



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



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Volume 3

"A Soldier's Footsteps"

August 2013

Commander's Corner: Just a reminder: we need to start getting the nominations for chapter officers as soon as possible. If you are interested, or would like to submit someone or yourself for an office, please contact one of the current officers. We definitely need someone who would like to take over the office of Secretary/Treasurer as Don Hicks will no longer be able to fill the post after this term due to his health. Don is going in for some surgery on August 15th, so we all wish him well and look forward to seeing him at Nashville. Don has had it tough the last several months and has still been hanging in there doing his job for us with the help of his wonderful wife, Renee. Thanks, Renee for all of your efforts. Also, anyone wanting to help with our website, please contact me. I haven't had any bites on this so far but, would like for someone to learn some of this for the future as I would really like for the web site to continue to exist after me. Most of it is pretty basic and anyone with some 'html' and 'css' knowledge could put some of it together. It's pretty much a plug n play deal where the basic data is available and the template is already set up to put the information in. We would like to welcome our newest chapter member, Roger Carrier (E).



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

A Surprise Discovery: When an Indiana woman went to the National World War II Museum earlier this year, she hoped to see a display depicting her high school sweetheart who was killed in the war. Instead, Laura Davis Burlingame discovered the diary in which Cpl. Thomas "Cotton" Jones wrote about her. "I didn't have any idea there was a diary in there," said the 90 year old Indiana native. Before he was killed by a Japanese sniper's bullet, Jones' last request was for whoever found the diary to return it to the girl he loved. He died on Sept. 17, 1944, the third day of the U.S. assault on the Pacific Island of Peleliu. Burlingame isn't sure why she never received the diary it had been sent to Jones' sister. His artifacts were donated to the museum in 2001. Jones' last entry, written aboard USS Maui on Dec. 1, 1943, describes winning \$ 200.00 at craps. He had a total of \$ 320, he writes, and if he were back home, "Laura Mae & I would really have a wonderful Xmas." He wondered if he could wire the money to her as a Christmas present. The museum provided her with a copy of the diary, after she insisted the original stay there. A photograph of Burlingame fills nearly all of the diary's 4-by-7-inch back cover. The picture itself is black and white but the photographer had tinted her cheeks pink and her lips dark red. She signed the photo. "Love, Laurie."

German Me-264 World War II bombers were capable of bombing New York City , but they decided it wasn't worth the effort.

Vietnam MIA Identified: The Defense POW/MIA Office has announced the identification of remains belonging to Air Force Maj. Larry J. Hanley, 26, of Walla Walla, Washington. On Nov. 4, 1969, Hanley was attacking an enemy anti-aircraft position when the F-105D Thunderchief he was piloting crashed in Khammouan Province, Laos. The loss location would be unknown because his wingman and a forward air controller did not see the crash.

Every Name Needs a Photo: "Call for Photos" is a national campaign by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation to collect at least one photograph of all 58,000 men and women whose names are inscribed on The Wall. To date, only 26,000 individual photographs have been submitted for display in the new Education Center at The Wall, as well as online on The Virtual Wall. For more information or to submit photos, go to <http://www.virtualwall.org/>

Looking for a Replacement for Secy/Treas: Your Chapter is actively soliciting for a replacement for our current Secy/Treas, Don Hicks. See the Commander's comments for details. Your entire staff will be up for reelection when we meet in Nashville in September 2013. If you are interested in serving in this capacity, reply directly to Chuck Holdaway or Rich Heroux.

VA Committee to Discuss MST Care and Treatment: The House VA Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing entitled "Safety for Survivors: Care and Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma. Joy Ilem, Deputy National Legislative Director for DAV presented testimony on behalf of the Independent Budget. Members of the committee have been vocal in their support for improving the care and treatment that VA and DOD provide survivors of military sexual trauma. We continue to express our hope that incidence of sexual assault are being effectively addressed by DOD. The testimony being given mirrors articles in the IB that advocate for greater collaboration between VA and DOD to identify best practices related to health care delivery and claims processing for conditions associated with MST.

