



ALPHA'S PRIDE

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BOB GOLD RECEIVES RECOGNITION 46 YEARS LATER

Robert J. Gold arrived in the A/2/12 barracks on 3rd Division Drive and Libby Avenue at Fort Lewis in late December. He was part of the group who traveled from the Reception Center at Fort Knox, Kentucky to fill in the ranks of our company as the unit prepared to deploy in the rapidly escalating hot spot called South Vietnam.

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The 4th Infantry Division at that time was at standby status with strength of only 20% of its full strength mode. It was destined to deploy to Vietnam and was quickly transforming itself into a train and retain organization. A Company was formed by combining men who were sent to Fort Lewis from Fort Knox and Fort Dix. B/2/12 was formed by men sent from the Fort Jackson and Fort Polk Reception Centers. Most of the men coming into the 2/12th were draftees. Most were reluctant, yet willing young men who thought it was now their turn to protect the country.

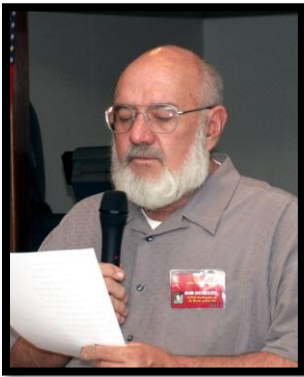
Bob would go through boot camp with us in A Company but upon graduation he moved on to the Headquarters Company of the 2/12th.

He was killed in action in 1967 and became part of our Honor Roll, consisting of men who served in A/2/12.

The story may have ended there had not a twist of fate brought Bob's history into further focus. Bob had received a BSM for Valor and no one knew it for forty-six years!

THE BRONZE STAR

To understand how this was discovered only recently I need to go back to early 2012 when I received an email from Bob Deshaies. Bob is a artillery veteran of the Battle of Suoi Tre who has been to our reunions on a few occasions and seeing as he lived relatively close we've kept in constant contact for years. You may recall



Bob Deshaies

that he spoke to us at the Seekonk reunion (when the picture above was taken).

This particular email contained a photo of a document which contained the names of men who were awarded medals for action in the 3rd Brigade of the 4th ID.

Bob told me it was a listing of men who received medals for action at the battle of Suoi Tre. His name was on the listing with Lou Urso, another artilleryman who has frequently joined us at our yearly reunions. Lou had passed the document on to Bob as they had both earned Bronze Stars for Valor for their action at FSB GOLD.

At the top of the cutout was written:

DECORATED

But to the hero, when his sword Has won the battle for the free Thy voice sounds like a prophet's word,

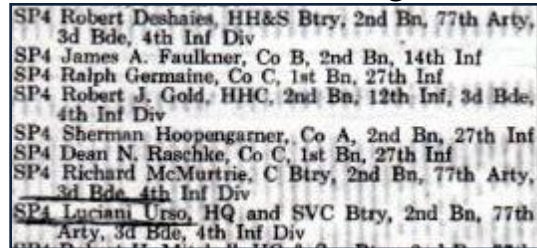
And in its hollow tones are heard The thanks of millions yet to be.

Fritz Green Halleck

Halleck was a highly regarded Guilford Connecticut poet from the 19th century. He never spent a day in the American military, but he understood the importance of a society to recognize its heroes.

As the company historian I recognized the clipping for its importance of the record of the outstanding soldiers from the period.

Inquisitively, I read the names to see if I could recognize any names when I suddenly reached a name that I recognized.



In the listing of men who were awarded Bronze Stars for Valor, halfway between Deshaies and Urso was written: *SP4 Robert J Gold, HHC, 2nd Bn, 12th Inf, 3rd Bde, 4th Inf Div*

Bob Gold, one of the men on Alpha Association's Honor Roll had been cited for bravery. Of course, this meant that the listing contained other men's names that were not at FSB GOLD. Bob was killed in action on February 26th, almost a month before the Battle of Suoi Tre.

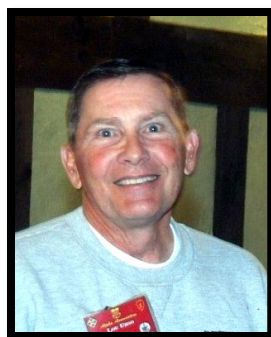
I explained to Lou and Bob what I learned and thank them for sharing the clipping with me.

