

THE

RED 5 DIAMOND

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AUG 2017

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5TH DIV U.S.

Red Diamond

Who held Vittori's tortured mass
And guarded well each mountain pass
That linked La France to Belle Alliance?
Red Diamond!

Who drove the Hun from out Freppelle,
Patrolled him out of Fontanelle,
The Bismarck, the Pilsner near Collet?
Red Diamond!

From Regneville to Seclours Ferme,
Then Bois de Claude, des Grandes Barbes
Made Hun retreat as they came on?
Red Diamond!

Bapt the Rappin, de la Pultice,
André Strasser, the Gray Troops,
Witnessed the valor of men who wore
Red Diamond!

Across the Meuse, the water said,
The army moved by you led,
In this land took the Fifth's the lead,
Red Diamond!

Swam river and canal, and earned
The heights on which the Hun were fanned,
From Din to Remahille those earned
Red Diamond!

The lure of peace started not their hand,
After the foe across the land,
They sped a tramping, fighting band,
Red Diamond!

On pinched hills among the Vosges,
Some Munchenberg, and where Meuse flows,
In glory sleep in last repose,
Red Diamond!

The wind blows softly thru the trees,
The sun sets red across the Meuse,
Blowing the banners of their,
Red Diamond!

For all that ever held high and free,
That speak of death without a fear,
Fought and exempl'd men that were
Red Diamond!

Diamonds cut and never worn,
Diamonds brilliant everywhere,
For jewel value, in war's affairs,
Red Diamond!

—A. P.

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JANUARY
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Deadline for next issue: Oct 14, 2017

2015 – 2016 SOCIETY OF THE FIFTH DIVISION OFFICERS ROSTER FEBRUARY 2016

OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

A. To perpetuate and memorialize the valiant acts and patriotic deeds of the Fifth Division; to electrify and unify that invisible current of fellowship, friendship and comradeship molded in the throes of war and the exigencies of a peacetime service, and promote the interests and welfare of its members.

B. To publish and preserve the history of the accomplishments of the Fifth Division and the Society, in war and peace, and set forth the gallant and heroic deeds of its members.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENTS

- *Maj. Gen. Hanson E. Ely (1919-22,24-25)
- *Col. Philip J. McCook(1922-23)
- *Dr. E. C. Morton (1925-28)
- *Maj. Gen. Paul B. Malone (1929-30)
- *Capt. Peter Murphy (1930)
- *Maj. Walter E. Aebischer (1930-32)
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- *W. Walter Healy (1934-35)
- *Lloyd A. Reder (1935-37)
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- *William Barton Bruce, Sr. (1938-39)
- *Emil Everts (1939-41)
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- *Aubrey Prewitt (1971-72)
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- *Kenneth Anderson (1975-76)
- *Howard Singer (1976-77)
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- *Stanley Piotrowski (1978-79)
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- *Harry Arquette (1980-81)
- *William Stanfield (1981-82)
- *Guido Bemasoni (1982-83)
- *Msgr. Harold Prudell (1983-84)
- *Chester Ball (1984-85)
- *William Colon (1985-86)
- *Robert Graves (1986-87)
- *Herman Schell (1987-88)
- *William Stanfield (1988-89)
- *John Goodman (1989-90)
- *William Upham (1990-91)
- *Bradley Brewer (1991-92)
- *Harry Arquette (1992-93)
- *Robert Rochon (1993-94)
- *Charles Coco (1994-95)
- *Michael Giannini (1995-96)
- *Don Brown (1996-97)
- *Cullen Slone (1997-98)
- *Jay Balderson (1998-99)
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- *Phil Maniscalco (2005-07)
- *Jim Spiller (2007-08)
- *Pat Andreoni (2008-09)
- *James "JJ" Jackson (2009-10)
- *Bernie "Buck" Kean (2010-12)
- *Steve Wheat (2012-13)
- *Bobby Moody (2013-2014)
- *Wayne Cumer (2014-2015)

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===== BREAKING NEWS ! =====

- **We urgently need** your updated email address, and home address, so the Red Diamond will be delivered to you on time every time. Please send your latest information to
John Estrada National Secretary: whitewater50@hotmail.com
- Below is a link to our GoFundMe account to support the Society of the Fifth Division's annual reunion in Kansas City this year. We are a small 501(c)(4) Veterans organization and any help is appreciated.
<https://www.gofundme.com/society-of-the-5th-division-reunion>
- The Society President will be awarding 11 Saint Barbara medals on Friday evening during the reunion to some of our field artillerymen.
- **ON THE COVER:** The image on this issues cover is a photo of the 1919 year Fifth Division Calendar. The battalions which comprised the Fifth Division then are subtly identified in the small diamonds that make up the overall red diamond in the center. The poem (though hard to read) has been copied and is found in the Editors Two Cents. It is an interesting piece worthy of contemplation in order to get an insight to how our WWI soldiers viewed the world then and their accomplishments.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

BOB DUDLEY
CHARLIE BATTERY, 5/4 ARTILLERY
5TH INFANTRY DIVISION (MECH)
AUGUST 2017

Well it is August 2017 – this will be my last Letter as your President for the Red Diamond. I cannot believe how fast time has flown by since I had the privilege of becoming the President of the Society. Thinking back to September 1970 when I first reported to the 5th Infantry Division in Vietnam, I never dreamed that I would be serving with my Red Devil brothers 47 years later. It was an honor in Vietnam and it is an honor today.

I do want to thank the entire Executive Board for their support over the past year. I believe we made some significant gains in the overall operation of the Board and I believe this will help the Society in the future. Both Dennis Thompson and Alex Candelaria have been great support as Vice Presidents helping me over the past year serving in a variety of functions while also planning their own reunions.

John Estrada as our Secretary has been instrumental in keeping our ranks filled with members as he manages both new membership and renewals. Our Treasurer, George Shoener, managed our finances in an outstanding manner and knocked the socks off of the annual audit. As always, our Historian Leigh Blood, has continued to update our lineage and historical records, plus research and answer a continual stream of questions from those interested in our division's history. Ron Van Beek has overseen our faith-based issues, administering to those families that lost Society members over the past year as well as conducting veteran suicide education within the civilian community.



Phil Maniscalco provided excellent procedural advice as our Judge Advocate, as well as providing invaluable input to the myriad of issues that arise over the course of the year while serving on a number of committees. Steve Wheat's performance as our Editor has been truly fantastic – just look at the great issues of the Red Diamond and you can see how hard he works. Our Quartermaster, Dennis Coulter, has been proactive in obtaining new items for our members and has managed this full-time position in a professional manner. Our Web Administrator, Joe Piechoinski, has continued to maintain a professional web site to educate both our current and potential members about the division and the Society. Finally, the two Past-Presidents officially serving on the Board, Wayne Cumer and Robb Robertson have been fantastic resources to keep me on track.

I also appreciate the support I've received from all Past-Presidents. Almost immediately after assuming the presidency, these Red Devil brothers talked to me and provided both counsel and support to ensure I knew I was not alone. Throughout the year they have supported me and helped me as I tried to do my best as your President.

Most of all I want to thank all of the members of the Society of the Fifth Division. This is your society and the officers serve for one reason – to make sure the Society accomplishes the objectives established nearly a century ago. I know in my heart that the original Dough Boys from World War I that started our Society would be proud of all of you for continuing the objectives and traditions of the Red Devils. I encourage all of you to continue your support for our Society and continually look for new members.

Finally I want to address next month's reunion. As I've mentioned in previous articles, formal events are from Friday September 8th through Sunday September 10th. We will start with a tour of Kansas City on Friday morning and then present the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara to 11 of our artillerymen that evening. Saturday will begin with a tour of the National World War I Museum and Memorial in the morning. As part of the Museum tour, we will hold a brief memorial service on the Museum deck for all 5th Division KIAs from World War I, World War II, Vietnam, and Panama. Saturday night will include a dinner plus live music and dancing with Valentine and the Ones. Sunday morning will be the normal non-denominational worship service, our annual memorial service for those members who have passed away over the last year, and our Society general membership meeting. Sunday night will include a dinner and installation of officers. Everything for the reunion is on track; however, that will not preclude Murphy from tossing a wrench into the works sometime over the reunion weekend. We just have to be prepared to "adjust fire" to ensure everything comes off as planned.

You can go to our web page to see all the details, plus make hotel reservations and register to attend. Please make your reservations directly through the Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel under the group name Society of the Fifth Division.

As everyone knows, the Society raises some of our annual operating funds during the Silent Auction at the reunion. If you have anything you would like to donate for the auction please bring it with you to help our Society.

Thanks for all of your support over the past year and I know you will provide Dennis the same during his year as our President.

Pat and I look forward to seeing everyone in Kansas City.

First Vice President Message

Greetings from Georgia. I hope everyone reading this is making their preparations to go to the 2017 Reunion of the Society of the Fifth Division on September 7-10 at the Hilton Kansas City Airport. Our President, Bob Dudley has a wonderful program planned for us. We're going to have a great time getting together again.

I don't know if the members of the Society are aware of the many volunteers involved. I certainly had no idea until I volunteered two years ago to be 2nd Vice President. Speaking of volunteers-any and all members are encouraged to step up and take a part in keeping the Society functioning. We have been seeking a National Web Administer for some time now to no avail. Also, we need someone to fill the position of National 2nd Vice president to become President in 2020. If you are interested, please contact President Bob Dudley at colrdudley@aol.com or 913-220-3725.

President Bob Dudley has kept the 12 person executive committee involved with the business of the Society by having monthly conference calls. All business conducted by the Executive Committee is for the good of the Society.

The Executive Committee also serves with all Active Past Presidents to make up the Advisory Committee. There are also eight Representatives at large. Please refer to the front inside page of the Red Diamond for names and addresses of all Officers. Two standing committees that I am aware of are the Nominating Committee chaired by Phil Maniscalco and the Audit Committee chaired by Gary Barard. Other committees are activated as needed.

As you can see there are a lot of Volunteers to the Society, but more volunteers are needed. See you in Kansas City and don't forget to volunteer.

Dennis Thompson
National 1st Vice President

Second Vice President: Alex Candelaria

I Enlisted in the United States Army for three years. Served from 1966 to 1969 with my last year of active duty service in Vietnam. I served with the 5th Infantry Division in I Corps and my last few months in the Mekong Delta in Cantho. I was separated from the army in July 1969.

Upon my return home, I attended the local city college and eventually transferred to the University of California. I graduated and immediately was hired to work in the law enforcement field. I worked Juvenile and adult cases. I was meant to do this type of work serving our community. I was always out in the field hooking and booking along with many other Vietnam veterans. We worked morning, noon, night and weekends as we were not bound by a regular schedule since the bad guys did not hold regular hours either.

While employed I also served on many committees that enhanced the lives of veterans. One of my favorite projects was the mayors committee to raise funds for a bronze statue of a local Hispanic WWII Medal of Honor Recipient. We also raised thousands of dollars scholarship funds for area high school seniors that were presented to them during the Mayors Ball after the unveiling of the bronze statue.

Another of my volunteer projects was serving on the Country Veterans Service organization. We were a group of veterans involved in veterans issues to include the "Arlington of the West cemetery" (Riverside National Cemetery). I served in all capacities to include becoming chairmen.

In between volunteering here and there, I was also fortunate to be elected to serve on a local school board. I rose through the ranks, eventually becoming school board president. Taking educational benefit offerings from the school district I was able to earn a masters certificate in governance.

I have been a member of the Society of the Fifth Division since 2007. I have served as treasurer and most recently as editor of the Red Diamond. At present I serve as your 2nd Vice President. I look forward to becoming 1st Vice President and eventually President. My intentions are to host the September 2019 SOFD Reunion in San Diego, California. But first things first: Kansas City, MO then Norfolk, Va. followed by sunny California in 2019

Respectfully,
Alex T. Candelaria
2nd VP, SOFD

THE EDITORS TWO CENTS



Greetings my fellow Society of the Fifth Division friends,

I hope this edition of the Red Diamond finds you all in good health and fine spirits.

Keeping with this years location for the Annual Convention I chose a graphic from the WWI Fifth Division. The poem at the end of these paragraphs is a transcript of the very hard to read one on the cover that is in black on red print.

Poetry on an Army Calendar?

I think they were a classy bunch of soldiers back then. *Maybe it was being in the French culture that evoked such an artful expression about what had to be constant horror.* All in all, I think they were much the same as us but without the high gadgets we are surrounded by now. Give their poem a read, it is worth it.

“Who is that?” I received an answer to last months photos of unidentified Red Diamond faces in the movies, Only one person answered with the name of the Major who is looking at the gun sight in a tank. The winner is.... Al Bowen!

Following is his message and answer.

“You had a couple of questions in the Editors Two Cents.

On Page 15: The Major is Tim O’Neil. Company C 1-77 Armor.

Yes you can hide a tank. See you in September.”

---- (AL Bowen Company A 1-77 Armor)

The Red Diamond

**Who held Violu’s tortured mass
And guarded well each mountain pass
That linked La France to Belle Alsace?
Red Diamond !**

~Continued on next page~

Who drove the Hun from out Frapelle,
Patrolled him out of Fontenelle,
the Ban-de-Sapt, the Plaine near Celles?
Red Diamond!

From Regneville to Souleuvre Ferme,
Thru Bois de Claude, des Grandes Portion,
Made Huns retreat as they came on?
Red Diamond!

Bois des Rappes, De la Paultiere
Andon Stream, the Clary freres,
Witnessed the Valor of the men who wear,
Red Diamond!

Across the Mense, the order said,
The Army must by you be led;
In this hard task the Fifth's the head,
Red Diamond!

Swam river and canal, and stormed
The heights on which the Huns were Formed
Dun to Remoiville there swarmed
Red Diamond!

The lure of peace stayed not their hand,
After the foe across the land,
They sped, a freeing, fighting band.
Red Diamond!

On pine-clad hills along the Vosges,
Near Rembercourt, and where Mense flows

In glory sleep, in last repose.
Red Diamond!

The wind blows softly thru the firs,
The sun sets red across the Meuse,
Blessing the bravery of theirs,
Red Diamond!

For all that men hold high and dear,
That speaks of death without a fear,
Fought and exampled men who wear.
Red Diamond!

Diamonds cut and never wear,
Diamonds brilliant everywhere.
For jewel prize, in wars affair.
Red Diamond!

-H. P

Honorable Order of Saint Barbara

Saint Barbara, the daughter of a wealthy aristocrat, was tortured and executed after her father discovered she had converted to Christianity. Legend has it that after her father executed her, he was struck down by lightning in divine retribution. Because of this, she soon was regarded as the patron saint in time of danger from thunderstorms, fires and sudden death. She became the patron saint of artillerymen from early on in the development of artillery pieces as early cannons were unreliable, and at times would explode wounding and killing their crews. Saint Barbara was invoked by these early cannoners in the hope she would protect them from this fate.

The United States Field Artillery Association at Fort Sill has two levels of Saint Barbara medals they award to field artillerymen:

- The Honorable Order of Saint Barbara is awarded to those individuals who have demonstrated the highest standards of integrity and moral character, displayed an outstanding degree of professional competence, served the Artillery with selflessness; and contributed to the promotion of the Artillery branch.
- The Ancient Order of Saint Barbara is reserved for those members of the artillery community who have achieved long-term, exceptional service to the artillery surpassing even their brethren in the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara. The approving authority for this award is the Commanding General, United States Army Field Artillery Center and Fort Sill.



On Friday evening, 8 September 2017, at 7:00 PM during our annual reunion, eleven members of the Society of the Fifth Division, US Army will be presented with the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara. The presentations will be made in the hospitality room at the Kansas City Airport Hilton. Everyone is welcome to attend the presentations.

Prostate Cancer Awareness

Men: Talk to your doctor before you decide to get tested or treated for prostate cancer.

The *prostate* is a walnut-sized organ located just below the bladder and in front of the rectum in men. It produces fluid that makes up a part of semen. The prostate gland surrounds the urethra (the tube that carries urine and semen through the penis and out of the body).

Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer among American men. **Prostate cancers usually grow slowly. Most men with prostate cancer are older than 65 years and do not die from the disease. Finding and treating prostate cancer before symptoms occur may not improve your health or help you live longer.**

Symptoms

Men can have different symptoms for prostate cancer. Some men do not have symptoms at all. Some symptoms of prostate cancer are difficulty starting urination, frequent urination (especially at night), weak or interrupted flow of urine, and blood in the urine or semen.

Risk Factors

There is no way to know for sure if you will get prostate cancer. The older a man is, the greater his risk for getting prostate cancer. Men also have a greater chance of getting prostate cancer if they are African-American or have a father, brother, or son who has had prostate cancer.

Screening Tests

Two tests are commonly used to screen for prostate cancer—

- **Digital rectal exam (DRE):** A doctor or nurse inserts a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to estimate the size of the prostate and feel for lumps or other abnormalities.

Depression Basics:

- *Do you feel sad, empty, and hopeless most of the day, nearly every day?*
- *Have you lost interest or pleasure in your hobbies or being with friends and family?*
- *Are you having trouble sleeping, eating, and functioning? If you have felt this way for at least 2 weeks, you may have depression, a serious but treatable mood disorder.*

Everyone feels sad or low sometimes, but these feelings usually pass with a little time. Depression—also called “clinical depression” or a “depressive disorder”—is a mood disorder that causes distressing symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working. To be diagnosed with depression, symptoms must be present most of the day, nearly every day for at least two weeks.

What are the different types of depression?

