



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



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Volume 11

“A Soldier Once And Always”

December 2021

Commanders Corner: Hello to all my brothers and families and friends and brothers from our sister units! I begin our newsletter by extending my hope that everyone was able to have a happy and safe Thanksgiving and I hope you were able to enjoy it with family and friends since last year was not a good year.



I still remember the great time that we had at this year’s reunion and hopefully we will have an even larger turnout at next year’s reunion scheduled to be held in Washington DC.

Our Secretary/Treasurer John Woyansky has reported that we have a new member since the last Newsletter. Welcome to Lonnie Dillon and his wife Diane to our family. Lonnie served with Battery B and HHC of the 2nd of the 1st. Lonnie and Diane reside in Anna IL and he is retired from the USPS .Lonnie, I hope you and Diane can join us in DC next year.

As we decided at the reunion we now have reverted to a Bi-Monthly newsletter so I am asking that everyone think how you can contribute to the newsletter by providing Rich articles and or stories that he can use. If you have remembrances which I know everyone does about our days in Vietnam or things that have happened since we returned please send some notes or ideas to Rich and he will edit them into the newsletter. I know when we got together at this year’s reunion there were lots of stories being told that I know many of our brothers that were not able to attend would love to enjoy.

As we enter into December and the holiday season I hope that everyone is planning to get together with family and friends and enjoy time together. None of us are getting younger and we need to make all our time count. It’s a time for us to remember those of our families and our brothers that we lost in the past year. The Holidays can be sad times for many so if you know someone that is suffering please reach out to them and try to make the holidays better for them. Volunteering to help those in need or not as fortunate is great way to spend time during the holidays. Many of our veterans of all our conflicts are struggling so if you can please reach out to a Vet and help make the holidays more enjoyable for them.

I want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy 2022. God Bless you all!

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

Dwight Sypolt.
Commander



The willingness of our young people to serve min any war no matter how justified shall be directly proportional to how they perceive how the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.

Thomas Jefferson

From H Duckworth O'Brien's "A Grunt's Life": : **Christmas in the bush:** Only a grunt would hump an artificial Christmas tree and ornaments into combat. Shows how far we went to stay connected to traditions back home. In the Boonies, Christmas dinner was delivered in marmite containers. If you were one of the lucky ones, the ice cream was still solid enough to resemble ice cream. If not, you just drank the watery mess. It was, after all, Christmas.

Thank you for thinking of Bruce: Bruce Nielsen would like to thank everyone who thought to send him “Get Well” cards while he was sick.

State Department to Form New Cyber Office to Face Proliferating Global Challenges: The State Department plans organizational changes to confront international cyber security challenges such as ransom ware and waning global digital freedom, U.S. officials said, the latest overhaul by the Biden administration aimed at treating cyber threats as a top-tier national-security issue. The restructuring will include the creation of a new bureau of cyberspace and digital policy to be led by a Senate-confirmed ambassador-at-large and a new, separate special envoy for critical and emerging technology, officials said. Both positions will report directly to Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman for at least the first year, the officials said. The administration hasn’t decided who will fill either role.

UNC Law Students Help Vietnam War Veteran get Purple Heart: When Army veteran John Spencer Jr. returned home from the Vietnam War at 21 years old, he was immediately stripped of his dog tags, uniform and dignity. “It was almost like being a criminal,” Spencer said. Instead of being recognized as a war hero, Spencer was given an other-than-honorable discharge. For more than 50 years, he was denied the veteran status, military honors and education, job and health benefits he deserved. “Knowing that I had a discharge like that, I couldn’t really ask for help,” Spencer said. “I held it within.” But all that changed recently, when Spencer, 73, was pinned with a Purple Heart, a combat infantryman badge and a Vietnam Gallantry Cross outside the law school at UNC-Chapel Hill. “All I really wanted was when they laid me to rest they just drape that flag across my coffin,” said Spencer. He never gave up the fight for that recognition and sought help from the UNC School of Law’s Military and Veterans Law Clinic. The clinic provides pro bono legal support for low-income former service members looking to upgrade or correct their military discharge status.



Advocates push for Space on National Mall to Honor Global War on Terror Troops: The U.S. military’s involvement in Afghanistan is now over, but advocates are working to make sure those deployments — and the fights still going on now — are never forgotten. Veterans groups and lawmakers are pushing for Congress to approve a new Global War on Terror memorial on the National Mall as a permanent reminder of the last 20 years of conflict overseas, including Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations. The effort took a significant step forward with inclusion of language in the House draft of the annual defense authorization act, a massive military budget policy measure that has passed out of Congress annually for six decades. Senate lawmakers also made a bid to approve the National Mall location in that chamber, but were blocked in efforts to fast-track the legislation. Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa and herself a veteran of the Iraq War, said the move is needed to remind Americans of the sacrifices made by hundreds of thousands of troops in recent years.

