

#28
Summer, 1996
Mùa Hè
Năm Bính Tỵ



BAO CAO TINH HINH

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SITREP

KLEI MRĂW MRANG

The SITREP is the quarterly publication of COUNTERPARTS/TƯỚNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á, an association of those serving in any counterpart role, as part of their assigned duties, during the Indochina Wars of 1954-1975, or beyond. Full membership available to anyone serving in this capacity, in a military or civilian role, in what was perceived as an effort to halt militarist expansion in SE Asia. Associate memberships also available. Membership inquiries and correspondence: Ben Myers; P.O. Box 6019; Lake Worth, Florida; 33466-6019.

OFFICERS

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Ed Abraham

Adjutant/
Historian
J.C. Fischer

XO
Charlie Thurmond

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Locator
Ben Myers

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Community
Quách Huỳnh Hà

Liaison, Highland
Assistance Proj.
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Bill Laurie

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Kok Ksor
Quách Huỳnh Hà
Roy Russell
Grant McClure
(Also D.C.
Liaison)

PIO
Mike Roberts
Hugh Mulvaney

Anyone know the gentleman seated at left in photo above? It's Mai Đình Lập, who served as an interpreter and in various other roles with the 4th US Div(1966-1967), 101st(1967-1972), and 3rd Marine Div. All of his personal papers were lost, and he needs verification for Orderly Departure Program. Photo being circulated among 4th Div, 101st, 3rd Marine Associations. If anyone can verify Lap's service, please editor soonest(Bill Laurie 1462 W. University Mesa, Arizona; 85201).



COMMANDER'S CORNER/LỜI THĂM TƯ LỆNH

Members: Our enlarged staff is functioning well, and we are about to have what should be our best reunion ever. Thanks to all of you who have submitted your dues, and special thanks to so many of you who have added an extra donation. Your generosity and dedication most appreciated, and of great benefit to the association. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to Joe West and Hugh Mulvaney, who

have worked so hard on putting together a good reunion, and additional thanks is due to your staff members who have also put forth an admirable effort in getting things done. So, a tip of the hat to Dick Williamson(Archivist), Mike McMunn, Bob Cunningham(Finance), Jim Simmons(Fund Raising), Jack De Boer(Logistics), and to all members who have contributed in other ways.

We ask your further assistance in submitting nominees for the XO position and in attending the reunion if at all possible. Also please be advised that we have included a survey form for you to send in, stating your time and

location preferences for our 1997 reunion. We want to get off to a good start, providing ample planning time for everyone. Please make your opinions known so the association can do a better job in serving its members. Your personal involvement, if only in the form of ideas, suggestions and voting, is eagerly sought and appreciated. Finally, we'll need more help with our Locator office. Laura Harris has resigned and is no longer with the association. Ben Myers can do some locator work, and is doing a fine job of it, but the task is too much for one member, and it looks like we'll need a small team of perhaps two or three people, assisting a chief Locator, to keep doing the job. Members are encouraged to nominate themselves, and volunteer in this role.

Once again, thanks to all of you, to our staff, for your efforts. We have come a long way since starting, and accomplished some worthy goals and objectives, but more work remains to be done. This is a fine outfit with fine people and our best years are still ahead of us.

Commander/Tư Lệnh

Ed Abraham

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REUNION REUNION REUNION REUNION REUNION REUNION REUNION

Time: 2-5 July

Place: Orange County Hilton (Formerly Radisson)
10800 Mac Arthur Blvd.
Irvine, California 92715

Reservations: 714-833-9999. Ask for Marsha.

Telephone bulletin board for room/ride sharing: Nevin Williams, at 916-966-2214. Call Nevin to see if anyone else wants to share room and/or driving. He'll give you phone number of anyone having called with similar request.

As indicated in previous SITREP Special Issue, reunion will be a unique and ~~eventful~~ occasion. In addition to presentations and programs mentioned last SITREP, we have a report on Bob Donoghue's trip to Quang Tri Prov. to help the Bru with whom he served. Gen. Vang Pao, Hmong leader also scheduled to attend, and we'll have an update on forced repatriation of Hmong back to Laos.

Members encouraged to bring slides, photos, or movies taken in VN, Laos, Cambodia or Thailand for impromptu show and tell.

Additional raffle tickets included in last page of SITREP for following raffle items, at \$1.00/ticket unless otherwise noted:

BOOKS

LONG GRAY LINE. West Point Class of 1966.

WAR IN CAMBODIA, 1970-1975.

BOUNCING BACK. Ex-POWs come home.

BLUES BASTARDS. Valor under fire.

SHRAPNEL IN THE HEART. Reflections from VN Memorial.

VIET NAMES TRADITION ON TRIAL, 1920-1945.

ARMY AVIATION. Development of Army aviation.

CHAINED EAGLE. Story of Everett Alvarez Jr., US POW.

ONCE A WARRIOR KING. Factual account of US Co Van.

DELTA ADVISOR. " " " " " "

ARVN: A STOIC ARMY. VN author presents balanced view of ARVN troops.

LOSERS ARE PIRATES. Analytical indictment of TV's VN portrayals.

IN THEIR DEFENSE. VN author defends US troops.

RAFFLE ITEMS(cont.)

BOOKS

- GREEN BERET MAGAZINE, Vol. II, 1967 (\$2.00)
- GREEN BERET MAGAZINE, Vol. III, 1968 "
- GREEN BERET MAGAZINE, Vol. IV, 1969 "
- GREEN BERET MAGAZINE, Vol. V, 1970 "

Note: these are bound reprints of SF in-country magazine for years noted. A view of history not available elsewhere.

OTHER

Prints:

Patton's address to his troops, 31 May 1944.
Pen/ink drawing by Mike Kelley. Skull, viewed by 101st Airborne grunt, May 1970.

Etched mirror clock w/COUNTERPARTS/TƯỜNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á patch design, in color. Beautiful piece of work, 13" x 13". \$3.00

Etched mirror, framed, w/SF flash and crest, in color. 13½" x 13½". No clock. Same good quality as above. Eye-catching wall-hanger. \$2.00.

KNIFE Custom designed and made stainless steel knife, Fairborne Com-mando Dagger style, w/engraved blade, and micarta handle having RVN service ribbon colors, bronze pommel and handguard, in presentation box. Please note this knife has been commissioned by a member who chooses to remain anonymous, and who requests that raffle tickets be sold to members only. It is intended to be the first in a series of knives commissioned each year, each in a different style, expressly and solely for raffle at our reunions. Our sincere thanks to 'Member X'. Raffle ticket: \$5.00.

Send raffle tickets to Joe West, 637 Grambling Court; Merced, California; 95348, no later than 25 June. Better yet, come to reunion and avoid missing out on an exceptional reunion. You don't want to miss this one. We'd all like to see you there.

Thanks again to Joe and Hugh for the fine job they've done.

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Left: Admin section Nghĩa Quân/PF. Right: Shoulder scroll for 1st Bde, 5th Mech RF/PF ĐPQ/NQ training center cadre. 'Theo Toi' means 'Follow Me'. Anyone know of other US line units which had similar advisory training centers? Let us know. Graphics courtesy of Clement Kelly's Việt Nam Insignia Newsletter, a \$15.00/year bimonthly publication(checks payable to Clem, not VICN), 510 W. 5th Ave.; Covington, Louisiana; 70433. Cảm ơn vạn bội to Clem for use of his material.

Mới nhập ngũ/New recruits....

Capt. Charles P. Hagan, USN Ret
RAG 22, '63-'64
6561 Foxdale Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Arthur R. Tiber
Adv Tm 91(2nd Civ Affairs Co.)
95-662 Hanile St., B-102
Mililani, HI 96789

Col. Edward P. Metzner, USA Ret.
Adv Tms 21, 55, 58, 72 & 75
9913 Timothy Path
Salinas, CA 93907

David Bousquet
Adv Tm 99
1101 Forest Park Dr.
Auburn, MA 01501

Charlie 'PJ' Coulton
CCN, '65, '68-'69, '71-'72
(Pres. G.C.M.A.)
174 Rocky Creek Dr.
Columbus, OH 43230

William A. Harrington Jr.
USN Adv Det Delta
13881 Langstone Dr.
Woodbridge, VA 22193

SGM Charles Creek Jr., USA Ret.
Adv Tm 99, '68-'69
1113 Cooks Lane
Baltimore, MD 21229

Donovan R. Leavitt
NAG, Tm 155(SD3/3rd Div), '72
6253 Childs Ave
San Diego, CA 92139

Jon F. 'Fred' Abel
NAG Fleet CMD
191 River Drive
Jupiter, FL 33469

Jack L. Ernest
Scout, 1/5 Marines, '66-'67
(Pres. Welcome Home Ministries)
P.O. Box 184
Richmond, OH 43944

Donald L. Clemons
Adv Tm 87, '70
P.O. Box 454
Peru, NY 12972

Glad to have you on board gentlemen. Hope to see you at the reunion.