Two of the most common forms of depression are:

- Major depression—having symptoms of depression most of the day, nearly every day for at least 2 weeks that interfere with your ability to work, sleep, study, eat, and enjoy life. An episode can occur only once in a person’s lifetime, but more often, a person has several episodes.
- Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)—having symptoms of depression that last for at least 2 years. A person diagnosed with this form of depression may have episodes of major depression along with periods of less severe symptoms. Some forms of depression are slightly different, or they may develop under unique circumstances, such as:
 - Perinatal Depression: Women with perinatal depression experience full-blown major depression during pregnancy or after delivery (postpartum depression).
 - Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): SAD is a type of depression that comes and goes with the seasons, typically starting in the late fall and early winter and going away during the spring and summer.
 - Psychotic Depression: This type of depression occurs when a person has severe depression plus some form of psychosis, such as having disturbing false fixed beliefs (delusions) or hearing or seeing upsetting things that others cannot hear or see (hallucinations). Other examples of

~Continued on next page~

depressive disorders include disruptive mood dysregulation disorder (diagnosed in children and adolescents) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder. Depression can also be one phase of bipolar disorder (formerly called manic-depression). But a person with bipolar disorder also experiences extreme high—euphoric or irritable—moods called “mania” or a less severe form called “hypomania.”

What causes depression? Scientists at NIMH and across the country are studying the causes of depression. Research suggests that a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors play a role in depression.

For More Information

For more information on conditions that affect mental health, resources, and research, go to MentalHealth.gov at www.mentalhealth.gov, or the NIMH website at www.nimh.nih.gov. In addition, the National Library of Medicine’s MedlinePlus service (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/) has information on a wide variety of health topics, including conditions that affect mental health

Chaplain's Message - Noah's Ark

Gen. 6:5 - And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The earth was only 1565 years old, when God brought the first world to a catastrophic end. The reason was, because God looked down from Heaven, and saw sin dominated overwhelmingly, within almost all of the inhabitants of the earth. God had Created the earth perfect; without sin...full of love. He gave His Covenant Promise, and every opportunity for mankind to grow, blossom, and serve Him with Love. But instead, sin, violence and destruction overwhelmed the earth, as Adam and Eve's great-grand children abandon God, forsook His Law, and fully embraced sin.

Becoming a law unto themselves, they willfully served Satan, instead of God. Plunged in sin, they now routinely and relentlessly, lived a life, the exact opposite of Love. They abused, beat and killed each other, with wild abandon and a deep hate. Peace on earth simply ceased to exist; as mankind refused to live together in Love to God and their neighbor; the purpose for which God had Created them. It became so bad, so violent, so sinful, that we can read one of the most astonishing verses in the Bible, that it grieved God; that He had even made man. Gen. 6:6 - And it repented The Lord that He had made man on earth, and it grieved Him at His Heart.

Out of the many upon earth; only Noah, and his family of 8, found favor with God. God planned to destroy the 1st world with a world-wide flood; and have mankind make a new start on the 2nd earth. He Commanded Noah to build a huge Ark, that all who came on-board, would be saved from His Flood. The Ark was built big enough to save everyone on earth. During the 120 years Noah and his family were building the Ark, God sent Noah out to preach concerning the coming Flood. Imagine how discouraging it would have be to preach for 120 years; and not one person believes Noah, not one person comes into the Ark. However, that was the sad

case; and God closed the door. The entire population did not believe God; refused to repent, and preferred the violence of the 1st earth. So God saved the animals; instead of the humans.

Now the rain started. God caused not just rain, but 40 days of never-seen-before, storm and rain. Even more, He violently opened up the foundations of the earth, and the Flood rose 15 feet, over the 7 mile high mountains. The mighty Ark floated safely on the surface of the waters, with its precious crew of 8, for 375 days. The violent 1st earth was utterly destroyed.

What an amazing sight greeted Noah and his family, as they exited the Ark. Everything looked different; for God's extremely violent forces had radically changed all the surface of the earth. Now as they sacrificed Blood, the beautiful rainbow gave God's Promise of a better 2nd earth. For into this new world, The Savior would be born! But two more years passed before Noah's first grandson, Arphaxed, was born. He was the GreatXXXXXX grandfather of Jesus!

Certainly, the first world was destroyed, but sadly, sin itself was not destroyed in The Flood. It quickly rears its ugly head, and becomes evident in the life of Ham. It will take the coming of the third world, before sin is utterly defeated. When Jesus shall appear in the 2nd Coming; He will instantly Create a 3rd World...a new Heaven and a new earth. Sin will not exist there. Are you looking for this new 3rd world?

Moses - Jewish

Moses, the Great Law-Giver, led the two million, Children of Israel out of Egypt, to the Promised Land, approximately 3300 years ago. In God's Sovereign Providence, he had been miraculously adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh, and lived for 40 years in the palace itself. Because Pharaoh had no male children or grandchildren, Moses probably would have become the next Pharaoh of Egypt. But Moses, at 40, rejected the pleasures of the Egypt, and chose to suffer hardship, so that he could serve God. He was the meekest man upon earth, as he obeyed God's every Command. God did not waste the 40 years, during which he lived in the wilderness, for this was the very area, through which Moses would later lead the Children of Israel.

What high drama and Miraculous Intervention; God used Moses for. The devastation of the ten plagues, finally convinced Pharaoh to let the people go. But God did not lead them on the normal road, the "King's Highway", which led directly to the Promised Land. First, He led them in the most impossible way, through the Red Sea. He needed to destroy Pharaoh's army first, so that they could not be able to war against, and harass them during the long journey ahead. What a stirring story unfolded, as God Personally led them with the pillar of cloud at night, and fire by night. He gave them The Ten Commandments, The Tabernacle, The Ark of the Covenant, and the meaning of blood sacrifice. A refreshing river of water, from the Rock, followed them. He fed them daily with manna for the next 40 years. He defeated all their enemies on their arduous journey, finally bringing them to the border again. Here Moses dies, and Joshua assumes the leadership, leading them into the land, flowing with milk-and-honey.

What a dramatic journey, Israel celebrates each year at Passover. Their story, written in Exodus, illustrates that God was with them. They are the only nation in the world, to have lived

and survived for 3300 years. How many times they were near extinction, but God always preserved them, according to His Covenant Promise.

The Great Eclipse

On Aug 21, 2017, God is sending a Great Eclipse across America, which will cause the sun to go dark, in the middle of the day. Each of us 300 million Americans will see this extremely rare eclipse darken our land, with their own eyes. For those Americans living in a 70 mile wide line, extending from Portland, Oregon to Charleston, South Carolina; it will become midnight, in the middle of the day. (Who can fathom; such an incredible American Miracle)

What we will be seeing is a fulfillment of a 2700 year old, Scriptural Prophecy of the Prophet Joel. In 700 BC he faithfully wrote down God's Eclipse Promise, which all of America will see on Aug. 21, 2017. Amazingly, this Eclipse will travel in reverse of the sun's normal path of going from east to west. It will start in Oregon and travel eastward through South Carolina. Scripture tells us - "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon into blood, before the Great and Terrible Day of The Lord". (Joel 2:30-31)

No one can, or should, predict that this will be the Last Day. However, God has certainly set from Eternity, an exact day, hour, minute and second, when He will end the earth...and earth is now 2700 years closer, to this Prophecy of Joel. Only God knows that exact Day, and for most people, it will sadly come as a complete surprise. However, it should not be the Ultimate Shock; for He has most certainly given us signs and indicators preceding that Day, in Scripture.

He especially counsels everyone to watch carefully for signs of the "Last Generation"; in which the Last Day, obviously takes place. He outlines these signs of the last generation in Luke 13, and Matt. 24, and they are not hard to see. Anyone can look around today, and see apostasy everywhere in this generation. The world seems hopelessly turned upside-down in the incredible turmoil of the nations, with wars multiplying, evil abounding, the law made void, and violence filling the earth again. (None of the 120 generation on earth, has violently killed as many humans; as we have in this wicked generation...not even close!) (Mark 13:29-30, warns us...when you see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.)

Everyone, naturally, always wants to see a visible, "Sign-from-God's-Hand"; before they will believe God. **Here is your BEST chance! If God's turning, August 21st "mid-day into midnight", for 300 million people to see across America, doesn't convince us; it can be feared, that we are beyond hope.**

Usually, God does not give such obvious, open and visible signs to humans; but on Aug 21, all of us will clearly see with our own eyes, His Power and Sign, promised from 2700 years ago. Fortunately, and Thankfully, Joel's Sign and Prophecy also ends with the most Precious Promise - ...whosoever shall call on the Name of The Lord, shall be saved. (Joel 2:32)

My Brothers Have My Back

By Louis Pepi

continued

Chapter 6—The First 100 Days

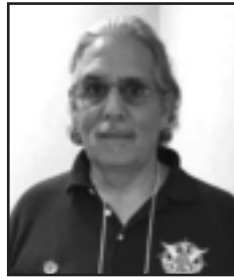
On July 13, 1969, I started my tour with A/1-61.

When I reached Qua Viet—in the back of a deuce-and-a-half with a half dozen other troopers, the company was on a half day stand down squaring up their gear. We had made a side trip to LZ Sharron, which is where the battalion headquarters were, to get our issue of personal gear. The gear was comprised of an M-16, 20 magazines of .556 millimeter in a pair of bandoleers, a steel pot & cover, a poncho and liner, 2 quart-sized canteens, a ruck sack, web gear, bayonet, a pair of jungle boots, a first aid pack, and a B bag for personal gear. We turned in our duffel—called our A bag—with some personal stuff, dress uniform and khakis to be stored away in a conex. Lastly, I asked for a Kabar and a PFC found one for me. Then we were trucked up to Qua Viet Naval Base—the second northernmost base in Vietnam—to link up with Alpha Company, which was providing security in that area.

We were called troopers—that was the new lingo—because we were a mechanized unit. Eventually, I was assigned to third platoon, first squad. The company's sixteen Armored Personnel Carriers were all impressively parallel parked inside Qua Viet Naval Base. Each PC had a 50 Caliber Browning Machine-gun mounted in the center turret on top. There was another smaller turret angling rearward where the M-60 machine-gunner sat. A coil of chain link fence and two metal posts were rolled up on the top deck to be used as an RPG fence and five coils of concertina wire fastened to the back to be ringed around a segment of a company night defensive position. I was told everyone sat on top of the tracks and not inside where an NVA shape-charged Rocket Propelled Grenade could wipe out a whole crew. The interior was loaded with about a ton of supplies—assorted ammo, several cases of grenades, several cans of diesel fuel; smoke, Willie Pete, extra Ma-deuce barrels, our B-bags and God knows what else.

The first squad was comprised of seven men then—Allen Jones (AJ), Don Saarsfield, Sargent Priest, Skip Hager, Gary Kent (Coolbreeze) and Tut our Kit Carson Scout. Rounding out the squad were CriCri the track driver, Stretch and AJ were short-timers and were only in the field with us a few months before they DEROSed, but they were our mentors—especially AJ. He was willing to work with us—especially with the little things that would help us stay alive even if we were FNGs. With the inclusion of a few others that came in August, these were the guys that I was closest to. None of the group was terribly gung ho or really had a cause to fight for—we simply fought for each other. We saw death all around us and we didn't want to see it in the squad. That might prove to be impossible.

Cri Cri—who also went by the nickname of Jo Jo—was the shortest and I knew little about him except that he and AJ were the two best and most experienced troopers in the squad. They were both Spec 4's and the brass would not promote them to sergeant



and make them squad leaders. There was a lot of racial prejudice then. They were pissed about not getting promoted.

Sgt Don Saarsfield: AJ was a black man—a real gentleman. When I first arrived AJ and another guy [“Jo Jo” Creider] had been there a while and there was definitely a lot of prejudice in our unit. He and that other guy had been there quite a while and they were E4s—but they probably were the best soldiers in the third platoon and they refused to give them sergeant stripes and make them squad leaders. AJ was the most experienced veteran and justifiably so should have been promoted. AJ took me under his wing and actually showed me what was going on when I first got there.

Carl “Stretch” Cragholm was from California and was a short-timer as well. The three of them had been in two Khe Sanh engagements—one on April 28th and the other on June 18th. Coolbreeze was a big farm boy from Georgia and one of the strongest guys I ever met.

Sgt Don Saarsfield: I remember the first time Coolbreeze came into the squad. We were in our bunker on a stand down and we were probably all drunk and high I'm sure. Anyway, I told him to do something and he actually came over and picked me up by the shirt and held me off the ground and said, “What are you going to do about this Sarge?” So I said to him, “Are you married?” And he said, “No!” And I said, “Do you plan on having kids?” He said, “Ya why?” And I said, “If you don't put me down, I'll guarantee you'll never have kids.” That was the last problem I ever had with Coolbreeze.

Donny Saarsfield, became one of my best friends over there. He was from Rochester, New York and turned out to be very cool under fire. At one point he was our track driver, replacing me from a short stint at that position. Eventually he was promoted to squad leader.

The squad had been given an SP Pack, so we loaded other goodies in our ruck sacks as well. The cigarettes went fast but nobody wanted the Lucky Strikes or Camels so I took both cartons. I put three packs in my ruck and the rest I stashed in my B bag in the 3-1 Track. That should last me till morning, I thought. I also thought it was a shame leaving all that ammo behind, but I did add six M-26 grenades, a claymore mine and 2 belts of M-60 to my already substantial load. AJ waved me over, beckoning with a roll of electrical tape in his hand. He took the grenades one at a time from my shoulder straps and wrapped two coils of tape across the spoon and around the body of each one. “We've had a lot of accidents lately. That would be a bad way to start.” I nodded dumbly. Hell I was scared.

Shortly after 1200 hours, we exited Qua Viet—dismounted—to make clover-leaf sweeps south of the Qua Viet River. We moved out in platoon strength groups at about 1500 to 2000 meter intervals. We all had full canteens and C-rations as we would not return till morning. *Oh boy*, I thought, *no grace period for me—*

right into the fire. I was scared shitless. The short timers picked it right up.

AJ said something like, “Relax, it’s not going to be bad. Nothing happening around here lately.” It didn’t do much to alleviate the fear. I decided to just shut up and watch the others. The others didn’t seem to be too worried, but that didn’t help. It was the unknown.

Brigade Op Order sent to all units: During the months of May and June, the Brigade has suffered an appalling number of accidental injuries due to shooting and detonation of various types of explosive devices. At the present rate of non-hostile injuries, during a normal year tour, two full rifle companies would be senselessly killed or maimed. The accidental losses that have occurred in the first brigade during the past two months will not be further tolerated. Commanders and leaders at all echelons will take vigorous action to insure that proper care and respect is afforded to the safe handling of weapons and explosive devices in use in the brigade. Small arms, hand grenades, claymores demolitions and pyrotechnics can be used safely and effectively if soldiers use common sense and are adequately supervised by their commissioned and non-commissioned officers.

Outside the Qua Viet gate, the first platoon and the CP took the lead. Second platoon followed and third platoon brought up the rear. Following the river, the platoons peeled off at 1500 meter intervals and patrolled south—then west—before turning north back to the river. Eventually a few hours before dark, the LT found a brushy knoll and we set up a perimeter about 300 meters from the Qua Viet River. I don’t remember the LTs name. He wasn’t with the platoon much more than another few weeks and would be replaced by Lieutenant William Miller in early August. As we dug foxholes, the LT “bracketed” our perimeter—walking arty in to four registered spots in case there was a need in the night. *Now they know where we are, I thought.* My foxhole buddy that night was Alton Hager, our 60 gunner. Each of the other squad guys—except Tut—dropped the M-60 belts they were carrying, giving us a total of 1400 rounds. All the firepower that we would have made me feel quite a bit safer till Hager mentioned off hand that if we were attacked, the NVA would concentrate on our tracers first off. As we were finishing up our foxhole—the digging was a breeze in the fine white sand—Sargent Kevin Priest came by and directed Hager to show me how to set the claymores.

Skip Hager was from Missouri and was truly a happy-go-lucky guy. He always had a smile on his face—but more importantly—he was one hell of an M-60 gunner. Pulling out his claymore, he motioned me to get mine. There are five parts to a claymore—the clicker, the wire, the blasting cap, the circuit tester and the mine itself. As he put his clicker in one of his side pockets, he motioned me to mimic the process. He put the blasting cap in his shirt pocket, clutched the claymore under his side with his arm and tied the end of the wire to his machinegun barrel. He then walked out in front of our position, uncoiling the wire as he went. About 30 meters out, he set the spool down and looped a knot about two feet

back from the blasting cap. He then crouched to set the claymore down and adjusted his aim with the peep sight. He then removed one of the priming adapters, inserted the wires through its slot and screwed the blasting into the hole. Then he fastened a peg into the ground to secure the wire, so pulling on the wire wouldn’t topple the claymore. We then moved ten meters or so laterally and I placed my claymore. Back at the foxhole, we tested the circuits then connected the firing devices. We disconnected the clackers temporarily to let the 2-man LPs slip out of the perimeter just before dark.

Then it got dark. I wondered how I could be more scared than I was during the day. That was nothing—a cake walk. Hager took first guard at 2000 hours and said he would wake me up at midnight, but the funny thing was, I never slept. I lay on my back as the mosquitos cannibalized my flesh. I was on fire everywhere. I wrapped tightly in my poncho liner but they found their way in and were voracious. After an eternity, my wristwatch struck midnight and Hager finally reached over and tapped me. I sighed and sat up. He showed me where the claymores clackers were and fell onto my sleeping spot. He was snoring lightly in less than a minute.

Clouds had moved in and it was the blackest of possible nights. I waved my hand in front of my face and couldn’t see a lick of movement. I must have looked like a carnival cat; my eyes were so bugged out. I went long periods without blinking and that began to dry my eyes out painfully. It was so quiet my ears were ringing. The funny thing is that they still ring like that today—the result of tinnitus from a thousand explosions. The terror of it was that some sapper could sneak up to me and slit my throat and I would never have seen it coming. I thought I imagined movement and rustling in front of my position but it was only partially audible through my ringing ears. I swore to myself that the noise was real. I wanted to fire the machinegun—just a 10-shot burst of recon by fire. I was tempted because I could hear—something. I stared for so long that the black blindness began to shillyshally like heat waves on a desert floor. That made it worse because now I really thought I could see something. I wanted to wake up Hager and whispered out to him. Hager sighed in his slumber and rolled to his side, resuming his light snoring.