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 Rich Heroux , 2005 Montgomery Road, Franklinton, NC 27525-7300.

The first German serviceman killed in WW II was killed by the Japanese (China , 1937).

House VA Subcommittees Clear Veterans' Bills: On Wednesday, the House VA Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs' cleared HR several bills that would change VA's handling of the disability claims backlog. For complete coverage visit the House VA website at: <http://veterans.house.gov/>. HR 8026 would allow veterans who have claims for two or more medical conditions to receive payments for the conditions that have been adjudicated while the others are being processed. The bill was amended to include provisions of several other bills including the WW II Merchant Marine Service Act which recognizes merchant seamen who served from Dec. 7, 1941, through Dec. 31, 1946, the bill provides burial benefits; appropriate medals, ribbons and other military decorations; and veterans status. HR 2189 would create a commission to study the claims backlog and recommend solutions and require VA to consider those solutions. It also requires the commission to assign a subcommittee to study any anticipated surge in appeals and asks VA to implement recommendations from a January 2013 VA strategic plan so that by Memorial Day 2015, each claim is approved or denied within 125 days. HR 2423 extends VA's ability to use private physicians under contract to conduct disability physicals. It also sets priorities within the disability claims process, with priority given to veterans who are age 70 or older; terminally ill; have life-threatening illnesses; are homeless, Medal of Honor recipients or former prisoners of war; or whose claims are being reviewed again in relation to a previously denied claim for military sexual trauma.

Pentagon Eyes Cuts in Danger Pay: The Department of Defense is eyeing plans to eliminate danger pay for service members in as many as 18 countries and five waterways around the world, saving about \$120 million each year while taking a bite out of troops' salaries, The Associated Press has learned. Senior defense and military leaders are expected to meet later this week to review the matter and are poised to approve a new plan. Pentagon press secretary George Little declined to discuss details but said no final decisions have been made. Senior military leaders came up with the proposed list of locations in their regions that no longer were perilous enough to warrant danger pay, including several countries in the heart of the tumultuous Middle East, such as Jordan, where hundreds of troops have recently deployed because of the bloody Syrian civil war on its border. Defense officials said the proposal would strip the stipend -- which can be up to \$225 per month -- from as many as 56,000 service members, including thousands stationed in Kuwait. It also would affect thousands of sailors who routinely travel through the Persian Gulf region on ships or airmen who fly over the Gulf. The \$225 monthly cut in pay would come regardless of the service member's base salary. Under the plans being discussed, troops would still receive the extra pay if they serve in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen and in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. The U.S. does not have any military members now serving in Iran. Some of the countries that could likely be dropped from the list include Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Liberia, Haiti and several former Soviet republics. The list has routinely evolved over many years, with countries added as they became more dangerous hotspots. And military leaders do periodic reviews of the list.

Army Relieves Fort Jackson CO: The Army has removed from the command of its largest training post the one-star general suspended in May over charges of adultery and involvement in a physical altercation. Brig. Gen. Bryan Roberts was relieved of his command at Fort Jackson, S.C., on Thursday afternoon due to misconduct, said Army spokesman Harvey Perritt. The decision was made by Gen. Robert W. Cone, Commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command in Fort Eustis, Va., Perritt said. "This misconduct included adultery and a physical altercation," he said. "This misconduct was not sexual assault or harassment; it was a breach of order and discipline that violated standards of the Army profession." In May, the Army said Roberts was in an altercation with another woman who was not his wife. Roberts took command of Fort Jackson in April 2012. The veteran of three tours in Iraq has been in the Army for about 29 years. His official Army biography produced when he took command of the post said he was married and the father of three children.

