



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



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Volume 10

“A Soldier Once And Always”

October 2020

Commanders Corner: Greetings to all my 2/1 Infantry Brothers and to all members that served with our sister units. The month of September is almost over and we have now reached the fall season. November 1 will bring the end to daylight savings time but until then we can enjoy the fall colors of October. I hope everyone were able to enjoy the months of summer with family and friends even with the challenges we all face with the virus. It sure has been a strange time that I never expected to see in my life time. Congratulations To Richard Heroux Assistant National Adjutant and Charles (Chuck) Holdaway who serves on the Executive Council and is also the Reunion Chairman for our 2021 Reunion for their service and representing us on the Americal Division Veterans Association. With these two gentleman serving us we are in good hands and they highlight the level of leadership we have in our chapter. I want to extend my condolences to the family and those that served under General Frederick (Fritz) Kroesen who passed away on April 30 2020 at the age of 97. I remember General Kroesen when he was a Colonel and the brigade Commander of the 196th Infantry brigade. I had the opportunity to meet with him on a few occasions at Camp Baldy when planning operations and I always found him to be a great leader who listened to input from everyone before making decisions. The 196th had a great record when he was in command. He served in WW2, Korea, and Vietnam in combat roles which were rare. I know Chuck continues to work on the planning for the 2021 reunion and lets all pray that we are able to gather again since none of us are getting younger. Also I know Richard continues to request input that he can include in the monthly Newsletter. Please read Jerry Hughes' letter at the end' Given the current COVID-19 pandemic medical experts say getting vaccinated against Influenza is crucial. It will be virtually important this season to get your yearly Influenza vaccine and try to protect yourself as much as possible from that, and we will continue to have a significant amount of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths. Getting both infections have the possibility to complicate your course of action and lead to worse outcomes, including death.



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

Dwight Sybolt,
Commander

**SPEAK IN SUCH A WAY THAT OTHERS
LOVE TO LISTEN TO YOU; LISTEN IN
SUCH A WAY THAT OTHERS LOVE TO
SPEAK TO YOU.**

From H Duckworth O'Brien's "A Grunt's Life": Night Patrol: Another opportunity to practice being scared soulless and trying not to let anyone else know it. This idea was obviously concocted by some horn-rimmed brain trust sequestered off in a dark corner of the Pentagon. In reality, it was where a 7 or so man patrol lefty the perimeter on a preplanned route to either “silently” search a particular location or set up an ambush. You carried just web gear, ammo, grenades and your weapon. There was a radio man and someone to lead the patrol. The execution of following a compass heading and walking through unfamiliar territory in the dark while remaining quiet was like walking barefoot through a tunnel of broken glass blindfolded and dragging a rope with tin cans tied to it. If it was an ambush setting, you basically laid down praying morning would come quick. The only thing an action like this accomplished was to deprive some soldiers of any rest for a night.

Tim Hill writes the following comment. I always enjoy the newsletter, thanks for the work you and others put into it. Duckworth O'Brien's comments about the Life of too many Grunts in Vietnam was spot on. I sure hope the Army has come to it's collective senses and realizes that expecting troops to carry so much gear for weeks at a time is fatally flawed. I happened upon a U Tube video a few years back of a North Vietnamese Lt. Colonel being interviewed about his experience fighting the Americans. He stated, you can't bring Americans over to our country and load them down with so much gear and expect them to be able to fight in the heat and humidity of Vietnam. In his opinion, you pretty much need to grow up in Vietnam to wage war in Vietnam. The Colonel, when asked what he thought of American Soldiers he was quite complementary, he described American Soldiers as very brave and very compassionate, risking their lives to save one another, something he was told did not happen and they didn't turn and run when the shooting started. In closing he was very critical of the US military leadership, the American Soldier is very brave but he is lead by a bunch of fools, who in their right mind sends a company to fight a regiment, it was like shooting fish in a barrel for us.

