



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

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Volume 6

"A Soldier Once And Always"

March 2016

Commanders Corner: March already! I'm starting to get ready for St. Paddy's day. One of my favorites throughout the year: No green beer though, just some Guinness and some Buds to wash down the corned beef and cabbage. Several of us usually make the rounds to a few of the Irish pubs in town for their parties and rely on our designated driver to get us back in one piece. Here's your history lesson for the month. Saint Patrick's Day, or the Feast of Saint Patrick, is a cultural and religious celebration held on 17 March, the traditional death date of Saint Patrick (c. AD 385–461) the foremost patron saint of Ireland. Saint Patrick's Day was made an official Christian feast day in the early 17th century and is observed by the Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion (especially the Church of Ireland), the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Lutheran Church. The day commemorates Saint Patrick and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, and celebrates the heritage and culture of the Irish in general. Celebrations generally involve public parades and festivals, and the wearing of green attire or shamrocks. Christians also attend church services and the Lenten restrictions on eating and drinking alcohol are lifted for the day, which has encouraged and propagated the holiday's tradition of alcohol consumption. Yeah! Okay onto some serious stuff. Persons delinquent on their 2016 dues need to get them to Jesse as soon as possible. As for our inventory, we only have 40 challenge coins left, no shirts and a few hats. If you are interested in acquiring a shirt or hat, please contact Jesse (we probably won't place and order for this year unless we have a response from enough guys). The same goes for the hats. If you want challenge coins, contact me. By the way, I found out that, at least in Indiana, if you have at least a 10% disability from the VA, you can apply at your county treasurer's office and get a reduction in your property taxes and they will provide you a form to get a reduction on any excise taxes you may have to pay at your BMV when renewing your license plates. This might be worth checking out in your state. I have updated our web site with information for the 2016 ADVA Reunion; check it out. Last but not least, I would like to welcome some new members to our chapter; Richard Kiel (E Co.), James Brice (B Co.), Frank Carlini (C/E Co), Herman Carter (B), Paul Vaccari (E Co.) and Mike Ford (A Co.). New Associate Member: John Henningson (3rd/82nd Arty-liaison to 2/1 HHC). Glad to have you guys.

Chuck

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



Military Files, Emails Deleted amid Probe: The chairman of the House Intelligence Committee said recently that personnel at U.S. Central Command have deleted files and emails amid allegations that intelligence assessments were altered to exaggerate progress against Islamic State militants. "We have been made aware that both files and emails have been deleted by personnel at CENTCOM and we expect that the Department of Defense will provide these and all other relevant documents to the committee," Rep. Devin Nunes said at a hearing on worldwide threats facing the United States. Central Command oversees U.S. military activities in the Middle East. Nunes, R-Calif., also said the Office of the Director of National Intelligence briefed the committee on a survey indicating that more than 40 percent of Central Command analysts believe there are problems with the integrity of the intelligence analyses and process. With turmoil across the Mideast, Nunes wondered aloud if it was appropriate to wait months for the Defense Department's inspector general to complete an investigation into the allegations before efforts are made to rectify the alleged problems. "To me, it seems like 40 percent of analysts who are concerned at CENTCOM -- that's just something that can't be ignored," Nunes said. Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said that while it would be favorable for all to "get closure on exactly the extent of this allegation," he cannot control the pace of the watchdog's investigation. He said that while the investigation proceeds, intelligence officials continue to look into ways to improve the process of producing the assessments. The New York Times, which first disclosed the investigation, reported that it began after at least one civilian DIA analyst told authorities he had evidence that Central Command officials were improperly reworking conclusions of assessments prepared for President Barack Obama and other top policymakers.

