



# COUNTERPARTS

## TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM A\*

# SITREP

Volume XVI Issue 1 Winter 2013/2014

### COUNTERPARTS 2014 Reunion, Greensboro NC: Latest News

#### Reunion Set for April 23 - 26. Montagnard events, NASCAR tours to be featured

Counterparts reunion for 2014 will be held in the Sheraton Hotel Four Seasons, 3121 High Point Rd, Greensboro, NC 27407 Our contact for the reunion is Shirley Kennedy in the Sales Office,(800 242 6556), or SKennedy@sheratongreensboro.com, and Sheratongreensboro.com (866 460 7456). When making reservations be sure to indicate you are with “Counterparts Vietnam Veterans” in order to receive the reunion rate. Room rates are: \$119 for a single or double. Prices are good for three days before and three days after the COUNTERPARTS Reunion. Members who need special accommodations should make their reservations as early as possible. NOTE: *There is a 24 March cut off for our block of rooms, after which there is no guarantee of available rooms.* So please make your reservations early.

These are the best rates we could find in the Greensboro area and this hotel has the best amenities as well. The hotel package includes our Hospitality Suite, theater style Meeting Room, and Banquet Room, items and services that would usually be a surcharge, which makes the registration fee less, so it balances out our overall attendance cost.

Travel to Greensboro is convenient;, the hotel is at the intersection of three Interstate routes. The airport is within ten minutes by free hotel shuttle. RV’s may be parked in the hotel lot.

Please fill out the **Reunion Pre-Registration Form on page 3** so reservations, transportation, seating, and meals can be coordinated.

Greensboro is a great area with much to do and see, so plan to come early, stay late, and explore North Carolina. Reunion Coordinators have been busy planning a mix of activities so that there is something

for everyone. There will be a day of NASCAR, and a visit to Historic Old Salem Village for history and fine crafts. North Carolina is home to many Montagnard families from the highlands of Vietnam. We are hoping to have several old friends join us to socialize and perhaps bring us up to date on what is happening in their homeland today. We are also hoping to bring together Montagnard authors, crafts, music, and a traditional rice wine tasting on Friday.

#### Reunion 2014 Schedule

- Wednesday 23 April** Registration for COUNTERPARTS Reunion  
**Hospitality Suite open.**
- Thursday 24 April** NASCAR Hall of Fame- morning  
Lunch at Hall of Fame  
Charlotte Motor Speedway- afternoon  
Dinner on your own
- Friday 25 April** Old Salem Historic Village- morning  
Lunch at Old Salem Village on your own  
Montagnard Experience- afternoon in Hospitality Suite  
Dinner at Vietnamese restaurant, individual checks.
- Saturday 26 April** COUNTERPARTS Business Meeting in morning, followed by Presentation: *State of Human & Religious Rights in Vietnam today*  
Late lunch on your own  
Afternoon free  
Dinner Banquet at hotel, guest speaker, entertainment presentation of traditional Montagnard music and dance.
- Sunday April 27** Informal Brunch, farewells.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *The hotel has electronic “Schedule of Events” boards throughout the hotel. Our activities, locations and times will be listed each day.*



# COUNTERPARTS SITREP

The Official Publication of Counterparts/Túong Hữu Đông Nam Á

Volume XVI

Issue 1

Winter 2013/2014

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## Commander's Corner

COUNTERPARTS Commander J. C. Fischer was scheduled for major surgery at the time this SITREP was put together. He asked the Editors to pass on the following message from him

*Since this is my last year as the Commander of COUNTERPARTS, I want to thank everyone for the support I've had and especially for the work Reunion Coordinators have done and the help we have received for assistance with Reunions.*

*There has been a lot of behind the scenes effort that only I have seen and it came from many of our members who do not always get recognized for their contributions.*

*Thanks especially to the COUNTERPARTS staff officers who have done so much to help me function these past three years. Thank you one and all.*

J.C.

J.C. also asked us to remind all the members of some of the important basics that allow COUNTERPARTS to survive. They are:

- Dues and Contributions: We help support a number of operations like Cambodia Corps (CCI), the Vinh Son Orphanage, our own COUNTERPARTS scholar, and Vietnam Vets With a Mission (VWAM). We do this entirely through your dues and contributions.
- Volunteers: We can always use volunteers to do the work and keep the organization running. Want to volunteer? Just check the list to the left of this column. There is never a shortage of work to do.
- Reunions: We know it can be hard to plan on attending a Reunion in another part of the country, but for those who have never made a Reunion, it is a guaranteed worthwhile and memorable experience.

COUNTERPARTS/THDNA is an IRS 501 (c)(3) Veterans organization Chartered in the State of Illinois. Registered Agent is Richard Webster, 1019 W Lafayette Ave Jacksonville IL 62650-1860

## Pre-Registration Counterparts Reunion 2014

- Registration Fee for the Reunion which will help offset the cost of non hotel services, admission fees, lunch, bus transportation is \$ 90 per person.

- Hotel banquet buffet dinner Saturday evening is \$ 42 per person.

Number of persons attending reunion \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 90 = \_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons attending banquet \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 42 = \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: "Counterparts"

Transportation is included in your registration, but we will need a head count for planning and seating. Please indicate the activities you plan to participate in and number of participants.

NASCAR day, bus and lunch (number attending) \_\_\_\_\_

Old Salem village, bus (number attending) \_\_\_\_\_

Vietnamese restaurant, bus (number attending) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send pre-registration forms and checks to:

**Max Lund**  
**411 W Washington**  
**Alpena, MI 49707**

**Email: [lundm@chartermi.net](mailto:lundm@chartermi.net)**  
**Tel. : 517-356-4043**

Remember to bring your name tags, or if you need one please indicate in the box below how you would like it printed, i.e. Team number, nickname, province etc. Cost is \$4 and should be included with your preregistration.

