



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



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Volume 3

*"A Soldier's Footsteps"*

May 2013

**Commander's Corner:** **SEX, Drugs and Rock and Roll!** I just finished spending a few days with a buddy of mine that is writing a book and he gave me a tip on writing: you need to capture the attention of your readers as soon as possible. Now that I have your attention, I just have a couple of things to say; especially after having to come up with a column each month for about the last 20 months. I'm running out of words! Of major importance is in regards to the health of one of our officers who has served our chapter with the same valor he exhibited as our brother-in-arms. He has carried out his duties to the chapter faithfully during his tenure and for the past few months, even though his health has made it very difficult for him, has continued to persevere. I'm talking about our secretary/treasurer, Don Hicks. Don has requested he be able to relinquish his post as it has become increasingly difficult for him due to his illness. His health seems to be improving and we all wish him well. Don seems willing to keep things going for a while and we'd like to start accepting volunteers/nominees for the post of Secretary/Treasurer to be voted on at the annual chapter meeting at Nashville. The duties include receiving and processing new member applications, receiving dues payments and applying them to the correct member, overseeing the annual dues collection, mailing out membership cards, maintenance of the chapter checking account, and payment of chapter expenses when incurred. I'm sure I've missed something but, that's the general idea. All documents regarding the above are done with Microsoft Excel so, some basic knowledge of the application is required although, expertise in it is not. Help will be available for whom ever takes over the job. Please contact any of the officers if you want to volunteer for nomination or nominate someone. Our newest member is Michael Schmid, Bravo Company, '69-'70. Welcome Mike!

**K** *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.

**L** **ooking 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.

**Don't judge each day be the harvest you  
reap but by the seeds that you plant.**

**Three MIAs Identified:** The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office recently announced the identification of remains belong to three soldiers who have been unaccounted-for since World War II and Korean War. Identified and returned home are: Army personnel from World War II and the Korean War. Returned home are:

- Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Ray E. Thompson, of Portland, Ore. On May 7, 1944, Thompson was a crewmember of a B-24D Liberator that departed Nadzab, New Guinea, on a bombing mission. Due to mechanical troubles, the aircraft departed late and was unable to join the formation after takeoff. Neither the aircraft nor 10-man crew were seen again.
- Army Master Sgt. Earnest W. Grainger, 28, of Conway, S.C. In early July 1950, Grainger, and elements of the 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, were deployed along the Kum River in western South Korea when North Korean forces struck and overran their positions. During this attack, Grainger was reported missing near the town of Chochiwon.
- Army Lt. Col. Don C. Faith, Jr., 35, of Washington, Ind. In late 1950, Faith's 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, which was attached to the 31st Regimental Combat Team, was advancing along the eastern side of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea when Chinese forces encircled and attempted to overrun their positions. As the battle continued, the 31st RCT, which came to be known as "Task Force Faith," was forced to withdraw to a more defensible position. Faith would be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions.



**D** **ecoration Day:** "Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, nor ravage of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations, that we have forgotten, as a people, the cost of a free and undivided republic." Words proclaimed by John A. Logan, Union Army general and commander in chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, issuing General Order No. 11, which established May 30 as an annual date "for the purpose of strewing flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in the defense of their country." First called Decoration Day, it later became Memorial Day.

**Brick Campaign Helps Build Army Museum:** The Army Historical Foundation (AHF) has launched a brick campaign to support the building of the National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, VA. Available in two sizes - @250 for a 4x8, \$500 for 8x8- bricks can be personalized to honor individual soldiers, Army veterans and Department of the Army civilians. They'll be installed on the Path of Remembrance, a walkway leading visitors to the museum. Full-size and miniature replicas of the inscribed bricks are also available at an additional cost. Ordering brick information can be found at [www.armyhistory.org/bricks](http://www.armyhistory.org/bricks).

**Help Complete Your Health Record:** According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, seven out of 10 veterans and service members obtain services from private healthcare providers, which makes it difficult for the VA and Defense Department to maintain a complete record of a patient's healthcare. That's why VA and DOD actively participate in the eHealth Exchange. Formerly known as the Nationwide Health Information Network, the eHealth Exchange is a partnership between 38 public and private organizations that, with a patient's permission, securely share health information. With the recent addition of the Idaho Health Information Exchange, VA is currently exchanging data with 14 regional private sector partners. As the eHealth Exchange network continues to grow, VA and DOD plan to expand their health information sharing programs into additional regions of the U.S.

