



**Commander's Corner:** : Well, I hope you all enjoyed Independence Day and remembered all of the brave persons who have given their all so we are able to enjoy the freedoms we have. I personally want to thank all of you for having done your part and want us to always remember our fallen comrades who paid the ultimate price for these freedoms.

I don't know about where you live but, it has been so dry in Indiana, almost all fireworks have been banned for the 4<sup>th</sup> and postponed to Labor Day. The only exception around here is the annual fireworks display in downtown Indianapolis and the only reason it is allowed is they are fired from the top of the 3<sup>rd</sup> tallest building in Indy and they figure all the sparks will be out before hitting the ground. The temperatures have been in the 90's and 100's with no rain at all in most of the state..

In June, Harry Humbert, Mike Kosteckzo, Bruce Nielsen and myself were treated to a weekend at Terry "Foxhole" Loyd's place in southern Indiana. Juliana "Mrs. Foxhole", her daughter, and Harry's wife, Sheri, did an excellent job of feeding us and we all had a wonderful time (except I let 2 bass get away).

Throughout the past several years, I have been lucky enough to make contact and be able to get together with several guys I served with in B 2/1. I truly love road trips and driving through our great, beautiful country whenever possible to visit with my old comrades-in-arms. Usually, the biggest decision is to drive or fly (I walked enough in the bush; so that option is out). I have just found a web site which calculates driving time between locations in the United States that gives miles, time and directions. Whether you are going to see a buddy or on a vacation, it might be helpful so: I added it to the "Links" section (2<sup>nd</sup> page) of our web site. Hope it's useful.

I want to welcome the newest members of the chapter as of this writing; they are Carl R. Jacob (D) and Francis Nerone (Bn. HQ). We now have 79 chapter members.

Thanks,  
 Chuck

***Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!***

**Help Wounded Warriors:** It was recently reported to the Congress of the United States that our newest wounded veterans don't just have one or two injuries to deal with the average is eight to nine! Independence Day is coming up. I don't know about you, but I think the best way to celebrate our American freedom is to thank the selfless men and women who fight and continue to pay the price for it! Let's show them how very grateful we are for their service to our beloved country. Please make a contribution to the Post Wounded Warrior program in honor of these honorable Americans who defend our nation and preserve our freedom. There is simply no better way to show you want justice for those wounded heroes that with a gift to Wounded Warrior.

## **Law Now Allows Retirees and Vets to Salute Flag:**

Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag only while wearing their organization's official head-gear. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 contained an amendment to allow un-uniformed service-members, military retirees, and veterans to render a hand salute during the hoisting, lowering, or passing of the U.S. flag. A later amendment further authorized hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel. This was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on Oct. 14, 2008. Here is the actual text from the law:

**SEC. 595. MILITARY SALUTE FOR THE FLAG DURING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM BY MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES NOT IN UNIFORM AND BY VETERANS.**

Section 301(b)(1) of title 36, United States Code, is amended by striking subparagraphs (A) through (C) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

- “(A) individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note;
- “(B) members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute in the manner provided for individuals in uniform; and
- “(C) all other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, and men not in uniform, if applicable, should remove their head dress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart;

Note: Part (C) applies to those not in the military and non-veterans. The phrase "men not in uniform" refers to civil service uniforms like police, fire fighters, and letter carriers - non-veteran civil servants who might normally render a salute while in uniform.

**WW II Veteran Wins 30 Year Battle:** Shots rang out in Italy ... Before Pfc. Louis Alfieri knew what hit him, he was struck by two bullets. One ricocheted in his stomach, mangling his insides. The other hit his left arm, separating it at the elbow. "I've had so many surgeries on my stomach that it looks like a roadmap," said Alfieri. "I've had most of my large intestines removed, and what I still have has been rerouted. It's caused major problems with my day-to-day functioning." Alfieri was deemed completely disabled and granted Unemployability in 1975. Life was still difficult, but he was getting by. Then the unthinkable happened: the VA did a massive review of Unemployability cases in 1981 and decreased Alfieri's service connection rating to 60%! He appealed the reduction but the appeal was denied. Alfieri, his wife and three children had already been living frugally. With the huge decrease in income, the future looked grim. Alfieri said, "I only wanted what I was entitled to ... nothing more." For the next 30 years, Alfieri fought the VA's decision. Then he met VFW Appeals Consultant George Sheets. "One of my service officers referred me to George," said Alfieri. "He said George is a fighter, and that he doesn't stop until he wins." Sheets fought tooth-and-nail until Alfieri's Unemployability rating was reinstated. "If it weren't for George, I would still be struggling. I just wish I could celebrate this victory with my wife, but she died 17 years ago. Since receiving his benefits, 86-year-old Alfieri bought a new car and helped out his children. Alfieri's grandson, who followed in his footsteps and joined the military and wounded twice.