## THE BUTCHER OF CUA CAN

By  
Fred Abel

Around the time of the 1968 Tet Offensive, I was on patrol as advisor to Lt. Hung, Commanding Officer of the South Vietnamese Navy ship HQ06, the *Van Don*. Built in 1944 as a SubChaser, the ship was showing her age, but was still the most desirable unit in the South Vietnamese Navy, at least as far as I was concerned. She was 174' long, with a narrow beam, and bristled with guns, and she could still make 19 knots in good sea conditions. She was, in every respect, a "mini-Destroyer".

I was also lucky to have Lt. Hung as my counterpart. He was my age and from a well-connected family that had migrated south from Hanoi during the 50's. He had attended the French Naval Academy, had spent 6 months training in California, and spoke French and English much better than I spoke Vietnamese.

Conditions aboard the *Van Don* were unusual. Originally built for a complement of 65, the vessel was loaded to the gunwales with personnel in its VNN configuration. While I was aboard there were anywhere from 12 to 15 Officers, and as many as 120 enlisted men. Aside from the Captain, the Exec., and one Chief Petty Officer, the crew were mostly green recruits on their first sea duty.

Somewhere along the line, the *Van Don* had lost some of her original equipment. There was no radar or Fathometer. There were no spare parts, no tools, and no hot water. The crew apparently didn't appreciate the concept of the western toilet, because there were no toilet seats. And almost everything of any black market value, including shower heads, bathroom fixtures and mattress covers had disappeared. There was, however, no shortage of weapons and ammunition.

The main armament of the ship consisted of a WW II 3"/50 gun forward, and a 40 mm cannon aft. There were five 20 mm cannon on deck, along with two .30 cal. and two .50 cal. machine guns mounted on the wings of the bridge. The gunnery officer had even picked up three 60 mm Mortars somewhere and used them for shore bombardment. Aside from that, there were always a half-dozen assorted rifles and grenade launchers lying around the bridge. The grenade launchers were used mainly against the schools of hostile tuna sometimes encountered in our patrol area.

I quickly found out that the 3" gun was worthless in action. It had no automatic fire control system, so when firing at coordinates, the gun crew placed a carpenter's level on the breach, and watched the bubble as the ship rolled so as to fire at a level attitude. Our supply of 3" shells was of WW II vintage, and we estimated that a full third of it was bad. The gun did make a satisfying "boom," though, so maybe it had a psychological effect on whoever it was being fired at.

Our secondary armament, the 40 mm gun, was another story. Designed as an AA weapon for WW II, it was light and easy to point and train. There were two operators, one on each side of the barrel, who turned hand cranks to bring the gun to bear. Each had a thumb switch for the firing circuit, and when both switches were depressed, the gun fired. A crew of 3 or 4 sailors kept the gun loaded with 4-round clips. The gun was amazingly accurate, and the best gun crew aboard was Captain Hung and LTJG. Van, the Exec. With those two in the saddles, any target in range and with a clear line of sight was doomed.

There was one unfortunate drawback to firing the 40 mm gun, however. The gun sat squarely on top of the refrigeration compartment, and the concussion nearly always ruptured the coolant lines in the reefer. Since we had no spare parts, we would then be without refrigeration for the rest of the patrol.

We had been patrolling off Phu Quoc Island near the Cambodian border for about three weeks when the little fishing village of Cua Can came under harassing attack from a band of VC. Cua Can was a "Chieu Hoi" village, made up of about 150 VC deserters and their families, given amnesty and relocated by the government— kind of a forgive and forget arrangement. Only the VC on Phu Quoc Island refused to forget.

Cua Can was pretty remote, and protected only by a handful of Popular Forces personnel. All they had for defense were small arms and a radio, and there were no ARVN units nearby, but apparently they hadn't been seriously threatened before.

Around the beginning of what we later learned was the Tet Offensive, the VC began to harass the village. At first it was just a few random mortar rounds during the night; nothing serious, but enough to get everybody on edge. Then one morning, there was a VC flag flying from a tall pole on the edge of the village. This panicked the villagers, and as the sun came up we could see them piling into anything that would float and heading our way. After all, these were Viet Cong deserters and their families, and the VC were out to kill them or drive them off.

Capt. Hung worked the ship in close to shore and ordered the 40 mm to be loaded with tracer. Then he and Ltjg. Van manned the gun and shot the VC flag down, breaking the flagpole on the fourth shot. This quieted things down a bit

on the beach, and before long, one of the village chiefs and a couple of the PF soldiers came aboard to talk to us, bringing us the VC flag and a puppy to show their appreciation.

We assured them that we would stay close, and they pointed out some of the approaches that they thought the VC would use to attack. We made sure we had good radio communication and wished them luck. It wasn't long though, before there were frantic calls for us from the village, to the effect that the VC were attacking from the east, using a herd of cows for cover.

We went to full speed, and were in position flanking the attack within a few minutes. We couldn't see much, but we cut loose with everything we had in the general direction of the attack. After a few minutes of smoke and noise, we got word that the VC had broken off the attack, and were retreating. Hung asked for a casualty report, and after a few more minutes they came back with: "five VC KIA, and one WIA, all cows".

I was disappointed that we hadn't nailed any VC and couldn't have cared less about the cows, but Hung's eyes lit up. He asked who the cows belonged to, and was told that it was a community herd, and he was welcome to the beef. He wanted it, all right, and when I thought about it, I began to understand why.

