

THE

RED 5 DIAMOND

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Oo-oo that smell,
can't you smell that smell?
Oo-oo that smell,
the smell of death's around you.

Can you guess that smell?

“WE WILL”

Deadline for submission of articles for the next Edition:

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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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A Message from our President

Louis Pepi

The Providence Reunion September 9-13, 2021

Greetings fellow Red Devils. I can tell you with supreme confidence that the reunion in Providence, Rhode Island is definitely going to happen. Guidelines become more relaxed weekly now and hotel and restaurant venues should be 100% by this month's end. To avoid quarantine of any sort no matter which state you are traveling from, my recommendation is to get your Covid vaccine. Anyone travelling to Rhode Island from another state, does not have to quarantine as long as their final dose was administered at least 14 days prior to arrival in Providence. And this is true for all the New England states.

Registration is already brisk and we have set a record for registrations in April. To date, have registered with Armed Forces Reunions as well as an equal number of others who have made flight and hotel reservations only.

Okay—now I would like to tell you a story of the life of a wonderful boy from my home town of West Boylston, Massachusetts. His name is Lukas Rinker. Sadly, Lucas' life was recently cut short at 19-years—but oh what a 19 years he lived. He was an Eagle Scout. His project to attain that lofty status was to raise money to have a bronze Battlefield Cross to be placed at the entrance of our local cemetery. Almost everyone doubted that he could succeed with his idea. He proved them all wrong. He could be seen all over town for several years on his bicycle canvassing for donations. We met Lucas in our home in 2019 and Pat & I donated to his project. Lucas quit the local high school but received his diploma a year ahead of his local graduating class in 2019. He then attended college and was on the Dean's List while working multiple jobs to pay for his education. You see, Lucas was from a single-parent family, and with all his accomplishments, Lucas suffered from seizures. A severe seizure in early January weakened his heart, but he kept on.

I am proud to say that the Society of the Fifth Division has sent a generous donation to his family for funeral arrangements. Below is Lucas' obituary.

Lucas' Love

WEST BOYLSTON - Lucas Nathaniel Rinker of West Boylston, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, March 20, 2021, at the age of 19. Lucas was born on February 12, 2002, in Cooperstown, New York. He attended West Boylston schools and graduated from Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School. Despite being dated in 2020, he earned his diploma in 2019 and started college in 2020 at DeVry University for business where he was on the Dean's List. He later received his license for business to further his career. Alongside school he worked many hours a week at multiple jobs; his favorite was Home Depot. He kept going until he couldn't anymore. He was proud of how hard he worked. His highest honor was becoming an Eagle Scout for troop 151. His Eagle Scout project is a monument of the battlefield cross for fallen soldiers in West Boylston. No matter how impossible it looked, he showed everyone he could get his project done. On New Years' of 2021, he suffered a grand mal seizure that should have took his life, weakening his heart. It left him in tremendous pain. He still kept going.

He will be deeply missed by his parents, Tracy Rinker of West Boylston, Richard Rinker and stepmother, Diana Rinker of Holden; his sister, Amanda Rinker; and his brothers, Arthur Rusaikin and Thomas Rinker. His family and friends will miss his beautiful spirit. We can all learn a lesson from Lucas: No matter how hard something seems just keep going. Don't worry about what others think, let your uniqueness radiate.

I wasn't prepared for God to take your hand this soon. He saw you were in pain and called you home. Lucas, you are so loved. I know you are watching from above as all who love you lay you to rest with the black and gold you wore so proudly. With your shining spirit and sharp attire many called you dark angel. All that glitters is not gold and not all who wander are lost. Keep shining, and keep wondering, Lucas. You are and always will be loved.

A private graveside service will be held at Mt. Vernon Cemetery in West Boylston. Funeral arrangements are under the care of Miles-Sterling Funeral and Tribute Center, 100 Worcester Rd., Sterling.



Vice President Gary Haverman

Message from 1st Vice President Gary Haverman

Hello again to the wonderful and beautiful people of the Society of the Fifth Division. I would like to tell you that spring has sprung here in Iowa, but unfortunately since we have been back from our 3 months stay in Florida, the temps here in Iowa have remained around the 40's to the low 50's. As I write this message for the Red Diamond, it is snowing and people are calling and telling us that we should have stayed down there for a couple weeks longer and we agree. They don't say too much more when I ask them for a donation.

We totally enjoyed our trip to Leesburg, Florida again and have completed plans to return to the same RV Resort next year. We have made some wonderful friendships and there is so much to do there that we are never bored. When I did find some spare time, I would grab my lawn chair, a beer and a book. Now that is something I would not normally do and I mean the part about grabbing a book. My daughter Gail gave me a book at Christmas and said she had read it during her furlough from work and she thought I would really enjoy it. The book is entitled, "The Greatest Beer Run Ever" by John "Chick" Donohue and J.T. Molloy. The story, which is a true one begins in a neighborhood bar near Inwood, New York, a town near Manhattan, the year 1967, where the bartender said he was tired of the disrespect that soldiers got when they came home from Vietnam. He said those boys meaning the boy from Inwood deserved to know that folks at home were supporting them. Somebody, he said needed to take those boys a beer and give them a hug from home. John "Chick" Donohue who served in Japan with the Marines and now working as a merchant seaman knew he had the right ID and papers stood up and yells, "I'll do it!" and by the next morning it was too late to back out. Eight weeks later he gets a position on a warship that took him to the port city of Qui Nhon where he begins his mission to find his childhood buddies and bring them a home town beer and a hug. The plot thickens when he is late from a three-day pass and the ship goes back to the world without him and got caught up in the Tet Offensive. One of the guys he needed to find took him up to Quang Tri which I found interesting. It was a very enjoyable read especially some of the verbiage and acronyms only a Vietnam veteran would understand. So now that I told you about that book, I have another daughter Ann, who gave me a book entitled: Last Known Alive. At this time, I'm about half way into the book, so allow me to describe the book as it is on the back cover. "The call of loyalty and the call of friendship compelled author, Arlyn Perkey to investigate the fate of Donald L. Sparks, a Vietnam Veteran with the high priority status of Missing in Action, Prisoner of War-Last Known Alive. Intertwining his own story with that of his friend, Don Perkey offers a portrait of two native Iowa farm boys, drafted, sent to Vietnam, and wounded when their squads were ambushed. The other suffered a fate obscured by decades of misinformation, withheld information and failed communications fostered by bureaucratic protocols and unwarranted paranoia. Last Known Alive pieces together the story of Donald L. Sparks struggle to stay alive and return to his beloved Iowa home.

Ok, this is where this book gets personal. I can see Don Sparks boyhood home from the farm that my late wife & I farmed and raised our six kids. She knew the Spark's family because our farm was where she grew up. As time went by, I got to know Don's sister and brother and did get to hear bits and pieces of his WIA, POW life. So far, the book has covered how the two young men from Iowa met at Iowa State University, became roommates, graduated 1968 with Don Sparks, receiving a BS in Agriculture Science and Arlyn Perkey received a BS in Forestry. They both were drafted in 1969. Don arrives in Vietnam, 5/12/69 assigned to C 3/21st Americal Division and Arlyn arrived in Vietnam 6/4/69 assigned to D.1st 8th Cav., 1st Air Cav. So far, the book covers Arlyn's time in the bush. I will be looking forward to finishing the book to better understand what happened to Don.

Knowing that this article will be in the May edition of the Red Diamond, I would be remiss, if I didn't remember the 50th anniversary of the most horrific rocket attack on Firebase C2, for that matter the entire Vietnam war. On May 21, 1971 the firebase once again started taking incoming rockets. I being with 5/4 Arty took my gunners position on gun #1 and started returning fire. Approximately at 5:45 p.m. I saw the ground splash of a rocket hitting the ground a safe distance ahead of my gun position. I'm thinking, no harm no foul but a short time later, we get the call for help at 1/61 bunker. I had to stay with the gun and began shooting illumination rounds to assist in the rescue and recovery. It wasn't until sunrise the next morning that I was informed of the real toll. My thoughts then were as they are now: May God bless their souls with their well-deserved heavenly home.

Jeanne and I are looking forward to meeting new friends and reuniting with our long-time friends at the up-coming, Providence, RI. 2021 Reunion. We are all signed up for the tours and banquets and have made reservations at the hotel. President Lou Pepi has served the Society with distinction this year and we are looking forward to see what he has in-store for us. Excited to see what is next. God Bless all the Brothers and Sisters of the Society of the Fifth Division. Here's to a great summer ahead!

A Message and Prayer from our Chaplain

Ron Van Beek

The Christian Passover

1 Cor. 5:7b – ...For even Christ, our Passover, is Sacrificed for us.

The Christian Passover is nearly 6000 years old. God always sends His Passover, at critical times, to spare His Precious people and Church. He first established it immediately after Adam and Eve sinned and broke the Covenant of Works in Paradise, with Original Sin. There God Passed over their well deserved deaths. For God had said, in the day you eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of God and Evil, You shall die. They did die there spiritually that day, but, instead of their physical death, God granted them, the first and Greatest Passover. He spare their lives, by sacrificing a Lamb, whose shed blood pointed to the Promise of The Coming Messiah, in the New Covenant of Grace. God, Himself, as a token of His Promise, clothed the naked Adam and Eve, with the bloody coat of this Lamb, and said to satan, in Gen. 3:15 – And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between Thy seed, and her seed; it shall bruise they head, and you shall bruise his Heel. Yes, This was the first Passover, for God Provided a Lamb, to be sacrificed, it's blood to be shed for sin, pointing to the Infinitely Greater Power of the Blood of Jesus Christ to erase and cover sin. The Second Christian Passover, was at the Great Flood, when God Commanded Noah to build a Great Ark, as He was going to destroy the whole earth with a Great Flood, because of the great sins abounding upon earth. He did destroy the whole earth, but spared His 8 Children, and the animals, in the Ark, which was The Passover. When the Ark landed again 375 days later, Noah, sacrificed a Lamb, which pointed to the continuing of God's Promise, of the Messiah, also for the second world.

