



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



WEBSITE: www.b-2-1-196lib.com

Volume 4

"A Soldier Once... And Always"

June 2014

Commanders Corner: JUNE? You have to be kidding me! Time sure flies when you get my age. It's hard to believe I'll turn 70 this year; it seems just like yesterday I turned 69. The good thing is I'm still pretty healthy but, the bad thing is, sometimes, I still think I have a 20 year old body. But, more often than not the stark realization sets in and I discover I have a 20 year old mind instead. Today, I'm suffering the aches and pains in the aftermath of digging up some drainage pipe and fixing it and power washing all the visible concrete within what seemed like a hundred mile radius. While sitting sedentarily in my recliner applying some liniment, I reflected on just how lucky I am to be able to be in the position to do what I can still do. Memorial Day has a special meaning to me because it reminds me of just how many of our brave "young" men and women were lost in the service of our country. Most of them never had the chance to enjoy reaching middle (or in my case, old) age. These heroes and heroines lost the potentially best years of their lives through the sacrifice they made for all of us.

I spent Memorial Day weekend hanging out with several friends and attending the Indy 500. As usual, my good buddy from B 2/1, Bruce Nielsen, came down for the festivities like he has for the past 25 years or so. This year however, for some reason, the memorial presentations at the race seemed to touch me more than other years. During the ceremonies commemorating our fallen heroes, it seemed quieter and more reverent than in past years: I wondered "are people finally putting our war dead in the proper perspective after all the years of passiveness?" "Did Iraq and Afghanistan do this? There sure wasn't this much reverence and respect for several years after Vietnam!" Well, anyway, I'm happy about it and I hope it continues and our war dead receive the respect they deserve from here to eternity. The invocation, the playing of "Taps" and the "Star Spangled Banner" were especially touching this year and the flyover of jets by 4 precision pilots was awesome. Another thing that struck me for the first time in years was Jim Nabors singing "Back Home In Indiana". I was thinking, no matter what state one hails from, it was awesome to finally make it back home from "across the pond"; so many of our comrades didn't and we should be forever grateful for their sacrifices and for being able to share a part of their lives when we were together in the worst/best years of our lives. I sincerely hope you all enjoyed the holiday weekend and were able to get together with your friends and loved ones; and, above all, remembered our fallen friends/heroes. Bless all of them and all of you as we go forward in our waning years of life. Never forget them!

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



Seven POW/MIAs Identified: The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to:

- * Army Sgt. Richard John Archambeault, Company L, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, was lost on Nov. 2, 1950, in North Korea. He was accounted for on April 29 and will be buried with full military honors.

- * Army Cpl. Richard Isbell, Company H, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, was lost on April 25, 1951, in South Korea. He was accounted for on April 17, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors.

- * Army Cpl. William N. Bonner, Medical Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, was lost on May 31, 1951, in North Korea. He was accounted for on April 22 and will be buried with full military honors in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

- * Air Force Capt. Douglas D. Ferguson, 24, of Tacoma, Wash., was buried May 2 in Lakewood, Wash. On Dec. 30, 1969, Ferguson was on an armed reconnaissance mission when his F-4D Phantom II aircraft crashed in Houaphan Province, Laos.

- * Army Cpl. Lucio R. Aguilar, Company M, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, was lost on Nov. 28, 1950, in North Korea. He was accounted for on May 6 and will be buried with full military honors in Corpus Christi, Texas.

- * Marine Corps Cpl. Harold W. Reed, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, was lost on Nov. 29, 1950. He was accounted for on April 22 and was buried with full military honors on May 24 in Toledo, Ohio.

- * Army Pfc. James R. Holmes, 18, of Warren, Ohio, who will be buried May 29 in Arlington National Cemetery. On Dec. 1, 1950, Holmes was declared missing in action as his unit, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, pushed through North Korea to the Yalu River. As part of a 1953 prisoner exchange, returning U.S. service members reported that Holmes had been captured by the Chinese, but died in captivity in 1951.