The young Vietnamese Navy still hadn't developed much of a supply system. We took plenty of rice, tea, sugar, *nouc mam* and beer whenever we left Saigon, and the Captain was given an arbitrary amount of cash to spend in local markets for any meat or produce. But because patrols were always extended, and the cash was never enough, VN ship captains had a problem keeping their crews fed.

Now we had an amazing opportunity. Just over the sand dunes was enough fresh beef to last a couple of patrols – all we had to do was go and get it. So Hung immediately commandeered the nearest fishing junk and put a dozen well-armed sailors aboard. They hit the beach, fanned out, and in an amphibious landing that would have made a US Marine proud, disappeared over the dunes.

Before long they emerged dragging dead cows by the hind legs. It was heavy going until they reached the water, but then the carcasses floated easily, and were tied off to the junk. Within a few minutes, the beef had been floated out to the ship, and was being winched aboard, where it was set upon by sailors with machetes, and hacked into manageable hunks.

But we had a couple of problems. One, we were joined by another VN Navy unit, a minesweeper whose skipper happened to be senior to Hung. Hung knew how to fight his ship, but was on shaky ground when it came to matters of protocol. He was reluctant to share his windfall, but didn't want to offend a senior so he asked me what I thought. I told Hung to "give him the senior cow". Hung got kick out of my advice and did just that.

The second problem was more serious, but I had a solution for that, too. We had no way to keep the beef cool but there was a US base on An Thoi, and I knew they had a big freezer. I asked Hung to close An Thoi until I could reach them on my PRC-25. I managed to get connected to the American duty officer there. The conversation went something like this:

"This is Executioner Bravo. We have been in action up near Cua Can, and have some battle damage to our reefer. We have some food aboard that we need to save. Will you keep it in your freezer on the base until we can complete repairs?" Before long we got an affirmative reply, and I advised them that we would arrive just after sunset, and leave the "provisions" on the dock, because we had to get right back out on patrol. Arriving late meant that we would be met by ARVN personnel, who would be less likely to reject "provisions" that consisted of large blood-soaked canvas bags with hooves sticking out.

Sure enough, the VC attacked the village again that night, but we made it back just in time. We lit things up with flares and Hung got all the villagers to assemble in a big circle on the beach where we could see them. The VC managed to take a few of huts on the outer perimeter, but the PF told us which ones, and we destroyed them without causing any damage to the rest of the village.

First thing the next morning, I started getting calls from the American supply officer in An Thoi. I knew what he wanted, and there was no way I was going to talk to him. We couldn't leave Cua Can for a few days anyway, so I just kept ignoring the calls and finally turned off the radio. When we eventually made it back to the base, I was able to find a USN Machinist Mate, and he fixed the reefers in exchange for a couple of beers. Then we tied up at the supply dock, where I did my best to act surprised. "*What, meat has to be inspected and packaged properly to be keep here? I had no idea*". "*What, you've been trying to call me? Sorry, I guess we were out of range*". Thankfully they hadn't thrown out the beef and we loaded it aboard and headed back out on patrol.

A few days later Cua Can was reinforced with a small ARVN unit and managed to get through the rest of the offensive without another attack. The beef was a welcome change from an otherwise lame diet and except for the occasional hunk of shrapnel, turned out to be pretty good.

In the end, we couldn't balance keeping our beef cold with the need to use our best weapon, so we ate as much as we could, and gave the rest away. I started kidding Hung about being "The Butcher of Cua Can", but he got back at me by naming our little female puppy "Co Van".

" 10% Discount for Counterparts™"

# Viet Nam Journey

1 - 17 May 2014



Army Museum - Hanoi



Floating Market – Mekong River



Halong Bay



Forbidden City - Hue

*From North to South, Vietnam is a breathtaking blend of exotic and diverse experiences. Rich, ancient cultures exist in harmony with cosmopolitan cities in this vibrant land. You will encounter unspoiled, natural landscapes, rural lifestyles and bustling urban centers. Vietnam will entice you with new and trendy beach resorts, elegant colonial hotels and culinary delights. Whether you are a returning veteran or have an historian's interest in the war in Vietnam, are an explorer in pursuit of new discoveries or a culture seeker eager to turn a rumor of Vietnam into a reality, you will find the fantastic and serene on your "Vietnam Journey."*

## Deluxe Packages Include:

- \* Round trip air – San Francisco to Vietnam.
- \* Domestic air flights in Vietnam.
- \* All private transfers and ground transportation.
- \* 15 nights in deluxe (4 star) hotels.
- \* Overnight on Halong Bay aboard a Luxury Junk
- \* Meals (15 breakfasts, 8 lunches & 5 dinners).
- \* Mekong River and canal cruises.
- \* Admission to all listed tours & tour sights.
- \* English speaking guides throughout the tour.
- \* Vietnam Visa fee.
- \* Travel insurance.

## Package Prices (incl. taxes & fees)

Per Person (Double occupancy) - \$5,850.00  
Single supplement - \$1,243.00  
Deposit: \$ 700.00 due at time of booking  
( Credit Card payments require an additional 3.5% fee.)

### Tour Escort:

**Bill Ridley** - President, BK Tours & Travel, Vietnam War veteran, Counterparts member and experienced Vietnam tour operator.



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## Tour Highlights:

**Hanoi** - Tour Hanoi to include: Fine Arts Museum, War Museum, Temple of Literature, Hoa Lo Prison (POWs' Hanoi Hilton), Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and house, the water puppets show and more.

**Halong Bay** - Board a Junk (*Halong Ginger*) for a spectacular cruise, dining, exploration and overnight on the bay amidst breathtaking sea-scapes and 2,000 pinnacle shaped islands.

