



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



WEBSITE: [www.b-2-1-196lib.com](http://www.b-2-1-196lib.com)

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Volume 3

"A Soldier's Footsteps"

March 2013

**Commander's Corner:** Okay members, it's time to get serious about the membership dues situation. Our \$5 dues are a pittance compared to a lot of other organizations and, since, we don't have all the bells and whistles, nor t-shirts and caps to help offset our expenses, we still need some income to support our website, newsletter, postage and our hospitality room at the annual reunion. Since October, 2011 we have 98 persons that have provided applications to be members of this organization; sadly, we lost Doug Franz, Bill Chrest and Gary Carder this past year and we wish the best for their families. Of the 95 others, 20 have never paid their dues for 2012 and 59 have not paid dues for this year that were due in February. That's 62% of the members riding on the coattails of the ones who are paid up. That may sound overly harsh, but, it's a fact that can't be sugarcoated. C'mon, gang, get with it. Several of the members have been generous enough to throw in some extra bucks towards our endeavors such as providing wreaths from the 2/1 Chapter for the funerals of our departed members and to offset some of our other expenses and, for this we are sincerely grateful. All dues should be sent to **Don Hicks, 909 Maple Leaf St., Franklin, KY 42134**. I know when you send in an app from the website, you can't include the dues and it is something that will slip your mind but, we truly need to catch up on them. If you are in doubt about your dues status, please contact Don, his phone number is listed on the website on the Bravo Company Roster page. Also, due to some computer problems on my part and a couple of other things, I may have missed listing some of our new members. Paula Cochran wife of member Jerry Cochran, is now an associate member and John Woyanski has joined as a member. Shortly, I will be updating our membership roster on the website and rearranging it into alphabetical order as opposed to application order. This will be done strictly from a maintenance standpoint.

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

**Chuck**

**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](mailto:rheroux1@nc.rr.com) or Rich Heroux, 2005 Montgomery Road, Franklinton, NC 27525-7300.

Just heard from Juliana, Terry (Foxhole) Loyd's wife that Foxhole is in Methodist hospital in Indianapolis for an operation on his arm. Will let you know more information as soon as we get more information. Please keep him in your prayers.

*I started out with nothing, and I still have most of it.*

**Three Korean War MIAs Identified:** The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office recently announced the identification of remains belong to three soldiers who have been unaccounted-for since the Korean War. Identified are:

- Cpl. Robert W. Scott, 19, of Detroit. In late November 1950, Scott and elements of the 31st Regimental Combat Team were deployed along the eastern banks of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea when they were attacked by a vastly superior number of enemy forces. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950.
- Cpl. Robert G. Archer, 19, of Brazil, Ind., also a member of the 31st Regimental Combat Team. On Nov. 29, 1950, his unit began a fighting withdrawal to a more defensible position south of the Chosin Reservoir. It was later learned he had been captured but died of malnutrition and lack of medical care.
- Pfc. Weldon A. Davis, 24, of Tioga, Texas. In late November 1950, elements of the 2nd Infantry Division suffered extensive casualties fighting the Chinese south of the Ch'ong-ch'on River in North Korea. It was later learned Davis had been captured but had died of malnutrition and pneumonia.

**Senate Introduces Stolen Valor Act:** Sens. Jon Tester (D-MT) and Dean Heller (R-NV) introduced Stolen Valor Act legislation recently as a companion bill to what Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV) introduced in the House last month. Both H.R. 253 and its companion, S. 210, would make it a crime to knowingly benefit from lying about receiving a military valor medal or combat badge. Violators could face a fine and up to one-year imprisonment. Veteran organizations strongly supports both bills.

**Senate Introduces Vets Employment Bill:** The Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) introduced VFW-supported legislation to extend and improve upon veterans' employment benefits included in the 2011 *VOW to Hire Heroes Act*. The comprehensive employment package, *Putting Our Veterans Back to Work Act of 2013*, or S.6, includes a key provision to extend the highly popular Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), which offers one year of additional GI Bill-style education benefits to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35-60. VRAP is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2014. The VFW was a champion of the *VOW to Hire Heroes Act* in 2011, and has worked to ensure that veterans who wish to enroll in VRAP can succeed. The VFW also pushed for many of the additional reforms, which garnered bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, during the last Congress.





