

River Currents



A PUBLICATION OF
THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE ASSOCIATION

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SUMMER 2005

RIVER RAIDER RAP-UP (People Sniffer)

June 1968

After a 100-mile voyage that took 13 hours, the Mobile Riverine Force dropped anchor at their last stop of their new 9th Division Stationary, Can Tho. Can Tho, of course, is the Mekong Delta's major city. It is also IV Corps Headquarters. Interestingly enough, the IV senior corps advisor is MG William Eckhardt who debarked at Vung Tau on December 19, 1966, as Commanding General of the men who sport the Octofoil. River Assault Flotilla One and the River Raiders were the first and only major US force to operate in the Strategic IV Corps area. One of the top stories for June 68 was a highly successful "people sniffer" mission conducted by the 2nd Brigade's chemical officer, Major Franklin Wagner.

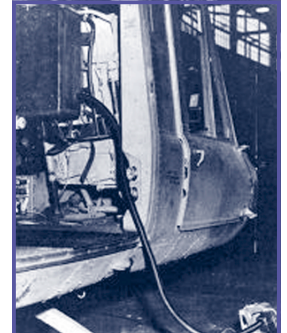


APL-36 / APB-36 Colleton

A people sniffer is a chemical personnel detector that samples the air and tells their opera-

tors when it smells humans. After obtaining a maximum reading in an area 9 miles southeast of Can Tho, Major Wagner directed a scout ship to buzz the area. When the desperate Cong, up on the LOH craft, Alpha troop, 7th of the 1st Cav, brought smoke all over the grid square. Sweeping River Raiders discovered 33 enemy dead in the location. Moments after midnight A/3rd/60th sprung an ambush on a VC sampan killing three enemies. Two hours later, the Tigers Alpha element triggered a claymore on another enemy sampan trying to sneak by them to the North. One female detainee was taken at the scene. Later in the day, the Wild Ones netted five detainees. In the morning while the Air Force was destroying 10 VC Bunkers, another "people sniffer" mission was run. This time when it was over, two Viet Cong lay face down in the mud. Then at 12:30, Echo Co 3rd/47th got hit from the front, right, and left. Air strikes and gunships supported the mission as other Tiger

companies moved to assist E/Co. The 7th of the 1st Cav dragonships prowling over the contact area in late afternoon spotted five more VC running away and quickly dipped down to kill them. During the night, spooky artillery fire pounded the enemy positions as the VC Company separated into two-to-three man groups in an attempt to escape. The 3rd/47th discovered two enemy bodies in the morning and A/7/1 reported killing 10 more VC in the June 18th contact.



A "people sniffer," Airborne Personnel Detector mounted on a Huey.

LTC John G. Hill, 3rd/60th Battalion Commander, was awarded a Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, and an Air Medal by 9th Division CG, MG Jullian J. Ewell, aboard the USS Colleton APB-36 on June 12th. Since

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Visit the Drawbridge's website at www.drawbridgeinn.com.

ELECTION OF MRFA OFFICERS 2005-2007

The following Officer's positions are open for election:

President • Vice President • Secretary

Anyone wishing to run for either of these positions, please send your name and unit to MRFA Secretary Bob Stumpf, 21 Madison Cir, Monroe NY 10950 prior to Aug 1, 2005. The terms will run from the 2005 reunion to the 2007 reunion. If a election is needed for any position, the election will be held at the reunion, Friday evening, September 2nd. Please remember, you must be a member of the MRFA to run for office.

FROM THE GALLEY

ALBERT MOORE, MRFA PRESIDENT

Our 2005 Reunion will be held at the Drawbridge Inn, Ft. Mitchell, KY, from Wednesday August 31 to September 4th (check-out Sunday). Room rates are \$77.00 for the Main Building and \$67.00 for the Garrison Building (detached). These rates are good for 3 days prior to the reunion and 3 days following the reunion. For room reservations, call 1-800-354-9793; for individual hospitality rooms, call 1-800-426-3841.

Individual Hospitality Rooms:

- **5110-Bedford Room:** USS Benawah, USS Colleton, USS Mercer, USS Nueces, AKLs, LSTs, etc. POC: Bill Manville, phone: 1-570-265-0246; e-mail manvilwh@epix.net
- **Room 207:** IUWG-1. POC: Larry Eberlin, phone: 1-618-883-2488, e-mail ireber@frontiernet.net
- **Room 281:** USS Askari ARL-30. POC: Ed Toth, phone: 1-419-693-9567
- **Monks Room:** RivDivs 91-92-111-112-131-132-151-152-153. POC: Randy Peat, phone: 1-616-657-4106, e-mail randy.peat@manatron.com

- **Grendel / Wolden Rooms:** 2nd/39th, 3rd/39th, 4th/39th, 9thInfDiv Society. POC: Cal Meyer, phone 1-406-585-2638, e-mail LZAMBUSH@aol.com
- **Dover Room:** 2nd/60th Inf. POC: James Lehne, phone 1-785-456-9399, e-mail lehne@wamego.net
- **Cambridge Room:** 15th Combat Engineers. POC: Donald Anderson, phone: 1-281-373-5838, e-mail deaskier@sbcglobal.net
- **Beowulf Room:** 2nd/47th (Mech) Inf. POC: Bob Doc Pries, phone: 1-513-755-1223, e-mail rpries@cinci.rr.com
- **Yeoman's Room:** Mini Museum Room. POC: Bob Doc Pries, phone 1-513-755-1223, e-mail rpries@cinci.rr.com
- **Ivanhoe Room:** RivRon 13. POC: Cap'n Mike Connolly, phone: 1-757 549-1904, e-mail miccon@pinn.net
- **Westminster Room:** 3rd/60th. POC: Bill Cunningham, phone: 1-757-227-8781, e-mail billcher@widomaker.com
- **London Hall Lobby:** Registration. POC: Gunner Stanley, phone: 1-864-306-8900
- **Main Hospitality:** ALL HANDS INVITED

The only room remaining in the Main Building is the Oxford room. However, rooms 4120-4121 are still available in the Garrison Building. For more information about any of these rooms, please contact

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MRFA Catalog Products



Name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Order Online at www.mrfa.org!

T-SHIRTS Fully Embroidered Logos

All Shirts are \$22.50 (includes S/H). Please indicate quantity and size in space provided.

- River Rat (Tan) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- Combat Action Ribbon (Tan) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- River Assault Force TF-117 (Ash) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- 9th Infantry Div. (Dark Blue) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- MRFA Army & Navy (Ash) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- Combat Infantry Badge (Ash) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- USS Benawah APB-35 (Tan) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- USS White River LSMR-536 (Tan) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- 2nd/47th Mech. Infantry (Ash) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- ☆ Boats ASPB Monitor Tango (Ash) Qty: _____ Sz: _____

EMBROIDERED SWEAT SHIRTS

\$44.00 each (includes S/H)

- MRFA (Ash) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- 9th Infantry Div. (Dark Blue) Qty: _____ Sz: _____
- River Assault Force (Ash) Qty: _____ Sz: _____

PATCHES

\$5.00 each (includes S/H)

- MRFA Qty: _____ 9th Infantry Div. Qty: _____
- TF-117 Qty: _____ River Rat Qty: _____
- MRFA Mekong Delta Qty: _____ IUWG Qty: _____

HAT PINS

\$5.00 each (includes S/H)

- MRFA Qty: _____ 9th Infantry Div. Qty: _____

MRFA Bumper Sticker

\$5.00 each (includes S/H)

High quality, full-color vinyl. Qty: _____

Forces Afloat

\$30.00 each (includes S/H)

High quality, full-color MRFA video. Qty: _____

MRFA Poster

\$21.50 each (includes S/H)

Full color, beautifully reproduced. Qty: _____

Ambush Print

\$150.00 each (includes S/H)

Limited Edition, full color print by Bill McGrath. Qty: _____

MRFA or 9th Inf. Satin, Nylon or Denim Jackets

Jackets embroidered with MRFA or 9th Div. logo.

