

THE

RED 5 DIAMOND

The official publication of The Society of the Fifth Division, United States Army.

Volume MMXXI Ed. 1

February 2021

Annual Dues: \$15



This is 2021

“WE WILL”

Deadline for submission of articles for the next Edition:

April 30, 2021

2020-2021 Society of the Fifth Division Officers – Roster

Objectives 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.

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- *Hal Roller (2019-2020)
- * Deceased

Executive Board Member & National President
Louis Pepi - Pat 181 Fairbanks St West
Boylston, MA 01583
508-835-3345
lapepi@charter.net

Executive Board Member &
National 1st Vice-President
Gary Haverman - Jeanne 409 Prairie Street
Bayard, IA 50029
C: 712-830-6081
email: gary.haverman@gmail.com
C Btry, 5/4 Artillery

Executive Board Member & 2nd Vice President
Hal Roller-Sheryl
15517 Woodward St., Overland Park, K.S.
66223, Phone 913-681-4915
hal.roller@sbcglobal.net

Executive Board Member & National Secretary
John Estrada – Diana
423 Middlefork Lane • Oroville, CA
95966-8823
Home: 530-589-9897 • Cell: 530-990-2575
e: whitewater50@hotmail.com

Executive Board Member & National Treasurer
George B. Shoener – Andrea
7472 Pamelas Way • Easton, MD 21601
Home: 410-822-9717 • Cell: 443-496-1177
e: gshoener@goeaston.net

Executive Board Member & Historian (Archive)
Roger Allen

Advisory Committee

All Executive Board members (above)

All Active Past Presidents

Robert Rochell – Libby
1129 Castle Bluff Circle • Waco TX 76712
Cell: 254-723-3280
e: rochell@msn.com
HHB, A Battery 5/4 Artillery

Jim Spiller – Joanne
500 Pearson Circle Apt 4011 Frederick, Md. 21702
Home: 301-662-2752 • Cell: 301-788-5459
e: spiller612@gmail.com
HHC, 1/77 Armor
James Balderson – Jackie
905 Sutton Place • Richmond, IN 47347
Phone: 765-966-7175 • e: jaybalderson@yahoo.com
Co D, 1/11 Infantry

17218 Hodges Rd Hilliard, FL 32046
campreddevil@hotmail.com

Executive Board Member & National Chaplain
Ron VanBeek
5411 Quest Drive. SW • Wyoming, MI 49418-8357
Phone: 312-343-0678 • e: ron@mtcnet.net

Executive Board Member & National Judge Advocate
Phil Maniscalco – Sandy
23 Franklin Street, Unit 17 • Westerly, RI 02891
Home: 401-315-0968 • Cell: 860-961-6450
e: pmanis@cox.net

Executive Board Member &
National Editor (Red Diamond)
David Kocan - Linda
9016 Simms Ave, Parkville MD
C: 410 804 1335
drkocan@verizon.net

Executive Board (Past President)
Stephen L. Wheat – Sandra
4838 Rockledge Trail • Smithton, IL 62285
Cell: 618-334-8410
wheatsco@gmail.com

Executive Board (Past President)
Robert Dudley
16385 148th Street
Bonner Springs, KS., 66012-9373
Ph. 913-422-3543 E-coldrdudley@aol.com
Quartermaster
Dennis Coulter
4118 E Stanford Street • Springfield, MO 65809
Phone: 417-414-5680 • e: dwcoulter1@aol.com

Mike Sperling
14503 E. 257th Avenue • Brush Prairie, WA 98606
Home: 360-892-7639 • Cell: 360-798-7111
e: sperlingmichael@hotmail.com
HHC Recon, 1/61 Infantry
Bernie "Buck" Kean – Mary
498 Ebenezer Road • Ellijay, GA 30536
Home: 706-273-1793 • Cell: 770-361-6670
e: Buck5div@wildblue.net

Co D, 1/11 Infantry
Wayne Cumer – Darlene Kopp
150 Cumer Lane • Burgettstown, PA 15021
Home: 724-947-3859 • Cell: 724-622-6564
e: wccumer371@verizon.net
HHC Recon, 1/61 Infantry

James "JJ" Jackson – Karen
P.O. Box 1845 • Cold Springs, TX 77331
Home: 936-767-4229 • Cell: 713-560-0008
HHC Recon, 1/61 Infantry

Representatives at large

Northeast

John Ginty
845-687-7051
New Paltz NY.

Joseph Rahie

14560 Lakeside Circle, Apt. 244
Sterling Heights, MI 48313-1354
Phone: 586-803-3082
Co M, 2nd Infantry Regt

Southeast

Col. Henry Neill (Ret)
7417 Jenna Road • Springfield, VA
22153-1349

Home: 703-569-5397 • e: reatta@mac.com
A Co, 75th Support Battalion

Gary Barard

1660 Esprit Court • Atlanta, GA 30331-8428
Home: 404-349-8247 • e: gbarard@aol.com
Co A, 75th Support Bn.

West

Dennis Coulter 417-414-5680
4118 E. Stanford Street, Springfield,
MO., 65809 email dwcoulter1@aol.com

Ray Collins

1230 Phillips Street • Long Beach, CA 90805-4854
Home: 562-428-6243 • e: raymcl8@aol.com
HHC Recon, 1/61 Infantry

Vietnam

Nick Pink
40662 Elizabeth • Sterling Heights, MI 48313-4037
Home: 360-892-7639 • Cell: 360-798-7111
Co D, 1/11 Infantry

Vernon Songerth

930 Timber Ridge Road • Princeton, IL 61356-2886
Home: 815-872-4171
Co D, 1/11 Infantry



A Note from the President

Louis Pepi

President's report for January 2021

Good day to all 5th Infantry brothers and sisters. Well, I am glad 2020 is finally behind us. Hopefully, 2021 is a vast improvement and we will be reunited again in the northeast for our September reunion. With the arrival of the vaccine, I have guarded optimism that we will see each other again this fall. We start work in earnest after the first of the year.

As a point of news, Jim Hooper, the author of *A Hundred Feet Over Hell*, has rewritten and added to the two chapters—*My People Need Help*—concerning the 5th Infantry Division's role (1-61) in Operation Rich and the battle of Kihn Mon. Jim Hooper has graciously allowed these revisions to be posted on the society of the Fifth Division website. Look under *Service Stories* and the link will drop down—or hit the following link: 16,000 words (societyofthefifthdivision.com)

Among the three losses to Society of the Fifth Division this period, was Alton "Skip" Hager—one of my Alpha Company 1/61 squad members. Skip was our 50 gunner on the 3-1 track. I remember him as a fun-loving guy who always had a smile on his face, even in the aftermath of the most horrible times when a smile was needed most. I spoke to his wife Vicky last week and she reinforced my memories of him by saying that Skip made her smile every day of the 48 years they were married. I re-found Skip about 5 years ago—or should I say Tim Hurley found him for me—and Gene Kelly and I spoke on the phone to him several times. He lived in Missouri and Vicky and her family will be attending the 2022 reunion in Springfield. Skip was one of the reasons the casualty list wasn't greater than it was on November 13, 1969 on Gallagher Ridge. His sector of the perimeter was the hardest hit and would have been overrun twice if not for Lt Korte's quickness to reinforce the weakened sector and Skip's expert use of the 50. Over 100 NVA dead lay in front of his position as dawn arrived. Several weeks later, Skip was suddenly gone from us when he was infused into the 101st. The squad missed him then and we sorely miss him now.

Rest in Peace, Skip

Lou Pepi
SOFD president





From the 1st Vice President: Gary Haverman

Message From the First Vice President: Gary Haverman

Hello again to all of my Red Diamond readers. Today is December 31st, so this will be the first time I will start writing an article for the Red Diamond in 2020 and probably won't get done till 2021. With that said I want to wish you all a very Happy New Year and do hope you all had a Merry Christmas. As we welcome in a new year we always tend to look back at the past year with reflection. That will be the only year that we can look back with true 2020 vision. For many people, it truly was an eye-opening year.

My wife, Jeanne and I are back on the road once again in our motorhome. We left Iowa a few days after Thanksgiving to a place called Starkville, Mississippi. We chose this town because it's about halfway to our final destination being Florida, where we plan on staying for 3 months. After two weeks in Mississippi, we went back to Iowa for dental and VA appointments, two meetings and three Christmas parties. Needless to say, the Christmas parties are what we were looking forward to the most. Boy this retirement thing is something else!!! Things definitely will slow down when we get to Florida and that is when the true retirement begins-Lol!

You know I like to look back at some of my memories and emotions of 50 plus years ago starting with Thanksgiving. It was just a few days before Thanksgiving, when the day started like all the rest with the DJ from AFVN beginning his broadcast with the all too familiar: Goooooooooooooooood Morning Vietnam. I don't ever recall any day in Vietnam that deserved that statement, however. First off it was raining and C-2 was a sea of mud. I was on gun 4 at the time and it was our turn to supply two guys for trash run. So, myself and another guy had to drive around the battery with M548 Cargo carrier picking up the dunnage that would accumulate after a day of shooting, things like powder canisters, projectile pallets, fuse boxes and junk in general. We were headed back to the battery after unloading all the crap in the landfill when we see a huge cloud of black smoke coming from C-2. As we got closer, I saw it was gun 4 personal bunker. There was no way to put it out, I recall hearing all of our bandoliers of M16 rounds going off like popcorn.

It wasn't much, but it was the place I could rest and get some peace. The only thing I owned at that time was what was on my back. My biggest lost was letters and pictures from home and five undeveloped rolls of Kodak film. Only God knows what was on that undeveloped film!!!

A couple weeks later, a group of guys from the engineers came in and leveled the spot and built us a new one. I got to move it for about ten days when I was asked or told to move over to gun one. They showed me where I was to put my stuff and the number one rule in that bunker was not to shoot the snake. Seems as if they had a friendly snake in there that would

slither across the floor harmlessly just looking for lunch which were those lovely rats. I could live with the friendly snake, but never with those damn rats!!!

The Christmas of 1970, Bob Hope did not go any further north than DaNang and that was as close as I got to him. Each section of the battery was to select one guy to see his show. At the time I was still on gun 4 and we chose to draw straws. I unfortunately came up with the short one again. So now I say to Bob Hope, "No thanks for the memories!"