K C-135 Air Crew Saves Pilot Over ISIS Territory: A quick-thinking refueling plane crew saved a fighter pilot who faced having to eject over Islamic State territory. The F-16 had been trying to refuel in mid-air when the pilot discovered a malfunction with his fuel system, which meant he could only fly for 15 minutes -- nowhere near enough to reach safety. Instead of leaving the pilot to cope with the emergency, the US Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker crew managed to escort him back to its base while refueling every 15 minutes to keep the jet in the air. US Air Force commander Lt. Col. Eric Hallberg said: "Over 80% of his total fuel capability was trapped and unusable. "Knowing the risks to their own safety, they put the life of the F-16 pilot first and made what could've been an international tragedy a feel-good news story."



DOD MIA Recovery Update: Two Korean War MIAs Identified: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains of two soldiers who had been missing in action since the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors on a date and location to be determined are:

-- Army Cpl. Dudley L. Evans, 24, of Greenville, Miss., who died in captivity after being taken prisoner in South Korea on Feb. 15, 1951. He was assigned to Company G, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division.

-- Army Cpl. Eldon W. Ervin, 22, of Ottawa County, Okla., who will be buried with full military honors on a date and location yet to be determined. He was assigned to Headquarters Battery, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division and was lost fighting in North Korea on Nov. 28, 1950.

Guard Troops Respond To Snowstorm Across 12 States: In Pennsylvania, National Guard troops were called on Saturday to rescue hundreds of motorists stranded by Winter Storm Jonas on the Pennsylvania Turnpike as part of the Guard's mobilization by governors across the mid-Atlantic region. In Virginia, Guard troops were using their Humvees to get state troopers where they couldn't go in their own vehicles. In Kentucky, National Guard wreckers were hauling abandoned cars off Interstate 75. The activated Guard troops and other first responders from Georgia to southern Connecticut were battling snow drifts up to four feet, record coastal flooding, and winds of 70 mph in some areas. As of midday Saturday, Maj. Gen. James C. Witham, director of Domestic Operations and Force Development (J3/7) for the National Guard Bureau, said at least 2,300 Guard troops had been activated and the number could go up to 3,000 as snow continued to fall in the storm that was affecting 80 million people in a quarter of the US. Witham did not have complete state-by-state figures on the numbers of Guard soldiers and airmen activated but said 500 each had been activated by Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Sixty were also assisting local responders in the District of Columbia and Gov. Andrew Cuomo, D-N.Y., had 600 Guard troops on standby in New York. Before the storm hit, Army Col. Thomas L. Morgan III, director of joint operations for the Virginia Guard, said potential missions for his troop included transportation through heavy snow, downed tree removal, debris reduction and distribution of food, water and other supplies. "In order to be able to respond rapidly when needed, we will get our personnel in place at key locations before the severe weather hits," Morgan said. Witham said the storm was "more widespread than we originally anticipated," but the Guard had been postured to respond by putting units on alert beforehand. Witham said he expected the number of guard troops activated to increase as the storm shifted northward to New Jersey and New York. Governors in 12 states and Mayor Muriel Bowser of the District of Columbia had already declared states of emergency.

Support For KW Wall of Remembrance: H.R.1475, *the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance Act of 2015*, which would authorize a Wall of Remembrance to be added to the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. The new addition would memorialize the names of more than 33,700 American battle deaths including the names of the 2,835 non-battle but still in-theater deaths. The bill, which has more than 280 co-sponsors, was introduced by Korean War veterans Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Texas), Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.), and Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.). The bill now goes to the Senate.

Americal Fighting Forces:

