

COUNTERPARTS 2007 REUNION AFTER ACTION REPORT

Our 2007 Reunion was held April 18-21 at the Wyndham Westshore Hotel in Tampa Florida. The superb planning work done by our Reunion Coordinators Bruce and Mary Anne Matthews produced an event that was lively, interesting, and busy.

There were 39 attendees and spouses, including Mr. Hoang Hy, a former ARVN officer and Reeducation camp escapee, Terry Turner, author of the widely read *Once a Warrior King*, and Gary Sizemore, whose father, SFC William D. Sizemore was a Covan killed in Vietnam.

Registration, which included individual Info packages and snack in our Hospitality Suite, was followed by an excellent Vietnamese dinner at the *Indochinois* restaurant. After dinner, members gathered informally to renew old friendships and embellish on old War Stories.

Saturday started with a bus ride to MacDill AFB Officers' Club for the first of several information Briefings. Col. Hans Busch, US Army, began with a *tour de horizon* of the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Col. Busch is a Special Forces officer presently assigned as USSOCOM PAO. He has operations experience in Grenada, West Africa, Afghanistan, and other international hot spots. His presentation made it clear that the Special Ops world has come a long way since "our" time, with impressive advances in technology, training and improved coordination between the various services.

Our afternoon briefings began after lunch at the club. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that our Briefer, Col. Greene, of the Central Command (CENTCOM) staff, wore a familiar MACV patch. Col Greene is a Ranger who served as an Advisor in Vietnam and was been recalled for operations in Iraq. Especially interesting were his observations on the differences between the Advisory environment in Iraq and that of the Vietnam War.

Having been thoroughly educated on today's world we rode the buses back to the hotel and after a short break began the day's business meeting. I presented the financial Report (attached), which was accepted by the attending members. As of April 15, 2007 we had a balance of \$7931.67 in the treasury. J C Fisher will assume the Treasurer duties shortly.

Our Banquet on Saturday night was well attended and featured Tommy Daniels of the Cambodia Corps, Inc. as guest speaker. Tommy showed us, through photos, and a description of his own experience, the plight of the "forgotten" Montagnard refugees in Cambodia, and what his organization is doing to help these, our former allies and comrades. Tommy also noted that, among all the various organizations that made contributions to Cambodia Corps, COUNTERPARTS was right at the top.

Jim Simmons was also presented, *in absentia* with a Letter of Appreciation for his work in Membership, 2005-2007

The following matters were discussed at our Business Meetings on Saturday Afternoon and Sunday Morning

Donations: Last year we donated a total of \$3000.00 to various organizations helping our former comrades in SEA. How much do we want to budget this year, and how will we allocate it? PAO Rich Webster pointed out that our "Counterparts Scholar", Broy Makara, will begin his second year of Veterinary college, at a cost of about \$2,000. After discussion, the following allocations were voted:

\$1500.00 to our "Counterparts Scholar"

\$500.00 to Mike and Marion Little's Operation Rice Lift (Vihn Son Orphanage)

\$500.00 to Vietnam Vets with a Mission (VWAM)

\$100.00 to Save The Montagnard People (STMP)

TOTAL \$2600.00

Individual Members also pledged support to the "Counterparts Scholar" as follows: Jim O'Malley, Charles Reinhart, Joe Frankoski, Tom Bender, \$100.00 each. Jim Ellis, \$200.00, Joe Pickerell, \$250.00

TOTAL \$3450.00

Many thanks to these members who showed their individual generosity. For those members that didn't attend, that's \$3450 that goes to organizations helping our former South Vietnamese and Montagnard allies to improve the conditions of their lives, something we can be proud of. COUNTERPARTS still has a small foot print in Southeast Asia. .

Membership: Jim Simmons was recognized *in absentia* for his outstanding job in membership, which included updating the members database, creating an active email mailing list, streamlining and improving dues collection, and promptly investigating and reviewing new applications. Due to Medical problems, Jim had to resign the Membership position earlier this year. A volunteer was called for to replace him and Jim Ellis stepped up to take the job.