US Vaccine Mandate for Soldiers Survives a Legal Challenge: The Biden administration’s push for vaccine mandates, under fire in courts around the nation, has survived a legal challenge headed by former Trump campaign lawyer Sidney Powell over vaccines in the military. Powell, who tried to flip the result of the 2020 presidential election with a series of failed lawsuits based on conspiracy theories, lost a request to temporarily block the Pentagon’s COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of disgruntled service members. The suit didn’t come close to meeting the high bar for winning a preliminary injunction, U.S. District Judge Allen Winsor ruled Friday in Pensacola, Florida. The ruling is a crucial early victory for the U.S. Defense Department. A ruling against the U.S. also would have been a blow to President Joe Biden, whose broader vaccine mandate for companies with at least 100 employees was temporarily blocked a week earlier by a federal appeals court in a suit by Republican-led states. “The plaintiffs have not met their extraordinary burden of showing the mandate lacks any rationality,” Winsor, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, said in the ruling. The suit, which also names the Food and Drug Administration, was filed in October by Powell’s Dallas-based nonprofit group Defending the Republic. Powell had requested a court order blocking implementation of the mandate but also undoing the FDA’s full approval of the Pfizer Inc.-Biotech SE vaccine.

Army Reviewing its Height and Weight Standards for the first time in Decades: Questions about changing the height and weight requirements have been brought up regularly to Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston as he’s visited soldiers at various installations over the last several months, Grinston said last week at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The standards haven’t been reviewed in roughly 30 years, and Grinston admitted that while he originally thought soldiers were asking to “get bigger,” he found that what they were really asking is, “Do we have the height and weight tables right?” “The rationale is, it was time to go look at it,” Grinston said. “What technologies do we have today that didn’t exist 30 years ago? There’s a lot of new technology, but can we afford it? Is it better or worse? We don’t know. That’s the whole point of the study.” The Army’s study, which is being conducted by the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine and Army Center for Initial Military Training, was first reported in July and began at Fort Bragg on Oct. 18. Officials said last week that they expect it to take roughly six to nine months before changes can be recommended to senior Army leaders.

Life is short; spend it with people who make you laugh and feel loved.

Army Expands its Reviews of Brigade Command Sergeants Major: The Army has begun a new program to take a closer look at Command Sergeants Major eligible to lead brigades in an effort to weed out potentially toxic leaders. “It wasn’t that the old system was bad. It’s just how do we pick a better leader?” Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston told reporters recently. “We want to move into the 21st century with really good talent management and assess and ensure that we have the absolute best leaders for our soldiers. Our soldiers deserve the best we can give them.” The program mirrors one recently launched for senior officers that has shown to give soldiers more fit and capable commanders, according to the Army Talent Management Task Force. About 490 noncommissioned officers will pass through Fort Knox, Ky., this month to conduct the in-person assessment, said Grinston, who traveled to the base to observe the increased screening process. These command sergeants major advise brigade commanders on leading up to 5,000 soldiers. “You get one more look at a leader, and it’s a completely holistic view,” Grinston said. The Sergeant Major Assessment Program evaluates some of the Army’s most senior NCOs using cognitive and no cognitive evaluations, tests on written and verbal communication, peer and subordinate feedback and a physical fitness test, according to the Army Talent Management Task Force. Candidates also interview with a psychologist and participate in an in-person panel review in which reviewers cannot physically see the candidate.

US Troops ID'd Family Members Trapped in Afghanistan, but None Qualified for Evacuation: About 60 service members reported up the chain of command that they still had family members stranded in Afghanistan following a Pentagon memo Nov. 2 requesting the information. None of those family members qualified for assisted evacuation by the State Department, according to the Pentagon’s top spokesman John Kirby. “They were all evaluated and thus far, in the evaluation, none have been determined to be eligible for parolee status,” Kirby said Monday, referencing the government’s term for Afghans who qualify for evacuation as direct relatives of U.S. citizens or residents. The Pentagon, which has successfully helped evacuate other relatives, did not say how many family members the State Department reviews this month affected. The numbers have been a shifting target since the complete U.S. military withdrawal on Aug. 30. Many of the troops who have attempted to get relatives evacuated were Afghan interpreters who immigrated to the U.S. and enlisted. The State Department is in charge of determining whether Afghans qualify for “parole” and evacuation. They must be the spouse or child under 21 years old of a U.S. citizen or resident, according to the agency’s criteria.