John Shoemaker writes I landed in Vietnam end of March of 70, maybe first week in April in Hawk Hill for two days before shipping out to hook up with Bravo Company on Hill 251 west of HH about a 20 minute Chopper ride. That's when I went on my first patrol following the LT of 3rd Platoon. Two hours or so into that first patrol, the LT's RTO directly in front of me in the line of march across a rice paddy stepped on a booby trap that took him and the LT out. I was then pronounced Platoon Leader. That is how leadership was sometimes created in the field.

**“Today is the youngest I will be
for the rest of my life.”**

House Passes Funding Patch to Avert Government Shutdown: The House passed a stopgap spending measure on September 22, 2020 to avoid a government shutdown and keep the Department of Defense and other federal agencies operating through Dec. 11. The continuing resolution was the subject of a bipartisan compromise with Senate Republicans, whose chamber now has eight days to pass the bill before 2020 federal funding expires. Failing to pass a CR would mean a politically fraught government shutdown ahead of the Nov. 3 elections. Mirroring an earlier draft from House Democrats, the bill would also extend the window for reimbursing government contractors for costs related to COVID-19 through Dec. 11—a step sought by trade groups. The bill would also provide needed funding to begin work on the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine program.

IRS Reopens Deadline for Veterans who Missed Corona Virus Stimulus Checks: Veterans Affairs officials are reminding families who missed out on some corona virus stimulus checks last spring that they have a few more weeks left to claim that cash. In a social media post Friday morning, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie urged veterans who think they may be eligible for the money to contact the Internal Revenue Service and see if they are owed any money. At issue are payments of up to \$500 per dependent child for disabled veterans who do not typically meet the threshold for filing annual income tax returns. The money was part of a massive emergency spending package pass in the spring designed to offset financial losses due to the corona virus pandemic, then in its initial months. Payment concerns disabled veterans with dependents who have not filed tax returns in recent years. After Congress approved one-time payouts of up to \$1,200 per person, the IRS struggled to get those stimulus checks to some veterans whose current address and bank account information was not up-to-date in their systems. The agency eventually partnered with VA officials to use some veterans benefits records to help with that challenge, but could not identify all of the individuals who may have been eligible to receive the additional \$500 child payments along with the other stimulus payouts.

Mike Pompeo: US troops could withdraw from Afghanistan by Spring: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he is optimistic about the pace of peace talks between Afghan government officials and the Taliban and expects to see a full withdrawal of US forces from the country by the spring of 2021. “So, 19 years after 9/11, we finally have the Afghans prepared to sit down and have a serious conversation about taking their country forward without all the violence,” Pompeo told Breitbart News. The nation’s top diplomat told the website that President Trump has two main objectives for the talks underway in Doha, Qatar. One is to “get our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines — get everybody home. Stop getting people killed there,” and the other is to “protect the homeland.” “I think we’re, today, on our way to putting America in a place where we can do both of those things,” Pompeo said. “The meetings went as could be expected at the first gathering. They were getting their teams together, getting to know each other, and they began to set out the framework of what negotiations will look like,” he continued.

President Trump and first lady test positive for COVID-19: President Donald Trump said Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump have tested positive for the coronavirus, just a month before the presidential election and after having spent much of the last year largely downplaying the threat of the virus.

Just remember, once you're over the hill you begin to pick up speed.

Pentagon Awards \$20 Million to Increase Production of COVID-19 Medicines: The Department of Defense signed a \$20 million deal with a Maryland-based pharmaceutical company to develop a domestic production line for critical ingredients used to treat COVID-19 patients that have long been sourced from overseas, Pentagon officials announced. The contract will allow On Demand Pharmaceuticals to continue developing its production technology for at least three critical active pharmaceutical ingredients that ultimately form the building blocks for final formulated medicines that may play a crucial role in helping critically ill Corona virus patients.