I immediately got on the phone with Carleen Pettit, who was his wife when he was killed. Carleen and I met years ago in Ohio at an association reunion.

"Hello, this is Bill Comeau; I'm calling to ask if you can inform me about the details leading up to Bob getting his Bronze Star for Valor medal."

"What Bronze Star for Valor medal?" was her reply.

It became clear to me that Carleen and Bob's family were never notified of the medal when it was first awarded.



Lou Urso

I suggested that she contact a local veterans group and investigate the situation.

I shared with Ed Smith what I learned about the medal that was awarded to Bob but never sent to his family. He told me that he suspected that the document was placed in his 201 personnel file and promptly forgotten about. It happens, but it really should not have been as this information would have been highly valued by the people he left behind.

It would take almost a year for the process of retrieving his records and authorization to be acquired for a presentation to his family in Ohio.

Before we get to that story I would like to share with you what I learned about Bob Gold from his widow and some members of the platoon that Bob was part of when he was killed.



Bob was born and raised in Sidney, Ohio, shown on the map as the green star.

Sidney had the fortune to be at a junction of

the Miami-Erie Canal and became a thriving shipping port for Shelby County goods that were sent on to Cincinnati and Toledo in the mid 1800s. It thrived then and later when the interstate was sent through in the 1950s. It never had a large population then or now. In 1961 when Bob entered high school the population was 14, 663. Today it has grown to 21, 229.

Bob never had it easy as a kid. He was the second born in a family of five children. His brother Bill, the oldest, had been in the Navy for over six years and was a Sonar Instructor when Bob was killed. He had two younger sisters named Diane and Patty and the youngest of the family was a brother named Ed.

When Bob was five years old his father died and his mom was left to raise the five alone. I can relate to that sad story as I came from a family of four children who were raised by my mother after my dad died just before I turned 2 years old.

Bob always saw his future outside the confines of Sidney and by the time he entered middle school he thought that he had discovered his ticket to fame and fortune. He developed a love of music and began taking lessons playing the base guitar. Bob wanted to live the American teenager boy's dream. He would gain celebrity and security by joining a band and traveling the country.

He began high school in 1961 and before long he joined a number of bands playing local gigs in the Sidney area. ¹



BOB PLAYING IN THE 'CHECK MATES' BAND 3RD FROM THE LEFT IN THE REAR

While in high school he met and fell in love with Carleen Fridley, a year his junior at the school.

Before I ever had a chance to speak much with Carleen about her time with Bob, I did web search to see if I could discover any information that may be available.

Luckily, I came across a tribute page to Bob Gold that was posted by his nephew Eric Kelly. It was there that I learned about Bob's musical background, which Carleen later would acknowledge. In addition, there were many pictures that Eric is allowing me to use for this feature story.

¹ Photo contributed by Bill Irish, 4.2 Mortar Platoon veteran

In fact, the photo on the cover page of this newsletter was made up using one of Eric's pictures of Bob Gold superimposed on a photo of the Candles of Remembrance stand that Porter Harvey built for our reunion Honor Roll Ceremony.

On that web tribute page Eric organized he wrote this about Bob's music days prior to his time in the army:

... Bob eventually played base bass guitar in some well-known bands while in high school (1962-1965). He played for The Yellow Jackets, Stan White and the Misty Echoes, & The Little Green Men. His song, "I'm The Talk of the Town" made the top-10 in Nashville, TN. He also recorded "Pretty Little Earth Girl," "School Will Soon Be Out," & "Cheater B-Modified Car."²

With that information in hand, it was then time to talk to Carleen to expand on what I knew of Bob.

When I told her of what I knew of Bob's musical background, she was quick to acknowledge his success as a musician.

Carleen told me that Bob and her met while they were in high school.



3

Bob Gold and Carleen going to her Junior Prom

Bob was a year ahead of her and she recalled specifically a miracle summer that she spent with Bob in Florida in 1965.