NATO Chief Signals Support to Ukraine Amid Russian Troop Buildup: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has assured Ukraine of the alliance’s backing amid what he called an “unusual concentration” of Russian forces in the area. Speaking at a press conference recently in Brussels with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Stoltenberg said NATO members would continue to provide “significant political and practical support,” to Ukraine as the standoff continues. Ukrainian officials fear the current military context could foreshadow a repeat of Russian moves that led to Moscow’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. NATO and the European Union consider that claim to be in violation of international law. Asked about Russia’s posture, Kuleba said Moscow’s intentions are still hard to read. “It is premature to say what exactly will be the Russian scenario whether the military build-up is the main plan, and it will be accompanied by efforts to destabilize Ukraine from the inside, or whether the military build-up will serve as a background force, as a background argument for destabilizing efforts undertaken by Russia domestically,” he said. “We have to be ready for all scenarios, for all options.”

POW/MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three burial updates and two new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Cpl. Leon E. Clevenger, 21**, of Durham, North Carolina, was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 11, 1950, while involved in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army in the vicinity of Chonui and Choch'iwon, South Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Clevenger will be buried on Dec. 11, 2021, in his hometown.

-- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Charles McMackin, 26**, of Boston, was assigned to 68th Bombardment Squadron, 44th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which McMackin was serving as a bombardier crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. McMackin will be buried on April 14, 2022, in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

-- **Army Sgt. Howard R. Belden, 19**, of Hague, New York, was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined.

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. John J. Heffernan, Jr., 24**, was assigned to 490th Bomb Squadron, 341st Bomb Group, 10th Air Force. On Feb. 22, 1944, the B-25G Mitchell bomber on which Heffernan was serving as a navigator burst into flames and crashed near Letpadaung. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending.

-- **Army Tech. Sgt. Ross H. Thompson, 50**, was assigned to the Finance Department, U.S. Army Forces Far East, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula in 1942. Thompson was among those captured and held at the Cabanatuan POW Camp, where he reportedly died on Dec. 10, 1942, and was buried. Interment services are pending.

Remains of World War II soldier from New Jersey identified: Authorities have identified the remains of a World War II soldier from New Jersey who was killed in Germany and buried in Belgium. Scientists used dental and anthropological analysis, as well as DNA, to determine the remains were Army Sgt. Larry Wassil of Bloomfield, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency said recently. Wassil, 33, was leading a three-man reconnaissance team scouting enemy positions during the Hürtgen Forest offensive, near Hürtgen, Germany, on Dec. 28, 1944, when they took enemy machine gun fire and scattered, officials said. Two of the men found each other, but Wassil was missing and presumed dead. An agency historian determined remains originally discovered by German wood cutters and recovered in 1952, possibly were Wassil, the agency said. They were disinterred from the Ardennes American Cemetery in 2019 and sent for examination and identification. Wassil will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery

Treat people the way you want to be treated; Talk to people the way you want to be talked to; Respect is earned not given.

Army Korean War soldier killed in 1950 buried after remains identified: Cpl. Walter Smead was finally laid to rest Monday near his rural upstate New York hometown, seven decades after he was killed in the Korean War and months after his remains were officially accounted for with help from DNA analysis. He was honored by a younger brother and sister with only hazy memories of him, by nieces and nephews born well after he died in 1950, by Patriot Guard Riders who escorted his hearse to the cemetery on rumbling motorcycles and by gray-haired veterans who came to give a man they never met a final salute. “It’s really important for Walter to be home. It gives the family closure,” Wolff said before the burial. “But more importantly, we can be proud of what he accomplished over there. He didn’t come home alive, but he did his job the way he was supposed to. And we need to honor that.” Smead was buried with full military honors at Gerald B. H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery, not far from the remote Adirondack town of Hadley, where he grew up.