Satin Jacket Colors:

Black (solid) or White with Gold collar/cuffs
Specify Jacket Color: _____
Navy Blue (solid) with White collar/cuffs
Blue and Gold Collar and Cuffs Available on Nylon Jackets Only!

Satin or Nylon Jacket Embroidered with large MRFA & 9th logo on back only. S-XXXL \$135.00

Satin Jacket Embroidered back and front. Name on right front, unit on left front. S-XXXL \$155.00

Quilted Embroidered back only. S-XXXL \$155.00

Quilted Embroidered back and front. Name/Unit on right front, MRFA/9th logo on left front. S-XXXL \$165.00

Embroidered Hats

\$21.50 each (includes S/H)

- 9th Infantry Division Logo (Dark Blue) Qty: _____
- MRFA Logo (Dark Blue) Qty: _____
- Combat Medic (Black) Qty: _____
- CIB Hat (White) Qty: _____
- ☆ Purple Heart Hats (White) 9th Div. Qty: _____
- MRFA Qty: _____
- ☆ Boat Hats (Off White w/Blue Bill) Tango Qty: _____ Monitor Qty: _____
- ASPB Qty: _____
- IUWG (Dark Blue) Qty: _____
- 2nd/47th Infantry (White w/Blue Bill) Qty: _____

Embroidered Hats also available with gold lettering showing unit name and ship with "VIETNAM" text.

- USS Benawah APB-35 Qty: _____
- USS Colleton APB-36 Qty: _____
- USS Mercer APB-39 Qty: _____
- USS Nueces APB-40 Qty: _____
- 9th Medical Battalion Dong Tam Qty: _____
- Riverine Infantry (Khaki) Qty: _____
- MRF/TF-117 Staff Qty: _____
- USS Mark AKL-12 Qty: _____
- USS Brule AKL-28 Qty: _____
- USS White River LSMR-536 Qty: _____
- USS Carronade IFS-1 Qty: _____
- USS Satyr ARL-23 Qty: _____
- USS Sphinx ARL-24 Qty: _____
- USS Askari ARL-30 Qty: _____
- USS Indra ARL-36 Qty: _____
- USS Krishna ARL-38 Qty: _____
- PBR's TF-116 Qty: _____
- USS Hartnett Cty. LST-821 Qty: _____
- USS Benawah APB-35 Qty: _____
- USS USS Holmes Cty. LST-836 Qty: _____
- USS Tom Green Cty. LST-1159 Qty: _____
- USS Washoe Cty. LST-1165 Qty: _____
- USS Westchester Cty. LST-1165 Qty: _____

Personalized MRFA Coffee Mug

\$30.00 each (includes S/H)

MRFA Member's Name (max. of 20 characters/spaces).

MRFA Member's Rank (max. of 4 characters/spaces).

Command in Vietnam _____

Specify insignia for the reverse side of the mug:

- Army Navy USCG USMC Purple Heart

Denim Jackets do not receive color choice, and tend to run larger than other styles. Denim Jackets are not available in quilted styles.

Denim Embroidered logo, back only. S-XXXL \$135.00

Denim Embroidered logo back and front. S-XXXL \$155.00

Name and unit on right side. S-XXXL \$155.00

Jackets Ordered:

Size: _____ Style: _____ Cost: _____

Size: _____ Style: _____ Cost: _____

Size: _____ Style: _____ Cost: _____

Size: _____ Style: _____ Cost: _____

Grand Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make check or money order payable to MRFA. Send to MRFA, 2906 S.E. Starlite Dr., Topeka, KS 66605. If you have any questions, please contact Bob or Nancy VanDruff by calling 785-267-1526 or visit www.mrfa.org.

From the Galley

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Jennifer Hesse or Ann Wilson in Sales at 1-800-426-3841.

CHECK-IN CHECK-OUT Guest rooms check-in time is after 3:00 pm. Check-out is no later than 12:00 noon. The Drawbridge will make every effort to accommodate those guest arriving earlier than 3:00 pm, but early check-in may not always be available.

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE: The Drawbridge is handicapped accessible. If you have a handicap with special requirements, please call 1-800-354-9795. There is a medical person on staff at all times.

AUTOMOBILE PARKING: Ample parking at no charge; RV hook-ups are available. First come, first served, call 1-800-354-9793.

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

10% RESTAURANT DISCOUNT IF YOU WEAR YOUR NAME TAG: A 10% discount on all meals will be available to all members and guests who wear their name tags and take their meals in one of the Drawbridge's restaurants. So, be sure you and your guest(s) wear your name tags and mention to your waitress about the discount. Folks, this does not include a discount on the Saturday Buffet, just meals taken in the hotel restaurants. If you're there for 3 or 4 days and have some or all of your meals at the hotel, this discount can add up to your advantage. Only at the Drawbridge will you receive a discount such as this.

REUNION TRAVEL ASSISTANCE: If you wish to use a Travel consultant to assist with your travel plans for the 05 reunion, the MRFA recommends Mann Travel Services. Please remember this is for travel planning only. You have to make your own hotel reservations, etc. You do not have to use Mann Travel, your choice of services is up to you. If you use Mann Travel, please ask for Alison Robinson, Travel Consultant. Alison has been assisting me with my flights for a few years now. She's a nice young lady and very professional in her job. When making your travel arrangements, be sure to mention you're with the MRFA.

Mann Travel Services
Alison Robinson Travel Consultant
1-800-849-2170 • 1-828-464-6926
1-828-465-3860 (Fax)
e-mail arobinson@manntravels.com

PLEASE NOTE:

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

Behind the Barrel

Last January, I watched the "Gunboats of Vietnam" on cable television. While viewing the featured story, I found it to be alluring as well as perplexing. The story was appealing at first because how often do you see anything about the Riverine Operations in Vietnam on television, video, and/or the silver screen.

The awkwardness seemed to creep in when I saw how the editing crew of *Modern Marvels* (A&E's History Channel) mixed old and new footage to portray the "linchpin of the riverine strategy..." It seemed that their intent was to center on the engineering and procurement innovations that went into a new vessel. However, aside from how this "Modern Marvel" met the Navy's need for a new patrol boat that would penetrate deep into enemy waterways, the story of the Gamewardens overshadowed the operations of Mobile Riverine Force. And in ways, it seriously downplayed the joint operations and the "gunboats" of the Mobile Riverine Force.

In addition, it overlooked what happened right before the 1968 lunar New Year Tet truce; the 2nd Brigade of the 9th Infantry Division launched riverine operations in the Mekong Delta under the code name CORONADO X. A joint Army-Navy mobile riverine force that searched out the Viet Cong's main force and local battalions in a combination of riverine, search and destroy, patrolling, and interdiction operations. When the Viet Cong violated the temporary truce by attacking eight major cities in the

delta, the mission of the Mobile Riverine Force was refocused toward crushing the Tet offensive. To learn more about what has been recorded, go to our Web site: <http://www.mrfa.org/bookfulon.htm>. Look under, "Chapter VIII: Tet Offensive of 1968 and U.S. Reaction" from the *VIETNAM STUDIES RIVERINE OPERATIONS 1966-1969* by Lt. General William B. Fulton (Ret.) USA. After reading General Fulton's record and seeing the "Gunboats of Vietnam," I'm sure you will agree with me on how it was slanted. There's more on the subject but it will take some research because it is in print. If you care to do some searching, there's the Army's VIETNAM STUDIES, TACTICAL AND MATERIAL INNOVATIONS by Lieutenant General John H. Hay, Jr. Go to: <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/Vietnam/tactical/index.htm#Contents>.