The Art of Camouflage: Place the web address on your computer to view how the art of Camouflage has progressed since you last used it. <http://www.military.com/video/logistics-and-supplies/military-equipment/the-art-of-camouflage/2534609224001/>

Two Amphibious Assault Ships 'Parked Off of Egypt': As political unrest continues in post-coup Egypt, two amphibious assault ships have moved to the coast there, the commandant of the Marine Corps said Thursday. The USS Kearsarge and the USS San Antonio "moved up into the Red Sea and parked off of Egypt," a couple of nights ago, "because we don't know what's going to happen," Gen. James Amos said. Amos was speaking with Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert at a forum on the future of maritime forces, which was held at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Having noted earlier that he thinks "there's zero peace dividend" coming out of Afghanistan, he used the situation in Egypt as part of his pitch that despite uncertain budget times the U.S. military should maintain a robust presence throughout the world. "Crisis happens. Egypt is a crisis right now," Amos said. "When that happens...what we owe the senior leadership of our nation is versatile options." The two ships are "there on purpose," he said. "That's the flexibility that in a response to a crisis we have to have." He and Greenert also discussed the pivot to Asia, a strategy that they are working on how to implement within the current budget constraints. The build up in Australia is continuing with the number of Marines in Darwin set to grow from 250 to 1,000 in 2014, and the Marines have gone from one to three battalions on the Japanese island of Okinawa with a fourth headed there this fall.



**It is easier to get older
than it is to get wiser.**

Activists Mount New Campaign for Religious Freedom: Christian activists are pledging to mount a new campaign to protect religious freedom in the military, saying they're seeing growing evidence of an anti-faith bent among military and administration leaders. "We get calls all the time telling us how bad it is to be a religious person in the military," said retired Lt. Gen. Jerry Boykin, now executive vice president of the conservative Family Research Council. "Political correctness has destroyed the ability to live your faith in the military." The move comes amid the annual debate on the defense budget bill, which again this year includes Republican amendments guaranteeing protection for troops who speak openly about their religion. Past efforts to pass the language have failed in the Senate, and White House and Pentagon officials have called the move unnecessary and potentially disruptive. But the activists and a handful of Republican House members said such language would protect Christian troops from misguided commanders who are slowly eliminating all mention of religion in public military forums. Ron Crews, executive director of the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, cited numerous anecdotes (all anonymous, out of fear of retribution from the chain of command) of soldiers forced to hide their Bibles, chaplains forced to omit Jesus' name from public prayers, and commanders facing dismissal for refusing to grant same-sex benefits to gay troops. His group plans to begin distributing religious liberty wallet cards, informing troops they have the right to "freely exercise and appropriately express their faith" and listing resources who can assist in that fight. "Those who wear the uniform should not themselves have to give up their religious liberties," he said. In a statement, Defense Department spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen said there have not been any new complaints or problems with the department's policies on religious expression, and there is no effort within the department to make religious proselytizing a crime.



2013ADVA National Reunion Check-in on Wednesday, September 11, 2013, Thursday September 12 trip to Fort Campbell and 101st Airmobile Division, Friday September 13 trip to Tennessee Vietnam Veterans Memorial (one of the nicest in the country), then Country Music Hall of Fame, Dinner and then Grand Ole Opry; Saturday September 14 meetings as usual and Saturday night Banquet. Out on Sunday, September 15. The reunion will be housed at the Millennium-Maxwell House Hotel at 2025 Rosa Parks Blvd., Nashville, Tennessee 37228-1505. Friday will highlight the annual memorial service and culminate with dinner and a trip to the "Grand Ole Opry. Saturday we will hold our annual meeting and elect new officers. See the ADVA Journal or visit our 2/1 website for more details.

