OH 45069. Phone: 1-513-755-1223 or email: rpries@cinci.rr.com.

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 Benedict 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.
Capt. Peveril Blundell, USN Ret. For Paul Wolfgang,
RivAstSqd-13
Paul De Nicola B/3/60 for Alex Radisa PCFs 55-19
Lt/JG Robert B. Conaty XO RivDiv-131 69-69 For
Paul Wolfgang RivAstSqd-13,
David R. Lynn For Howard Burns (QM2) Robert
Bouchet (SM2) Herman Miller (GM3)
68-68-68 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
Al & Sara Moore for Mac Moore 1989-2003 "MRFA
First Dog"

Get Well Wishes:

Member **David Trostle** is in the University of Alabama Birmingham in the Heart Transplant unit and will be there until he receives a new heart. David served in RivDiv's 554-595 (PBR's) You may contact the family c/o Lynette Trostle, 8170 Harbour Square Dr. Pensacola, FL 32514, 850-476-6005 trostle@bellsouth.net

Andi Goins wife of board member Tim has been fighting a courageous battle with cancer she's now home after being in and out of the hospital. Tim has been in the hospital as well. Both Tim and Andi need our thoughts and prayers at this time. You may contact Tim and Andi 714 Kathryn St., Santa Fe, NM 87505, 504-424-8490, tgoins8417@comcast.net

Gentlemen,

Jacket arrived. When I opened the box, tears came to my eyes. Thank you for the superior craftsmanship! It is the most beautiful jacket ever made! I will wear it with pride and honor for my fallen brothers.

— Rick "Doc" Jarvis

REUNION 2003 IS ALMOST HERE ~ DON'T MISS OUT

Join us from August 27 through August 31 at the Drawbridge Villager Premier in Fort Mitchell, KY. The reunion will be held over Labor Day weekend. Labor day is always recognized as a National Holiday and will give you an extra day for travel.

You can start making reservations at the Drawbridge by calling 1-800-354-9793.

**Dates: Wednesday, August 27
Sunday, August 31, 2003**

Room rates are as follows (these rates are good three days prior to the reunion and three days following the reunion):

**Main Building: \$77.00 Single, Double,
Triple or Quad Occupancy**

**Garrison Building: \$67.00 Single, Double,
Triple or Quad Occupancy**

When making reservations be sure to mention you're making reservations under the MRFA and give the dates. When sending in your registration fee please add the name of your guest or guests. This is for name tag purposes. If you have any questions about the Drawbridge please feel free to call Jennifer Hesse, Convention Coordinator at 800-426-3841; or e-mail jhesse@drawbridgeinn.com. The Drawbridge is handicap accessible and has plenty of free parking. There are RV hook-ups but they are limited and there is a charge. You can find out the cost by calling the 800-354-9793.

If you are flying in, there is free transportation to and from the airport. In the baggage area you will see a bank of phones. Pick up the one that says *Drawbridge Coach to the Castle*; a van will pick you up shortly. You will receive your meal pass or passes when you check in at the registration desk. If you have e-mail we'll e-mail you upon receiving your registration. When sending e-mail addresses please send in a manner we can read and make sure it's not an old e-mail address. We're having problems with members changing e-mails and not letting us know.

Slide Projector

The Association has purchased a slide projector for those of you who want to show your slides at the reunion. It will be located in our large hospitality room (London Hall).

Alternate Hotel

For the 2003 reunion, we have chosen the Holiday Inn, 2100 Dixie Hwy., Ft. Mitchell, as our alternate hotel for overflow. Contact them at 1-859-331-1500. Room rates are \$77.00 a night. Free transportation to and from the Drawbridge at the top and bottom of each hour. The Holiday Inn is handicap accessible. If you have any questions concerning the Holiday Inn, contact Peggy Schmitt at the above number, or you may contact her via e-mail at pschmitt@lodgian.com.

2003 Reunion Registration Form

Drawbridge Estates Inn in Ft. Mitchell, KY • August 27-31, 2003

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 address below.

Registration fee (Member only, cost includes family and 1 guest)

Total _____ x \$35.00 each = \$ _____

Registration fee (Non-Members)*

Total _____ x \$50.00 each = \$ _____

Saturday Afternoon Buffet (All)

Total _____ x \$10.00 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. Please send your check or money order (payable to MRFA) and the top portion of this form before August 21, 2003 to:

MRFA Reunion • 106 Belleview Dr. • Conover, NC 28613

Daily Events

Thursday, August 28

9:30 am till ????? MRFA activities begin all over the hotel. Try the large hospitality room (London Hall).