Then it started to rain—not a couple indiscernible drops that escalated into a steadier freshet, but rather an instant deluge like a violent waterfall. I jabbed out in the darkness, feeling for my poncho, but it was already too late when I slipped it over my head. All sound and sight—imagined or otherwise was drowned out in an instant by this—this monsoon. Within five minutes, my foxhole had a foot of water in it and I was shivering uncontrollably—so badly that the fear was gone—there was no room for it. As the foxhole filled the water felt warm in comparison in the cold night air. It had been 95 degrees in the heat of the day but now it must have been in the fifties. By 2 AM only my neck and shoulders were above water. I reached over and tapped Hager a few times—who woke with an angry sigh this time. I climbed out of the pond that was my foxhole in a seizure of chilling cold shakes. I spent the rest of the night and early morning trembling in the fetal position.

The weather cleared at dawn and I dried out rapidly as the temperature rose through the eighties not long after sunrise. The first order of business at daylight was to break down the claymores in reverse order of the way they were set up. While we were cooking breakfast, the LPs returned to the perimeter. The beans and franks breakfast—heated with a chunk of C4—warmed me from the inside out, and the cold night became a distant memory with the onrush of the heavy humidity into the saturated wet jungle.

At about 0730, after drying all our gear we were saddled up and rendezvoused in company strength at a point on the river south of Qua Viet. While the three platoons loitered in separated groups two Navy River patrol boats appeared making way towards us from a bend in the river. We were told that in the night one of the PBRs fired on approximately fifteen individuals—small people they were called—and Alpha Company was given the task to “search and destroy” anyone in this “free fire zone”. The PBRs eased up to the shore and extended a gang plank to dry land. It was about 0745. The first platoon loaded in two groups for the short ferry ride to the north side of the Qua Viet. As the diesel engines revved in reverse, they churned up red swirls of silty mud in a slow turn to the far shore. The third platoon watched from the south shore as they waited their turn. That awaited return was interrupted by a loud explosion and a rooster-tail of water rising about thirty feet at the bow of the first boat. Simultaneously, the boat lifted out of the water. Five bodies were seen arcing out of the boat into the water—two Naval personnel and three 1-61 troopers. What ensued next was an instant panic of the shore bystanders who all hit the ground and dispersed awaiting a further explosion of chaos that did not come. Four of the human missiles were soon seen bobbing in the muddy water. They quickly made their way back into the capsized boat that was sinking fast. They were noticeably shaken and wounded in varying but slight degrees. The second boat picked up the wounded before ferrying the first platoon to the north shore. The fifth individual thrown by the blast, was Spec 4 Terry Hawkins of Waterville, Ohio. He did not surface and the boats and troopers searched downstream on both shorelines for several hours before pronouncing that Hawkins was MIA. Eventually Hawkins body washed up on the south shore of the large island downstream two days later and his status was changed to KIA. PFC Darrell Alexander, who was in the boat that hit the mine, stated that Hawkins was sitting just below the quad fifties and was slammed head first into the barrels and then ejected overboard. He was probably dead as he hit the water.

From the 1-61 Daily Journals July 14: 0755 Juno CP Qua Viet—14075H—303673—Clearwater Navy Patrol boat hit a mine and sunk. 4 WIA and 1 KIA. 2 WIA and 1 MIA from A/1-61. 2 WIA from Navy. Medivac complete at 0805 Hours. Searching area for MIA

From the 1-61 Daily Journals July 16: In reference to mining incident in Qua Viet River, the MIA was found at approximately 0600 and pronounced KIA vicinity of YD309673

The ferrying resumed and soon it was third platoon’s turn to board one of the PBRs. I strained my eyes to stare into the murky

water to see any object that might resemble a mine, not knowing even what they actually might look like. This was a new level of fear as I expected to be blown out of the boat at any moment. It didn’t happen and we waited on the far shore for the final groups to cross.

By 0900 all of Alpha Company was across the Qua Viet and heading northwest toward the DMZ—some three miles distant. The third platoon got the middle quadrangle near the destroyed city of Bac Vong starting out in grid square YD2664. The area was flat paddy country dotted with destroyed and abandoned villages of small thatched huts. I knew not what danger would face me next. The blackness of the night before was bad enough, the mine incident was even worse, and the ferry ride while expecting another blast was another higher degree of terror. What level of fright could be next? I soon found out. It was walking point. As we were about to start out, I made eye contact with the LT and he motioned me to join AJ on the point, stating that it was as good a time as any to learn. I made a mental note to never make eye contact with a lieutenant again. AJ waved me along and instructed me to do exactly as he did. We started out hugging the brush about ten meters apart and heading west to another brush line, then north to a more barren wilder country with vegetated red bluffs and another brush-line about 600 meters away. The ground was low undulating red heights with concealed areas at every turn. AJ moved out from the tree line and the next level of fear hit me head on. I lingered at the edge till AJ looked back and waved me out. It dawned on me that calling this maneuver a “search and destroy” was a total deception for the grunts performing it. A better term would have been “bait and switch”. We were the “bait” and air support or artillery was the “switch”. Actually military tacticians had a better term for it. They called it “hammer and anvil”. It was a very simple slant on the ancient tactic in Vietnam. Put a small vulnerable-looking force of infantry out in the open to draw out a more superior enemy force and then use an air support and artillery combination to hammer them against the human grunt anvil. It was a very successful tactic that usually produced 10 to 1 casualty ratios—but not so good for a small infantry unit that was used as bait. In Vietnam it was always about body count and never about territory. Tacticians had another phrase—they called it a “War of Attrition”.

Those 600 yards took an eternity to negotiate and I expected a bullet in the chest at every turn. It had taken barely two days, but I had already resigned myself to the fact that there was no scenario that would allow me to survive this place. I was simply a dead man walking and I was already reconciled to it. Somehow this caused a lessening of my anxiety and I was relieved to come to terms with my certain fate. The only question now was—when? AJ looked back at me and instantly picked up the new resignation in my demeanor and nodded with approval. I guess I had met the test. When we got to the tree line, we stopped for a breather in the 100 degree heat. I was exhausted more from fear than from the heat, thirst and the load I was carrying. AJ gave me some words of encouragement and then walked over and spoke to the lieutenant, who announced that AJ and I could fall back to the middle of the platoon when we resumed. Donald Saarsfield, another

FNG, was called up to take my place and Kevin Priest replaced AJ. Saarsfield sat beside me and asked me about the point and I told him I was scared.

The rest of the day was uneventful except for the complete feeling of exhaustion when we returned to the ferrying point at the river. The boats returned us to the south side and we dispersed in platoon strength again to set up platoon size killer-team ambushes. The third platoon's area was the furthest west and we humped maybe two miles by 01600. The lieutenant found us a little hill and he again registered the area with artillery. A chopper dropped in with water and hot chow which lifted my spirits for the first time in my 36-hour baptism of fear. The uplift was short lasted though as it came to me that arty registration and chopper landings were just broadcasting to the NVA exactly where we were to spend the night. We set up our claymores again and set shooting stakes for Hager's M-60. Then we sat in our wide foxhole as darkness fell. Our position faced northwest and we stared out toward the western mountains and watched them disappear into the darkness of the clear starlit night. The dominant land form was a steadily rising peak that was taller than the other three or four peaks slightly to the south of it. I didn't realize it then but the large peak was Hill 162 and the smaller ones were called The Three Hundreds. They would play a dominant role in the collective lives of Alpha Company in about four months. The lieutenant gave us one of the starlight scopes and I was mesmerized by the way it transformed the distant vegetation into emerald shimmering images. The problem was the darker it got the more everything looked like it was moving until I got used to it.

I was given first guard—which lasted till midnight—and I settled into it after smoking a cigarette out of sight under a poncho liner in the bottom of the foxhole. This night was brightly star-lit and the starlight scope really wasn't necessary. It was quiet except for the sporadic raucous call of some nearby tropical bird. Then the idea occurred to me that the bird call might be sappers signaling each other as they crawled toward our perimeter to throw in satchel charges or slit our throats. Consciously, I unbuckled the clasp on my Kabar sheath and curled my hand around the steel-gray handle. I had been sharpening it for a week—starting on the truck ride from LZ Sharron and every other chance that offered itself. It was sharp enough to shave with—attested by the fact that I had removed nearly all the hair off my right forearm testing its keen edge. Lately, I was working on the top edge—two inches back from the tip—to shape it like a Bowie Knife.



I was startled out of all this idle thought with the appearance of three human forms crossing the trail to the river about 200 meters to my front. My heart leapt and I slapped Hager awake and pointed emphatically to our front. He jumped into the hole and peered out but they were already in the brush to the right of the trail. Meanwhile the lieutenant saw the activity at our position and

crawled to us. He told us to fire if we caught sight again and Hager saw movement at that moment and opened with several short burst on the M-60—maybe 15-20 rounds. The lieutenant stopped him with a hand on the shoulder as his RTO—Doug Free—crawled up. Before calling in some coordinates, the lieutenant signaled someone in the next position to lob a few M-79 HEs to the point of interest. That done, the first artillery round came in from 155s somewhere and hit right on the mark. The lieutenant nodded back to the RTO and the call was to fire for effect. Nothing could have lived under that barrage but still there was no evidence of success when one of the squads searched the area in the morning.

The company continued those search and clears—sometimes mounted and sometimes dismounted—for about another week. We alternated between ambushes out in the white sand area and security inside the Qua Viet Base itself in platoon sized forces and then on the 22nd of July, the Company moved about 17 miles south to LZ Sharron where battalion command was. Alpha Company acted as a security force for the neighboring LZ Angel for the next 21 days. Our company commander was replaced on July 26 and Captain Robert Patrick Gallagher joined Alpha Company as our commanding officer. Officers rotated out of units every six months. He was a no-nonsense by-the-book commander, airborne qualified. He was clean-shaven with a short crewcut and always had a starched clean uniform. He expected us to shave every day—even out in the field—but there wasn't much he could do about our filthy uniforms since we were never issued a new set of jungle fatigues till the old pair rotted off.

Sergeant Ken Leach—first platoon squad

leader: *I got to 1-61 on October 20th—about three weeks before this thing happened—and I got my wish about wanting to get in combat. And it was enough to last me for a while. And as for Gallagher—he ran a tight ship. I remember I hadn't shaved for two or three days one time and Gallagher came up to me and said, "Leach, you didn't shave this morning". He was a real stickler—even out in the field. I remember there on 100 in the morning—I shaved with cold water in my steel pot. He went by the book and I think everyone respected him—I know I did. He had leadership qualities.*

Gallagher was not popular with the battalion brass—I believe—because he refused to lose a few men acceptably to justify a big enemy body count. He looked out for us and we truly appreciated that. An anonymous battalion source told me that for this reason, brigade was considering relieving him of command. He also admitted that that was a grossly incorrect review of his soldiering qualities. As a result Alpha Company did not roll up enemy body count numbers like the other companies, but after Terry Hawkins died on July 14th, we didn't have another friendly KIA till November 13th in that big firefight. During the same period, the other rifle companies in Task Force 1-61 collectively suffered 56 friendly KIAs. Captain Gallagher, although not beloved—was respected. He was also hard on drugs—administering swift punishment when troopers were found with them. This

seldom happened though, since we were nearly always in the field, where the problem was not as widespread and accessible as it was in the rear.

Lieutenant Colonel John Swaren—Battalion Commander:
when you are down there in Quang Tri & Sharon you've got race problems, you've got drug problems, and you've got serious problems. But up there in the AO those things are really reduced. You still have them but not nearly so bad.

From the 22nd of July till August 13th Alpha Company was based out of LZ Sharron but we occupied ourselves most of the time providing security inside and outside of and LZ Angel. During the day the rifle Companies ran platoon-sized cloverleaf search and clears outside LZ Sharron both north and south but rarely ranged past Jones Creek to the north. On the off chance that third platoon ranged further north than this, we had a portable tank bridge along with us to get across the Thach Han and its tributaries like Jones Creek. I mention Jones Creek because we got several tracks stuck approaching the creek and actually got the tank bridge bogged down one time. Daily, we would find a constant variety of various types of NVA equipment. There were Ho Chi Minh sandal tracks in the loose dirt and red mud everywhere. One day we would find NVA web gear and pith helmets and the next we would find Chicom grenades, RPGs and AK-47 ammo. From time to time we would find various sizes of pots, pans and assorted mess gear. The odd thing was that with all the sign that we found, there was surprisingly little contact. It was almost like we were being watched and avoided. It seemed like they were viewing and evaluating their ace-in-the-hole.

About this same time, we got word that the 3rd Marine Division would be pulling back to Thua Thien, eventually would leave Vietnam completely and move in force to the island of Okinawa. This meant that the 5th Division would now take over operational control of the Northern I Corp. The official transfer date would be November 1st.

Also during early and mid-August we would receive a fresh batch of new guys. Among the group were Gene (Bo) Kelly, Joe Vetrano, Don(Mark) Marksberry, Bobby Vandergriff, David Nicholson, Steve (Smitty) Smith and Lieutenant William Miller. Kelly was assigned to 3rd platoon first squad with me, Hager, Priest, Kent and Saarsfield. Kelly was from Shasta, California, and his hometown gave him one more nickname. He would eventually become our track driver. Vandergriff was a specialist but would be promoted to sergeant and he took over one of the other squads of third platoon. Marksberry was assigned to Vandergriff's squad as was Smith. Joe Vetrano was assigned also assigned to Vandergriff's squad but being a good friend of Kelly's, he spent a lot of his down time with us.

On August 13th, Alpha Company left the area around LZ Sharron and Angel to travel north again to the AO in and around Qua Viet. We were placed under the operational control with Delta Company/ 1-11 till August 22nd. This area was familiar to most of us as we had been there in mid-July. The best perk about Qua Viet was the good navy chow and movies if we happened to be assigned base security on movie night. I remember one particular instance when we had been out on mounted patrols south of

the base all day and got back to Qua Viet at dusk to stand down till 1200 hours the next day.

Captain Gallagher was anxious to get us through the chow line in quick order so that the whole company could watch a Clint Eastwood movie that night called "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly". It was almost show time as the last of the company finished chow, and Gallagher—not wanting to miss not even a minute of the movie, ordered everyone to mount up on our PCs and drive them over to the movie sight. We pulled into the seating area and since there was nowhere to park, Gallagher divided the tracks into three columns and sent them down the center and two side isles. The other army and navy personnel that were already seated watched in amazement as a mechanized infantry captain, flailing his arms like a traffic cop, directed each driver, till all fifteen tracks were parked in three neat rows. We had the best seats in the house and everyone enjoyed the movie.

On August 22nd Alpha Company was placed under the operational control of A/1-77 Armor and was charged with security of LZ Nancy and the surrounding area out onto Wunder Beach. Following this short stint, on August 26 A/1-61 was charged with the security of Fire Base C-2. This was an uneventful time, but the company did get their first taste of the western foothills in and around Hill 162. Several times they ranged out to this area and set up company perimeters with ambushes and LPs. The weather got hot and there were heat exhaustion medivacs on the 26th and 27th of August. On the 29th, five NVA were pushed out in the open briefly at about 0900 hours by a squad-sized search and clear patrol from 4th platoon. Alpha company trained two 50 caliber machineguns on them and fired about 200 rounds of 50 BMG. Barky was on sight later in the day at 1800 hours and two fast movers were brought in to drop napalm. A bunker was found set up as a makeshift hospital with medical supplies and it was destroyed. On the 30th, Alpha Company set up a night perimeter on Hill 100. They would return to this hill on November 12th in a night "Bald Eagle" insertion. On the return trip, 3-1 Sergeant, Kevin Priest fractured his tailbone when the APC rumbled over a large boulder and threw everyone on top into the air. He was medevaced by Batman 17. On the 1st of September a trooper had two fingers blown off by a blasting cap while disarming a claymore mine. He was lucky. It could have been much worse. The company picked up camp and moved to C-2 to stand down for maintenance.

On September 2nd, Typhoon Doris struck Vietnam. On the morning of the 2nd, gale winds were blowing a deluge sideways and Alpha Company was assigned the task of maneuvering around C-2 on a search and clear mission. The mission began at 0700 hours and the first four check points were reached in mounted patrols by 1100 hours. The company then dismounted in 70 mile per hour winds—with gusts to 100—and walked to the next two checkpoints. The rain was coming down now at a rate of more than 3-inches per hour. Everything was flooded as the company moved along in foot-deep standing water. In this present set of weather conditions bomb craters were hidden by the standing water and there were countless instances of the point elements plunging to the bottom of these hidden craters. In several

instances, web gear and rifles were dropped and discarded to prevent drownings. Several M-16 rifles and quite a bit of web gear were lost. Sgt Bob Zeissler recounts that he was walking along in ankle deep water when he stepped into what would turn out to be a bomb crater. As he struggled to keep from falling forward into an abyss, a huge gust of wind hit him head on—and coupled with the weight of his M-60 machinegun that was slung behind his shoulder—he was hurled backwards into shallow water. He lay on his back like a turtle till several members of his squad lifted him back to his feet. Huge lizards, possibly Kimoto Dragons, flooded out of their underground dens by the deluge, were flushed out into the open by the approaching column. At about 0200 hours, we finally made it back to the APCs and headed into C-2 for shelter.

At C-2 there was chaos in the now 90 mile per hour sustained winds. The roofs had blown off the four hooches we were billeted in so we were put in tents. There were rivers of water running through the tents. Smitty found a leach on his leg that must have been sucking his blood all day. It was so gorged with blood that it measure four inches long and two inches in diameter. There was corrugated metal flying through the air everywhere. Two rear echelon guys were killed by some of that flying metal. Then the tents started to blow away so we packed into the tracks like sardines and road out the typhoon in relative safety. The aftermath of the typhoon was significant flooding and wind damage besides the 52 inches of rainfall.

On September 4th Alpha Company was placed under the operational control of the 77th Armor—and was attached to the Alpha Company tankers. This attachment at that time extended out to September 26th. The area of operation for the first week or so was west of Con Thien along the DMZ. During that time various pieces of enemy equipment were found including several cached AK-47s and a decomposed NVA body that had been there for about a month.