All of these Passovers, each year, God used to point to The Ultimate Christian Passover, when He sent His Only Begotten Son to suffer and to die on the Cross, for the sins of His Children. The Passover speaks to a much larger context of slavery, of God's Children being saved from the much larger slavery. Our spiritual and physical slavery to sin, to satan, to death. Sin always enslaves, Sin is our cruel Task Master, our slave driver, or tormenter. God's Passover speaks to lost sinners, being saved from sin, being freed, being washed, being sanctified, being redeemed, in the Blood of The Lamb, The Son of God.

All sinners are invited to partake in The Christian Passover, just as Jesus did with his disciples. This dinner, is faithfully reproduced during thousands of years of biblical and cultural tradition. Each element, every prayer, and every blessing, are designed to reveal God's amazing plan of deliverance and salvation, for sinners.

All Beatitude sinners, who mourn their sins, who are hungry, all who are thirsty, are welcomed here. The table is set, so come, taste, and see that the Lord is good. Here God's people will experience that the Holy One of Israel, who delivered His people from physical and spiritual slavery, by the Blood of the Lamb. For He is The Lamb of God, Who delivered the world from the slavery of sin, and death, and the grave.

And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the 12 apostles with Him. And he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you, before I suffer. For I say unto you I will not anymore eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and said take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I say unto you I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks and break it, and gave it unto them saying, this is my Body which is given for you, this do, in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after



A Message from 2nd Vice President

Hal Roller

The Failed Incursion

By Second Vice President Hal Roller

“When the way you want things to be is in conflict with reality, reality wins 100% of the time.” – GEN Eric Shinseki, Ret.

Fifty years have now passed since the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) with American military assistance conducted a raid in force into Laos. The American portion was named Dewey Canyon II and the ARVN Lam Son 719. For those of us who participated in it, the incursion was a time of physical discomfort, moments of sheer terror, observances of valor, a heightened sense of comradery, and sometimes witness to uncaring incompetence. The reality of combat kept all wants and wishes away. At the national level things were different.

The President with senior civilian and military leaders devised the plan “wanting” it to assist in turning the war over to South Vietnam and withdraw all U.S. forces. (Even though ARVN units could not conduct missions without U.S. advisors, combat support, combat service support, and air power.) In congress, legislators “wanted” to end the war by passing laws that prevented U.S. ground forces from entering Cambodia and Laos. (Even though there were thousands of North Vietnamese soldiers and equipment in these countries.) Both executive and legislative “wants” conflicted with reality. Likewise, a pining process took place inside the U.S. command in Vietnam.

In the theater, redeployment of soldiers and equipment out of Vietnam continued a schedule determined before the raid into Laos was conceived. This had disastrous impact, especially with air support. Cobra and Huey helicopters were being shipped out of country when they were most needed. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) had an enormous number of anti-aircraft guns in Laos. Heavy losses ensued and replacements were unavailable. Also in theater, American intelligence underestimated the strength of the NVA in Laos. When the ARVNs invaded, they were outnumbered by the NVA 2 to 1. The NVA then sent two more divisions when the South Vietnamese units were well inside Laos. An additional critical issue overlooked in theater was the lack of ARVN experience conducting a military operation on their own. Up to this point in the war ARVN had only conducted operations along-side U.S. forces- with the U.S. commander having command and control.

As a ricochet on this article, the American news media establishment was calling the NVA in Laos Viet Cong as if they were volunteer South Vietnamese citizen soldiers fighting for unification of the two Vietnams.

The concept of Dewey Canyon II and Lam Son 719 was to use the old French colonial road QL9 which ran from Dong Ha, Vietnam to Tchepone, Laos as an avenue to reach and destroy NVA bases along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was the NVA logistical artery providing Soviet Union provided weapons and equipment, as well as NVA soldiers to fight U.S. and ARVN forces inside South Vietnam. But like the Vietnam War itself, there was no stated objective. Were the ARVNs to go all the way to Tchepone? How wide a reach out from QL9 destroying NVA bases would the incursion take? Nevertheless, the operation proceeded.

Dewey Canyon II kicked-off the last of January 1971. 1/61 Mechanized Infantry remained in their assigned area of operations (AO Orange). 1/77 Armor took responsibility for keeping QL9 open. Attachments of company and platoon size between mechanized and armor battalions occurred throughout the incursion. 5/4 Artillery deployed to firebases out from and along QL9. By February 5, 1971 1/11 Infantry secured the old Khe Sahn combat base. All 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division combat support and combat service support units were assigned responsibilities to assist the operation directly or indirectly. 7th Engineer Battalion built a short-cut road to Khe Sahn with 3/5 Cavalry providing security. Outnumbering the 5th Division units were elements of the 101st Airborne Division, the Americal Division, 24th Corps, and theater assets. The U.S phase of the incursion progressed quickly and well.

Lam Son 719, however, did not fair so well. In Laos, the South Vietnamese soldiers found densely covered jungle terrain and a QL9 road that was almost non-existent at points. The NVA was numerous, equipped and in well prepared positions. This was their territory, and they took full advantage of it. American air power and artillery kept ARVN losses from going higher but certainly did not dominate the combat as senior American leaders WANTED it to. Most ARVN soldiers were not properly trained and unmotivated. ARVN in Laos fell apart. A few elite units fought hard but often found themselves surrounded and out gunned by the NVA. Unable to depend upon their fellow ARVNs, these units had to fight their way out, or in some cases, not survive. American military leaders who later faulted ARVN for not taking and holding certain key terrain features were unaware of the superiority of the NVA in the fight. In fact, it was not until long after the Vietnam War that the U.S. learned of the NVA strength.

Making matters worse for ARVN, the longer they stayed in Laos the larger the NVA strength grew. Two weeks into Lam Son 719 the incursion stalled. A battle of attrition ensued. American helicopter losses were abominable. One pilot said it best, "In Vietnam you have to hunt for the enemy. In Laos they hunt for you." Seventy-five percent of the helicopters inserting or picking-up ARVN sustained bullet damage. On March 6th an insertion of ARVN into Tchepone by the largest helicopter assault of the Vietnam War took place. The force remained for three days destroying enemy supplies and repelling NVA attacks. On March 9th, South Vietnam President Thieu directed a withdrawal to begin. The U.S. overall commander in Vietnam, GEN Abrams, asked Thieu to keep ARVN longer in Laos. Thieu replied they would stay only if U.S. forces joined them.

The withdrawal of ARVN out of Laos can only be described as chaos. Units lost cohesion as vehicles, equipment and weapons were destroyed or left behind. Most soldiers walked back into their homeland. Others who could overcrowded U.S. helicopters, even to the point of riding the skids. On March 23rd three events describe the situation. First, Alpha Company, 1/61 Infantry was in a hasty night defensive position after running an NVA gauntlet on QL9 from Khe Sanh to the Laotian boarder and returning though the gauntlet. Alpha Company rescued an eight-inch artillery battery in danger of being over-run. Around two o'clock in the morning, I was wounded in the head. This event had no impact on the operation, but it sure did on me. Second, by sunset the last ARVN had left Laos. Third, just before midnight NVA sappers blew-up a large fuel storage area in Khe Sanh combat base. These events demonstrate the NVA were following the ARVN out of Laos and into Vietnam. The NVA movement behind the withdrawal would continue almost to Dong Ha.

If the senior military leadership was aware of the NVA advance, they ignored it. When Dewey Canyon II closed in early April 1971, the U.S. focus quickly shifted to stand-down mode. The mission now was withdrawal from Vietnam; combat operations were not allowed to disrupt this mission. Taking advantage of this, the NVA positioned troops and artillery in strategic positions south of the Demilitarized Zone which divided North and South Vietnam. As April moved into May, American firebases and Special Forces outpost were overrun by the NVA. The NVA field and rocket artillery dug-in the mountains west of U.S. bases anticipating American air power. This artillery was heavy but not very accurate. They usually began firing just before sunset. One evening in May I sat atop a bunker on Firebase Charlie 2 and counted 99 rockets fired at the base. None hit inside the base's protective wire. A horrible exception later occurred on May 21, 1971 when a rocket hit a bunker on Charlie 2 killing 30 soldiers.

Officially the tragic event on May 21st was after Dewey Canyon II and Lam Son 719 ended. But, it was a direct segue. At the beginning of this article I gave some thoughts on what the incursion was like for those of us who participated in it. There is one feeling absent from that list which became colossal on May 21, 1971- lifelong grief.