The National Army Museum will be the first and only to tell the 245-year history of the U.S. Army in its entirety. Construction in the Museum has continued with a focus on completing the installation of the exhibits, the Veterans’ Hall, Medal of Honor Garden, and Café Terrace. All workers and contractors are following the rules and regulations outlined by the CDC and the Governor of Virginia. As you may know, the government considers construction to be an essential service, as it helps keep our country and our economy on the move. Opening date for the Museum has been placed on hold because of COVID-19. Stay tuned for a new date TBA,

Air Space Force Units are Operating Worldwide, and Experts Expect More: The Space Force may be the U.S. military’s youngest service branch, but it already has 10 units based outside the continental United States, along with facilities in Greenland, the United Kingdom, Ascension Island, Diego Garcia, Alaska, Hawaii and Guam. The service was established Dec. 20 with a force of 16,000 military and civilian personnel, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. The Pentagon’s first Space Force budget proposal calls for \$15.4 billion in 2021. It’s still a work in progress, according to the official Space Force website. The number of active duty troops wearing the Space Force uniform was 90, although personnel from other branches are assigned to the service, according to Space Force spokeswoman Lynn Kirby. Because of the military, security and economic importance of space operations, most large powers currently have global facility networks, and the U.S. is no different. Headquartered at the Pentagon, the Space Force mission is to organize, train and equip forces to protect U.S. and allied interests in space and to provide space capabilities to other branches of the military, according to its website. The force is charged with “maintaining and enhancing America’s competitive edge in space while adapting to new strategic challenges,” the site states. “Maintaining space superiority is an emerging capability required to protect U.S. space assets from hostile attacks.” The Space Force operates satellites and ranges used to launch military and commercial missions, provides satellite communications and navigation to the military and monitors ballistic missile launches worldwide. Its motto, “Semper Supra,” translates as “always above.”



Take time to be kind, volunteer good deeds, be cordial and show respect for all others, even when disagreement and division prevails.

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Remains of North Dakota Sailor Killed in Pearl Harbor Attack Identified: The remains of a Navy sailor who was killed during the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor have been identified and will be returned to his home state of North Dakota. Navy Fireman 2nd Class Albert Renner was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia that was hit by two bombs and at least seven torpedoes from Japanese airplanes on Dec. 7, 1941. The 24-year-old was killed along with 105 other crewmen. The sailor's remains are expected to arrive in North Dakota next week under a full military escort. The military is covering nearly all costs associated with the funeral. The Navy is working to find and identify the remains of unknown soldiers from Pearl Harbor that were buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu.

Remains of Soldier Returned by North Korea in 2018 to be Buried: The remains of a Missouri soldier who died nearly 70 years ago in the Korean War will be buried Thursday at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis County. The burial plan for Jerome V. Hummel of St. Louis was announced by the Army recently. Hummel was a corporal who served in the Heavy Mortar Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950, near the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea, after his unit was attacked by enemy forces. He was 23. Remains turned over by North Korea in July 2018 were tested, including DNA analysis, and proved to be those of Hummel. The Department of Defense says more than 7,600 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Korean War.

Senators Push to Extend Care to 34,000 More Veterans for Agent Orange Diseases: Senators have ramped up efforts to add three new diseases to the Department of Veterans Affairs' list of Agent Orange-related diseases, pressing the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to include them in the final version of the national defense policy bill. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., and 45 other senators sent letters to leaders of the committees, imploring them to amend the fiscal 2021 National Defense Authorization Act to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism to the VA's list of conditions linked to herbicide exposure in Vietnam and elsewhere. The bipartisan group said an amendment is needed to support 34,000 "frustrated and desperate veterans living and dying from these health conditions."

Army to Deploy 3 Brigade Units to Afghanistan, South Korea and Europe this Fall: The Department of the Army announced deployments for three brigades rotating this fall to Afghanistan, South Korea and Europe. The 2nd Infantry Brigade, from 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, New York, will deploy approximately 1,600 personnel to Afghanistan to support the U.S. commitment to Operation Freedom Sentinel. The 1st Armored Brigade from 3rd Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Georgia, will deploy approximately 3,500 personnel this autumn to the Republic of Korea. Finally, the 1st Armored Brigade from 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, Texas, will deploy approximately 3,500 personnel to Europe.