On September 11th there was an occurrence of singular importance near the DMZ in AO Orange. A new staff sergeant, Master Sergeant Nave, was assigned to first platoon as their platoon sergeant. A mounted mechanized mission was assigned to Alpha Company 5 clicks east of Con Thien and two clicks south of the demilitarized zone. As the



company neared within a 2000 meters of the DMZ a temporary company perimeter was formed and three patrols of ten troopers each from the three rifle companies were dis-

mounted and formed to make cloverleaf search and clears across the DMZ and sweep north and then east keeping just south of the international demarcation line. With the temperature above the century mark, the new platoon sergeant, who was overweight and out of shape, went down with heat exhaustion inside the DMZ but still a good distance from the North Vietnamese border. He had been seen huffing and puffing through stifling elephant grass earlier and it was a cinch to everyone that he wasn't going to make it through the day.

Because of the precarious location, a medivac was a decision of last resort. That was no man's land and we weren't supposed to be there. In lieu of that, Captain Gallagher decided to have an APC pick up the sergeant and bring him back to the company defensive perimeter where he could be medevaced south of the "no fly" zone. Don Saarsfield and I were atop the 3-1 track manning the fifty caliber machine gun and Gallagher waived us over. Giving us a dead reckoning direction by sighting down the length of his arm, he pointed out for us where the sergeant was down. He ordered us to traverse the relatively open country and bring the sergeant back to the company perimeter where he could then be medevaced. Knowing that Saarsfield was our regular driver, he ordered him to drive and me to man the fifty—to which we both nodded to the affirmative. I had done a stint as a driver previously and Saarsfield had made the recent switch.

Walking back to the track, Saarsfield asked me if I wanted to drive to which I quickly nodded in the negative. As I jumped into the fifty turret, we expected this to take only a few minutes as the patrol was on the return leg just over a knoll that could be seen about 500 meters north of the perimeter. The problem was that a small tributary of the Ben Hai River was situated just south of that knoll and we had to cross it. We made up the 450 meters to the bank of the stream where we stopped to reconnoiter a crossing.

Right away we were reluctant. Although the stream was only about twenty feet wide, there was a steep bank rising up out of the water on the other side and we had no reason to believe that that steepness did not continue proportionately to a depth too great to negotiate. We sat on the track staring at the stream convinced that crossing at this point was a mistake. At the same time, we were pondering the crossing, the company commander's RTO radioed us asking what the holdup was. The reply was that we doubted we could cross successfully. Meanwhile, one of the platoon patrols appeared upstream on their return route. They had crossed the stream several hundred meters upstream to the southwest. The officer in charge of the patrol, having heard our doubts about crossing on the company net, stated that he had just crossed upstream and the streambed was very firm and the water was moderately shallow and static as it appeared to him in front of us. He then gestured us to start moving. In the spirit of the old military adage that enlisted men are not paid to think; we immediately obeyed the order and motored down the bank—only to smash headlong into the steeper opposite bank. The water was about seven feet deep—considerably deeper than the crossing upstream. We tried to back out only succeeded in digging in deeper. Captain Gallagher was notified and the command track appeared at the scene a few minutes later with two other PCs. It was soon discovered that there was no tow cable. It was now late in the after-

noon—almost 1700 hours—and this was a bad place to be stranded. The rest of the company was contacted and instructed to break camp at the temporary perimeter and move about three clicks to the NDP. An hour later at 1800 hours, a Batman from the brigade aviation detachment showed up and threw out four tow cables before he medivaced several troopers with heat exhaustion including the staff sergeant. One of the tracks was backed into place and was cabled to the 3-1 track. It immediately was sucked into the mud. A second track was backed in and hooked up in tandem only to become stuck as well. A call was made to A-4 for an M-88 Tank Recovery Vehicle. In the meantime an M-48 tank, part of the group we were attached to, was backed into place with negative results. It became bogged down in the mire too. At 1945 hours, with the aid of the recovery vehicle, the tank and the three PCs were pulled out of the hole & clear of the mud. Gene Kelly was summoned to the 3-1 track and Jack Collins, one of the other company track drivers, towed him and his derelict PC back to LZ Sharron. He would become our new track driver right then and there. It was now 2100 hours and the remaining contingent of five tracked vehicles started its trek across the western foothills in the dark on their return to the company NDP. At 2145 a request was made for a Basketball flare ship to illuminate the way back to the NDP but the request was denied. At 2345 the command track, with the three other PCs and the M-48, finally closed with the rest of Alpha Company at the NDP, 2 ½ miles to the southwest of the scene of the day's event. We were in the shadow of Hill 162. Somehow there was no enemy contact. We all breathed a collective sigh of relief.

On September 26th Alpha Company was released from the 77th Armor and returned to LZ Sharon. The company remained in that vicinity till October 5th—most of the time spent running mounted and dismounted search and clears around LZ Sharon. Each line platoon would spend two nights out of three out on ambush at and the third inside with base security. It remained a quiet time. Again, there was plenty of enemy sign and equipment found with little or no contact. You had the feeling though that you were still being watched.

One occurrence was the loss of one of the scout dogs attached to our squad. The dog and handler had been with us nearly a month and we all became attached to them. The dog was friendly to everyone in the squad except for the unlucky person that pulled the guard shift just before the handler's slot. It was a very delicate undertaking waking up the handler without getting chewed up by the dog. To put it mildly, the dog did not like anyone shaking or touching the handler at night while he was asleep. The dog had been out of sorts during the day and was bleeding internally through its nostrils that night. A common practice of the NVA was to strategically place poison-laced meat when they saw that we had a scout dog. The dog was in obvious physical distress but the medivac was refused because another company was engaged and had wounded in Leatherneck Square. A medivac did not arrive till 0600, but the dog was nearly gone by then. We never saw the dog again, or the handler for that matter.

On October 5th, Alpha Company was put under the operational control of the 3/5th Cav to replace the Marine detachment that was guarding the Cam Lo Bridge. On October 8th, the 3/5th Cav was

relieved from bridge security and the 77th Armor replaced them. Alpha Company remained at the Cam Lo Bridge and was billeted at Cam Lo Fire Base till October 22nd. Bridge security turned out to be good duty protecting the bridge from harm at night and the quiet times continued for Alpha Company. On October 23rd, the battalion was reunited at LZ Sharon and remained in the area until October 31st, when an advance party of all the 1-61 units was sent to Firebase C-2 to move the entire battalion operation there. The balance of the line companies remained at LZ Sharon, packing for the move. There was a definite change in the air as the entire 3rd Marine Division was preparing to leave Vietnam for the island of Okinawa and pass the Northern I Corp over to the 5th Infantry Division. 1-61 would be on center stage now.

On November 1st, Alpha Company/1-61, Delta Company/1-61 and A/1-77 were ordered to set up their billets at Con Thien and Bravo, Charley and Delta/1-11 were ordered to Firebase C-2 along with Headquarters & Headquarters Company. This new push was called Operation Fulton Square and the battalion commander had ordered his OH-1 for observation of AO Orange for each of the next six days. A distinct change was about to occur on November 1st.

Chapter 7—The First 10 Days of November November 1st

November 1st started with 74 degree temperatures, unrestricted visibility and 15 mile per hour winds. The outlook for the day was partly cloudy skies and highs of 85 degrees. Sunrise was 0648 and sunset was 1822. The beginning of morning nautical twilight was 0626 and end of evening nautical twilight was 1845. The systematic movement of Task Force 1-61 started with the Scout Platoon exiting LZ Sharon at 0930 hours with the mission of linking with a platoon of tanks—the 1/6 element of A/1-77. Their mission was then to proceed to Fire Base C-2 as a Ready Reaction Force for the firebase. This was followed by Alpha Company at 0835, the battalion Command Post at 1000, Charley Company at 1015 and Bravo Company at 1030. D/1-11—already at C2—was put under the operational control of Task Force 1-61. Alpha Company proceeded toward C-2 to their jumping off point, and then maneuvered west to the general vicinity of Hill 162. Just before dark, Charley Company took five rounds of incoming with no casualties.

November 2nd

On November 2nd, Alpha Company brought in its ambushes at dawn and by 0745 hours, had moved east six clicks past C-2 to an area on the edge of a large plain of rice paddies near the destroyed village of Dao Xuyen. They then divided into mounted patrols and searched four to five clicks east northeast and then fanned to the south, on a line toward Con Thien. The third platoon patrols found three heavily used trails—one heading north and two northwest—with multiple footprints in the loose dirt. At midday a report was received by the TOC that A/1-61 was receiving incoming, but this communication was later proven false, when it was confirmed that the ARVN 7th Mech in the next sector had received that incoming. At 1500 hours, the fourth platoon command track—directed by Lieutenant Korte—split off the column and drove to Con Thien to pick up hot chow. They met up with the rest of the company at the evening NDP four clicks south east of Con

Thien. After the evening chow was complete, night acts of ambushes and LPs were put out.

Bravo Company patrolled further west of C-2 and had an uneventful day other than calling for a medivac when two men severely were stung by bees and were having allergic reactions. They were medevaced in the late afternoon. They were committed several clicks to the west when a sniffer sensor detected approximately 20 littlepeople in the vicinity and moving west. An artillery mission was fired on the spot and then walked several hundred meters to the west to block any retreating action. Bravo Company later reported negative findings after searching the area.

Charley Company patrolled west of Bravo Company in the area of the Three 100s and also had an uneventful day reporting only that a trooper had been bitten by the scout dog and medevaced. At 2200 hours another sensor detected movement of twenty or more individuals and several dashes of TAC Air were sent to drop ordinance on the area.

Delta Company of the 1st of the 11th Infantry—now under the operational control of TF 1-61—and having set up an NDP three clicks west of Firebase C-2, reported one of their mechanical ambushes exploding indicated that they would have more information in the morning. Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 11th Light Infantry was commanded By Captain Stanley Blunt. As stated, on November 1st D/1-11 was placed under the operational control of Task Force 1-61. It is noteworthy here to mention him and his men. In late 1969 Captain Blunt was already half way through his third tour in Quang Tri province—this time with the 5th Division. He had earlier in 1966 and 1967 served as an advisor to a battalion of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. He went on to serve another tour as an advisor to units of the ARVNs in a program that was known as Vietnamization. He was renown as a courageous—but very unconventional—commander by the Army staff but his men revered him and would have followed him into hell if he asked that of them. He knew his job as a combat infantry officer, knew every crook and cranny of the country along the DMZ, and most

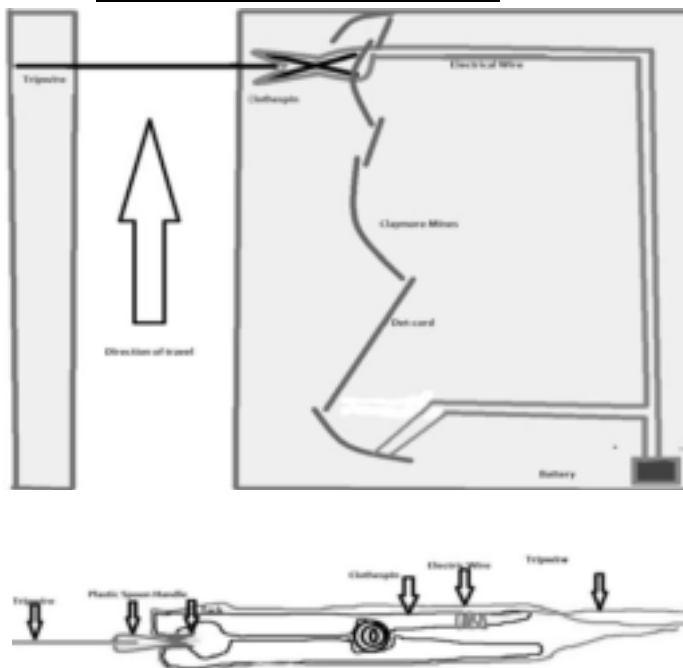
importantly, he knew the enemy he was fighting—maybe better than they knew themselves—certainly better than the high command. He knew their tactics and strong points—and in so doing—knew their weaknesses and how to capitalize on them. In a war where soldiers were limited to tours twelve months in length, he had been in Northern I Corps for better than two years and knew his area of operation second to none. It was the norm that a soldier, no matter whether he was and officer, non-commissioned officer or enlisted man, would show up at Camp Red Devil ignorant to the tactics of jungle warfare. To help prepare them, they were attached to the 75th Support Battalion for three days of intensive jungle warfare training outside of the firebase in a ravine where they were taught to set up a claymore mine, set up trip flares and booby-traps, retrained on the M-60 machine-gun and lastly exposed to an L-shaped ambush. In other words, it was a crash course and as Blunt put it, “Mickey Mouse” and probably created more questions than answers—more confusion than clarity. After these three days, they were assigned to a unit company and thrown directly out to the field into a constant combat situation.

More importantly, the 5th Division had just gone through a mass rotation of personnel in July and August. The division had shown up in July and August of 1968 in a massive airlift and amphibious landing that had arrived in mass from Fort Carson, Colorado. To fill the gap left by their eminent departure of the 1/5, the Kansas National Guard's 69th Infantry Brigade was called to Federal Duty in May of 1968 and assembled at Ft Carson, Colorado. There it underwent intensive training as it prepared to take its place in the 5th Infantry Division. The brigade remained a part of the 5th Division until it returned to the control of the State of Kansas in December 1969.

Beside daily replacements to substitute ongoing WIAs and KIAs, a mass replacement had occurred in July and August of 1969 to supplant the majority of the division due to one-year rotations back to the states. The division was very green and the inexperience was present in all units including the two premier infantry battalions of the division—the 1-11th Light Infantry AKA The Wandering Eleventh, and the 1-61 Mechanized Infantry—AKA Roadrunners. To compound mat-



SGT Joseph Prince—2nd Squad, 2nd



ters, July through October had been comparatively quiet months and many of the men were not yet battle tested.

In the face of all this rawness, Blunt was the consummate teaching soldier who always lead from the front. His men were on the whole, more at home in the western hills because of Blunt's steady teaching hand. They also had spent more time in those foot hills and had been "defensive aggressors" rather than waiting to be found by the enemy to then employ "Hammer & Anvil tactics.

Stanley Blunt became pretty notorious with his mechanical ambushes. Actually, he learned the technique from a soldier nicknamed Yahoo and through Sgt "Big Daddy" Hammond. The way it worked was that Blunt established several Killer Teams. One particular incident that Joe Prince recalls was during a day of platoon patrols. As late afternoon approached, Blunt assigned Sergeant Phil Phillips' Killer Team to lag behind to set the booby trap for the mechanical ambush. Included in the team was Sergeant Joe Prince, along with EMs, Dan Switzer, Bobby Strack, and Bobby Preece. While the main force of the company meandered their way to the top of the hill in small groups to set up a night defensive position on top, the killer team searched the valley for a well-used trail to set the booby-trap. Typically they would look for a portion of the trail that was a natural funnel. On this particular day, they found a good spot and set up the device with claymores, trip wires, clothes pins, thumb tacks and a battery. Once the trap was armed they moved off the trail and meandered their way to up the perimeter too.

Less than fifteen minutes after they arrived at the company site, there was a large explosion and a huge cloud of smoke and dust billowing up out of the valley. Blunt—believing that the device detonated spontaneously—sent the team back to check the site. This was out of character for him because he liked to call artillery in and wait till the next morning to reconnoiter. Still, believing the blast was spontaneous, the men were instructed to view the spot from a distance and not actually go to the bottom of the hill. As the team worked their way down the hill, they spotted a lot of red in the grass—presumably blood. Acting on their own and moving cautiously, they continued on, making their way down the hill and found three dead NVA. It appeared that one of them may have spotted the trap and bent over to look at the wire across the trail and the next PAVN soldier behind tripped the secondary wire killing all three. The lead man had the whole top of his skull blown off from the eyes-sockets up, suggesting he had bent over to take a closer look when the setup exploded. From the documents they had on their persons, it appeared one was a pay master. They found three weapons and hid them in the bushes so they could find them in front of the lieutenant the next day and claim them as booty of war.

Blunt's killer teams became so adept at this practice that the NVA coined them with the nickname of Bush-whackers. Eventually the 27B Regiment put a price on Blunt's head. A few weeks after this episode, D/1-11 was setting up another night perimeter. By mid-1969, there was probably not a single suitable hilltop that had not been used previously for a night position many times over. This spot was no different. As the company split into twos, they touched up the readymade positions with their entrenching tools. Blunt was no different—finding a hole in the

center that appeared to be previously used as the command position. As he thrust his shovel into the center of the hole, it struck a metallic object. Digging around it he found a mine—which he assumed, probably correctly, was meant for him. "Damn Gooks—those fuckers are trying to kill me", he barked. This hill would be coined—Gallagher Ridge—in the not-to-distant future. Below is a picture of those captured weapons from the mechanical ambush.