### **Afghan Veteran Receives Medal of Honor**

Former Army Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha received the Medal of Honor recently for heroism under fire at the battle of Combat Outpost Keating on Oct. 3, 2009, when some 300 insurgents surrounded a small, forward deployed outpost of about 50 Americans. Romesha, who currently resides in Minot, N.D., was assigned to Bravo Troop, 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. He will be just the fourth living, and 11th overall, recipient of the Medal of Honor from America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**DOD Budget Cuts:** The Defense Department and the services released details on how they plan to meet the mandatory sequester, which, barring a last-minute agreement by Congress, is scheduled to automatically kick in on March 1. Sequestration would force the Pentagon to cut \$52 billion more from its budget by the end of the current fiscal year, Sept. 30—just seven months away. The automatic sequestration cuts would be in addition to the \$487 billion reduction in defense spending over the next 10 years, as mandated by the Budget Control Act passed in 2011. Planned reductions include:

- Slashing noncombat flying, sailing and driving hours, to include possibly cancelling all, or part of, the air show seasons of the Navy's Blue Angels and the Air Force's Thunderbirds.
- A three-week furlough of almost 800,000 DOD civilians.
- A hiring freeze and cut-back on installation and facility maintenance.
- Cancelling the deployment of a second carrier strike force into the Persian Gulf.
- Requesting a 1 percent military pay raise for fiscal year 2014 instead of the planned 1.7 percent.
- Requesting another base realignment and closure round.
- Possibly increasing military dependent and retiree Tricare health program fees.

Changing the current military retirement system for future generations. Further complicating the issue, Congress has yet to pass a current year defense budget, which means the Pentagon is operating under a continuing resolution at last year's spending levels, which also prevents them from reprogramming monies from one account to another. As expected, the Pentagon is planning for the worst. DOD is guaranteeing that deployed forces will be protected, but forces in garrison and not "on deck" to deploy will be impacted.

**It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.**

**The Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs:** The Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held its first oversight hearing of 2013 on VA's use of the 100-percent temporary disability rating. Veterans receive the temporary rating when medical evidence shows that a surgery or treatment for serious illness requires a substantial recovery period that may prevent them from working, or when the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities allows the award of a 100-percent evaluation for a period of time. A recent VA Office of Inspector General (IG) report detailed VA's failure to process and monitor those claims, resulting in a \$943 million overpayment to veterans. The IG also found that VA had not set up proper controls or scheduled future medical examinations as required. All seven IG recommendations, including one requiring VBA to review all temporary 100-percent ratings to ensure a future examination date is entered in the Veteran's electronic record, are being implemented.

**Coins Left on Tombstones:** While visiting some cemeteries you may notice that headstones marking certain graves have coins on them, left by previous visitors to the grave. These coins have distinct meanings when left on the headstones of those who gave their life while serving in America's military, and these meanings vary depending on the denomination of coin.

A coin left on a headstone is meant to be a message to the family someone visited to pay respect. Leaving a coin at the grave means that you



left on a stone or grave site as a message to the deceased's family that else has the grave respect. A penny simply visited. A

nickel indicates that you and the deceased trained at boot camp together, while a dime means you served with him in some capacity. By leaving a quarter at the grave, you are telling the family that you were with the soldier when he was killed. According to tradition, the money left at graves in national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries is eventually collected, and the funds are put toward maintaining the cemetery or paying burial costs for indigent veterans. In the US, this practice became common during the Vietnam war, due to the political divide in the country over the war; leaving a coin was seen as a more practical way to communicate that you had visited the grave than contacting the soldier's family, which could devolve into an uncomfortable argument over politics relating to the war. Some Vietnam veterans would leave coins as a "down payment" to buy their fallen comrades a beer or play a hand of cards when they would finally be reunited. The tradition of leaving coins on the headstones of military men and women can be traced to as far back as the Roman Empire.





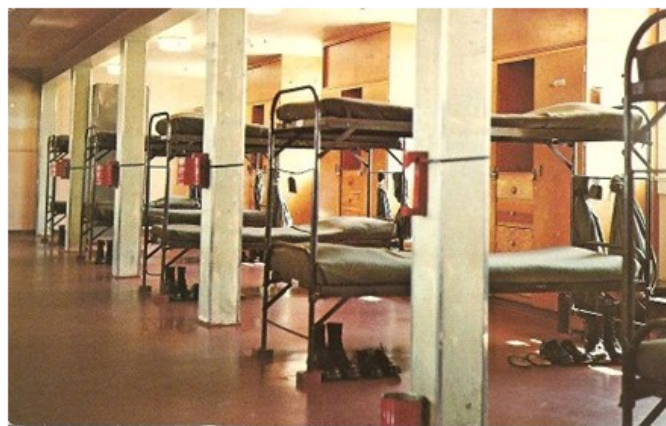
**Wounded VFW Member Testifies:** The Senate Budget Committee hosted a hearing this week to discuss the impact federal budget decisions are having on wounded veterans as they attempt to reintegrate with their communities. Sharing his experience with military and VA benefit programs was retired Marine Cpl. Patrick Murray, a member of VFW Post 3150 in Arlington, Va., who lost a leg to an IED explosion in Iraq.