9:30 am ... Snacks and beverages are provided by the MRFA daily.

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

9:30 am ... Registration begins in London Hall lobby.

9:30 am ... Video footage and slide videos are shown throughout the day. The Association will furnish the TV-VCR and slide projector. The TV-VCR will be a raffle item. Everyone attending is welcome to bring personal videos and slides to share.

Friday, August 29

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

11:00 am - 1:00 pm ... Cash concessions at outdoor pool (cook-out). You pay for your own.

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm ... Join us for a Pig Roast in parking lot between the main building and the Garrison building. Provided at no cost to you, the member.

6:00 pm - 10:00 pm ... Dance with DJ at outdoor poolside. Snacks furnished by the Association.

Saturday, August 30

7:30 am - 8:30 am ... Breakfast Buffet in Chaucer's, with overflow in Friar's / Merchant's. You pay for your own.

9:00 am - 10:00 am ... Memorial Services (We will have guest speakers, to be announced) in London Hall.

10:00 am - 12:00 noon ... London Hall will be closed so that Drawbridge staff can set up for the Lunch Buffet. Josh's and Chaucer's will be open for your convenience.

12:00 noon - 1:30 pm ... *Lunch Buffet in London Hall.*

The following menu will be served.

- Seasonal Fresh Cut Fruit · Cole Slaw
- Baked Beans
- German Potato Salad
- Grilled Hamburgers / Cheeseburgers
- Grilled Bratwursts
- Mettwursts
- Grilled Hot Dogs
- Sandwich Set-ups
- Assorted Breads
- Beverages

7:00 pm - 12:00 am ... **Dance in London Hall (with a DJ) Snacks and beverages furnished by the Association.**

Sunday, August 31

Check-out before 12:00 Noon.

We Hope To See You There!

PIG ROAST

Member Dean Ayres of the 709th Maint Bn & the 99th CSB has volunteered to roast 3 pigs for the membership. This is a freebie, provided at no additional cost to you the member. It will be held on Friday the 29th between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm. The MRFA will contribute the paper plates, napkins and plastic forks, bread, etc. This will be done in the hotel parking lot between the Main and Garrison buildings. This is not a formal affair, just get in line and get a plate of Dean's famous barbecue and chow down. A great big thanks to Dean for his hard work. Dean will be set up near the MRFA trailer.

Albert

As Always We'll Be Having Our Famous Raffles Hosted by the Equally Famous Thelma & Louise! Thanks Girls, For Always Doing Such a Great Job!!

MINI MUSEUM

We hope that if any of you that have any items that you would like to put on display, feel free to do so. You do not have to donate anything to the museum you can bring what you have to show and take it home with you. This could include a scrap book, your ribbons and medals displays; anything that you think would be of interest. Some of you Navy guys I know have ships, plaques and pictures you might want to share. I believe some of our Army members may have a weapon or two they brought back and other goodies they could bring, parts of your old uniform. The more items we have on display the nicer the museum will be for all to see. The Memorial Wall and the mini museum will all be in the same room. Bob 'Doc' Pries and a few of the 2nd/47th members will handle the museum. Ralph and a couple of the other members will take care of the Memorial Wall.

Sara and I look forward to seeing each and every one of you at the reunion the first time attendees as well as the old gang. You may contact Ralph or Bob at these locations:

Ralph Fries at 1000 Erica St, Escondido, CA 92027; phone 760-745-0473; or e-mail rfries@pacbell.net; and Bob 'Doc' Pries at 9702 Friar Tuck Dr., West Chester, OH 45069; phone 513-755-1223; or e-mail rpries@cinci.rr.com.

"When war does come, my advice is to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard."

— General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson

Right now we have a 350 room reservations at the Drawbridge that's pretty good for this far out from the reunion. Be sure to remind your units of the reunion, etc.

U.S. Navy & 9TH Infantry Division Vietnam Memorial

Thanks to Association board member Ralph Fries, the U.S. Navy & 9th Infantry Division Vietnam Memorial will be on display from now on at all National Reunions. I would also like to thank Dave Argabright of the 2nd/60th and a few others of the 2nd/60th who have put a lot of time and effort into obtaining the listings for all the 9th Infantry Division KIA's. This was not as easy task. These folks used their own time and funds to make trips to DC and St. Louis to get these records, and they are a very impressive set of records too.

Ralph also did the same for the Navy records, visiting DC and Millington, TN. As with all military records, you're going to find a few mistakes, but Ralph and Dave and others have done the best with the info they have obtained.