Submitted by Pete Vander Haegen

The earlier edition of this excellent and interesting history was loaned to me by a Marine buddy, also a Vietnam vet but with infantry combat experience. It is the no-punches-pulled account of the Second Battalion, 12th Cavalry during the Tet offensive. The author, a retired Army LtCol, was the Bn. S2 as a captain. It is the story of what is known in classical military terms as a fustercluck. The 2/12th was sent forward with limited ammo and supplies, without packs, without arty and air support to attack an entrenched NVA force three times their size. The foul weather added to their misery and prevented air support and resupply for most of their ordeal. They took 60% casualties. They were surrounded at TFP for a considerable time, and only were extracted because the CO, LtCol. Richard Sweet, disregarding the opinions of higher command, exfiltrated at night through a weak spot in the NVA forces they found. It is difficult even for the author to place responsibility because there was so much chaos during the battle and so much CYA afterwards. But it seems clear the First Cav. Division CG, who hung a poor efficiency report on Col. Sweet, bears much of the responsibility. It appears that the Bn. fought well and was well led, but that the supply and support systems broke down, and higher command made things worse. The author does a good job on lessons learned, so the book is of value not just to Vietnam vets and military history buffs, but also to serving officers. Some quotes that will resonate with Vietnam Vets: "In one hamlet near Hue, we found the bodies of 15 women and children. 'They had all been shot at close range,' reported LtCol. Zane Finklestein, the Division's top lawyer. 'Some of the children had their skulls crushed by rifle butts.' Who knows the reason for this brutality? And nearly 25 years later, who remembers or cares? But everyone remembers My Lai." (P-127) "No one knows for certain how many civilians were executed by the NVA...but nearly 2,800 bodies were recovered in mass graves near the fields of execution." (P-141) "The (captured NVA) report also notes the 'elimination' (that is, murder) of '1,892 administrators, 38 policeman, 790 tyrants, 6 captains, 2 first lieutenants, 20 second lieutenants and many NCOs.' Assuming the administrators, police and 'tyrants' were civilians, the total acknowledged murdered is 2,748."

Ty Harper writes;

In 3 to 5 days, a hard copy of my book, *A GRUNT'S LIFE ILLUSTRATED*, will be available on Amazon.com. I am *not* asking anyone to buy a copy but would appreciate it if you would pass this along to anyone you think might be interested. I am writing under the nom de plume *H Duckworth O'Brien*. This is in honor of two of the men in my company who have died. For those of you who do not know them, Robert Duckworth was killed in a car accident a couple years after returning home and Dwight O'Brien was a combat casualty. Their names also represent all Vietnam Combat veterans who died after coming home or were combat casualties in the war. Any funds raised from the selling of this book will go to the Living Trust I have set up for my adult autistic son and for donations to various Vietnam Memorial Projects like Jerry Hughes' Key West Memorial Project (Check this one out. It is *AWESOME!*)

If you are interested, apparently my book *A Grunt's Life Illustrated* is available on Amazon.com. Thanks for looking.

Editor: I have a copy of this book. It is professionally written and brings back to mind many of the experiences we have all encountered during our time in Vietnam. I highly encourage all to get a copy.

"America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves."

~ ~Abraham Lincoln

With War in Afghanistan over, Army prepares to send Infantry Battalion to Helmand Province:

This seems a little oddly worded, but it looks like maybe the new troops will take over some of the force protection (i.e. Guard Towers) around base, freeing up some Special Ops guys to go do what they do best, ventilate bad guys. And maybe some will be embedded with Afghan units? It's really not too clear. But by way of perspective, we're sending 500 troops to a province that is 22,619 square miles, which probably doesn't mean much, until you realize that it's roughly the same size as West Virginia. And if you've never driven through West Virginia, maybe a better comparison would be that Helmand is bigger than New Hampshire, New Jersey and Connecticut combined. In other words, that's a pretty damn big AO to have only 500 guys in. The Guardian out of UK had a bit more to note about the oddity of providing combat troops to what is not supposed to be combat: *In keeping with Barack Obama's formal declaration that the US is not engaged in combat, despite elite forces recently participating in an hours-long battle in Helmand, defense officials said the additional troops would not take part in combat. But they will help the existing Helmand force defend itself against Taliban attacks, officials said. US military officials declined to offer many specifics about an upcoming reinforcement, but they described the mission as primarily aimed at bolstering the performance of the embattled 215th Corps of the Afghan military, through training as well as protecting other troops training Afghans in Helmand.* I don't know what to make of it all to be honest, but I wish you guys well. Hopefully I'll get a chance to do an embed out there next year and see what is really going on.