New Addresses....Five days paid leave to Mike George who promptly
sent in new address and phone number:

6851 Roswell Road
Foxcroft I-16
Atlanta, GA 30328 SDT/Phone: 770-671-0278.

True story: 'I moved and forgot to give Ben my new address. A week later the IRS audited me for the past 15 years, and then I found out my new house was sinking into a toxic nuclear waste dump. I got fired from my new job. Hoping to redeem myself in the life hereafter, I used my last stamp to send in my dues and advise Ben Myers of my new address. A week later the IRS told me I'd overpaid taxes and would be receiving a \$55,000.00 refund. The court said justice delayed is justice denied, and the next week I got a \$2,000,000.00 settlement on my sinking house, later to find the the radioactive material was a rare isotope which reversed the aging process, made my hair grow back and has me looking like I'm 25 years old. Then, a movie company bought the rights to my story for \$500,000.00. On top of everything else, now I can go to the reunion and buy every raffle ticket I want. I think I'll move again and send in my new address, area code and phone number, just to see what happens this time. Take it from me, it pays to stay current with Ben.'

There it is Ladies and Gentlemen. Please keep Ben posted of new addresses, and area code changes. Your diligence most appreciated.

In the letter box/Công văn đến...

'I enjoyed Rod Hinsch's story about Martha Raye's visit to Mộc Hóa in 1967; it brought to mind some of my experiences. In Dec 64, TV's Raymond Burr, on his own and paying his own way, showed up with no advance notice at Adv Tm(7th A/VN Div) in Mỹ Tho. He asked to be taken to the most isolated teams and I was assigned to escort him to Mộc Hóa. When we arrived he spent the afternoon shooting the breeze and getting names and addresses to contact in the States. He then visited several other teams with another escort. Months later, George C. Scott showed up alone, and spent a few days visiting closer in district teams. The only trouble with him is that he was such a good poker player he left with a bundle of everyone's money, including mine. Another visit I remember was by five man USO team to Chương Thiện Prov., just prior to the 1968 Tết Mậu Thân attacks. We were getting shelled often, and the local VC sent a note to the province chief promising they would eat Tet dinner in his house, and clean our clocks in the process. We'd already convinced an IG team to come some other time, but the USO team decided to come anyhow. Much to my surprise, the bass player was a long lost buddy from WW II; We'd served together 24 years earlier in the SW Pacific. They put on a great show, and the province chief borrowed a guitar, doing a professional job of playing sev-classical songs. We had a great time, but I made sure the USO team was on a helicopter before the sun set.'



Ed Metzner and Raymond Burr en route to Mộc Hóa.

-Ed Metzner

Ed also included a photocopy of his official VN ID card, presented to him by his Counterpart, Lê Minh Đạo (who later commanded the 18th Div/SĐ 18 at its valiant stand at Xuân Lộc in 1975, and then spent 17 years in prison camps. Ed says, understandably so, that this is a special memento, and that he has since been in contact with Đạo, now living in Connecticut.

In joining COUNTERPARTS/TƯỚNG HỮU ĐỒNG NAM Á, Ed was instantly reunited w/Member Col. Lê Nguyên Bình, both of whom served in Định Tường.

VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA		THE CAN-CƯỚC	
LAO ĐỘNG NỘI VỤ SỐ		Số 000001	
Họ Tên	NGUYỄN-VĂN-METZNER		
Ngày, năm sinh	12-7-1925		
Nơi sinh	New-York (USA)		
Cha	Joseph	(s)	
Mẹ	Florence	(s)	
Nghề nghiệp	Sĩ-quan		
Địa-chỉ	Tiểu-khu CHƯƠNG-THIỆN.		

'I am conducting research for a book on the history of the Korean Marine Corps and am interested in obtaining info from retired, former, or active duty Marines or Navy Corpsmen who have either served with the Korean Marines or may have trained with them as advisors or liaison personnel, from the time of the Korean War until the present.

Korean Marines(cont.)

Personal experiences accompanied with statistical info and photos will be appreciated. Please contact:

-Col. John W. Guy, USMC/Ret.
334 Bicentennial Ct.
Powell, Wyoming 82435-2202
307 754-0224'.



'I was with Adv Tm 51, in Bạc Liêu Prov from 6/66 to 6/67, and assigned to Gia Rai subsector, halfway from Bạc Liêu City to Cà Mau. Martha Raye came to visit us one day and came out on our MEDCAPs, spending the entire day with us in what was considered 'Marlborough Country'. Later, I was reassigned to Bạc Liêu city, where I ran the compound bar while off-duty, throwing in card tricks for fun. One day Maggie came by on another one of her tours, had a drink of her favorite vodka, and asked if she could get me anything from the US. I asked her if she could get me a Derby hat to wear, to go with my white shirt, vest and black trousers. No one could ever find one on an R & R trip. A few weeks later I came in from patrol and had a box waiting for me, from a Western costume store in Hollywood; we thought it was a cowboy hat. Inside was the most beautiful Derby I've ever seen, an expensive model from Dobbs Hat Company in London. I wore it all the time I was off-duty, and would not leave it with the team when my tour was over. The box was addressed to SFC Joe Powers, and it was going home with me, period. I still have the hat, the original box and will treasure it forever. God bless Col. Maggie.'

-Joe Powers.

-Nice story Joe, thx for taking time to send it in. Most appreciated.

'I saw the article about Martha Raye in the last SITREP, and recall seeing her at B42 in Châu Đốc. I never spoke with her but she always seemed so happy whenever I saw her. This was Oct-Nov '66. I did see Gypsie Rose Lee while serving as Cỗ Ván to Recon Co., 14th Regt, 9th ARVN Div, near Vĩnh Bình. I'd just come back from an operation, looked like hell, and the Sub Sector Cỗ Ván in charge of the club said I could not get a beer because of dress code violations. I was more than upset, and went to the storage room to find a suitable cast iron gift for the dress code commissar when the senior Cỗ Ván said VC were attacking outside of town and we had to saddle up. As I walked to the HQ there was Gypsie Rose Lee; she asked if I'd be back that night and I said I didn't think so. Two days later I was in the Càng Long Base Area and WIA, and that's about as close as I ever got to see a show. Keep up the good work; I always enjoy the SITREPs.

Chào Ông, Always Airborne
Elmer Giese

Elmer Giese letter(cont.)...

-Ed note: Thx for your story Elmer, and good words about SITREP. Fact is, the SITREP is enjoyable because of the people who submit info, and because of the contributions everyone made in the past. Unlike the news media, and some novelists and film makers, we do not have to make anything up.

'I'm a retired US Navy captain and member of COUNTERPARTS/THDNA, and am writing a book about the last POW released in VN; I'm looking for anyone who may have pertinent info. 1st Lt. Robert T. White was shot down while piloting a Mohawk over Long Toàn Dist, Vinh Binh (AKA Trà Vinh) Prov on 15 Nov 69. He was with the 73rd Surveillance Co.(SAC), based in Vũng Tàu, and was with US Navy LCDR John G. 'Jack' Graf, intel officer and CỐ VẤN for 3rd Coastal Zone, HQed in Vũng Tàu. They were captured immediately after the shootdown, and were the subject of a massive five day rescue operation, including elements of US Army aviation, cav and inf units; US Navy and Coast Guard boats and aircraft, USAF aircraft, RF/PF and CỐ VẤNs from Adv Tm 72(Vinh Binh Prov) were all involved as was Tm 2, Det. B, 525 MI Grp and 175th KBAR. In spite of this tremendous effort, the two remained in captivity in the Long Toàn Secret Zone in Vinh Binh. On 20 Dec 70, MAC-SOG's Joint Personnel Recovery Center received info on prisoner location; two RF companies from Vinh Binh were inserted but there had been an apparent leak and the site had been abandoned about two hours before they arrived. They did recover a copy of White and Graf's initial interrogation reports, conducted by the Long Toàn Dist. Political Section.

Jack Graf escaped only to die, supposedly while crossing a river. His body was reportedly buried by the river bank and later washed away. Bob White survived 3½ years of captivity and was the last POW to be released, being received by the Four Part Joint Commission on 1 April 1973, only a few hundred yards from the capture site. His release came three days after the last POW left Hà Nội.