The Monument will be a very impressive site, over a 100 feet long and around 7 feet high. It will list all 9th and U.S. Navy KIA's by Name, Unit, Date KIA, and Province KIA. This is not just for MRF-TF-117; it's for all Navy Units who served in Vietnam and all units of the 9th Infantry Division. The Memorial will be set up in the Mini Museum (Yeoman) Room. We hope you will make plans to attend the reunion and take part in visiting the Museum and the Memorial. I don't think you will be disappointed.

P.S. If you're coming in a day or two early and would like to help with assembling the memorial, please contact Ralph at 1000 Erica Street, Escondido, CA 92027; phone 760-745-0473; or email rhfries@pacbell.net.

"Human life is the only thing that takes care of itself."

— Napoleon Bonaparte (on why he felt exposed to the enemy in Russia)

2/47th "Scouts Scramble" Golf Tournament

Is being held again at the upcoming reunion. You may contact Russ Vibberts at vibbert@Nationwide.com; or via mail at 1 Standish Dr., Stafford Springs, CT 06076; or by phone 860-684-2072, if you have any questions.

Folks, this is very prestigious tournament and you golfers won't want to miss it, the participants always have a great time. Russ always has some excellent prizes for the winners and runner ups. This is for all reunion attendees Army and Navy, all are most welcome to participate. If you wish to do so please contact Russ prior to the reunion at the above address.

Letter to VUMMF

Dear Ken:

It is with regret that we feel we are forced to resign in protest from the Board of Directors including Don's position as Treasurer of the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument Fund. Roy Heilpern also joins me in tendering his resignation from the board. We've thought long and hard on the issue and have come to the conclusion that we cannot continue to serve.

The board's negative position on the of the proper inclusion of the 9th Army casualties on the memorial wall has caused a significant enough rift between us that we believe we will not be able to continue working with this group in an effective manner. It is just something that we feel is so important to exhibit the historical link of this unique joint Army/Navy operation that was Task Force 117 and later 194.

As a Navy SEAL called up as a reserve when the Iraq conflict started, my son-in-law works in the joint force headquarters for special forces in Fort Bragg, NC. The modern sailor and soldier know how to work together without the prior prejudices that prevailed between the forces in the past. General Tommy Franks, a former 9th Infantry soldier in Vietnam, knows the strength of joint force operations and used them more effectively than any other commander in history in the Iraq War. How do you suppose they will question this board's reluctance to include the 9th Infantry soldiers who gave their all fighting along side their Navy brothers in the rivers of Vietnam? I think they, much like Roy and I, would not understand your position or the hidden agendas which pervade this board's narrow minded position.

The majority prevailed in its vote to obscure the historical nature of our task force but that doesn't mean we will quit telling the story of the Army's involvement in TF-117 and TF-194. We will use the CCB-18, and primarily interior displays to memorialize the casualties of the 9th Infantry Division soldiers and to tell the story of this precursor to modern joint warfare.

The Mobile Riverine Force Association will not be replacing Roy and myself on the VUMMF Board. However, we wish you success in continuing to build a memorial monument to honor the sailors and coast guardsmen that died in Vietnam, limited though it may be in its scope and accuracy.

Attached are all Treasurer materials you presented to me two months ago. I have done nothing with them except read the bank balances to the board at the last

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

MRFA Catalog Products

Name _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

New shirt designs feature fully embroidered logos. All shirts are \$22.50 each (includes S/H) Please indicate quantity and size in space provided.

Combat Action Ribbon (Tan) (Qty: _____ / Sz: _____) **River Assault Force** (Ash) (Qty: _____ / Sz: _____)
 9th Inf. Div. Vietnam (Dk. Blue) (Qty: _____ / Sz: _____) **MRFA Army & Navy** (Ash) (Qty: _____ / Sz: _____)
 Combat Infantry Badge (Ash) (Qty: _____ / Sz: _____)
 Boats **ASPB** **Tango** **Monitor** (Ash) (Qty: _____ / Sz: _____)
 (# of Shirts: _____)
 x \$22.50 each = \$ _____

New hat designs feature fully embroidered logos. All hats are \$21.50 each (includes S/H) Please indicate quantity in the space provided.