**Hue** - Former imperial city, with its Citadel, seat of the Nguyen emperors, Thien Mu Pagoda and tomb of Emperor Khai Dinh.

**DMZ** - Dong Ha, Hien Luong Bridge, Ben Hai River, tunnels of Vinh Moc, Rockpile, Dakrong Bridge, Quang Tri and Khe Sanh.

**Danang** - Marble Mountain, China Beach and the Cham Museum.

**Hoi An** - 17th century port town, pagoda bridge and beach resort.

**Saigon** - Tour the city landmarks: Notre Dame Cathedral, former Presidential Palace, Old Saigon Post Office and Ben Thanh market.

**Dalat** - Beautiful mountain resort, location of the summer palace of Emperor Bao Dai, Lam Ty Ni Pagoda, Montagnard village, Domaint de Marie Convent and Prenn Waterfall.

**Cu Chi** - Explore the famous Viet Cong tunnel system constructed during the Vietnam War.

**Coa Dai Temple** - Travel to Tay Ninh in time for services at the Cao Dai Temple.

**Mekong Delta** - Travel to Cai Be on the Mekong River; cruise on the river and explore it's canal tributaries with stops at the floating market, lunch with a local farm family. Visit the farmer's property with gardens, and more.

**Crafts** - Vietnamese silk goods, jewelry, ceramic, tailored apparel and hat craftsmen.



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## *2014 Montagnard COUNTERPARTS Scholar Update*

Our new COUNTERPARTS scholar is Sev Yem , a Jarai from Ratanakiri Province who is studying for an AA degree at Panha Chief University and will graduate in 2015. Our two previously sponsored students, Broy Makara from Mondulkiri and Romas Phanna from Ratanakiri are working in their home provinces at CCI approved jobs.

Since 2007 COUNTERPARTS and members have been generous donors to Cambodia Corps Inc, that has to date graduated 31 Montagnard students with college degrees. Ninety-five percent of contributions directly support the in-country program. Presently, Max and Carol Lund have sponsored their second student, Chang Nin, a Phnong from Mondulkiri Province. Jim O'Malley has just sponsored a new Jarai student, Khlan Kheoung, who will be studying for an AA degree in Rural Development.

At present, there are nine Montagnard students living in the Indigenous Student Center in Phnom Penh, who travel out to various colleges and schools in the Capitol City. The latest program for CCI is the renting of a house and the providing of food for 11 female Montagnard high school students in Ban Lung, Ratanakiri Province. (See photo) These girls were living in deplorable conditions in a shelter so they could attend the only high school in the province. A future goal is to provide scholarship money for these girls to attend nursing school in Stung Treng.

Cambodia Corps has now provided the first nursing scholarship for Yon Plik, a Jarai male who will start school Jan 15, 2014 in Stung Treng. CCI is run by our COUNTERPARTS member, Tommy Daniels, and assisted by Rich Webster and Max Lund, all uncompensated employees. There is one Cambodian paid employee, Uth Siramaren, who manages the ISC in Phnom Penh for a monthly salary of \$475. I have been to Cambodia seven times and can personally attest that COUNTERPARTS generous support of CCI has had a significant impact on the Montagnard community in Eastern Cambodia. The 31 graduates of the program have returned to their home provinces to fulfill the eight-year contract required of them to work for the betterment of their people.

The Montagnard nation in Cambodia is oppressed by the crooked Cambodian government, and their lands are being grabbed from them by Police and Government officials in cahoots with foreign nationals and their old enemy, the Vietnamese who have never forgiven them for aligning with the Americans in the Vietnam War.

COUNTERPARTS members can be proud that they have made a significant impact on the Montagnards who the World has forgotten and abandoned. There is revolution in the air now in Phnom Penh, with the populace contesting the last election, stolen by Prime Minister Hun Sen. Someday, one or more of our graduates will be future leaders of the Montagnard nation. COUNTERPARTS members have provided them with the education to lift them up to the challenge.



***Montagnard High School Girls at Rental House provided by CCI***

.....Rich Webster

# BULLETIN BOARD

## *Dalat Military Academy Class Reunion*

On September 1, 2013, I had the honor and pleasure of being a guest speaker at the 50 Year Class Reunion from the Dalat Military Academy. My Counterpart, former Maj. Le Tan Tai was the head of the reunion. While visiting Tai last February in San Jose, CA., he asked me if I would come back to San Jose for the reunion and be a guest speaker with him. There were approximately 600 people at the reunion, all graduates of the Dalat Military Academy and my wife and I were treated like VIP's. I brought along my old VN Ranger enlisted fatigues and my last Army uniform when I was an officer, which confused some of the VN's because they could not figure out if I was enlisted or an officer. It took a bit of explaining. It was an emotional time for me as I recalled some of our times together back in 1967, but I loved doing this for Tai. A copy of my speech follows.

...Steve Leighton

*"Hello, my name is Steve Leighton and I am a former Biet Dong Quan. I had the honor of serving with some of the finest soldiers in the world back in the Mekong Delta in 1967. I was 19 years old at the time and had been serving as a radio operator at the ARVN 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Headquarters in Bac Lieu. We were known as MACV Team 51 and our commanding officer was Colonel Bill Maddox. During Dan Chi 279 in February 1967, a friend of mine was KIA. His name was SSG Ken Hargrave and he served with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Ranger Battalion. After SSG Hargrave was killed, I took over his position on the 5 man American Advisory Team as the Radio Operator. During my time with the Rangers, I became very close friends with two of them in particular. They were the Battalion Executive Officer, Cpt. Long and the 4<sup>th</sup> Company Commander, 1Lt Tai. When the 3 of us were not in the field, we lived in Bac Lieu. As you would expect, the three of us spent many nights chasing around Bac Lieu having the time of our lives. After my year in Viet Nam was over in late October, 1967, I returned to the United States and finished my active duty time in the Army. Several years later, I would re-enter the Army National Guard, attend the Minnesota Military Academy and become an officer. Soon my military job was getting in the way of my civilian career, so I resigned my commission in 1980 to concentrate on my civilian job. I had a successful career and was able to retire in 2001. During all those years, I had no contact with Long or Tai. I had always wondered if they survived the war and re-education camp. I did not know about re-education camps until only a few years ago"*