I am trying to locate anyone who was w/Adv Tm 72 and who accompanied the RF teams on the 15-16 Nov 69 insertion into Long Toàn Secret Zone, after the initial shoot down, and any who were involved with the 20 Dec 70 rescue attempt. Anyone having any info is asked to contact me immediately. Your help would be greatly appreciated.'

-(Member) Stan Sirmans
2301 S. Jefferson Davis Hwy, Apt. 1228
Arlington, Virginia 22202
703 418-2088.

-Hope you get some meaningful response Stan. A worthy subject to be pursued. Note: Stan was SA to RVN Naval Coastal Grp 35 in Vinh Binh. Contact him ASAP if you can help.

'My wife is Việt Nameese and we have numerous VN friends. Recently a VN couple returned from a visit home, and found price discrimination used against VN-Americans in the markets. They ended up having friends and family members buy things for them in the market. It seems the locals can spot a VN-American by lighter skin tone.'

-MSG Don Souder(Ret.)

-Thx for tip Don. VN residents/citizens also tend to weigh more than homeland contemporaries, giving another clue as to where they live. fostering a two-tiered price system. A word to the wise here, when traveling back to VN.

'Just heard a story on the radio, describing an instance in which Ted Turner and Jane Fonda went to a popular restaurant in Bozeman, Montana, 'Rocky Mountain Pasta', and couldn't get a seat because it was too crowded. She demanded to see the manager and confronted him with the imperious query: 'Do you know who I am?'. Well, as a VN Vet, it turned out he certainly did, and he told her under no circumstances would she be welcome in his establishment. Can we move our reunion to his place of business?'

-Paul Brubaker

-Would have nice to be have been there and seen it. Ol' payback again. Oh well, if you can't take a joke, you shouldn't sit on an AA gun in Hanoi.

'In less than three months' time, I've lost two very close and personal friends, Stu Beckley and Gene Scales. Stu was an Army brat, son of a colonel and West Point graduate. Stu had bad eyes and was turned down at the Point, but enlisted anyhow and ended up in Armor OCS. He finished with high honors but was told his eyesight was such that he would get a service branch commission instead of armor. Stu stood before the officer review board and told them he'd rather be a corporal in armor than a 2nd Lt in quartermaster. He received his armor commission.

He ended up in SF, serving in Thailand, Laos and VN. Not many people know this, but Stu was covertly decorated by the Royal Lao Army. While in Thailand he met a beautiful woman named Pannee. I love her as I did Stu. She was with him in life. She will remain with his spirit in death.

Stu was buried at Fort Sam Houston Memorial Cemetery, Texas.

Gene Scales died from an aneurysm of the aorta in Jan 96. He was a West Point graduate, class of '58, and I first heard of him in 1962 when he was commandant of 82nd Jump School. He trained some Cubans whose group was named after a Cuban hero, Commando Ignacio Agramonte. Note the initials. When they operated in Cuba they left 'CIA' on everything they touched. Castro was sure it was our CIA.

Gene was SF, but his most important work and training was airborne/ranger. He and Col. Lew Millett Sr. started the RECONDO program, and in 1970 Gene left the army to work in Thailand with the Agency. He was also an advisor to RVN Biệt Động Quân in VN. Gene was also buried at Fort Sam Houston.

Comrades, we lost to great brother warriors. I have survived friends and comrades in two wars. Now, as an elder, I still survive my friends. It is a lonesome, gut-empty feeling.

-Papoy Hicks

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Shoulder insignia, Pacific Command Counter-Insurgency School, Okinawa, est. Jan '62. 4-6 week course similar to British Jungle Warfare School, Malaysia, and included content on military tactics as well as civic action, psyops, inter-agency/branch coordination, etc.

Stu Beckley helped build the school, and wrote all lesson plans and instructional aids; he was also the lead tactics instructor. Patch from Clem Kelly's Viet Nam Insignia Newsletter, for which Stu and Pannee provided translations and insignia identification.

COUNTERPARTS
LITERATURE

Description of Mobile Guerrilla Force, mentioned briefly in last SITER.

No undeserved hoopla in this brief summary. It's a well-written, informative, and compelling book, well worth space on your library shelf. Check w/local bookstore, or call Naval Institute Press: 1-800-233-8764. Member Peter Scott also talking w/Naval Institute, which has expressed interest in Peter's book-in-progress, about Prov. and Dist. Scouts in Chau Doc Prov.

NEW TO THE NAVAL INSTITUTE SPECIAL WARFARE SERIES

MOBILE GUERRILLA FORCE
With the Special Forces in War Zone D

by James C. Donahue, foreword by Col. Francis "Blackjack" Kelly, USA (Ret.)

- A compelling account of an experimental special forces operation in Vietnam
- Delves into the motivations of elite warriors and the culture of Cambodian freedom fighters
- Describes the team's unconventional tactics and techniques

There have been many accounts of Special Forces operations in Vietnam, but none can match this book for intensity, insight, and drama, and for capturing the essence of special operations and the men who volunteer for them. The award-winning author was a member of the Mobile Guerrilla Force, an experimental Special Forces unit conceived to emulate the tactics of Viet Cong guerrillas.

This authentic firsthand account of Operation Blackjack-31 chronicles the Force's first foray into War Zone D—the VC's secret zone about which allied intelligence knew little or nothing—in January 1967 when 13 hand-picked Green Berets and a company of free Cambodian guerrillas slipped into the VC secret zone. Their orders were to conduct guerrilla operations for an undetermined period, without artillery support or possibility of reinforcement. Detachment A-303 turned the suicide mission into a dramatic success.

With surgical precision and a novelist's grasp of dialogue, timing, and dramatic pacing, the author puts the reader on the ground with the Force for 31 days without respite. A surprisingly fresh description of close-in combat, Donahue's account stands as a powerful testament to the few who mattered little in the big picture but who were all that mattered to each other. Blackjack-31 was a historic departure from the conventional military thinking that dominated the war in Vietnam and clearly demonstrated that American-led indigenous forces could conduct guerrilla operations against the enemy.

240 pages. 25 photographs. 2 maps. Appendix. Index. 6 x 9 inches. ISBN 1-55750-172-6. Hardcover. March/\$28.95



MORE THAN A SOLDIER'S WAR, Pacification in Viet Nam, by Member Ed

More Than a Soldier's War



Edward P. Metzner

PACIFICATION IN VIETNAM

Metzner, covering his experiences of seven years as a Cố Vấn, has been lauded by no less a list of illuminaries than Douglas Pike, Robert Komer (of CORDS fame), and the late William E. Colby. Member Nevin Williams is preparing an equally complimentary review for 'Military'. It's probably a book which should be required reading for any/all would-be historians, if not service academy students. During his seven years, Ed saw it all, the good and the bad, and pulls no punches in describing either as he narrates the often convoluted path taken by pacification programs in the Delta. However bad things may have been, the fact remains, as many of our members can testify, that progress was made, and in no small part due to the dedication, intelligence, and rock-hard perseverance of some incredibly brave VN people. MORE THAN A SOLDIER'S WAR, unlike too many other 'authoritative' books, covers an extended period of time in one area, delineating history experienced and made, by one individual who has sufficient perspective

to see the changes taking place, changes which may have seemed impossible in 1962, or 1966, and which would have been invisible to anyone serving a one year tour. This is a must read for any student of the war. Special order from your local book store, or call Texas A & M Press: 1-800-826-8911. Price: \$29.95, plus \$4.00 s/h, and while you're at it, thank the people at Texas A & M Press for publishing this invaluable work.

We're trying to get copies of MORE THAN A SOLDIER'S WAR for consignment sale at the reunion.

Texas A & M has also recently published two other VN books:

SAPPERS IN THE WIRE: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF FIREBASE MARY ANN, by Keith William Nolan, a detailed account of events leading up to, and enabling the costly sapper attack on FB Mary Ann. Hardcover, \$29.95, plus \$4.00 s/h. And...

A VERY SHORT WAR: THE MAYAGUEZ AND THE BATTLE OF KOH TANG, by John F. Guilmartin, Jr., (a chopper pilot who helped evacuate personnel from Saigon and Phnom Penh in '75. As many will remember, the Mayaguez was a freighter seized by Khmer Rouge forces in May '75, and taken to Koh Tang Island, where several dozen USMC were KIA in a recapture attempt. Hardbound, \$39.50, \$4.00 s/h.