TAPS

Darrell Crall died 3/14/21 5th Division
Vietnam

Rodney Roberts died 3/4/21 5th Division
Vietnam

Joanne Spiller died Wife, of Jim Spiller
who was former
5th Division Chaplain
and who was former
5th Division Society
President. 2007-08

To my Brothers (and Sisters) of the Society,

Many, many thanks for the flowers, messages and cards, visits and calls you shared at the death of my wife, Joanne, on March 4, 2021. She loved accompanying me to reunions and meeting the men I served with, and their wives and sweethearts. Joanne and I were married for 68 years and she was always a partner in ministry with me, during my time as a civilian pastor and as a military chaplain. We are blessed with many friends, military and civilian, and three exceptional daughters and their families. Father Jeremiah, (CPT Jerry Brown, Cdr, A Co, 1/77 Armor, as I knew him) a Society member and now chaplain of Steel Tigers, 77th Armor Association, attended the Celebration of Joanne's life with his wife. Bobby Moody, former National President of the Society, drove 800 miles to attend, and what a blessed surprise it was to see him! My military family supported my family well, and I am very grateful.

Sincerely,
Jim Spiller, Chaplain, 1/77 Armor, 1968-69
Former Society National Chaplain and

National President

Dear friends, Joanne, my wife of over 68 years, completed her earthly life early this morning, one day after her 89th birthday. Her health rapidly declined over the last week and she was unresponsive the last 5 days, so her death comes as sweet relief but deep grief also. Hospice provided a hospital bed here in the apartment and she was free of pain through it all. A visitation and celebration of her life is planned for Friday, March 19, 2:00-4:00 PM, at Stauffer Funeral Home in Frederick. Her obituary can be found on staufferfuneralhome.com. Give thanks to the Lord for her exceptional life!

Grace & peace surround us, and may they surround you too, Jim

It is with a heavy heart, that I forward a message from another Past National President Jim Spiller (2007-2008) for the passing of Jim's wife of 68 years, Joanne Spiller.

My wife Sandy's heart and my heart are broken, again. We are praying for Jim and the Spiller family.

May I ask the National Secretary and the National Chaplain to reflect their respective records.

Peace Always. Phil Maniscalco

ATTENTION RED DEVILS !!!

People often ask me, "*Steve, I cant make it to the reunion this year but I really would like to, I sure will miss seeing my old friends.*"

So I tell them this: "*Other than attending a Society of the Fifth Division Reunion, the next best thing is making your own ad saying Hi to all of your Red Devil friends.* Face it, the guy who is not present at the reunion will be the one talked about by all of his friends and who doesn't like to get the last word in even if you cant be present.

So how can you overcome this puzzling predicament?

EASILY!!! By placing an ad in the 2019 Reunion Booklet you will ensure that your words and photo will represent you in fine order and give all of your buddies a reminder that you are still thinking of them. All of the proceeds from the Ad Book are used to offset costs of the reunion, so you are also doing a good deed for the Society. |

Like last year, the ads will be all one page in size and you can add a photo with your message all for one low price.

A single page ad is 4.5" wide and 7.5" tall. Using your hardcopy or "soft copy photos and words, I will make something you will be glad to have your friends see. Keep it brief, 1-2 sentences and one to two photos. Net proceeds from the Program Book go toward the reunion expenses. The deadline for ad submission **"July 05, 2021"**

Full Page Ad – (4.5" x 7.5") reduced pricing \$40.00

Make your check payable to the "Society of the Fifth Division US Army"

Send your ad information to: Steve Wheat

4838 Rockledge Trail

Smithton, IL 62285

*For soft copy ad submissions send to: wheatcco@gmail.com

The Society of the
5th Division
United States
Army



98th Annual Reunion



Norfolk, Va. 2018





No Sense from the Editor of the Red Diamond David Kocan

The 101st year and the belated 100th Anniversary of The Society of the Fifth Division is on this year 2021. My family and I have missed seeing you and we pray that all of you are well and in good health. We are looking forward to seeing all of you this year and many more years to come. Please check our web site for all the forms, if you need any help please contact me or any of the board members. This is a special time to celebrate the past and look forward to the future. I would like to welcome our next secretary who happens to be a 5th Division Veteran from the Panama Operation, Scott Murrah. So please welcome Scott and our new brothers who served in Panama, God Bless you all.

"You must ask yourself, 'How did these men do it?' Or, 'What compelled them to take these actions?' Again we return to our dedication to our brothers. We were a family whose bonds were forged in the fires of combat. Our brothers lives were more important than our own. If they were in a fight, then we wanted to be there. They would never stand alone." Staff Sergeant Ryan Pitts

See you in September to celebrate 100 years!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Report of the Treasurer of the Society of the Fifth Division
Account Activity for FY20 (01/01/20-12/31/20)

RECEIPTS

Secretary - Dues (\$3275) + Donations (\$1040)	4,315.00
QM Sales	1,314.00
2020 Other Income/Donations	1,400.00
Gain from CDs/MM	1,780.14
TOTAL	8,809.14

DISBURSEMENTS

Secretary Expenses	(311.60)
QM Expenses	(1,668.89)
2020 Other Expenses	(1,376.69)
TOTAL	(3,357.18)

RECEIPTS - DISBURSEMENTS for FY20 **5,451.96**

Report of Treasurer - December 31, 2019 (FY19)

Cash in Bank	31,856.71
Value of Ladder CDs	43,209.49
Net Worth	75,066.20

Report of Treasurer - December 31, 2020 (FY20)

Cash in Bank	35,528.53
Value of Ladder CDs/MM	44,989.63
Net Worth	80,518.16

Net Worth Difference for FY20 **5,451.96**

GB Shoener

George B. Shoener
National Treasurer
SOFD

RESULTS OF FINANCIAL REVIEW-SOCIETY OF THE 5TH DIVISION, U.S. ARMY
CALENDAR YEAR JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

Utilizing established review procedures, the Audit Committee of the Society of the 5th Division executed a review of the Society's financial statement and activities for the Calendar Year ending December 31, 2020. The objectives of the review were to determine if proper accountability was maintained over Society funds and if such funds were used to accomplish the Society's objectives.

The Society of the 5th Division was created in 1919 to (1) perpetuate and memorialize the valiant acts and patriotic deeds of the 5th Division; (2) promote fellowship and the interest and welfare of its members; and (3) publish and preserve the history and accomplishments of the 5th Division and the Society. These objectives are achieved through the efforts of Society members, under the leadership of its officers, and annual reunions for members and special guests.

The Society's National Treasurer is responsible for the overall accountability of Society funds. As such, the National Treasurer maintains the Society's checking account, bank statements, vendor invoices, and other accounting records to support and summarize the receipt of income and the disbursement of funds for expenditures. At the end of each calendar year the Treasurer prepares an Account Activity Report reflecting the results of financial operations and the financial condition of the Society. The Audit Committee used these records to perform the review.

The Calendar Year 2020 Account Activity Report (Attached) shows that the Society generated income of \$8,809 from dues, donations, quartermaster sales and gains from certificates of deposit. The report also reflects expenditures of \$3,357 for quartermaster purchases and general administrative activities. Due to the Pandemic, Covid-19, and the eventual cancellation of the Society's Annual Reunion, Year 2020 income and expenditure amounts were significantly less than in prior years. Moreover, the Society's decision to discontinue distributing copies of its official quarterly news publication (The Red Diamond) to each of its members has resulted in a major reduction of annual expenses. The publications are available for review on-line.

The Audit Committee analyzed the accounting records provided by the Treasurer and concluded that the records adequately support income and expenditure amounts reflected on the Account Activity Report. We also concluded that the Account Activity Report accurately reflects the financial condition of the Society of the 5th Division. Additionally, the expenditures incurred during the year appeared reasonable and consistent with Society objectives.

The Committee extends its appreciation to the Society's Treasurer for the timely submission and the thoroughness of the records needed for this review.

Audit Committee Members

Gary J. Barard
John Ginty
Bud Wagner

WW2 Legacy Keepers

Ten Minutes Too Late: The Last GI KIA in the ETO

By James Oliveri, WW2 Legacy Keepers

The excitement in the air around Volary, Czechoslovakia on the morning of May 7, 1945 was contagious. The war in Europe was all but over and both sides knew it. Many of the GIs already began to get back into the civilian mindset, wondering what they would do for work when they got home and what foods they had missed the most. It was breakfast time and thoughts of home-cooked food made the men of the 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion's Reconnaissance Company (currently attached to the 5th Infantry Division) stomachs rumble. At around 0700 hours, as the soldiers finished their paltry K ration meals and tucked the toilet paper and mini packs of 4 cigarettes into their pockets, Lt. Donald T. Warren of Maryland called on 2 platoons for a scouting mission that he would lead. PFC Charley Havlat of Dorchester, Nebraska jumped into a nearby Jeep just as the driver ground the clutch into gear and they pulled up to the rear of an idling M-8 Greyhound that was to take the point for the mission.

PFC Havlat's brother, Rudolph, was also a member of the 803rd TD Battalion, but with the battalion spread out the way they were, he was unaware that his brother had been sent on a mission. As PFC Havlat traveled along the rough Volary-Prachatice Road, the exhaust from the M8 in front of him mixed the warm May temperatures made it easy to slip into a daydream. About an hour into the patrol, at 0820 hours, the peaceful daydream was shattered by the dreaded sound of German MG42 unleashing its deadly fire. Bullets ricocheted off the M8 at the front of the column making deep gouges in its thick layers of olive drab paint and 2 men of the crew were hit. PFC Havlat sought cover behind his Jeep just as several rounds from German Panzerfausts exploded around him throwing bits of the road all over him. One M8 slowly rotated its turret in the direction of the enemy and opened up with its .30 caliber machine gun to provide cover fire for the convoy as the patrol took up a defensive posture.