New Medal of Honor Recipient Named: The president will present the Medal of Honor to retired Marine Corps Cpl. William "Kyle" Carpenter in a White House ceremony on June 19. Carpenter was medically retired due to wounds received covering a grenade on Nov. 21, 2010, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was assigned to Company F, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, and will become the eighth living and 15th overall recipient of the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq or Afghanistan. The 24-year-old is currently a full-time student at the University of South Carolina.

PASSING SCHOOL ZONE
TAKE IT SLOW
LET OUR LITTLE
SHAVERS GROW
Burma Shave



House Passes Bill with Pay Raise Intact: The U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$601 billion defense bill that would spare cuts to military benefits next year, despite a veto threat from the White House and major areas of disagreement in the Senate. The House voted 325-98 in approving its version of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, which sets policy goals and spending targets for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. The bill would give troops, with the exception of general and flag officers, a 1.8 percent pay raise.

Army Veteran Gets Citizenship He Thought He Had: After decades of slipping through the cracks, Mario Hernandez, who came to the United States when he was 9, served in the U.S. Army and spent 22 years in the federal prison system, finally received something he thought he already had. American citizenship.

Hernandez, who lives in Tallahassee, was at the U.S. immigration office in Jacksonville on Wednesday to reverse denials he'd been served during an earlier attempt at getting his citizenship. "The last time I walked in here, I was treated like dirt," he said while waiting for his case to be called. By 1:30 p.m. his oath of citizenship had been administered in a cobbled-together ceremony at the Southside office. "I couldn't be happier," he said. His first act, he said, will be to get his voter registration card in Tallahassee. "This is the only country I've known and I am very proud," he said. A 9-year-old in 1965 when he came here from Cuba with his mother and three sisters, Hernandez was allowed to stay under the Cuban Adjustment Act. He was eligible for a green card a year later and citizenship five years after that, but no one in his family ever applied for those documents. He was given a Social Security card in California when an employer helped him apply for one, he said. When he joined the Army, he took what he believed was an oath of citizenship. After a three-year stint, he went on to work and never left the country. He has paid taxes throughout his life and has no criminal record, his attorney said. It wasn't until after he retired and decided to go on a cruise with his wife, Bonita, that he learned he needed a passport. He had no paperwork proving his citizenship. The application was denied. It should have been granted. When he joined the Army in 1975, the Vietnam War was still in what was considered a "designated period of hostility." That factor qualified Hernandez for citizenship, but the immigration service denied his application in March. His attorney appealed and two continuances followed.

Eight U.S. Army Air Forces personnel to receive the POW Medal: Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III will present the Prisoner of War Medal to eight World War II era U.S. Army Air Forces personnel during a ceremony at the Pentagon auditorium. The Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James authorized the award of the POW Medal to 143 USAAF airmen who were interned in the Wauwilermoos, Switzerland, prison camp during World War II. Eight recipients, listed below, will travel to the Pentagon to receive the award:

Lieutenant Colonel (retired) James I. Misuraca
Major (retired) James V. Moran
First Lieutenant Paul J. Gambaiana
First Lieutenant James F. Mahon
Technical Sergeant Alva H. Moss
Staff Sergeant John M. Fox
Sergeant William G. Blackburn
Sergeant George E. Thursby

We started a new feature in last months Newsletter. To date no other story to print has been received. Please send your entry to the Editor, 2/1 Newsletter either by email rheroux1@nc.rr.com, or by snail mail at 2005 Montgomery Road, Franklinton, NC 27525. In any case we can not over emphasize these articles contain historical value for all of us.

It was in mid-July of 69 and our unit was on an island. We had been in contact during the day pushing the NVA as hard as we could. Things were quiet and my scrambler carrier and I decided to dig a GOOD fox hole. We placed our radios near the hole and set back to eat and relax a bit before guard duty. All of a sudden we started getting mortars so I headed for the fox hole I was the third one in because I got my radio as I fell into the fox hole and started calling headquarters that we were receiving mortar fire and to crank up the artillery. Several others fell on top of me and I felt a stream of blood hitting me in the face from someone above me. I told the ones above me that one of them was hit. After the mortars stopped we started checking everyone out for wounds. No one was hit but the guy that fell on top of me had a busted nose where he hit my radio.