*"Finally, after 40 years of not knowing about my friends, I decided my road to peace would be to try and find them. I took my wife and went back to Viet Nam in October, 2007. It was strange for me to return to Bac Lieu after 40 years and see how everything had changed. I was able to locate a former Ranger by the name of Sgt. Chi. He was with us in the 42<sup>nd</sup> during my time in 1967. He told me that he believed Long was alive and living in the United States, but did not know about Tai. Upon returning to the United States, I joined an American Veterans Group called Counterparts. This group of veterans were all advisors to Vietnamese units during the war. They started a search for me to see what they could find. After about a month, I received a call one day from LTC Long. I was overwhelmed with joy that he was alive and well...and much to my surprise, was living in my home town of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He started a search for Tai and found him in San Jose, CA. On Christmas Day, December 25, 2007 I had my first phone conversation with Tai. I cannot tell you how happy I was to find both of these guys alive and well and living here in the United States. My first reunion with Tai and his family came in February, 2008 during Tet. It was a wonderful reunion and we have been together many times since that time."*

*"Long and Tai are very special to me and had a great influence on my life. I am better person today because of them and I owe them much for their friendship and the good times we had together back in 1967. I would have to say it was the best year of my life, but I would not want to do it again. I love these guys like brothers and enjoy every minute I have spending time with them. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I wish you all the best! Biet Dong Quan Sat! (Rangers Lead the Way!)"*





## BULLETIN BOARD

### ***Some Novel Communications Methods.***

*From COUNTERPARTS member Joe Frankoski:*

Before Vietnam I never expected that I would have to cope with communications methods well outside the normal. Some examples: (I was Battalion Advisor, 2d Battalion, 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry in 1963, north of the Dong Ngai river, in the southwest corner of War Zone D).

**FLAGSHIPS** -- My Infantry Weapons NCO Advisor, SFC Thaggard, told me that the VC had placed VC flags on tiny wooden rafts and floated them down the Dong Nai river, probably for PsyWar purposes.

**GO FLY A KITE** -- ARVN Rangers reported that when they would leave the district capital of Tan Uyen on patrols, children flying kites would follow them. This gave the VC an idea of the location and direction of movement of the rangers.

**JUNGLE DRUMS** -- At strategic hamlet Bau Ca Tre, heard drums being beaten in the nearby forest. Battalion officers said the VC were signaling.

**BLOW THAT BUGLE!** -- I had noticed that one of the soldiers carried a bugle. We came under attack at anti-GVN hamlet of Binh My. The bugler immediately blew "Recall" or some tune to prepare for action.

**THREE SHOTS** -- Three gunshots are often an emergency signal. In December the battalion was searching for an enemy regimental base camp in War Zone D. Three rifle shots were heard. Recalling the Army adage of WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and (sometimes) WHY, I noted the time. An hour later, three more shots. I told my counterpart that the VC were trailing us and about an hour behind us. He ordered an ambush, and sure enough, about an hour later the ambush was sprung with 2 VC KIA, 1 M1 and 1 Remington 30.06 captured.

**LETTER** -- In Strategic hamlet Xom Can. The VC stopped a civilian vehicle driver and told him to deliver a letter to me, which he did. In the letter (written in English) the VC threatened to "injure" me if I did not leave South Vietnam. My last name was spelled correctly. Someone must have been close to my name tag to get the spelling accurate. (My counterpart informed me that there was a price on his head of 500 piasters and 400 piasters (US \$6.60) on my head.)

**"WINDTALKERS"** -- I was sending a report by radio to the regimental advisor thru one of the other battalion advisors due to the distance between units. We heard someone on the frequency translating the figures into Vietnamese. I asked, "Sprechen Deutsch?" and the other advisor said "Yes." The report was completed in German and we could hear whomever was monitoring our frequency shouting in exasperation. German proved to be an effective code!

**FLAMING ARROW** -- As the VC withdrew in darkness from Binh My, we lit the flaming arrow device at the old fort pointing it in direction of the enemy withdrawal. As I recall, shortly thereafter a VNAF aircraft flew overhead and dropped flares. The VC attack had failed but they succeeded in withdrawing.

**TREE LIGHT** -- After an engagement had concluded, I noticed a light about 1 km away. The terrain was flat and the light was well above the terrain, probably in a tree. I thought it might be signaling the location of a rally point for a withdrawing VC unit. My counterpart immediately ordered an 81mm mortar to fire at the light with HE. The round was fired, detonated and the light went off ASAP. Doubt if we knocked out the light but it sure went off quickly.

**MACABRE MESSAGE** -- In October, in Tan Uyen District capital, three VC attempted to demolish the Information Office. Two were killed by KIA by ARVN Rangers. Later, one KIA, now stiffened with rigor mortis, was placed against the Info Office outside wall as a warning to the VC and those who might support them.





# BULLETIN BOARD

## ***First Contact. By John Haseman***

My second assignment to Vietnam was as a district-level advisor in Ham Long District, Kien Hoa Province. Ham Long was directly across the Mekong River from the former 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division base camp at Dong Tam. Kien Hoa was always in the bottom five provinces security-wise, and as the birthplace of the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of Vietnam, its population was sympathetic to the VC, to say the least. Isolated from the rest of the country by several branches of the Mekong River, Kien Hoa was heavily populated and had a rich agricultural base, but its economy was stunted by the lack of security.