Alabama town honors brothers who died in Pearl Harbor Attack: The town of Coaling hosted a ceremony to dedicate a monument honoring two native sons who died in the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. Woodrow Jones, 22, and Daniel Jones, 19, of Coaling enlisted in the Navy in early 1941 and were assigned to the USS Arizona at the Pearl Harbor Navy Base in Oahu, Hawaii. On Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese launched a surprise aerial attack on Pearl Harbor, killing 2,403 U.S. service members and 68 civilians. More than half of those killed in the attack were aboard the USS Arizona, including Woodrow and Daniel Jones. A monument to the memory of brothers Daniel P. Jones and Woodrow Wilson Jones, men who died aboard the USS Arizona Dec. 7, 1941, during the surprise attack was dedicated in Coaling, a town in Tuscaloosa County, Ala., Friday, Nov. 12, 2021. Jamie Jones, one of several relatives of the Jones brothers in attendance at the ceremony, thanked the town of Coaling for dedicating the monument to her great-uncles. “This monument will stand strong for years and years to come, reminding us and our loved ones how blessed we are to have soldiers, so we can have the life that the Lord intended us to have,” Jamie Jones said.

Community Gathers for Veteran’s Funeral, Family not Located: Many of the 100-plus attendees at the recent funeral for Army Spc. Michael J. Gilmer at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery had never met the veteran. Gilmer, 52, died in late October in the Fort Harrison Veterans Affairs Medical Center’s intensive care unit. Hospital staff said Gilmer has family, but they could not be contacted. “It’s not often someone dies totally unconnected like this,” said hospital chaplain Tim Weidlich, speaking of patients at the local VA hospital. Staff did not know much about Gilmer. After his death, they discovered he had received the Army Commendation Medal for his part in securing Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the 506th Regiment Combat Team, established during World War II, and the 4th Infantry Division, based out of Fort Carson, Colorado.

No Afghan Family Members of U.S. troops have been eligible to come to the U.S.: The Defense Department has received requests to get their family members out of Afghanistan and legally into the United States, but none of them qualify for an immediate legal residency status. Over the course of the 20-year war in Afghanistan, many Afghan-born immigrants joined the U.S. military or became DoD civilians and contractors, while members of their family have remained in the country. “Thus far of the ones that have been studied and reviewed, they are not eligible for parole status,” Kirby said. State is working with DoD, the Homeland Security Department, as well as advocacy groups and non-profits to identify people who want to leave the country and help coordinate their arrival in the United States, according to a State spokesman.

5 Convicted of Stealing Veteran, Social Security Benefits: Five men have been convicted in South Florida of running a scheme to steal more than \$1.8 million in veteran and Social Security benefits. A federal jury in Fort Lauderdale found Omar Shaquille Bailey and Ronaldo Garfield Green guilty last week of conspiracy to commit fraud following an eight-day trial, according to court documents. They're scheduled to be sentenced in January. Jamare Mason pleaded guilty to his role in the scheme on the second day of trial. Two others, Kadeem Gordon and Mario Ricketts, had pleaded guilty before the trial. Two other men suspected of participating in the fraud haven't been captured. From 2012 to 2017, the group attempted to redirect over \$1.8 million in benefits from more than 100 disabled veterans and Social Security beneficiaries, officials said. The scheme resulted in the actual loss of nearly \$1 million, though the federal government reimbursed the victims for the full amounts of their stolen benefits.

Memories from the Past: A half of a century ago or for that matter nearly 51 years ago, I was issued the pictured wallet by the Americal 23rd Infantry Division. It was May 1970 when I was assigned to the 723rd HQ & A Co. in Chu-Lai, South Vietnam. When I DEROS'd from Nam in April 1971, I brought the wallet home as a memento and to honor my combat n't as fortunate as I came home alive. myself into civil-turning home wanted to do was leave my memoirs of Nam behind. In the span worked as a Federal Civil Service at the Defense Presidio of Monterey, CA. I also had a successful 36 years of head coaching ball teams on women's basketball teams on both high school and collegiate level. But also, my mind would wander off to my Vietnam experience. Now retired from my work and from coaching, I was rummaging through some boxes and found this Americal Division wallet which I have not seen for nearly 51 years. I had to pause and think what we all went through just to be where we are at today. Finding this wallet made me realize that it seems so far ago. But yet it seems like yesterday. AMEN.



Pharmacy Changes Coming to TRICARE: TRICARE has announced that beginning on Dec. 15, 2021, there will be changes to the retail in-network pharmacies. Express Scripts is the TRICARE pharmacy contractor with oversight of home delivery, military pharmacy, and civilian contract facilities. It is recommended that you contact your pharmacy to see if it will remain in network. Find a participating pharmacy near you and any pharmacy changes.