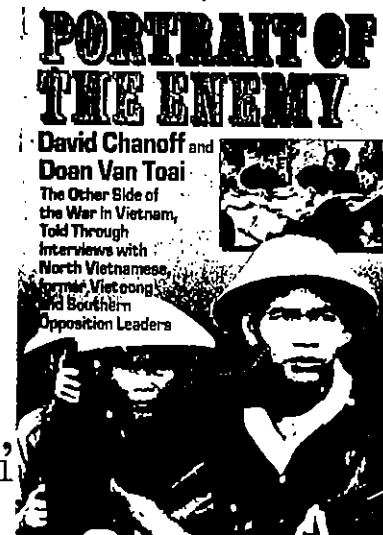
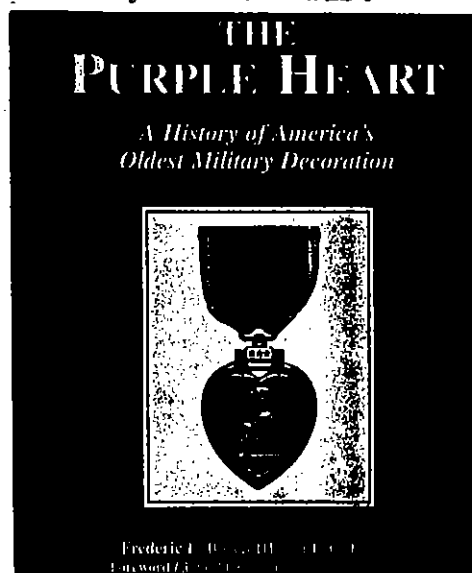
These all appear to be well-researched objective history, in contrast to an obtuse tome recently written by a former Sec. Defense, and are welcome installments to the yet-untold full history of the war.

THE PURPLE HEART, by Member Frank Brown and and Frederic L. Borch III is a comprehensive study of the purple Heart, its design, award criteria, with coverage of recipients. Contains more than 100 photos, charts and documents, examining the 'Heart' from the Revolutionary War to today's embroglio in Bosnia. 240 pp, 8" x 10" format, 'perfect-bound' softcover(quite sturdy).

\$20.00, plus \$4.00 p/h(1st class insured mail) from: Rice Paddy Press; 18 Reed Avenue, Hamilton Township; New Jersey; 08610.

Note: Any member authoring any book invited to send info for SITREP.

OUT OF PRINT PORTRAIT OF THE ENEMY, by David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, Random House, 1986. An overlooked and little read gem of a book, which is not about 'us', but rather those whom we were opposed to. As such, it is, indirectly, about 'us', in keeping with Joseph Conrad's dictum: 'You shall judge a man by his foes as well as by his friends.' Authors Chanoff and Toai, with the latter having been a naive NLF supporter and militant student leader in Saigon, interview former VC and NVA, and discover that all was not rosy on the other side. Book is educational in a multi-dimensional manner, touching on effectiveness of communist indoctrination, especially when conducted in the void of a dictatorial society; the eventual disillusionment of many former



PORTRAIT OF THE ENEMY(cont.) .. VC/NVA who encountered events not explained by propaganda; the benefit of Saigon malfeasance/corruption to VC cadre; inequities in NVN, to include successful draft-dodging by the well-connected; individual soldier's experience and response to growing US involvement; disastrous aftermath of the post-Tet '68 years, and on and on. Altogether, several dozen VC/NVA (most who'd become refugees at time of interview) show the very human side of the 'other side', revealing the almost diabolical effectiveness of VC/NVA indoctrinal programs, all reinforced by the grim political officers whose 'stick' served as intimidating complement to the propaganda 'carrot'. Reading this book will convince most of 'us' that we were doing what should be done, and that we-or 'they'-referring to our national 'leaders'-devised ways in which we were almost guaranteed to step all over ourselves. Highly informative, and it is perhaps for this very reason that the book did not sell very well. Read it; you will learn things you didn't know.

PERIODICALS VIET NAM Magazine, June 1996 issue has article 'One Tough



Hamblen (left) with SOG Team Romulus, whose primary mission was intelligence gathering, at Da Nang in 1966. Six of the team's members were from the Da Nang area, one was Cambodian and 30 were refugees from the North Vietnamese coast.

Marine' about USMC Sgt. Donald Hamblen, who lost a lower leg in a parachute accident, later to go on to work with SOG Tms operating out of Đà Nẵng, going north to gather Intel and cause trouble. As photo above indicates, most of Hamblen's SOG people were from NVN. Members encouraged to submit their stories to Viet Nam Magazine. Send SASE for author guidelines: Editor, Viet Nam; 741 Miller Dr. SE, Suite D-2; Leesburg, Virginia; 22075. Landline/SDT: 703 771-9400.

MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM

Capt. Carlton Jake Holland
MSGT James Henry McLean
Unknown VN Soldiers

SSGT Emmett Joseph Bryant
PFC John Wayne Malapelli
Unknown Montagnard(Dega) Soldiers

All above KIA at Bu Dang Compound, 9 Feb 1965

2lt. Lewis Walling
SFC Wayne E. Marchand
Capt. Paul R. 'Windy' Windle
Col. _____ Thong

SP5 James Babriel Jr.
MSGT Donald F. West, SF
LTC _____ Hieu

LTC Hieu and Col. Thong died in 1975 in Binh Dinh, in the withdrawal from the Highlands. Col. Thong had refused to evacuate, and was last

returning fire from hastily prepared defensive positions he and others had constructed. A report (handwritten) by a USAID Prov Rep states 'Col Thong, 42nd Regt commander, refused to evacuate or surrender. Instead he rallied some men and dug in to defend the 22nd ARVN (Regt.). (as evacuation to offshore craft was completed) Col. Thong was still dug in and returning fire.'

Col. Richard Ellison
Pat Eichen (C5 crash, 1975)
Maj. _____ Hy

Rudy Kaiser (USAID, Go Cong)
Col. Nguyen Ba Lien
Cpl. _____ Lam

Thx to Ed Metzner for submitting six names cited above.

CDR David Leo Cooley (MIA)

Thx to R.P. Hoffman for submitting CDR Cooley

LTC Charles Lewis Butler

LTC Burr M. Willey

Both LTC Butler and Willey KIA in '72 Nguyen Hue Offensive

Post-service/Non-combat:

Wilbur Wilson (USAID)
BGEN Francis G. Brink, USA
Eugene Scales, USA
Jay E. Olsen, USN

Col. Raymond L. Fléigh, USA
Bernard Yoh
LTC Harvey Barrell, USA
Edgar L. Lewis, USN

USA SF/LLDB:

Col. John P. Geraci
MSGT Charles L. Harper
CWO William Montgomery
SFC Carl 'Whitey' Johnson
Col. Jim Corey
Col. Mitchel J. Hazam
SFC Daniel W. Campbell

Cmd SGTMAJ Henry T. Belton
Maj. Billy N. Carlock
SGTMAJ Charles Cooper
SFC James K. Akuna
SFC Jack D. Brown
SGTMAJ Henry H. Jones

We also regret to express our condolences to the family of Col. Gordon R. Jackson, a COUNTERPARTS/TUONG HUU ĐÔNG NAM Á member who passed away recently.

'We were young. We died.

Remember us.

We have done what we could but until it is finished it is not done.

We have given our lives but until it is finished no one can know what our lives gave.

Our deaths are not ours: They are yours, they will mean what you make them.

Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace, a new hope, or for nothing we cannot say; it is you who must say this.

We leave you our deaths. Give them meaning.

We were young... we have died.

Remember us.

-Archibald MacLeish in
'The Young Dead Soldiers'

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Here's what can happen when members are kind enough to write. Tom Pentecost sent in notice of Warren Parker's passing, which was included in last SITREP. Reading this, Bill Blakely wrote in, providing an abundance of information to Mike McMunn, Archivist for "Members in Memoriam, based on Bill's shared experience with Warren Parker in Quang Nam. Bill writes: 'I served with Warren on two different tours in Việt Nam and I feel strongly that he deserves all the recognition he can receive from both our Association and the country he served so well.'

MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM/Bill Blakely letter(cont.).

Bill related, in 3½ pages, stories of Warren Parker's, and Bill's tours, providing the exact type and nature of information we want and need for our Members in Memoriam files, concluding 'Warren was a quiet man, who didn't talk very much about his past history. He had a good sense of humor, didn't panic, and was tough but fair. I've had no further contact with Warren since he left in 1970. I respected him highly and would welcome receiving any information you may have on his subsequent career and life.'