Don Hicks (RTO)

Army Begins Equipping Soldiers with M4A1s: The U.S. Army recently started converting the first of a half million M4 carbines into M4A1s. Army weapons officials are performing 3,000 M4/M4A1 conversions for the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kan. The service decided to replace the M4 with the M4A1 version, wrapping up a five-year effort to search for a better individual weapon for soldiers. Last June, the Army formally concluding its Individual Carbine competition without selecting a winner to replace the M4 Carbine. None of the carbines evaluated during the testing phase of the competition met the minimum scoring requirement needed to continue to the third and final phase of the evaluation, weapons officials said. The Army never released any of the test data that showed how test guns from Heckler & Koch, FNH-USA, Remington Defense, Adcor Defense Inc. and Colt Defense LLC performed in the competition. The decision to convert the service's 500,000 M4s into M4A1s by 2020 will give soldiers features such as a heavier barrel, an ambidextrous selector switch and a full-auto trigger. The Army's decision to dump the current three-round burst trigger will give shooters a more consistent trigger pull and lead to better accuracy, weapons officials maintain.



U.S. Special Operations Command: SOC soldiers have used the M4A1 configuration since 1994. Program Executive Office Soldiers officials praised the M4 and M4A1 for its reliability. The M4 and M4A1 will fire "58 basic loads mean rounds between stoppages," PEO Command Sgt. Major. Doug Maddi told reporters May 21. "A basic load is 210 rounds; you can do the math." Ok so I did the math and 58 basic loads equals 12,180 mean rounds between stoppages. I would really like to see the data from that test since the Army's requirement for the M4/M4A1 is about 6,000 mean rounds between stoppages. The M4A1 gives soldiers a better weapon than soldiers had with the M4, and that's all that matters". Army weapons officials said they are also looking at future improvements such as an extended rail system, a match trigger and a suppressor.

White House Mistakenly Reveals CIA Official's Name: In an embarrassing flub, the Obama administration accidentally revealed the name of the CIA's top official in Afghanistan in an email to thousands of journalists during the president's surprise Memorial Day weekend trip to Bagram Air Field. The officer's name — identified as "chief of station" in Kabul — was included by U.S. embassy staff on a list of 15 senior American officials who met with President Obama during the Saturday visit. The list was sent to a Washington Post reporter who was representing the news media, who then sent it out to the White House "press pool" list, which contains as many as 6,000 recipients. The Associated Press is withholding the officer's name at the request of the Obama administration, who said its publication could put his life and those of his family members in danger. A Google search appears to reveal the name of the officer's wife and other personal details.

VA Says Wrongdoing Not Yet Verified: The acting inspector general for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Richard Griffin, said at a recent Senate hearing that no evidence had been found so far of patient deaths attributed to long wait times at the Phoenix VA Health Care System. Whistleblowers and the House Committee on Veterans Affairs have said as many as 40 veterans might have died while waiting for appointments at the Phoenix system. Griffin's office has already reviewed 17 of these cases and has not found a single instance of a patient death because of excessive wait time. Testimonies, statements, and a video of the hearing are available on the [U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs website](#).

VFW Reacts to Shinseki's Resignation: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States said the resignation of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki is in the best interests of the nation's veterans. "The VFW was the first major veterans organization to call for an independent investigation and, if warranted, for the dismissal and criminal prosecution of those employees involved with gaming the system," said William A. Thien, National Commander of the 1.9 million-member VFW and its Auxiliaries. "Throughout the political firestorm of the past several weeks, the VFW remained steadfast in supporting an independent investigation and calling for full accountability in this matter—especially for those in Congress, who for years have turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to the concerns of America's Veteran Service Organizations. "Change will not come easy to the VA, but change it must, and the VFW will absolutely be part of its evolution, just as we were in the years leading up to and after we helped to create it," said Thien. "The new secretary will inherit a host of ongoing challenges, but he or she must immediately identify and fix what's broken, to hold people accountable to the maximum extent of the law, and to do whatever is necessary to help restore the full faith and confidence of veterans in their VA," he said. "Members of Congress have an equal responsibility to put their individual political agendas aside and do what they were elected to do. The VFW will never tolerate politics as usual when it comes to the proper care and treatment of our nation's heroes.