Hagel: Cuts Will Force More Service Uniformity: Hagel: Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said Monday that the Pentagon was pushing to develop more common personal gear and ground vehicles for all the services to save money in the new era of tight budgets. In taking questions at Fort Bragg, N.C., Hagel did not get into specifics on standard issue gear, but he lined up with the general statement of an enlisted soldier that the services had gotten away from using the same equipment and ground vehicles since 9/11. When asked if he agreed that standard issue was preferred name, Hagel said "Yes. First, we're being forced to" by the \$500 billion in defense spending cuts over 10 years now underway in the sequestration process. "We're going to be forced to change things," Hagel said. "The fact is every program in the Defense Department is accountable. We're going to be changing business about how we do a lot of things." The soldier who asked the question said he had been serving for 13 years and he had seen the military change in that time from a period when "the force branches jointly developed and fielded" the same gear. "Very little" of what the four services now use was common, the soldier said. Only last month, Hagel was less certain about commonality for camouflage uniforms when asked about it by a Navy petty officer during a town hall at Offutt Air Force Base in his home state of Nebraska. "Quite frankly, I'm aware of the bill," Hagel said of proposed legislation in the House to come up with a single camouflage pattern, but "I haven't asked any of our (service) chiefs what they think." At Fort Bragg, the first stop on Hagel's three-day trip to southern East Coast military bases, five of the six questions directed to Hagel during the town hall dealt with the impacts of sequester and furloughs. The wife of a soldier was concerned that teacher furloughs might affect the accreditation of base schools. "What's going to be done for our children?" she asked. Hagel said that standards and accreditation were being "exempted from any cuts." A soldier said that "some of the (military) services were in better fiscal condition than others." He asked why they weren't able to be exempted from furloughs. Hagel said he had wrestled with that issue, but decided to come down on the side that "we're all in this together." "I want us to come at this -- not as different services, or commands, or different bases," Hagel said.

DoD: 5,000 Military Families Losing Food Stamps: The House action that stripped food stamp funding from a massive farm bill would threaten vital assistance for about 5,000 military families, mostly from the junior enlisted ranks, Pentagon officials said Friday. More than 5,000 of the 48 million Americans receiving Supplementary Nutritional Assistance Program (food stamps) listed their employment status as "active duty military," the Pentagon officials said. "Military members who receive SNAP tend to be made up of members in junior pay grades with larger than average household sizes," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen, a Defense Department spokesman. "Military members normally 'promote out' of the need for additional subsistence benefits, due to the corresponding raises in basic pay and other allowances as one moves to a higher pay grade," Christensen said. Older recruits who already have several children and join the military because of the poor job market tend to need SNAP, Raezer said. "If you're junior enlisted and you're single, fine, but if the servicemember has children and a non-working spouse, 'you're going to be on food stamps.'" "It gets tough, even with a housing allowance," Raezer said. In addition, the Defense Commissary Agency reported that food stamps were being redeemed at base commissaries at a record pace.

Army to Overhaul Officer Evaluations: The Army plans to launch a new officer evaluation system toward the end of this year that will, for the first time, hold rating officials accountable for the recommendations they make for officer promotions. The new Officer Evaluation Reporting system will apply to all commissioned officers and warrant officers. It will feature clearer responsibilities for the rating officials, so that the rater is focused on performance and the senior rater on the potential of the officers being considered for promotion, said George Piccirilli, chief of Evaluations, Selections and Promotions at the U.S. Army Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Ky. The Army is also launching a new Evaluation Entry System to replace AKO My Forms as the tool used to create, submit and track an OER through to completion. The web-based application is designed to eliminate errors and will be more user friendly, HRC officials say. The new effort was first reported by Army Times in May. Under the current system, the rater "basically advocated to the senior rater who was the best and assessed performance and potential, but they were not held accountable to that evaluation because there is no mechanism to hold them accountable," Piccirilli said. With the new OER, "we are holding rating officials accountable ... based upon a rater profile," Piccirilli said. "Senior raters will also have a profile so it will provide clear delineation between what the rater is focusing on and senior rater is focusing on." Army officials stressed that the current system is not "broken," but after 14 years, the Army's competencies and attributes for officer evaluation are out of date. The new attributes can be found in the new ADRP 6-22. "What is success? How do you want me to accomplish this performance objective as it relates to the competencies and attributes like character, presence, intellect, leads, develops, achieves?" said Piccirilli. "It will be more competitive. It is currently more competitive at the senior rater [level], but the rater is going to have to make a call like the senior rater has to make a call, so it is going to be equally competitive at both levels."