To this end, Bill was forwarded some information about Warren's final tour as a USAID Prov Rep in Kiến Hòa (Bến Tre), from 1973 to 1975. In addition, he and Tom Pentecost made contact, and discovered that they had served together in Quảng Nam, with passing of time blurring names and face recognition.

Bill also praised a number of his former Counterparts, several of whom he'd been led to believe had been KIA in VN. We do not yet know if two of these, Trung Tá Phạm Cao Dong and Đại Tá Lê Trí Tin, have survived, but were delighted to tell Bill that then-Thiếu tá/Maj., and later Gen. Vu Văn Giai did survive the war and is known to be here in the States. Search now underway for Vu Văn Giai.

All of this because Tom Pentecost took the time to let us know Warren Parker had passed on, and should be included in our Members in Memoriam. Ladies and Gentlemen, keep those letters coming.

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Sgt. 1st Class George Ovsak (left) and the author oversee training on the rifle range at Ho-Ngoc-Tao. The Cambodian is firing a .30-caliber M-2 carbine.

SFC George Ovsack (Member in Memoriam) and Jim Donohue, training Mobile Guerrilla Force troops at Ho Ngoc Tao.

From MOBILE GUERRILLA FORCE, Naval Institute Press.

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News item: Jane's Defense Weekly, the authoritative British publication, reports Hanoi has been training Cuban commandos for limited attacks in the US should the US invade Cuba. Jane's said Hanoi has been training Cuban sappers since 1990, at bases in NVN, and that political object-

of any Cuban operations in US would be to 'bring the reality of warfare to the American public and so exert domestic pressure on Washington.'

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VC/NVA HỒI CHANHs, by year:

1965	11,123	1968	17,836	1971	20,493*
1966	20,271	1969	47,088	1972	10,052
1967	27,196	1970	31,998	1973	19,180**
				1974	4,283

*Includes 2,741 VC PoW Convertees

**Includes 10,973 VC PoW Convertees

Ten Year Total: 199,468



Left to right....

Front: 1st Lt. Sang,
BML Lewis, Lt Nhan,
Lt. Tri

Rear: Maj. Lewis,
Maj. Kinh, Capt.
Tuong, Capt. Cat.

All w/River Boat
Patrol HQ and 19th
River Boat Co.(Re-
con), Mỹ Tho.

Photo courtesy J.C.
Fischer, also w/19th
Boat Co.

LOCATOR

Bill Blakely	looking for	Vu Văn Giai Lê Tri Tin Pham Cao Dong
Lưu Văn Tường	" "	Maj. Ralph E. McGuire (Song Mao, 1956)
	" "	LTC Donald Barrell, son of Tường's Counterpart, LTC Harvey Barrell
	" "	LTC R. L. Gunlach(MAAG, w/5th Div/SĐ 5, 1960)
Đào Tang Dinh	" "	Michael Nyham(Khánh Hòa) Randolph Marcus(Khánh Hòa) Capt. _____ Bowers(Khánh Hòa) Mr. _____ Garret(t?), Director VN-US/Hội Việt Mỹ, Nha Trang Mr. Paul S. Taylor, teacher at VN-US Assn./Hội Việt Mỹ Nha Trang
Võ Thanh Liem	" "	Capt. Norman Welch(Phoenix/ Phung Hoan) 9th Dist HQ, Saigon, 1970-1971.
Đo Mat	" "	Anyone, including a Col. Vanch(as spelled) who can verify's Mat's years of service w/US, ROK, and ICCS elements, from 1966 through March, 1975. He has no paperwork to verify anything, and cannot emigrate without further proof of service.

LOCATOR(cont.)

Bùi Trung Ta looking for

Mr. Harry Pagh(as spelled)
Mr. Wayne Thompson
Mr. Leeland Robinson
Mr. Douglas P. Ryan
All of US Embassy House,
Quảng Tin)
Mr. Howard C. Thomas
Mr. James Lestock
Mr. _____ Palmer
(All w/USAID, Quảng Tin).

Ta also needs verification for his emigration processing.

Hồ Xuân Hùng Nam looking for

Sgt. Giani(as spelled) or anyone who can verify his experience w/Mercury Grp(Ed-SOG???), along w/ Capt. Luu, Sgt. Noi, Sgt. Tot. Nam also trained at Cam Ranh Bay, at US Navy deep diving/subwater ops school in 1971.

Mai Đình Lập " "

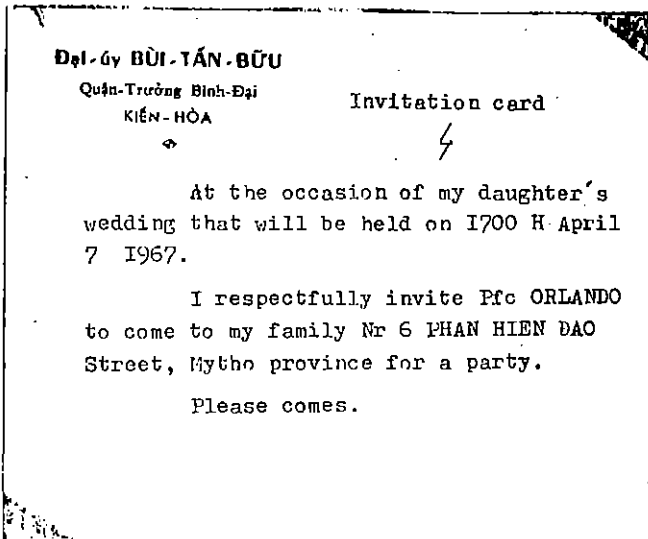
Anyone who can verify his service with 4th Inf Div('66-'67), 7th Pshyops Bn/101st Div('67-'72) or 1st or 3rd US Marine Div during latter period.

Del Catron " "

Lt. Peter Duc, Intel officer, QLVNCH Người Nhai(RVN SEALs), and PTF Boat ops, Đà Nẵng, 1964-1968.

Tony Orlando " "

Đại úy/Capt.(in 1967)
Bùi Tấn Bửu, Dist. Chief/
Quận Trưởng, Bình Đại Dist.,
Kiến Hòa(Bến Tre) Prov..



Please note invitation reprinted at left, and reflect upon the honor Đại Úy Bửu bestowed upon Tony by inviting him to his(Bửu's) daughter's wedding. Also reflect upon character Tony exhibited to warrant this invitation, and the resultant friendship between Bửu and Tony. Let's hope we can find Đại úy Bửu.

Ed Metzner looking for

Trần Văn Phúc, former Tỉnh Trưởng/Prov. Chief, Định Tường

Dang van 'Tony' Thanh " "

Tom Tobin, Jim Barker(not present member), Jack Latta, Richard Schamburger, and John Hicks.

LOCATOR (CONT.)

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have our Locator work out out for us. Please remember we someone to fill the head locator slot, and will probably need several others to assist on a Locator Section or, Dept maybe? It is a lot of work, it can be frustrating, but it is also most rewarding when connections are made. Think about it. Think hard.

LOCATOR letter:

'I am Cong Vo, a former officer of the Republic of Viet Nam. I had over 10 years in re-education camps of communists. I escaped from my country and arrived here in July, 1990. Reading VN paper in southern California I know that you will organize a special meeting for all former US advisors and former VN counterparts.

We are very happy when hearing that news. We should be meeting again all former US advisors who lived far from us over 20 years. But, unfortunately for me, I lost address of my US Army advisor:

John Ozaki, LTC, 1967-1968. He was a Chiến Hôi Cổ văn in I Corps. Could you find him for me?

Cong Vo'

We found John Ozaki, thanks to efforts of Joe West and Ben Myers, and have put him in contact with his long-lost counterpart. Woundn't YOU like to know you've helped bring this about? HMMMMMMMM?

And..in process of organizing reunion, the President of Hội Thiết Giáp/ RVN Armor Assn., Hang Phong Cao, was reunited with Nguyễn Ngan, a VN artist who makes beautiful scrollcut wood appliques of any unit insignia you can think of. Cao and Ngan had been out of contact for decades.

So, give a thought to our vacant head Locator position, and/or offering to work as an asst. We will have on-site computerized phone book Locator searches, live, at the reunion.

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How to become a millionaire in present day VN: First, start with a billion dollars.....