"Secretary Shinseki is an American patriot, an honorable man whose personal integrity and commitment to duty and to others is above reproach," said the VFW national commander. "We support his decision to resign, because the outside calls for his resignation were overshadowing the crisis in healthcare issues veterans face, and that is what's most important."

Army Selects New Camouflage Pattern: The U.S. Army is quietly putting the word out to commands that it is replacing its current Universal Camouflage Pattern with a pattern the service has owned for more than a decade. The Army's senior leadership has selected Scorpion, a pattern similar to MultiCam that was developed around 2002, according to a source with knowledge of the decision. Sgt. Major of the Army Raymond Chandler III has been briefing senior sergeants major throughout the Army about the new pattern for the Army Combat Uniform, but details are still limited. The Army was poised to announce the results of its multi-year camouflage improvement effort nearly a year ago, but congressional language in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal 2014 called on the Pentagon to put an end to the services branding their ranks with unique camouflage uniforms. The Army has been considering replacing UCP with Crye Precision's MultiCam -- a pattern that has demonstrated consistent performance in multiple tests and was selected in 2010 for soldiers to wear in Afghanistan. Army officials even tried to buy the rights to MultiCam but rejected Crye's figure of \$25 million, according to Caleb Crye, owner of Crye Precision. Army officials also balked at paying for "printing fees" the company receives on MultiCam -- a small figure that amounts to about one percent of the 20 percent price hike uniform companies want to charge the Army for MultiCam, according to Crye. In addition to Crye, the other finalists in the Army's Phase IV camouflage testing included ADS Inc., teamed with Hyperstealth, Inc.; Brookwood Companies Inc.; and Kryptek Inc. And, ironically, in March 2013 the Army decided to drop the fifth finalist -- a government pattern developed at the Army's Natick Soldier Systems Center. The pattern, known as Scorpion, was too similar to one of the industry submissions, Army officials said.



DOD Releases 2012 Suicide Event Report: Today the Department of Defense (DOD) released its latest summary of fatal and nonfatal suicide events that occurred in 2012. The data shows that 319 service members who were on active duty, this includes reserve and Guard members on active duty orders, committed suicide in 2012, and that 203 members of the Guard and reserve who were not on active duty orders also committed suicide over the same time period. The report also indicated that those at greatest risk for suicide are males age 17-24, who are married and at the pay grade of E1 to E4. In the report you can find factors that appear to be associated with suicide, like legal and financial issues and failed relationships. The statistic that may surprise readers the most is that only 13.5 percent of service members who committed suicide had a military combat history. DOD also noted it is changing the way they report suicide by standardizing practices across the services which previously had responsibility for summarizing and releasing their own statistics. The new procedure will help align suicide rates consistent with those used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, allowing for better comparisons across the services and against a U.S. population adjusted for demographics similar to those of the military. **If you or someone you know is at risk for suicide please reach out to military and veteran crisis line at 1 (800) 273-8255 press 1, or you feel like you just need someone to talk to reach out to vets4warriors at <http://www.vets4warriors.com/> . These resources are available to active duty military, veterans and their family members.**



DARPA Develops Infantry Helmet Heads Up Display: The Pentagon's research arm has developed a prototype designed to give grunts the same type of tactical helmet displays enjoyed by fighter pilots. "It's like a pilot's heads-up display" for troops in the field, said Yiftach Eisenberg a program manager for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The program is called Urban Leader Tactical Response, Awareness and Visualization program, or Ultra-Vis. The eyepiece of the prototype helmet has been designed to overlay full-color iconography onto the scene in a soldier's line of sight, giving constant grid coordinates and elevation. It also offers the location of friendly forces, vehicles, and aircraft in the vicinity. "It's all about heads-up situational awareness," said Eisenberg, a program manager for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Information from overhead drones can also be fed into the display, along with potential locations of enemy forces and safe navigation routes, Eisenberg said. "It enables the soldier to understand where all those things are," Eisenberg said, and "the information is right in front of you and not out of your field of view."