**Drone Medal Cancelled:** Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel cancelled the highly unpopular Distinguished Warfare Medal. Instead, the Pentagon will create a new device to affix to existing medals to properly recognize drone operators, cyber warriors and others who are making a tremendous real-time impact on battlefields far away. The VFW, which immediately began an intense media and grassroots lobbying effort against the 9th-place ranking of the new medal on the military order of precedence, is appreciative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their review, and commends Secretary Hagel for taking on the issue so early in his tenure. VFW National Commander John Hamilton called it the right decision, which will clearly keep medals that can only be earned in combat in their high order of precedence, while providing proper recognition to all who support our warfighters regardless of their distance from the fight.

**A Million Claims a Year:** That is the number of claims that have been processed each year during the past three years. The problem is that more claims are coming in. This year there will be about 1.2 million claims coming in and about a million being processed. The backlog is growing by 200,000. The Veterans Administration efforts have been outpaced by new claims filings in each of the three years, further compounding the backlog. "Whatever the reason", Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, Bernie Sanders, said "we remain deeply committed to work with the Veterans Administration on cleaning up the claims backlog."

**Seventy-Four (74) percent Veterans:** The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) hires the highest number of employees who are veterans. This is the most of any federal agency. Included in the 74% of employees are 406 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. This is according to the NAC officials.

**VA Priority Groups for Healthcare:** Since funding from Congress is limited, the VA has set up eight priority groups to make sure that certain groups of veterans are enrolled before others. A veterans is assigned a priority group based on eligibility status with one being the highest and eight being the lowest. The following identifies the group:

**Priority Group 1;** Veterans with 50 % or higher service-connected disability rating and/or determine VA to be unemployable.

**Priority Group 2;** Veterans with service-connected ratings at 30 or 40 %.

**Priority Group 3;** POWs Purple Heart recipients and veterans who were discharged for disabilities incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, service-connected at 10 or 20 % and receiving benefits under 38 U.S. Code 1151 or vocational rehabilitation.

**Priority Group 4;** Veterans in receipt of compensation or pension at housebound or aid-and-attendance rates, as well as veterans determined by the VA to be catastrophically disabled.

**Priority Group 5;** Non-service connected veterans and non-compensable service-connected veterans rated at 0% and with a net worth not greater than VA financial thresholds, and veterans receiving pension benefits or eligible for Medicaid.

**Priority Group 6;** Veterans who are 0% service-connected, were exposed to ionizing radiation, served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, served in a combat theater after Nov. 11, 1998, or were discharged on or after Jan. 28, 2003 (for a period of five years after that discharge).

**Priority Group 7;** Veterans who have incomes below the geographically adjusted threshold for their resident locations, and agree to pay co-pays.

**Priority Group 8;** Veterans with gross household incomes above the VA national threshold who agree to pay co-pays.

If you do not belong to one of these groups, see your local VA medical center eligibility advisor for other options. You may also use a Priority Group 8 calculator at [www.military.com/contentfiles/priority-group-8-enrollment-calculator.html](http://www.military.com/contentfiles/priority-group-8-enrollment-calculator.html).



**BURMA SHAVE SIGN: DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD TO GAIN A MINUTE YOU NEED YOUR HEAD YOUR BRAINS ARE IN IT**



**Vision Benefits – Savings You Can See:** Vision impairment is one of the most feared of all disabilities. Although it is believed that half of all blindness can be prevented, the number of people in America who suffer from vision loss continues to grow. According to the provisional from the National Health Interview Survey, 21.5 million American adults age 18 or older reported experiencing vision loss. The leading causes of vision impairment and blindness in the United States are primarily age-related eye diseases. The number of Americans at risk for age-related eye diseases is increasing as the baby boomer generation ages. These conditions, including age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma, affect more Americans than ever before. Disturbingly, the number of Americans with age-related eye disease and the vision impairment that results is expected to double within the next three decades.