**Beard Would Bar Hasan From Fort Hood Courtroom:** The Army psychiatrist charged in the fatal Fort Hood shooting rampage will be barred from the courtroom during his pretrial hearing Tuesday if he hasn't shaved his beard and will be forced to watch the proceedings on closed-circuit television. Maj. Nidal Hasan surprised the judge earlier this month when he appeared in court with a beard, which violates Army regulations. The judge, who has the power to bar defendants from court for such violations, issued the order and postponed the hearing until Tuesday. Hasan had been clean-shaven in all other court appearances since the 2009 attack, which killed 13 people and injured more than 30 others on the sprawling Texas military post about 125 miles southwest of Fort Worth. Fort Hood officials wouldn't say Monday whether Hasan would be charged if he shows up unshaven. One possible charge is failure to obey a lawful order or regulation, which carries a maximum two-year jail sentence. Hasan is an American-born Muslim, and his attorneys have said they would seek an exception based on religious beliefs to the Army's rule. Since Hasan has been growing the beard just before his scheduled Aug. 20 trial, he may be trying to use the media attention to show that he's being persecuted for his religious beliefs, said Jeff Addicott, a former senior legal adviser to the Army's Special Forces who is not involved in the Hasan case. "He's going to play the religious card," Addicott, director of the Center for Terrorism Law at St. Mary's University School of Law, said Monday. "And this is his last card to play ... because no one believes he's not going to be found guilty." Fort Hood spokesman Chris Haug said Monday that post officials wouldn't know until Tuesday whether he had followed the judge's order. He remains jailed. "I don't think he has to rely on a beard to show that he's being treated unfairly," Hasan's former lead attorney John Galligan said, noting previous court rulings against Hasan. Galligan, who hasn't spoken to Hasan in months, said he doesn't know why Hasan is growing the beard and declined comment on what Hasan had said about his religion. The judge, Col. Gregory Gross, is expected to consider several motions Tuesday, including whether to delay Hasan's military trial until December. The trial already has been postponed from March and then June, as defense attorneys said they needed more time to prepare. Hasan faces the death penalty if convicted of 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder. The trial is expected to last at least two months, and the military jury will be brought in from Fort Sill, Okla.

**The Reason We Celebrate Independence Day:** Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence in June 1776. The Declaration of Independence is the nation's most cherished symbol of liberty. Jefferson's words capture the convictions of the American people's hearts and souls. The political philosophy of the Declaration was not new; its ideals of individual liberty had already been expressed by John Locke and the Continental philosophers. What Jefferson did was to summarize this philosophy in "self-evident truths" and set forth a list of grievances against the King in order to justify before the world the breaking of ties between the colonies and the mother country. In Congress, July 4, 1776 Thirteen, former colonies, now states unanimously signed the Declaration of Independence as the United States of America.

**National Healthcare Upheld:** The Supreme Court upheld the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act challenge on Thursday. The reversal would have had little to no impact on service-connected veterans served by the Department of Veterans Affairs or on military members and retirees served by military medicine or enrolled in TRICARE. This is because VFW led the fight back in March 2010 to get Congress to recognize all VA and Defense Department health programs as meeting minimal acceptable coverage standards as required by a proposed national healthcare bill that had failed to include VA health programs for widows, disabled children, and almost 90 percent of military TRICARE programs. With the strong support of then-House Armed Service Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.) and Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.), and the grassroots advocacy of thousands of VFW members and supporters, the new, more encompassing legislation quickly passed Congress and was signed into law by the president on May 27, 2010.

**Stolen Valor Act Overturned:** VFW was very disappointed to learn that the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Stolen Valor Act of 2005 in a 6-3 decision. Still, the high court did mention in their decision that a more narrowly defined law in the future might survive a First Amendment free speech trial. Despite the ruling, VFW National Commander Richard DeNoyer said, "VFW will continue to challenge far-fetched stories, and to publicize these false heroes to the broadest extent possible as a deterrent to others."