There was a rumor going around that a few of Dean Martin's Gold Diggers might stop by for a meet and greet. We all thought that would be a heck of a lot better than even having Santa Clause show up. We knew it was possible because about two months earlier, a chopper flew in and out stepped four lovely ladies in hot pants. Wow talk about "eye-candy!" Their outfits were definitely nothing like the "Donut Dollies" that would stop by. Whether The Gold Diggers or the Donut Dollies, all were very much appreciated.

Anyway, Christmas day came and it was the Gold Coasters, a five-piece band from Australia that performed for us at our make-shift stage. They were good until we had to run back to the guns for a fire mission because somebody ignored the Christmas cease fire- "Fun haters." Enough said of those memories for now.

In October, when Jeanne & I traveled to Springfield, Mo. to meet with some of the people we will be working with on the 2022 Reunion. I have been texting, emailing and talking to these folks and I felt it was important to make that personal connection. It started on Saturday night with meeting up with Dennis Coulter and his wife, Terrie at the Fire and Ice restaurant. As most of you know, he is our Quartermaster and lives in Springfield. During what was to be a great meal and a few drinks we also covered a lot of topics such as tours, transportation, meals, Vietnam, etc. It has been so nice to have Dennis's "walking point" for me in Springfield. On Monday, Jeanne I I along with Dennis met with Carrie Chavez from the Springfield Convention and Visitor's Bureau. Wow is all I will say for now. I will be planning another trip to Springfield to see and do some of the many things she highly suggested for entertainment. The next day, we met with the Sales Manager from the Oasis, Caleb Campbell. He is a very delightful young man who I took a liking to right away. It helped when he picked up the check-just kidding, kind of. He gave us a tour again of the Convention Center, of rooms we would be using and spoke of new construction plans with the promise it will be complete when we arrive for our 2022 Reunion.

Last thought: I was thinking the other day how nice it will be not to wear a mask everywhere I go, then I remembered the damn steel pot we had to wear all the time, so then the mask didn't seem so bad.

God Bless you and may He keep us all safe and healthy.

1st Vice President,

Gary Haverman



Second Vice President's Message: Hal Roller

What should Veterans do?

Veterans with symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath should immediately contact their local VA facility. VA urges Veterans to contact VA before visiting – you can find contact information for your closest VA facility. Alternatively, Veterans can sign into My HealthVet to send secure messages to their VA providers or use telehealth options to explain their condition and receive a prompt diagnosis.

Read responses to Veterans' frequently asked questions about accessing their VA benefits.

Upon arriving at VA, all patients will be screened for flu-like symptoms before they enter in order to protect other patients and staff. A VA health care professional will assist you with next steps once this screening process is complete.

At this time, VA is urging all visitors who do not feel well to please postpone their visits to VA facilities.

How to protect yourself

Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent the COVID-19 infection and no medication to treat it. CDC believes symptoms appear 2 to 14 days after exposure. Avoid exposure and avoid exposing others to an infection with these simple steps.

Learn to use VA Video Connect through the VA mobile app store or by contacting your VA care team, before any urgent problems arise.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. An easy way to mark the time is to hum the

“Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice while scrubbing.

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Stay home when you are sick or becoming sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue (not your hands) and throw the tissue in the trash.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Getting a flu shot is recommended.

For more information

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Memorandum M-20-21, all financial information that agencies are required to report concerning their disposition of CARES Act and other supplemental COVID-19 appropriated funds is publicly available on USAspending.gov*, specific information regarding COVID-19 spending can be found on the COVID-19 Spending profile page <http://usaspending.gov/covid-19>*.

Chaplain's Message: Ron Van Beek

The Weeping Trinity - God's War against Sin

Genesis 6:6 - It repented The Lord, that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His Heart.

As a Chaplain, I do not need to tell you that our President has declared America is at war. We are at war again, The whole world is at war again. It is a most unusual War against a tiny invisible germ, COVID-19, which is mushrooming doom and destruction, all around the world. War is always devastation, war is always destruction, war is always consuming. And so is this one. This is a different war, but also deadly. In this war, Nearly every one of the 196 nations in the world has been brought to its knees, before God's Wrath today. Over 350,000 have died. The Trinity did not originally Create us to war with each other, or to die from disease. We caused it, sin causes wars. The Trinity is Weeping for all human deaths involved in war destruction.

But, we should not use the word, war again, but more accurately, we should say more continuous daily wars. History has lost count of how many human wars has been fought. History has lost count of how many humans have died because of wars, but what the Bible says is True. That 1/3 of the world's people would die from wars, the war we tragically started. Imagine that human cost to families and loved ones. Try to imagine the River of Tears. However, Let us stop and look honestly at The real cause of this war, and all wars, which began nearly 6000 years ago, when we openly declared war against God, when we rebelled in Eden against God, our Creator. When we rebelled against all Good, and willingly embraced Satan, the father of lies, and all Evil. Yes it was our sin, our guilt. The Bible says We did it. Wars come from our human lusts and sin. The Bible says that We began this war against our God, you and I. The Holy Spirit has taught all of our Godly Forefathers this awful reality. What a tragic thing that we do not know this today, that in just this one wicked and perverse generation, we have lost the knowledge of this central human reality. The Trinity is Weeping for this destruction we are heaping upon ourselves daily..

How, we must fear, with our open sins in this wicked and perverse generation, that we have nearly reached that same tragic point with our relentless accumulated sin and wickedness, which the corrupt christian church reached 31 times before in history, where God would no longer even hear their prayers. With our great sins, how we may fear, That we have reached that same point, where Isaiah is told by God, in Isaiah 6:9-10; Go tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the hearts of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed. Try to fathom this Judgment. God Gives ears to hear, but we can not hear. He gives us eyes to see, but we can not see, hearts to discern but not able to discern...because sin has blinded us to our sin. The Trinity is Weeping for this destruction, we are heaping upon ourselves daily! God wept over the high cost, of the death of His Son, which sin demanded. In that 6 hours upon the cross, where God hid His Face from His Own Son, how it grieved Him to His Heart. This River of Tears, is what your and my sins have caused.

Only look around, look throughout history, at the River of tears, which our sins have caused. How large is that river! Look only at the wars, the dying, the sick beds, the funerals, the graves, the hospitals, the infirm, the handicapped, the mentally ill, the murders, the abortions, where nearly 200,000 die each day across the world. Sin has caused that! Our daily war against God has caused all this. God has brought all 196 countries to their knees today, He is calling us to repentance. Let us be as wise as the King of Nineveh. History shows, that without a doubt, he was more cruel and inhuman, than even Hitler, yet we read that when he heard God's Warning, he immediately repented, along with his whole country. America desperately needs to follow his example.

TAPS

- Hank Neill, Jr. died Nov. 10, 2020 5th Division - Vietnam
Col. US Army
2. Robert J. Silva died Oct 18, 2020 5th Division -
Vietnam
 3. Michael Pelton died Nov. 15, 2019 5th Division - Vietnam
D-1/61
 4. Alton (Skip) Hager 5th Division -
Vietnam
 5. Fredrick Bullenbock died July 29, 2020 5th Division - C-1/11
Vietnam
 6. Luis Angel Ibarra died Jan. 2, 2021 5th Division - D-1/11
Vietnam
 7. Joseph Rahie died Feb. 14, 2020 5th Division - Vietnam
Past Society Historian
 8. Alex T. Candelaria died Dec. 29, 2020 5th Division - Vietnam
Past President
 9. Major Bill Joseph Helwig died January 10, 2020 5th Division Vietnam
 10. Mary Sondgeroth died January 4, 2021 wife of Vern Sondgeroth D-1/11

Please stand, bow your head and give a moment of
silence and if you wish say a prayer for all.

Thank you.

To the Members of the Society of the Fifth Division:

I love the angle of the sun this time of year in Virginia as it lights on fire the late lingering autumn leaves. It is with this beauty of nature that I will remember Hank Neill as he rose on wings of eagles to the heavens.

Hank was at peace with how he lived his life and with his God. I was able to arrange Last Rites, Confession and his last Communion at his bedside while he could still participate.

Henry W. Neill, Jr., COL U.S. Army, retired

Born: August 19, 1939

Died: November 7, 2020

Hank remained Army Strong as he battled cancer for over sixteen years. With the help of Hospice I was able to take care of him at home. He passed away with me at his bedside as was his wish. Now I hope that I will be able to carry on Army Strong and live up to his expectations.

Those of you who ever spoke with Hank quickly found that he did not have to kiss the Blarney Stone to acquire that gift of "gab". He loved sharing his stories. Over the years he attributed the soldiers of the Finance Unit in Vietnam to enabling him to have a successful military career and rising to what he considered the best job in the Army for him, Commandant, U.S. Army Finance School, "Chief Of The Corps". The Finance Soldiers made him the man he was. He treasured meeting with them and other members of the Society at the annual meetings. The support of the Finance Soldiers with words filled his last hours with memories. I thank them for being with me in spirit. I felt the prayers- they were comforting.

Hank's wish is to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. This will happen in the spring. Because of covid, attendance will be limited so I will have a photographer live stream the services and ceremonial burial.

My very best wishes to the Society of The Fifth Division.

Regards,
Judy

A Day in Vietnam

Dirty, faded jungle fatigues. Jungle boots with only a hint of black. Hot water from a canteen that tastes like Clorox. Bodies that smell like 3 hot weeks without a bath. Doc and his daily malaria tablets. Doc chasing us with his weekly malaria tablet. Saving toilet paper for what you know is coming. Rucks that bite into your shoulders and back. The cold metallic taste of fear in your mouth. The crackling sound of bullets passing by your head. The hissing and swaying of an illumination round falling through the pitch black darkness causing moving shadows on the ground like a horror movie. A sound in the night that is not supposed to be there. C's that no longer matter what's in the can. 20 year old C-ration cigarettes. Praying that today will be uneventful. Nervousness and anxiety that it will not be. The elation following survival. The numbness following those that didn't. Counting the days until we would be welcomed home with open arms. The ignorance of not knowing that would never happen. And then the sun would go down amid those beautiful sunsets. Relief of making it through another day. And then it was night. Vietnam nights, a totally different world that made the days look good. The love of our Brothers that kept us sane. Two salt tablets and Drive On. All you can do. Just remembering.....
The way we were.