**Why More Veterans Choose Cremation Societies:** Almost 50% of people in the United States will choose cremation for their final needs, with a higher percent on the coastlines and less in the heartland. That percentage is expected to continue to increase annually well into the future. Cremation can be combined with traditional funeral or memorial services as well as offer cemetery and interment options. Those choosing cremation for their final needs can make arrangements with a local funeral home or a specialized funeral home that handles cremation only. For veterans, the decision to have a direct cremation may be a cost effective option that offers simplicity. And in reality, since every veteran is entitled to have a military funeral service with honors, when planned correctly, their memorial service at graveside is a very dignified way to honor themselves. And the veteran can plan cremation services in advance with a cremation society. Paying in advance can offer several benefits for families, such as locking in the cost of the services.



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. See the ADVA Journal or visit our 2/1 website for more details.

**Did You Know?:** A Congressional review concludes that doing away with the dollar bill and replacing it with a dollar coin could save taxpayers \$4.4 billion over the next three decades. Associated Press reports, The projected savings relate to how long coins and bills stay in circulation. A coin can stay in circulation for 30 years, while a bill's lifespan is just four or five years on average. The problem is that Americans don't like dollar coins."In the past five years, the U.S. Mint has produced 2.4 billion presidential \$1 coins. Most are stored by the Federal Reserve, and production was suspended about a year ago," according to the AP.

**Army Leadership Set to Pick New Camo Pattern:** The U.S. Army's top leadership recently held a closed-door meeting that's likely to result in the selection of the service's next official camouflage pattern. Army officials briefed Army Secretary John McHugh on Chief of Staff Ray Odierno's recommended replacement for the Army's current Universal Camouflage Pattern. Nearly four years ago, the Army launched its



exhaustive Phase IV camouflage improvement plan to find a replacement for the UCP, a pixelated pattern known for its poor performance in Afghanistan. Uniform experts and scientists have been evaluating a handful of patterns that emerged from the massive effort. The Army awarded developmental contracts to four vendors in early 2012 to Crye Precision, ADS, Inc., teamed with Hyperstealth, Inc., of Virginia Beach, Va.; Brookwood Companies, Inc of New York; and Kryptek, Inc. of Fairbanks, Alaska. Equipment officials briefed Odierno in April on the results of the effort. Details are still close-hold, but there was no definitive winner -- meaning that none of the four patterns clearly outperformed one another through all the test environments, said a source familiar with the results. One finding was clear though -- UCP is not an option for future Army use, the source said. Although MultiCam is issued to soldiers deploying to Afghanistan, UCP is still the Army's standard issue Army Combat Uniform.

**Wal-mart will offer a job to any honorably discharged Veteran:** "For our troops returning home, Wal-mart has a pledge. Starting Memorial Day, Wal-Mart will offer a job to any honorably discharged Veteran. With a goal of 100,000 jobs over the next five years". One stipulation was listed: "Veterans must be within twelve months of active duty and meet their standard hiring criteria". I hope you can get the word out. For more info see: [www.Walmartcareerswithamission.com](http://www.Walmartcareerswithamission.com)

**FOR THOSE WHO FOUGHT FOR IT - FREEDOM HAS A FLAVOR THE PROTECTED WILL NEVER KNOW.**

**Base May Lose 8,000 Soldiers:** Under an Army downsizing plan, Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) may lose up to 8,000 soldiers, as well as civilians who support those troops, during the next four years, according to Lt. Gen. Robert Brown, commander of the base's I Corps. In a recent meeting with leaders of nearby communities, Brown said no final decisions on the cuts are expected to be made until sometime in the summer. It's still possible that Lewis-McChord could be spared any cuts. "There are several courses of action," Brown said. "Nothing has been decided." The budget reductions come after a period of a major expansion at this joint Army and Air Force installation. During the post-9/11 period, Joint Base Lewis-McChord added 19,528 Army soldiers, to reach the current level of more than 47,900 active-duty personnel. The base also employs more than 15,800 civilians. Base officials say that base spending generates some \$6 billion a year. Some 70 percent of military personnel live off-base. Brown said the upcoming downsizing is separate from more immediate Army cuts this year in training and other activities required to meet budget reductions taking place under the congressional agreement known as sequestration. Under the Army's long-term plan, active-duty personnel will be cut from the current strength of about 540,000 soldiers to 490,000 by 2017.