**VFW Applauds State AGs for Protecting Student-Vets:** The VFW applauded the work of 20 state attorney generals, who announced this week that the website, GI-Bill.com, had officially been turned over to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and that the site's owner, Quin Street, would pay \$2.5 million to states as part of a settlement for fraudulent recruiting practices. To see highlights from this week's press conference, announcing the settlement, and to learn about the VFW's ongoing efforts to protect student-veterans.

**Editors Notes:** Newsletters are uploaded to the 2nd Battalion Chapter ADVA Website. If you missed an issue or would like to look at one from the past look on the Website. The Web address is identified in the heading of the N/L. If you have anything relating to this N/L, email or write them to the following addresses; Email: rheroux1@nc.rr.com or gcarder@columbus.rr.com. Snail mail: Rich Heroux, 2005 Montgomery Road, Franklinton, NC 27525-7300 or Gary Carder, 1725 Demorest Road, Columbus, OH 43228.



**DUE TO PRICE INCREASE ON AMMO  
DO NOT EXPECT A WARNING SHOT!**

**Thank you for Your Understanding**

**Women Say They're Fitting in on Subs:** Since reporting to their boats in November, 25 women who broke one of the Navy's final gender barriers have gone on patrol and been accepted among their crews. "The men adjusted to us being there, and we adjusted to them," said Lt. j.g. Megan Bittner of the USS Ohio gold crew. "It was quick. There were no big problems. No stumbling blocks along the way. It was just learning as a junior officer how you fit on the boat." Bittner, 24, is one of 13 women assigned to two Trident submarines based at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor -- the cruise-missile-carrying Ohio and the USS Maine, armed with nuclear warheads. Another dozen are in Kings Bay, Ga., with the USS Wyoming and USS Georgia. Each have blue and gold crews that take turns operating the boats. There are three women on each crew -- two on their first assignments and a more experienced supply officer who serves as their mentor. The Ohio blue crew includes four women because fewer dropped out of training than the Navy anticipated. It's not that hard to wash out. After the submariners graduated from the Naval Academy or ROTC programs in spring 2010, they spent six months in Nuclear Power School in Charleston, S.C., six months at the Nuclear Power Training Unit, or "prototype," also in Charleston, and nine weeks at Submarine Officer Basic Course in Groton, Conn. At prototype, they toiled 12 hours a day, six days a week in decommissioned subs with working reactors. "It's definitely challenging," said Lt. J.G. Amber Cowan, a main propulsion assistant with the Maine gold crew. "All of it's very fast-paced compared to traditional college courses." "You get so much information in a short time period," added Bittner, an electrical assistant from Chesapeake, Va. A week after arriving at Bangor, Cowan, also 24, met the Maine in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and finished a patrol. Bittner flew to Guam, where the Ohio was forward-deployed, and patrolled for three months. "It's definitely a different kind of atmosphere," said Cowan, a University of Washington graduate from Colorado Springs. "You're always working. You don't see the sun every day. You're adapting to a new routine, learning everything you need to know, getting to know everybody." While learning their own jobs, junior officers are pulled to all parts of the boat to perform or observe things for their qualifications, which leads to earning their dolphins.

**Navy store in Jacksonville, Fla.,** kicked him out after he commented to the store's management about an employee's uniform. Aaron Bennett says he was shopping at the store's location in Orange Park when he noticed an employee wearing something unusual: a Marines dress uniform that "had rank on the side, couple rows or ribbons and a weapons badge," he said. It's illegal in the United States under the ["Stolen Valor"](#) act for civilians to impersonate military by wearing uniforms or medals. Bennett, who comes from a military family, said he told the store manager about the staff member's apparel. He claims he was then approached by a deputy and members of mall security, who told him he was banned from the store. Old Navy's corporate headquarters says the matter was a "misunderstanding" in a [statement it gave to WJXT in Jacksonville:](#)



**An Unmanned Air Force:** It seems that each conflict brings with it another news item about some jaw-dropping development in drone technology. Take, for example, the recent report in Britain's Guardian newspaper that scientists at Northrop Grumman and Sandia National Laboratories are working on plans for nuclear-powered drones capable of loitering over target areas for months at a time. Reuters reports that the U.S. and Britain are collaborating on a program that would enable one pilot to command "up to five armed drones." Next-generation drones could be empowered to identify and attack targets autonomously, based on predetermined conditions. We are witnessing the transformation of warfare before our very eyes. Drones have been credited with striking Qaddafi's convoy; killing al Qaeda's Anwar al-Awlaki and most recently Abu Yahya al-Libi; and eviscerating al Qaeda's leadership and the Taliban high command in Pakistan. The Brookings Institution estimates that as many as 2,209 militants have been killed by drone strikes in Pakistan. Given this record, it's no surprise that unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) are beginning to dislodge manned aircraft from the central role they have played in warfighting since World War II. Consider some of the evidence:

There has been a 1,200-percent increase in combat air patrols by drones since 2005.