In Memory of Col (Ret) Henry Neill
As remembered by Gene Rees

What can be said about a gentleman like Henry Neill. First off – the fact that he's (as far as I know) never gone by anything but "Hank" tells you a lot about his "formality". Second - I'm both honored and humbled to have been asked to write something about Hank. If anybody needs to read anything about Hank's professional capabilities I'd be more than happy to share the Red Diamond article that he wrote in 2017 about having to, with no more than a few days notice after his arrival in RVN, travel to Saigon with a couple of Finance clerks in the Summer of 1968 and "bag up" several million dollars in MPCs and travel back to Quang Tri for an MPC exchange (C-Day as it was called) for virtually ALL of the personnel in 5th Division – no matter their rank or location.

Hank and I met at Quang Tri Combat Base, A Company, 75th Support shortly after I was assigned there in mid-August of 1968. As the designated Reenlistment Clerk AND the clerk and driver for the Brigade AG we all shared the same row of mud and tents that were the "offices" while Camp Red Devil was being constructed by the Seabees. It soon became apparent that people like "Cpt. Neill" weren't as much impressed with rank as with capability, he was always much more of a "do-er" than a "saluter". When it was "necessary" people were saluted, rank was stated, etc. When it wasn't people usually just shook hands and usually just used first names. As the "driver" for the AG, Asst. AG and NCO of Reenlistment (and, often, as a "fill in driver" for the Finance Officer or the Personnel Officer) we all soon began to develop a casual group of "Buddies" - especially during evening runs to the somewhat nearby Seabees Officers Club. It made for a much more tolerable year in both Quang Tri Combat Base and Camp Red Devil.

As in most cases, many of us lost track of each other until we started attending Red Diamond Reunions. With one being here in Pittsburgh in 2015 (where I've lived all my life except for a couple of "Army assignments") my attendance was almost mandatory. On the way to a Pirates baseball game Hank and I came into contact again for the first time in close to 50 years – and NOTHING had changed! Sure we walked a bit slower and didn't remember all of the things on tomorrow's Reunion schedule but the old friendship thing hadn't skipped a beat. At that same reunion I learned the email address of one of my direct bosses – Maj. Bill Helwig, who had been the Asst. AG in Vietnam when I was there and now lived in Albuquerque. Once the three of us began comparing notes via email a "semi-plan" was hatched to meet together at the 2019 Reunion in San Diego. Very happily the plan came to fruition and the three of us were able to enjoy I-Corp stories in person (along with Hank's wife Judy and my wife Cheryl who became fast friends – especially during the various lunch & shopping activities). Unfortunately Hank and Bill and I also all learned more about our various health maladies – many of which are/were Agent Orange related. That said, we ALL had a great time in San Diego – still on a first name basis. None of us remotely imagined that we'd never see each other again - Bill Helwig passed on in late 2019 and, as we all know, Hank passed on in November of last year. No thanks to Covid 19 none of us were able to travel to any of the memorials.

My overall military experience was greatly enriched by people like Hank Neill – who quickly let me see that being an Officer vs being an Enlisted Man was only a nomenclature thing to some people. I can quickly think of a few guys back then who definitely did NOT fit into that category. Paramount to the "Let's just get the job done" philosophy was certainly Hank – we simply were then, and will always remain, Brothers.

Obituary Bill Joseph Helwig—Brigade Assistant AG for the 1/5th Infantry Division

Retired U.S. Army Major Bill Joseph Helwig, age 78, passed away peacefully at his La Vida Llena home Friday, January 10, 2020. Bill was preceded in death by his parents, Mary and Harry Helwig, and his sister, Barbara. Bill is survived by dear friend and "sister" Sandy Cody, friend and "brother" Rick Draker, and Cousins Bronwen Crothers, Alice Harmon and husband Charles, Nancy Ames, Herb Helwig and Walter Helwig. Bill received his education at Placer Union High School in Auburn, CA, and obtained his Bachelor's Degree at the University of Washington, Seattle WA. An officer in the United States Army, Bill was commissioned Second Lieutenant, Adjutant General Corps, United States Army Reserve June 15, 1963, and retired from active duty as Major, Regular Army September 30, 1983. Bill was a Vietnam veteran. He was the recipient of several awards, among these were: Bronze Star Medal and Bronze Star Medal (First Oak leaf Cluster) for Meritorious Service; Vietnam Service Medal; Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal W/60 Bar and Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm (Unit Citation). Bill was also generous in his support of several charities: AMVETS, American Cancer Society, The Full Life Foundation-La Vida Llena, Alcoholics Anonymous, Marines Memorial Association, Vietnam Veterans of America, University of Washington Alumni Association and many more. Bill was a unique and gifted man and he will be greatly missed by family and friends whose lives he touched in many ways. A memorial Service will be held on Thursday, January 30, 2020, 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M., at La Vida Llena Retirement Community (Carter Hall), 10501 Lagrima De Oro Road NE, Albuquerque NM. Interment ceremony will be at the Santa Fe National Cemetery, January 31, 2020.

Courtesy of Rick Draker

I'm looking for any records showing that the 5th Battalion, 11th Infantry existed under the 5th Infantry Division at Fort Carson around 1969/70 time period. I find nothing anywhere showing the Battalion ever existed.

I just want to make sure I didn't miss something here. From what I see the post was in a state of transition from the 5th Infantry Division deactivating at Fort Carson and the 4th Infantry Division moving in at the end of the year of 1970.


Like this one below is wrong since it was the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry that deployed with the 1st Brigade.

image.png

--
Have a Good Evening,
Rowdy

Roger A. Gaines
Army Chief Admin
Chief Historian and Database Manager
Email: admin@togetherweserved.com
Skype: roger.gaines
TWS Profile #193119

JEROME VINCENT SCHWENK
December 1, 2016



Obituary Service Details


Jerome "Jerry" V. Schwenk, 68 of East Springfield, passed away on Thursday December 1, 2016 at St. Vincent Health Center. He was born January 20, 1948 in Erie, a son of the late Perry and Evelyn (Gruver) Schwenk.

Jerry graduated from Tech Memorial High School in 1967. Following high school he was inducted into the US Army during the Vietnam War. He was deployed to Vietnam with Alpha Co., 5th Battalion, 11th Infantry Division. He was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal w/star, Vietnam Campaign Medal w/60 device, The Combat Infantry Badge and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry w/palm. When discharged he volunteered for Reserve duty and was proud of his service in Erie in Supply as a Sergeant First Class at the Reserve Center.

Following his return from the Vietnam War he worked at Reed Mfg where he worked as a machinist and later at Dodswoth Trucking in Erie for many years.

He was a member of the VFW post #4985 in Springfield and enjoyed watching NASCAR, and was an avid Dale Earnhardt and Dale Jr. fan. His favorite memories include hunting with his son in earlier years, and most recently getting together with his children and grandchildren.

In addition to his parents he was preceded in death by his infant brothers, Ronald and Arthur, and Corky and Mickey Schwenk and a sister, Evelyn "Snooky" Kinsey.



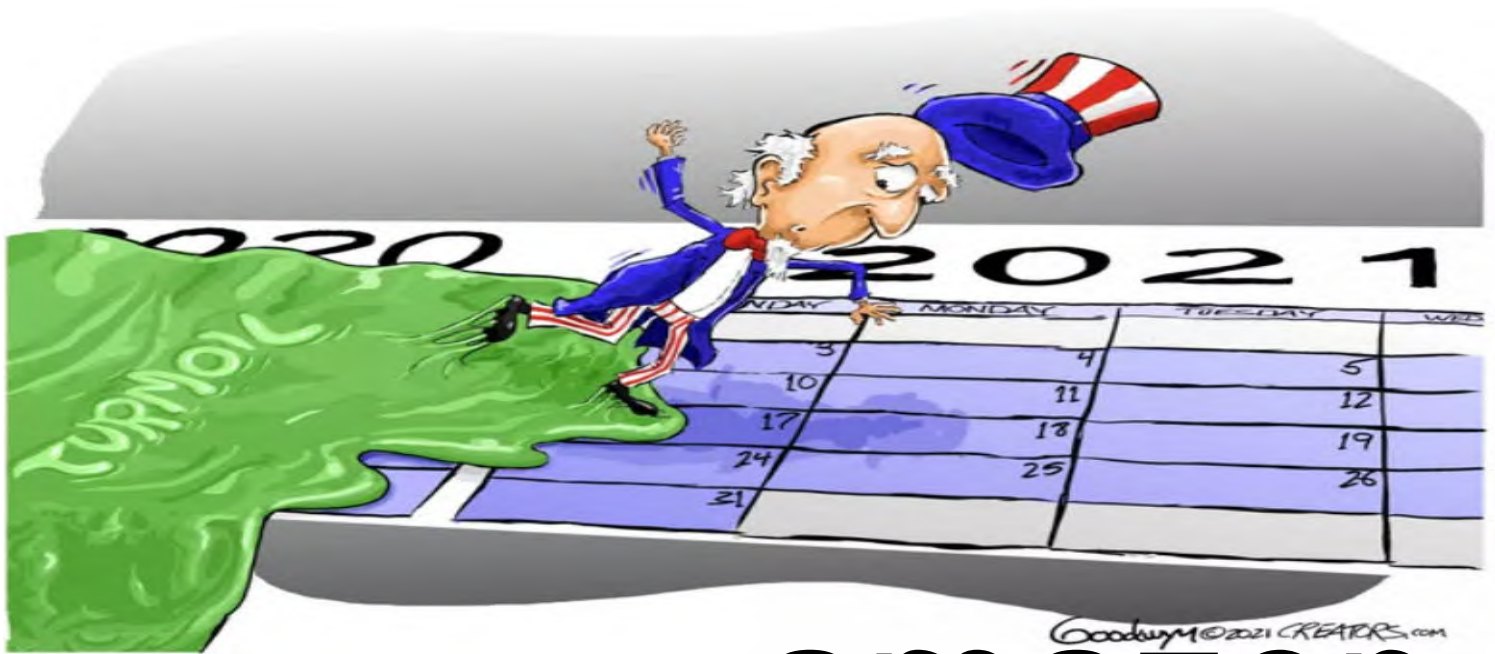
[Stop Mock](#)
QUADRE HONORS



from the Editor of The Red Diamond : Dave Kocan

"Upon America's preservation must depend our own happiness and that of countless generations to come. Whatever dangers may threaten it, I shall stand by it and maintain it in its integrity to the full extent of the obligations imposed and the power conferred upon me by the Constitution."