**US Troops to Jordan Could Jump to 20,000:** The Pentagon will send some 200 U.S. soldiers to Jordan to control spillover violence from the Syrian civil war, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel told the Senate. But the troops, near Jordan's border with Syria, could be the forerunner of 20,000 or more U.S. troops deployed if the Obama administration decides to intervene in the 2-year-old civil war, senior U.S. officials told the Los Angeles Times. The 200 or so troops from the 1st Armored Division at Fort Bliss, Texas, will work alongside Jordanian forces to "improve readiness and prepare for a number of scenarios," Hagel told the Senate Armed Services Committee. Those scenarios could include securing chemical weapons arsenals or to prevent the war from spilling into neighboring countries, he said. But the Pentagon has drawn up plans to possibly expand the force to 20,000 or more, the officials told the Times. These forces could include special operations teams to find and secure Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles, U.S. air defense units to protect Jordan's airspace and conventional military units capable of moving into Syria if necessary, the Times said.

**Doolittle Raiders Hold Final Reunion:** At 97, retired Lt. Col. Richard Cole can still fly and land a vintage B-25 with a wide grin and a wave out the cockpit window to amazed onlookers. David Thatcher, 91, charms admiring World War II history buffs with detailed accounts of his part in the 1942 Doolittle Raid on Tokyo, in which he earned a Silver Star. Retired Lt. Col. Edward Saylor, 93, still gets loud laughs from crowds for his one liners about the historic bombing raid 71 years ago Wednesday that helped to boost a wounded nation's morale in the aftermath of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Cole, Thatcher and Saylor - three of the four surviving crew members from the history-making bombing run - are at Eglin Air Force Base in the Florida Panhandle for a final public reunion of the Doolittle Raiders. They decided to meet at Eglin because it is where they trained for their top-secret mission in the winter of 1942, just weeks after the Japanese devastated the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. The fourth surviving raider, 93-year-old Robert Hite, could not make the event.

**SOCOM Works to Expand Roles for Women:** U.S. Special Operations Command leaders are refining a plan to expand roles for women among their ranks, allowing them to participate as Navy SEALs, Army Rangers and other Special Forces units, service officials told lawmakers April 17. SOCOM Commander Adm. William McRaven told members of a House Armed Services subcommittee that he is planning to provide an update to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in May on the command's work to formulate a specific plan to include women in special operations forces, giving them expanded roles beyond serving as cultural liaisons and other non-combat positions. "We're building a plan to do that, looking at doctrine, training and deployment. I've got to find out whether we can pull that off -- because I am committed to doing that and have seen the value," McRaven said. The SOCOM commander is required to issue a full report on a plan to integrate women by the first quarter of fiscal 2016, McRaven said in January, the same month that the military rescinded the policy to exclude women from direct combat positions. Further integrating women into SOCOM units is part of a larger transition the special forces community is making with the planned withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. SOCOM leaders told lawmakers that their forces are again evaluating the scope of their mission sets on the heels of a 10-year counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency focus in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**VA Silent on Exec Bonuses for Manipulated Data:** A year after testifying that some executives received bonuses by manipulating appointment data for veterans needing mental health care, a former Department of Veterans Affairs hospital administrator said officials have avoided the issue "like the plague." "They avoid it with a 10-foot pole," Nicholas Tolentino said during a telephone interview. Last April, Tolentino, a former mental health administrator at the Manchester VA Medical Center in New Hampshire, told lawmakers that VA hospital officials across the country talked to each other to find workarounds to meet VA appointment goals. The overriding objective, "from top management on down, was to meet our numbers" and make it appear as if the VA was seeing as many veterans as possible, he said. Meeting those goals was linked to bonuses for executive career employees, he said. This created "a perverse administrative incentive" for officials to exploit loopholes to meet manufactured goals without providing the services. The upshot of these all too widespread practices is that meeting a performance target, rather than meeting the needs of the veteran, becomes the overriding priority in providing care," he testified. Tolentino told the Senate that VA officials from across the country discussed ways to get around the system. "That's one of the reasons I left," he said. "Not only because of the fraud. They were gaming the entire system and profiting off it. I left before I got a bonus. I didn't feel right taking [one]." Tolentino, who in the Navy worked in patient care as an independent duty hospital corpsman, is now studying nursing in Boston. Overall, the VA paid out about \$194 million in bonuses in 2011, according to testimony during the hearing.