The Origin of the VA Motto: Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address took place on March 4, 1865 a time of great uneasiness for the country. In just over one month, the war would end and the president would be assassinated. President Lincoln framed his speech on the moral and religious implications of the war. With its deep philosophical insights, critics have hailed the speech as one of Lincoln's best. With the words, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan," President Lincoln affirmed the government's obligation to care for those injured during the war and to provide for the families of those who perished on the battlefield. President Lincoln's words have stood the test of time, and stand today as a solemn reminder of VA's commitment to care for those injured in our nation's defense and the families of those killed in its service.

**A GUY WHO DRIVES
A CAR WIDE OPEN
IS NOT THINKIN'
HE'S JUST HOPIN'
Burma Shave**

Soldier Serves Double Duty as Horror Novelist: William Jarrett leads a double life. By day, he is Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jarrett, an analyst for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command at Fort Belvoir. By night -- or anytime he's off duty - he becomes "Dev" Jarrett, a horror writer with more than 30 short stories published and his first novel set to hit the shelves next month. "I've always wanted to be a writer," Jarrett said. "It's just something I've always done. Even when it's work, it's fun." The hard part for Jarrett isn't the writing -- it's finding time to create his worlds of vampires, zombies, monsters and ghosts outside of his full-time job in the Army. "It's really tricky," he said. "I usually try to write for at least an hour or two every day. A lot of times, I'm up later than anyone else in the house." Besides being a writer, Jarrett is a career Soldier with 19 years of service under his belt, including two deployments. He juggles writing and editing on the side but says being a Soldier has actually helped him make time for his passion, by teaching him to persevere. "Really, I think being in the military has given me the discipline that I do stick to it," he said. In fact, it was during Jarrett's first deployment to Afghanistan in 2004 that he first decided to share his work with others. "It was just a fluke, really. I looked online and there was a contest for Halloween stories. I put something together and sent it in and it won," he said. "I always loved to write but the idea that it would be entertaining for others was really exciting." Since then, Jarrett has evolved from a contest winner into a published novelist. "Originally, I just started looking online for magazines, both electronic and print, that would publish stories," Jarrett said. "Since then it's been building slowly." He wrote his first published novel, "Loveless," while stationed in Hawaii from 2003 to 2009 and finished editing it during another deployment to Afghanistan in 2011. "Loveless" will be released in July by Blood Bound Books.

This is a really good video. Humbles you right down to your toenails! I will pass this to all I can. This is one of the best 'America Tributes' I've ever seen...

http://www.youtube.com/embed/rKsW6c_CgFY?feature=player_detailpage

VA Releases Second Women Veterans Sourcebook: The Department of Veterans Affairs has released Volume 2 of their Women Veterans Sourcebook. Some details:

- * Healthcare Usage: The number of women VA healthcare nearly doubled over the past decade, from 175,698 in fiscal year 2001 to 316,903 in FY10. Women veterans now comprise 6% of VA patients. They also use outpatient care more than men.
- * Age Distribution: A decade ago, the age distribution of women veterans showed two peaks, at ages 44 and 77. In FY10, a third peak appeared, at age 27. In FY10, 42% of women veteran patients were 18-44 years old, 45% were 45-64 years old, and 13% were older than 65.

- Residence: More women veterans resided in urban areas than rural areas in FY10 (urban 64%; rural 36%).