Zachary Taylor



unprecedented

PPE

amazon

ZOOM

social distancing

COVID 19

virtual

super spreader

QUARANTINE

LOCK DOWNS

SOME OF THE NEW WORDS THIS PAST YEAR HAS GIVEN US TIME TO RE-BOOT

My husband, John Fish, served in Vietnam 1969-1970 and saved this copy of the Diamond Dust newspaper. He thought his fellow Red Diamond Devils would find it interesting. He sent the original newspaper to Roger Allen for preservation. HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Best Regards,

Carol Fish

Merry Christmas

A Story From The Commanding General

Once upon a time (which is the right way for a fairy tale to start) there was a little VC who lived on the top of Nui Ba Number 10. From the top of this mountain he could see all the basecamps; especially one with a little red diamond. He was a typical VC with a teeny weeny heart. The only thing he loved was his nuc mamh, and that only sometimes.

Chuck, the little VC on the mountain, looked down one day and saw something different. There were the same old roofs, there was the same old mud, but something was definitely different. C-130s were flying in laden with packages, and the lights of the APO were burning far into the night. The 2½-ton trucks were coming back from rations breakdown full of turkey and nuts and fruit. And everyone was smiling, even the NCOs!

For a week, Chuck watched the action, and then decided to call Hanoi, but he got hooked into Red Devil switch and heard the sound of singing. As he slammed down his field phone, his little heart shriveled even smaller, and he decided to lay a plan of operation. He thought he could find a little solace with Hanoi Hannah, but instead of hometown inspiration he got "We wish you a Merry Christmas" on AFVN.

"This must be a capitalist conspiracy of some sort," he complained, as he stomped his shower-thonged foot on the ground. "For the greater glory of the memory of Ho Chi Minh, I'll eliminate Christmas!"

So that night he put on his no-can-see-me's and snuck down into the camp. First he emptied the PX (which didn't take very long, as anyone who's been there would know), then hurrying on to the mess hall he took all the Christmas goodies for the next day's meal: turkeys, nuts, fruit, candy and potatoes.

continued on page 4

I am gratified to see that the spirit of the Christmas Season is reaching into every unit within the Red Devil Brigade. During my visits I have found the traditional symbols of Christmas in the most unlikely places. They are displayed in TOCs and in bunkers, or carefully wrapped and stored in APCs and tanks awaiting the time when they can be set up. It is heartening indeed to see these signs of the spirit of the Season.

The true meaning of Christmas should be more evident to us than ever before. Christ was born to insure "peace on earth and goodwill to all men." Ours is the important task of deterring a force who would impose its own will on a peace-loving people. Our prayer is for the people of this embattled land to soon be able to carry on their livelihood with their families in a lasting peace.

For this Yuletide Season let us observe the birth of Christ not only with traditional symbols; let us do our part in bringing peace to this small nation; let our prayers be with our families, that they may be comforted in our absence and that we may all be reunited soon.

Diamond Dust

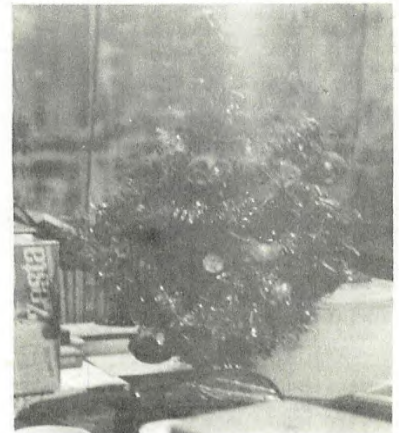
QUANG TRI, VIETNAM 1ST BDE, 5TH INF DIV (M)

December 25, 1969

Christmas on the DMZ

By SPl C.P. Lavelle
It's a lonely, cold place-- perhaps the loneliest and coldest in South Vietnam. It has been raining for about one month and the forecast is more then likely more rain, possibly lasting until February. For men of the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mech) it is the climate and placewhere they will spend the last Christmas of this decade, just below the Demilitarized Zone, at the Con Thein forward basecamps, Charlie-2 and Alpha-4.

The 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry and elements of the 1st Tank Battalion, 77th Armor were the first Red Devil units to move back into the area south of the DMZ when the 3d Marine



page 2



Northernmost Noel... on the DMZ



Division began to redeploy its troops from South Vietnam in September. When the Red Devil Brigade was initially deployed to South Vietnam operations were conducted in the same area. Names coined then began to reappear: "Leatherneck Square," "The Market Place;" and new ones, such as "Rocket Ridge" and "Mutter's Ridge" were given as the Red Devils met and inflicted heavy losses on enemy elements operating below the DMZ.

In late October and early November the 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry replaced the 1/11 force. The mechanized sweeps continue with sporadic contact as Christmas approaches, the rain continues, alternating between downpours and drizzle and the mud becomes deeper and thicker. It is an alien environment for the American soldier, made even more alien because of the Christmas season, for most the first spent away from home.

PFC John Gardner, Detroit, Mich., a member of Delta Company, 1st of the 77th, has been in Vietnam for seven months. He has been at Charlie-2 for nine days and recently has been pulling gate guard on the north side of the camp, making sure at least two vehicles travel the road to Alpha-4, "because somewhere out there is an NVA battalion."

Gardner is engaged to a girl in Detroit and it is his first time away from home during Christmas. When there are no vehicles passing, he reads his Bible. "I'll probably be spending Christmas on a bridge-launcher, and it's going to be lonesome, real lonesome," Gardner said.

PFC Arlie Jackson Jr., Garret, Ky., of A Company, 1st of the 61st, was on his way from Charlie-2 to Alpha-4 to rejoin his unit. He is just about to complete his first month in Vietnam. What impressed him most about spending Christmas below the DMZ is the cold. "When we first got our orders assigning us to Vietnam they told us to take our field jackets and I couldn't understand why--now I do!"

Jackson was an elementary school teacher at Salt Lake Elementary School before coming into the service. His wife Sarah resides in Garret.

Alpha-4 is the northernmost U.S. Army outpost in South Vietnam. On a clear day you can see across the DMZ three miles away into North Vietnam. The Red Devils haven't seen a clear day here in quite some time. Vehicle movement within the confines of the outpost is almost impossible due to the thickness of the mud. The cold biting rain continues, assisted by the shifting wind. All this, this bleakest of surroundings, seems to magnify the feeling of loneliness as Christmas approaches.

SSG Francis Smith, Colorado Springs, Colo., is a member of the 4.2 mortar platoon of Headquarters Company, 1st of the 77th. He has served nine years in the Army, during which time he has been in Turkey, Greece, Germany and Vietnam. He has eight months remaining on his second tour here. He hasn't been home for Christmas in nine years.

SSG Smith stated that this tour is a real pleasure compared to the first. "If it wasn't for the mud it wouldn't



SP4 John Whitmore
"...a lonely place at a lonely time..."

be bad. I would like to spend one Christmas at home, though if it snowed here, with the mountains, it would be just like home. We could break up ammo boxes and go skiing!"

SP4 John Michael Whitmore is a fellow Coloradan from Denver. He has served with HHC, 1/77 for nine months. He was a student at the University of Colorado before entering the Army.

"I can't say much for spending Christmas here, but there's nothing you can do about it," Whitmore commented with a wry smile.

SP5 Juan Silva, San Antonio, Tex., also of HHC, 1/77, wants to get Christmas over with--he goes home January 13.

So it is, as Christmas 1969 approaches, that thoughts turn to personal reflection, to family and friends, the year passing and the year ahead--the last of the sixties and the first of the seventies. The hope is held that the rain will stop, that Christmas will pass quickly, along with the time remaining on a tour. Perhaps the hope is also held that this will be the last Christmas that an American soldier spends in Vietnam, especially along the DMZ, a lonely place at a lonely time, in a lonely country.

Photos by SP4 Clarke

Chaplain Speaks...

As we approach the Christmas season we do so with mixed emotions. For some of us it will be a time of loneliness because we are separated from those we love. For some of us it will be "just another day" in our lives. For many of us it will be a time of questioning our reasons for being here in this troubled land.

If we recollect the time that the Christ child appeared, we see many parallels between that time and this. His country was filled with foreign soldiers, there were social conflicts, taxes were high, most of the people were lethargic if not despondent. Into this welter of conflicting hopes, dreams and unhappiness the Christ child came, and his coming was announced with the words that we still revere: "Peace on earth, good will to men."

Peace on earth is still the hope and dream of mankind, and that is why we American soldiers are in the Republic of Vietnam, to help bring a just and lasting peace to this strife-torn land.

Noel

Secretary 1969 Ch

To all members of the best wishes for Christmas

The world's hope is that one day prevail everywhere and good will prevail to keeping this age-old. For almost two centuries try's freedom and help from tyranny and aggression.

I want all of you in the active and reserve unselfish and devoted service.

May the Christmas season bring joy to your families, and many personally and professionally.



'Tis The Season To Be Jolly !

of the Army Christmas Message

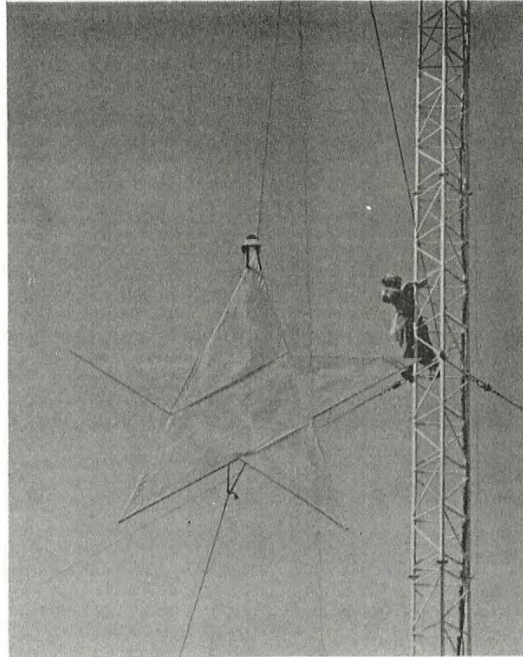
United States Army I extend my
and the New Year.

the true spirit of Christmas will
e, for that would mean peace on
all men. No one contributes more
pe alive than American soldiers.
they have been guarding our coun-
other people who seek freedom
.