Trump Bans DoD Diversity Training That Suggests US Is Racist: President Donald Trump issued a sweeping executive order Tuesday banning the military's use of diversity training programs that suggest that the United States is "an irredeemably racist and sexist country." The move is an extension of a prior ban that applied to government workers; the latest order would also block the agencies from paying for "divisive" training programs supplied by federal contractors. Trump said his order is aimed at combating a "pernicious" ideology taking root in the U.S. that "some people, simply on account of their race or sex, are oppressors; and that racial and sexual identities are more important than our common status as human beings and Americans." "Unfortunately, this malign ideology is now migrating from the fringes of American society and threatens to infect core institutions of our country," he said in the order.

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Eisenhower Memorial Opens in Washington: The legacy of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States and supreme allied commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force during World War II, will be brought to life with a national memorial opening this week in Washington, D.C. Set on a 4-acre site described by designers as an "urban park," the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial will be located at the base of Capitol Hill in front of the U.S. Department of Education and across the street from the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. The memorial will be dedicated on Sept. 17. The event will be live streamed on Facebook beginning at 7 p.m. Eastern. It originally was scheduled to open on May 8, the 75th anniversary of V-E Day, which marks the Allied victory in Europe in 1945. The opening was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Forming the centerpiece of the memorial will be a stainless steel "tapestry" depicting the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc on the French coastline, the site of the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944. The 450-foot long, 60-foot high installation is the first of its kind. The drawing of the cliffs across 60 panels was created with a welding machine made specially for the project.

Veterans will see Cost-of-Living Boost in 2021 as Social Security Beneficiaries: Veterans receiving government benefits will see a cost-of-living boost in 2021, if Social Security officials approve one for their recipients later this year. The Senate unanimously passed legislation to link the two federal payouts, sending it to the White House to become law. President Donald Trump is expected to sign the measure soon. The bill is not controversial, and routinely passes Congress each year without opposition. But, under current law, lawmakers must approve linking the two increases in order for veterans to see the pay boost. Efforts to permanently tie the two sets of increases have made little progress in recent years. In a statement, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran, R-Kan., and committee ranking member Jon Tester, D-Mont., praised the bill's passage as important for veterans and the country. "Our men and women in uniform deserve to have Washington in their corner working tirelessly to ensure they can keep up with the rising costs of housing, utilities, and food when they return to civilian life," Tester said. "Today's passage is a clear sign that we're making good on our promises to those who've served."

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Marines Weigh Opening New Coed Boot Camp: The Marine Corps is considering a plan in which it could close its two existing boot camp locations and funnel all recruits to a new base where men and women would train together. Marine entry-level training is a long way off from being able to meet a congressional mandate to make its East and West coast training bases both able to support gender-integrated training the Corps' top general said recently. That is leading the service to study the option of opening a third training base in a new location to which all new recruits would ship, rather than spending cash on construction projects at aging training bases. "Nothing, the way we're organized right now, lends itself to integrated recruit training," Commandant Gen. David Berger said. "If that's our start point -- and it is -- we have to get to a place on both coasts, or at third location or whatever we end up with, that ... there are male and female recruits around." Both the Marine Corps' recruit training depots have storied pasts -- particularly Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island in South Carolina, which was first used by Marines in the 1890s. Hundreds of thousands of Marines have stood on the famous yellow footprints on each base at the start of their careers before earning the coveted eagle, globe and anchor and title of Marine. But with a new law bearing down on the service to make both locations support coed training -- within five years at Parris Island and eight at San Diego -- the Marine Corps is exploring different options, Maj. Eric Flanagan, Berger's spokesman told Military.com. "The question becomes, 'Are we better off just using military construction dollars to create a new third site, or put that money into our existing sites?'" he said. "No decisions have been made. We're not investing any money anywhere else. It's just an option we're talking about."