America's unmanned air force - including UCAVs deployed by the military and the CIA - has struck targets in Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia.

Over the past 10 years, the U.S. drone fleet has grown from 50 planes to 7,000.

**Senate Retiree Commission Survey Results:** Last week, we told you that the Senate was looking to form a commission to review the military retirement system, but sought to lock out veterans' advocates like the VFW from participating in the commission. We asked you what you thought, and wanted to share the results one week later:

\* Do you think this Commission would have the best interest of service members and retirees in mind? No: 97% Yes: 3% (448 votes)

\*If this Commission drastically changed military retirement benefits, would you continue to serve or encourage others to serve a full career? No: 94% Yes: 6% (316 votes)

\* Would your Senator's stance on this issue weigh into your decision on election day? Yes: 94% No: 6% (331 votes)



**Law Now Allows Retirees and Vets to Salute**

**Flag:** Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag only while wearing their organization's official head-gear. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 contained an amendment to allow un-uniformed servicemembers, military retirees, and veterans to render a hand salute during the hoisting, lowering, or passing of the U.S. flag. A later amendment further authorized hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel. This was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on Oct. 14, 2008. Here is the actual text from the law:

**SEC. 595. MILITARY SALUTE FOR THE FLAG DURING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM BY MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES NOT IN UNIFORM AND BY VETERANS.**

Section 301(b)(1) of title 36, United States Code, is amended by striking subparagraphs (A) through (C) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

- “(A) individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note;
- “(B) members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute in the manner provided for individuals in uniform; and
- “(C) all other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, and men not in uniform, if applicable, should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart;

Note: Part (C) applies to those not in the military and non-veterans. The phrase "men not in uniform" refers to civil service uniforms like police, fire fighters, and letter carriers - non-veteran civil servants who might normally render a salute while in uniform.

**Five MIAs Return Home:** The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office recently announced the identification of remains belonging to four airmen and one soldier who had been missing in action from World War II and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Returned are:

\*Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Emil T. Wasilewski, 22, of Chicago. On Sept. 13, 1944, Wasilewski and eight other crew members were aboard a B-17G Flying Fortress that crashed near Neustaedt-on-the-Werra, Germany. Only one of the crewmen is known to have successfully parachuted out of the aircraft before it crashed.

\*Army Cpl. Robert I. Wax, 21, of Detroit. In August 1950, Wax and Battery A, 555th Field Artillery Battalion, were fighting against North Korean forces in a battle known as the "Bloody Gulch," near Pongam-ni, South Korea. Wax would be listed as missing in action on Aug. 11.

\*Air Force Lt. Col. Charles M. Walling, 27, of Phoenix, and Maj. Aado Kommendant, 25, of Lakewood, N.J. On Aug. 8, 1966, Walling and Kommendant were flying an F-4C Phantom II that crashed while on a close air support mission over Song Be Province, Vietnam.

\*Air Force Capt. Clyde W. Campbell, 24, of Longview, Texas. On March 1, 1969, Campbell was piloting an A-1J Skyraider that crashed while on a close air-support mission over Houaphan Province, Laos.

**Bragg Captain Gets Silver Star for Firefight:**

May 4, 2010, began ominously in the village of Hendor in Afghanistan's Laghman province. As the soldiers of Operational Detachment Alpha 3336 and their Afghan partners moved into the village of about 800, they noticed that no one was home. There were no farmers, no women, no livestock. It was a ghost town, basically. As soon as the sun went up everyone was thinking it would be a long day. The town had been emptied, officials said, in preparation for an ambush on the coalition force. CPT. Roger Driscoll was honored Thursday with a Silver Star -- the military's third highest award for valor -- for his actions on that memorable day. He led a joint force of about 90 Special Forces soldiers and Afghan commandos during a 10-hour firefight in which they were surrounded by nearly 100 enemy fighters shooting from heavily fortified positions. More than 40 other Green Berets with the 3rd Special Forces Group also were honored for actions in Afghanistan. Seven soldiers received Bronze Star Medals with Valor devices, 17 were awarded Army Commendation Medals with Valor devices and 14 received Purple Hearts. Driscoll and the other soldiers were presented their honors by Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland, commanding general of Army Special Operations Command, in the John F. Kennedy Auditorium on Fort Bragg. The May 4, 2010, air assault on Hendor, nicknamed Objective Mudslide, was part of a larger operation across Afghanistan planned ahead of a meeting of Afghan officials in Kabul in the summer of 2010, according to officials. The mission for ODA 3336 was to clear the village, known to house insurgents who often targeted nearby Highway 1 with improvised explosive devices. Driscoll said some believe the mission was compromised and insurgents were tipped off about the assault, giving them time to clear the village without the military noticing. The team first learned of the coming ambush in the hours before sunlight, after arriving outside the village on the backs of several CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