²Source: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=11504704>

³ Prom and 1st band photo from Carlene's collection

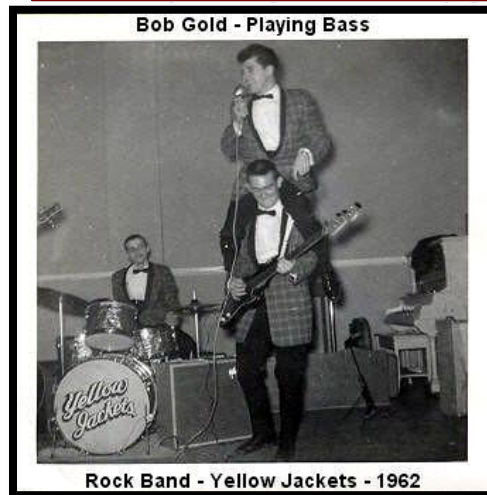
"I was just out my freshman year when I met him while I was babysitting next door to his best friend, Jon Johnson.

One of those nights, Jon came over to the house I was sitting at and told me that Bob Gold had told him that he wouldn't go home until he was introduced to me. This was done and we began dating from that time and throughout our high school years.

Bob played throughout the local area through high school for a number of bands."



Bob Gold front right in an early gig



Bob Gold - Playing Bass

Rock Band - Yellow Jackets - 1962



Bob Gold (R) - 1962 w/ "Yellow Jackets" Record released in

Songs: "Pretty Little Earth Girl" &

"I'm The Talk of the Town"

Florida made the Top 10 in Nashville, TN. Played w/ Stan White and the Misty Echos & The Little Green Men.

**The last two photos were from the photo collection on Eric Kelly's tribute page.*

"Bob's band manager moved to Florida when Bob was in his senior year. As soon as Bob graduated from high school in June, 1965 he and two other band members packed up their belongings and moved to Florida.

His band manager owned a recording studio in Florida and they began cutting records. They lived near Cape Canaveral which allowed playing at the bases nearby. They would play country and rock songs, not at all unusual for the period when there were many song crossover hits moving back and forth into the different formats. He was one of the lead singers by this time.

Bob supported himself by working for Western Union delivering telegrams as a courier during the day and doing his music in the evenings.

During one of those recording sessions in Florida they recorded a country song, written by Bob that really took off locally. The name of the song was "I'm The Talk of the Town" and it was very popular. Before long it became #1 on the local listings of songs. Eventually, some record producers in Nashville got wind of it and produced the record nationally. The record was promoted and moved up the charts quickly. It ultimately became a top ten hit nationally in 1965."

I asked her life while he was in Florida.

"Bob left for Florida not long after June 1st, 1965. Two weeks later I convinced my folks to allow me to spend the summer down there when my junior year ended. To my astonishment, they agreed so long as I moved in with his band manager and wife's home, which they agreed to earlier.

So I was off on this adventure as young 18 year old girl. The arrangement worked out for me and the band manager as they had a child which I babysat for while they were out during the days. My evenings were free when I could be with Bob at the play dates or

just enjoying the warm Florida nights together. It was marvelous.

Oh yes, I did have one job responsibility with the band. At the time they were known as 'Misty Echoes, & the Little Green Men' and as part of their persona, I had the job of dying their hair green. It was so much fun!

By late August, I needed to return to Ohio to begin my senior year at Fairlawn High School. .

That November Bob got his draft notice and Bob returned to Ohio to prepare for entering the army. On December 15th, Bob was transported to Fort Knox Reception Center where he was sworn in. He remained there for a short period and was sent to Fort Lewis to begin boot camp."

The group that Bob was drafted with were flown to Fort Lewis and picked up and brought by bus to the corner of 3rd Division Drive and Libby Avenue. Once there, they were greeted by a burly First Sgt. named Sidney Springer who welcomed the group to Alpha Company, 2nd battalion, 12th Infantry. They were added to another group that arrived earlier from Fort Dix. ⁴

Less than a week later the battalion began basic training. After the eight week training period we were allowed a two week.

Bob was now officially a soldier.

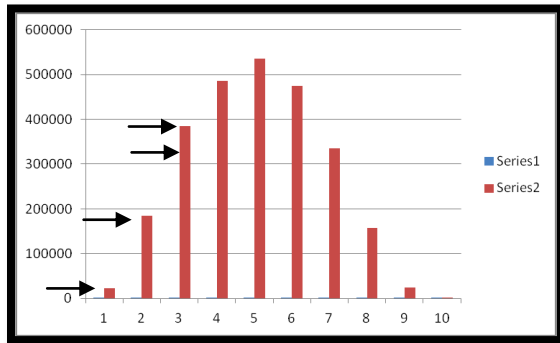


Bob during Basic Training leave

⁴ Photo provided by Carleen Pettit

HOW WE FIT IN AT THAT TIME

The total troop strength in Vietnam grew dramatically from 23,330 at the end of 1964 (#1 on the chart) to 184,200 by the time we began training at the end of 1965 (#2). When the 2/12th landed at Vung Tau in October, 1966 the troops level in Vietnam was 320,000. By the end of 1967, (3) a month before the Tet Offensive, the total was 485,600.