PFC Havlat, hunkered down at the side of his Jeep and prepared to return fire but couldn't tell where the enemy position was so he slowly raised his

head over the front of the Jeep. His eyes passed the white stenciled serial number on the side of the hood, and as the stencil of U.S.A., above the serial number, came into focus, a German 7.92 X 57mm bullet struck him in the forehead, killing him instantly. Ten minutes into the battle on the Volary-Prachatice Road, word of a formal ceasefire spread throughout the ETO but for PFC Havlat it was ten minutes too late. In an ironic twist of fate, PFC Havlat's parents were from Czechoslovakia and they emigrated to the U.S. before he was born. Now, more than 3 decades after they left Europe, the oldest of their 3 sons had given his life defending their native land. He was thirty-four years old, an old timer by World War II soldier standards, and the last American killed in the European Theater. Shortly after the ceasefire went into effect, the recon group was ordered to withdraw back to Volary, and later that day Rudolph Havlat found out that his brother had been killed.

The final paragraph of the May 9, 1945 newsletter 'Diamond Dust', published daily by the 5th Infantry Division read, "The Recon Plat. Of the 803rd Tank Destroyer Bn. is officially credited with engaging in the last clash with enemy troops before the cease-fire orders became effective at 0830 hours on May 7. The Recon Plat., running a spearhead for the 2nd Infantry Regt., was ambushed by an estimated 30-man German patrol at approximately 0820 hours – ten minutes before peace was declared – about four miles ahead of the town of Volary. One T.D. man was killed and three men were injured. The Germans later apologized for the incident, saying they knew nothing of the order until thirty minutes later." PFC Havlat was the T.D. man that was reported as KIA. PFC Havlat was buried in a temporary cemetery in Volary. The graves registration unit prepared a shallow grave with a raised mound of dirt, and a wooden cross marked his spot.

In June, 1945, another one of PFC Havlat's brothers, Adolph who was also in the Army, made his way to Volary from Germany to visit the grave of his fallen sibling together with his brother Rudolph. In a 2002 newspaper article, Adolph said that after nearly sixty years he still carried the pain of losing his brother and much of that time is hazy in his mind. He remembers visiting the temporary grave and saying a silent prayer while standing in front of the wooden cross. He no longer remembers the words he used in the

prayer but he knows he said one. PFC Havlat's body was eventually reinterred in the Lorraine American Cemetery in Saint-Avold, France. The cross he rests beneath is now made of marble and the inscription simply reads, CHARLEY HAVLAT, PFC, 803 TD BN. Nebraska, MAY 7, 1945. There are no markings on it designating him the last American killed in action in the ETO. PFC Havlat is just like all the other 10,481 Americans buried throughout the 114 acre cemetery, except for the fact that every single other GI buried there was killed before him.





CHARLEY HAVLAT
PFC 803 TD BN
NEBRASKA MAY 7 1945

75



McCain and the POW Cover-Up

By Sydney Schanberg

July 1, 2010

[QUOTING:]

The “war hero” candidate buried information about POWs left behind in Vietnam.

Eighteen months ago, TAC publisher Ron Unz discovered an astonishing account of the role the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, John McCain, had played in suppressing information about what happened to American soldiers missing in action in Vietnam. Below, we present in full Sydney Schanberg’s explosive story.

* * *

John McCain, who has risen to political prominence on his image as a Vietnam POW war hero, has, inexplicably, worked very hard to hide from the public stunning information about American prisoners in Vietnam who, unlike him, didn’t return home. Throughout his Senate career, McCain has quietly sponsored and pushed into federal law a set of prohibitions that keep the most revealing information about these men buried as classified documents. Thus the war hero who people would logically imagine as a determined crusader for the interests of POWs and their families became instead the strange champion of hiding the evidence and closing the books.

Almost as striking is the manner in which the mainstream press has shied from reporting the POW story and McCain’s role in it, even as the Republican Party has made McCain’s military service the focus of his presidential campaign. Reporters who had covered the Vietnam War turned their heads and walked in other directions. McCain doesn’t talk about the missing men, and the press never asks him about them.

The sum of the secrets McCain has sought to hide is not small. There exists a telling mass of official documents, radio intercepts, witness depositions, satellite photos of rescue symbols that pilots were trained to use, electronic messages from the ground containing the individual code numbers given to airmen, a rescue mission by a special forces unit that was aborted twice by Washington—and even sworn testimony by two Defense secretaries that “men were left behind.” This imposing body of evidence suggests that a large number—the documents indicate probably hundreds—of the U.S. prisoners held by Vietnam were not returned when the peace treaty was signed in January 1973 and Hanoi released 591 men, among them Navy combat pilot John S. McCain.

Mass of Evidence

The Pentagon had been withholding significant information from POW families for years. What’s more, the Pentagon’s POW/MIA operation had been publicly shamed by internal whistleblowers and POW families for holding back documents as part of a policy of “debunking” POW intelligence even when the information was obviously credible.

The pressure from the families and Vietnam veterans finally forced the creation, in late 1991, of a Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. The chairman was John Kerry. McCain, as a former POW, was its most pivotal member. In the end, the committee became part of the debunking machine.

One of the sharpest critics of the Pentagon’s performance was an insider, Air Force Lt. Gen. Eugene Tighe, who headed the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) during the 1970s. He openly challenged the Pentagon’s position that no live prisoners existed, saying that the evidence proved otherwise. McCain was a bitter opponent of Tighe, who was eventually pushed into retirement.

Included in the evidence that McCain and his government allies suppressed or sought to discredit is a transcript of a senior North Vietnamese general’s briefing of the Hanoi politburo, discovered in Soviet archives by an American scholar in 1993. The briefing took place only four months before the 1973 peace accords. The general, Tran Van Quang, told the politburo members that Hanoi was holding 1,205 American prisoners but would keep many of them at war’s end as leverage to ensure getting war reparations from Washington. Throughout the Paris negotiations, the North Vietnamese tied the prisoner issue tightly to the issue of reparations. They were adamant in refusing to deal with them separately. Finally, in a Feb. 2, 1973 formal letter to Hanoi’s premier, Pham Van Dong, Nixon pledged \$3.25 billion in “postwar reconstruction” aid “without any political conditions.” But he also attached to the letter a codicil that said the aid would be implemented by each party “in accordance with its own constitutional provisions.” That meant Congress would have to approve the appropriation, and Nixon and Kissinger knew well that Congress was in no mood to do so. The North Vietnamese, whether or not they immediately understood the double-talk in the letter, remained skeptical about the reparations promise being honored—and it never was. Hanoi thus appears to have held back prisoners—just as it had done when the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and withdrew their forces from Vietnam. In that case, France paid ransoms for prisoners and brought them home.

In a private briefing in 1992, high-level CIA officials told me that as the years passed and the ransom never came, it became more and more difficult for either government to admit that it knew from the start about the unacknowledged prisoners. Those prisoners had not only become useless as bargaining chips but also posed a risk to Hanoi's desire to be accepted into the international community. The CIA officials said their intelligence indicated strongly that the remaining men—those who had not died from illness or hard labor or torture—were eventually executed.

My own research, detailed below, has convinced me that it is not likely that more than a few—if any—are alive in captivity today. (That CIA briefing at the Agency's Langley, Virginia, headquarters was conducted "off the record," but because the evidence from my own reporting since then has brought me to the same conclusion, I felt there was no longer any point in not writing about the meeting.)

For many reasons, including the absence of a political constituency for the missing men other than their families and some veterans' groups, very few Americans are aware of the POW story and of McCain's role in keeping it out of public view and denying the existence of abandoned POWs. That is because McCain has hardly been alone in his campaign to hide the scandal.

The Arizona senator, now the Republican candidate for president, has actually been following the lead of every White House since Richard Nixon's, and thus of every CIA director, Pentagon chief, and national security adviser, not to mention Dick Cheney, who was George H.W. Bush's Defense secretary. Their biggest accomplice has been an indolent press, particularly in Washington.

McCain's Role

An early and critical McCain secrecy move involved 1990 legislation that started in the House of Representatives. A brief and simple document, it was called "the Truth Bill" and would have compelled complete transparency about prisoners and missing men. Its core sentence reads: "[The] head of each department or agency which holds or receives any records and information, including live-sighting reports, which have been correlated or possibly correlated to United States personnel listed as prisoner of war or missing in action from World War II, the Korean conflict and the Vietnam conflict, shall make available to the public all such records held or received by that department or agency."

Bitterly opposed by the Pentagon (and thus McCain), the bill went nowhere. Reintroduced the following year, it again disappeared. But a few months later, a new measure, known as "the McCain Bill," suddenly appeared. By creating a bureaucratic maze from which only a fraction of the documents could emerge—only records that revealed no POW secrets—it turned the Truth Bill on its head. The McCain bill became law in 1991 and remains so today. So crushing to transparency are its provisions that it actually spells out for the Pentagon and other agencies several rationales, scenarios, and justifications for not releasing any information at all—even about prisoners discovered alive in captivity. Later that year, the Senate Select Committee was created, where Kerry and McCain ultimately worked together to bury evidence.