When I got there in summer 1971 the district advisory teams were down to two or three Americans, and I became the Deputy District Senior Advisor and functioned as a tactical advisor rather than spending my time in the Phung Hoang Center.

The first month or two in Ham Long were relatively uneventful. I went to the field often, probably three times a week, with the DSA going at least as often as well. Those first several operations were incident-free, with little contact with the enemy, which was good for me as I literally got my feet on the ground and became familiar with my new territory.

That all ended in September 1971, when what seemed like a quiet and uneventful operation in Tuong Da Village turned to anything but. Everyone who has written about Vietnam combat experience has said essentially the same thing: life in Vietnam consisted of days and weeks of total boredom and a few moments of sheer terror. The big difference between serving in a huge US unit (my first VN tour was in the US 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division) and being a district level Advisor is that the slack time was never boring. There was always something to do – besides operations there were meetings, intelligence briefings, report writing, house maintenance, buying food, repairing the generator...

My time in Kien Hoa also had moments of "sheer terror." No matter how many times something bad happens, that's what it feels like. Experience with those "moments" teaches you how to react instinctively, how to survive, how to take care of those around you. But you are still scared and anyone who says they were never scared is lying in their teeth. And the first time under enemy fire, even if just for a few minutes, and even if there are no friendly casualties, becomes one of life's defining moments.

My first memorable incident was during an operation in Ham Long's Tuong Da village. Although the only road to Ben Tre (the province capital) went through Tuong Da, it was a solid "D" village. The previous DSA had been killed there when his jeep hit a mine. Our operation plan was for several platoons of PF and RF troops to patrol north from the main road into the coconut trees, looking for a small VC unit and base camp reported there.

The operation started out quietly and innocently. We had no indication of trouble until we left the rice paddies and entered an area of fallow fruit trees and an unkempt coconut plantation full of scrub brush. All of a sudden all hell broke loose. We were ambushed! I was with the operation commander, 1LT Huong, the district intelligence officer. I quickly hit the ground with a loud "uuffff" with the weight of my radio on top of my back. The enemy had clearly spotted Huong and me because of the radio antennas, and my height marked me as an American advisor.

Bullets whispered through the banana leaves over our heads – a very strange sound. Happily the enemy fire was too high to hit us but sure would have gotten us if we had not moved so quickly. Lieutenant Huong quickly directed the troops behind us to move out to the right, behind an abandoned house, to flank the ambush. Adrenalin pumping, the command group kept firing straight toward the enemy, both to keep them from noticing the maneuvering and of course maybe to kill some of them. They had not pinned us down completely but wisdom was to stay down and distract the enemy with direct fire.

The flanking force surprised the VC and took them under fire from our right side and the enemy quickly broke contact. The firefight lasted less than ten minutes. I had no memory of firing my M-16 but I know that I did because I had emptied the magazine in the rifle and a second magazine from my ammo pouch. "Good work, Dai-uy," Huong said as things quieted down. "Maybe you got some." Who would know? We all were shooting M-16s. Well, somebody did very well. We killed four VC before they retreated, and best of all, there were no friendly casualties.

Here's how I remembered it only a few days afterwards:

“. . . . the cold flash of danger lying with PF soldiers in the grass of a banana grove, the bullets of the enemy ambush

“Looking frantically for the enemy, knowing that somebody out there is trying to kill me. Cordite from my M-16, fired in anger for the first time at an enemy I can hear but cannot see. Relief when the firing stops and the wonderful, sensual feeling of adrenaline still pumping. And the feeling of savage, uncontrolled delight at learning we killed four VC and suffered no friendly casualties. The looks of respect from the PF at me, for sharing their danger and doing well. And walking out of the Tuong Da jungle, alive.”

Just another day in the life of a district level advisor!

## ***Why your story is important***

By

Ken Jacobsen

In this issue of SITREP, as in every other issue, you'll read of the experience of other COUNTERPARTS members. Sometimes it's funny, sometimes thought provoking, sometimes poignant, and sometimes what our comrades tell us just strikes dead center on that place in us that says, "yes, I remember that, too. I remember how it was."

Don't take those memories for granted. They are slipping away faster than we can imagine, and sometimes, the authentic foundation of our own experience is being distorted and disfigured. Don't let that happen to us. Write down your memories, send them to SITREP. It's a permanent record of our lives.

A few days ago, while doing some informal research on the internet, I ran across what promised to be an interesting article on the history of Riverine operations in Vietnam. As I dug into the piece though I began to notice an irritating number of errors. None seemed important at first; an incorrect acronym here and there, some dates a bit off, and a few odd omissions. The errors added up though, and some of them were significant. Worse yet, the author's analysis of this error riddled information led him inevitably to conclusions that were clearly false and misleading.

If the article had been written by an antiwar reporter or published in an academic journal, this experience would have been annoying, but not surprising. What was disturbing was that it was published in 2002 by the US Marine Corps Air/Ground Training and Education Center in Quantico, and written by a USMC Major, apparently as a research paper of some kind. Unintentionally, the Marine Corps was participating in spreading misinformation about tactics, lessons learned, and basic historical fact. *Rolling Stone* could not have done a better job of undermining the truth.

The experience reminded me again of the importance of getting out the facts and the story of the Vietnam war as we, the Advisors, saw it. Now more than ever, as the war recedes into the past, and the intensity of our recall fades, we must must jealously guard historical truth. No one else is going to do it for us, no one is going to speak out on our behalf. If we do not preserve our history, no one will. Every one of us has seen examples of errors, obvious to us, but not apparent to the unaware, become accepted truth, simply because no one stood up to correct the author.