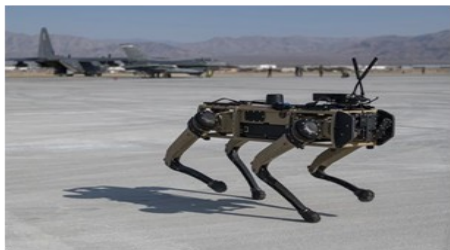
8 Surviving Members of Merrill's Marauders to Receive Congressional Gold Medal: After being run out of the Burmese jungle by the Japanese in May of 1942, Army General Stillwell had, according to one war correspondent, appeared "like the wrath of God and cursing like a fallen angel." The general didn't mince his words either, telling reporters that the joint expedition between a small contingent of American, British, and Chinese troops "got a hell of a beating. We got run out of Burma and it is humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back, and retake it." The following year a determined Stillwell took a major step toward getting his wish, as allied leaders, many who sought to rectify the previous campaign's novice display of jungle fighting, mapped out a plan for a ground unit trained and equipped to engage in "long-range penetration" missions. In what was to be the forerunner for today's special forces units, 3,000 American men volunteered for the newly formed 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) — code name: Galahad. Dubbed Merrill's Marauders after their commander, the men were tasked with a "dangerous and hazardous mission" behind Japanese lines in Burma, where the fall of the country's capital of Rangoon had severely threatened the Allied supply line to China. The Marauders were tasked with cutting off Japanese communications and supply lines and pushing enemy forces north out of the town of Myitkyina, the only city with an all-weather airstrip in Northern Burma. Although operational for only a few months, Merrill's Marauders gained a fierce reputation for hard fighting and tenacity as the first American infantry force to see ground action in Asia. After five months of combat, 95 percent of the Marauders were dead, wounded, or deemed no longer medically fit for combat. By the time the force was deactivated in August 1944, many, including Congress, wondered whether Stillwell had sacrificed the Marauders due to poor planning and his own dreams of glory and revenge.

Automatic US Citizenship Restored for All Military Children Born Overseas: In compliance with a new law, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has changed the rules to give children born overseas to U.S. military families and civil servants immediate American citizenship. The changes recently adopted by USCIS will allow military families and civil servants to avoid a laborious and potentially costly application process to get citizenship for their children, according to Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., a sponsor of the new law passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump. The new law scraps rules put in place in August 2019 that caused widespread confusion for military families. The August 2019 rules still gave citizenship in the vast majority of cases, but said that it was not automatic for children born overseas if the parents adopted them while serving abroad; the parents became U.S. citizens after their children were born; or the parents were American citizens but lived abroad. The new law will make sure that children born while stationed abroad, as well as stepchildren and adopted children, will automatically acquire U.S. citizenship. In addition, service members and civil servants who were subject to the old rules can now avoid application fees that can amount to \$1,000 or more to gain citizenship for the children, she said.

Eleven suspects charged for marriage fraud scheme involving immigrants, US Army soldiers: According to the indictment from the Department of Justice, the purpose of the conspiracy was to help foreign-born nationals evade U.S. immigration laws and obtain lawful permanent residence status and for the soldiers to receive Basic Allowance for Housing to live off post instead of the barracks.

Burn Pits Linked to Chronic Cough and Wheezing in Veterans, New Study Shows: A new report from a scientific advisory panel finds some evidence that chronic respiratory symptoms, such as coughing and wheezing, are linked to service in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War and post-9/11 combat environments such as Iraq and Afghanistan. But the research, published recently by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, found there was not enough evidence or data to conclude a link between combat deployments to the Middle East and Afghanistan and many serious pulmonary diseases -- a finding likely to disappoint thousands of service members who believe their poor health was caused by open-air burn pits used by the U.S. military for waste disposal or by the dust or emissions inhaled while they served overseas. The Department of Veterans Affairs asked the National Academies in 2018 to review existing scientific and medical research to determine whether such deployments contributed to the development of respiratory illnesses in U.S. service members. An 11-member panel led by Dr. Mark Utell, professor of medicine and environmental medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center, could not definitively prove any association between deployment and more than 20 health conditions, including non-cancerous respiratory disorders such as sinusitis, sleep apnea, constrictive bronchiolitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, as well as cancers of the lungs, esophagus, mouth and nasal passages. The "limited or suggested evidence" characterization might make it easier for thousands of Gulf veterans with such symptoms to receive VA disability compensation, but the VA would have to accept the ruling and add the symptoms to a list of illnesses presumed to be connected to overseas service in the Persian Gulf and post-9/11.