Lastly, if you have a story and need some help putting it together, contact me. I'll be more than happy to assist you and give you the by-line. Don't forget photographs. They are essential to any story. Give us an advance notice. Although it's a quarterly newsletter - deadlines mean we will be working far in advance. If you have an article or idea, feel free to e-mail me at JoeRosner@wi.rr.com or send it by snail mail to 2434 55th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53144-4605.

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

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

Veterans Day 2005, 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, Friday, November 11, 2005. 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 30 rooms at the Quality Hotel & Suites in Arlington, Virginia, for November 9-13. Room rates vary from \$99.00 (plus tax) per night (there are twenty [20] rooms available at this rate) to \$115.00 (plus tax) per night (there are ten [10] rooms available at this rate). For reservations, call 1-888-987-2555 and refer to our group code "MRFA1." Reservations under this code must be made be-

fore the cutoff date October 19, 2005, so call early.

The Quality Hotel & Suites is at 1200 North Courthouse Rd., 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 for walking because there are lots of sights to see.

We look forward to seeing you in DC. Come join us as we honor our fallen Brothers on Veterans Day 2005.

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

Honoring the Families of our Fallen

Some of the relatives of Our Fallen will be in attendance at our 2005 reunion. If you knew any of our fallen brothers, please join us in making their families feel welcome:

Bill Bonner, uncle, and only living relative of George D. Miller, B/CO/3rd/47th, KIA, 6/19/67.

Joe Paonessa, brother, Michael D. Paonessa, D Troop, 3rd Sqd, 5th Cav, who was KIA 10-19-68.

Beverly Durbin, sister, Ron Durbin, A-111-1, KIA, 5-26-68.

Pat Demigard, brother of Lt Demigard C/CO/4th/47th.

Carrie E. Young, in memory of S/SGT LeRoy Young, 25th Medical Branch.



Veterans Day 2005, Minnesota

This is your FIRST ALERT on the upcoming Veterans Day Mini-Reunion in the beautiful Twin Cities of Minnesota. The mini-reunion is scheduled for Nov. 11-13 Fri-Sun. We will hold our memorial services at the MRFA and 9th Inf Div monuments at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery on Sat Nov 12.

Our "headquarters" motel will again be the Ramada Inn Airport Thunderbird Convention Center. It is just east of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, off I-494 at 24th Ave. West. The Ramada's telephone is 952-854-3411.

This year's room rate is \$74 per night (for 1-4 people inclusive). To reserve a room, you should call the motel at 952-854-3411 and ask for the MRFA/9th Inf Div special rate. The motel switchboard hours are 8am-5pm Mon-Fri. DO NOT CALL RAMADA'S 800 #: YOU WILL NOT GET THE SPECIAL RATE THAT WAY. There are 15 rooms on hold for us; if we fill all 15 or more, we get the hospitality suite free.

My contact at the Ramada tells me there is another large group that's going to be there on one of the nights we are scheduled. She recommended calling to reserve your room ASAP. She said you can always cancel if you find you won't be able to attend. THE DEADLINE FOR GETTING THE MRFA/9TH INF DIV SPECIAL RATE IS OCT. 10. AFTER THAT, YOU'LL BE PAYING WHATEVER THE GOING RATE IS FOR THE ROOM.

I would appreciate it if you would also let me know if you're planning to attend and how many others will be with you. That way, I'll have some idea on what to buy in the way of snacks and beverages. There is no registration fee for this mini-reunion, but I will be passing the hat for donations.

If you have any questions or would like more info, please email me and I'll get back to you as quickly as possible.

Frank Humphreys E-3/39
4946 Monroe St. NE., Columbia Heights,
MN 55421; 765-572-0394;
a_vietnam_vet@yahoo.com.

River Raider Rap-Up

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LTC Hill took command of the Wild Ones on November 28, 1967, they had killed more than 700 Viet Cong (by body count) and captured more than 200 individuals and crew-served weapons. The Wild Ones enjoyed their finest hour under LTC Hill when, at the outbreak of the VC Tet Offensive, they rushed into My Tho to lift the siege of that Province Capitol and then redeployed to Vinh Long to again repulse the VC.

The above was taken from notes by Colonel Robert Archer Commanding Officer 2nd Brigade.

—Albert Moore

MADE YOUR RESERVATIONS YET?

2005 Reunion Registration Form

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

Name: _____

Unit in Vietnam: _____

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

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-Mail: _____

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

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

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

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

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

Grand Total Enclosed \$ _____

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

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

Saturday

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

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

Memorial Services

9:00 am - 10:30 am — Memorial services will be held by Chaplains LTC Jim Johnson U.S. Army Ret. 3rd/60th 9thInfDiv., and Captain Richard MacCullagh CTF-117-2.

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

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

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

Sunday

Guests are asked to check out before noon.

Reunion Hotel Registration

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

Registration Schedule

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

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

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

Daily Events

Thursday

9:30 am until ???

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

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

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

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

Friday

Same as above Daily Events.

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

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

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

Buffet Menu

Our buffet menu will feature the following:

- Fresh cut mixed fruit
- Cole slaw and German potato salad
- Baked beans
- Hamburgers & cheeseburgers
- Bratwurst, mettwursts & hot dogs
- Fixins': lettuce, tomatoes, onions, etc.
- Assorted breads and beverages

Master of Ceremonies:

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

Pledge of Allegiance:

Big John Richardson

3rd/47th Infantry

INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS—

Captain Joseph Hood CDR D-E CO's 3rd/39th 9thInfDiv, 9/69.

Captain Mike Connolly U.S. Navy Ret. ComRivDiv-132, ComRivRon-13 (TF-117) 5-69-3/70 Ops Center Binh Thuy, 3/70-6/70.

LTC Jim Noyes U.S. Army Ret. CDR C-Btry 3rd/34th Arty (Afloat) 9thInfDiv, 1967-68.

LT Norman Wells ComRivDiv-112 (TF-117) 9/66-1/68.

Emily Strange Red Cross Volunteer, 9thInfDiv, Dong Tam, 1968-69.

Need More Info?

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

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

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

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

—Albert

LRPD Soldiers Describe "Tough Mission"

OLD RELIABLES, August 2, 1967

"With fire like that, you think it's all over." LONG THAN—Jones has ripped his pants again. But the ripped pants went well with his dirt matted beard and the mud drying on his camouflaged jungle uniform and the patches of green cake makeup under his eyes.

He didn't stand out from the rest of the team. They all emitted an odor faintly resembling wet hay after patrolling the jungle.

It had been a rough mission for the team from the LRPD (formerly Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) of the 9th Division.

"For awhile, recalled Jones of Thermopolis, WY, "it looked like it was time to call the chaplain." He had been point man as the team picked its way along a jungle trail in Bien Hoa Province.

"I heard voices, then a command of some kind," Jones explained. He had started to move back to warn the others when an enemy gunner unleashed a lethal rain of lead at them. Reaction came automatically. Jones emptied a magazine into the enemy position and jumped away for the next man to fire.

Before the first burst of enemy lead burned into the tangled foliage, Sergeant Jim Bedgood, the team leader, had struck

off the trail. The Dublin, GA soldier afterwards said, "I was pinned down. I mean really pinned down, I couldn't move, didn't want to move."