THE CAPTURED WEAPONS—Prince, Phillips, Switzer, Strack

SGT Joseph Prince—2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon: We had four man teams that would set up the unmanned Claymore ambushes. The group I was with consisted of Phil Phillips, Tom Strack, Bob Preece, and myself. We would pick out a trail that looked like it had been used on a regular basis. We would try to read the direction of travel that was used the most and direct our ambush accordingly. The booby-trap team would then stay behind with a couple of guys for security while we were setting up the ambush and the rest of the platoon would move on down the trail. The platoon would find a good site for an NDP and carefully make their way into some thick cover so as not to leave a path revealing where they were. They would then proceed to set up the NDP. The ambush team would join them when the ambush was set. The platoon would leave the NDP each day at dawn and move to a remote location to do the cooking, reading, letter writing, resting, etc., away from the NDP, then return about dark to spend the night. This way the NDP was not compromised and could be used for several days. We used a plastic spoon from the C-ration pack. We would cut the handle off and bore a hole in it, then attach it to some tripwire and covered it with electrical tape. We would attach that to a bush and stretch it across the trail to use as a trigger. At the other end we attached a wooden clothespin to a bush on the other side of the trail with another short piece of tripwire. The clothespin had a thumbtack on the inside of each ear that would make contact when the spoon was sprung by walking into the trip wire. We ran a wire to each tack and ran that to a battery hidden somewhere off the trail. The clothespin was then covered with friction tape to hide it in the brush. The spoon handle was placed between the tacks to keep it from completing the circuit. The electrical connection at the battery was made with one wire run from the clothespin ear and connected to the negative terminal on the battery. The other wire from the other clothespin ear was connected to the claymores via a blasting cap. Then the other wire from the blasting cap was connected to the positive terminal of the battery. This made a complete circuit if the plastic spoon was removed. We would then place 4 claymores on the trail connected in parallel to the circuit and together by det-cord. Number one Claymore was aimed directly at the tripwire. Number two was aimed just in front of the tripwire in case someone walked into the ambush from the wrong direction. The third Claymore was aimed so as to slightly overlap the number one Claymore to cover the targets behind the person that tripped the ambush. The number four Claymore was aimed down the trail to catch anyone following on the trail from the anticipated direction of travel. That meant that you had one Claymore at the tripwire, one in front of the tripwire and two behind the tripwire pointing back down the trail.

I asked Phil Phillips about who taught Blunt about the mechanical claymores. Phil says it was probably a guy called Wahoo who taught Bob Gibson. "I don't know where he would have gotten the idea for that, he wasn't in-country very long before me at all and I don't remember anything about it. Maybe he got it from hanging around Wahoo, who had been there quite a while and I believe had been in recon or something before that. Rumor was he was to be married in Hawaii and was stood up so he went AWOL and ended up in D/1-11. I can't remember his real name, only that he was about half nuts. He would unscrew a grenade, disarm it, pull the pin, let it discharge and put it back together. Then open the door of the hooch and roll the grenade down the floor letting the spoon flip off like it was the real thing. He would then roll on the ground in a fit of laughter when everyone dove through the screens. Or else he would prop a dead gook up against a tree after a firefight and set back—tossing M&Ms into his mouth, that is if he wasn't prying a gold tooth out with his bayonet. NUTS!!!!!! But he was fearless in a firefight. I forgot to mention that the gook was moaning, and the CO really got on his ass for that one".

Captain Blunt was one of only a few truly unique officers that actually understood Vietnam and how to fight that war. Unfortunately those few were never listened to. Others like Paul Vann were similarly discounted for finding fault with the American strategy. Blunt was a classically trained infantryman. From Denver, Colorado, Blunt enlisted in the Army early in the war and feared the war would be over before he could get a chance to get there. In his own words, he describes his early education, training, and his tours:

Captain Stan Blunt: Thank goodness for sports in high school. That was a good time for us all. We had a good football team and basketball team and, and it was part of life in Colorado—having after school time on the football field, the basketball court . . . darn near won a state championship. We got Third Place in football, third Place in basketball too in the State Class A. We had a good team. Good men. They went on to college, and I tried college for two years and said "The hell with this, to heck with this shit . . ." Too much time in college. I was drafted and I don't know if my dad called the local draft board and got me drafted or what happened. I . . . the draft came and the next thing I knew I was on a train for Fort Leonard Wood—and then for Ranger training in Georgia . . . Airborne training. I enjoyed that very much. It was challenging. And, OCS was good too, because I had a physical nature and I enjoyed that, and we were pretty good. We were pretty good. We had a good platoon; with a good platoon sergeant. But Viet Nam was starting. We had a platoon leader that had just got back from Viet Nam, who got wounded and I know he wasn't too happy about it. It dawned on me the importance of that, the conflict, and I thought it was going to be a short duration. I just had to get over there, what the hell. But it turned out to be long-range, and we were there ten years. I

saw over four of it I guess. At Ranger School, we were down there with "Charging Charlie Beckwith," they called him and . . . he was the boss. But he tried to turn it into Special Forces. Eglin Air Force was where I was at for the third stage of Ranger training. We had patrols down there in swamps. Big rattlesnakes! Big damn snakes we kept running into during the course of it. But it was good training. I just felt you gotta be hard-core to make it . . . but you can only teach so much about Vietnam, put your Vietnam village up and all that crap. We didn't need those things. We needed to stay strictly Ranger. It was a good school. And Charging Charlie and I disagreed on the whole damn thing. He came back wounded from Viet Nam and took over Florida Ranger and . . . Charging Charlie Beckwith we called him, he was a good man. He had a point, village searches and crap like that but I felt we could learn that in Vietnam. It was ok to push guys and make em' proud when they come out of there as good leaders, but let them work on Vietnam when they get there. I don't know whether I was right or wrong . . . I think probably right . . . I think he was looking for training here in the States to have us ready to go over there and that's impossible. Every village was different. So, we learned again over there though. You learned fast what was right and what was wrong . . . I stayed there a year. Early '66 when I finally got to go to Vietnam... 173d Airborne was my first stop, and everybody was trying to get a platoon, so, I was the company XO and just waiting for a platoon to open up in the 1st of the 503rd. And finally I got into it and it still looked like the war was going to be over any second. And I had to make it quick. Search and destroys, we went on 'em, and even on the searches you got to see where you were at in front . . . but you didn't see left or right it was so thick. We were in War Zone "D" and "C". We ran search and destroy, but we didn't search very much except, ah, the ants . . . saw plenty of ants (laughing) in the trees as they came down on ya'. And it was thick forest. Thick jungle. And you tried to keep it quiet. Thank goodness we stayed off the trails. We had straight lines to go through, but when ya' look at what we actually saw, you, you, saw a hundred meters of a thousand meter area and you wouldn't see the other 900 meters. You saw a hundred meters of the area that you worked through, and they could be right there on the left or right and you'd miss 'em. It was War Zone "D" and "C" and, in that area, and Bien Hoa, and around Saigon. On Saigon River we had contact with the NVA. They were the Viet Cong then in the Iron Triangle.

Well first I was a lieutenant, a little lieutenant—

then first lieutenant and finally to captain. I made rank pretty quick. It was about three years as a lieutenant and then you were automatically promoted to captain. Eventually I got wounded and was sent in to Fitzsimons Army Hospital. I was thinking about the whole god dang thing, and I thought, "I can't be finished", even though the doctor said, "Take your disability and get out of the military." Bull-crap. So I went to Washington and altered my records a little bit. Where it said I shouldn't go anywhere without a jeep and I should be protected at all times, and wear a steel pot anytime I was out of the orderly room, I reworded the damn thing and resubmitted my file and then requested to go back to Vietnam to use some of my thoughts about what we should be doing in that conflict.

So, I got to go back, initially, with the 1st ARVN Division as an advisor and that was sixty, '67- 68, so I was in a portion of almost every year. But I learned a lot with the 1st ARVN Division. They were good, good guys in the 1st Battalion, 2d ARV . . . up in Quang Tri and around there, around Da Nang, and the Rock Pile, and Vandegrift Combat Base, and Khe Sanh, A-Shau Valley . . . We were on Hamburger Hill, we were on the west side of it. The hill we tried to take was in the center west side of the A-Shau [Ap Bia Mountain]. We watched it, and then we ran into enough contact too. It was on the main road into Da Nang from Laos. And they, they had guards on it, and we ran into them. We took friendly artillery from a fire support base on . . . I think it was on Fire Base Sarge They fired short rounds, and we were on top of a hill where we could hear them whistling by, then those rounds hit the trees. It was night time and we had some men that were in ponchos that were in bed. We did the medivacs the next day and clear out, and ah, WHAM!

After that, I ran into this little major, whom I never forgot him, Major Ferguson (laughing) shouldn't use any names. And he was the battalion senior advisor, real mouse, that brought me in as staff advisor after this operation, and the first thing he did was, want me to go down to Da Nang and see about his Bronze Star, and I said "No, instead I'll go out and talk to the S-1. He wants me to find out how many ARVN soldiers were killed and are still drawing pay," because it was all going into the pockets of the Battalion Commander and Regimental Commander. And I said, "I don't need to go to Da Nang. You go to Da Nang and get your damn Bronze Star." He was a major in a lieutenant colonel's position, and all he could think about was getting his records straight so he could get his medal. The last thing on my mind was having a record. I mean, it was about being out in the bush accomplishing the mission—knowing what you're

doing and thinking about it. But, it worked out okay. They had a lot of frags in that unit.

Eventually, I went in to the 5th Mech. It was '69-70, and the 5th Mech was up in Quang Tri. It must have been July but I forget, (chuckling)...but I had pretty good time with everybody there. I kind of knew my stuff there, thanks to the ARVNs that taught me an awful lot. I knew about I-Corps and northern I-Corps, and along the DMZ and A-Shau Valley and Khe Sanh. I knew the areas because we'd worked them... Vandegrift Combat Base, and I knew about Con Thien. Already knew about them. I'd been there a couple of times and had some action with the ARVNs at each place. I learned a lot, cause I insisted on staying in the bush. Oh yeah, it was good you bet...yeah I've got good memories of the 5th. The 5th was a good unit. They were out of Fort Carson. I'd already been up there for a year or two before they came over to Viet Nam. They had a combination of a leg battalion, a mechanized battalion and a tank battalion, all of them under a brigade. It was pretty good unit, especially the legs, cause we didn't have to hit the roads and hit the mines. We knew what we were doing. I knew the area already as far south as the Ba Long Valley, to the Khe Sanh area and the A-Shau Valley. I knew it and been there already.

We were starting to use booby-traps—to hell with convention. We'd use Claymore booby-traps with pre-planned artillery, and then get the hell out of there. And go back into it very carefully. You'd unhook that battery and get your Claymores and move out—or put them back in and stay. We had them coming and going. We didn't hit the base camps but we got the places in between. And the army finally found that's what caused the big push in '72. It was the ambushes—the Claymore ambushes. I think that they simply couldn't resupply their units. They couldn't go out of their base camps and into the residential areas anymore, because everybody was using them—the Regional Force, the Popular Force and, and the ARVN's were using them too. The commanding officer of the 1st ARVN Division was a good friend and we taught them how to use them. I don't know what happened to him. His name was Di-Uy Ta. He became the regimental commander and he was my old battalion commander—good friend. We showed him how, and showed everybody how to make the Claymores booby-traps—and they got good at it.

Captain Blunt—with his one-of-a-kind personality—definitely knew his stuff as a straight-leg company commander and definitely knew the area. His strategy was to keep his position hidden—to set up mechanical ambushes and booby-traps that were preregistered with artillery. If a booby-trap detonated, artillery was immediately called in to all the approaches while the company

perimeter remained quiet and held fire. It was hinted that the NVA actually changed their strategy as the war wore on because the mechanical ambushes were so effective. Also, Choppers were never allowed to fly into his defensive perimeters and give away his position—unless it was absolutely necessary. Because of this, there were never hot meals and purified water. You ate C-Rations and got your water—which you treated with purification tablets—from the streams you traversed. They stayed out in the field fifty to seventy days at a time. There was many an irate letter from the parents of his men echoing the entreaties of the soldiers for hot chow. The few that he did respond to, immediately saw the justification of his orders and thanked him. He verbalizes this in his own words:

Captain Stan Blunt: . . . I said, “let’s just be quiet”. “Well, what about a hot meal?” “No, we don’t have hot meals. We hide out in the bush and you can listen to your radio, but keep it down”. And don’t go moving around much or they’ll see you and then we got trouble. If you hear a ‘boom’ we want to immediately put artillery on it. I don’t give a damn if it’s pigs, or a water-buffalo or whatever’s walked in there and detonated that thing. We got to put fire power on it and then H & I’s and then we’ll go in very carefully the next day and locate the battery, disconnect the damn thing and then go see if we got anything with it. And you pick up those Claymore’s and get out of there. “But we’re going in careful. We’re not gonna’ walk into an ambush they’ve set up. No, no”. Supposedly that was violating the Geneva Convention, but who cares? Who cares? We are walking into booby-traps all the time—let them walk into a few. And they would come down the trails lickity-split. They weren’t messing around; they were always going where they’re going on a trail. They never cut their way through the jungle. And so you mine the trails. And you cleared pre-planned, and were ready to fire. Have the tubes aimed there. We got pretty good at it along with the artillery. They knew we weren’t messing around out there. And they’d have the tubes aimed at the booby-traps, ready to fire, pre-planned and as soon as the damned thing went off, H & I’s. And all night H & I’s when they come in take their wounded out or their dead out and, and get rid of the other booby-traps you have H & I’s going right on it. At least you make them think about it. It got, it got to be a dry spell in ’71 and ’72. I think that caused ’72 to happen when, when they came in on us. They, they couldn’t get their commanders to come down the trails anymore because this was going all over I-Corps and II-Corps, and the ARVN’s, they were using the booby-traps. So we, we had a team for just going around instructing how to set up Claymore booby traps safely. And it worked, it worked real good. It was against the Geneva Convention, but who cares?

Who cares? You’re walking into booby-traps all the time, let them walk into them. Of course . . .

Blunt’s disdain for convention did not make him popular among the brass and they just couldn’t see that his ideas were sound. The buzz words of the day were “Search & Clear”, or Search & Destroy”—or in other words—move to contact. This silly notion continually got American men killed because the notion of body count was so critical to the politics of the war. Granted, the tradeoff was two, three, four—or even ten to one—but still, American soldiers were needlessly being lost in his opinion. Blunt’s opinion of the high command was mutual and the Fifth Mech’s commander was no exception.

Captain Stan Blunt: Burke’s was bullshit. He, he was a frustrated general. He made me frustrated. He’d walk around with his silver pearl-handled pistol acting tough, but he was lost. But he didn’t last that long. Ole’ Burke (scratching his head). I remember him coming in to one LZ and we had the company there, and were getting ready to go up the hill where we were supposed to go up to the thicket up there and set up quietly. He comes in and there’s not a goddamned Viet Cong in that area that can’t see us, right there in this LZ where the generals are walking around and giving us away. But they don’t care because they are getting ready to go back in for the hot meal at night back at the base. And uh, I just avoided him like a plague because we had to go up that damn hill and I knew I was gonna’ either take casualties or they’d get the hell out of there. They’d know we’re coming. It was a base camp on that hill [Hill 162] and a bunker system coming out of the thickets there, big thickets on the south side of the hill. They had a base camp there and infiltrating all the time down this trail. We found the base camp and we were very lucky. But we were very careful too because I thought, “This is just so stupid, because they got to see us. We’re in the elephant grass, and they’re in the thicket up there. They got a choice to wait for us or get the hell out of there—one or the other. And it’s going to take us a long time to get up this hill. . . the west side of it, and to get to the top of that mountain. We should have been put on the top of the mountain first of all if we’re gonna’ do the risk of helicopters”. I just thought, “Gee whiz, you guys still don’t know what you’re doing.” And this was, this was ’69, ’70 . . . I had plenty of experience in that area, and Khe Sanh. . .

Captain Stan Blunt: Well, there was a lot of embarrassment (laughing). Like with the ranger units, and some of the LRRP units—long range patrol and stuff. What a farce. I mean you get off the helicopter and go hide, and wait for something to come down the trail. You don’t make any noise, because they can find out where you’re at and eventually come in on you or wait for you at the helicop-

ter pick-up. And it's all so dang dangerous—very dangerous. And there were a few times when they go to insert and they'd take ground fire while they're inserting—no, no.

Then there was Rocket Ridge where they shot rockets off from all the time with time delay fuses—water triggers. They'd set them up and figure out where they wanted them to go—Con Thien, or Alpha Three, Alpha Two and Charlie Two. And then they'd get out of there because there would be a delay fuse that would fire sometimes six hours later before the thing goes up. That's the way they hit Charlie Two where they hit the bunker that had all the men in it. **[He's talking about Charlie Two on May 21, 1971 killing 33 American soldiers].** Yeah, it was like an R&R center—that bunker. It's the same one like in the movie PLATOON where they had a bunker and they were dancing and talking, that's the kind of bunker they were in—with a mess hall and music. It was a place where you went when you were coming in from the field. They had a delayed fuse on a 130 and WHOOM—it hit right in the middle of them. It killed 33 good men. God almighty—good men. Darn good men. We had the AO out to the west with all these trails coming into to Quang Tri that we booby-trapped the hell out of.

November 3rd

On November third, Alpha Company consolidated their ambushes in the morning and moved north along with a tank platoon from A/1-77. A little after 1300 hours, Recon Team 12 reported being surrounded just across the DMZ and Alpha Company was alerted along with the tank platoon to move north to a rendezvous point and be prepared to move to the aid of Team 12 and to extract them if contact developed. At 1400 hours A/1-61 and the tank platoon were ordered to continue their movement north to a grid point to assist in an extraction of Team 12 by air. At 1440 hours, while in route to that grid point, an APC from the tank platoon hit a mine. The mine was of unknown size but four bogie wheels were blown off and there were 2 medivac casualties and one other slightly injured trooper. The crater created by the mine measured five feet by six feet by four feet deep. The mine was big!

Alpha Company, while heading to the grid point found a bunker complex consisting of five bunkers and a ten foot tunnel leading to a four-foot by four-foot room. The complex was destroyed and they moved on to their allotted grid point on the DMZ. As the afternoon wore on, Team 12 seemed to be out of danger and the extraction was cancelled. A/1-61 was diverted east and set up in platoon NDPs with squad sized ambushes and LPs just outside the northern boundary wire of Con Thien.

Charley Company worked their platoons east to a final point where they set up their NDP several clicks west of Hill 162. In the course of the day, they found an area where approximately twenty men hand slept the night before. They also reported the heavy use of the nearby trails, indicating the presence of many

more than twenty individuals. Various pieces of discarded enemy contraband were found and kept as souvenirs. They had one medivac during the day for a toothache.

Bravo Company worked the area southwest of C-2 moving in the course of the day, to a point about four clicks south of Firebase C-2. After setting up their new NDP, six fire-teams were situated outside the radius of the perimeter.