**VFW Wants New Medal Ranking Lowered:** The Pentagon announced recently a new medal to recognize the direct wartime contributions of service members not physically located in a warzone, like drone pilots. The VFW supports the Distinguished Warfare Medal, but wants it lowered in status below the Bronze Star and Purple Heart in the order of precedence. Said VFW National Commander John Hamilton, "The VFW fully concurs that those far from the fight are having an immediate impact on the battlefield in real-time, but medals that can only be earned in direct combat must mean more than medals awarded in the rear."

**House VA Committee Discusses Mental Health** The House Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing on barriers to VA mental healthcare. Recent reports from both the VA Inspector General and the GAO have identified a number of issues impacting care, specifically, wait times for appointments, inadequate staffing, and other situations where veterans were not receiving timely, quality mental healthcare from the VA. Committees members voiced their frustration and suggested VA begin looking to partner with outside entities in local communities to expand critical mental healthcare to veterans. Panelists explored the need for a non-traditional approach, especially in rural and remote areas where drive times to the VA are an issue.

**VFW Joins MST Press Conference:** VFW joined Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) at a press conference when they introduced legislation to require the VA to fix its disability claims system for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) survivors. The VFW-supported Ruth Moore Act of 2013 relaxes evidentiary standards for tying mental health conditions to an assault, which would make it easier for MST survivors to receive VA benefits. It also requires VA to report MST claim-related information annually to Congress. The House bill, H.R. 671, parallels what the VFW and our three other partners called for in the FY 2014 Independent Budget.

**VA Panel Debates Post 9/11 GI Bill Claims:** House VA Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing recently to review the implementation of VA's computer system used to process Post-9/11 GI Bill claims. Prior to the passage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, Congress authorized \$100 million to develop a new system, called the Long Term Solution or LTS, to fully automate education claims. Witnesses discussed the IT system and the problems that student-veterans face as they try to get real-time information on the status of their benefits. Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill became law, the subcommittee has held about seven hearings on the program. Subcommittee Chairman Bill Flores (R-TX) said "Congress expects the system and the information provided to veterans and schools to be more accessible so that everyone involved can make better-informed decisions on education and training benefits in the future." Student Veterans of America testified on potential improvements to the system and echoed the concerns of the VFW, which works closely with SVA on education issues.



**Military Basic Training Accommodations:** How many of you remember the time spent in Basic Individual Training? Here is a picture that should bring back into focus those sleeping quarters. When in the 1950' & 60's many Army bases that conducted Basic training housed the soldiers in barracks such as pictured here. There were two floors. Each floor housed approx. 50 soldiers. Latrines were shared by all inhabitants with limited space. Every day personal care had to be scheduled in a manner that fit into an already demanding set of daily activities. Everywhere a soldier went he was hurried at double-time. Meals were dispensed in a common mess hall that was used by company size units. Mealtime meant that you could sit down and spend 15 minutes devouring whatever was served; and you enjoyed it!

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**We could learn a lot from crayons.**  
Some are sharp, some are pretty and some are dull. Some have weird names and all are different colors, but they all have to live in the same box.

**Independent Budget Partners Lays Out VA Budget Needs:** The VFW, along with its three Independent Budget (IB) partners—PVA, DAV, and AMVETS—has released what is believed to be the necessary funding for VA to continue to offer consistent high-quality healthcare and services to all eligible veterans, their families, and survivors. The comprehensive budget highlights the needs of older veterans and those young men and women returning from active duty to join civilian life. Funding information is provided after careful review of medical and administrative costs within VA, which form the foundation of the recommendations. The Administration and Congress are expected to release their FY 2014 budget proposals sometime in March. We will continue to update you here as the budget and appropriations cycle moves along in the 113th Congress. We will continue to ask Congress and the Administration to provide sufficient funding to meet the healthcare and benefit needs of veterans in a timely and predictable manner. IB Recommendations for FY 2014 include:

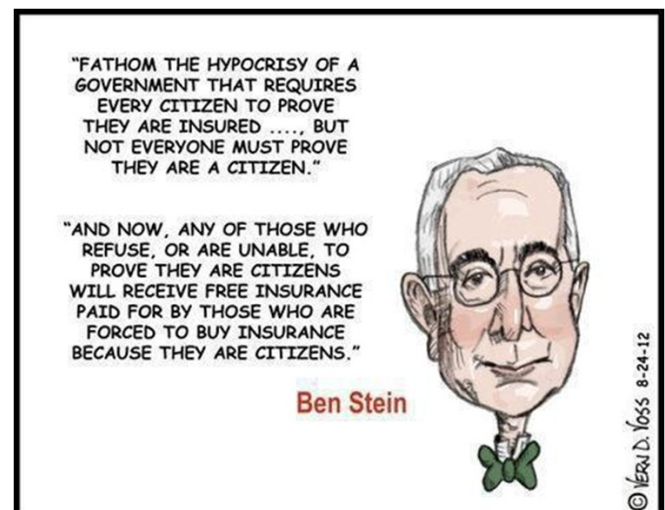
- \$58.8 billion total for healthcare—\$1.3 billion more than what the Administration recommended (\$57.5 billion) in their advance appropriation last year.
- \$2.4 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration—approximately \$226 million more than the expected FY 2013 appropriated level.
- \$2.25 billion for all construction programs—approximately \$900 million more than the expected FY 2013 appropriated level, and well below the true funding needs of construction projects. \$ 611 million for medical and prosthetic research, approximately \$28 million more than the expected FY 2013 appropriated level.

**Amputee Returns to Battlefield:** It's clear from the way Staff Sgt. Brandon Vilt moves around the maintenance bay of Delta Troop, 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Lighthorse, that he has his mission in mind. An OH-58 "Kiowa" helicopter crew chief responsible for the maintenance of the troop's fleet flying to bring the fight to the enemy. "I just want to make sure my guys put out a good, quality product," said Vilt, a Cameron Park, Calif., native. Not only is he responsible for the Soldiers on the maintenance bay floor, but he's also a platoon sergeant. If he's not overseeing the maintenance of Kiowas, he's up in the office loft doing administrative work for his Soldiers. Vilt, who lost his leg during his first deployment to Iraq in 2007, said he decided to deploy a second time with Task Force Lighthorse and Task Force Falcon, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, because he simply loves what he does. He was guarding an entry control point when a truck came barreling through and caused the cement barriers on either side of the road to topple. One fell on him. "All I could think in the moment was, 'Get this thing off of me!'" he said. "It was surreal to be told the leg was gone for good." He underwent surgery and physical therapy at the Bob Wilson Naval Hospital in San Diego, Calif. While there he considered leaving the Army, but his experiences as a squad leader in the Warrior Transition Battalion reminded him of his love for Soldiering -- and helicopters. "I was always in good spirits," he said. "I just thought, 'I got to get back to aviation.'" He did, becoming an advanced individual training instructor in the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va. He arrived at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., in Sept. 2011. Vilt keeps his motivation with a three-step approach: openness, communication, and humor. "I mean, I miss my leg, but I might as well have fun with this one," he said. For Vilt, it always has been and always will be equal parts labor and love. He said. "I love my job. I love working with Soldiers."



Although years after hostilities have abated, the Korean peninsula is not a safe place for soldiers. Soldiers stand watch over the Demilitarized Zone for infiltrators and assist the South Korean Army keep peace. It has been 60 years since the shooting stopped.

**VA Expands Dates of Agent Orange Exposure in Korea from 1968-1969 to 1968-1971:** Veterans who served along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea during the Vietnam War now have an easier path to access health care and benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expanded the dates when illnesses associated with exposure to Agent Orange can be presumed related to their military service. Previously, VA recognized exposure for service between April 1968 and June 1969. VA now presumes exposure for service between April 1968, and August 31, 1971, if a veteran served in a unit determined by VA and Department of Defense top have operated in an area of the DMZ where Agent Orange or other herbicides were applied. The expanded dates took effect on February 24, 2011. The presumption simplifies and speeds the application process for Veterans of the Korean DMZ. VA encourages Veterans who believe they have health problems related to Agent Orange to submit their applications for VA health care and disability compensation benefits. To apply for health care benefits, apply online at [www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez), or contact the nearest VA health care facility at 1-887-222-VETS (8387). To file a claim for disability benefits, apply on line at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov), or contact the nearest VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000. Veterans who served along the Korean DMZ may also be eligible for a free Agent Orange Registry health evaluation.