McCain was also instrumental in amending the Missing Service Personnel Act, which had been strengthened in 1995 by POW advocates to include criminal penalties, saying, "Any government official who knowingly and willfully withholds from the file of a missing person any information relating to the disappearance or whereabouts and status of a missing person shall be fined as provided in Title 18 or imprisoned not more than one year or both." A year later, in a closed House-Senate conference on an unrelated military bill, McCain, at the behest of the Pentagon, attached a crippling amendment to the act, stripping out its only enforcement teeth, the criminal penalties, and reducing the obligations of commanders in the field to speedily search for missing men and to report the incidents to the Pentagon.

About the relaxation of POW/MIA obligations on commanders in the field, a public McCain memo said, "This transfers the bureaucracy involved out of the [battle] field to Washington." He wrote that the original legislation, if left intact, "would accomplish nothing but create new jobs for lawyers and turn military commanders into clerks."

McCain argued that keeping the criminal penalties would have made it impossible for the Pentagon to find staffers willing to work on POW/MIA matters. That's an odd argument to make. Were staffers only "willing to work" if they were allowed to conceal POW records? By eviscerating the law, McCain gave his stamp of approval to the government policy of debunking the existence of live POWs.

McCain has insisted again and again that all the evidence—documents, witnesses, satellite photos, two Pentagon chiefs' sworn testimony, aborted rescue missions, ransom offers apparently scorned—has been woven together by unscrupulous deceivers to create an insidious and unpatriotic myth. He calls it the "bizarre rantings of the MIA hobbyists." He has regularly vilified those who keep trying to pry out classified documents as "hoaxers," "charlatans," "conspiracy theorists," and "dime-store Rambos."

Some of McCain's fellow captives at Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi didn't share his views about prisoners left behind. Before he died of leukemia in 1999, retired Col. Ted Guy, a highly admired POW and one of the most dogged resisters in the camps, wrote an angry open letter to the senator in an MIA newsletter—a response to McCain's stream of insults hurled at MIA activists. Guy wrote, "John, does this [the insults] include Senator Bob Smith [a New Hampshire Republican and activist on POW issues] and other concerned elected officials? Does this include the families of the missing where there is overwhelming evidence that their loved ones were 'last known alive'? Does this include some of your fellow POWs?"

It's not clear whether the taped confession McCain gave to his captors to avoid further torture has played a role in his postwar behavior in the Senate. That confession was played endlessly over the prison loudspeaker system at Hoa Lo—to try to break down other prisoners—and was broadcast over Hanoi's state radio. Reportedly, he confessed to being a war criminal who had bombed civilian targets. The Pentagon has a copy of the confession but will not release it. Also, no outsider I know of has ever seen a non-redacted copy of the debriefing of McCain when he returned from captivity, which is classified but could be made public by McCain. [In an interview with 60 Minutes in 1997, McCain mentioned the confession his North Vietnamese captors forced him to write: "I was guilty of war crimes against the Vietnamese people. I intentionally bombed women and children." The truth, of course, is that what McCain wrote under duress is actually an accurate statement. – <https://www.lewrockwell.com/2008/09/laurence->]

All humans have breaking points. Many men undergoing torture give confessions, often telling huge lies so their fakery will be understood by their comrades and their country. Few will fault them. But it was McCain who apparently felt he had disgraced himself and his military family. His father, John S. McCain II, was a highly regarded rear admiral then serving as commander of all U.S. forces in the Pacific. His grandfather was also a rear admiral.

In his bestselling 1999 autobiography, *Faith of My Fathers*, McCain says he felt bad throughout his captivity because he knew he was being treated more leniently than his fellow POWs, owing to his high-ranking father and thus his propaganda value. Other prisoners at Hoa Lo say his captors considered him a prize catch and called him the "Crown Prince," something McCain acknowledges in the book.

Also in this memoir, McCain expresses guilt at having broken under torture and given the confession. "I felt faithless and couldn't control my despair," he writes, revealing that he made two "feeble" attempts at suicide. (In later years, he said he tried to hang himself with his shirt and guards intervened.) Tellingly, he says he lived in "dread" that his father would find out about the confession. "I still wince," he writes, "when I recall wondering if my father had heard of my disgrace."

He says that when he returned home, he told his father about the confession, but “never discussed it at length”—and the admiral, who died in 1981, didn’t indicate he had heard anything about it before. But he had. In the 1999 memoir, the senator writes, “I only recently learned that the tape ... had been broadcast outside the prison and had come to the attention of my father.”

Is McCain haunted by these memories? Does he suppress POW information because its surfacing would rekindle his feelings of shame? On this subject, all I have are questions.

Many stories have been written about McCain’s explosive temper, so volcanic that colleagues are loath to speak openly about it. One veteran congressman who has observed him over the years asked for confidentiality and made this brief comment: “This is a man not at peace with himself.”

He was certainly far from calm on the Senate POW committee. He browbeat expert witnesses who came with information about unreturned POWs. Family members who have personally faced McCain and pressed him to end the secrecy also have been treated to his legendary temper. He has screamed at them, insulted them, brought women to tears. Mostly his responses to them have been versions of: How dare you question my patriotism? In 1996, he roughly pushed aside a group of POW family members who had waited outside a hearing room to appeal to him, including a mother in a wheelchair.

But even without answers to what may be hidden in the recesses of McCain’s mind, one thing about the POW story is clear: if American prisoners were dishonored by being written off and left to die, that’s something the American public ought to know about.

1. In Paris, where the Vietnam peace treaty was negotiated, the United States asked Hanoi for the list of American prisoners to be returned, fearing that Hanoi would hold some prisoners back. The North Vietnamese refused, saying they would produce the list only after the treaty was signed. Nixon agreed with Kissinger that they had no leverage left, and Kissinger signed the accord on Jan. 27, 1973 without the prisoner list. When Hanoi produced its list of 591 prisoners the next day, U.S. intelligence agencies expressed shock at the low number. Their number was hundreds higher. The New York Times published a long, page-one story on Feb. 2, 1973 about the discrepancy, especially raising questions about the number of prisoners held in Laos, only nine of whom were being returned. The headline read, in part, “Laos POW List Shows 9 from U.S.—Document Disappointing to Washington as 311 Were Believed Missing.” And the story, by John Finney, said that other Washington officials “believe the number of prisoners [in Laos] is probably substantially higher.” The paper never followed up with any serious investigative reporting—nor did any other mainstream news organization.

2. Two Defense secretaries who served during the Vietnam War testified to the Senate POW committee in September 1992 that prisoners were not returned. James Schlesinger and Melvin Laird, both speaking at a public session and under oath, said they based their conclusions on strong intelligence data—letters, eyewitness reports, even direct radio contacts. Under questioning, Schlesinger chose his words carefully, understanding clearly the volatility of the issue: “I think that as of now that I can come to no other conclusion ... some were left behind.” This ran counter to what President Nixon told the public in a nationally televised speech on March 29, 1973, when the repatriation of the 591 was in motion: “Tonight,” Nixon said, “the day we have all worked and prayed for has finally come. For the first time in 12 years, no American military forces are in Vietnam. All our American POWs are on their way home.” Documents unearthed since then show that aides had already briefed Nixon about the contrary evidence.

Schlesinger was asked by the Senate committee for his explanation of why President Nixon would have made such a statement when he knew Hanoi was still holding prisoners. He replied, “One must assume that we had concluded that the bargaining position of the United States ... was quite weak. We were anxious to get our troops out and we were not going to roil the waters...” This testimony struck me as a bombshell. The New York Times appropriately reported it on page one but again there was no sustained follow-up by the Times or any other major paper or national news outlet.

3. Over the years, the DIA received more than 1,600 first-hand sightings of live American prisoners and nearly 14,000 second-hand reports. Many witnesses interrogated by CIA or Pentagon intelligence agents were deemed “credible” in the agents’ reports. Some of the witnesses were given lie-detector tests and passed. Sources provided me with copies of these witness reports, which are impressive in their detail. A lot of the sightings described a secondary tier of prison camps many miles from Hanoi. Yet the DIA, after reviewing all these reports, concluded that they “do not constitute evidence” that men were alive.

4. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, listening stations picked up messages in which Laotian military personnel spoke about moving American prisoners from one labor camp to another. These listening posts were manned by Thai communications officers trained by the National Security Agency (NSA), which monitors signals worldwide. The NSA teams had moved out after the fall of Saigon in 1975 and passed the job to the Thai allies. But when the Thais turned these messages over to Washington, the intelligence community ruled that since the intercepts were made by a “third party”—namely Thailand—they could not be regarded as authentic. That’s some Catch-22: the U.S. trained a third party to take over its role in monitoring signals about POWs, but because that third party did the monitoring, the messages weren’t valid.

Here, from CIA files, is an example that clearly exposes the farce. On Dec. 27, 1980, a Thai military signal team picked up a message saying that prisoners were being moved out of Attopeu (in southern Laos) by aircraft “at 1230 hours.” Three days later a message was sent from the CIA station in Bangkok to the CIA director’s office in Langley. It read, in part: “The prisoners ... are now in the valley in permanent location (a prison camp at Nhommarath in Central Laos). They were transferred from Attopeu to work in various places ... POWs were formerly kept in caves and are very thin, dark and starving.” Apparently the prisoners were real. But the transmission was declared “invalid” by Washington because the information came from a “third party” and thus could not be deemed credible.