**"The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government."**

Thomas Jefferson

## MORE FROM MY VIETNAMESE ASSOCIATION

On Sunday April 21st I went to another function with the Vietnamese Association of Grand Rapids guys their wives and kids who I have written to all of you about once before. There are lots of South Vietnamese soldiers involved in this organization and it is somewhat equivalent to our Americal division association but maybe a bit smaller since it is just for the city of Grand Rapids Michigan. My good friend Bill "Billy Bob" Gregory who is a Marine Vietnam vet was able to go with me this time, if you read about my last trip to see these people you know he missed that one. We met one other GI grunt at this affair, his name was Bill, we never got around to last names. I felt better about the odds this time, only about 150 to 3, Bill looked a bit older than he should have looked. I asked Bill when he was in Vietnam and he said he had joined the Army in 1948 and did one 12 month tour in Korea prior to 3 tours in Vietnam. He said Korea was God awful and that he lost a lot of guys there had no winter gear and it was just plain terrible. Some where along the line somebody decided he should be in Special Forces so that's what he did in Vietnam, said he spent lots of time in Cambodia and Laos. Great guy with some interesting stories from 30 some years in the U.S Army, retired a Master Sgt.

Ok, this get together was for the Hung Kings Temple Festival or Gio To Hung Vurong in Vietnamese just in case ya wanted to know. The Hung Kings are the founding fathers of Vietnam. Didn't know any of this but learned along the way thanks to some of the guys I met at the Tet celebration. At the Tet celebration I met Pham Trang Hung and Mike, that's right Mike? I have yet to explore how he got that name but I just gotta find out one of these days. Not sure if Pham was in the military or not but he looks too young to me to have been. Trang was South Vietnamese Army Hung flew Dragon Flys and was trained in Texas and Mike was in the Navy on a boat of some kind that I have yet to learn about in the rivers of the southern part of Vietnam.

1st guy I saw when we arrived was Trang who was the last guy I saw when I left the Tet celebration, he was outside the building having a smoke and remembered my car when me and Billy Bob drove in. Talked with him for a minute or so and ran into Mike who took us inside and of course gave us front row seats for the big event. By the way all the guys I have mentioned are the higher ups of this organization. The entire time we were there we had somebody with us who spoke good English to let us know what was going on when to stand up when to salute etc. Either Mike or Hung was with the three of us the entire time. The big ceremony was much the same as the Tet celebration and lasted about an hour. Hung was involved in that with several other South Vietnamese military who carried in the American flag and the South Vietnamese flag and all were in full uniform. Mike stood by the end of our row of seats for the entire hour to let us know what was going on every now and then. He also went and got us some water. The Bill who was in Special Forces understood what was going on and did not have to be told. We were also all asked to stand up and be introduced to the crowd who gave us a standing "O" same same as at the Tet celebration.

After all this it was time to eat Vietnamese food, Mike insisted we eat and put us in line ahead of everybody, all 150 or so of them. This was like an American pot luck only for about 150 to 200 people and Vietnamese woman were serving. The food was like usual, smelled terrible but tasted pretty good. Mike was at the end of the food line passing out Budweiser beer, just past Mike was a Vietnamese woman in a nice business suit who told us to just go back and sit where you were. There were tables set up by the time we got back, they were very organized to feed that many people.

All in all a great and interesting time, these are one gracious race of people who took care of the three of us far better than we deserve. The office of the Vietnamese American Association of Grand Rapids is in the same building we were in and we have been invited back to just sit and talk without all the noise and commotion going on. We have not been able to really get into some good ole war stories, find out what these guys did and tell them what we did but we are gonna do that sooner or later.

Bruce " Nelson" Nielsen