The recon experts backed up a few yards vaulted a fallen tree and shouted to Bedgood. When the fire decreased momentarily, he too broke for their tiny perimeter. As Bedgood scrambled the log, a second storm of lead erupted.

Specialist 4 Jerry F. Wilson of Orlando, FL described the second shower of bullets. "It got so hot in there that I thought they'd be calling me the late Jerry Wilson." You can get hit once and maybe get out of it," Specialist 4 Bruce L. Church of Fort Worth, TX added grimly. "But when fire like that comes in a second time, you think it's all over."

The automatic weapons fire decreased slightly. Sergeant Kenneth R. McCarn of Gastonia, NC glanced over his shoulder. The glance saved their lives, the team believes. "I saw a file of them sneaking up along the trail from our rear," McCarn explained. He killed the first and Church got the next one. "They were feeling the bushes trying to find out where we had cut off from the trail," Church explained. With at least two dead, the enemy was off balance.

That was the chance to break for the pre-

arranged helicopter pick up point. The team rushed through the jungle. "We didn't just move out," Wilson added. "I mean we really covered the distance."

About 200 meters from the scene of the contact, they radioed Crusader gunship helicopters from Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry and marked their position with a smoke grenade. Reading the smoke, the helicopter light fire team opened up a hail of rockets, mini guns, and machine gun fire behind the recon team.

Meanwhile, the team dashed the remaining 1,000 meters to the landing zone where a transport helicopter awaited them.

Minutes later, the grubby soldiers were strolling toward a mess hall for their first hot meal since they began their mission. Mouthfuls of food muffled the conversation that continued unbroken throughout the meal.

Captain Clarence G. Matsuda of Honolulu, the new Long Range Patrol Detachment Commander, who had accompanied them, explained that they relish conversation after days of whispering and hours of utter silence. Matsuda, who had gone out to observe them in action praised them in action; praised his own as competent, courageous soldiers.

Afterwards, they privately described Matsuda as a "cool head" whose performance in the words of Wilson was "jam up and jelly tight."

A Bad Day on the River

May 26, 1968

FM CTF 1-1-7 TO TF 1-1-7, INFO CO SECOND BRIGADE NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY — DAILY INTERNAL INFORMATION SUMMARY 05-26

Thirty Viet Cong were killed and 30 were captured by MRF units Sunday in heavy fighting 7 miles southeast of Ben Tre.

The battle broke out at 0715 when assault craft of River Division 111 were ambushed on the Song Huong River. Ground elements that were beached in the area achieved almost immediate contact and the fighting continued until sundown.

Two Navy men were killed and 13 were injured in a series of rocket and recoilless rifle attacks on the boats. Most of the casualties occurred in the first assault on the 111 craft as they moved into land elements of the 3rd/47th Infantry.

The lead units in the column bore the blunt of the attack. The Boat Captain and Radioman of ASPB-111-1 were killed instantly and two other crewmen were injured when their boat took two rocket and two recoilless hits. Two of the rounds struck the boat's 20 mm cannon. Another hit the mast and the fourth tore into the coxswain's flat.

Four crewmen on ASPB-111-5 were also injured in the first attack.

As a rocket blew open their 20 mm mount. Monitor 111-2, the first boat behind the lead ASPB, took heavy fire and reported two men with minor wounds. ASPB-111-3 and ATC-111-5 also took rocket hits, but there were

no personal casualties.

Boats of River Division 91 were also hit several times during the day.

At 0750 they were ambushed with automatic weapons just west of the point where the 111 boats were attacked. A crewman of ASPB-91-7 was slightly wounded in the attack although there was no significant damage to the boats.

The 91 boats were the target for a second, more substantial attack later in the morning at virtually the same position where the 111 boats were hit. Four men, including three crewmen of ATC-91-3, were injured by the automatic weapons, rockets and recoilless rifle fire.

The boats were attacked on several other occasions during the afternoon, but no other personnel casualties resulted. Other units hit by hostile fire were ASPB-111-2, which took four recoilless rifle rounds, and Flame thrower-111-7 and ATC-111-1.

Ground forces of the 3rd/47th stayed in continuous contact with the VC elements, calling in heavy air and artillery strikes on the enemy bunkers. As of 1900, three Army personnel were reported killed and 26 were wounded, all Army casualties except for two were from the 3rd/47th Infantry.

Most of the boats moved out of the AO early in the evening as the Army settled into night positions.

The MRB relocated to Ben Tre Sunday morning, departing Dong Tam at 0500 and arrived at the new anchorage about 1115.

The above was taken from a daily report sent by Commander Task Force One One Seven to: Commander Officer Second Brigade Ninth Infantry Division. Sit rep was furnished by Captain

William Patterson USNR RivRon 13, 1970.

The sit rep states three Army personnel of the 3rd/47th were killed that day but all records showed 7 KIA's for the 3rd/47th in Kien Hoa Province. I have asked many members of the 3rd/47th by e-mail if they could place the 3 KIA's on the sit rep by name or company and had no luck in doing so.



Ron Durbin

This is a listing of the names of all 3rd/47th KIA's for May 26, 1968 and Navy KIA's:

- Sgt Alton Boyce age 20 Turner, AR. E/CO/3rd/47th Infantry
- SP4 Roy Lee Brager age 24 Dallas, TX. E/CO/3rd/47th Infantry
- Sgt Billy Ray Brown age 20 Belton, TX. C/CO/3rd/47th
- PFC Jessie James Danner age 22 Meridian, MS. C/CO/3rd/47th
- PFC Ronald Lee Smith age 20 Beech Grove, IN. C/CO/3rd/47th
- SGT Douglas Rolland Sutton age 22 Bryson City, NC. C/CO/3rd/47th
- CPL Morris E. Thomas age 25 Las Vegas, NV. B/CO/3rd/47th

Navy KIA's:

- BM2 Ronald Wayne Durbin age 21, Cumberland, MD, Boat Captain A-111-1
- RM3 Jerry Leonard Williams age 23 Pincher, OK. Radioman A-111-1

My S-3 Experience

"The following is a remembrance that took place some time between March 1967 and June 1967 with the 9th Infantry Division, South of Saigon, in the area of Dong Tam, Republic of South Vietnam. It was just a speck in time but will be there with me forever."

In March 1967, I was transferred from the 175th Engineer Company, 196th Light Infantry Brigade in Tay Ninh, to the 15th CEB, "E" Company in Bear Cat. I had been with the 175th since arriving at Fort Devens, MA for basic training in October 1965. We were, for the most part, drafted together, trained together, and shipped out together to Vietnam. The transfer orders to the 15th Engineer Battalion came with a great disappointment to me as I had made many friends in the year and a half that I had spent with the 175th Engineer Company. We were told, however, it had to happen as everyone had the same rotation date and that date had to be broken up; not everyone could leave at the same time from the same unit. The Army's Infusion Program was born. The idea was to take some of us from our unit with the same rotation date and swap them with someone of the same MOS with a different Army unit, with a different rotation date.