Statistics show that at the age of seventy, there are five women to every man. Isn't that an ironic time for a guy to get those odds?

Reserve Marine Receives Award for Heroism:

To the average passerby, Lance Cpl. Bryan Daniels looked like any other driver sitting in traffic on the President George Bush Turnpike in Grand Prairie, Texas, on the afternoon of August 3, 2013. Daniels, a 21-year-old food delivery truck driver from Keller, Texas, was driving his normal route when a tractor-trailer careened off of the overpass above and into the lane of traffic ahead of him. That's when Daniels distinguished himself from the other drivers. He jumped from his truck and ran toward the billows of smoke ahead as other drivers turned around and fled in the opposite direction. He reacted by doing everything in his power to attempt to save the life of the driver but unknown to Daniels at the time, it was already too late. "In my mind there was no choice but to act," said Daniels. "I had to see if there was someone still inside." For his actions, the Marine Corps awarded Daniels the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, one of the nation's highest honors for acts of heroism. When awarded for an act of life-saving or attempted life-saving, the action must be performed at the risk of one's own life to qualify, which is exactly what happened that day. "I think he used his training as a Marine to help him stay calm and think clearly in the situation," said Fountain. "He did what we all hope we would do if we were put in that same situation." As the first responder to arrive at the scene of the gruesome accident, Daniels assessed the situation and looked for signs of the driver outside the wreckage. Finding none, he approached the burning vehicle, finding the passenger side completely smashed into the ground and the driver's side up in the air.

Debate Stirs Over US-Taliban Captive Swap: Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl can expect a buoyant homecoming after five years in Taliban hands, but those in the government who worked for his release face mounting questions over the prisoner swap that won him his freedom. Even in the first hours of Bergdahl's handoff to U.S. special forces in eastern Afghanistan, it was clear this would not be an uncomplicated yellow-ribbon celebration. Five terrorist suspects also walked free, stirring a debate in Washington over whether the exchange will heighten the risk of other Americans being snatched as bargaining chips and whether the released detainees -- several senior Taliban figures among them -- would find their way back to the fight. U.S. officials said Sunday that Bergdahl's health and safety appeared in jeopardy, prompting rapid action to secure his release. "Had we waited and lost him," said national security adviser Susan Rice, "I don't think anybody would have forgiven the United States government." Tireless campaigners for their son's freedom, Bob and Jani Bergdahl thanked all who were behind the effort to retrieve him. "You were not left behind," Bob Bergdahl told reporters, as if speaking to his son. "We are so proud of the way this was carried out." He spoke in Boise, Idaho, wearing a long bushy beard he'd grown to honor his son, as residents in the sergeant's hometown of Hailey prepared for a homecoming celebration.





The C-130 on Display at Little Rock AFB: This C-130A Hercules was the 126th built by Lockheed Aircraft corp. of Marietta, Georgia. It was accepted into the Air Force inventory on 23 August 1957. It was given to the South Vietnamese Air Force as part of the Military Assistance Program on November 1972. A few years later, the aircraft would be involved in a historic flight. On 29 April 1975, this Herk was the last out of Vietnam during the fall of Saigon. With over 100 aircraft destroyed on the flight line at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, some of them still burning. In a very panicked state, hundreds of people were rushing to get aboard, as the aircraft represented a final ticket to freedom. People hurriedly crowded into the Herk, packing in tighter and tighter. Eventually, the loadmaster informed the pilot, Major Phuong, a South Vietnamese instructor pilot, that he could not get the rear ramp closed due to the number of people standing on it. In a moment of inspiration, Major Phuong slowly taxied forward, then hit the brakes. The loadmaster called forward again stating he had successfully got the doors closed. In all, 452 people were on board, including a staggering 32 in the cockpit alone. Using a conservative estimate of 100 pounds per person, it translated into an overload of at least 10,000 pounds. Consequently, the Herk used every bit of the runway and overrun before it was able to get airborne. The target was Thailand, which should have been 1:20 in flight time, but after an hour and a half, the aircraft was over the Gulf of Slam, and they were clearly lost. Finally, a map was located, they identified some terrain features, and they were able to navigate. They landed at Utapao, Thailand after a three and a half hour flight. Ground personnel were shocked at what "fell out" as they opened the doors. It was clear that a longer flight would almost certainly have resulted in a loss of life. In the end, however, all 452 people made it to freedom aboard this historic C-130. Upon landing, the aircraft was reclaimed by the United States Air Force and assigned to two different Air National Guard units for the next 14 years. It made its final flight to Little Rock Air Force Base and placed on permanent display on 28 June 1989.