Delta Company(1-11) remained in the same general area it had been in the past three days, patrolling the adjoining areas as before, and picking thick covered areas for their meals and down time.

November 4th

Alpha Company again moved east of Con Thien and performed search and clears all day. At 1000 hours, the second platoon found three sets of footprints and patrolled in the direction of travel. At a turn in the trail, individuals were sighted and a short time later radar sensors spotted movement in the same grid. Artillery was called in and Alpha Company moved forward after the fire mission to assess the damage. The results of the artillery mission were negative at first. Eventually, the third platoon found a shattered rifle stock and a little further on, found an AK-47 rifle-barrel stuck in the ground. They also found one RPG booster and a 105 MM fuse.

Bravo Company worked the area 3 clicks northeast of Hill 162 and patrolled all day long. They found one RPG in the bushes and destroyed it. At 1745 they set up on Gallagher Ridge at YD 085645—the same hill where captain Blunt found a mine while cleaning up the CP foxhole with his entrenching tool. Bravo Company put out two ambushes and two LPs. Charley Company started the day west of Hill 162 and searched in an easterly direction. Several clicks south of Gallagher Ridge, they found an observation area consisting to two spider holes with observation ports. Behind the holes was a skinned tree that appeared to be for affixing an antenna and camouflaging it. There were also rocks with scratch marks on them seeming to indicate direction of travel put out by an advance group of an enemy unit. They also found a badly mutilated NVA body—probably a casualty of an artillery attack. It was estimated to be about two days old. It was also assessed that a platoon sized force had occupied the area for a while and had abandoned it about two days earlier. They also found three TM41 mines, an NVA entrenching tool, a Chicom grenade, a shirt with blood stains, a canister round, and one 57 MM recoilless rifle round in very new condition. All the items were evacuated and this was all reported to Col. Swaren. Charley Company set up their NDP 2 clicks south of Gallagher Ridge and put out their night acts—two ambushes and two LPs.

D/1-11 consolidated to their NDP of the night before and prepared for a significant movement west to the area of Hill 162. After moving west all day and passing in the vicinity of Bravo Company, they moved west southwest of Gallagher Ridge and about twelve hundred meters distant and set their NDP at YD 077637. They put out six LPs at a distance of one hundred meters from the perimeter.

November 5th

On November 5th, Alpha Company, after bringing in their

night acts at dawn, was on the move early, and by 0735 hours were about four clicks east northeast of the northern perimeter of Con Thien. Search and clears were initiated, and at 0840 hours, the third platoon found a north/west travelling trail that had sustained heavy use in the past few days. There were maybe ten fresh sets of prints from the previous evening. At midday, the lead element of A/1-61 spotted fourteen individuals in their sector and evacuated them to Cam Lo for questioning and resettlement. Later in the day in the early afternoon, the first platoon found ten bunkers measuring forty feet long, eight feet wide and five feet high. They also found eleven one-man foxholes all with overhead protection. There was a tunnel complex to all the bunkers and lined with pieces of bamboo—some of them with various writings on them. Also found was a GI poncho, a C-ration can, and an empty mortar charge. The bunkers and contraband were destroyed but the bamboo writings were evacuated to S1.

Bravo Company conducted a search and clear of their area north of Gallagher Ridge and swept in clover leaves, returning to their defensive position of the night before.

Charley Company worked their sector two thousand meters south of Hill 162 on the south facing ridge of Hill 124. They found a bunker system consisting of eighty spider holes with head cover. Russian 60MM ordinance was found along with one poncho, and one rifle grenade. The system seemed not to have been used in several weeks. Moving up Hill 124 dismounted, the third platoon found four Chicom grenades, one US-made M-26 grenade and an NVA hand grenade pouch. Twenty minutes later, the third platoon found another cache consisting of an RPG round and seventeen assorted hand grenades which were destroyed in place.

Delta Company(1-11) ranged northwest four clicks in the course of the day with large cloverleaf patrols only to return to their NDP of the previous evening—on the southwest facing ridge of Hill 162.

November, 6th

November 6th was a bluebird day—clear skies, temperature 84 degrees and relatively low humidity. By 0720, Alpha Company was back from its night acts and in the company defensive perimeter, five clicks northwest of Con Thien and two clicks south of the DMZ. Charley Company was four clicks south of Hill 162, fifteen clicks southwest of Con Thien and their ambushes were moving toward their NDP. Bravo Company was 4 clicks northwest of Charley on Gallagher Ridge. D/1-11 was between the two 1-61 companies. The area of operation was known as AO Orange.

While sweeping around their NDP Charley Company found a foot trail going in a westerly direction. A mounted platoon patrol followed this trail for 900 meters. By 0920, the rest of Charley Companies PCs had caught up with the lead platoon patrol and traversed together, another 1000 meters. While patrolling, they found fourteen bunkers—3 feet by 4 feet by 3 feet deep. They had recently been hit by airstrikes. While sweeping the area, the first platoon found an assortment of enemy equipment including: five NVA shovels, a sixty millimeter mortar base plate, two picks, four woven baskets, 3 RPG boosters, 186 AK-47 rounds, one RPD machine-gun clip, one Chicom grenade, one NVA soft cap, two NVA canteens, two NVA officer belts, four AK-47 magazine pouches, four RPG-2 fuses, one ruck sack, five pairs of socks, two

pairs of pants, two officer field hats, one 9-millimeter pistol magazine, three pounds of salt, ten pounds of polished rice, one pair of underwear, numerous graves and a copious amount of various propaganda materiel. Charley Company's second platoon found an unexploded US five hundred pound bomb that they blew in place. They also came up on ten more bunkers with various unserviceable materials and sundries as well as one NVA flashlight, one pair of socks, one pair of pants, rice in cooking pots 24-hours old, one NVA handkerchief with XVAN 1969 written on it, and three B-40 rockets that they blew in place. Sweeping their way back in the afternoon, Charley Company set up their NDP 800 meters south of Gallagher Ridge. Ambushes and LPs were strategically put out.

Bravo Company made its daily sweeps several thousand meters to the east of Charley Company. Their day was uneventful except for one incident. While performing a recon by fire mission at approximately 1700 hours, a trooper had a 50-caliber machine-gun blow up in his face. The man was in critical condition and a medivac was immediately called in. At 1735 hours the dust-off was complete and the man did survive. They set up their NDP again about 1000 meters northwest of Gallagher Ridge and put out ambushes and LPs.

Delta/1-11 also made its daily sweeps and set up their NDP several hundred meters north of their previous night's position and situated between Charley and Bravo Companies on Gallagher Ridge. Their one event of the day was finding an anti-tank mine, an NVA blasting cap and det-cord which they blew in place. Because of the close proximity to the other two companies, those patented Blunt mechanical ambushes were not set out that night.

Alpha Company had the unlucky draw twelve clicks to the northeast on this day. From their night defensive perimeter, they started a mounted sweep east in platoon patrols. About 2000 meters east of the NDP, half the company had split off and the remaining half was still on the main track trail. In a grassy area, and with the first platoon-leader's PC in the lead, they hit a large tank mine at 0840 hours—probably command detonated. Lieutenant Miaorca remembers the blast and being thrown from the track but is hazy on the details after that. Sargent Kenny Leach, one of the first platoon squad leaders remembers the incident as well.

SGT Kenny Leach: I was on the lead track—I didn't know it was November 6th exactly but it was around that time—so that was it. We hit a mine and I was thrown off the track about 10 feet in the air and got a purple heart. I remember the track tipped over on its side and I was thrown 20 or 30 feet laterally—I landed pretty far away and was pretty banged up. There were about ten of us on that track and we were going up a hill and I believe it was detonated by someone. I didn't know there were two more tracks hit because I got medivaced. They shipped me out in a chopper but I was just banged up and bruised. They treated me and sent me back into the field. I remember all of us got purple hearts and citations for that and someone in the rear they said they would keep them safe for us but that's the

last that we saw of them. Somebody stole them I guess so I don't have that citation anymore and that's why I didn't remember the date exactly

Gene "Bo" Kelly—once in third platoon/ first squad but driving for the medics now—remembers with remarkable detail.

PFC Sterling Eugene Kelly: So we were working out there in AO Orange. And we just go out that day. I was driving for the medics and we had some medics onboard the Track. Right behind me, was the maintenance track. I was the next to the last track in the column. As I recall, we went around a bend. I think we had half the Company with us. And the lead Track went around the bend and I lost sight of the lead Track and then I heard this WHOOMP! A big WHOOMP and then word came back to stop column. Soon more word came back for the medics to move forward. So, I think three medics went forward or all of them might have gone forward except for the gunner. And we were kind of sitting there in the dark so to speak, the daylight. We didn't have access to a radio or anything. So, I get word from the track in front of me and it appears that the lead rack, hit a mine and some guys got hurt and a dust-off had been called. The dust-off came and picked up our casualties.

Immediately, the order was given to dismount on both sides and form a defensive line in the grass. We were down in place well before the utterance was complete. Everyone expected small arms and machine-gun fire but it didn't materialize. An LZ was set up and eventually a bird came in and eight men were evacuated. Two others were shaken up a bit but the third dust-off was cancelled. The rest of us—half the company—lay in the grass facing out. As the journals read—"waiting for further information". The first platoon's command track had its hull split in two places and was stripped of weaponry and all supplies. The hulk was to be left behind—as it was smartly flipped on its side, well off the track trail. The crater that was left though was about four feet wide and four feet deep—caused by an anti-tank mine estimated to be about thirty to forty pounds.

By the time the medivacs were finished and the field stripping of the PC complete, about two hours had passed. At 1045 hours, the order was given to mount the tracks and reverse direction. The other two columns were still sweeping west, while we were ordered back to our NDP of the previous night. At 1055 hours, now facing east, the column was given the order to move out while keeping widely spaced and following in our same tracks. It can only be imagined how the drivers and other troopers strained to see any telltale sign ahead for metal or det-chord. Not a minute passed and a second track hit a mine. Again everyone was dismounted and were in the grass even before the order was given. Again Bo Kelly recalled the second incident with equal detail.

PFC Sterling Eugene Kelly: The word came back to off load everybody on the tracks and to send out flank security, which us guys were part of that

and they said "ok, turn the column around." So that's what we did. I was solo in the medic track and the maintenance track had the driver and was behind me. We turned around and we headed back down the road the way we came and he was now in front of me. And the maintenance track was going back over this little rise, this little hump, and I noticed he started losing purchase with his tracks and he starts sliding backwards. I was trying to give him plenty of room in front of me, you know, to maintain a distance from him. But my forward motion was still carrying me forward and he was sliding backwards and then KABOOM! On his right, it looked to me like his right rear idler (maybe just a little forward) hit a good size mine. It really lifted that thing out and I didn't get hit with any of the shrapnel. Our Track got some on the trim plane and on the left side, below the cockpit, but the concussion was just horrendous. And the PC came back down and landed and I stood there for a moment taking inventory of myself and I couldn't hear anything. I checked out my vision and I could still see. Ok— so figured I was ok. And the medics came back. They got the driver out of the maintenance track. I don't remember his name. He had a broken jaw. He was pretty roughed up and they evaced him. So, the word came back to continue on and Captain Gallagher came up on foot next to me and I couldn't hear a word he was saying but he made motions like – let me see your shot gun. You know, I had the twelve gauge pump shot gun and he pantomimed that. And that was the only weapon I had, so I did-



n't want to give it up but he was a Captain and I was a PFC, so I gave him my shot gun and I gave him about a quarter of a sand bag of double-aught buckshot. So, I was essentially unarmed and I was now the point Track. So, he said go around the maintenance Track and go back and rejoin the Company. So, that's what I did. I made my way around the maintenance Track, got back on the trail, and I just kind of started ski-daddling and I didn't know if those mines were command-detonated. I almost had a feeling they were. And so I was kinda putting on a little speed and I'm looking in front of me trying to see if there was anything I could see that was potentially lethal and I saw a little aluminum disk and I thought "Oh, crap, here it comes!" That was on my side, coming under the left side of the Track, then it dawned on me, it was a pop-up cap. So, I made my way back to the rest of the Company and pulled in and wheeled around in the center of the perimeter and here comes the rest of the company following in my trail pretty much. And I was rattled pretty good but I was really kind of pissed that I didn't have my weapon with me while I was out there by myself. So, I met up with Captain Gallagher and put my hand out and kind of mumbled "I'd like my shot gun back sir." So, he gave me my shot gun back. And after that, for a couple of days, I was in a daze and didn't really remember much. I guess I had gotten a concussion then but didn't know it. You know, we were always so tired and pooped out, it really didn't make much of a difference.

The second track was a total loss as well—two road wheels and a track blown off. It was also field stripped of all weaponry and supplies. It was left and towed back to A-4 a few days later by a recovery vehicle from A/1-77. The second mine also seemed to be command detonated but again—the expected ambush never came. This time we stayed dismounted and humped the 1500 meters back to the defensive perimeter—arriving by about 1600 hours. Again, Gene Kelly remembers the consensus of what went down that day.

PFC Sterling Eugene Kelly: You know what it looked like to me? From a tactical situation, being a PFC and not knowing a whole lot about tactics, but if I was going to ambush somebody, I would look at it like a snake. I would hit them in the head. When they turned around, I'd hit them in the tail. And I'd hit them from both sides.

PFC Ed Martin, was seated on the weapons track which always was positioned in the rear of the column and today was no exception. Lieutenant Chelse Korte, the Mortar Platoon Leader was on the mortar track as well and in radio contact with the other elements on the company net. Martin remembers the day:

PFC Edwin Martin: I got into Nam on October the 15th of 1969. I landed in Cam Rahn Bay and

flew up to the DMZ. I was with [1-61] for only a few weeks when all this started. I remember [the mine incident] very well and I remember that field very well. I was in the mortar track which was actually an M-113. We didn't have a proper mortar track—the ones that have the mortar built in. They must have lost it before I came into the outfit. We were in just a regular APC and we had all the mortar ammunition there—the mortar squad on the mortar track always travelled last in the convoy. We were out in a field in the middle of nowhere and the whole company had just dropped down a three foot slope and we entered this large open field. All the rest of the APCs were in front of us and they were stretched out in a straight line in this field. We had just passed through that little entrance point—and we had just dropped down that slope and were about 20 feet into the field when we heard this explosion up front. The first APC hit a tank mine and everybody froze. Captain Gallagher ordered the second APC to peel off—reverse course and drive back to that little slope where we had entered. Then that number two track hit another mine about half way back to the entrance point from where the first explosion was. The rest of the column [eventually] followed and cast around the number two track back to the entrance point. At this point, the new lead track was right beside our mortar track when they started up that little incline and there was a mine on it. They hit [that third mine] right [behind] us. The whole company had just come across that mine, but that track had come back to that [slope] and must have run over at just the right angle and tripped the mine. I remember walking up to that track afterwards and there was a hole under it that must have been three feet deep. I felt so comfortable standing there because it had already blown and there was no danger then. After they medivaced the wounded out, the rest of us left that field and went off and set up a perimeter.

Sgt Don Saarsfield also remembers the mine incident.

Sgt Don Saarsfield: The track I was on that day was one of the ones that hit the mines. It happened so quickly and I was fortunately thrown clear so that I wasn't hurt. The first thing that popped into my mind was: "Shit, all my stuff is in the track. An additional dust-off was called for when one of the shaken troopers began bleeding from his ears. The others that were shaken, as Kelly was, remained with the company. Ambushes and LPs were put out but it would be a quiet night.

The casualties of the day were all WIAs and the list of dust-offs follow as listed in the Morning Report: PFC Jeffrey Brooks, 1LT Michael Maiorca, PFC Tommie Evans, SP4 Robert



Gawron, SP4 Wayne Hall, PFC Gregory Lang, SGT Anatoli Puschkin, SGT Kenneth Leach, PFC Lewis Femiano, PFC David Nicholson. Several others incurred minor wounds.

November 7th

At 0100 hours on November 7th, the observation tower at Con Thien spotted fifteen to twenty individuals four hundred meters west of the western perimeter at YD01707102 and heading toward the perimeter at an azimuth of 0800. An illumination and artillery fire mission was immediately called. During the fire mission these personnel were seen retreating at an azimuth of 0850 mils. At the same time, on the opposite side of the perimeter three individuals were seen blinking flashlights. These individuals were about one hundred seventy five meters outside the western perimeter at YD13307028. Illumination and artillery was fired as well. Taking part on the western sighting were tanks, dusters, crew served weapons and various small arms fire. It was an extended mad minute. At first light two platoons of tanks were sent out to search the area of earlier contacts. At 0830 hours the two platoons of tanks reached the grids of the previous evening's sightings with negative findings. Moving further northeast one of the tank platoons found and destroyed a six foot by four foot by four foot deep bunker made of dirt and logs. Later in the day the tankers found a total of fourteen bunkers, several ten to fifteen feet long and all of them roofed with logs and dirt. The last of them were destroyed at 1655 hours. Various other pieces of contraband were found including an unexploded 1000 pound bomb which was also blown in place.

At 0900 hours, the Scout Platoon, moving from LZ Nancy to C-2, was ordered to check out individuals seven hundred meters east

of C-2. Searching till 1300 hours, they found only recently used foot trails and returned to C-2 for base security. At 1600 hours Lieutenant General Melvin Zais, commanding general of XXIV Corp, along with Major General Troung, the ARVN sector commander, were briefed by Lieutenant Colonel John Swaren, Task Force 1-61 commander and Colonel John L. Osteen, 1st Brigade, Fifth Infantry Division Commander. It was now obvious—along with the ramp up of sightings and engagements of the past week, and all this brass so close to the DMZ—that something pretty big was in the near future. Following this meeting, Ranger Teams 11, 15 and 17 were extracted. Team 12 and Long Range Recon were ordered to watch crossing points on the Ben Hai River and were in route to their grids. A message to all units was sent out to be on high alert the next four nights from November 7th -11th, taking special care to insure that all defensive perimeters were extremely well prepared and mutually supported with preplanning artillery, mortar and TAC Air support. Additionally Alpha Company, whose NDPs were closest to the ranger teams north of Con Thien, were warned to be especially vigilant this evening and ready to assist in reinforcement, relief or extraction of either team by mounted ground or airmobile assault. Additionally, all units were vigorously warned to be very vigilant when handling



enemy bodies, due to NVA forces purposely leaving booby trapped bodies specifically to be easily seen and handled by US or friendly forces.