I'm writing a letter to my shipmates at the USMC Center, and hope that I'll be able to replace one troubling piece of misinformation with the humble but enduring truth.

*“Human History becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe”*

*....H.G Welles*

## BOOK REVIEWS

Reviews of Books, new and old, relating to the Southeast Asia experience. Members are encouraged to submit reviews. All reviews will be published as space permits.

**Killer Kane: A Marine Long Range Recon Team Leader in Vietnam, 1967-1968.** *Andrew R Finlayson, ISBN 978-0-7864-7701-2, \$35.00 Available through Amazon.com.*

This book, by COUNTERPARTS member Andrew Finlayson, recounts his team's experiences in the pivotal period in the war, the year leading up to the Tet Offensive of 1968. Using primary sources, such as Marine Corps unit histories and his own weekly letters home, he presents a highly personal account of the dangerous missions conducted by this team of young Marines as they searched for North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong units in such dangerous locales as *Elephant Valley*, the *Enchanted Forest*, *Charlie Ridge*, *Happy Valley* and the Que Son Mountains. Taking only six to eight men on each patrol, the team (Killer Kane) searches for the enemy far from friendly lines, often finding itself engaged in desperate fire fights with enemy forces that vastly outnumber this small band of brave Marines. In numerous close contacts with the enemy, Killer Kane fights for its survival against desperate odds, narrowly escaping death time and again. The book gives vivid descriptions of the life of recon Marines when they are not on patrol, the beauty of the landscape they traverse, and several of the author's Vietnamese friends. It also explains in detail the preparations for, and the conduct of, a successful long range reconnaissance patrol.

**The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Vietnam War.** *Phillip Jennings, Regnery Publishing, 244 pages, \$19.95*

The author was a Marine Helicopter pilot in Vietnam, and later flew for Air America in Laos. He begins his book with an observation that leaves his perspective in no doubt. "No war in American history" he writes, "is in greater need of a politically incorrect--another word for honest--treatment than the Vietnam War". Mr. Jennings provides a background on the history of the Indochina and Vietnam war and does not hesitate to point out the strategic blunders of successive political leaders, but where his history provides a new and refreshing insight is in his reexamination of events like the 1968 TET offensive, which he concludes, was a tactical and strategic military disaster for North Vietnam but was made into a disaster for the US by a shortsighted and subjective news media that has failed (to this day) to grasp the extent of the defeat that the Communists were handed, mostly by South Vietnamese soldiers. In retrospect the news media, and the politicians who benefited from the media's agenda, managed to accomplish something that had never been done before in US history--they snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

Jennings also explodes other popular myths about the war. The South Vietnamese Government corrupt and unworthy of our support? How about the government of North Vietnam, a totalitarian nightmare state ruled by a small number of morally corrupt officials who were prepared to sacrifice millions of their own people to their ends. The American people didn't support the war? Even after daily assault from the media, most Americans supported Pres. Nixon's objective of "Peace with Honor". The war was unwinnable? As most of us know, the US had mostly won the war by 1973. The North Vietnamese, who misread the South Vietnamese people yet again and launched a decisive offensive in that year were stopped, not by US troops, but by the South Vietnamese armed forces, who, outnumbered and often outgunned, stopped the North Vietnamese invaders cold.

When the US congress decided to callously break its promise to South Vietnam by cutting off aid, the war did indeed become unwinnable; not because the South Vietnamese failed, but because, in Mr. Jennings words, "The argument that Vietnam was an unwinnable war was not true, but the Democrats in Congress decided to make it so".



**MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM**

***MGen. James B. Vaught, US Army. Sept 20, 2013***

Conway SC, Oct 3 2013: There was a noticeable absence at Tuesday night's Horry County Council meeting. The closest seat to the podium for public input sat empty, wrapped in a red, white and blue bow and a bronze plate with "In Memoriam Lt. General James B. Vaught, 1926-2013" inscribed on it. The chair was often occupied, usually at the edge, by Vaught, who died Sept. 20. "That will forever be known as General Vaught's seat. ..." one Council member said "He is certainly going to be missed." The Horry County Council also voted to designate the county's portion of International Drive in his memory.

COUNTERPARTS' life Member MGen James. B. Vaught was born in Conway S.C. and attended The Citadel. He served on active duty from 1945 to 1983. In the fall of 1967 he was battalion commander of the 5th Battalion of the 7th Cavalry during the Tet offensive. His unit participated in considerable action, including relieving the Imperial City of Hue before moving to Khe Sanh to relieve the Marines. "We were pretty much in the middle of it for four months," said Vaught. "Other than that it was a quiet tour."

Injured when a truck rolled over on him in the A Shau Valley, Vaught returned to the U.S. in a body cast and spent the next six months in Walter Reed Medical Center before being assigned to another tour at the Pentagon. A second Vietnam tour followed as Combat Development Liaison officer to a Vietnamese Army Paratroop Division.

He returned to the U.S. to command the 12th Support Brigade at Ft. Bragg. Sixteen months later he was promoted to Brigadier General and became the assistant division commander of the 82nd Airborne Division. His assignments also included Chief of Staff XVIII Airborne Corps, CG Combined US/ROK Field Army and CG 24th Infantry Division.

As director of Operations, Readiness and Mobilization Headquarters for the Army during President Jimmy Carter's term in office, MGen. Vaught was a main planner of the mission to rescue 53 American hostages who had been held in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. For months he led a group of elite soldiers from various branches of the military through training exercises to prepare for the rescue mission.