Army family -- military and civ-
-- to know that your
is known and appreciated

son bring happiness to you and
e New Year and new decade be
ly rewarding.

Stanley R. Resor



A daring young man shows his
Christmas spirit as AFVN hoists
its star 275 feet up into the air.

which refreshments will be
served and presents given
to the orphans.

In addition to these ac-
tivities, several other u-
nits will have holiday pro-
grams. Many orphans will
dine at unit messhalls, and
at several district head-
quarters parties will be
given for the dependents of
Vietnamese Popular and Re-
gional Forces personnel.
Overall, the units will
host almost 7000 Vietnamese
children and dependents.

Even in the hinterlands
signs of the approaching
holiday are evident. From
Dong Ha Mountain, located
15 miles northwest of Quang
Tri and accessible only by
helicopter, men are being
airlifted into Dong Ha and
Quang Tri to purchase gifts
and money orders for their
relatives and friends.

On the isolated hill, SP4
Clarence Castle, of Ashland,
Ky., received a Christmas
tree from his wife, com-
plete with ornaments and
spray snow. After setting
up the tree Specialist Cas-
tle noted, "All I need is a
brick fireplace and a red
stocking to hang over it
and it would be just like
home--although with this
weather, I'd settle for the

Story and photos
by SP4 John Coyte

The nine-foot silver star
soaring 275 feet above Camp
Red Devil atop the AFVN
transmitting tower epitom-
izes the Christmas spirit
of members of the 1st Bri-
gade and its support units
as they prepare for the
Yuletide season.

Throughout the area units
are planning special pro-
grams for the holidays, and
among the most active is
the Red Cross. During the
week before Christmas the
Red Cross will distribute
thousands of ditty bags con-

taining gifts and foodstuffs
donated by clubs, organiza-
tions and individuals in
the United States. "I hope
we're able to give each man
in the Brigade a gift," Mr.
Norman Swanson, Red Cross
field director, commented,
"and that it will help make
up for the enjoyment of the
holiday season back home he



Mr. Richard Wiles (left), assistant Red Cross field
director and Mr. Norman Swanson, field director load
one of their thousands of ditty bags.
will be missing." fire-
place."

On Christmas Eve children
from the La Vang orphanage
and soldiers from the 63rd
Maintenance Battalion cast
as shepherds, will act out
the traditional Nativity
story. The performance will
be complemented by a choir
from the orphanage singing
carols and hymns. Following
the play, Chaplain Paul
Hunsberger will host a party
for the children during

Christmas comes even to Dong Ha Mountain. SP4 Clarence Cas-
tle's tree, however, had to be brought by chopper. Clarence
is on the left, with PFC Thomas Moreno.





Story

The Idler
SP4 JON CLARKE ON SPIRITS

Potatoes! Phooey; even a VC can make a mistake. Sloshing through the mud to the post office, he took all the mail that could be found. Then, as a final gesture, he gleefully emptied all the bottles of cheer at all the clubs--sparing a few to accompany him on his long and arduous journey back to Nui Ba Number 10.

"Now Christmas can never come," he cried. High on the mountain top it was near daybreak, and he gathered his catch and prepared a bonfire to fini Christmas. But just as he was about to throw the first six-foot, delux fiberglass tree into the flames, he heard a sound from the basecamp below. It started quietly then grew louder and louder. They were singing Christmas carols! Chuck's little slanted eyes grew round with amazement at the sight he saw below. Even without tinsel, even without trees, even without presents and even without booze (is that possible? he thought) Christmas had come to the land of the Red Diamond. At that moment his heart grew two sizes bigger--for that's where Christmas really happens, in the heart. Then the last straw came, as he heard a resounding "HO HO HO, Merry Christmas!" He chieu hoied that very moment. "After all," he thought to himself, "the Red Devils can't be all bad if they wish Merry Christmas to the memory of Ho Chi Minh."

Merry Christmas from Lizann and Ginny

THE END

Merry Christmas from who? Lizann Mallezon and Ginny Moffitt, our storytellers and Special Services girls.

READ THIS : The Commanding General feels that all the Red Devils ought to have a part in the naming of the Brigade magazine, soon to be published. Send your suggestion, your name, rank and unit to Bde, HQ, ATTN: PIO before January 5. Final selection will result in \$25 and a four-day in-country R&R (choose the spot) for some clever soldier, and \$10 and a four-day China Beach R&R for the not-quite-so-clever soldier.

DIAMOND DUST is an authorized weekly publication, published by the Information Office of the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mech), APO San Francisco 96477, for the men of the Brigade. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Printed by offset through the courtesy of the Naval Support Activity, Danang.



Vol 3, No 9

Commanding General..BG William A. Burke
48th PI Info Off...CPT Frank Richardson
48th PI Press Off.CPT Michael G. Munson
NCOIC.....SFC Ronald D. Peters
Editorial Staff--SP5 Leslie C. Perry,
SP4 Jonathan Clarke, SP4 John F. Coyte,
SP4 Robert Eubanks, SP4 C. P. Lavelle,
Photographic Staff--SP5 Bob Lisbeth,
SP4 David Lawrence, SP4 Blaise Falbo.

There's no reason to lack faith in the presence of a spirit of Christmas among us. But speculation threatens to run high as to whether or not there will actually be a Christmas here this year. Of course, there's no chance the date, the day will fail to come by, or that any essential facts will change; what is in doubt is whether any kind of festive atmosphere will shape up in Vietnam.

The superficial possibilities can be recognized, and then passed over, pretty quickly. The poor handicapped people in the mess hall, for example, will stir up some gala concoction and hopefully call it "Christmas Dinner," but it won't actually amount to any significant departure from the sustained homogeneity they maintain so well. (But they do try; no denying it.) Too, we may have some decorations, but the fundamental ugliness of hootches and bunkers is hard to disguise.

The solution lies in oneself, through an adaptation to the peculiarities of the Vietnamese landscape, both indigenous and imported. For there have been signs. Each night when I leave the office, if it happens to be clear, there is a star which attracts my attention. Not only does it have a fierce tropical twinkle, which is correct behavior for one of these stars, but it appears as if it had several facets of different colors--red, blue, green and a brilliant white--which it displays in sequence. Thus each night we have a natural refiguration of Christmas, with both a suggestion of sublimity and a sparkle of Yuletide hues.

If you come from a cold winter climate in the States, you might find the winter evenings in Vietnam, with their grey chill which almost threatens snow, a likely stimulant to a mind's eye image of Christmas cold the likes of which we won't actually have. You can talk yourself into anything. (To digress and divulge, I always keep in mind for a quintessential feeling of snappy cold and warmth--a true Christmas combination--the scene where Natasha comes in from the Moscow night in War and Peace. It is bitter and dark outside and she enters the foyer carrying some of the chill with her, while through the fur of her cap, and coat and collar, her nose shines, her cheeks glow with the heat and her eyes sparkle as she takes a preliminary peep, still wrapped, at Pierre and the others.)

What we lack is not the delight with and the spirit of Christmas, both of which are very much in evidence, but an atmosphere which is familiar to us, and most of all special people to share it with. But Christmas will come again, we will carry through this one with our good humour finding the best possibilities of the circumstances, and then the next will be practically unbearable following our double period of anticipation.



December 21, 2020

To:
Gene & Cheryl Rees
130 North Branch Rd
Monaca, PA 15061

From:
Louis A Pepi
Society of the Fifth Division, President

Dear Gene & Cheryl,

Thank you for the generous donation to the Society of the Fifth Division in the name of our departed brother Henry, "Hank" Neill (Col. Ret), but more importantly, thank you for honoring his memory. I met Hank—for the first time—at the San Diego Reunion and enjoyed his talk at one of the banquets. He was humble and unpretentious and that's exactly how those who knew him well remembered him. After rereading the San Diego banquet program for the night that he was our keynote speaker, it was evident that he had distinguished and successful careers in both his military and civilian lives. As with all our departed brothers, he will be sorely missed.

Regards,

Louis A Pepi (President)
Society of the Fifth Division

Greetings to all,

I hope that everyone is in good health and is able to celebrate the holidays in some small and healthful way considering the situation we are all in these days.

Now to the subject of this correspondence:

I was recently informed by our treasurer—George Shoener—that he has received a donation from Gene & Cheryl Rees in memory of our departed brother Henry "Hank" Neill (Col Ret). I have composed a letter to Gene & Cheryl on behalf of the Society which is attached. I also want to send a copy to Hank's widow Judy. John Estrada—or anyone—could you please forward her address to me? Gene Rees has also agreed to write something for the next newsletter. We will see that that gets to you, Dave, before January 10th. Feel free to critique.

Regards,

Lou

Society of the Fifth Division Executive Board Openings for 2021-2022

Our National President, Lou Pepi, asked me to be a co-chairman of the Nominating Committee for 2020-2021 along with Steve Wheat. Additionally, JJ Jackson and Robb Robertson are also on the committee. Normally this consists of nominating a new National Second Vice President who will eventually serve as our National President. We also fill any other vacancies for our national officers. As of now, both the National Second Vice President and the National Secretary positions will need candidates.

The good thing about being on our Executive Board is you are never alone. There are 11 official members:

- President
- First Vice President
- Second Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Historian
- Chaplain
- Judge Advocate
- Editor
- 2 Past Presidents (Normally the two immediate Past Presidents)

Although not officially on the Executive Board per our Constitution, the Quartermaster and Web Master are also normally included in all of the meetings of the Board.

As you can see, nobody has to go it alone – there is plenty of help. Each member has the help of the entire Board plus the experience of two Past Presidents. Additionally, each position has historical records to help the incumbents do their work and Phil Maniscalco has developed an outstanding “Best Practices” document to help guide everyone in managing the Society.

All this being said, I am asking those who are interested in serving on the Board to contact me or one of our committee members and voice your interest in helping to run our Society. In 2020 we celebrated our 100th anniversary as the oldest continuing Army Division association. If we want to continue our proud heritage, we need members who are willing to serve on the Board. Over my years as a member of the Society of the Fifth Division I have had many conversations with members who have excellent ideas on how the Society should be run. Well, this is your opportunity to help put your ideas into action.