A government big enough to give you everything you want, is big enough to take away everything you have.'
Thomas Jefferson

Thousands of Afghans Evacuated during U.S. withdrawal Awaiting Resettlement: The U.S. government calls the 50-acre sprawl of tents on this desert Air Force base a "village." The 4,300 Afghans temporarily housed here are the government's "guests." And the landscape of tents and trailers is called Aman Omid, which in Persian means "peace and hope" — the feelings U.S. officials say they are trying to foster here. More than two months after the United States' chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, the federal government is still in the process of resettling roughly 45,000 Afghans housed in temporary camps on U.S. military bases after they were airlifted from their home country. Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico is among eight facilities that became hubs for one of the largest humanitarian resettlement operations in U.S. history. Biden administration officials say about 73,000 Afghans have arrived in the United States since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. Holloman received 7,100, half of them children, between late August and early October. They include Afghans who risked their lives to aid the U.S. government during its two-decade war effort in their country, officials say. Others are relatives of those who served or of U.S. citizens, as well as many others who felt at risk in Taliban-held Afghanistan. "We are this generation's Ellis Island," Curtis Velasquez, the Air Force colonel who serves as the village "governor," told reporters on a recent tour of the base. Reporters were shown an adult English class in progress, an impromptu cricket game and a cavernous dining hall that serves halal meals labeled in English, Dari and Pashto. "We take pride in what we are doing here for our Afghan guests," Velasquez said. He described the camp as "a safe haven where they can transition from that survival mode to a thriving mode." But the long-term fates of many Afghan evacuees are uncertain. While officials say all of the Afghans have been heavily vetted, most will start new lives in the United States as short-term "humanitarian parolees," without an immediate path to permanent residency or the full host of benefits and services offered to refugees. To stay in the United States permanently, many — including those who served the U.S. mission — will need to navigate a severely backlogged visa and immigration system.

Inside a Wisconsin Army Base Where Nearly 13,000 Afghans Await an Uncertain Future: Dozens of Afghan children cheered on their older brothers as they played a lively game of soccer with U.S. Army soldiers at a military base in rural Wisconsin. As the kids ran up and down the pitch, their traditional long pants and tunics mixed with flashy, donated jackets and sneakers stamped with American logos. Across the field, some of their mothers watched and waved as they hung laundry out to dry. Fort McCoy, a sprawling Army base surrounded by miles of cornfields and Christmas tree farms, is hosting the largest population of new Afghan evacuees in the U.S. Since the first families arrived in late August, it has grown into a small city of more than 12,600 refugees, almost half of them children, along with thousands more military and support staff. For the Afghans, it has been a blur of government interviews, paperwork, vaccinations, and talking to family left behind when they fled Kabul amid the chaotic U.S. withdrawal. But by the time a small group of reporters received a tightly-controlled tour on Sept. 30—the first time journalists were allowed onto the base—their surreal new life seemed to be settling into a routine. Afghan families have been sorted into neighborhoods of orderly white barracks, where they are waiting for their immigration paperwork, employment authorizations and health screenings to be processed. Kids are visible everywhere on the base, high-fiving soldiers, playing outside, and making arts and crafts while their parents learn key phrases in English classes. ("Would you like to pay in cash or card?") Along with vaccinations, they are being given culturally appropriate clothing and food, military officials say.

Closure for a Former Enemy's Family

by
John Shoemaker

We decided to sell our home in Massachusetts and downsize. I dislike the typical project for so many baby boomers. It marks another major change in life. I went to the attic and started working through years of accumulations of "stuff". Inside an old storage chest was a box and inside that was another box with a mix of items and an old wallet. I recognized it from my days as an Army infantry officer. The "jungle wallet" contained my old Army ID in sealed plastic sleeves, some pictures and tucked away, hidden in one sleeve, was a small packet about 2 inches wide and 3 inches long. It was a military ID of a North Vietnamese soldier that looked like a small passbook with 8 pages, including his photograph.

I sat down and turned the pages of time and reflected on a momentous time in my life. It was August of 1970, we assaulted from dozens of Huey's to retake Kham Duc from the enemy. Located next to the Laotian border and at the mouth of the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail, it was an old Special Forces airstrip that was overrun by thousands of North Vietnamese soldiers during the on-going Tet Offensive in 1968.

Our mission involved the whole battalion and other units to return and interdict the enemy while we recover the remains of over a dozen Americans KIA and left behind in the panicked evacuation conducted under constant enemy fire. Heroics were common in this serious '68 battle and one Huey helicopter pilot, Major Patrick Brady, received the highest honor, the "Congressional Medal of Honor".