Alpha Company, short-handed from the previous day's medivacs, recalled their ambushes and LPs and moved west southwest in the direction toward Con Thien as a blocking force north for the fire base while a tank platoons from Con Thien patrolled towards them. At 0830 Alpha had three platoons and a star team fanned out along the 17 northing line at easting grids 12, 13, 14, and 15 with negative sightings. At 1000 hours, the second platoon found five bunkers two thousands meters northeast of Con Thien and destroyed them with C4. Alpha Company set their NDP one click east of Con Thien and put out two platoon ambushes, two squad ambushes, and the Star Team for night acts.

Bravo Company, having been east of Hill 162, moved north to a point one thousand meters east of Gallagher Ridge. Moving to the north, the second platoon discovered a TM-41 mine on the tank trail that was exposed by the rain but had been run over many times. It was blow in place with det-cord. At 1830 hours, a squad

patrol found an eight pound tank mine laying on its side on a tank trail and it was blown in place. A half hour later, they found an RPG-2 round with a booster in very good condition and evacuated it back to C-2. Bravo Company set their NDP one click west of Gallagher Ridge and set up normal night acts.

Charley Company, moved around Hill 124 and circled Hill 162 as well, reaching a point on the northern slope of that peak. In the course of the day, C Company found signs of an enemy platoon in the area and various weapons and contraband—including twenty-six 82MM mortars and fuses, a large tin of NVA stew still warm, a wicker basket, and two stakes with paper wrapped around them pointing in the easterly direction. They then swept the area in a thousand yard diameter around the spot. C Company set up their NDP two clicks east of Gallagher ridge and established their normal night acts.

Delta Company (1-11), starting out south of 162, then moved northwest to a point four hundred meters north of Gallagher Ridge. They patrolled and swept this area all day and returned to their NDP of the past three days, where ambushes and LPs were put out.

November 8th

Weather report for November 8th: visibility unrestricted and wind out of the northeast at ten to twelve knots and the twenty four hour outlook is for partly cloudy skies—high of 82 degrees and low of seventy eight with 80% humidity—EMNT is 0627 and EENT is 1839—sunrise is 0649 and sunset is 1817—moonrise is 0501 and moonset is 1656 with lunar illumination of 5%. The darkest night of the month will be the evening of November 10th to 11th.

Ranger Team 12 remained on the southern shore of the Ben Hai River northwest of Con Thien. At 0930 hours, the Tactical Operations Center announced that Killer Team 16 would be inserted into the DMZ in the afternoon and would move to the lower left corner of grid 1176 on the south shore of the Ben Hai River. These two reconnaissance teams were positioned about seven thousand meters apart. The plan also directed that they would stay in place for the next four days till November 12th. At 1050 hours the TOC reported that C-2 had taken two to three rockets. Reverse radar measures were employed and it was determined that the rockets were fired from the western hills some ten clicks due west of the fire base. At the same time, Bravo and Charley Companies reported seeing the rockets emanating several clicks southwest of Hill 162. There were no casualties. An hour later Charley and Bravo reported seven to eight more rockets being fired from the same location. An artillery mission was ordered and adjusted by Bravo Companies forward observer 1Lt Mike Cowart. As the fire mission continued, Bravo Company reported four secondary explosions. The result was that no more rockets were fired from that grid location.

Alpha Company began November 8th 1300 meters northwest of Con Thien. All ambushes, listening posts and star teams returned to the night defensive perimeter just after dawn. After breakfast the company split into two groups. By 0940 hours, the CP and the fourth platoon moved fifteen hundred meters south to a point thirteen hundred meters east of Con Thien while the first,

second and third platoon moved northwest away from Con Thien to a point within two clicks of the DMZ. The CP and mortar platoon continued their sweeps and found an exposed mine weighing twenty-five pounds and measuring seven inches in diameter.—which they blew in place. It had been run over multiple times in the last few days. At dusk Alpha moved into Con Thien for stand-down till late morning for maintenance. The rest was welcome and so was a night's sleep in the relative security of a bunker (above), albeit if they were rat infested, filthy and laced with diesel fuel to hold down various infestations. Whoever came up with the idea that diesel would keep the rats down was mistaken. There was a standing contest for the biggest rat or centipede (below) and the squads were very competitive in this sport. As it got dark and quiet as troopers fell asleep, there was always someone awake to set out bait and wait for a rat or centipede to show its shadowy form. 45-caliber rounds were altered by taking out the lead projectile and replacing them with a wad of candle wax—enough to kill a rat safely at close range. A shot fired with these light rounds would sound like a low thud outside but the report sure was loud inside the bunker. The trophy would be hung on the game pole in the morning.

Bravo Company began the day on an elevated knoll half way down the north facing slope of Hill 162. At daybreak all night acts returned to the NDP. During the morning, as Charley Company rotated clockwise to the north, then east, to Bravo's previous night position, Bravo made the same clockwise maneuver south, then west, to Charley's previous night's position—reaching their destination by midday. In the afternoon, Bravo arrived at a hill one hundred meters in height. It was 2 clicks north northwest of Hill 162. This hill 100 bore an exact height with two other knobs oriented in a triangular shape with the hilltops about four hundred meters apart—thus this land form was known as The Three 100s. On this evening, Bravo set up their night defensive perimeter on the southernmost hilltop that had a promontory that looked out at the northern slope of Hill 162. An hour before dusk, Bravo reported to TOC that while firing DEFCONs, there was a secondary explosion. At dusk, three listening posts were set out North, east and west—one hundred meters from the NDP. The fourth LP was set to the south—two hundred meters out and facing Hill 162.

Charley Company initiated their day acts on a small bench one third of the way down the southwestern slope of Hill 162. Ambushes and LPs returned for breakfast chow after dawn in preparation for their daily sweeps. With the first platoon moving northeast toward Bravo Company's position of the previous night, they found various pieces of NVA equipment, including one Chicom grenade, an NVA pouch and a roll of communication wire. They continued to sweep the area. Meanwhile the second platoon, moving northwest fifteen hundred meters to a point twelve hundred meters west of the first platoon, found ten 4x4x4 bunkers with logs and dirt for overhead cover that had been hit a few days earlier by artillery. In the bunker were several unserviceable weapons and pieces of equipment. The troopers moved back carefully and then tossed a grenade in the bunker. From the several secondary explosions it was obvious that the dead that

were left behind were booby-trapped. This is a practice that is totally foreign and completely unthinkable to the American soldier. One can easily see the unanimous puzzlement displayed in the faces troopers of Charley Company which begs the question: "How can they do something like this to their own dead." The only answer to this rhetorical question must be that: "The life of a PAVN soldier is certainly cheap."

Then sweeping further north, Charley Company spotted eight to ten individuals out in the open in a southwesterly direction. Immediately, the weapons platoon plotted a fire mission from their track and lobbed a dozen 81MM at the fleeing PAVNs. Simultaneously the forward observer attached to the company from the 5th/4th Artillery—called another fire mission and the 175MM guns from Camp JJ Carroll responded as well. After the mission, a platoon was sent down to sweep the area finding no enemy casualties. They did find several pieces of unserviceable equipment along with a 51 Caliber Machine-gun tripod in very good condition. At 1450 hours, a Charley Company sweep found two 82MM firing bunkers—two hundred meters apart—on an elevated bench one thousand meters north northwest of Hill 162. They were reported to have appeared to be used for the last two or three weeks. Sweeping east for the rest of the afternoon, Charley Company arrived at the westernmost hilltop of The Three 100s—500 meters northwest of Bravo Company's NDP. Setting up on that hill they were following the directive given by the TOC earlier in the day for all units in the field to be mutually supportive. Six listening posts were set out—all one hundred meters or less from the NDP.

Delta 1-11 spent their evening four hundred meters north of Gallagher Ridge. They moved off to a secure location for chow before starting their daily sweeps to the south. During the morning Delta worked south in platoon group across Gallagher Ridge and continued to a point seven hundred meters to the south. When the directive from TOC earlier in the day was broadcast for all units in the field to be mutually supportive, Delta Company began a twenty-five hundred meter trek to the northwest, coming to the easterly bench of The Three 100s. This completed the last act of all units in the field that day. LPs were put out at one hundred meters and three quarters of Task Force waited for what would turn out to be a quiet night.

November 9th

At 0015 hours on November 9th, Con Thien was probed. Perimeter guards on the eastern perimeter spotted individuals with flashlights at two hundred meters and engaged them with tank fire. The lights went out. At 0130, radar spotted five individuals to the east again at three hundred fifty meters and they were engaged with tank fire and artillery. At 0230, radar again spotted five individuals on the southeastern perimeter at about one thousand meters and engaged them with automatic weapons and tank fire. At 0300, radar again spotted five individuals on the southwestern perimeter at a distance of one thousand meters and engaged them with artillery and 40MM Dusters. At 0315 hours radar spotted five individuals in the same area as fifteen minutes earlier and artillery and duster fire resumed. From 0330 to 0415, five lights were sighted on the northwest perimeter intermittently for forty-five

minutes and were fired at will when sighted with small arms and artillery fires.

All the probes came to naught, but hind sight would be telling. It would soon become obvious that these were faints to hold Alpha Company at Con Thien for base security and so prevent them from being inserted to reinforce any one of the three companies near Hill 162 in the western hills. Nobody knew it at the time, but the NVA were on the offensive and the executive branch of the North Vietnamese government was hoping to be dealt that ace-in-the-hole of wiping out an American fighting unit. In the next 24 hours they would break the cease fire while still in secret meetings with American officials in Paris in an attempt to bring the war to an end.

The forecast for the day again was mid-eighties temperatures and high humidity with ten to twelve knot winds. The next two nights would be the darkest of this lunar cycle with no moon and cloudy skies. Illumination would be less than 1%. This would seem to be a perfect time for the NVA to attack if the so wished.

A/1-77 tankers sent three platoons out to sweep the previous evenings sighting and engagement locations. The third platoon found footprints along the southern perimeter in two locations. The three tanker platoons continued to sweep around Con Thien through late morning and found several twenty-foot long tunnels with large vented underground rooms which they destroyed. At 1955 hours, battalion requested a bird for the next day from 0930 to 1000 to distribute Frag Order 2 of Op Order 11 to be distributed to all units in the field.

P Company of the 75th Rangers requested a four square Kilometer grid location northwest of Con Thien along the DMZ—just south of the Ben Hai River and it was granted. They would remain in that grid till November 13th. At 1715 hours, the ranger team reported four NVA following them near the DMZ and several elements of A/1-77 Tankers were committed as a ready reaction force to chase them down. The small PAVN team dispersed and the ranger team continued on its recon mission.

Alpha Company, still on stand-down, remained in Con Thien repairing equipment as well as refitting and loading three new APCs to replace the losses of the previous week. The company would remain in Con Thien and the bunker wide rat hunt would be extended one more day.

Bravo Company began its day by moving off the Three 100s and moving south toward Hill 162. At midday they moved to just south of Gallagher Ridge. In the afternoon, they moved back north to Gallagher Ridge

Charley Company also started its day moving south from the Three 100s toward the eastern slope of Hill 162 and stopped for a breather between 162 and Gallagher Ridge. At midday they moved to just southwest of Hill 162. In the afternoon, they moved several hundred meters north and set up their night defensive perimeter.

Delta Company brought in its LPs at dawn and remained on the easternmost hilltop of the Three 100s. At midday they moved to just east of Gallagher Ridge. They remained there and dug in in the evening and again the three companies were aligned in a triangle and again in mutual support of each other. Listening posts and

fire teams were strategically set out to further the mutual support of their sister companies. They were now in the epicenter of a ten square kilometer grid that they had swept and re-swept over the past nine days. They had destroyed dozens of bunkers and tunnels, confiscated many pieces of equipment and the information that they passed on to intelligence, had hatched a major Frag Order and a change of OPODER-11 coming the next day. The commanders now sensed that a major engagement was at hand and that they had done all that they humanly could to prepare Task Force 1-61 for what was to come.

November 10th

The weather report again was good with clear skies and temperatures in the 80s with ten knot winds. Conversely, night illumination will be 0% with the moon beginning its new phase—the portion of the lunar cycle perfect for enemy movement.

At 0055 hours, Con Thien radar picked up a motorized object or vehicle at nine hundred yards on the northern perimeter. The 8-inch guns fired 13 rounds as it kept moving toward the firebase. Illumination was fired by 4.2 mortars but visual detection was lost. A few minutes later the vehicle was detected again by radar and moving north at a high rate of speed. At 0900 Alpha Company tankers sent three platoon patrols to investigate. At 1230 hours, one of the patrols found in the area of the previous night's radar sightings, four square holes that were one foot deep. They also found a Vietnamese newspaper. Intelligence will be flown to the area. Another tank platoon discovered various pieces of enemy equipment including 51-Caliber belted rounds and two RPG-2s. They were all blown in place. These would prove to be more diversionary tactics. Alpha Company spent still another night at Con Thien and now assigned to close security of the firebase. The next few days would consist of night listening posts and ambushes along with daytime search & clears and sweeps close in to the firebase.

Bravo Company called in at 0800 and reported being in position on the western edge of Gallagher Ridge. They would patrol the area northeast to northwest for the day and set up on Gallagher Ridge for the night. Bravo Company's third platoon discovered a one hundred fifty pound bomb which they blew in place. They also found several spider holes and a tunnel that was too deep to see if it opened into a room. All of the bunkers were destroyed. At 1505 hours an aerial observer in an O-1 aircraft from the 220th RAC spotted concentrated enemy activity on all of the trails west and northwest of Hill 162.

Charley Company reported at 0230 hours taking one 60MM mortar with no casualties taken. The round hit harmlessly outside the perimeter to the west. Charley Company moved back to Hill 124 southwest of Delta/1-11 and Bravo/1-61. They patrolled in platoons all day to the northwest. In the late afternoon, Charley Company moved northwest to the top of Hill 162 and put out three listening posts one hundred meters from their NDP.

Delta Company reported at 0800 positioned across a ravine from Hill 162. The three companies now were in platoon sized units, spaced out in a straight line running northeasterly over a twenty-five hundred meter defensive line. In the late afternoon, Delta had moved another thousand meters and set up their night

defensive perimeter 800 meters east of Gallagher Ridge. Having been out in the field for nearly forty days, Delta Company was due to be airlifted back to Firebase C-2 the next morning for a well-deserved rest and stand-down.ans not record that when America was the most powerful nation in the world we passed on the other side of the road and allowed the last hopes for peace and freedom of millions of people to be suffocated by the forces of totalitarianism. And so tonight-to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans, I ask for your support. I pledged in my campaign for the Presidency to end the war in a way that we could win the peace. I have initiated a plan of action which will enable me to keep that pledge. The more support I can have from the American people, the sooner that pledge can be redeemed; for the more divided we are at home, the less likely, the enemy is to negotiate at Paris. Let us be united for peace. Let us also be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that. Fifty years ago, in this room and at this very desk, President Woodrow Wilson spoke words which caught the imagination of a war-weary world. He said: "This is the war to end war." His dream for peace after World War I was shattered on the hard realities of great power politics and Woodrow Wilson died a broken man. Tonight I do not tell you that the war in Vietnam is the war to end wars. But I do say this: I have initiated a plan which will end this war in a way that will bring us closer to that great goal to which Woodrow Wilson and every American President in our history has been dedicated—the goal of a just and lasting peace. As President I hold the responsibility for choosing the best path to that goal and then leading The Nation along it. I pledge to you tonight that I shall meet this responsibility with all of the strength and wisdom I can command in accordance with your hopes, mindful of your concerns, sustained by your prayers. Thank you and goodnight.^{ix}

As it turned out the once Silent Majority began shrinking every day and that vocal minority—comprised mostly of their children—grew every day. The organizers of the moratorium—bolstered by the success of the August demonstrations, were organizing more aggressively for the next round of protests planned in mid-November. Considered the largest political rally in U S history, the November 15, 1969 march of over 500,000 protesters on Washington D C in the frigid autumn cold, was billed the most influential protest ever. Simultaneously, millions more marched in nearly every city in the United States. What the protesters didn't know, however, was that Nixon's plan, and the specifics of troop withdrawal and Vietnamization were already written in stone in the White House and proceeding toward an eventual withdrawal and the war's end. They also didn't know that North Vietnam would break the cease fire all over Vietnam and when they saw the opportunity to trap Task Force 1-61, they would play for that ace-in-the-hole on Hill 162 and Hill 100. And they could not have known that the subsequent overwhelming victory of Task Force 1-61 under its commander Lt. Colonel John Swaren, against three battalions of the 27th NVA regiment might have contributed to the collapse of the Paris Peace Talks and the continuation of America's active part in the war for nearly four more years.