Making Good on a Promise: Henry Repeating Arms Company Donates to VFW: During the 2015 National VFW convention the Henry Repeating Arms company presented a \$ 50,000 check to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This fulfills a pledge made by the CEO of the company who served in the Army from 1953 – 1955 including service during the Korean War. The CEO explained the donation for “The bravery of American soldiers explains why we will continue to support great veterans’ organizations like the VFW.”

USO Celebrates 75 Years of Service: Civilian organizations have a long history of supporting the troops, even going back to the Civil War when volunteers served hot coffee from horse drawn wagons to soldiers on the battlefield. But there is not one group since more recognizable than the United Service Organization Inc. (USO). When the U.S. entered the “War to End All Wars” in 1918, several humanitarian organizations sprung to action. Following the armistice the groups ceased offering care for troops. After President Roosevelt in 1941 called upon the several organizations to again provide troop support and thus on Feb. 4, 1941 the USO for National Defense was born. In 2015 the USO deployed 62 celebrity entertainers on 31 countries and 16 states. All told, the USO made 119 trips to Iraq and 85 to Afghanistan since 2002. Today's USO goes way beyond mere entertainment. It has some 160 locations around the world offering various services and comfort depending on the needs of GIs and their families.



VA Officially Drops Net Worth as an eligibility

Factor: A VA proposal to exclude a veteran's net worth as a factor in determining eligibility for health care is now the rule. Proposed early in 2015, it became official December 21, 2015. VA will no longer consider net worth when determining if a veteran is eligible for certain benefits or reduced co-payment responsibility. Instead of combining the sum of a veteran's income with his or her assets to determine eligibility for medical care and co-payment obligations, VA will now only consider the veteran's gross household income and deductible expenses from the prior year. The new ruling means that certain lower-income, non-service-connected veterans will have less out-of-pocket costs.

Free Training for Transitioning Veterans: The Military Times brings us an article of particular interest to "Veterans of any rank who left the service in the last two years, as well as currently serving troops transitioning in the next six months." The multi-dimensional program (including both on-site and online portions) begins April 8-11 in Herndon, Virginia where "[manpower and tech powerhouses Korn Ferry and Harris Corp. are teaming up to provide free Leveraging Military Leadership Program for troops and recent veterans transitioning to civilian careers. "Participants will be guided by a team of leadership experts who will guide [veterans through a three-month program composed of online and in-person assessments, coaching, instruction, and group exercises and lectures. Participants will have to cover their own airfare and lodging for the on-site weekend, but 'everything else, including course materials and food, is completely free. We've also made arrangements for deeply discounted lodging as well,' said Tracy Kurschner, a Korn Ferry spokesperson."

Marine Veteran John Keith Wells – The first Iwo Jima flag raising:

Lieutenant John Keith Wells led one of the most decorated infantry platoons in Marine Corps history – 3rd Platoon, 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division. He led them at Guadalcanal and on Feb. 19, 1945 he led them on Iwo Jima – one of America's most historic battles. Upon landing on the Japanese held island, his platoon was tasked with assaulting the foothills of Mount Suribachi. Attacking across open terrain littered with enemy fortifications and pillboxes. Wells led his men from the front, encountering machine-gun, mortar and rifle fire. He continuously moved across the line to lead his assault groups forward. “Give me 50 Marines not afraid to die and I can take any position,” Wells famously said about his Marines who destroyed 25 enemy emplacements on their way up Mount Suribachi. He was severely wounded during an assault, but continued to command until the objective's enemy blockhouse was destroyed. Unable to walk, he posted himself at a position where he could observe his men and continue to command before he was evacuated to a hospital ship. 1st Lt. Harold G. Schrier filled in for the wounded Wells, the final push up Mount Suribachi. On Feb. 23 at approximately 10:20 a.m., 3rd Platoon, 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division breached its summit and planted an American Flag – the first, but often overlooked flag raised that day. Too small to be seen from the beach, leadership ordered a larger flag to be taken to the top of Mount Suribachi to mark the United States first captured Japanese territory. So admired by his men, leadership allowed for the wounded Wells to be carried off the hospital ship and escorted to the top of the Mountain so he could witness the raising of the larger flag—that became a beacon of hope and an iconic image for the ages. Wells remained in the reserves after the war and retired as a Major. He passed away on Feb. 11, at age 94, just 12 days shy of the 71st anniversary of that historic event. We honor his service and all those brave Marines that followed him on Iwo Jima.