-Present day humor in Saigon

-0-



POW/MIA Funny stuff making the news these days. First, Former MSgt Mateo Sabog, missing since 1970, surfaced in 1996, having spent most of the last 26 years in Rossville, Georgia. Almost a year earlier, on 11 April 1995, the POW/MIA office had informed Sabog's brother that his remains had been identified, including teeth, bones, and some 'personal effects/clothing'. The Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii (CILHI) analysis on the teeth was inconclusive, which calls into question its ability to prove remains do not belong to someone who is the object of an MIA search. Other controversy arises from possible

misidentification of now buried remains, with family of former USMC Kenneth Plumadore now being informed the grave with returned remains now believed to contain remains of a William Berry. Critics question whether CILHI is identifying remains, or simply 'naming' them. And... in a recent article the San Jose Mercury News alleges Hanoi is making money off US POW/MIA search efforts, renting US military vehicles to tourists, and otherwise extracting funds designated for search efforts.

POW/MIA(cont.)...Mercury News sources suggest that more than one-third of last year's search funding(\$11.2 million) could not be accounted for, and that DoD pays inflated prices for anything purchased in VN. LTC Timothy Bosse, US MIA mission commander in Hanoi is quoted as saying 'How it's(MIA funding) disbursed is not our concern', while his boss BG Charles Viale insists that the MIA office pays reasonable prices. Finally, one tooth fragment was used to 'ID' the remains of Sgt. Joseph A. Matejov, and 23 other bone fragments were used to account for seven other crewmen from 'Baron 52', a Sigint/Elint aircraft shot down over Laos on 4 Feb 73, after the Paris Peace(sic) Accords had supposedly gone into effect. These remains were buried, in Arlington, on 8 Jan 96, closing the case, in the face of criticism that no positive identification could be made from such scant remains. Members interested in ongoing POW/MIA controversy can subscribe to Heart of Illinois POW/MIA Assn.; Joe Schott, Membership Chairman; 2507 Cherry Lane; Pekin, Illinois; 61554. 5-6 issues/year; \$6.00/year.

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BOAT PEOPLE Forced repatriation now underway, precipitating riots in Malaysia, Philippine, and Hong Kong refugee camps. Photo to right shows one woman, of 278 Boat People, hauled out of a Malaysian camp. In Hong Kong camp inmates/residents burned buildings, knocked down fences, and fled to the hills around the camp. As of Feb '96, Boat People camp populations: Japan, 137; Hong Kong, 19,195; Thailand, 4,844; Philippines, 2,435; Malaysia, 3,707; and Indonesia, 4,316. Dr. Nguyễn Đình Thang and The Boat People Rescue Committee(P.O. Box 2652; Merrifield, VA; 22116//SĐT/



Nhân viên cảnh sát Mã Lai Á đang đờ một phụ nữ Việt Nam bị ngắt xâu vì mệt mỏi khi bà leo lên một chiếc tàu Hải Quân Mã Lai Á ở Kuantan ngày 9 tháng Năm 1996, trong chương trình "hồi hương có trật tự", cưỡng bách hồi hương thuyền nhân Việt Nam. Mã Lai Á đã bắt đầu cưỡng bách đợt chót gồm 278 thuyền nhân về Việt Nam, tại cảng Kuantan, bằng tàu của Hải Quân.

Phone: 703 205-3916) continues valiant effort to bring this to a halt. Congress had passed legislation no money be used for repatriating VN and Hmong refugees until it has been certified that all have been given a fair review. Clinton has threatened to veto it, and probably has at this writing. Dr. Thang urges letters to Clinton asking support of Section 2104, Foreign Aid Bill H.R. 1561(William J. Clinton, President; 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.; Washington, D.C.; 20500) as well as protest letters to Air France, which is contracting to haul reluctant refugees: Mr. Philippe Pelletier; Director/Customer Services; Air France; 1120 Connecticut Ave., NW; Suite 1050; Washington, D.C., 20036. Malaysian Airlines backed out of its contract after receiving similar letters. Protest should also be sent to:

His Excellency Manasbas Xuto
Ambassador to the US
Embassy of Thailand
1024 Wisconsin Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20007

His Excellency Dato Bali Mahmud Hashim
Ambassador to the US
Embassy of Malaysia
2401 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

and: His Excellency Arifin Mohamad Siregar
Ambassador to the US
Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
2020 Massachusetts Ave. NW Washington, D.C. 20036.

Correcting statement made above, Clinton has vetoed the legislation, saying it would impede his power over foreign affairs, yet the administration has come forth with a proposal by which eligible refugees can come to the US, providing they first return to VN and then undergo additional screening interviews by US immigration officials. IF this arrangement can be implemented w/Hanoi it is uncertain how many could come to US. One refugee official ventured a guess of from 2,000 to 6,000(out of 34,634). Seldom mentioned is fact that 34,634 refugees should be easy to digest, with the rest of the world already having absorbed over one million. Why go through all this idiocy? To place matters in context, current legal immigration quotas into US are approx. 850,000. Makes as much sense as carrying a wheelbarrow instead of simply pushing the damn thing. Oh well, if things were made easy and simple diplomats wouldn't have anything to do. Write your letters, ruin a bureaucrat's day.

No word in situation w/Hmong in Thai camps, but situation in Hong Kong bodes ill for Hmong. A trickle of Hmong has been allowed to come to US recently, and we shall undoubtedly find out more at the reunion.

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'Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.

-G.K. Chesterton

'Fame is Madonna; success is Helen Keller. Know the difference.'

-Erma Bombeck

'A dying culture invariably exhibits personal rudeness. Lack of consideration for others in minor matters. A loss of politeness, of gentle manners, is more significant than is a riot.'

-Robert Heinlein

'The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits.'

-Albert Einstein

-0-

CORRECTION Last month's SITREP credited Ben Myers w/getting us on Internet Homepage. Wrong. It was member Jim Alkek who did it, per letter from Ben, who wants credit where credit is due. Thanks for your contribution Jim. Sorry for omission last time. Our cyberspace call sign: <http://www.nieto.com/counterp/advisors.htm>.

COFFEE CUPS/CHALLENGE COINS Our diligent Logistics Officer, Jack De Boer, has COUNTERPARTS/TUONG HUU ĐÔNG NAM A coffee cups, and will soon have a new run of challenge coins. Initial lot of 50 cleaned out long ago. Coins being numbered, and will be available for \$10.00, postpaid. Same price as cups. To order: Jack De Boer; 6865 Pine Bluff Ct. SW; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 49509-9716. When ordering, thank Jack for his welcome efforts. Cups also available at reunion.

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'You can be sincere and still be stupid.'

-Charles Kettering

INCENTIVE, FURTHER, TO ATTEND REUNION

'Dr. Mr. West,

Please list us for the reunion with advisor.

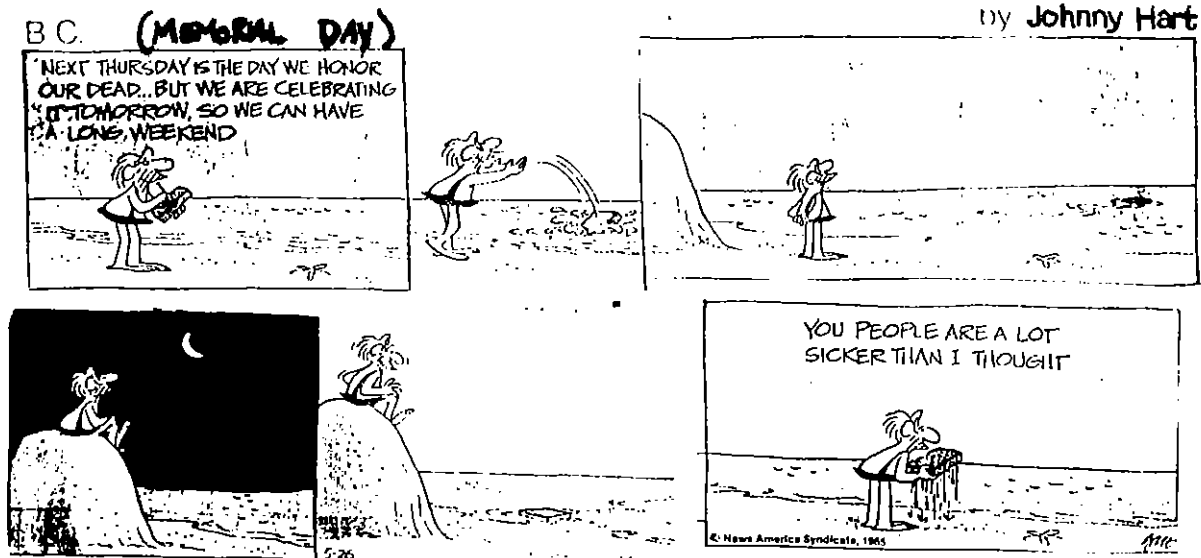
- 1. Nguyễn Ngọc Quỳnh, Capt./Đại Tá RVN Navy/HQ QLVNCH
- 2. Lưu Trọng Đa, Trung Tá/Commander, HQ QLVNCH/RVN Navy
- 3. Nguyễn Hải Thiệu tá/LCDR, HQ QLVNCH/RVN Navy

Very Respectfully yours,

Lưu Trọng Đa
'Việt Nameese Navy Veteran'

This response from publicity in Người Việt newspaper.