Man Claims to be SEAL, Defrauds Charity: A man was recently indicted for fraud on charges that he ripped off a Crystal Lake charity by posing as a Navy SEAL who could rescue aid workers kidnapped in Somalia, authorities said. William Burley, 34, of Yucaipa, Calif., was indicted by a grand jury in Rockford for wire fraud for allegedly taking \$30,000 from International Aid Services -- USA, Inc., based in Crystal Lake, the U.S. Attorney's office announced. In July 2012, the three workers with IAS were kidnapped in northern Somalia, and a fourth worker was shot but survived and escaped, officials said. Burley was hired to seek the release of the hostages after claiming -- falsely, that he was a highly-decorated U.S. Navy SEAL.

Force Survey: Nine in 10 Troops Oppose Cuts to Pay, BAH: About nine in 10 active-duty service members oppose the Defense Department's proposals to reduce their pay raises and basic allowances for housing, according to a new survey by Military.com. Responses from more than 8,400 service members, their spouses, veterans and retirees show overwhelming opposition to the Pentagon's recommendations to curb personnel costs by reducing military benefits to include pay, housing, commissary stores and health care. Troops also resoundingly rejected suggestions from the top brass that pay raises aren't "on their minds." Of the more than 2,000 active-duty respondents, 90 percent said they disagreed with reducing next year's pay raise to 1 percent from a previous 1.7 percent. An even higher percentage -- 94 percent -- said they disagreed with slowing the growth of basic allowances for housing until recipients pay about 5 percent of the cost. "It will hit my wallet harder, especially in high-cost areas," said Army Capt. Robert Garcia, an infantry officer with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, at Fort Bliss, Texas, who lives with his wife and child in El Paso. "Anyone and everyone who is trying to provide a better home for their family is going to feel that right away."

Commissaries Safe; Pay Cap and New Rx Fees Likely: In shaping a 2015 defense authorization bill, Congress has decided to protect the prized commissary benefit from the most worrisome budget threat to base grocery stores in decades. But military personnel are not likely to escape other key compensation curbs to include a second consecutive annual pay raise cap in January of one percent versus 1.8 percent needed to match private sector wage growth. Also, a million recipients of Basic Allowance for Housing are likely to see BAH increases dampened for the next three years until rates, on average, cover 95 percent of local rental costs versus 100 percent today. Finally, beneficiaries with prescription drug needs likely will face sharply higher out-of-pocket costs if they rely on retail pharmacies, or if they choose to use brand name medicines over less costly generic drugs. The pay raise cap, BAH raise slowdown and higher drug co-pays are all found in the Senate Armed Service Committee's version of the defense policy bill (S 2289) but not in the House-passed bill (HR 4435). The Republican-led House Armed Services Committee continued its recent yearly pattern of leaving no fingerprints on any rollback in compensation growth sought by the Obama administration and military leaders to accommodate lowered defense spending targets. But the political rhetoric of protecting troops and families from budget cuts eventually has to give way to budget realities created by the bipartisan 2011 Budget Control Act (BCA), as amended last January, with its sequestration tool to force automatic cuts if Congress doesn't comply. The Senate committee's embrace of plans to raise member out-of-pocket costs are likely to become law because the House, in rejecting any compensation curbs, failed to identify alternative cuts to avoid creating a \$2 billion hole in the defense budget. That means House-Senate conferees, in ironing out differences in separate versions of the bill, almost certainly will have to accept the Senate panel's menu for slowing compensation growth. Both the House and the Senate committee agreed to reject administration plans to consolidate TRICARE options and to raise TRICARE fees to include Medicare-eligible beneficiaries under TRICARE for Life. But pharmacy co-pay increases, to be phased in over 10 years, would mean higher out-of-pocket costs mostly for older retirees, spouses and survivors.