It wasn't long after I arrived at E Company, 15th Engineer Battalion that I was instructed to report to Battalion HQ. I was to pick up the S-3 for transportation by jeep down into the Delta to review work progress being performed by the units of the 15th CEB. It

is my belief that the S-3 at that time was Major Bill Anderson. Major Anderson was a man of few words for the short time that I knew him. Most of our conversation was in the form of directions to the 15th Engineer operation sites that we would be visiting, as I had no idea where the hell I was or where I was going. Most of the Major's comments to me during these trips were in relation to my driving speed. "Slow down the jeep!" were his favorite words. He would say he didn't want to die in Vietnam in no God Damn auto accident. On the other hand, I didn't want to give Charlie a good slow moving target on QL4. I had learned that from experience with the 175th Engineer Company. I spent most of my driving in a near crouching position, trying to create as small a target as I could as we sped along at a hefty 25 mph to keep the Major happy. It wasn't so bad as we passed through Saigon and Cholon, but outside the city, on those elevated roadways, with rice patties on either side as far as you could see, that made me feel that I was always in someone's crosshairs. This didn't stop the Major from

time to time commanding an abrupt, "Stop the Jeep!" so he could get a snapshot photo of some Vietnamese wildlife or locals working in the field. The Major never could figure out how I could stop the jeep, retrieve my rifle from the rear of the jeep, exit the jeep, and be down on one knee before the jeep stopped moving. I just don't think he ever understood exactly where he was.

We would start out from Bear Cat early morning and travel unescorted through Saigon down into the Delta. We would do whistle stops at locations during the day and usually pull into a camp just before sunset, only to start out the next day for yet another series of whistle stops. These inspection trips would usually last a few days. The only place I can remember to any degree was Dong Tam and the Dredges. The Army was sucking sand out of the river and blowing it onto Dong Tam base camp for building lots. Most of the other places we visited were small and nameless, taking only a few hours of waiting for the Major to return from his business, than off we were again. When we pulled into camps at night, I would get a, "Be here in the morning," then the Major

there for some time, probably booby-trapped; therefore, no one wanted to go near it. There were infantry in the compound bunkers and about the area, but of what outfits I do not remember. There were approximately two to three platoons there. I remember I didn't like the cramped area between the civilian buildings. I thought sleeping under the jeep that night might be in order.

We pulled up to a building that had a screened-in front porch. It reminded me of a summer home, sitting in front of a lake somewhere back in the States. There were lots of trees and bushes about the area. It was cool and shady. Sitting in front of the place were two jeeps, not sandbagged up and crusted with mud, as my jeep was, but all clean and shiny. There was a Spec 5, with a rag, polishing up one of the jeeps when we pulled up. My first thought was, what a waste of time! The Major jumped out of the jeep with his usual, "Be here in the morning," grabbed his bags and went into the building. I introduced myself to the Spec 5 and struck up a conversation.

Seems the Spec 5's name was Robin Robertson or something to that effect. I am sure of the Robin part. He was a driver/orderly for a General who was inside the building, henceforth the shiny jeeps. I asked him, "How did you get a job driving a General around?" He said in his case he got shot up a couple of times and they felt sorry for him and gave him the job. Don't know if I believed that or not, but it sounded good to me. Robin said he didn't like the duty with the General so much. He didn't

like that he had to shine the General's shoes, lay out his clothes, and such, but it kept him out of the shit.

Robin said he was drafted by a minor league pro baseball team before he got drafted in the Army. He said he looked forward to playing pro baseball when he got out of the Army. I often wondered if he made it. Eventually, his name was called and he retreated into the building with the lake front screened-in front porch. I moved on about the compound looking for food and a place to sleep. I usually ended up in my jeep under a poncho and tonight was no exception.

I guess it was some time around 3 or 4 in the morning that I became aware of men running around the area and of gunfire off in the distance. I could hear artillery fire going out from somewhere nearby and striking in the distance. We could see slight flashes of light from the exploding artillery rounds far out to our right. There was a lot of radio traffic echoing throughout the compound area. Grabbing my gear I went over



Ron Titus, 9th Infantry Division, 15th Eng, Bear Cat, 1967.

was gone.

I believe it was some time in May when we pulled off a fairly large paved roadway into a compound somewhere in the area of Dong Tam. It was a small compound of congested trees and small buildings; half of the buildings were of Vietnamese architecture with some Army additions. As we pulled into the compound, I could see large bunkers about 25 yards apart, but sometimes only 15 yards from the perimeter wire. There wasn't much of that wire to speak of, either. There were civilian buildings on two sides, outside the wire, less than 50 feet from it. This was scary to me; one could hit us throwing rocks from those buildings.

The back side of the compound had a view open to rice fields and tree lines with a small dirt road passing left to right just outside the wire. It was good open area here, not easy for someone to sneak up on you on this side. I remember there was also a Viet Cong flag way out in the middle of one of these rice paddies the day we were there. The grunts in the bunkers said it was out

to a group gathered around a radio. The sky was starting to light up out in the distance above the tree lines. There were aerial flares and the distinctive drone of a "Puff" Dragon gun ship, off in the distance. I would guess the activity was about 5 miles out from where we were. On the radio, I could hear someone calling for artillery fire. He was getting it from two different locations. "Shot over!" "Shot over!" with adjustments, I could hear him yelling. This man's position was being overrun with enemy and he was losing control. I could hear someone telling him an air strike was imminent! We could hear the jets coming in from our left to right. Someone was yelling for a flare marker at the same time, FDC (Fire Direction Control) was calling for verification of hits at the same time. The soldier on the radio was starting to come apart. He had become highly agitated and was screaming under the pressure that was consuming him. That's when the General in our compound identified himself to this soldier on the radio and told him to calm down; "Help is on the way, you are doing good." The General asked the person directing the fire to identify himself. He said he was the radio operator for his CO. The General asked where his CO was and where the FO (Forward Control Officer) was? He said they were all dead, killed in the first moments of contact. The fighting started to taper off shortly after the air strike ended. It was close to daybreak by this time. The morning sunlight was just starting to filter into the sky.

The next morning I saw Robin Robertson. I asked him if he knew what happened earlier that morning? He said that a Company of our Infantry had set up an ambush along the bank of a river not far from where we were. An estimated Battalion of VC wandered into it. The CO of the company had been killed in the initial contact followed by the FO from the artillery. The Spec 4 radio operator for the CO had been directing artillery from two separate batteries of artillery, one was a 105-mm American outfit and the other was a Vietnamese 155-mm howitzer outfit. At the same time, he was directing an air strike on his own position. He said the General had intervened to calm the man down and was recommending him for the Silver Star, for Gallantry in action.

A short time later the Major showed up with a direction to go to Dong Tam. I asked the Major if he knew anything about the night's action. That question got me that familiar stare and a verbal to move on out. I often think of that night and what happened to those involved. I thought often of Robin Robertson looking for him in the pros from time to time, but I guess it wasn't to be.

— Ron Titus, 15th Eng Bn., E Co., 9th Inf. Div.

You may contact Ron Titus c/o 339 Boyle Ave., Totowa, NJ 07312; phone 973-595-5970; or e-mail barny@usa.net. Ron has a couple of web sites that may be of interest:
<http://eastonvietnammemorial.homestead.com/>
anthonytorcivia.html and <http://vietnamveteransmemorial.homestead.com/albertshiller.html>.

MRFA & 9th Infantry Division Mobile Museum

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

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



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

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

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9th Infantry Division Vietnam from The Delta to The DMZ

Apparently, many people are unaware that the 9th Infantry Division came very near to being **the only American division to fight in all four corps tactical zones - at the same time.**

Upon arrival in RVN in 1966-67, the 9th ID (including its First Brigade) was based in, and operated from, Camp Bear Cat in the III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ). In early 1967, the 2nd Brigade of the 9th ID moved down into the Mekong Delta (in the IV CTZ) and began operating there with the Mobile Riverine Force. During the Tet Offensive of 1968, part of the First BDE moved down to Dong Tam and began operations in the IV CTZ. Both brigades were still operating in their respective AOs in the III and IV CTZ areas in late 1968. The 3rd Brigade had moved from Bear Cat to several bases in the south and southwest of Saigon and worked in both the III and IV CTZ areas.