**VFW Testifies on Changes to Disability Claims Process:**

On Tuesday, the VFW testified before the House VA Committee regarding VBA's transformation plan to digitize the disability claims process aimed at improving accuracy and wait times for veterans. The hearing centered on the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) which focuses on a paperless IT system that is critical to VA reaching its goal of eliminating the backlog and providing quality decisions. VFW testified that the new program should be fully tested to identify short comings, but that VBA must walk a fine line between rolling out the program too soon and delaying too long while seeking to fix all the problems. Members of the committee stressed their frustration with the process saying that the department has been working on different "transformation" plans for decades with little progress while the claims backlog remains stagnant.

**“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction.” President Ronald Reagan**

# Atlanta



# 2012

## **Time to Make Arrangements for the 2012 ADVA Reunion:**

Times *awaistin* for making plans for the 2012 ADVA reunion in Atlanta, GA. This note is intended to alert you to join us for a most anticipated "Hot" time in *"HotAtlanta"*. Atlanta is chock-full of fun things to do and see. It is the capital city of the South making it a well traveled tourist adventure land. The ADVA staff is working to make this year's event one that everyone will long remember. We are scheduled to participate in the dedication of the Americal Division monument in the "Walk of Honor" near the newly opened National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning. As part of this memorable event the attendees are invited to eat lunch at the 2/46<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Mess Hall. What a treat this will be for the ladies who have seldom had the opportunity to dine in this fashion. The lunch may even be an experience for all of us "Grunts". An application is part of your latest Americal Journal. You can also find an application via our Chapter and ADVA WEBSITES. Make your reservations early. Let's make this another banner reunion. Our annual membership meeting will also be conducted at this time. We're adding a "Hospitality Room" for Chapter's use during the reunion. Look at our Chapter website for additional information or go directly to the Americal Division Veterans Association website <http://www.americal.org/programs/reunion.html>



AFGHANASTAN HELICOPTER EXTRACTION 2012

## **THE HISTORY OF TAPS**

Virginia's historic Berkeley Plantation will host a series of events commemorating the 150th anniversary of Taps, the national bugle call sounded at flag lowerings, military funerals and memorial services. The highlight of the three-day celebration will be Saturday's rededication of the Taps monument, constructed and given to the state by the Department of Virginia American Legion in 1969.

The monument stands on the military campsite where Taps was first sounded in July 1862, when Union Gen. Daniel Butterfield enlisted the help of his bugler, Oliver Norton, in composing a new bugle call for his men. Wanting a less formal and more distinctive melody, he adapted an earlier bugle call used to signal "lights out." The somber notes are said to reflect Butterfield's sadness following the Battle of Gaines' Mill, during which 602 of his men were killed or wounded. "It's a uniquely American bugle call, a piece of music you can recognize within the first three notes," says Jari Villanueva, Taps historian and bugler. "It's transcended the military. Many people recall hearing it at summer camp as Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, on Veterans Day or Memorial Day, or when they've attended a funeral for a loved one who served in the military. When they hear the call, they'll remember something that was very important to them." TAPS 150, the organization sponsoring the Berkeley event, raised money for a renovation of the Taps monument and landscaping. In April, a speaker system was installed that will play an audio presentation of the bugle call's history, and a recording of Villanueva sounding Taps on a Civil War bugle. Villanueva first learned to play Taps as a Boy Scout bugler. He studied at Kent University and the Peabody Conservatory before joining the U.S. Air Force Band. He spent 23 years sounding Taps at Arlington National Cemetery and, as the author of the booklet "Twenty-Four Notes That Tap Deep Emotions: The History of America's Most Famous Bugle Call," he's considered the nation's foremost authority on Taps.