Air Force Is Testing Robo-Guard Dogs to Protect Its Planes: The U.S. Air Force trotted out a robotic dog during a major exercise last weekend at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. The Ghost Robotics Vision 60 robot, a four-legged dog-like robot, was seen alongside base security personnel. The service is apparently testing the robo-dogs as a way to patrol small battle spaces and provide needed data resources. The exercise was part of a test of the Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS), an Air Force project designed to provide command, control, and sensor fusion not only for U.S. Air Force units, but also for other services and potentially allied military forces. ABMS was also used to provide Air Force sensor data to a U.S. Army howitzer that shot down an incoming simulated cruise missile.



Meet Nova, the Air Force Academy's new Mascot:

The Air Force Academy's newest mascot now has a name.

The female gyrfalcon has been named *Nova*, the academy announced in a tweet Sept. 3, 2020. "Nova, an exceedingly bright star, represents the future of our Academy as a commissioning source for both Air & Space Force officers," the academy said.



Trump Lauds Medal of Honor Recipient for Hostage Rescue: President Donald Trump bestowed the Medal of Honor on a U.S. soldier Sep. 10, 2020, calling him "one of the bravest men anywhere in the world" for his role in a daring 2015 mission to rescue dozens of hostages who were set to be executed by Islamic State militants in Iraq. Trump picked the 19th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks to honor Sgt. Maj. Thomas "Patrick" Payne, who negotiated a barrage of enemy gunfire and repeatedly entered a burning building in a harrowing effort that saved more than 70 hostages. The president said that Payne, who was in high school on 9/11, and his classmates learned about the attacks on the United States from a teacher who solemnly relayed what had happened. "In that moment, Pat was called to action," Trump said. "He knew that his country needed him." Trump highlighted Payne's "small-town America" upbringing and his family's commitment to public service. The soldier grew up in Batesburg-Leesville and Lugoff, South Carolina. His wife, Alison, is a nurse, his father is a police officer, and his two brothers serve in the Army and Air Force. Payne, 36, was assigned to lead a team clearing one of two buildings known to house hostages in a nighttime operation in the northern Iraq province of Kirkuk. Ten to 20 Army soldiers, including Payne and Master Sgt. Joshua L. Wheeler, headed toward the second building that was partially on fire. Kurdish commandos were pinned down by the gunfire. Wheeler was shot and killed, the first American killed in action since the U.S. launched renewed military intervention in Iraq against the Islamic State in 2014. Twenty ISIS fighters also were killed in the operation. Payne called his fellow soldiers' actions on that day "awe-inspiring." "It makes me proud to be an American," he said. Their legacies live on in this Medal of Honor."



Decorated Iraq War Veteran Denied Community Supervision, facing 5 Years in Prison for Pot possession: An Alabama circuit judge Samuel Junkin denied a motion to send Sean Worsley to a community supervision program instead of state prison. Worsley had been arrested for marijuana possession while driving through Alabama; the drug had been prescribed to him legally in Arizona. Worsley is sitting in Pickens County Jail awaiting transport to state prison to begin serving a five-year sentence for marijuana possession. Junkin's denial came after months of legal efforts to keep Worsley, a Purple Heart recipient, out of prison. Advocates for Worsley's release said they believed they had an iron-clad case for his transfer to community supervision. Junkin's denial cited issues with Worsley's pre-incarceration probation and felony charges. Previously, he had been arrested for non-violent marijuana charges and pleaded guilty. In his letter denying the request for community supervision, Junkin wrote that Worsley "fled this jurisdiction both times he was released, failed to comply with any condition of bond or probation and has five felony convictions," according to court documents. At the time of his initial arrest, Worsley and his wife, Eboni, were driving through Alabama on their way to North Carolina to help his mother repair extensive hurricane damage to her home. After the arrest, the Worsleys returned to Arizona, where they endured bouts of homelessness and joblessness resulting from the case in Alabama.