On February 26, 1968, most of the 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry (which was the 9th ID's Division Reconnaissance unit) was moved from the 9th ID's AO in the III and IV CTZ to the I Corps Tactical Zone. Elements of the 3/5 Cav remained there until they were pulled out of Vietnam as late as 1972.

One of the First Brigade units - the 4th BN, 39th INF - was posted to the II Corps Tactical Zone for a brief period. In his book, *Vietnam: Order of Battle*, author Shelby Stanton states that the 4/39 was based in Ban Me Thuot (capital of Darlac province - in the middle of the II CTZ) from Nov 67 to Jan 68.

I questioned the accuracy of Stanton's claim because I found some errors in this book. For example, the placement of my own battalion - the 2/39 - in Tan An at a time when we were actually in Rach Kien, and other similar errors.

However, I did find one man who served with the 4/39 BN during that period, who does remember that troops from the 4/39 BN

were sent up to Ban Me Thuot for a period beginning in late 1967 and ending prior to the start of the Tet Offensive in late January 1968. The US Army unit that was based in Ban Me Thuot at that time (not sure which unit that was) had been called upon to work in a different AO, and the 4/39 was brought in to "hold the fort" in Ban Me Thuot and continue patrolling in that area of the II CTZ.

So, the 9th ID actually had troops on the ground and in the field in all four tactical zones in Vietnam - **in the first calendar quarter of 1968** - just not all at the same time.

Other US Army units have also claimed to have operated in all four CTZs of Vietnam. In Mike Kelley's book *Where We Were in Vietnam*, he states that the 1st Cavalry Division was "the first Army Div to fight in all four CTZs during the war". In the same book, he states that the 25th Infantry Division was "one of the few US divisions to serve in all four CTZs". It appears that the 4th Inf Div and the 101st ABN also worked in three of the four tactical zones.

I do not know how accurate these statements are. I have not found any evidence that any major units (battalion or squadron level or above) of the 1st Cavalry Div, 25th Inf Div, 101st ABN Div, 4th Inf Div, or other division or brigade level US Army unit ever worked in the IV Corps region of RVN. The 9th Infantry Division did operate in all four of the corps tactical zones of Vietnam.

If anyone out there has more information on this, or knows anyone who served with the 4th BN, 39th Infantry during the months of October 1967 through January 1968, please contact me. Jim Stone, 9th ID - First BDE, Echo 2/39 Recon 2/68-2/69, 23310 Meadowbrook Rd., Novi, MI 48375. 860-621-2070; jastone@sbcglobal.net.

also has patch, book and tour info on the web site. You may contact Mike Harris if you want a book, pictures, etc. posted on the site. Mike makes the final decision on what is posted on the web site. Contact him by e-mail mekong152@charter.net. Mike served on *Tango-152-1* 68-69.

WEB SITE: MRFA & 9thInfDiv

www.mrfa.org Mike Harris is our web master. He does a great job with the web site. We have lots of VA and KIA info. Just about anything you want on the 9th and the MRF and other in-country Navy units Mike has somewhere on the site. He

Dean's Pig Cookout

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

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



Ads River Currents

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

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

- **McGrogan's Military Patches: 208-762-4481; macpatch@mcgrogans.com**
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The only products that will appear in *River Currents* will be those sold by the MRFA.

MRFA & 9TH INF. DIV. MUSEUM ROOM

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

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

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

CCB Working Party

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

Goodbye Dong Tam ... The Troops Begin to Leave

Bryan Grigsby

Early in 1969, President Richard Nixon announced that the US would begin withdrawing troops from South Vietnam. This was part of a program that he called "Vietnamization" of the war. South Vietnamese units were supposed to eventually take over the major responsibility for fighting the war. Part of that withdrawal process involved the 2nd Brigade of the 9th Infantry Division stationed at the combat base at Dong Tam. The 2nd Brigade, along with US Navy elements formed what was known as The Mobile Riverine Force. Their mission was to carry the war to the enemy via the myriad rivers and canals of the Mekong Delta. The infantry lived onboard floating barracks ships stationed on the larger rivers. The Navy would carry the soldiers to their missions on armored troop carriers instead of Huey helicopters. The Navy manned the boats and the Army slugged it out with the Viet Cong in that area of the Mekong Delta.

The base at Dong Tam had long been known as "Mortar City", a nickname richly deserved due to the constant rocket and mortar attacks the base endured over the years. It was not a nice place to visit, and no visitors ever wanted to spend the night

there. Between 6 and 8 July 1969, DASPO [Department of the Army Special Photographic Office] was assigned to document that withdrawal.

For weeks prior to the beginning of the withdrawal, Armed Forces radio (AFVN) had been running announcements offering to let any soldier from any other unit in-country with 90 days or less on their tour of duty sign up to join the 9th Division troops leaving the war. It seemed that soldiers who were part of the 2nd Brigade and who had more than 90 days left on their tours were being transferred to other brigades of the 9th Division that were not leaving the war zone. In the short term, it was to be a downsizing of American Forces on paper only.

On July 6th, an honors ceremony commemorating the activities of both the 9th Division and the Navy Riverine Force was held on the USS Benewah, a self-propelled barracks ship anchored in the middle of the My Tho River. At the end of the ceremony aboard the Benewah, a US Navy Force consisting of approximately 30 troop carriers and river assault boats passed in review.

We all hoped this was the beginning of a quick end to the war. Unfortunately, the war



General Abrhams

would continue for nearly 3 more years, and thousands of American Troops were to die before the last military units were pulled out of South Vietnam early in 1973.

While I was covering the withdrawal ceremony onboard the USS Benewah, I carried with me a sense of déjà vu. While photographing at the US Mortuary Facility-Personal Property Depot at Tan Son Nhut Airbase a week or so prior, I had saved from a trash can a diary belonging to a soldier who had lived onboard the Benewah as part of a 9th Division Infantry unit. Reading that diary had given me a true sense of what it was like to live and fight in that part of South Vietnam. To be standing on the deck of that same ship put a chill through me that is hard to describe. I had hoped to some day figure out who that diary actually belonged to and return it to his family. Unfortunately, there was not enough information in the diary to do this.

The original diary is in a special collections library at La Salle University in Philadelphia.

This article was taken from the Vietnam War archives of Texas Tech University.

For more great info on the Vietnam War go to your search engine and type in Vietnam War Project Texas Tech University. You will be taken to The Vietnam Center. Then click on The Virtual Vietnam Archives its all self explanatory. Lots of great info on all the units that served in Vietnam. Also lots on the 9th Infantry Division and all the in-country Navy Units. <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu>.

Get Well Wishes

Spike wrote: **Ken Locke** has prostate cancer again. It has been in remission for years and has now reared its ugly head again. Ken is being treated for it and plans to come to the reunion in Kentucky. His SPA level was going up fast. He said if it reaches his bones, he will have to go on radiation and chemo or both. You may contact Ken c/o 888 N 67th Pl. Springfield, OR 97478. 541-747-8270. I'm sure Ken would appreciate a card or phone call. Ken served onboard White River 6/66 & 1/68.

Lt/Col Jim Johnson has been in the hospital. Jim has cancer of the kidneys but the outlook looks okay and Jim is upbeat and in good sprits. Most of you know Jim Johnson as Chaplain Johnson who has done our reunion memorial services over the past few reunions. Chaplain Johnson is also the author of the best-selling book, *Combat Chaplain*. It not only covers his duty in Vietnam but his duties prior to and after Vietnam. Chaplain Johnson served with the 3rd/60th Riverine Infantry 1967-1968. You may contact the family c/o 2505 Dartmouth Dr, Fayetteville, NC 28304. 910-486-5127, e-mail Gymjimgem@aol.com

Robert (Doc) Malone has been under the weather with some heart problems. Doc served in RivRon 11 as lead Corpsman 1966-68 You may contact Doc. c/o Robert Doc Malone 2301 Arnold Hills Rd, Kemp, TX 75143. 903-432-9356. Doc says

he hopes to see everyone at the reunion.