"This has been a love of mine ever since I can remember," says Villanueva, a member of Dewey Lohman American Legion Post 109 in Arbutus, Md. "Playing it every day, I became very familiar with that piece of music, and that led me to want to know more about it."

The Berkeley weekend is expected to draw thousands of visitors. Attractions include the Virginia Civil War HistoryMobile, a Civil War re-enactment, performances by the Federal City Brass Band, and tours of the Berkeley Mansion, built in 1726.

"It's going to be a wonderful weekend of music and history," Villanueva says. Butterfield's and Norton's descendants are expected to attend, along with Lou Madonia, the Marine bugler who sounded Taps at the 100th anniversary celebration in 1962. Villanueva says that Taps' 150th year would be made especially meaningful with official recognition by Congress. The House's defense authorization bill contains a provision sought by Rep. Tom Reed, R-N.Y., designating Taps as the national song of remembrance.

"Taps isn't really recognized," Villanueva says. "It's not even considered a piece of music. It's considered a bugle call. So when people write about it, they don't even use a capital T. I'm hoping to get it a capital T."

Free men do not ask permission to bear arms



## Return to Vietnam

On April 16th, a group of Americal Division vets flew back to Vietnam to retrace some of their footsteps from 40 some years ago. We were guided by two Marines that have made a service of taking vets back. Regulars at the Americal annual reunions included Gary Noller, Ron Ellis, Jim Craig, Mike Twomey, Bob Short, Dave Eichorn and sometimes Bill Bacon (CO, C/2/1). We were also joined by Dennis Powell, Alan States and Ben Buehler (B/2/1). The Marines were Tex Ed Stiteler and Cliff Cromer. All Americalers were former members of the 196th LIB, so we focused on the northern AO out of Chu Lai. Bill Bacon was my replacement as S-5 for 2/1. For Bill and I, after 42 years, it was an opportunity to reunite with Sgt. Cau our S-5 interpreter and Thua, our Kit Carson Scout. They accompanied us for a week-touring and dining with us each day. It was a truly memorable time.

We made it to Hanoi for a day and visited the Hanoi Hilton where Senator John McCain resided for several years, JPAC-the US POW/MIA team who are searching for the remains of those missing in action and spent a nice evening with the US Marine contingent assigned to guard the American Embassy. The next day we flew to Chu Lai. There we met Cau at the Chu Lai airport. We visited the Operation Starlight area where the Marines south of Chu Lai were hit hard by the VC/NVA- a column of 8 APC's were ambushed in the paddies. This was one of the first major battles of the Vietnam war. Two APC relics are kept as memorials under permanent open air museums. We also visited parts of Chu Lai and could see over much of the area covered by our Division base camp. We visited the former site of the 91st Evac and the PX on the bluff just north of the beach. Much of the lower base continues to be a Vietnamese military base. We also had the opportunity to visit Cau's home north of Chu Lai on the way to Hoi An where our modern hotel was.



Jim Craig, Ron Ellis, Gary Noller, & Spen Chu Lei Beach



Thua, Spen, Cau, & Bill at LZ Ross

In subsequent days, we visited many former firebases- Ross, Baldy (gate to VN military base), Hawk hill (gate only), Hill 151, Kham Duc, Siberia. We saw Center and West from a distance but didn't climb them. Some when to Hill 65 and other FSB's. On Ross, there are several large memorials. Because of large trees that had grown in the past 40 years, it looked nothing like what I remembered. You could not even see artillery hill from where the 2/1 B-TOC was located. From Ross, we went into Que Son village where we saw the former MACV compound and where the store was that I used to go into with Ed Suits, the S-5 I replaced.