Please contact me or any of the members of the committee if you are interested:

Bob Dudley: colrdudley@aol.com or 913-220-3725

Steve Wheat: wheatsco@gmail.com or 618-334-8410

JJ Jackson: jcjackson48@gmail.com or 713-560-0008/936-767-4229

Robb Robertson: RWR475@aol.com or 561-308-5847

Bob Dudley

Past President & Nominating Committee Co-Chairman

A Sniper Tries to Take Me Out

We trudged across the flat muddy Vietnam countryside looking for the enemy called "Victor Charlie." We, the men of Charlie Company, had been on patrol in the now steamy Delta since early morning. Our Commanding Officer, Captain Dexter Brandscome, was leading us on this new mission. We hoped for some kind of action, but there was no reason to think this day would be any different from the day before. The days were all blending together; the weeks were hard to distinguish. The only way to tell when we were in a new week was when Mondays came along and the medics distributed salt pills to us. As usual, this day was getting hotter as the morning wore on.

We slogged across the flat wet countryside looking for "Charlie Cong." We crossed drying stream beds and hardening rice paddies. The tide was out until later. It seemed like the Viet Cong were deliberately avoiding contact with us. I was bored and so I asked our acting platoon sergeant, Sergeant George Edmond how far we had to go. In response he opened up the topographical military map of the area.

Some of the operations that were widely reported on television during the 21st century's Iraq War included those about the Special Forces teams that were dispatched into enemy territory early in the initial assault to disrupt enemy communications, and the airplane and missile strikes on Baghdad to destroy Iraq's command and control facilities. In classic and modern warfare you try and take out the command and control elements to cripple the enemy's offensive and defensive capability.

In the tactical, platoon level organization, the command and control element are the platoon leader/sergeant and the radio telephone operator. On this mission, in the 3d Platoon, Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment (Old Guard), that would have been Sergeant Edmond and me.

Back then, in Vietnam, I don't think I realized all that. I didn't think about how tempting a target I was carrying an ANC-PRC radio with its long antenna sticking up above my shoulders. I was a surefire ammunition magnet for any enemy gun.

Edmond and I were the far left element of the platoon. To our left, about 200 to 300 yards away, over the flat open ground of a drying rice paddy, was a line of nipa palm trees and tall grass.

As we walked, I asked him how much further we had to go. To answer he took out the military map he was issued. As he spread the map open, I was positioned on his left, with the platoon radio on my back, with its 3 foot antenna sticking up. Suddenly my eye was attracted by sudden surface movement heading toward my feet. There was something hitting the ground. The effect looked like gravel hitting the surface of the mud creating an inverted small funnel followed by a faint spreading ripple.

There were perhaps five or six, followed by a few more, there were quite a few and they were definitely in a line coming toward me. It was something I had never seen before and at first I did not react. Then I suddenly comprehended what I was watching.

If there had been a film crew recording what happened next, our reactions could have been from a scene straight out of the bank robbing, "buddy movie" of the 1970's, "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid."

Apparently, Sergeant Edmond realized what was happening the same time I did, because when I stoically said, "is that someone shooting at us?!" He replied calmly, "I think so!"

At that point, with no further conversation, we both scrambled to the safety of the river bank on our right. One of us shouted the word "incoming" to warn our fellow soldiers of the danger.

From the relative safety of the bank we radioed the company commander about the situation. Almost immediately we were ordered to assault the tree line where the firing came from. We lined up and attacked over the edge of the river bank and ran across the open rice field, firing as we went. The M-60 light machine gun crew was near the left flank, and they laid down a heavy rate of fire on the tree line. There was no doubt the M-60 could do the job at the necessary range. However, at the time, the M-16 we carried was not a weapon I had confidence in for long range capability.

Many of us had trained on the M-14 rifle, which looked like a traditional rifle, wooden stock an all. When fired it had a hard recoil or "kick" against the shoulder, which felt like a military weapon. The M-16 rifle was new to most of us and it looked like a toy. It had almost no kick and was much lighter in weight than the M-14. It appeared to be made of plastic. It was inevitable therefore, that when the machine gun jammed, the attack faltered and stopped until it could be brought back on line. As soon as the stoppage was corrected the attack began again. I do not remember hearing any firing coming back from the trees.

When we reached the trees we did not find any bodies. There was nothing but a wooden dugout canoe drawn up by the trees. Someone in charge ordered that someone shoot holes in the boat to prevent its being used again by the enemy. The platoon leader's radio operator, PFC James McDonald came on the radio and asked me, "Is that recon by fire? (A reconnaissance technique whereby you fired into the bushes to get the enemy to divulge their positions by returning your fire.) No, I replied, that's putting a hole in a boat." I guess my answer surprised him, because he laughed at my reply as though it was the funniest thing he had heard.

Soon, we were told to withdraw as the Company Commander had called in an air strike on the position; I guess the idea was to clear the area of anyone hiding in the trees.

I looked up and saw the plane approach. It was eerily silent until it came around for its bomb run. I stood and watched in fascination. Ever since I was a child living in Gary, Indiana, I had been interested in fighter planes. Even today, I recall watching formations of propeller driven World War II vintage planes fly overhead back then and now I was going to see a modern one in action. I did not notice that the others in my unit had moved away from where I stood and that I was alone in the open.

I recognized the type of plane, it was an F-100 Super Sabre,

http://www.globalaircraft.org/planes/f-100_super_sabre.pl successor of the F-86 Sabre Jet

http://www.globalaircraft.org/planes/f-86_sabre.pl of the Korean War. The F-100 came closer and closer to its target as I watched; the plane got larger and larger; the pilot's image got clearer and clear. I was almost catatonic for a few seconds or minutes and then frightening thoughts came to mind, what if the pilot missed the target; what if the pilot thought I was the enemy standing in that rice paddy; what if the pilot dropped his bomb load and I was standing in the kill zone. Clearly it was time to leave. I turned and ran in the direction of the Company. It was slow going because of the mud. As I ran, I turned around just in time to see the F-100 drop a load of cluster bombs on the tree-line target.

My platoon joined the rest of the Company near the pickup LZ. Some of the other soldiers told the story of a water buffalo charging some members of our unit. Several of them had fired their M-16 rifles to bring down at the animal and halt its charge, but they were unsuccessful. A burst of machinegun fire killed the buffalo and prevented anyone from being injured.

We took up positions around a field and waited for our stack of Huey choppers to pick us up. After a brief period and the choppers swooped in for a landing. I watched in anticipation of some rest and a hot meal at base-camp in Nhon Doc.

We moved to meet the waiting helicopters and then an amazing thing happened. We were ordered off and told to go back some yards toward the tree line. I did as I was told, walking past a punji pit, a hole about a foot deep, with several small bamboo stalks sharpened to a point and probably tipped with some form of deadly poison. It was the first one I had seen. As I stepped around it, I called out for others to be on their guard.

I soon came to a small flowing stream that was full of water. There was no way for me to avoid it so I plunged right in as I had done before on many occasions. It was unexpectedly deep. The water was about a foot over my head.

I held my breath and haltingly walked on the muddy stream bottom until I got further into the middle. I was anticipating a short trip under water. Suddenly, I slipped and my feet went out from under me. Just in time, someone near to me grabbed me and pulled me forward and I was able to walk out of the stream. It was my acting platoon sergeant, Sergeant George Edmonds. He had saved my life. One of three times that I was pulled from under the waters of Vietnam.

As quickly as the new mission developed it was called off and we were ordered back to the choppers. Incoming tracers were hitting the ground among the Hueys and ricocheting off into the air. We were on a "hot LZ." It was the first one of the war for my unit. As we took off into the sky, the rounds between the choppers were even scarier.

As we took off, I performed my most daring act of the war. It was a personal, but temporary triumph, which I cannot explain to this day. I stretched my legs out the open door to the skids of the chopper. I was usually terrified of the open door in the choppers as we flew on our missions. I usually sat on the floor of the ship and mentally controlled my fear. This time was different. I was not afraid. What may have been working that day, I guess, was the adrenalin produced because of the days events and my escapes from death had emboldened me in a way that I had not experienced before.

Red Beach Vietnam 1966 monsoon season . We were working in the rain most of the day trying to get tin roofs on some hooches for the Marines . It had rained steadily all day and in the low spots in the camps water was building up laying in pools on top of the ground though out the camp. I had lost my grip twice sliding down the wet roof , accelerating as I slid . I flew out into the air feet first falling about seven feet to the ground. As luck would have it I landed in a muddy puddle of slop and mud on the ground, it broke my fall .Ouch. So by the end of the day I was ready for a shower and change of clothes. After arriving at my hooch I grabbed a towel and shower stuff and walked to a shower they had rigged up. It had warm water some days but no roof yet . The shower heads hung there in the air with a water storage tank above gravity feed. I know that by the time we left Red Beach there were decent showers rigged up but at first it was primitive . I stood in the rain showering but the water was cold. I walked back in the rain and dressed in the hooch . The water was getting deeper and deeper all around the hooches many mortar pits were full of water . Later that evening I walked over to a building they called the EMClub . The club at that time was a roof with a cement floor it didn't have any walls just posts holding up the roof . I had walked over with a couple other men from Charlie Co and we sat in the club and had a couple beers . I sat there sipping a beer and watching the pouring rain. It never let up the whole time we were there and now the wind was picking up and rain was blowing into the club. We decided to head back to our hooch and during what seemed like a lull in the rain we took off walking for our hooch. We were splashing through water up to our ankles and water covered the ground as far as I could see. As we neared our hooch we turned to go between two hooches about twenty feet apart, the water seeming to get a little deeper.. it started raining again harder and blowing to the point we leaned into it walking . Suddenly as I stepped my foot found no footing and I fell forward into a mortar pit about five feet deep . Gasping and choking I stood up staggering in the cold water. The water was up to my neck and I reached up to my buddy to pull me up and he was laughing so hard he staggered backwards . Finally still snickering and laughing they grabbed my hands and dragged me up out of the pit. I was covered in mud and it was dripping in my eyes . I stood there in the rain a moment and looked into the pouring rain and with my eyes closed rinsed the mud off my face . The rain poured down my face and I washed some of the dirt off. I looked around and my buddies had fled into the hooch out of the rain . I walked over to my hooch and in the dark stripped my wet clothes off and lay them on the steps. I walked over under the eave of the hooch and let the rain

running off the roof rinse the mud off me . The water pouring off the roof would almost stagger you as it hit in the head and back . After the mud was off I walked over picked my gear up and walked into the hooch naked. As I went through the door the razzing started , “ hey don’t you have any clothes “ another yelled , “ were gonna call you Muddy Waters from now on” . They roared in laughter as I grabbed a towel and dried off grinning sheepishly. Yeah I remember the monsoon season , never being dry for days. Working in the rain and mud. Nothing stops a Seabee. I learned early in life as a bee , failure wasn’t in our vocabulary. This is something that once Seabee learns it stays with them the rest of their life. It molds us , changes us . That is why they say once a Bee always a Bee. I have seen Seabees tackle any problem they continue until they solve the problem . We are different as Seabees we build , we fight. We don’t let anything stop us . Can do .