Robert A. Pettit has been having some medical problems and been in and out of the VA. Bob served on the USS Askari ARL-30 9/66-1/68. You may contact Bob c/o Box 103, Gibbstown, NJ 08027. 856-423-9328 E-mail bobandhelen@snip.net

Member **Leroy Clement** has been under the weather. Leroy served with AIRCOFAT 2/70-2/71. You may contact Leroy c/o 25816 Ashwood, Sun Lake, AZ 85248. E-mail ginnyclm2@aol.com. Some of you may wonder what AIRCOFAT was. It was the Navy helicopter unit that brought mail into the Delta and was stationed out of Saigon. They used the old Marine helicopters and were always skimming across the water when delivering mail. I remember we used to make bets if the helicopters would make it to the ships or not. One crashed on the Benewah in 69 and I believe a couple hit the water in the Delta.

"I have not been to the last reunion but I came down with COPD from the meds I was given and almost died. I am just starting to get out and am feeling a little better. I sure do miss you guys and our talks.

May God Bless and keep you all well.
John L. Jones, 28365 Clark Ave., Millsboro DE 1966-9281; 302-945-7283; 1st Plt, A Batt 84th Arty (10/66-11/67).

Let's keep all our brothers and sisters in our thoughts and prayers. None of us are getting any younger and we all need support at one time or another.

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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 has passed on since Vietnam. The cost is \$25 for 4 issues.

- Jack Benedick for C/CO/4th/47th 66-68 C/CO/3rd/60th 69 and E/CO/3rd/60th Inf. KIA 4-7-68
 Tim Goins for Andi Goins A Lovely Lady and Wife.
 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) IUWG-1 Unit 3
 Bob Sutton for Lt/jg James F. Rost KIA 11/17/69
 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-1-9-70
 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
 Brothers of the 2nd/47th for all Army & Navy KIA's
 Bruce McIver for Doc Zeth Lane (RAID) RivRon 13
 Adam Metts for Donald L. Bruckart Tango-111-2 KIA 03/31/69
 Jim Morse for Mark W. Weachter CTO-3 COMNAVFORV 1971-72
 Lloyd Austin for Arthur Day D/4/47th
 Rick Chapman for Alex Kaufbusch A Co. 3rd/60th Inf and Frank Fabian A Co. 3rd/60th Inf
 Larry Hunter for Dan Williams
 Robert Thacker for Earl Pelhan, Jr. SSG KIA Delta Lo 15th Eng

47th Infantry Regiment Reunion – 2005

Members of the 47th Infantry Regiment celebrated a reunion at Fort Benning/Columbus, Georgia during the period 21-23 April 2005. All four battalions were represented. We were fortunate to have four veterans of World War II to represent 1st Battalion. Vietnam veterans represented the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Regiment. The active duty host battalion was the 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry, a basic combat training battalion located at Fort Benning.

We held a Regimental business meeting and all battalions agreed that future 47th Infantry reunions be moved to the even numbered years, commencing in 2006. This change will eliminate having the MRFA and Regimental reunions occur in the same year.

The highlight of the reunion was the presentation of "Distinguished Member of the Regiment" certificates to six deserving individuals. The certificates were approved and signed by the Commanding General of Fort Benning in his role as Chief of Infantry for the United States Army. The recipients were John Ax and Henry Jezek from 2/47; MG (Ret) Lucien Bolduc and Frank Gubala from 3/47; and Dave Schoenian and Roy

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



George Lang, Medal of Honor

George Lang, Medal of Honor recipient, Specialist 4th Class, 57, passed away on March 16, 2005 due to cancer. George served with A Company/3rd Platoon, 4th/47th, 2nd Brigade under the 9th Infantry Division banner from August 1968 to February 1969. He was a humble man despite

being recognized for "*Conspicuous Gallantry and Intrepidity*". George became one of the most prominent historians regarding the "Medal of Honor," spending thousands of hours of research on the subject. He helped compile the two volumes "*Medal of Honor Recipients 1863-1994*" which was published in 1995. Despite being in a wheelchair from wounds received during his own personal MOH heroism, George was always positive. You may contact his wife, Jacqueline, c/o 3886 Clark St., Seaford, NY 11783-2101.

There is a tribute to Mr. Lang. Go to: <http://www.9thinfantrydivision.com/html/lang1.htm>

Daniel Bien passed away on May 27, 2004. While in Vietnam he served with E Co, 50th Infantry as a LRRP from January 1968 to January 1969. You may contact his family c/o Joyce Bien, 91S 500 West, Valparaiso, IN 46385-9036 (219) 464-8843

Lieutenant Commander John "Jack" Hermann, USN (Ret.) passed away on April 21, 2005, after a long bout with cancer. "Jack" was Commander of River Division 92 during portions of 1967 and 1968. He was one of the founding members of the Mobile Riverine Force Association having been a member since 1992. May our shipmate of many years rest in peace. You may contact his family c/o Jane Hermann, PO Box 252, El Dorado, CA 95623; (530) 620-8042; oro@internet49.com

Charles Lemmex served aboard the USS Askari (ARL-30) from March to August 1971. You may contact the family at: 5506 67th Avenue NE, Marysville, WA 98270-8865.

Moseman from 4/47. They received a standing ovation from the audience. It is worthy to note that all recipients are active members of the MRFA. The current Commander of 2/47, LTC Jesse Ward, made a special presentation to cap the evening. He established the Robert "Doc" Pries Leadership award to be presented to the Honor Graduate of each company training cycle. The outstanding contributions to MRFA and the 47th Infantry by Bob Pries will be remembered for as long as 2/47 remains a basic combat training battalion. We are all so proud of Bob for all he has done for his brothers.

The reunion adjourned, to meet again April 27-29, 2006 at Fort Benning/Columbus, Georgia.

Captain William Nation (USN Ret.). William was Commander of TG 115.3 -10-66/10-67. He passed away on February 21, 2004. You may contact his daughter, Susan Hern: 10102 Pemcrest, San Antonio, TX 78240.

Commander Gerald Sturvist, USN (Ret.) passed away on June 23, 2004. Cdr Sturvist was Chief of Staff for River Assault Squadron 15 in 1970. You may contact his family c/o 39361 Red Rock Rd., Hubbel, MI 49934 (906) 523-6225.

John Ward passed away on December 25, 2004, due to liver cancer. While in Vietnam he served with Bravo Company 3rd/60th, 9th Infantry Division from June to December 1967. After the war, he moved to Springfield, Vermont. You may contact his loving wife, Jackie, and son, Jerome, 115 South St., Springfield, VT 05156-3217.

Sergeant Major Daniel Williams, Daniel passed away on February 25, 2005, due to a heart attack. While in Vietnam he was attached to the 62nd Transportation Group, 9th Infantry Division, delivering food, ammo, and supplies to Bear Cat, Cu Chi, Tay Ninh, Dong Tam, Saigon and other locations. His unit was in Long Binh and Saigon. You may contact his family c/o Ruth Williams, 286 S. Dorset Apt. 202, Troy, OH 45373; danruthwilliams@msn.com.