TAPS

April - June

Thomas Bainbridge
NOK - daughter: Mary Beth

Unknown

WWII -

James Welsh
NOK - Wife: Jennifer

died March 22, 2017

Ft. Carson - Stateside
Vietnam era

Col. Richard Meyer

died July 12, 2016

1/77th Armor - HHQ
Vietnam

Story behind coins left at vets' graves

According to the Military Salute Project website (militarysalute.proboards.com): “ Leaving coins on the headstones of those who served in the military, especially those who died in combat, dates back at least as far as the Roman Empire.” The practice became especially popular in the United States during the Vietnam War because of the political climate throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Friends of those who died in combat left coins to let family members know that someone had visited the gravesite. Leaving a coin on the headstone was more practical than contacting the family and risk becoming involved in a discussion about the war. Generally speaking, a visitor who did not know the deceased well enough to be considered a friend might leave a penny. Someone who went through boot camp or a training class with the deceased might leave a nickel. A friend who served in another platoon within the same company might leave a dime. A buddy who served in the same outfit, or was with the deceased when he died, might leave a quarter. “Some Vietnam Veterans left coins as a down-payment' to purchase a beer or play a hand of poker when he was eventually reunited with his deceased buddy. “Today, the denomination of the coin left on the headstone has become less significant because so few people carry coins other than quarters. “The coins left on headstones within national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries are collected by cemetery staff from time to time and are used to maintain the grounds. Some cemeteries use the coins to help pay for the burial costs of indigent veterans.” -- *courtesy of alex Candelaria and William (Bill) Hendrickson*

Colonel (Retired) Robert M. Dudley
16385 148th Street
Bonner Springs, KS 66012-9373

7 July 2017

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary;

With the election of President Trump and the renewed emphasis on our national defense posture, I foresee the possibility of increasing the strength of our military. If the end strength of the active Army increases significantly, I can see where the activation of additional divisions could occur. If that happens I would request that the 5th Infantry Division be reactivated.

The Red Devil Division has a long storied history of service to our country. Its lineage dates back to December 1917 when it was originally activated to serve in World War I. As the eighth American division to arrive in Europe, it served with distinction throughout the war. Especially noteworthy was the division's crossing of the Meuse River. After this operation General Pershing wrote: "... The feat of arms... which marks especially the division's ability as a fighting unit, was the crossing of the Meuse River and the establishment of a bridgehead on the eastern bank. This operation was one of the most brilliant military feats in the history of the American Army in France. . . ." By Armistice Day, the 5th Division had advanced further to the east than any Allied division.

The 5th Division was once again called upon to fight during World War II. Initially shipped to Iceland in September 1941, the division was moved to England in August 1943 to train for the invasion of Europe. The division landed in France on 9 July 1944 and launched its first attack on Vidouville on 26 July 1944. Following this successful attack the Division was assigned to the XXth Corps of the newly operational Third Army, commanded by Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. For the most part of the war the 5th Division remained in either the XIIth or the XXth Corps of the Third Army. At the end of the war General Patton stated in a letter dated November 17, 1945: "Nothing I can say can add to the glory which you have achieved. Throughout the whole advance across France you spearheaded the attack of your Corps. You crossed so many rivers that I am persuaded many of you have webfeet and I know that all of you have dauntless spirit. To my mind history does not record incidents of greater valor than your crossing of the Sauer and Rhine."

When the United States was engaged in Vietnam, the soldiers of the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) was again called into battle. The 1st Brigade of the Division was deployed from Fort Carson in June 1968 and initially served with the Marines in Leatherneck Square until assuming full responsibility of that area of operations in August 1969. In January 1971, a reinforced 1st Brigade, initiated operation Lam Son 719. The Brigade opened the QL9 Road from Dong Ha to the Laotian border; at the same time engineers constructed access roads from the Rock Pile through the Punch Bowl to Khe Sanh. Following this, a 20,000-man ARVN Task Force moved to the Laotian border. The brigade colors finally departed Vietnam in August 1971.

With the invasion of Panama opening in the first hours of December 20, 1989, the 5th Division was once again engaged in combat. A part of the division had been deployed in the Panama City area in May 1989 to secure American facilities so elements of the division were in place to support Operation Just Cause. The mission of the task force from the 5th Division was to establish roadblocks north and south of La Comandancia. An estimated 300-400 PDF troops defended the 15 building compound of La Comandancia and fought fiercely to defend their positions against the advancing American task force. As in previous wars, the Red Devils of the 5th Division fought valiantly and secured all of their objectives.

Although the 5th Division served the country for many decades, it was deactivated for the last time in November 1992. I truly believe that with the long history and lineage of this division, it deserves to be reactivated once again to serve our country if our force structure requires expansion.

Sincerely

Robert M. Dudley
Colonel, US Army (Retired)
President
Society of the Fifth Division, United States Army

SOCIETY OF THE FIFTH DIVISION REUNION**SATURDAY DINNER CHOICES****September 9, 2017****\$46 per Person*****Chicken Supreme Customized Plated Dinner***

House Salad of Mixed Greens with Cucumbers, Tomato & Onion served with Ranch Dressing and Balsamic Vinaigrette
Rolls and Butter
Sautéed Chicken Breast with Supreme Sauce
Complimentary Starch & Vegetable (Chef's Choice)
Chef's Choice of Dessert

Sliced Roast Beef Customized Plated Dinner

House Salad of Mixed Greens with Cucumbers, Tomato & Onion served with Ranch Dressing and Balsamic Vinaigrette
Rolls and Butter
Sliced Roast Beef with a Cabernet-Mushroom Demi Glaze
Complimentary Starch and Vegetable (Chef's Choice)
Chef's Choice of Dessert

Garlic Herb Pork Loin Customized Plated Dinner

House Salad of Mixed Greens with Cucumbers, Tomato & Onion served with Ranch Dressing and Balsamic Vinaigrette
Rolls and Butter
Garlic Herb Pork Loin with Apple Chutney & Rosemary Demi-Glaze
Complimentary Starch and Vegetable (Chef's Choice)
Chef's Choice of Dessert

SUNDAY DINNER CHOICES**September 10, 2017****\$46 per Person*****Chicken Marsala Customized Plated Dinner***

House Salad of Mixed Greens with Cucumbers, Tomato & Onion served with Ranch Dressing and Balsamic Vinaigrette
Rolls and Butter
Sautéed Breast of Chicken with Mushroom Marsala Sauce
Complimentary Starch and Vegetable (Chef's Choice)
Chef's Choice of Dessert

Grilled Sirloin Customized Plated Dinner

House Salad of Mixed Greens with Cucumbers, Tomato & Onion served with Ranch Dressing and Balsamic Vinaigrette
Rolls and Butter
8 oz. Grilled Sirloin Topped with Sautéed Mushrooms, Natural Pan Juices
Complimentary Starch and Vegetable (Chef's Choice)
Chef's Choice of Dessert

Seared Salmon Customized Plated Dinner

House Salad of Mixed Greens with Cucumbers, Tomato & Onion served with Ranch Dressing and Balsamic Vinaigrette
Rolls and Butter
Seared Salmon-Pan Seared Filet with Leek Confit, Smoked Tomato Jus
Complimentary Starch and Vegetable (Chef's Choice)
Chef's Choice of Dessert

With all menus: Starbucks® Freshly Brewed Coffee, Decaffeinated Coffee, and Iced Tea.

**HILTON KANSAS CITY AIRPORT – KANSAS CITY, MO
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<http://www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/missouri/hilton-kansas-city-airport-MCIAPHF/index.html>

Location

8801 NW 112th Street, Kansas City, MO 64153

Located just five minutes from the Kansas City International Airport and just 15 minutes from downtown Kansas City

Reservation Information

Please call the number above and reference the Society of the Fifth Division Association or please visit www.group.hilton.com/SocietyoftheFifthDivision

Group Name: Society of the Fifth Division

Reunion Dates: September 7-11, 2017

Rate: \$99 (Single/Double) \$109 (Triple/Quad) + tax (currently 16.225% + \$1.50 per night) Rate includes breakfast for up to 2 people in the hotel restaurant

Cut-off Date: 08/03/17 Late reservations will be processed based on space availability at a higher rate.

Cancellation Policy: Cancellation must be received 24 hours prior to arrival date or there will be a charge of one night's room plus tax.

Parking & Shuttle Information

The Hilton Kansas City Airport offers free parking and free shuttle service to and from Kansas City International Airport. Airport shuttle service is offered upon request, please contact the hotel upon arrival at the airport and proceed to the baggage claim area for pickup.

Wheelchair Rental

ScoutAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call (888) 441-7575 or visit www.scootaround.com for details and to make reservations.

New Item In Quartermaster Catalog !

For those of you who want to stay on top of the latest trend in

Red Devil Headgear Don't miss our new

“Society of the Fifth Division all occasion Headgear”

Yes!!! One size fits all heads. (even officers and senior NCO's)

Hats w/embroidered logo design, adjustable, \$15.00 ea. plus \$5.00 shipping.

Contact the Quartermaster today and flaunt your Red Devil Awareness.

The Red Diamond in center flanked by our Wartime Record seated on “Red Devil”.

Our Motto: “WE WILL” on obverse side.



SOCIETY OF THE 5TH DIVISION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/society2017 (3.5% will be added to total). All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before August 3, 2017. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
322 Madison Mews
Norfolk, VA 23510
ATTN: SOCIETY OF THE 5TH

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Check # _____	Date Received _____
Inputted _____	Nametag Completed _____

<i>CUT-OFF DATE IS 8/3/17</i>	Price Per	# of People	Total
TOURS			
FRIDAY 9/8: KANSAS CITY TOUR	\$50		\$
SATURDAY 9/9: NATIONAL WWI MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL	\$50		\$
SATURDAY: BANQUET DINNER (Please select your entrée)			
Sliced Roast Beef with a Cabernet-Mushroom Demi-Glaze	\$46		\$
Sautéed Chicken Breast with Supreme Sauce	\$46		\$
Garlic Herb Pork Loin with Apple Chutney and Rosemary Demi-Glaze	\$46		\$
SUNDAY: BANQUET DINNER (Please select your entrée)			
8 oz. Grilled Sirloin Topped with Sautéed Mushrooms	\$46		\$
Sautéed Chicken Breast with Mushroom Marsala Sauce	\$46		\$
Pan-Seared Salmon Filet with Leek Confit and Smoked Tomato Jus	\$46		\$
PER PERSON REGISTRATION FEE			
Covers various reunion expenses.	\$20		\$
DONATION FOR HOSPITALITY ROOM EXPENSES	\$		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WANT YOUR NAMETAG TO READ

FIRST _____ LAST _____

SPOUSE NAME (IF ATTENDING) _____

GUEST NAMES _____

UNIT INFORMATION (ex. D CO/1st BN/11th Infantry): _____

YEARS SERVED W/ 5ID(ex. 1965-66): _____

WHERE (CIRCLE ONE): WWII FT CARSON VIETNAM FT POLK OTHER: _____

CURRENT & PAST SOCIETY OFFICE HELD (ex. NATIONAL FIRST VICE PRESIDENT, PAST PRESIDENT, ETC.): _____

STREET ADDRESS OF MAIN ATTENDEE _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PH. NUMBER (_____) _____ - _____ EMAIL _____ @ _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

(Sleeping room requirements must be conveyed by attendee directly with hotel)

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY). YES NO

For refunds and cancellations please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. **CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00am-4:00pm EASTERN TIME (excluding holidays).** Call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. By submitting this form you will be enrolled in our monthly newsletter subscription. To opt out of this service, please check the box.

**SOCIETY OF THE 5TH DIVISION REUNION
SEPTEMBER 7 – 10, 2017
HILTON KANSAS CITY AIRPORT – KANSAS CITY**

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

1:00pm - 5:00pm

Reunion Registration Open

Hospitality Room to be open throughout reunion, hours to be posted.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

8:30am - 9:30am

Reunion Registration Open

10:00am - 3:30pm

KANSAS CITY TOUR

4:00pm - 5:30pm

Reunion Registration Open

Additional hours will be posted if needed.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

8:30am - 9:30am

Executive Board Meeting

9:30am - 2:30pm

NATIONAL WORLD WAR I MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL

6:00pm - 7:00pm

Cash Bar Reception

7:00pm - 10:00pm

Dinner Banquet

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

9:00am - 10:00am

Non-denominational Worship Service

10:00am - 11:00am

Memorial Service

1:00pm - 2:00pm

Society General Membership Meeting

6:00pm - 7:00pm

Cash Bar Reception

7:00pm - 10:00pm

Dinner Banquet

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

Farewells and Departures

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date (8/3/17), Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable AFR registration fee (\$7 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable AFR registration fee. **Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time, excluding holidays.** Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation does not cancel your reunion activities.

SOCIETY OF THE 5TH DIVISION REUNION TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

KANSAS CITY TOUR FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2017

Kansas City is known as the City of Fountains. See why as we make our way through the area. Some points of interest include Lewis and Clark Point and Union Station. A new addition to the downtown area is the Kauffman Performing Arts Center, much like the Opera House in Australia. Also enjoy Kauffman Gardens. You'll have free time for lunch on your own at Country Club Plaza, Kansas City's premier retail, restaurant, and entertainment district. The plaza offers more than 150 shops and restaurants nestled within old-world architecture, captivating fountains, and expressive works of art. After lunch, we will make our way to the American Jazz Museum and the conjoined Negro Leagues Baseball Museum (NLBM). Take time to tour these two museums. The American Jazz Museum showcases the sights and sounds of jazz through interactive exhibits and films, visual arts exhibits, and enriching jazz audiences. The NLBM includes multi-media displays, and artifacts dating from the late 1800s through the 1960s preserving the rich history of African-American Baseball. You will have time to explore both museums before returning to the hotel.

**10:00am board bus, 3:30pm back at hotel
\$50/Person includes bus, guide, and admission.
Lunch on your own.**

NATIONAL WORLD WAR I MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2017

Ranked the number one attraction in Kansas City and the fifth best museum in the United States, the National World War I Museum and Memorial has been called a "national treasure". Steeped in history, the National World War I Museum and Memorial is America's only museum dedicated to sharing the stories of the Great War through the eyes of those who lived it. We will arrive at the museum and begin with a brief memorial service outside of Liberty Memorial Tower, which rises 217 feet above the main courtyard. After the Memorial Service, you'll receive a guided tour of the museum. In the museum you'll enjoy interactive displays, thought-provoking films and eyewitness testimonies, while receiving a narrated tour of the largest collection of WWI artifacts in the world. Following the tour, grab your boxed lunch from the "Over There Café" and enjoy some time on your own exploring the grounds and museum.

**9:30am board bus, 2:30pm back at hotel
\$50/Person includes bus, guide, admission, and lunch.**

QUARTERMASTER REPORT

Following are pictures and descriptions of merchandise that is available for sale from the Quartermaster

Society of the 5th Division Polo Shirts



Black or White Polo Shirt w/embroidered logo design. Choice of short or long sleeve. Cotton/Polyester (50/50) Cotton/Polyester (50/50). Specify size: Short Sleeve: M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL - \$40 Long Sleeve: M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL - \$50 S & H: 1 shirt - \$5; 2 shirts - \$7.50 Larger orders: Contact the Quartermaster

Society of the 5th Division T-Shirts



Black or White T-Shirt w/embroidered logo design. Choice of Short or Long Sleeve. Cotton/Polyester (50/50). Specify size: Short Sleeve: M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL - \$25 Long Sleeve: M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL - \$30 S & H: 1 shirt - \$5; 2 shirts - \$7.50 Larger orders: Contact the Quartermaster



PIN (Hat/Lapel)
½ Inch Red Diamond w/white numeral "5"
Gold finish metal Cloisonné, \$5.00 ea.

Shipping & Handling Add \$1.50 for order of 1 to 10 pins. Contact Quartermaster for larger orders



PIN (Hat/Lapel)
1 Inch Red Diamond, Silver finish metal Cloisonné, \$5.00 ea.
Shipping & Handling Add \$1.50 for order of 1 to 10 pins.

Contact Quartermaster for larger orders

Fifth Division Hats

w/embroidered logo design, adjustable, \$15.00 ea. plus \$5.00 shipping costs. Contact Quartermaster for larger orders

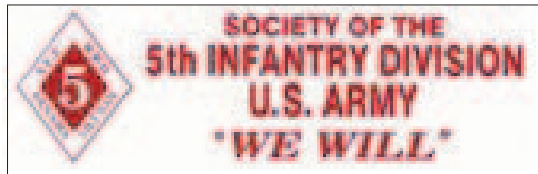
Fifth Infantry Division Challenge Coin



Fifth "Infantry" Division Challenge Coin (front and back shown): \$10.00 ea. w/shipping and handling included. Antique gold (sandblasted texture) w/epoxy finish; 1¼" x 1/8". Detail is exquisite. This is the only authorized Challenge Coin issued by the Society of the Fifth Division.



1



Bumper Sticker: "WE WILL" BumperSticker; 1½" x 3"; \$1.00 ea. Add \$1.15 for shipping and handling for each order.

Dennis W. Coulter - Quartermaster
4118 E. Stanford St.,
Springfield, Mo 65809
email: dwcoulter1@aol.com




Compilations of New York Times Articles: This is the book which was made available to those who attended the Reunion. It is available now at our cost of \$9 plus \$9 shipping/handling for a total cost of \$18. Contact Quartermaster for larger orders.



SOCIETY OF THE FIFTH DIVISION
John Estrada - National Secretary
P.O. Box 5764
Oroville, CA 95966-8823

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 "WE WILL" THE SOCIETY OF THE FIFTH DIVISION UNITED STATES ARMY	MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL APPLICATION	<small>PLEASE PRINT FULL NAME AND ADDRESS CLEARLY.</small>
	<p>Having served honorably with the Fifth Infantry Division, I wish to:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> become a member in</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> renew my membership in</p> <p>... the Society of the Fifth Division as:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a full member</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> an Associate Member</p> <p>and herewith submit my annual dues of \$15.00, to include a year's subscription to the <i>Red Diamond Magazine</i>.</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____</p> <p>State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>I served in _____ <small>Co., Bty, Trp / Battalion / Regiment / Brigade</small></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> WW-II <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnam <input type="checkbox"/> Panama</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p>\$ _____ Gift to the Society.</p> <p>Make checks payable to: Society of the Fifth Division</p> <p>Send to: Secretary: John Estrada Society of the Fifth Division P.O. Box 5764 Oroville, CA 95966-8823</p>

The dues for membership in the Society are \$15.00 for annual membership. Any member wishing to become a LIFE member may do so by paying the following one-time dues: age less than 61, \$150.00; age 61-69, \$75.00; age over 70, \$50.00. All LIFE members are subject to any special assessments declared by the Executive Board or adopted at any meeting.