What were the life expectancies of soldiers during the Vietnam War?



A friend recently sent me the link to an article claiming that the life expectancy of a radio operator in the Vietnam War was only 5 seconds. As I carried a PRC25 radio for over seven-months in the Nam, I was curious to find out what I did RIGHT to survive and exceed the expectations for the position. In it, the author wrote how dangerous the position was and all the duties he was tasked with. There

was no mention regarding how the number was reached or even what data was considered.

So, I decided to scour the internet for more information and came across other articles that cited the life expectancies of soldiers by assignment during the war. Here's what I found so far: helicopter pilots: 45 minutes; door gunners: 6-minutes; infantry 1st and 2nd lieutenants: 16 minutes; and M-60 machine gunners: 2 minutes.

What I failed to see in any of these articles or fact sheets was how the rates were determined. Did life expectancy mean death or wounded (taken out of action)? Was the total time used in the equation an accumulation of actual combat time? Who added up the minutes and hours? At what point did somebody begin keeping tabs on the exact time that one of these positions dropped out? Is any of this even possible to determine? One article showed math formulas for mean and median determinations – work that would make Einstein proud. But, it didn't tell me much.

The United States suffered a little over 58,000 KIA and 304,000 WIA during the war. Here's the breakdown:

Cause Of Casualty Hostile & Non-hostile (Percentage):

Gunshot or small arms fire -- 31.8

Multiple frag wounds grenades, mines, bombs, booby traps – 27.4

Aircraft crashes – – – 14.7

Arty or rocket fire – – – 8.4

Drowning and burns – – – 3.0

Misadventure (Friendly fire) – 2.3

Vehicle crashes — — — — 2.0

**Illness, also malaria, hepatitis, heart attack, stroke —
1.6**

Suicide — — — — — 0.7

**Accidental self-destruction, intentional homicide,
accidental homicide, other accidents. — 5.8**

Other, unknown, not reported — 2.0

***Data compiled by William F. Abbott from figures
obtained shortly after the construction of the Vietnam
War Memorial***

In total, there were around **2.5 million** Americans who served in-country during the Vietnam War. They were not only soldiers but also officers, advisors, nurses, doctors and other units that supported the Republic of Vietnam. 2.2% of the 2.5 million died in the war – 12.2% of those served were wounded.

So let's take a look at why the survival rates may be low for some of those jobs indicated above.



Radio Operator: His radio was the lifeline of the unit on the ground and its termination would effectively eliminate air and artillery support as well as disrupt internal company communications during combat. Out in the open, a radio would be difficult to hide and the enemy knew that the soldier moving before or after the RTO was bound to be either an officer or an NCO. Thus an opportunity to cut off the head of the snake at the same time. When moving, the antenna is like a periscope in the ocean – a huge plus for an enemy sniper. At night, the radio is normally posted in the center of the perimeter where the RTO and leader sleep, it's also the location where other soldiers share radio watches. Sound travels far in the jungle, and carelessness in using the radio during watches could help the enemy pinpoint that location for a mortar attack.



Infantry 1st & 2nd lieutenants: They are the battle coordinators who try to manage the fight on the ground and direct overhead support. It is rare that they sit still during an ambush and are always on the move to oversee the fight; his RTO, joined at the hip. When marching in a single file, he was usually in the middle of the pack with his RTO. Snipers sought out those individuals with a folded map sticking out of his trouser pocket, grease pencils poking from shirt pockets, and a compass/lanyard hanging from his neck. Many officers were excellent leaders, but there were some that shouldn't have been in

those positions. Their shortcomings, sometimes, caused death to themselves or a fellow soldier.



Helicopter pilot: These guys flew many different aircraft, their jobs at the time determined the risk. I would say that Medivac crews were most at risk since their arrival often occurred while the fighting was still taking place. The door gunners (trained medics) were usually busy stabilizing patients, thus leaving the ship undefended – a sitting duck while in range of enemy weapons. I'd consider the next risky group to be the Loach pilots. These cowboys flew around at treetop level looking for the enemy and then daring them to fire at them. Success would bring down hellfire from circling cobras and gunships. Slick drivers were next. They were the birds that brought in the troops to landing zones and were most vulnerable during hot insertions and pick-ups.



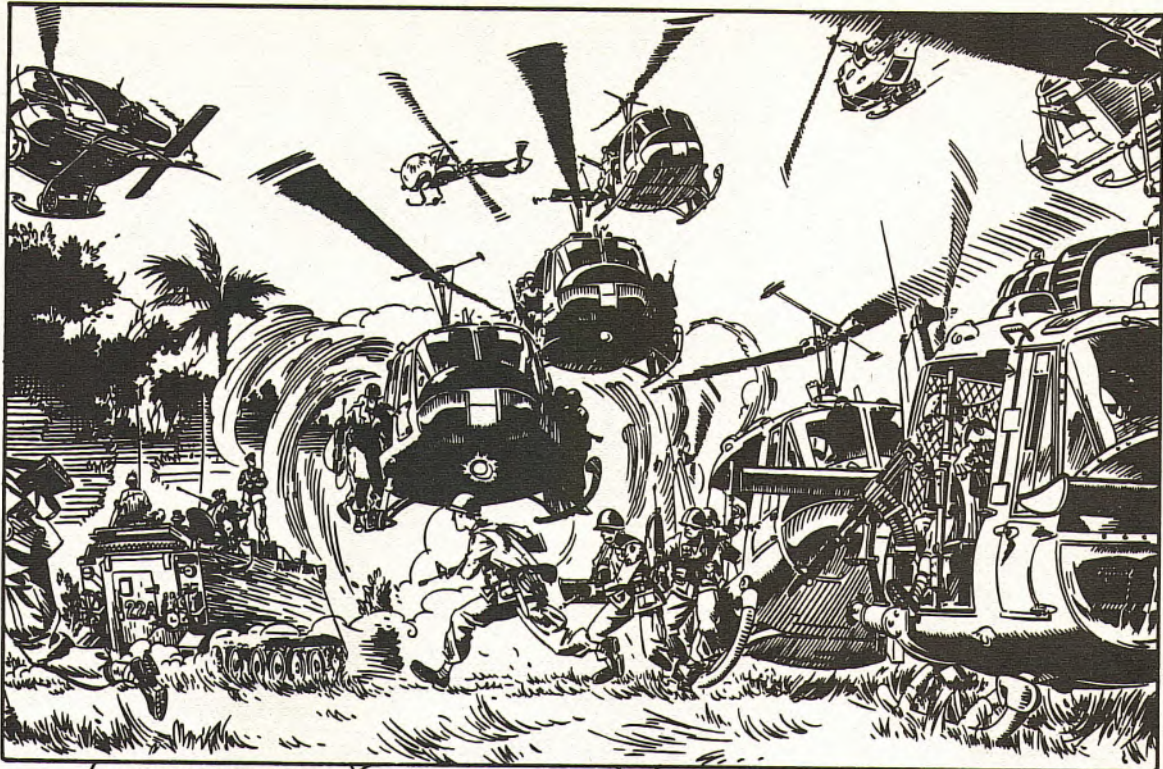
Huey Door gunners: Sitting in an open doorway of a helicopter and wearing only a flack jacket, made him the most exposed member of the crew. During a hot landing or extraction, when taking him out, the ship was left undefended from that side.



M-60 machine gunner: Every weapon had a distinct sound and soldiers on the ground (both sides) could identify it by its sound. In most ambushes, the enemy blended in with the jungle and was difficult to spot – their locations determined by flashing and sound. When a machine gun opened up, it became a bullet magnet. They were dangerous weapons, created severe damage, and had to be taken out quickly.

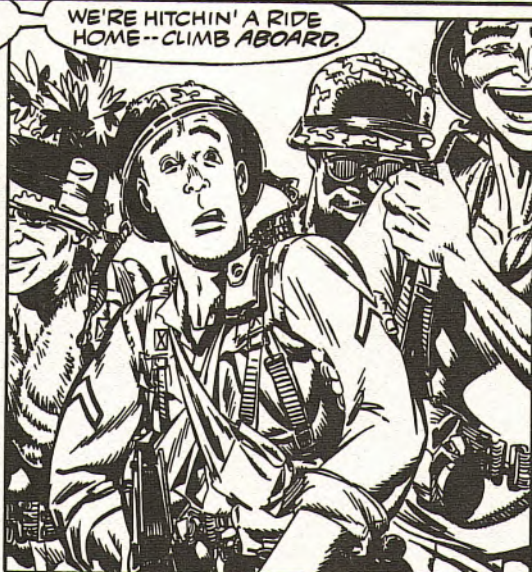
You're probably asking, what about medics or corpsmen, point men, fuel haulers, armor, Recon & SOG, Rome Plow crews, etc.? I'm quite certain there are many more examples of jobs held during the Vietnam War that had extremely low life expectancies and welcome your feedback in the comment section below. Thanks for your support!



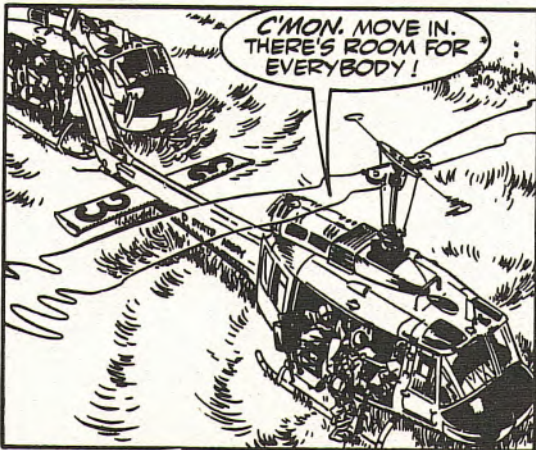


ALL RIGHT, SGT. WE'LL TAKE THIS NOW. TAKE YOUR MEN BACK TO BASE!