**Different Heroes:** As they say "better late than never"; this really applies to my tardiness on a follow up of the article I wrote in the August newsletter entitled "My temporary duty in Saigon, South Vietnam". It looks like this will be an intermittent project as I am trying to glean information from my cousin in California and she has been ill lately. This will be an introduction to some people who are truly great Americans and gave selflessly to others during the Vietnam War. While we, and others like us, were busy humping the bush for "Uncle Sam" a dedicated group of civilians were a difference in Vietnamese or-Verda, or "Mac" ately known, living in Saigon phaned children. during WWII ried a Marine Gustavson. Gus mand pilot with as a marine in busy in Saigon making the lives of South phans. My cousin, as she was affection-spent several years and working with or-Mac was a WAVE and eventually mar-pilot, Warren "Gus" flew as a combat com-the Vietnam Air Force '65 and '66. He participated in the landing at Danang from the USS Princeton. Gus served 2 tours in Vietnam and retired from the Marine Corps in 1966. Gus was awarded the Legion of Merit with combat "V", 15 Air Medals, the Distinguished Flying Cross, Navy Commendation Medal with combat "V", the Presidential Unit Citation, and the Navy Unit Commendation. After Vietnam, Gus came back to the states as the S-1 officer at the Marine Corps Air Facility in Santa Ana, CA. where a parade, covered by national TV was held. He was recruited by Air America before he retired and returned to Nam flying missions throughout Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Based out of Saigon, he brought his wife, "Mac" with him and they spent 6 years there; which Mac said "was no walk in the park". She initially had no idea what Air America entailed but quickly found out. When the US Government ordered all civilians out of Vietnam, Gus left Air America and Mac thought they were going to settle down, but it wasn't in Gus' plan. He had another job waiting doing the same thing only this time, he would be flying out of the states piloting "under the radar" flights to Sudan. Gus was a true American hero and, as Mac says "He loved to flirt with danger". In Vietnam, while Gus was busy making his "deliveries" around the war zones, Mac stayed busy accompanying senator's wives around Saigon, being the liaison between the civilian community and the armed forces and, more importantly, working with the unfortunate orphans who were a very real by-product of the war. In my next article, I'll cover more about Mac's role with the orphans and, hopefully, it won't take me as long to myself in gear as it did this time.

Chuck Holdaway

2d Bn. 1st Infantry, 196<sup>th</sup> LIB



**News for Animal Planet Glory Hounds:** If you get *Animal Planet* check out "Glory Hounds", a documentary on *Military Working Dogs* to see how one of our units work. Combat dogs have their day in *Animal Planet's Glory Hounds*, which details relationships between four military working dogs & their handlers in ... Link to an article on MWD: <http://ten100tv.com/category/news/>

### GLORY HOUNDS

8-10 p.m. EST Thursday Animal Planet



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. Thursday will feature a bus trip to Fort Campbell, KY. Friday will highlight a visit to the Tennessee war memorial for 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 and our banquet. See the ADVA Journal or visit our 2/1 website for more details. Hotel reservations may be made on-line or over the telephone. The hotel website can be found at [www.maxwellhousehotel.com](http://www.maxwellhousehotel.com). (Guests can enter the group code 1206AMERIC where prompted.) Guests may call the hotel toll free at (800) 457-4460, Monday through Friday 8am – 5pm CST

*Make reservations and registrations as early as possible .*



## **A Vietnamese Celebration I will not soon Forget:**

In July 2010 Gerry [Bo] Borysiak Bill [Billy Bob] Gregory who is a Vietnam vet Marine who was in mobile artillery and myself went to a welcome home even for all Vietnam vets called LZ Michigan held at the 5th 3rd minor league ball park in Grand Rapids Michigan. There was a large group of South Vietnamese soldiers at this event, Army Navy and Air Force. Navy men were dressed in dress whites and then rest were either in their dress uniforms or starched and pressed fatigues, they all looked parade ready. They could not get enough of talking with us and having their pictures taken with us, in their eyes we were heroes. None of the three of us thought to bring a camera or get any information from them so we could meet and talk again down the road. Ever since then I have been poking around on my computer on occasion trying to find a website to see if they had some sort of association or any other way to get in contact. About three weeks ago I stuck pay dirt with the American Vietnamese Association of Grand Rapids who, as it turns out, were sponsors of LZ Michigan. A couple of phone calls and I talked to a man named Pham who invited me to the Tet celebration on February 10th at a Knights of Columbus hall in Grand Rapids. Bo and Billy bob were unable to attend due to prior plans so I went by myself.