5. A series of what appeared to be distress signals from Vietnam and Laos were captured by the government’s satellite system in the late 1980s and early ’90s. (Before that period, no search for such signals had been put in place.) Not a single one of these markings was ever deemed credible. To the layman’s eye, the satellite photos, some of which I’ve seen, show markings on the ground that are identical to the signals that American pilots had been specifically trained to use in their survival courses—such as certain letters, like X or K, drawn in a special way. Other markings were the secret four-digit authenticator numbers given to individual pilots. But time and again, the Pentagon, backed by the CIA, insisted that humans had not made these markings. What were they, then? “Shadows and vegetation,” the government said, insisting that the markings were merely normal topographical contours like saw-grass or rice-paddy divider walls. It was the automatic response—shadows and vegetation. On one occasion, a Pentagon photo expert refused to go along. It was a missing man’s name gouged into a field, he said, not trampled grass or paddy berms. His bosses responded by bringing in an outside contractor who found instead, yes, shadows and vegetation. This refrain led Bob Taylor, a highly regarded investigator on the Senate committee staff who had examined the photographic evidence, to comment to me: “If grass can spell out people’s names and secret digit codes, then I have a newfound respect for grass.”

6. On Nov. 11, 1992, Dolores Alfond, the sister of missing airman Capt. Victor Apodaca and chair of the National Alliance of Families, an organization of relatives of POW/MIAs, testified at one of the Senate committee’s public hearings. She asked for information about data the government had gathered from electronic devices used in a classified program known as PAVE SPIKE.

The devices were motion sensors, dropped by air, designed to pick up enemy troop movements. Shaped on one end like a spike with an electronic pod and antenna on top, they were designed to stick in the ground as they fell. Air Force planes would drop them along the Ho Chi Minh trail and other supply routes. The devices, though primarily sensors, also had rescue capabilities. Someone on the ground—a downed airman or a prisoner on a labor gang—could manually enter data into the sensor. All data were regularly collected electronically by U.S. planes flying overhead. Alfond stated, without any challenge or contradiction by the committee, that in 1974, a year after the supposedly complete return of prisoners, the gathered data showed that a person or people had manually entered into the sensors—as U.S. pilots had been trained to do—no less than 20 authenticator numbers that corresponded exactly to the classified authenticator numbers of 20 U.S. POWs who were lost in Laos. Alfond added, according to the transcript, “This PAVE SPIKE intelligence is seamless, but the committee has not discussed it or released what it knows about PAVE SPIKE.”

McCain attended that committee hearing specifically to confront Alfond because of her criticism of the panel’s work. He bellowed and berated her for quite a while. His face turning anger-pink, he accused her of “denigrating” his “patriotism.” The bullying had its effect—she began to cry.

After a pause Alfond recovered and tried to respond to his scorching tirade, but McCain simply turned away and stormed out of the room. The PAVE SPIKE file has never been declassified. We still don’t know anything about those 20 POWs.

7. As previously mentioned, in April 1993 in a Moscow archive, a researcher from Harvard, Stephen Morris, unearthed and made public the transcript of a briefing that General Tran Van Quang gave to the Hanoi politburo four months before the signing of the Paris peace accords in 1973.

In the transcript, General Quang told the Hanoi politburo that 1,205 U.S. prisoners were being held. Quang said that many of the prisoners would be held back from Washington after the accords as bargaining chips for war reparations. General Quang’s report added: “This is a big number. Officially, until now, we published a list of only 368 prisoners of war. The rest we have not revealed. The government of the USA knows this well, but it does not know the exact number ...and can only make guesses based on its losses. That is why we are keeping the number of prisoners of war secret, in accordance with the politburo’s instructions.” The report then went on to explain in clear and specific language that a large number would be kept back to ensure reparations.

The reaction to the document was immediate. After two decades of denying it had kept any prisoners, Hanoi responded to the revelation by calling the transcript a fabrication.

Similarly, Washington—which had over the same two decades refused to recant Nixon’s declaration that all the prisoners had been returned—also shifted into denial mode. The Pentagon issued a statement saying the document “is replete with errors, omissions and propaganda that seriously damage its credibility,” and that the numbers were “inconsistent with our own accounting.”

Neither American nor Vietnamese officials offered any rationale for who would plant a forged document in the Soviet archives and why they would do so. Certainly neither Washington nor Moscow—closely allied with Hanoi—would have any motive, since the contents were embarrassing to all parties, and since both the United States and Vietnam had consistently denied the existence of unreturned prisoners. The Russian archivists simply said the document was “authentic.”

8. In his 2002 book, *Inside Delta Force*, retired Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Haney described how in 1981 his special forces unit, after rigorous training for a POW rescue mission, had the mission suddenly aborted, revived a year later, and again abruptly aborted. Haney writes that this abandonment of captured soldiers ate at him for years and left him disillusioned about his government’s vows to leave no men behind. “Years later, I spoke at length with a former highly placed member of the North Vietnamese diplomatic corps, and this person asked me point-blank: ‘Why did the Americans never attempt to recover their remaining POWs after the conclusion of the war?’” Haney writes. He continued, saying that he came to believe senior government officials had called off those missions in 1981 and 1982. (His account is on pages 314 to 321 of my paperback copy of the book.)

9. There is also evidence that in the first months of Ronald Reagan’s presidency in 1981, the White House received a ransom proposal for a number of POWs being held by Hanoi in Indochina. The offer, which was passed to Washington from an official of a third country, was apparently discussed at a meeting in the Roosevelt Room attended by Reagan, Vice President Bush, CIA director William Casey, and National Security Adviser Richard Allen. Allen confirmed the offer in sworn testimony to the Senate POW committee on June 23, 1992. Allen was allowed to testify behind closed doors and no information was released. But a San Diego Union-Tribune reporter, Robert Caldwell, obtained the portion relating to the ransom offer and reported on it. The ransom request was for \$4 billion, Allen testified. He said he told Reagan that “it would be worth the president’s going along and let’s have the negotiation.” When his testimony appeared in the Union-Tribune, Allen quickly wrote a letter to the panel, this time not under oath, recanting the ransom story and claiming his memory had played tricks on him. His new version was that some POW activists had asked him about such an offer in a meeting that took place in 1986, when he was no longer in government. “It appears,” he said in the letter, “that there never was a 1981 meeting about the return of POW/MIAs for \$4 billion.”

But the episode didn’t end there. A Treasury agent on Secret Service duty in the White House, John Syphrit, came forward to say he had overheard part of the ransom conversation in the Roosevelt Room in 1981, when the offer was discussed by Reagan, Bush, Casey, Allen, and other cabinet officials.

Syphrit, a veteran of the Vietnam War, told the committee he was willing to testify, but they would have to subpoena him. Treasury opposed his appearance, arguing that voluntary testimony would violate the trust between the Secret Service and those it protects. It was clear that coming in on his own could cost Syphrit his career. The committee voted 7 to 4 not to subpoena him.

In the committee’s final report, dated Jan. 13, 1993 (on page 284), the panel not only chastised Syphrit for his failure to testify without a subpoena (“The committee regrets that the Secret Service agent was unwilling ...”), but noted that since Allen had recanted his testimony about the Roosevelt Room briefing, Syphrit’s testimony would have been “at best, uncorroborated by the testimony of any other witness.” The committee omitted any mention that it had made a decision not to ask the other two surviving witnesses, Bush and Reagan, to give testimony under oath. (Casey had died.)

10. In 1990, Col. Millard Peck, a decorated infantry veteran of Vietnam then working at the DIA as chief of the Asia Division for Current Intelligence, asked for the job of chief of the DIA's Special Office for Prisoners of War and Missing in Action. His reason for seeking the transfer, which was not a promotion, was that he had heard from officials throughout the Pentagon that the POW/MIA office had been turned into a waste-disposal unit for getting rid of unwanted evidence about live prisoners—a "black hole," these officials called it.

Peck explained all this in his telling resignation letter of Feb. 12, 1991, eight months after he had taken the job. He said he viewed it as "sort of a holy crusade" to restore the integrity of the office but was defeated by the Pentagon machine. The four-page, single-spaced letter was scathing, describing the putative search for missing men as "a cover-up."

Peck charged that, at its top echelons, the Pentagon had embraced a "mind-set to debunk" all evidence of prisoners left behind. "That national leaders continue to address the prisoner of war and missing in action issue as the 'highest national priority,' is a travesty," he wrote. "The entire charade does not appear to be an honest effort, and may never have been. ... Practically all analysis is directed to finding fault with the source. Rarely has there been any effective, active follow through on any of the sightings, nor is there a responsive 'action arm' to routinely and aggressively pursue leads."

"I became painfully aware," his letter continued, "that I was not really in charge of my own office, but was merely a figurehead or whipping boy for a larger and totally Machiavellian group of players outside of DIA ... I feel strongly that this issue is being manipulated and controlled at a higher level, not with the goal of resolving it, but more to obfuscate the question of live prisoners and give the illusion of progress through hyperactivity." He named no names but said these players are "unscrupulous people in the Government or associated with the Government" who "have maintained their distance and remained hidden in the shadows, while using the [POW] Office as a 'toxic waste dump' to bury the whole 'mess' out of sight." Peck added that "military officers ... who in some manner have 'rocked the boat' [have] quickly come to grief."