Army Budget Cuts Modernization and Personnel, Invests in Readiness:

A shrinking U.S. Army rolled out its proposed fiscal 2017 budget today -- a plan that funnels more money into readiness but cuts every other area including personnel, modernization and construction. "As we built this budget and sought to strike the best possible balance within our top line funding levels, we ensured that our absolute, number-one priority remained readiness," Maj. Gen. Thomas Horlander, director of Army Budget, said during a Feb. 9 Pentagon briefing. The \$125.1 billion request is \$1.4 billion less than the service's approved fiscal 2016 budget, according to budget documents. The Army proposed personnel budget is for \$55.3 billion, compared to fiscal 2016's \$56.2 billion. The active force is scheduled to get \$40 billion -- down from last year's \$40.9 billion. The Reserve and National Guard receive slight increases with the Guard getting \$8 billion and the Reserves getting \$4.6 billion. The Army's active component takes the biggest hit to personnel compared to other services. The Army is the largest service, but its active force is scheduled to shrink from 475,000 to 460,000 -- that's a 3-percent decrease, compared to the Navy's 1-percent cut to its active component. Both the Air Force and the Marine Corps have no planned cuts to their active components, according to budget documents. The Army National Guard is slated to cut its force from 342,000 to 335,000 and the Army Reserve plans to shrink its force from 198,000 to 195,000. This is the last that the Guard and Reserve will downsize, but the active force is scheduled to cut another 10,000 in fiscal 2018 for an end-strength of 450,000, according to budget documents. The Army plans give \$22.6 billion to its modernization efforts, compared to last year's \$23.9 billion. Procurement programs take the largest cut with a proposed \$15.1 billion, compared to last year's \$16.4 billion. "This is an area where the Army has had to take risk as funding levels have come down," Horlander said. Army aircraft accounts for the biggest drop from \$5.9 billion in fiscal 2016 to 3.6 billion for fiscal 2017. The budget prioritizes modernization of AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Black Hawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopter fleets, according to budget documents. The budget supports the Army's Aviation Restructure Initiative by providing \$1.1 billion for 52 Apaches and \$1 billion for 36 Black Hawks. By comparison, the Army purchased 107 Black Hawks and 64 Apaches in fiscal 2016. For land programs, the Army's budget funds a "next-generation shoulder-launched weapon," as well as a replacement for the Army Tactical Missile System, or ATACMS, and increased firepower for the Stryker armored vehicle fleet. The budget also adds "significant survivability improvements" to the Stryker fleet, according to budget documents. Additionally, the budget funds 1,828 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles for fiscal 2017 as well as 567 Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles, compared to last year's purchase of 166.

House Speaker: Legal Steps to Stop Obama from Closing Guantanamo:

Speaker Paul Ryan said recently Republicans are taking legal steps to stop President Barack Obama from closing the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, after the president unveiled his plan to close the facility and move the detainees to the United States. The Wisconsin Republican said the GOP is "preparing our legal challenge" to ensure the prison remains open and detainees aren't moved to the U.S. "These detainees cannot come to American soil," Ryan said. Obama has pushed to fulfill a 2008 campaign promise and close Guantanamo, arguing that the facility is a recruitment tool for terrorism worldwide. The president has faced strong opposition in Congress. Under Obama's plan, roughly 35 of the 91 current prisoners will be transferred to other countries in the coming months, leaving up to 60 detainees. Those detainees would be relocated to a U.S. facility.