BMC Joseph E. Miser of Beckley, WV died on July 6, 1994. BMC Miser was Boat Captain of PBR-725 from activation of River Section-535 on Oct 18, 1967, to his departure in June 1968. He was one fine person and sailor.

He may be gone but NOT FORGOTTEN.

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Life Saving Medics

This story is dedicated to our life saving medics. My name is Steve Luft and on January 20th 35 years ago I was your average grunt trudging through the jungles and rice paddies of the Mekong Delta in South Vietnam. I was assigned to Bravo Co. 4th Bn. 47th Inf. 9th ID. When I first got to the 9th they saw that I had scored expert with the M60 so naturally they gave me one. After a week I learned to love that weapon, whenever we saw action, which was almost every day, I was putting out so much lead I almost warped the barrel. To me this was good, but all good things must come to an end, and I soon discovered after jumping the canals of the delta all day that I was having problems making it to the other side. After all I'm not a very big guy, 155-lbs. soaking wet, and with the weight of the gun I just couldn't do it. Well to make a long story short, I ended up an RTO for the squad. Same weight, still had problems jumping, but I figured I better not complain because I was getting closer to the point. The guys in my squad were all good soldiers and I tried to learn as much as I could as fast as I could because almost every day guys were getting hit all around me. I should have realized that it was just a matter of time before my turn came up, but the thought never entered my mind. I was just concentrating on doing the best job I could do, because I knew my life and the lives of the members of my squad depended on it.

Well, now you get the basic picture where I'm coming from so I'll get back to Jan 20th. It started out as any other day in the Nam with one exception, we had a new CO. All I heard was he was a West Pointer with a lot of scars on his face (like Tom Berringer) and he was on his 3rd tour. The last time I saw him he was headed into the bush like he had a death wish. To this day I don't know his name or if he even made it back. When I saw him walking off that day he was headed in one direction and my platoon was headed in another. We had split off from the rest of the Company to go on a recon mission.

We had gone maybe a click and it was around 4 or 5 in the afternoon, we were on a large path somewhere on VC Island when maybe 40 feet in front, Sgt. McKlean had his legs swept out by a grenade. He was in excruciating pain and that's when we realized we didn't have a medic with us. I contacted the company and told them of our situation and they said a medic and 2 other guys were on their way. They must have run all the way because it seemed like they got there in no time. But I'm sure for the Sarg and the 2 other guys that caught metal it must have seemed forever. When the Sarg got his Morphine we couldn't shut him up, he was singing (one more river to cross). It was good to know he wasn't in pain anymore but it was getting dark and we had 2 rivers to cross to get them back to the paddy. We made stretchers from shirts and bamboo and when we carried them across the rivers the water was about chest high. When the medivac

was leaving it was dark and I could see tracers chasing it as it left. As the sound of the chopper faded off we all looked at Lt. Harvey, and he said we had to get back where we had just came from. We were all exhausted, wet and tired as hell but an order is an order so off we went into the dark.

I noticed on the way back the rivers had gotten a lot deeper but all I was thinking about was getting back so we could rest. We got back to the spot where the Sarg hit the trap, and instead of going straight we made a left. I remember passing through a bamboo gate and there was hooch up on the left. When there was a large explosion not far ahead but off the trail to the right, I went flying backwards and landed on my radio and elbows. I lay there for a second and I started hearing gurgling and I was getting a spray on my face. I couldn't see the color but it was sticky and I knew it was blood. I panicked when I started gulping and gulping blood, I looked to the rear and the guy who was behind me didn't even get touched, but I heard the guys in front starting to moan. I got up, stripped off all my gear as I started to run to the rear of the column, holding my throat and saying I was hit. I reached the medic who was on his way to the front; he grabbed me, laid me down and saw I was having problems breathing so he said he was going to give me a trach. He was getting ready to cut the wind pipe when he saw the hole right next to the Adams apple. He said, "I don't have to cut him," and he reached in his pocket and pulls out a pen. He took the pen apart and stuck the tube in the hole and listened to how I was breathing. He said good and told another guy to squeeze the skin tight around the pen, and then before I knew it he was gone. The rest of the night was grenades going off close by, the guy holding the pen shielded me with his body, and now 6 of us had to be carried out. And as they carried us across the rivers I looked over the side of the stretcher and all I saw was an arm coming up out of the water holding up the stretcher. It was truly an amazing night. I figured 'All I got to worry about now is the chopper getting shot down'. When we reached the paddy my Lt. stood about 25 yards in, with a strobe light, guiding the chopper in. The last thing I remember was arguing with Lt. Harvey, telling him I didn't want to get on the chopper without my 16 as they flung the 6 of us onto the floor of the huey.

You know as I wrote this story tonight I started feeling a little guilty about just dedicating this story to the medics. There was so much bravery that night, from the crew of the medivac to the Lt. standing in the middle of the paddy with a strobe light; the Sgt. shielding my body with his; to the men carrying the stretchers completely submerged. So besides the medics I'd like to dedicate this story to all the brave fighting men of the 9th Inf. Div. I'm looking forward to meeting you all at my first reunion, in 2005. Thank you!

— Steve Luft.

River Assault Sqad 9

This is a copy of a formerly classified document, sent in by Mike Harris. He found this at the Navy Archives in 2002. Thanks Mike, for passing on this info!

C O N F I D E N T I A L DISESTABLISHMENT OF RIVER ASSAULT SQUADRON NINE

A. CNO 12237Z APR 69

B. CINCPACFLT 212104Z MAY 69

1. In accordance with Ref. A and B, River Assault Squadron 9 disestablished this date.

2. In its short history, River Assault Squadron Nine has made important contributions to Riverine Warfare, conducting assaults in over 250 major operations in the Mekong Delta which resulted in over 6150 enemy initiated fire-fights. While inflicting crippling blows to the Viet Cong, the squadron suffered 10 men killed in action (KIA) and earned 409 purple hearts. For heroic action the men of the squadron earned 2 Navy Crosses, 12 Silver Stars, 84 Bronze Stars, 2 Navy and Marine Corps medals, 149 Navy commendations and numerous Navy achievement awards.

3. The squadron, which was commissioned 1 Nov. 1966 and commenced operations on 4 Jan. 1967 using borrowed Vietnamese boats is appropriately ending its gallant career by turning over all its assets to the Vietnamese Navy.

4. The officers and men of RAS 9 express their sincere appreciation to all who have worked with us and supported us. We wish the greatest success to those remaining squadrons who carry on in our footsteps.

BT 2187 TOR 101717477/40/JWR
100400Z JUN 69

D E C L A S S I F I E D

SEEKING

BM2 RONALD DURBIN

Anyone who served with or knew BM2 Ronald Durbin Boat Captain A-111-1 KIA May 26, 1968. Please contact sister Beverly Durbin PO Box 24 Cumberland, MD 21501, e-mail bevurdurbin@yahoo.com.

ROBERT 'BOBBY' HAMILTON

Anyone who served with or remembers Robert (Bobby) Hamilton B/CO/2nd/60th Inf 9thInfDiv KIA 1/8/68. Please contact: Wanda Burke, 8411 Heron Circle, Ooltewah, TN 37363; 423-344-9121; cell 423-802-9621; or e-mail burkewanda@aol.com Wanda says she would appreciate any info given.

JAMES L. FRANCISCO

Glenn Francisco is seeking anyone who served with his brother James L. Francisco. He served with D/CO/4th/47th, 12/68-2/69. James was KIA 2/5/69 in Kien Hoa Province. Contact Glenn Francisco, 4708 Rocky Pines Ct., Indian Trail, NC 28079, 704-882-4362, 704-533-0992; gandgknives@carolina.rr.com.