THE LOSS OF GOOD SOLDIERS

Jerry Hughes remembers US Army Sgt Paul Edward Thomas of Esbon, Kansas who died April 5, 1970 in Vietnam Where Jerry served as an Infantry Lieutenant with Company B 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade; Americal Division. Jerry wrote the following letter in June 1981, as both a personal catharsis, and tribute to a very special young man.

It was a typical day on Hill 251 with my Platoon off and relaxing for once. The 2nd platoon was off the hill on a day patrol and the 3rd platoon, like us, was also taking it easy. I remember how beautiful the day was - clear, sunny, and quiet. The day before, the 2nd platoon had come across 2-3 Vietcong soldiers bathing in a river. They had made the mistake of taking off all their gear, leaving no security, and paid dearly for their mistake. Part of the gear the 2nd platoon confiscated were 6-8 U.S. hand grenades the VC had attached to their webbing. The hand grenades were brought into the Company perimeter and set beside the Company CP (command post).

So here we are the next day and the "Old Man," Company Commander 1LT Joe Genereux, calls my RTO (radio telephone operator) to send someone up to the CP to dispose of the grenades. Anyhow, the next thing I know, a squad leader, Paul Thomas, is hollering, "Fire in the Hole," and pulls the pin on the first grenade and throws it down the side of our perimeter hill. Just a reminder; we had been working with live M-16, M-60, and M-79 ammo, claymores and grenades daily for 10 months as a unit. He was using the "by the book" method to dispose of captured ammunition. That is to put it in a hole, pack it with C-4 plastic explosive and blow it in place. But again, we slept with U.S. hand grenades, and field expedient was simply to pull the pin and toss it over the side. I sat up halfway and looking toward the sound, I saw Thomas pulling the second pin, and hollering "Fire in the Hole," and tossing the grenade. Again the huge explosion and at that time I put two and two together – captured grenades by 2nd platoon and Thomas was getting rid of them.

I remember returning to resting and waited for other 4 or so grenades, when "BOOM," the explosion sounded to be right behind me instead of halfway down the hill. Dirt was flying through my position, and before the first cries of "medic," my instinct told me there was trouble and BIG trouble. There are certain moments in one's life that will live for eternity, kind of like when your entire life flashes before you. No doubt there were screams for "medic," "lieutenant," "mother," and all the other last effort cries man is capable of in his final moments or the last moments of his buddies. When you're scared, frightened and alarmed, your ability to react multiplies tenfold. I should think it took me 3-5 seconds to get from the prone position to Thomas's side. To me, the hand grenade is the most lethal weapon the Army has in its "up close" Warfare arsenal. Yes, the claymore can do a J-O-B, but the hand grenade with its volume of sheer velocity and exploding metal is awesome. The last of the captured U.S. grenades went off in Thomas's hand at about the moment he was in the wind-up for the baseball toss downhill. Evidently its fuse was shortened by the Vietcong to be used as a booby trap at a later date. Little did they know it would eventually find its mark!