HAULT! YOU GOLD-BRICKS, MOVE OVER THERE ...



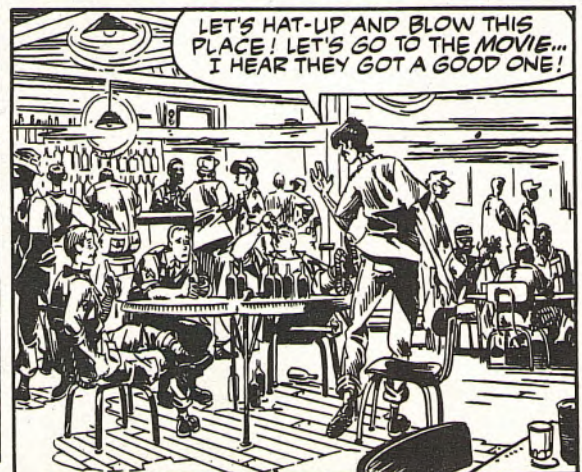
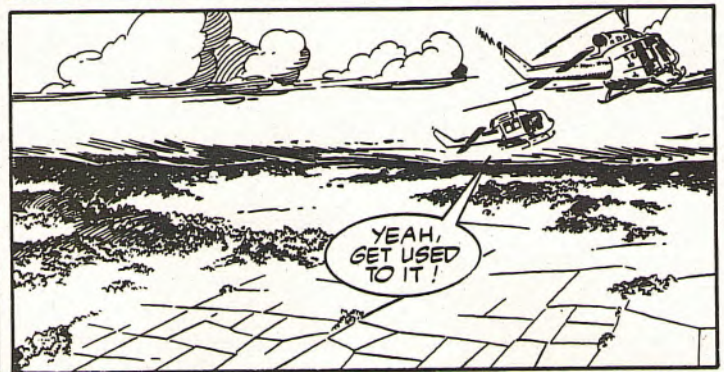
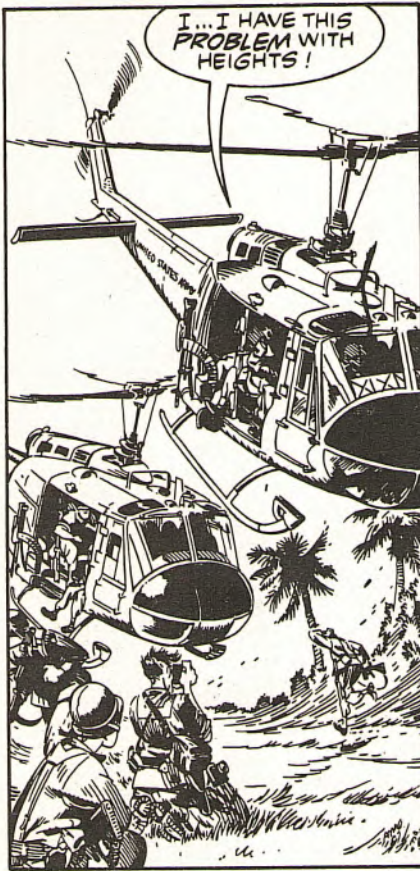
WE'RE HITCHIN' A RIDE HOME--CLIMB ABOARD.



C'MON. MOVE IN. THERE'S ROOM FOR EVERYBODY!

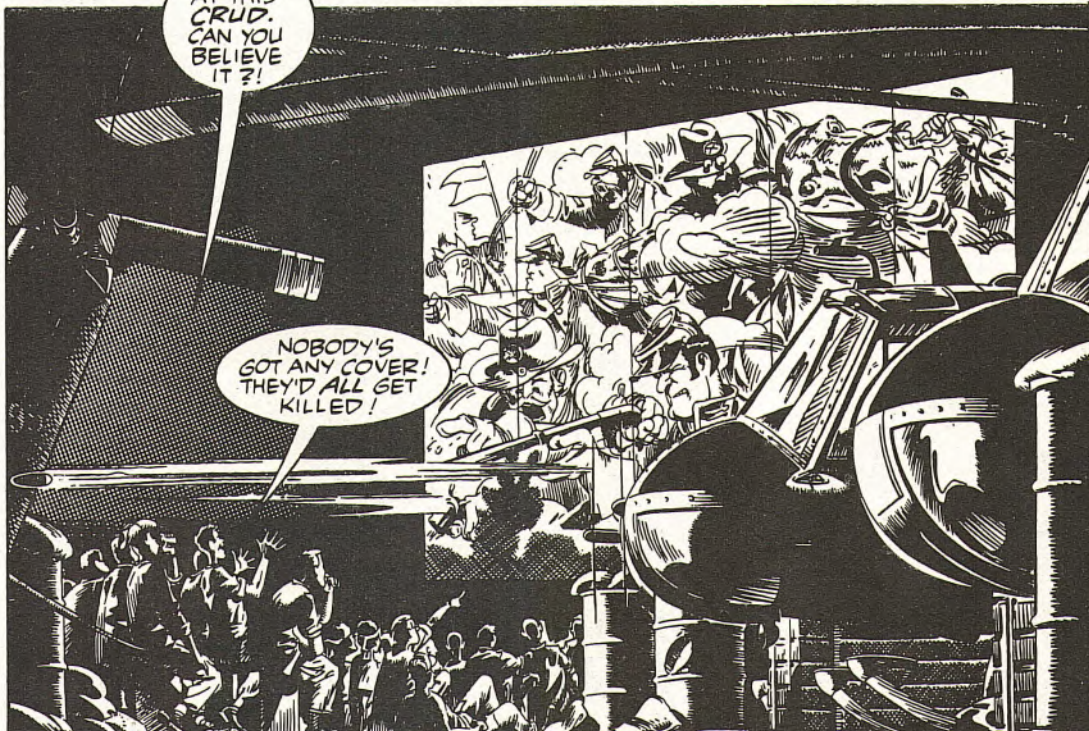


HEY! WHAT'S THE MATTER? WE'LL BE HOME IN NO TIME!

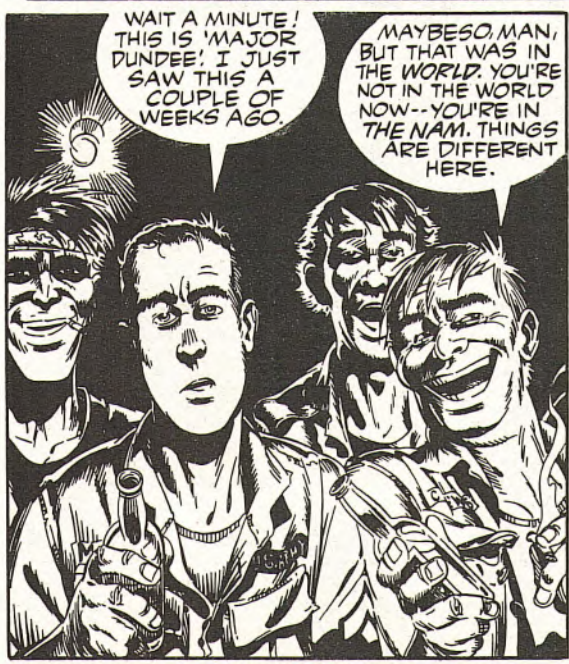




LOOK AT THIS CRUD. CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!



NOBODY'S GOT ANY COVER! THEY'D ALL GET KILLED!



WAIT A MINUTE! THIS IS 'MAJOR DUNDEE'. I JUST SAW THIS A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO.

MAYBESO, MAN, BUT THAT WAS IN THE WORLD YOU'RE NOT IN THE WORLD NOW--YOU'RE IN THE NAM. THINGS ARE DIFFERENT HERE.





VC ARE
ROCKETING
THE BASE
AGAIN!

WHO
CARES? THEY'RE
TOO FAR AWAY
TO REACH US.
ENJOY THE
FILM!

WHAT IF THEY
SHOOT THIS
WAY?



THEY WON'T
SHOOT THIS WAY,
ED. THEN THEY'D
MISS THE
MOVIE, TOO!

CHARLIE
DON'T GET NO
R & R.

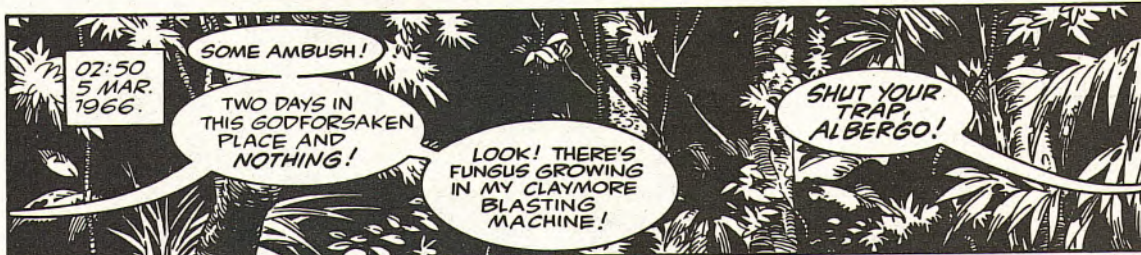


OH! I SEE. DIFFERENT
HERE. I JUST HAVE TO
GET USED TO THAT.



THE NAM

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| DOUG MURRAY..... | WRITER. |
| MICHAEL GOLDEN..... | PENCILER. |
| ARMANDO GIL..... | INKER. |
| PHIL FELIX..... | LETTERER AND COLORIST. |
| LARRY HAMA..... | EDITOR. |
| JAMES SHOOTER..... | EDITOR IN CHIEF. |



"JUST OFF!"

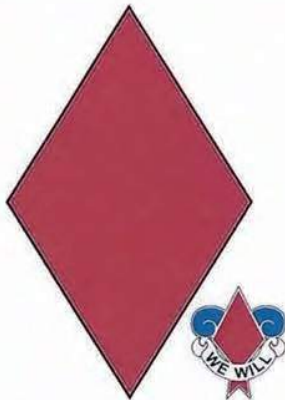




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