We had a frightening experience on Hill 151. We were told it was about a click and a half to the top. Expecting a short hike, some of us took very little water. Two took none. It turned out to be close to 3-4 miles up a sometimes steep slope. Dennis elected to stop and wait for us about 3/4th the way up. We dropped our small packs there with Dennis and continued up. After seeing the sights at the top, we returned to pick up Dennis. By then, we knew we were in trouble- the 100 plus degrees was getting to us and each had the same thought running through our minds- would we be the first to pass out? Tex called down to the bus where the Vietnamese guide had stayed with Ron and Bill who elected not to make the hike. Tex asked the guide- Thanh to bring water up the hill to a memorial about a quarter of the way up. Five of us made it back to the memorial and got bottles of water from Thanh. I told him to continue up the hill because there were several others in worse shape than we were. As I headed down towards the bus, I noticed one of the guys with me was weaving back and forth as he tried to walk down some stairs. I grabbed him and guided him down to a dam, about 200 yards from the bus. There, he collapsed onto the roadway on the top of the dam. I was too weak to lift him so I told him I would go for help. I started across the dam, waving my towel for help. While Ron and Bill saw me, they could not hear my cries for help. Finally, Bill met me half way across the dam. As I told Bill the other guy (unnamed on purpose) was in trouble, he noticed the guy had gotten up and had staggered down into the water behind the dam, face down. Bill immediately went to help and pulled the guy out. He was soaked, complete with wet cell phone and passport. Later the guy said he was overwhelmed with fear that he was having heat stroke and had to get into water to cool off. I proceeded across the dam to a building next to the bus because I was exhausted by then. The others that came down with me were equally physically spent. We made efforts to get Cau to ask for help from some dam workers. Eventually, we got the dam workers to move their truck so our bus could get across the dam to where the guy was with heat exhaustion. Tex, Dennis and Mike made it back down to the bus by taking it very slowly and picking up what ever water they could find along the trail in discarded water bottles.

Eventually, three of us that remained on the far side of the dam felt strong enough to walk across to the bus. There we found they had moved the wet guy into the bus and had the air conditioning on. We realized how dumb we had been, a bunch of 60+ year olds, hiking in the heat without proper precautions. Fortunately, within a few days, our friend had fully recovered.

Kham Duc was particularly moving to some, have spent some extremely tense time there. Bill showed me where there was a small creek where his platoon took baths. He also showed me where the NVA had dug gun emplacements but never used them when they came upon the base. He said if they chose to fight, they would have blown us away. One of the guys commented to me "I was so scared and it was so quiet". He repeated that several times with great emotion.

On the sixth day, a few of us decided to take the day off from visiting firebases. Jim Craig, Bob Short and I decided to take a side excursion- a boat trip to the Cham Islands. They are a group of islands about 12 miles off shore from Hoi Ann. After a short high speed boat ride out to the islands, we toured the islands' visitors center. We went inside a Buddhist temple that had a major celebration going on. Over 500 people were chanting and they had long tables covered with all sorts of fancy food. When we left the temple, Jim said he had to get some flip flops to replace his sandals that had split. He found a pair at a street side stand that were almost long enough for his typical American feet and was dickering with the shop owner over price as he was obligated to do, or so we were told. Bob and I left him and headed back down to the beach. We thought we would have to wait for him but he soon showed up, riding on the back of a motorbike. He said this guy had offered to take him down for a buck. Then, when strolling along the beach area, we were offered some dried squid samples. We had been cautioned not to eat anything from the locals and their small stands. But of course we had to try the squid and it was very good. It was similar to beef jerky, very chewy and slightly fishy but good. When our boat tour guide saw that, she bought some raw squid and squatted down to cook it over a small charcoal grill. That was really good. When we got back to the boat, they told us we were going snorkeling. That was nice - warm water with some coral and fish to see. We then went to a beach where we had a five course lunch- including cooked snails and grilled clams. It was, as all the food in Vietnam was, very tasty. After that, we chilled out in chaise loungers on the beach under palm trees, thinking back to how different this was from our last visit to this country.

Bill Bacon and I took a day off to go with Cau and Thua to see the places we worked as S-5's. We were able to visit Thua's rice farm where we met his wife, son and daughter in law and three grandchildren. He has a nice house with his ducks and pigs nearby. He raises two tons of rice a year, three crops on about a half football field rice paddy. Lots of hard work but he seems happy. While he is a poor rice farmer, I was surprised to see both he and his wife had cell phones. In fact, it seemed

everyone had cell phones in Vietnam. And everyone has electricity and TV. Cau even has a computer and internet complete with a Gmail address. We visited Tam Ky, the site of the Tet battle in 1968, Cau's son's restaurant and the MACV compound there. While I had visited it a time or two, Bill remembered it vividly and said it was the same as it was in 1970. While visiting the compound, an older gentleman showed us a marble memorial to a Capt. Lloyd Payne, a US soldier killed in 1963. The MACV compound was named the Payne Compound in his honor in 1965, according to

the memorial. Tex later told us what we saw was one of the few remaining memorials to Americans and South Vietnamese soldiers in all of Vietnam. It seemed we had regular adventures and mini-crisis incidents. While Bill and I were touring with Cau and Thua, Cau's son who was driving, managed to run two tires off the edge of a rice paddy dike, dropping us down to the frame. Thua went and got a long beam type log to try to wedge us out of the drop off. I kept thinking we were in for a long stay. As Thua worked to get us free, it seemed all the teenagers in the village had shown up to watch us. The log didn't work. But Thua got the teenagers to gather around the vehicle and lift us out and sideways onto the roadway. I would not have believed it until I saw it happen. After giving them 200,000 Dong (\$10US) they were happy.