Quartermaster/Village Market: This office has been vacant since the resignation of Steve Moczary earlier this year. Volunteers were called for and Frank Norwood generously offered to take on the job.

Elections: The Commander's three year term expires next April, and elections will be required for that position. XO Tom Stevens volunteered to stay on as XO. Our bylaws require that a nomination and election committee be appointed at least ninety days before the annual meeting (Reunion). All members are urged to consider their choices for the Commander's office. At present, plans are to include a nomination form in the next SITREP, then form a nominating committee to prepare a slate of candidates to be voted on at the annual meeting (Reunion). XO Tom Stevens suggested that we remind all members that they can vote by proxy or by mail.

Web Site: While there has been encouraging improvement in the Counterparts website (www.counterparts.net) we still have a long way to go. Jim Alkek continues to maintain the site without help. *Computer knowledgeable volunteers are needed to assist in this job if we expect the site to improve.*

New Business:

Scholarship for descendant of an Advisor: It was suggested that we look in to establishing a modest scholarship for a selected descendant of a former Advisor. XO Tom Stevens volunteered to form a committee of one to begin looking into this possibility.

Dues Increase: Several members suggested that we increase dues to help fund future charitable and scholarship initiatives. Increases proposed were Annual Dues of \$25.00 from the present \$20.00 and increase in Life Membership from \$200.00 to \$250.00. This proposal will be published in the next SITREP and members will have the opportunity to vote on it. Such an increase would probably become effective January 1, 2008. At present we have about 300 dues paying members, of which about 100 are Life Members.

We need the views of the membership on this proposal, by mail, email or on the Web site bulletin board. More about this in the next issue of SITREP

Recruiting/Publicity: Thanks to the efforts of Jim Simmons in Membership and Rich Webster in PAO, COUNTERPARTS has become better known and membership has increased. But we still need to do a better job of getting out the word. Most of us heard about COUNTERPARTS from another former Advisor, or by other indirect means. There has been little opportunity to "sell" our organization to other ex-covans. We can increase membership by increasing awareness of who we are and what we stand for. I urge all members to be aggressive in contacting their local community and city newspapers and radio and TV outlets to try to get our story out. You might be surprised at how eager the media is for a good feature or human interest story.

Most of us recall the role media coverage, good and bad, played in forming public opinion in the Vietnam era. In case you haven't noticed, the same thing is happening

now with Iraq. It was apparent, after listening to the Briefers at the Reunion, that the REAL story of Iraq isn't getting out. As always, the story of our small day to day victories is pushed aside by the media's need for sensation and drama. We can help to support today's soldiers by taking every opportunity we can to get informed and help tell the story as it is, not like TV would like us to see it. Stand up for what you believe.

2008 Reunion Recommendations were called for, but as of this writing, no volunteers have stepped forward to host our next Reunion. There was some interest in holding the 2008 Reunion on the West Coast, but we need volunteers. Time is important. The sooner we decided on a site the sooner planning can begin. **WE NEED SUGGESTIONS AND VOLUNTEERS FOR THE 2008 REUNION.**

Membership Eligibility: XO Tom Stevens and several other members suggested we consider the possibility of allowing spouses, widows, and other family members of former Advisors to be eligible for membership. Tom is looking into the implications of this and will have more info on the subject in the coming months.

Additional items: The traditional format for COUNTERPARTS Reunion has been: check in, informal dinner on day 1, events, Banquet on day 2, close and depart on the morning of day 3. In my opinion, this results in a very tight schedule which leaves little free time and often, barely enough time for a business meeting. I'd like to consider the possibility of adding a day to our reunion, which would then run Thursday to Saturday, Friday to Sunday, or perhaps be planned for mid-week. I'd like to hear some opinions on this subject pro or con.

This years' Reunion left me with the belief that we are a dynamic organization, continuing to move forward and ready to meet new challenges. Despite the fact that we are no longer youthful warriors, we can say, like Tennyson's Ulysses:

Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are -
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Once again, thanks to Bruce and Mary Anne Matthews, to all the COUNTERPARTS who attended the Reunion, and to those who were with us only in spirit.

Ken Jacobsen

Commander, Counterparts/THDNA