Since Vaught's retirement in 1983, he served as a consultant and adviser to military and civilian agencies in the development and production of avionics, digital communications, night vision equipment and radar for military use, such as special operations. He was also a member of the Special Operations policy and advisory group for the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

In 1985, Vaught chaired a study group sponsored by the American Security Council. The group developed and submitted the "Peace Through Strength" proposal to the White House. President Ronald Reagan adopted the idea which became a basis for a successful US strategy against the Soviet Union.

In March 2006, Vaught received the National Defense Industrial Association's Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict Lifetime Achievement Award for his more than 60 years of contributions to the U.S. Special Operations Community. MGen Vaught was also the Guest Speaker at the 2002 Counterparts Reunion in Charleston, S.C.



## MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM

### **Colonel Dale E. Prieser, US Army (Ret)**

San Antonio, Texas, died June 30, 2013. Dale was a Life Member of Counterparts. He was the son of Robert F. and Mary M. Prieser of Wapakoneta, Ohio. He is survived by his wife Barbara of San Antonio; a daughter Victoria and her husband Phillip Pair of San Antonio, TX; and a son Timothy of Tampa, FL. Timothy also served in the Army. Col. Prieser served in three wars; he saw the end of WWII, and fought in the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Dale began his military career by enlisting in the US Marine Corps. As a Marine he served in various tactical and administrative assignments. He was honorably discharged from the US Marine Corps after serving six years and enlisted in the US Army, rising to the rank of Master Sergeant, Infantry before he was commissioned by direct appointment as a Second Lieutenant, Infantry. Colonel Prieser held a variety of Command and Staff positions. He was the recipient of many decorations and awards both American and foreign, including the Bronze Star, Combat Infantry Badge and the Purple Heart for wounds received in combat. Dale served as Advisor to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion ARVN 51<sup>st</sup> Regt. and with the Special Forces.

Dale's son Robert, was Killed In Action on Sept 8, 1968 at the Ha Thanh Special Forces Camp in I Corps, while leading a reinforcing element of Strike Force soldiers in the attempt to relieve Ha Thanh Camp. At this time Dale was also serving his second tour in-country.

Dale later said that: *"Military service as a family tradition has been handed down from regiments forever. There is no greater pride enjoyed by a father and mother, nor a higher calling to patriotism, than to have a son answer the summons to serve his countrymen in time of war. Conversely, no pain, no anguish, and no suffering can be as great, as deep nor as long lasting as to have that son lost in combat"*

While he was still in-country, Col. Prieser composed a moving poem to commemorate his son Robert's sacrifice. The poem was published in the Summer 2004 issue of SITREP. The tribute can also be seen at the Vietnam Wall Web page <http://thewall-usa.com/literary/prieser.html>

Col. Prieser was a graduate of the Army Command and Staff College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. He was a Life Member of the VFW and was active in other veterans' organizations. Both he and his son Robert were inducted into the Ohio Military Hall of Fame for Valor. In 1988 He retired from a 30 year career as a Colonel, Special Forces/Special Operations Officer.

### **Doug Reese, US Army.**

We were informed by Steve Leighton of the passing of COUNTERPARTS member Doug Reese. Don Bocik also noted that Doug was instrumental in setting up Don's return trip to the District Town in Vinh Long province where Don had served as an Advisor. Doug served with MAT 76 in An Xuyen Province.

***In case you've never seen this ...***  
***Some Vietnam War Statistics (From the VA website)***

- ★Vietnam Vets: 9.7% of their generation
- ★9,087,000 Military personnel served on active duty during the Vietnam Era. Aug. 5, 1964 - May 7, 1975.
- ★8,744,000 GIs Were on active duty during the war. Aug. 5, 1964 - March 28, 1973
- ★3,403,100 (Including 514,300 Offshore) Personnel served in the Southeast Asia Theater (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Flight Crews based in Thailand, and sailors in adjacent South China Sea Waters.)
- ★2,594,000 Personnel served within the borders of South Vietnam. Jan. 1, 1965 - Mar. 28, 1973
- ★Another 50,000 men served in Vietnam between 1960 and 1964.
- ★Of the 2.6 million, between 1 - 1.6 million (40-60%) either fought in combat, provided close support or were at least fairly regularly exposed to enemy attack.
- ★7,484 Women (6,250 or 83.5% were nurses) served in Vietnam.
- ★ Peak troop strength in Vietnam: 543,482 (April 30, 1969)
- ★Hostile deaths: 47,378
- ★Non—hostile deaths: 10,800
- ★Total: 58,202 (Includes men formerly classified as MIA and Mayaguez Casualties.) Men who have subsequently died of wounds account for the changing total.
- ★8 Nurses died - 1 was KIA
- ★Married men killed: 17,539
- ★61% of the men killed were 21 or younger..
- ★Highest state death rate: West Virginia - 84.1 (National Average 58.9 for every 100,000 males.
- ★Wounded: 303,704 --- 153,329 Hospitalized + 150,375 Injured requiring no hospital care
- ★Severely disabled: 75,000-----23,214 100% Disabled; 5,283 Lost limb; 1,081 Sustained multiple amputations.
- ★Amputation or crippling wounds to the lower extremities were 300% higher than in WW II and 70% higher than Korea. Multiple amputations occurred at the rate of 18.4% compared to 5.7% in WW II.
- ★Missing in action: 2,338.
- ★97% Of Vietnam Era Veterans were honorably discharged.
- ★91% Of actual Vietnam War Veterans and 90% of those who saw heavy combat are proud to have served their country.
- ★66% Of Vietnam Vets say they would serve again if called upon.
- ★87% Of the public now holds Vietnam Veterans in high esteem.

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