I wore a coat I have with a big dragon on the back and a rocker patch above that says VIETNAM my SSG. stripes CIB and 1st platoon Widow Makers patch to make sure there was no doubt who I was since I had never met Pham in person. As I walked in I realized I was surrounded by about 300 Vietnamese. I saw a man standing by the wall with a suit and tie on with a name tag on the front, his name is Trang, figuring he must be somebody important I introduced myself and asked if he knew where Pham was. He took me to meet Pham who apologized for being too busy to talk much because he was putting on this event. He spoke to Trang in Vietnamese and Trang took me to meet the elders of this association. Trang and the three elders he introduced me to were all South Vietnamese soldiers. They were delighted to have me there and we talked for a few but the conversation was difficult due to the language problems, they did all speak English but not very well. There were three rows of chairs deep enough to seat everybody there, after the conversation Trang lead me by the hand to the center row center seat right in front of the stage. We attempted to talk so more and did get a few things across to each other, he either touched my hand or leg during the conversation. He got up and left and in short order a Vietnamese woman named Minney came over and sat next to me and explained she was asked to keep me company for awhile. She spoke perfect English and looked to be in her late 30s or early 40s, she must have been born here or moved here at a early age. She went and got some food which was dough rolled over and stuffed, she said they told her there was meat in the center. It tasted good but for the next 20 minutes my breath smelled like something crawled in my mouth and died. Soon after that a man named Hung came over and sat with me, he told me they had called him at home and told him I was there. He was a South Vietnamese pilot trained in the US in Texas and spoke very good English, he either touched my hand or had his hand on my leg during conversation and he spent the rest of my time there sitting next to me, told me when to sit and when to stand during the ceremony.

Prior to the ceremony and very pretty Vietnamese girl in her 20s was going thru the 2nd row of seats to my left taking names of the dignitaries, she eventually worked her way over to Minnie. When she walked past me Hung grabbed her hand and pointed at me. She sat down next to me, spoke perfect English, and took down my name address phone number and email address so that I could be invited to future events.

Above the stage was a large south Vietnamese flag and there was and American flag sitting to the right of the stage another South Vietnamese flag on the left with some traditional Vietnamese items in the center. Pham got up on stage spoke in Vietnamese for a few minutes then English. He spoke of how proud we all are of our country and he was talking about the US, all these people are US citizens and did it the hard way. Then he began introducing the dignitaries, each stood and waved at the crowd. When he got to Minney, who is the president of an association and lives just 9 miles from me, I figured he was done. About then Hung tapped me on the leg told me to stand up and wave at the crowd. I was introduced as Staff Sgt. Bruce Nielsen who left his family his home and his country to fight for the freedom of our country. I got a standing "O" and was overwhelmed. I was pretty much overwhelmed by how these people took care of me, how gracious they were to me and how much I was thanked during the entire affair.

After this Pham was done talking and a Vietnamese girl, who could not have been much over 16, came up to the microphone and sang the national anthem [Hung told me to stand up] with a voice 10 times as big as she was. Best rendition I have heard in years, none of the stylistic crap the rock stars all try and do. Everybody was standing with their hands on their hearts and by the time she was finished I had tears running down my face.

A very amazing dragon dance took place after that with some high school age kids, two each one big one small, inside very elaborate dragon costumes. A lot of this was synchronized and they could not see the other dragon next to them due to the costumes, they must have practiced this for hours, they could even switch places inside the costumes and stretch the dragon up to the ceiling with one kid on the other's shoulders of knee. This lasted about 45 minutes and was a very physical effort to say the least.

After that I said my goodbyes after collecting a couple of email addresses. I kept on trying to say thank you, they kept saying no, we thank you. Pham was still busy on stage but I gave him a big thumbs up and waved goodbye. I think he is too young to have been in the military but it's hard to tell. Said goodbye to the girl who took down my information and she hugged me and thanked me for leaving my home country and family to come fight for the freedom of South Vietnam. Overwhelmed once again. I have received emails from Pham Trang and Hung since the event, I think they have a South Vietnamese Army association, I will be invited to the next time they have another celebration.