SIMPLE TRUTH :

When a lady is pregnant, all her friends touch her stomach and say, "Congrats".

But, none of them touch the man's penis and say, "Good job". Some members of a team are never appreciated.

FNG Hits The Field

After being assigned to a unit, a new guy usually spent a day or two (or several days) hanging around in the company area at Chu Lai; getting gear, hearing the stories, and eagerly or apprehensively awaiting their first trip to join the company in the field. When my big day came, I was unceremoniously loaded on a resupply chopper and headed out to the bush in the late afternoon.

Looking all spiffy in my newly issued jungle fatigues, steel pot, ruck, and newly acquired slightly used M-16; I thought I was ready for the new adventure Uncle Sam has so wisely assigned to me. With my new Gerber knife and some personal affects here I went soaring high above the Vietnamese countryside.

I really don't recall what exactly was going through my head except looking out over the beautiful landscape and realizing I soon would be walking all over it looking for bad guys. All I knew was the company was setting up a night Laager on some place called 953. Having had the advantage of superb army training, I knew 953 was a "hill" somewhere in Vietnam and it must be a pretty tall hill. The chopper wove its way higher and higher and the country side got smaller and smaller, it finally banked to the left and I could see some figures on the ground and some smoke coming up from the area where these ant-sized people were located.



As the chopper eased down towards the ground, I could see a bunch of grubby looking GIs with towels around their necks, shirts without sleeves and, here and there, a bandana or bush hat that was apparently the fashion of the day. As the skids hit the ground, a voice told me to "unass" the chopper so I started to get off. All of a sudden, someone, whom I later found out was my platoon leader, John Mackey, grabbed the front of my shirt and pulled me down off the chopper to the ground; it was then I realized the chopper had landed at an angle on the hill and the rotors were at a precarious angle whirling not far above my head. That's not the way it was in "training". I could picture the headlines in my hometown paper; "FNG decapitated his first day in combat". After my initial faux pas, I was escorted by SSG Mackey to the platoon's location through a bunch of the nastiest, dirtiest looking group of men I had ever seen. I was introduced to guys with various nicknames; my all time favorite nickname was assigned to a lanky guy they called "Foul Fred". I soon learned the name was appropriately given because he must have been the dirtiest of the bunch. Turned out "Foul Fred" and SSG Mackey became my main mentors for the next few days as I slowly turned into a "grunt".

My first night and the next day were unforeseen adventures, because, I spent it armed with only my Gerber. At dusk the first night, SSG Mackey saw some "dinks" "deedeeing" (both fairly new terms to me) across the valley below and thought it would be a good time for the new guy to sight in his M-16. As I took aim and fired at my first enemy soldier, all I got was a click as I pulled the trigger; eject, reload new bullet, "CLICK": bent firing pin in my trusty M-16. Oh crap! The good news was that I could get a new firing pin on the next resupply chopper; the bad news was it wouldn't be in until the next evening at the night Laager.

Mackey told me no big thing there were plenty of guys with weapons around me. Still, the night and the next day humping down 953 towards LZ Ross were very unsettling with no weapon. Talk about nervous in the service that was me. Wow, only 350 some days to go! I spent the next few days walking my ass off, luckily downhill towards LZ Ross, listening and, hopefully, learning how to get by in this new world that was initiated by a letter received a year ago that said "Greetings". Greetings my ass!

Chuck Holdaway