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Days to have been, or be, observed: ANZAC Day, 25 April; Meomirial Day, 30 May; Founding of US Army, and Flag Day, 14 June; and Ngày Quân Lực Việt Nam Cong Hoa/RVN Armed Forces Day, 19 June. We trust a part of these days will be set aside for proper reflection.

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From our 'cousin' association, the Saigon Mission Association(last joint entity in RVN)...

SMA member Jack Goldberg was on cruise ship w/ports of call in Đà Nẵng, Nha Trang and Vũng Tàu. At Đà Nẵng, Công An/Security personnel checked ship passenger list and denied entry to Jack, who was informed by cruise line officials that a 'black list' is used to deny entry to some, for reasons not made clear. Jack's VN position/activities not known.

And...Col. Lewis Sorley(Ret)(9429 Garden Court; Potomac, Maryland; 20854) is writing a book on the 'neglected years' of RVN, from mid-1968 to 1975(Ed. note: when many 'journalists were using notes and 'impressions' from 1962-1966--see Hội Chanh data on p. 13 for validity of these assumptions). Many of our members have relevant experience. Drop Col. Sorley a line and see if you can help.

SMA has donated \$1,100.00 to Father Bill Crawford for his continued work in Palawan, Philippines refugee camp. Commendable effort by Father Crawford and SMA.

GRAY TIGER:

INTERESTING ARTICLE...

-20-

ESCAPE FROM VIETNAM

By Don Tate
Staff writer

April 30, 1975 . . . The flag of Ho Chi Minh went up this day over Saigon, after the South Vietnamese Army, in demoralized chaos, crumbled and quit . . . But even as the communists celebrated victory in the streets of Saigon, word came that a small group of South Vietnamese fighters still held parts of the provincial capital of Dalat to the northeast. Though the province chief and other commanders had fled with the mob, there was one commander, already a legend, who fought on. He was Major Le Xuan Phong, called the "Gray Tiger." In Vietnam, that species of tiger is known to be of especially strong spirit and uncommonly fierce. For a month he and his few hundred bloodied soldiers kept the communists at bay, until there were no more bullets, no more food. Soon, the Tiger would find himself in a cage, many cages, large and coffin-small, for nine years, seven months and 10 days.

But the spirit of the Gray Tiger was never in the cage. It was always outside, dreaming and plotting how to not only get free, but also how to reunite Le Xuan Phong with his Americans, the ones in whom he had never lost faith. Here is the account of Phong, the Americans and others, of how it happened . . .

Al Cornett and Jerry Beckett first met the Gray Tiger when he commanded the 302nd Vietnamese Reconnaissance Co working the jungled hills around Dalat. Together, the two Americans would log well over 10 years in Vietnam, most of it working as advisers to Phong in the 302nd.

"I can't remember much advice we ever gave him though," says Jerry, now Sgt. Maj. Beckett of the USAREUR inspector general's office in Heidelberg, "since he was about the best damn soldier we ever saw."

"You went out with the 302nd, you were guaranteed contact," recalls Al, now a Special Forces 1st. Sgt. in Bad Toelz.

The 302nd . . . reconnaissance was a gentle word for what they endured, and *contact* was another one of those sanitized military terms for what happened when the blood hit the fan.

Called elite, crack, deadly, ghostly . . . the 302nd never got to contact the easy way, flying in on a chopper.

"Too noisy," Jerry says. "Sometimes it took us six or seven days to walk into the deep jungle to exactly where we wanted to be, not a hundred yards to the left or right, but right *there*, on the spot the enemy would be passing."

"We were never compromised by noise or the dumb stuff," Al says. "Phong and his men could track like you wouldn't believe. All of a sudden he'd say, 'Contact today.' Then . . . 'Three hours.' He could tell you how many and in what direction."

Al and Jerry and the Gray Tiger with the deep dark eyes became tight with each other in a way that transcended race, color and everyday civilized hang-ups. Battlefield tight, staying-alive tight, you-save-my-skin-tonight, I-save-your-butt-tomorrow tight.

Phong alone won 40 Vietnamese medals for valor, as well as American medals, including the Silver Star. He won something beyond valor, the total respect of the Americans.

"I was over there a long time," Jerry says, "and I knew how the system worked. How the (South Vietnamese) province chiefs bought their provinces. How, coming down the chain, Vietnamese commanders ripped off their soldiers' pay. Phong didn't do that.

"In fact, he wouldn't take his own pay until his troops got paid. He would go in there and fight the province chief and make sure they got paid. He'd go down to the market and buy his troops boots. There were a lot of lousy leaders but Phong was the real thing, a true believer, what a commander was supposed to

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be. His men loved him, and we loved him, and it's just too bad there weren't more like him."

But there weren't. And one bitter day the Americans cut their Vietnam losses and went home. Neither Jerry nor Al wanted to leave. Though a Vietnam peace had been declared in Paris, they felt it was a mirage peace that would never reach Vietnam, and it never came close.

"I felt totally depressed, it tore our hearts out to leave," Al says. He had married Phong's sister-in-law, Francoise, and Jerry had married Chieu My, who had fled North Vietnam to the South.

They got their wives out, Al recalls, but saying goodbye to Phong, "seeing what was in his eyes as we left, after all we'd been through . . . Jesus . . ."

"He knew we'd been ordered out," Jerry says, "but I've felt like a betrayer. It would have been easier for me to cut off my leg and abandon that."

Before Phong finally turned himself into the communists, he and the remnants of his unit slipped 300 kilometers down offshoots of the Ho Chi Minh Trail into Saigon, still in great confusion, and merged with the mob. If he had been captured in Dalat, Phong felt as if the legend of the Gray Tiger would have been terminated on the spot.

Now the world watched to see if the communists would trigger a postwar bloodbath in the South as many many predicted. But the North Vietnamese were proclaiming brotherly love, how the northern and southern brothers would unite into one Vietnam, no hard feelings

Officers of the South were cordially invited to turn themselves in, and asked to be sure and bring meal and lodging money for their stay at the Continental. Saigon's famous old French colonial hotel, where they were to undergo a brief period of "re-education" before joining the new "liberated" society.

Phong did enjoy one glorious meal at the Continental, but never got to use his room reservation. He and the others were quickly hustled off to what his hosts termed more "suitable" quarters, a camp north of Saigon.

For a battle-hardened soldier, that first year as a prisoner wasn't so tough. There was endless preaching about the goodness of communism and the evils of the Americans and their running dogs, but the Gray Tiger was skillful at maneuvering to the rear of the groups, where he could mechanically applaud on cue, and half sleep and dream . . . inevitably the same dream, of finding his wife and children and somehow reaching America.

The second year, as the world's attention faded, so did the quality of the accommodations and cordiality, and Phong was jammed aboard a ship with thousands of others and taken to North Vietnam. There, they were herded along a road as crowds jeered, poked at them with sticks, pummeled them with rocks. Shuffled from camp to camp, each more primitive than the last, Phong finally arrived at Camp 1 in upper North Vietnam.

He built his own prison dwelling out of bamboo and thatch, a long way from that promised room at the Continental. No more lecturing by the communists, no more promises, just hard, hard animal labor from sun to sun with just enough sweet potatoes, sweet potatoes, sweet potatoes to keep them chopping down trees.

Guards played with the prisoners' minds, setting out tantalizing food in the reach of hungry men, daring them to steal it, knowing they would, and when they did, re-educating them with rifle butts.

Phong was warned that there was no escape, that even the Laotian jungle to the west was not some lush coconut and banana tree jungle, it was a thousands-year-old dead jungle where survival was impossible.

There was no way the Gray Tiger wasn't going to

test that. He and three others escaped and defied that jungle, living on snakes, bees and worms, but mostly on nothing, and 16 days out one of them died.

The last thing Phong heard him say was that he had no regrets, and that he only hoped the place he lay down to die was out of Vietnam, so that his soul could be free. They were indeed out, west of Dienbienphu now, moving nearly naked deeper into the miserable Laotian bush without food, water or weapons, trying to walk all the way through Laos to Thailand or even Burma.