MRFA (Dark Blue) (Qty: _____) **Purple Heart Hats** (White) **9th Div.** (Qty: _____) **MRFA** (Qty: _____)
 Combat Medic (Black) (Qty: _____) **Boat Hats** (Off White with Blue Bill)
 CIB Hat (White) (Qty: _____) **Monitor** (Qty: _____) **Tango** (Qty: _____) **ASPB** (Qty: _____)
 9th Inf Div. (Dark Blue) (Qty: _____)
 (# of Hats: _____)
 x \$21.50 each = \$ _____

MRFA Poster *In Full Color* (Qty: _____ x \$27.50 each = \$ _____)

Patches **MRFA** (Qty: _____) **9th Infantry** (Qty: _____) **TF-117** (Qty: _____)
 Specify: **River Rat** (Qty: _____) (Qty: _____ x \$4.00 each = \$ _____)

MRFA Bumper Sticker *Full Color Vinyl Decal* (Qty: _____ x \$4.00 each = \$ _____)

Hat Pin **MRFA** **9th Infantry Pin** (# of Pins: _____ x \$3.00 each = \$ _____)

MRFA Video "Force Afloat" (Qty: _____ x \$27.50 each = \$ _____)

"Ambush" *Limited edition print by Bill McGrath.* (Qty: _____ x \$150.00 each = \$ _____)

Personalized MRFA Coffee Mug *Specify items of your choice*
 MRFA Member's Name (maximum of 16 characters/spaces) Rank (max. 4 characters/spaces)
 Command in Vietnam (maximum 20 characters)

Specify insignia for reverse side of the mug: **Army** **Navy** **USMC** **USCG** **Purple Heart**
 (Qty: _____ x \$30.00 each = \$ _____)

MRFA or 9th Infantry Division SATIN OR DENIM Jackets *All Jackets Are Embroidered with MRFA or 9th Infantry Division Logo.* Satin Jackets are available in: *Black, Silver, Royal Blue or White.*

Available combinations: **Black jacket w/white or gold collar/cuffs.** **Silver jacket w/black or white collar/cuffs.** **Blue jacket w/white or gold collar/cuffs** **White jacket w/solid colors only.**
 Specify: _____ Jacket Color: _____
 Collar/Cuffs: _____

Nylon Jacket Embroidered Back Only S-XXXL **135.00**
 Nylon Jacket (Embroidered Front & Back) (Name on right front, unit on left front) S-XXXL **155.00**
 Quilted (Embroidered Back Only) S-XXXL **145.00**
 Quilted (Embroidered Front & Back) S-XXXL **165.00** (Qty: _____ x \$ _____ each = \$ _____)

Denim Jackets do not receive color choice, and tend to run larger than other styles!

GRAND TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Make check or money order out to the MRFA. Send to: MRFA, 2906 Starlite Dr., Topeka, KS 66605. You can contact products Chairman Bob VanDruff by calling 1-785-267-1526 or email bvdmrfa@networksplus.net.

Note: *Due to the increase in postage over the last few years we have had to go up on our S/H there has also been an increase in cost from our product suppliers so we have had to go up on the products as well. This is the first increase of any kind the MRFA has had since our beginning in 1992.* Albert Moore, MRFA President



MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Charlie Ardinger

1857 CO Rd. A-14, Decorah, IA 52101

New Member **Renewal** **Donation**
 Sponsor
 CHANGE OF ADDRESS - Note Below!

NAME: _____

STREET: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: () _____

E-MAIL: _____

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

WWII **Korea** **Vietnam**

Army Member: Unit (Division, Brigade, Battalion, Company, Platoon): _____

Navy Member: Ship, Boat Hull Nos. or NavDet: _____

Associate Member

Membership Rates:

1 Yr. \$10.00 **3 Years** \$27.50

Donation: \$ _____

To become a member, mail your check or money order (payable to MRFA) to: **Charlie Ardinger, MRFA Membership Chairman, 1857 CO Rd. A14, Decorah, IA 52101-7448.**

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

Letter to VUMMF

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

meeting. No funds were accepted by me on behalf of the board and I wrote no checks and handled no other transactions involving the funds of the VUMMF. Please take whatever steps you deem necessary to remove my name from the official records of the corporation and the bank holding the monument's funds. You may also remove our names from the web site as well.

It is not our intent to make waves with the Navy over this issue of historical inaccuracy. Our intent is to continue to restore and maintain the CCB-18, the last remaining vestige of the Mobile Riverine Force, at its current location as a tribute to the soldiers and sailors of that force. We will participate, as we are able, in ceremonies desired by the Navy in which the link to the past through the boats is important and will attempt to cooperate with the VUMMF regarding the maintenance of the memorial site. If you need to notify the MRFA CCB-18 restoration coordinator please do so by calling Charles Campbell at 619-227-7692. Sincerely,

Don Blankenship and Roy Heilpern

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; cciccc@aol.com) or Everett Jones, 1947 Gotham Street, Chula Vista, CA 91913 (619-421-3721; oneerj@pacbel.net).