The 78-page sourcebook is now available in PDF format on the VA website at http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/docs/SourcebookVol2_508c_FINAL.pdf

What's So Special About This Place? Andersonville National Historic Site began as a stockade built about 18 months before the end of the U.S. Civil War to hold Union Army prisoners captured by Confederate soldiers. Located deep behind Confederate lines, the 26.5-acre Camp Sumter (named for the south Georgia county it occupied) was designed for a maximum of 10,000 prisoners. At its most crowded, it held more than 32,000 men, many of them wounded and starving, in horrific conditions with rampant disease, contaminated water, and only minimal shelter from the blazing sun and the chilling winter rain. In the prison's 14 months of existence, some 45,000 Union prisoners arrived here; of those, 12,920 died and were buried in a cemetery created just outside the prison walls.



A foggy morning inside the prison site.

The cemetery site serving Camp Sumter was established as Andersonville National Cemetery on July 26, 1865. By 1868, the cemetery held the remains of more than 13,800 Union soldiers whose bodies had been retrieved after their deaths in hospitals, battles, or prison camps throughout the region. Andersonville National Cemetery has been used continuously since its founding and currently averages over 150 burials a year. The cemetery and associated prison site became a unit of the National Park System in 1970.

Today, Andersonville National Historic Site comprises three distinct components: the former site of [Camp Sumter military prison](#), the [Andersonville National Cemetery](#), and the [National Prisoner of War Museum](#), which opened in 1998 to honor all U.S. prisoners of war in all wars.

VA Health Care Facilities Named to 2013 "Most Wired" Hospitals List: The Department of Veterans Affairs, representing 152 VA medical centers, was recently named to the 2013 "Most Wired" hospitals list. The list, which is released by *Hospitals & Health Networks*, in partnership with McKesson, the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME) and the American Hospital Association (AHA), is the result of a national survey aimed at ranking hospitals that are leveraging health information technology (HIT) in new and innovative ways.

**SPEED WAS HIGH WEATHER WAS NOT
TIRES WERE THIN X MARKS THE SPOT
AROUND THE CURVE LICKETY-SPLIT
BEAUTIFUL CAR WASN'T IT?**

Burma Shave

American Heroes: All of us have our old TV western favorites but, what we may not realize is just how many of them were veterans and contributed to their country as more than just being a famous personality. One of mine was James Arness (May 26, 1923 – June 3, 2011) best known for portraying Marshal Matt Dillon in the television series "Gunsmoke" for 20 years. What is generally unknown, James Arness was a "grunt" in World War II. He initially wanted to be a naval fighter pilot, but he felt his poor eyesight would bar him and his height of 6' 7" forever ended his hopes, since he was over the maximum height limit for aviators. Instead, he was called for the Army and reported in March, 1943. He served as an infantry rifleman with the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, and was severely wounded at Anzio, Italy. He landed on the Anzio beachhead on January 22, 1944 as a rifleman with 2nd Plt., E Co., 2nd Bn., 7th Infantry Rgmt., 3rd Infantry Division. Because of his height, he was the first ordered off his landing craft to determine the depth of the water; which came up to his waist. Having being subsequently wounded at Anzio on January 29, 1945, he underwent surgery several times. He was honorably discharged and his wounds continued to bother him throughout his career; in his later years, Arness suffered from chronic leg pain, which sometimes hurt when mounting a horse. His decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three bronze battle stars, the World War II Victory Medal and the Combat Infantryman Badge. He was born James King Aurness (later dropping the "u") in Minneapolis, MN and his younger brother also became an actor under the name of Peter Graves. After his discharge, Arness entered Beloit College in Wisconsin and began his performing career as a radio announcer. He hitchhiked to Hollywood and soon began acting and appearing in films. He was a close friend of John Wayne and co-starred in some of Wayne's movies (he also appeared and the star in the sci-fi films "The Thing" and "Them"). Wayne was the one who recommended Arness for the role of Matt Dillon. The Norwegian-German Arness had to dye his naturally blond hair darker for the part. "Gunsmoke" made Arness world-famous and ran for two decades, becoming the longest running drama series in U.S. television history by the end of its run in 1975. It was in the top 10 in the ratings for a total of thirteen seasons, including four consecutive seasons at number one. After "Gunsmoke" ended, Arness performed in several western-themed movies and a television series, including "How the West Was Won". His role as mountain man "Zeb Macahan" made him into a cult figure in many European countries. He also starred in five made-for-television "Gunsmoke" movies between 1987 and 1994. James Arness was truly an American hero in more ways than one. This article is a compilation of information garnered from "Wikipedia" and various internet sources