To prevent surprise attacks, my 23-man platoon was ordered to patrol down through thick jungle to a river that ran along the east side of the airstrip. We crossed the river and cut our way up the other side to the top of the plateau. It was not easy. Each of us were fully loaded with ammunition, weapons and rucksacks to patrol for several days. It took hours in the relentless heat and humidity and once we got to the top of other side of the gorge, we uncovered a well-used trail running north/south along the east side of the gorge. I decided to establish a night ambush position.

We slept on the damp ground just off-trail to avoid making noise digging foxholes. In the thick jungle, it was soon so dark I could not see my hand in front of my face. With my M-16 at my side, I dozed off believing all was quiet, except for the nagging insects and bugs. Then, BOOM! Before midnight the massive explosion jolted us. No one moved and we strained to see in the total darkness. Then another BAM! Both major explosions happened just a few yards from our position. Then it was silence until about 5:00 in the morning, just before daylight. "My God, what is happening!" I thought. Behind us, across the river at the airstrip, multiple explosions and gunfire erupted in an all-out battle. My worst fear was the possibility that our forces on the airstrip would be overrun again. We kept radio silence and waited. All possible fears raced through my mind and considered our options.

At daylight, I sent soldiers forward to search the area. We had caught two North Vietnamese soldiers walking along a trail and tripped our mines. They were killed instantly. That morning, North Vietnamese sappers carrying satchel charges were intent on blowing up our artillery battery with large Howitzers at the airstrip. Their attack failed and all 16 were killed. We took the weapons and ID's of the two we killed and moved out quickly to patrol the area and soon killed two more NVA soldiers. For some reason I kept one ID packet in my wallet and forgot about it. We engaged the enemy many more times after this routine nighttime nightmare. Such was life in I Corps during the Vietnam War.

Here it is, nearly 50 years later, I sat in my attic and thought about what to do with it. I decided to take pictures of it with a summary of what happened that day. I posted it on the Vietnam Veterans Face book page. I had been sharing dozens of pictures with members and made many new friends with fellow veterans. It truly is a lifelong bond of friendship.

Then came the surprise. A young Vietnamese man, Minh Thanh Dinh, who had lost his grandfather in the “War with America”, is now supporting the US AID program and contacted me. He asked if I would return the ID document if he could find the family. I agreed, of course, but what are the chances, I said to myself? It only took less than two weeks and he located the fallen soldier’s family. The soldier’s name was Bui van Mo and the ID listed his family name and Province. However, both his parents have since passed away, but Minh determined that Bui still had two brothers living deep in the countryside.

Soon, Minh flew from Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) to Hanoi and worked his way southwest into the mountains. Parking his car at the local military commander’s home, they both travelled by motorbike to the commune village of Dao. When the dirt road ended, they started the hike on foot, passing rice fields to their home with a tin roof and built on stilts. The van Mo family has three generations living under one roof, Bui’s youngest brother and his son and daughter with spouses and their children. They work a small plot of land to grow rice.

The Dao village is in the Tuan Dao Commune, the poorest commune in the Hoa Binh Province. Living a very simple life, the van Mo family have limited electricity, no toilets or running water, no air conditioning or other typical appliances of the western world. Minh saw the Government’s old letter that notified the family that Bui was missing in action on the battlefield and had no other information. They had no idea where, how or what happened when he died and where his remains are located. A ceremony was held where Minh personally offered the ID document I sent him along with a Vietnamese flag in honor of Bui van Mo. I also forwarded a personal letter of condolence from me with a brief description of the incident with a map I had drawn of the area at Kham Duc.

Pictures and video of their journey and ceremony were sent to me that show a time of remembrance, honor, respect and closure. When those you love are lost, feelings never leave, no matter who you are or where you live. War impacts generations to come establishing meaningful historical roots. It is not just about winner and losers. It is about family.
Postscript: Minh Dinh and others in Vietnam work with the US AID organization to help Vietnam develop its economy. He and others also volunteer to find and return the remains of soldiers who fought on both sides of the war. Incredibly, the North Vietnamese sacrificed over one million men and women fighting the war; 300,000 remain unaccounted for or MIA. This does not count the thousands of South Vietnamese or Americans who are still MIA to this day. We remember them always.

John Shoemaker can be reached at shoerfid@yahoo.com. He was a First Lieutenant, Platoon and Company Commander, 2 Battalion, First Infantry of the 196th Infantry Brigade of the Americal Division.