A Hard 2½ Months

CALVIN SUTTON

I was looking at the Association's web site and it has some great info on it and I like it all and it did bring back some memories. When I first entered country I was assigned to A/CO.3rd/47th Inf for 2 ½ months from the end of April till the first of July. It was the hardest 2 ½ months I have ever been through; I had a heat stroke, I got bit by some kind of varmint and I never seen what it was because we were in the field and it was dark. I walked back into Tigers Lair the next day my leg was swollen real bad.

So I went on sick call that day and got a shot. I thought I was tough had been out of AIT for about 30 days. The first day I went out into the field with these guys I knew I was in trouble and was not in shape like I thought I was. Ft. Polk did not say one damn thing about me riding the boats up the small



canals and all the mud. When the 2nd/Bde was turned down in July of '69. I was assigned to the 2nd.47th Mech at Binh Phouc. But the 2 ½ months off the boats was the hardest time I have ever had.

Now tell me where in the hell was Tigers Lairs"? You may contact Cal Sutton at 32 Valley Creek Rd., Cartersville, GA 30120; 770-386-2076; or email csutton345@aol.com.

Brown Water Navy and Delta Army Vietnam Veterans

Please check this message board out; it was put together by Stan Lambert who served on the USS Mark AKL-12.

The message board is dedicated to the men and women who served in Vietnam and to their friends and families who supported them when it was not popular to do so.

Starting with HOW TO USE THE MESSAGE BOARD and moving on to MORNING MUSTER and VIETNAM MEMORIES, the message board is designed for us to keep in touch and share memories and information. There's even a place to SPEAK OUT! Also, a forum to learn about Military Awards & Decorations. More recently added was a forum on VA benefits and claims. Get yourself a cup of coffee and make yourself comfortable in front of your computer, then go to...

<http://pub34.ezboard.com/bbrownwaternavyanddeltaarmyvietnamveterans>

American Shepherd's Pie

Prep Time: 15 Min. • Cook Time: 25 Minutes • 40 Minutes total

Ingredients:

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- ½ cup chopped onion, ½ cup chopped celery
- 1 (10.5 ounce) can condensed vegetable soup
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 3 cups mashed cooked potatoes
- 1 cup sharp shredded cheddar cheese (or use cheese of your choice)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350° and lightly grease a 2 quart baking dish.
2. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, stir and cook ground beef, onion and celery until juices run clear. Pour mixture into baking dish with vegetable soup and thyme and stir well. Spread mashed potatoes on top.
3. Bake 20 minutes. Sprinkle shredded cheese on top and bake 5 minutes more or until cheese has melted.
4. Makes 6 servings.

Dear Al,

I received all the information you sent me on the USS Benewah (APB-35). I have wondered many years of what happened to the ship. What a great record, she done herself proud. It made me feel proud to be part of her past, even if it was during the Korean War.

For the record, I sent in my membership application for the MRFA. I hope I am accepted.

Thank you so much.

— Richard Mellinger

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 MONTROSE (APA-212)

Seeking past crew members for all time periods, excellent group of White Hats. Contact Russ McDonald at 10072 Bonser Ave., Garden Grove, CA 92840 (714-636-6267; e-mail gatornavy1@prodigy.net).

VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Phone 570-603-9740; or e-mail vvwnvatl@epix.net; website <http://www.vvwnv.org>.

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.

9THINFDIV 39TH CAV PLT. ACV

Ben Luc Vietnam - Summer 2004 in Williamsburg, VA POC: Jack Kavanaugh 902-535-2228; jackkavanaugh@hotmail.com

NAVY MSO ASSOCIATION

2003 Crews Reunion (All time periods) Oct-10-12-2003 at the Drawbridge Estates, Ft. Mitchell, KY; 800-354-7973 (reservations) POC : Larry Fugh 7209 Lismore Ct., Orlando, FL 32835; 407-292-2394; flafoo@aol.com.

Please note that Tim, our new editor, has not been feeling well recently. If you would like to place an Notice please send it to Albert Moore, 106 Belleview Dr., Conover, NC 28613; or email mrfa@charter.net. This is only temporary until Tim gets back on his feet. More on Tim under get well wishes.

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

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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!

MRF A Web Site

Our expressed thanks to those who have become MRF A sponsors! It's never too late to get on board as a sponsor, so we continue to seek and welcome those who wish to defray the cost of producing in the MRF A helps to defray the cost of producing River Currents, which in the past had for a period of one year, with your name and information appear by the printers. Sponsorships last for a period of one year, with your name and information appearing in four issues. Send your \$25.00 payment to: Charlie Ardinger, 1857 CO RD A14, Decorah IA 52101

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