Chuck Holdaway

**A three-year-old boy was examining
his testicles while taking a bath.
"Mom" he asked, "are these my
brains?"
"Not yet," she replied.**



Black Hawk Medical Evacuation (MEDIVAC) Helicopter Duty in Afghanistan



Some back ground is necessary to share with you a story related to me while my niece, Emily Wiest, who served a one year tour of duty in Iraq with the our local National Guard 1073rd Maintenance unit. After returning from Iraq she stayed in the Army and is now flying Black Hawk Medical Evacuation (MEDIVAC) helicopters stationed in Nashville, TN. A few weeks ago her grand-father, my uncle, passed away; so she came up to Michigan for the memorial and brought along her boyfriend, Brandon Warren, also a MEDIVAC pilot and also stationed in Nashville, TN. He is a solidly looking guy; 100% officer and gentleman. Emily asked me to write about our Vietnam experience when she was in Iraq. I am sure she has shared, what we (Me and some other Bravo soldiers) wrote, with Brandon. Brandon has done a tour of duty in Afghanistan flying MEDIVAC picking up wounded GIs as well as locals. When Emily introduced me to Brandon and before the hand shake was over it was like we had met before and since I knew he served a tour in Afghanistan I had a few questions. Although we were with five other people at a picnic table, Brandon and I sat at the end of the table and didn't talk to anybody else for about an hour. So----here's what he had to tell me about flying a MEDIVACs in Afghanistan.



They are either flying in a sand storm or fog 90% of the time. The moon is only out a couple of days a month there so night vision stuff does not work effectively. Their night vision stuff works just like our star lights in the Land of The Cool Water Buffalo. So conditions most of the time they are flying on instruments. When landing to pick up wounded from 50 feet up to the ground the sand is such that they are always landing totally blind. He said he hit hard more than once. The sand gets in everything and it's difficult to keep everything flying since it gets into the electronics and causes shorts, everything over there is affected by the sand. He has a big red cross on the side of his chopper and the bad guys are not supposed to shoot at MEDIVACs but, of course, they do anyway. When they get shot at they call in Cobras. When the Cobras arrive on the scene and find the bad guys they have to ask permission to shoot the bad guys. This takes at least 4 minutes, so the bad guys just head for the closest house and go inside. We are not allowed to shoot at a house unless we know exactly who is in the house as to avoid civilian casualties. Surprise, surprise, the bad guys know this too so they just head for the nearest house.

I also asked about his flying schedule. When on duty you are on call 24 hour a day. Pilots have to have so much time off and their schedule varied depending on where they were in Afghanistan. He said calls from the field can vary from 2 calls a month to 15 a day. He has picked up as many as 14 guys on one call, 2 pilots and 2 medics on a "Chopper". And, they are not allowed to carry any weapon other than a 9mm pistol.

Weather: 130 during the day in summer with daily sand storms. It only rained a couple of times during his entire tour but when it did it was torrential and the rain was partially mud due to all the sand in the air which made a mess of everything not covered. At night the temperature in summer dropped off dramatically and winters are bitterly cold. *Not exactly a vacation spot.* Matter of fact, considering all I am sharing with you about what this man told me---how about we just say goodbye to Afghanistan and let them sort it out themselves.

Later GIs
NELSEN