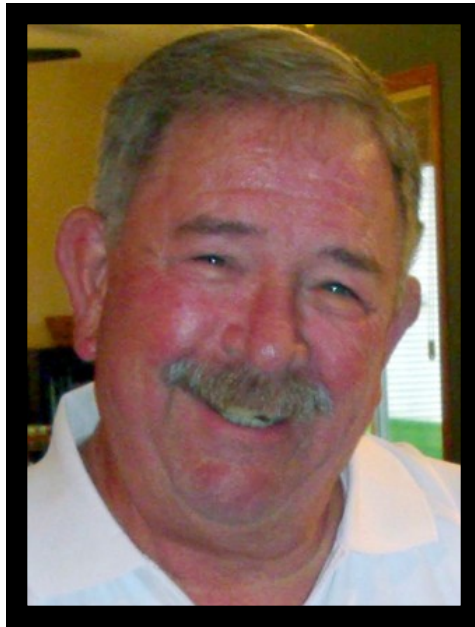
Budget Proposal Includes Major Retiree Tricare Fee Hikes:

The new Defense Department budget proposal for 2017 sent today to Congress drastically increases the cost of healthcare for military retirees under 65 and reorganizes the current Tricare system, but otherwise includes few other major military family program reforms. Under the new proposal the primary three Tricare options -- Tricare Prime, Tricare Standard and the services used by retirees -- would be combined into two basic plans. Like the current Tricare Prime and Standard options, the newly minted Tricare Select and Tricare Choice would continue to offer free services at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and require co-pays for services from in-network civilian providers. Like Tricare Prime, Tricare Select would require users to receive referrals for specialty care, while Tricare Choice would operate like Tricare Standard, allowing users to self-refer. Active duty families and retirees could choose between the two plans and pay graduated fees between \$20 and \$250 for non-MTF care, depending on the service provided. As in the current Tricare Prime system, active-duty families stationed in remote areas far away from an MTF would be permitted to see in-network civilian providers without paying additional fees. The major price changes are reserved for retirees. Under the new plan those users would be forced to pay a yearly enrollment fee through an open-enrollment type process regardless of which Tricare option they choose. Currently, retirees using Tricare Prime pay \$282.60 per year for a single person or \$565.20 for a family, while Standard requires no enrollment fee. The new system, however, would require retirees pay a \$350 enrollment fee for individuals or \$700 for families for Tricare Select, and \$450 for individuals or \$900 for families for Tricare Choice.

Intelligence Officials: ISIS Determined to Strike US This Year:

Leaders of the Islamic State are determined to strike targets in the United States this year, senior U.S. intelligence officials said Tuesday, telling lawmakers that a small group of violent extremists will attempt to overcome the logistical challenges of mounting such an attack. In testimony before congressional committees, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and other officials described the Islamic State as the "pre-eminent terrorist threat." The militant group can "direct and inspire attacks against a wide range of targets around the world," Clapper said. Marine Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said the Islamic State will probably conduct additional attacks in Europe and then attempt the same in the U.S. He said U.S. intelligence agencies believe IS leaders will be "increasingly involved in directing attacks rather than just encouraging lone attackers." Clapper also said al-Qaida, from which the Islamic State spun off, remains an enemy and the U.S. will continue to see cyber threats from China, Russia and North Korea, which also is ramping up its nuclear program. North Korea has expanded a uranium enrichment facility and restarted a plutonium reactor that could begin recovering material for nuclear weapons in weeks or months, Clapper said in delivering the annual assessment by intelligence agencies of the top dangers facing the country. Clapper said that Pyongyang announced in 2013 its intention to refurbish and restart nuclear facilities, to include the uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon and its plutonium production reactor, which was shut down in 2007. He said U.S. intelligence had assessed that North Korea has expanded Yongbyon and restarted the plutonium production reactor there. Clapper also told the Senate Armed Services and intelligence committees that North Korea has been operating the reactor long enough that it could begin to recover plutonium "within a matter of weeks to months."