Peck concluded, "From what I have witnessed, it appears that any soldier left in Vietnam, even inadvertently, was, in fact, abandoned years ago, and that the farce that is being played is no more than political legerdemain done with 'smoke and mirrors' to stall the issue until it dies a natural death."

The disillusioned colonel not only resigned but asked to be retired immediately from active military service. The press never followed up.

My Pursuit of the Story

I covered the war in Cambodia and Vietnam, but came to the POW information only slowly afterward, when military officers I knew from that conflict began coming to me with maps and POW sightings and depositions by Vietnamese witnesses.

I was then city editor of the New York Times, no longer involved in foreign or national stories, so I took the data to the appropriate desks and suggested it was material worth pursuing. There were no takers. Some years later, in 1991, when I was an op-ed columnist at Newsday, the aforementioned special Senate committee was formed to probe the POW issue. I saw this as an opening and immersed myself in the reporting.

At Newsday, I wrote 36 columns over a two-year period, as well as a four-part series on a trip I took to North Vietnam to report on what happened to one missing pilot who was shot down over the Ho Chi Minh trail and captured when he parachuted down. After Newsday, I wrote thousands more words on the subject for other outlets. Some of the pieces were about McCain's key role.

Though I wrote on many subjects for Life, Vanity Fair, and Washington Monthly, my POW articles appeared in Penthouse, the Village Voice, and APBnews.com. Mainstream publications just weren't interested. Their disinterest was part of what motivated me, and I became one of a very short list of journalists who considered the story important.

Serving in the Army in Germany during the Cold War and witnessing combat firsthand as a reporter in India and Indochina led me to have great respect for those who fight for their country. To my mind, we dishonored U.S. troops when our government failed to bring them home from Vietnam after the 591 others were released—and then claimed they didn't exist. And politicians dishonor themselves when they pay lip service to the bravery and sacrifice of soldiers only to leave untold numbers behind, rationalizing to themselves that it's merely one of the unfortunate costs of war.

John McCain—now campaigning for the White House as a war hero, maverick, and straight shooter—owes the voters some explanations. The press were long ago wooed and won by McCain's seeming openness, Lone Ranger pose, and self-deprecating humor, which may partly explain their ignoring his record on POWs. In the numerous, lengthy McCain profiles that have appeared of late in papers like the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal, I may have missed a clause or a sentence along the way, but I have not found a single mention of his role in burying information about POWs. Television and radio news programs have been similarly silent.

Reporters simply never ask him about it. They didn't when he ran unsuccessfully for the Republican nomination in 2000. They haven't now, despite the fact that we're in the midst of another war—a war he supports and one that has echoes of Vietnam. The only explanation McCain has ever offered for his leadership on legislation that seals POW files is that he believes the release of such information would only stir up fresh grief for the families of those who were never accounted for in Vietnam. Of the scores of POW families I've met over the years, only a few have said they want the books closed without knowing what happened to their men. All the rest say that not knowing is exactly what grieves them.

Isn't it possible that what really worries those intent on keeping the POW documents buried is the public disgust that the contents of those files would generate?

How the Senate Committee Perpetuated the Debunking ...

[END OF QUOTING.]

READ THE COMPLETE DOCUMENT AT:

www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/mc

Cobra shooting



C124 landing



Hueys bringing soldiers?



Chinook delivering supplies?



Chinook delivering a bladder?



All these pics were at the Special Forces Camp

Bob,

I just realized you sent me the pics.

My first question to you, are these photo's close to the Special Forces Camp. It was surrounded by fighting berm and fighting bunkers embedded in them, then rolls of stacked concertina wire, then lots of tangle foot; land mines too? Just before reaching to the top of Mai Loc there was a small village; after we reached the plateau there was ARVN Camp; and about klick later a Special Forces Camp (5th Mech took over in April 70 after it was overrun with American and Australians KIA's, as we received them at our Graves Registration). To the right of the compound there was a large grassy area where C123's (mostly smaller Caribou) planes could land there). If you continued north, there was a small Mountain Yard village about a half a klick.

I can't see the old Special Forces Camp in these photos.

I'm wondering if you might have been closer to the ARVN Camp or the mountain yard village?

Are those 155MM ARVN howitzers as they did have artillery? Our JP4 10,000 gallon bladders and the 500 gallon donuts had diesel fuel in them. This was in July 1970 as we were just starting the initial movement to reopen Khe Sahn (Lam Som 719) and also a new road which was called Red Devil Road was being built.

POL Platoon, Company C, 75 Spt Bn, was supporting the Fuel Area; also hauling supplies up there via 2 ½ ton trucks and 5 ton flatbed tractor trailers by July 1970; tanks and apc's were covering security on higher points of the road to Mai Loc.

I can't tell what the chinook is delivering because of the distance.

The fuel bladder area was just outside the wire of the special forces camp to the right of the main gate entrance some 100 meters. By August the JP4 Bladder was in a large trench, and we started building a cover to put sand bags on top for incoming and illumination flare protection; also from the ARVN Camp, as ARVNS were beings ARVN's.

Hey Malcom, were you ever at Mai Loc? Bob, can you send Malcom and David?

Jerry

Hey Guys;

The recollections of the operation out of Mai Loc in '70 have tweaked my memory a bit and so, in keeping with my remark that there is often something amusing in the midst of the crap and chaos, I submit the following anecdote.

B Co 1/11 was deployed to Mai Loc to act as reserve backup for D Co 1/11 who were out securing some area around Hwy 9 (I believe) for some very good reason unbeknownst to us. It all seemed to be a big to do with shit-hooks coming and going, officers tripping over each other and so on. Once dropped off and staged, B Co got down on the ground and many of us just slept. Some of us slept much better than others as the night before we partied pretty hard at base camp even though we were warned that night that the company would be headed out in the morning on Sparrow Hawk duty.

It was the flight to Mai Loc from base camp that was most memorable event . . . and I am thankful for that. After loading onto the shit-hooks, the crew, on my ship anyhow, kept the back gate (ramp?) down as we lifted off. The distance between base camp and Mia Loc being a short hop, we never gained much altitude. It seemed that we were skimming the ground at great speed. The ship even followed the rolling contour of the ground; up and down, up and down as we watched out the back gate at the landscape receding quickly away. The movements even produced a little bit of a fish tale near the gate.

Maybe this low altitude, skimming of the ground was a safety protocol given the short flight distance but I doubt that the up and down business was kosher. I think that the crew was doing this roller coaster for our amusement. The trouble was, though, that a good number of the guys who had spent the night drinking beer got sick. One could look at their expressions of distress to see what was coming. And come it did. Luckily, for the crew, none of us had had the time for a hearty base camp breakfast.

This was the second time during my tour that a chopper pilot played somewhat loose with the flight plan. On this foray, though, they were left with a reason to regret it.

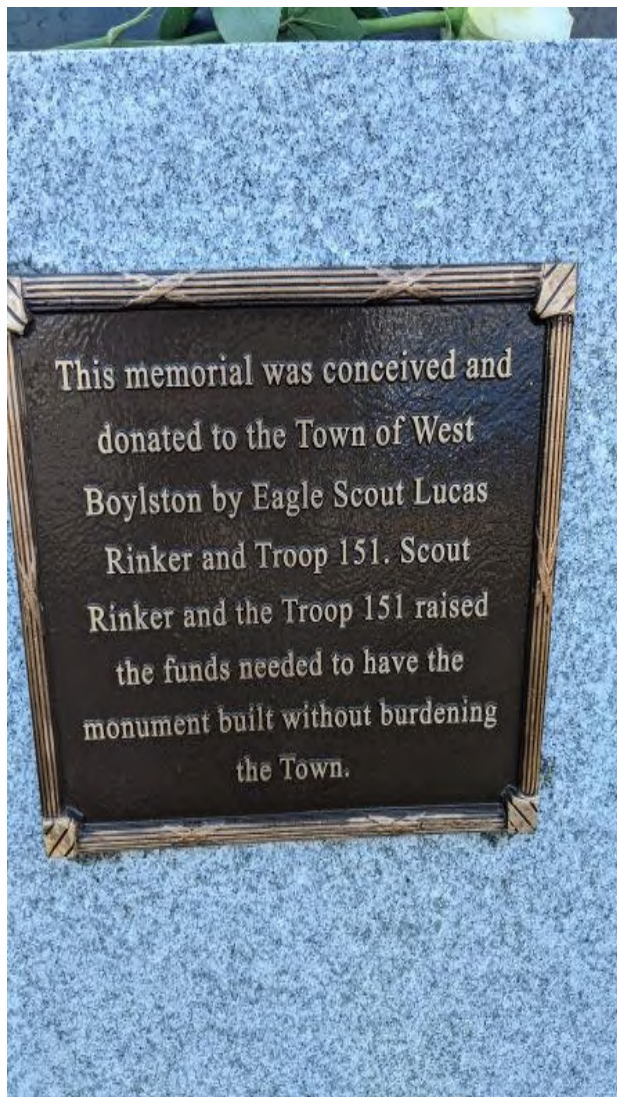
Malcolm Estrada
Harrison, Tennessee

Hi Jerry,

I bet it was A Btry from QTCB, I went out with them on occasions, I also went out with B Btry from Dong Ha. At Khe Sahn I worked on C Btry first, their new gun was hit by a mortar round, they fired the next round and the he liar came welding of the floor plates had let go and there were gaps between them, that track did not even have 100 hours on it! B Btry was over near Lang Vei when we were working on them and then we went up to Ranger Ridge with A Btry to help them out, that was when the jet put the napalm canisters right down the tunnel. We had an E7 who told all of the crews from A Btry they had to remove all of their breech cams, I still cannot believe they left them all there in the dirt when they left. That ment they had to manually open and hold open the breech every time they fired. Our E7 certainly won negative points that day, and from all of us too. He went ballistic when the chopper bringing him there left him, he frantically popped smoke for every chopper flying over, A Btry had no use for him after that.