As I think back on that moment, I think my whole world stopped for me, changed, crumbled, and has never been the same. One must picture a friend he loves dearly with raw bone and flash hanging where before was a "Golden Gloves" boxing champion's hand. When I say no hand, I mean just cut-off at the wrist. The poor guy never knew what hit him. There was a piece of shrapnel through his throat the size of a penny roll and also one lodged in his forehead, almost the size of two quarters. He was moaning incoherently, lying in a fetal position on his back, looking up at me with his eyes rolled back, three quarters white. Our medic was working on Cecil "Smitty" Smith who had been standing 10 feet to Thomas's right rear. Smitty also took one in the throat, and was dying rapidly. Two other men had also been injured, but not as bad. And here I am with my main man Thomas, my most squared away and respected of all, moaning like an animal. I remember screaming for another medic, telling my soldiers

to call a “freak ‘in DUSTOFF,” and saying “God –Please don’t let him die, PLEASE!” Did I apply life saving techniques? I’m sure I did. No doubt I wrapped his hand and told him I was there and to hang-on, but when one’s hit really badly, only a prayer is in place. At the time of the accident, there was a Loach chopper on the other side of the Company CP bringing in supplies or intelligence, I don’t recall. The pilot was saying to the CO (Company Commander) he wasn’t a DUSTOFF and that we should request one from Hawk Hill, our Battalion firebase, a 10 minute wait or so. I told the CO that I had two men dying and that if that chopper doesn’t land on my side of the perimeter immediately, I was going to personally blow him out of the sky. He did come and we carried Thomas and Smitty over to him about 30 feet away. His chopper was small, he couldn’t land as our side of the perimeter was about a 45 degree slope, and I remember having a hard time lifting up Thomas into the small back seat. Smitty went in somehow also, and he took off. About 5-10 Minutes later, I guess, a Huey Slick helicopter came in and took the fellows who were slightly injured to the Aid Station at Hawk Hill.

Although it seemed like an eternity, it still happened so fast. After the choppers, the dust settled and my men dispersed, disappearing into their foxholes, bunkers, and what have you. I remember Commander, Joe G, promising me he would let me know how Thomas was as soon as he got word. Joe knew me well, and knew how much Thomas meant to me and the platoon. At that point I had written Thomas off. I knew he was dying when we put him on the chopper. If he didn’t die, he would have been a vegetable judging by the size of shrapnel in his forehead. I remember going around to my men and trying to be strong when inside I was devastated. I particularly recall going to Snyder, Thomas’s point man. What a team we were, Snyder, Thomas, myself moving in the order - smooth, efficient, and deadly. Never a word be said, each other knew what to do, and I looked forward to the days Thomas’ 2nd squad had point with me. Snyder was in his bunker and said nothing. His eyes looked right through me. No doubt I said, “What can I say?” and left him there alone. There was an empty bunker upon which I sat on top and just cried. Not the kind of cry with just tears rolling down your face, but balling like a baby, right there in the open on that beautiful sunny day. I’m crying now too, but that’s OK, because I don’t want to forget his death and I know I never will.

My Platoon Sergeant, an E7 lifer type, but nice guy and respected, he said to me, “Lieutenant, crying don’t do no good, it isn’t goanna bring Thomas back, and it’s not good for the men to see you cry.” I remember saying “This freak ‘in war,” and all that stuff and saying “I don’t care if the men see me cry.” Its’ all a blur, we went to sleep, got up the day after, the war marched on. The CO informed me the next day that both Thomas and Smitty didn’t make it. It was anti-climatic at that point. I know I didn’t even cry when he told me. I had not cried in Nam prior to Thomas’ death, nor did I cry again before I left.

Those were hard times for my men. Perhaps we all became more ruthless in our desire to get even with the enemy, but I think for me it was the straw that broke the camel’s back. I was beaten and started to think of getting out of the field after extending out there for 10 months. No amount of enemy killed or wounded would bring ‘ole Thomas back.

All that happened in April of ’70 and I recall it as if were yesterday. Sometimes I think of what his parents are doing in Kansas, and I wish I could visit them and tell them what a great man he was. I don’t think I could take the pressure, would probably breakdown, cry, etc., but I’m willing to try. I find myself crying a lot lately. At the end of the movie “Coming Home,” when John Voight is telling those high school kids what it’s like to see a buddy die in your arms, I could feel it man. I could see Thomas again and again. I guess you could say; I was lucky to know him.