"No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms." - Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Constitution, 1776



William S. (Bill) Bacon

William S. (Bill) Bacon of Center Point passed away peacefully at his home on February 27, 2016 after a courageous battle against cancer. He was born in Colorado Springs, CO to William C. Bacon and Doris Fox Bacon on January 1, 1945. In November 1985, he married the love of his life, Debbie Traska. Bill attended 9 different schools while his father was in the Air Force and graduated from Rincon High School in Tucson in 1962. Bill is class of 1966 at Texas A&M majoring in Animal Science. After graduation from A&M, he entered the Army at Fort Benning in GA in 1968. His last assignment was Vietnam from 1969-1970. His decorations and medals include: The Bronze Star with V device, 2d Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Parachute Badge, and National Defense Service Medal. He was medically discharged from the Army with the rank of Captain in February, 1971. He was Vice President of the Hill Country Veterans Council from 2011-2015, life time member of the Americal Division Veterans Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart and AMVETS Post 1000. He also served on the Kerr County Veterans Day Parade Committee.

Bill held many management positions with several national food manufacturers including National Procurement Manager for Kraft Foods in Glenview, Illinois. He was also Vice President of Sales for Wilson Foods in Oklahoma City. He retired from the Military Order of the Purple Heart as their National Adjutant and was awarded the Don Arthur Memorial Award for Greatest Impact on the Operation of the Military Order of the Purple Heart for 2004-2005. Bill enjoyed a good joke and his quick wit and sense of humor served him well. He was proud to be an Aggie and loved to tell stories. He was committed to his fellow veterans by volunteering and lending a helping hand whenever possible.

Bill was an avid photographer. He always had his camera with him and took numerous photos while traveling with Debbie, their friends and family. He also loved working in his shop making wine cork bird houses and cypress wood candle holders. In recent years, he was able to spend more time on the coast fishing with good friends.

NAVY SEAL RECEIVES CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR

Senior Chief Special Warfare Operator Edward Byers, a native of Toledo, Ohio, was honored for actions in December 2012 mission to rescue Dr. Dilip Joseph, an American who had been kidnapped in Afghanistan by the Taliban. Byers, 36, is the 11th living service member to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Afghanistan when President Barack Obama presented him with the award on Feb. 29. The SEALs were successful in rescuing Joseph, a medical director with a nonprofit organization training Afghan healthcare workers, but one team member, Petty Officer 1st Class Nicolas Checque, was killed during the operation.



In the interview, Byers said Checque was the point man as they headed toward the building where Joseph was being held. It was a night mission and the SEALs were wearing night-vision goggles.

"He saw a guard come out of the door and he engaged the guard and we started sprinting towards the door," Byers said. "Nick made his way in and I made my way in right behind him."

Byers said he took out one enemy as he made his way along one of the inside walls, then jumped on another who was crawling across the floor. After Joseph responded to his calling out for him, Byers dispatched the enemy on the floor then moved over to shield Joseph from any possible fire.

"When I did that there was a guy right behind him within arm's reach, he was armed, and I was able to pin that guy to the wall by his throat while I'm holding the doctor and waiting for my team mates to come in and take care of the threat right next to us," he recalled.

Once outside, however, he saw Checque being treated by medics. Byers, who is also a medic, handed Johnson off to other team members and began helping to care for Checque. He said they continued resuscitating efforts on Checque until they reached the hospital, where the 28-year-old was pronounced dead.

Byers said he didn't consider himself a hero, applying that title instead to his fellow SEALs and, in particular, Checque. "Nick embodied what it is in essence to be an American hero," he said. "He forever will be remembered in the pages of history for the sacrifices he made." Byers said he is honored and humbled to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

"Because now I'll be a representative for the Navy and the Special Warfare community," he said. "And there is a weight that that carries with it, and that weight is the sacrifices that everybody has made within this community, guys like Nic Checque and all my other brothers who have fallen. "It's an affirmation once again of the job that we do, an appreciation of the job that we do," he said.