On the 11th of this month is the 50th anniversary of George, Chuck and Lucio's being killed. I dis see that they changed it in one place to KIA from mis-adventure meaning friendly fire.

Photos from Lucas Rinker of memorial and grave stone.



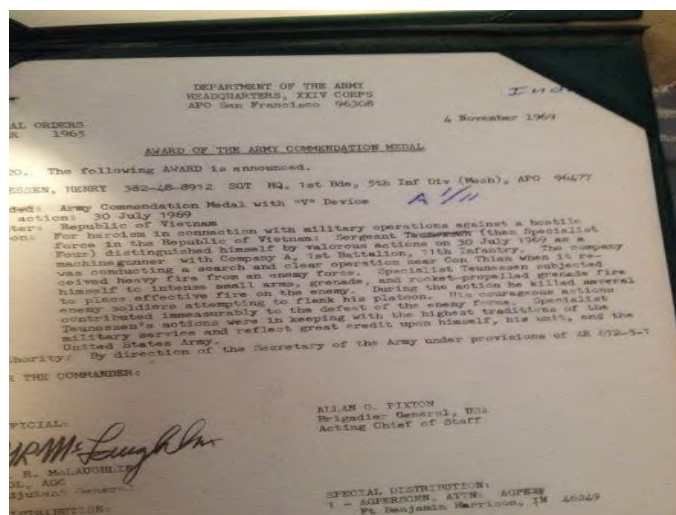
Lucas N. Rinker

February 12, 2002 - March 20, 2021

God Bless You



Yesterday, I received a phone call from Stan Shaffer (Alpha Company 5/4 Artillery, 1st Brigade 5th Div, Vietnam 1968). Stan read an article in the Jan-Feb 2021 issue of the DAV magazine on page 36 that you and Andy Teunessen were seeking information about anyone who was stationed with Henry Martin Teunessen (Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry) in Vietnam and anyone familiar with actions on July 30, 1969 near Con Thien. Stan called Andy and Stan gave Andy my name as a reference. Please share this message with Andy Teunessen.



Please be advised that Scott Murrah has opened a post office box for correspondence in his capacity as the societies new national secretary. Below is information on the new post office box.

Society of the 5th Infantry Division, U.S. Army

Scott Murrah National Secretary

P.O. Box 162176

Fort Worth, TX 76161

This is the new and final updated form please check it out, thank you.

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 \$35 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/society2021 (3.5% will be added to total). All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before August 6, 2021. 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.

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SATURDAY 9/11: Newport Tour	\$ 67	#	\$
<u>MEAL OPTIONS (Please select your entrée)</u>			
SATURDAY 9/11:			
Grilled New York Sirloin Steak	\$ 45	#	\$
Sauteed Chicken Breast Saltimbocca	\$ 45	#	\$
Baked New England Scrod	\$ 45	#	\$
Pasta Primavera	\$ 45	#	\$
SUNDAY 9/12:			
Grilled New York Sirloin Steak	\$ 45	#	\$
Boneless Breast of Chicken	\$ 45	#	\$
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Covers various reunion expenses.	\$20	#	\$
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WHERE (CIRCLE ONE): WWII FT CARSON VIETNAM FT POLK OTHER: _____

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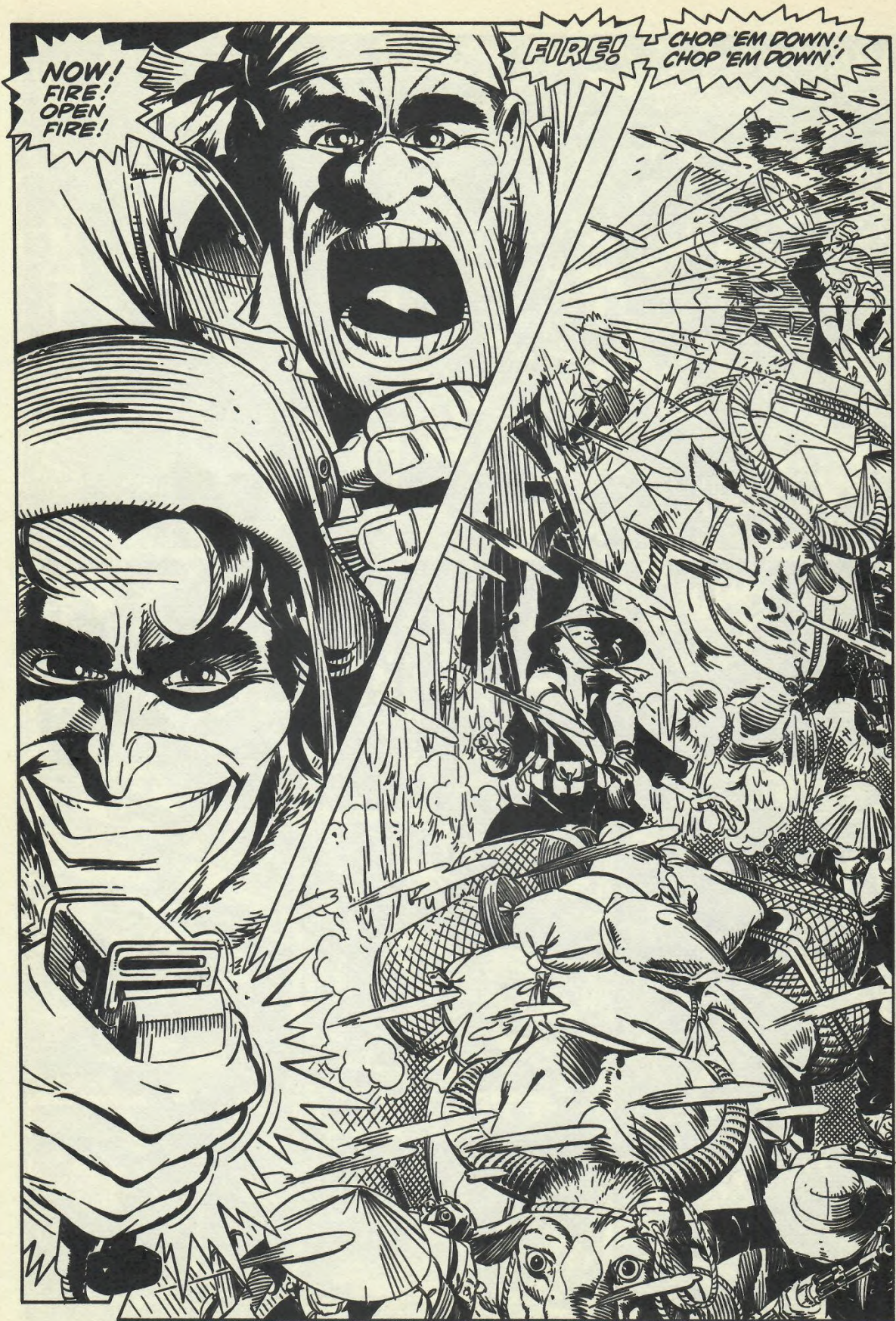
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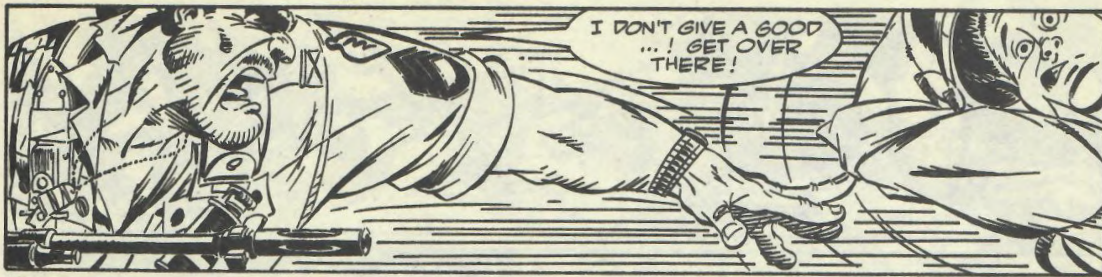
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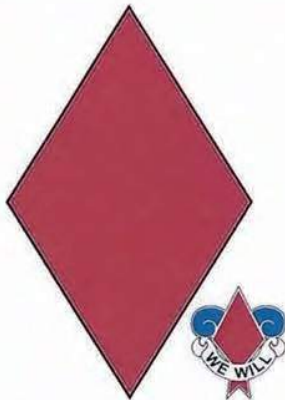




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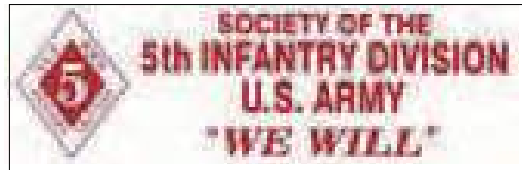
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