Spem, & Bill at Cau's Home

We also visited the entrance to Hawk hill. It is now a Vietnamese military base. When we walked up to the gate, there were two young soldiers there, complete with 1960's era AK-47's. When we asked, they said no pictures could be taken. As we chatted with one of the soldiers, the other walked away. As we were walking back to the car, we heard someone call to us from the gate. It was an officer who turned out to be the head of security. After we explained who we were and what we were doing, he offered to ask higher higher for permission for us to tour inside the base. While he said it might be possible, he warned us it would take some time. Wanted to see more of the area, we declined his kind offer.

When we went to LZ Maryann, there were special remembrances there. Gary had spent 9 months on that hill. The day after he was moved to another FSB, they were basically overrun- 31 Americans killed, 78 wounded. Dennis wore a T-shirt commemorating the event which listed the 31 dead by name. Gary left his shirt on the hill, tied to a tree to remember those lost. We had a short ceremony with bowed heads. Shortly before we moved to that area, Jim Craig announced he had seen enough of Maryann and was headed back down to the bus. That was the last we saw of Jim.



The group at LZ Maryann

When we got back to the bus, we asked Bill Bacon who had stayed behind, where Jim was and he said he never saw him return. This was just before noon on a hot, 105 degree day. So we started searching. Over the next several hours we searched much of the hill without success. Due to the heat, only a few of us were able to make it up parts of the hill. We called in the local authorities who mounted a search also. The heat limited what we were able to do. By 4:30, Tex told us to get on the bus and go back to the hotel. We were basically exhausted by the heat and lack of food since we did not stop for lunch. The bus trip was 4-1/2 hours back to Hoi An which is how far out in the boonies we were.

Tex organized the locals and 70 searched until midnight with flashlights. The American Embassy was notified and government officials came from as far away as Danang. The Deputy Province Chief came to lend support. They resumed the search at first light 5:45 AM with 100 locals with a \$5,000 reward offered. At noon, they called in the searchers to rest- even the local people were showing the effects of the heat. The search resumed at 2 PM. Shortly thereafter, a Montagnard farmer with a wooden leg found Jim. He had fallen off a 70-80 foot cliff and was dead. So Maryann cost us one more fatality. We do not know why Jim was on that side of the hill. It was easy to tell which way was back to the bus because there was a river in the distance on the cliff side. The road was clearly visible from the hilltop. Needless to say, it put a damper on our travels. But we know Jim was with us on the trip because he wanted to be there, to share time with his fellow veterans. We will miss him but will remember the good times we had.

Gary, Dave, Alan and Ed were able to attend portions of the memorial services for Jim in his home town of Longmont, Colorado. Mike visited with Donna Craig, Jim's wife, during a recent visit he made to the Air Force Academy to attend his niece's graduation ceremony. Gary, Ron, Dave and I went to Denver in mid June to visit with Donna to share our stories of the trip and the photos we had of Jim in Vietnam on this trip. It was nice seeing Donna and hopefully we gave her some comfort in showing her that Jim was enjoying himself up to the end. The morning after we were notified that Jim was gone, we packed up our stuff in Hoi An and flew to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). We skipped our visit to the historic city of Hue because of extending our stay in Hoi An while the search for Jim was on-going. We saw some of the sights in Saigon but it just didn't seem the same. We visited the Presidential Palace and War Remnants Museum. Some went to tour the Cu Chi tunnels and a magnificent Catholic Cathedral. We also visited the Cathedral where President Diem was found by the army just before he was shot. We took a boat tour of the Mekong Delta- touring a candy factory, a rice paper cooking operation, had a pony cart ride and another wonderful lunch.

So this was truly a trip full of lifetime memories. If any of you are considering a trip back, do it. It is amazing and the tours Tex organizes take care of everything.

Gary, Ron, Dave and I went to Colorado to share our memories of Jim with his wife Donna and his brother Joe. It was a nice visit and we hope we gave her some comfort in showing her what a good time Jim was having with us.

Spencer Baba