Phong, once a svelte 145-pounder, was down to well under 100 and dwindling. All of them were so weak it was understood that the next man to die would be eaten by the other two. They kept going . . . for 52 days. Semi-alive, they finally dragged themselves into a Meo tribal village in Laos, where they ate a goat. Unfortunately, the goat and the village were communist-controlled.

Returned to North Vietnam, Phong was deposited this time in Camp 3. Hands and feet tied, he was squeezed into a coffin-sized hole in the side of an earthen embankment near a river, in which he would remain in a horizontal position for three months. He was not allowed out even to go the bathroom, though occasionally he was jerked out in the middle of nights for interrogations and beatings. Fed a little corn daily, he added protein to his diet by catching

and consuming frogs that jumped into his coffin.

Phong was now considered a hardcore, unrepentant, pro-American, anti-communist political prisoner, and in 1979 he was sent to the North's ultimate prison for his ilk — with high, 18-inch thick walls, where muttering one word of English (his favorite was "okay") or even whistling were punishable as unrevolutionary — from which no man had ever escaped.

In 1980 the Gray Tiger escaped. Recaptured, he was nearly beaten to death ("this is the leg that likes to escape," his guards observed, before they smashed it, broke his feet, nearly knocked an eye out), and thrown into a nearly lightless, one-man cubicle where they kept him under watch for another four-and-a-half years.

One more escape, he was told, would result in his

Photos by Ken George

summary execution.

During that time he was visited by his wife, who came from the South by train, bicycle, ox-cart, and water buffalo to reach him. He implored her to send him a cake with a file in it, for his next escape.

Before that could happen, the Gray Tiger, the last South Vietnamese combat officer held at the ultimate prison, was given a certificate of release and one-year's probation — to demonstrate that he had finally learned to travel the straight revolutionary path.

Only nine years, seven months and 10 days of re-education since he left the Continental . . .

Ordered to stay in another province and out of Saigon, Phong, ever the slow learner, visited his communist probation officer a few times, before disappearing into Saigon. He found that Saigon, purified under communism, had progressed backward — terrible economy, far less freedom, but no less corrupt. With money, you could buy anything, and he bought forged papers, a new identity.

Phong spent the next months planning and gathering his family for the next escape. This would be the big one . . . by boat from Vietnam and somehow to the U.S.A.

Three times they tried it, and each time engine trouble, something, would go wrong. Once his wife was caught, had her head shaved by the communists, and was jailed for two months.

On the fourth attempt, in June of this year, with 69 people packed in the dark aboard a small open fishing boat, Phong, his wife and daughter (a son didn't arrive in time and had to left behind), made it out into the heaving South China Sea. Twelve hours later, shouting joyously into the sunrise, they were hauled aboard the West German freighter, Cap Anamur II.

It took three months for the ship to reach Hamburg. At ports along the way, Phong mailed letters to Ft. Benning, Ga., the last known address of his old American buddies, Al and Jerry, telling them he was alive and out of Hell, on the way to Germany.

In September, standing on deck as the ship slid close to the Hamburg dock, Phong thought he heard his name being bellowed over the noise. He looked down, and there was Al Cornett, all 6-foot-4 of him, waving and hollering from the crowd below. Phong felt it must be another dream. It just couldn't be. He blinked dazedly and stared again. Al Cornett was still there and getting bigger.

"Cornett," he began to shout back, jerking his thumb up in the old way. He started grabbing people and pointing downward. "Cornett . . . oh, Cornett . . . Cornett . . ."

Later, he would meet Beckett. "We just grabbed each other and didn't say nothing," Jerry said.

Everybody choked up. Laughed. Shook their heads. Incredible. Only there they were. Vietnam was gone, but they weren't, and they talked a long time about the old days, their days, that would never die.)

The Gray Tiger, now 46, looks out of the darkness of those eyes that have seen too much, and says softly that he has one more journey to make before he rests easy. "To the U.S.A. . . ." There's also one more jungle to get through, a paper jungle of immigration procedure.

"By his physical presence here, he's technically considered a West German refugee," say Al and Jerry, who plan an appeal to the American ambassador, if need be, to help cut red tape.

"He has family and friends in America," Jerry says, "but it means a lot more than that to him. There's a special closeness. We fought together, and then we left him, but he never left us. He's dreamed about it for a such a long time. Going to the U.S.A. All it did was keep him alive out there." ...



Al Cornett, Jerry Beckett, and Le Xuan Phong, together again. Of interest is fact that Member Nguyen Văn Chinh (37th Rgr Bn/TĐ 37

BĐQ, later dist chief/quận trưởng, Đức Đức Dist, Quảng Nam) was in a NVN prison camp with Phong, and knew him well. Yes, Phong was as unrepentant/không ăn năn and stubborn/cứng đầu as suggested here. Efforts made to find all three unsuccessful to date.

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When Ben Myers is not working like a con trâu/water buffalo for this Assn., he has other hobbies, such as organizing a veteran and unit association of the US Army homepage, and doing a good job of it. So says current Army Chief of Staff Ge. Dennis J. Reimer in a letter to Ben. Good job Ben.

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Oh, -noooooow-I-get-it-dept.: Then-journalist, now-author Zalin Grant:

'I too was quite skeptical of Gen. Westmoreland's claim, made in 1968, that Tết was a defeat for the VC. I changed my mind in 1970, when I went to VN on behalf of CBS and 'Time' to investigate the capture of the news-men who disappeared in Cambodia during the American invasion. At the Tây Ninh amnesty center, I personally interviewed over three hundred VC who had been more or less forced to surrender, because of the invasion, many of them officials of the political/admin organization (Ed. note: the 'brains of the outfit'). Their candid admissions of their failures convinced me that the Tết offensive had been both a major military defeat and a great psychological victory for them.'

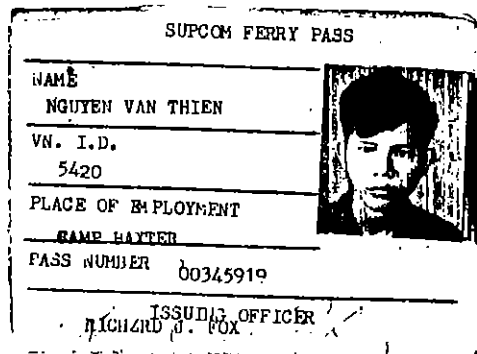
-p. 371, FACING THE PHOENIX

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...You are very sleepy, your eyes are tired, your eyelids are heavy, you cannot keep them open. You will keep Ben posted on address/area code changes, ...you will stay current with your dues....you will have the time of your life at the reunion...you will volunteer your name-or someone's for XO position...or you'll enjoy helping w/Locator work. When you turn the page this message will become invisible..

Another Locator request.....^XNguyen Van ^{Thien}Thien is looking for anyone who remembers him from 1966-1971 at Medical Supply Division, at Naval Support Activity Station Hospital, Da Nang, or 1971-1972 at 5th US Army Trans. Cmd, Camp Baxter/China Beach, Da Nang.

Thien's Father was KIA when Thien was 11 years old, his family was destitute, and helpful US CO Vans 'arranged' Thien's employment at the hospital, and helped his siblings go to school. Thien continued to support his widowed mother, and family, until Camp Baxter closed in '72. Does anyone know anyone who can vouch for Thien's service? He needs verification to emigrate. Note: for whatever reasons, old grudges seem to die hard in the Da Nang area (from several sources) and a young man who worked 6 years with the 'imperialists' does not have a good future. Our Locator search is underway, yet member help is greatly appreciated. Thx to Del Catron for this info.



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UNITED STATES ARMY-RETIRED t-shirts. Please note ad on opposite page. Member Nevin Williams will donate \$1.00 to Assn. for every shirt sold. Also available at reunion.

-0-

XO/Sĩ Quan Phụ Tá position: Somebody nominate someone. We need to fill this slot. If you absolutely cannot attend reunion, send nomination to J.C. Fischer; 100 Red Oak Circle; Temple, Texas; 76502-3503; ASAP. SITREP is late (editor's fault), and we may have to send out a post-reunion ballot; once all nominations are in. Sorry for screwup. Please send reunion questionnaires from previous SITREP; we need/want your input. NO proxy form for XO; postcard/letter will do. Additional raffle tickets included below for those who want another stab at goodies offered. Better yet, come to reunion. The more the merrier. Càng nhiều, càng tốt.

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