Troop Levels in Vietnam 1964-1973

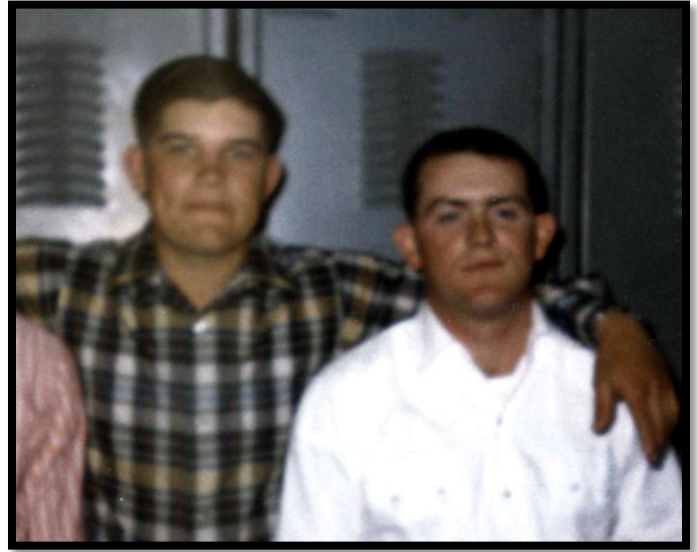
I point this out to illustrate just how quickly the buildup took place and how it would affect the ground operations in Vietnam over the course of that period. The allies were treading water in Vietnam and the military knew that without boots (*many boots*) on the ground to attack the enemy's staging area, the war would be lost. We were wearing some of those boots, although many of us denied it until it became apparent during Advanced Infantry Training that we were headed to the jungles of Vietnam.

Little did we know then, but by the end of 1968, the number of Americans deployed to Vietnam would go to an astonishing 536,100 level!

By comparison, for the entire Iraq and Afghanistan deployments, the average American troop levels over the years in Iraq and Afghanistan *combined* was 187,917⁴.

The 4th Infantry Division was the first large scale unit that added to that total that would be required to flush out the enemy from his sanctuaries in War Zone C. The 9th Division would follow 9 months later.

AIT IN HQ COMPANY AND BOB GOLD'S FINAL ASSIGNMENT



Walter Butkus and Bob Gold in HQ/12

5

Walter Butkus, an association board member, remembers Bob from his days he spent with him in Headquarters Company.

"After A/2/12 returned from basic training leave a number of men from the company were reassigned to different units. Bob Gold, I and about twenty other men were sent to HQ 2/12th, commanded by Capt. Robert E Kavanaugh. This is when Bob and I became friends.

We progressed to the next stage of instructions for the battalion; Advanced Infantry Training. He and I trained as infantrymen same as everyone else.

Sometime late in that two month period I was called down to the Company CQ where I was greeted by an unfamiliar Officer."

"The army has an interest in having you participate in our top secret unit manning Davy Crockett Nuclear Device launchers", he began.

"Do you have any inhibitions about nuking a large number of people should it become necessary in combat?"

"I answered that I could if I had to if war broke out and I was ordered to do so."

He looked over his glasses and peered at me for a few seconds and finally dismissed

⁴ Source Congressional Research Service
<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf>

⁵Source:Walter Butkus collection



Walter at the 2012 reunion

with this statement:

“Alright, soldier, you can return to your unit. You may not hear from me again.”

“A few weeks later I was informed that I

had been chosen to be on a Davy Crockett crew.

Bob Gold was also chosen to begin training in the Davy Crockett program. I assume that he was asked the same question that I was asked on that day.

The Davy Crockett launcher was a recoilless rifle that would launch a small nuclear device. It was designed to be a field weapon mainly to slow the advance of Soviet tanks across Europe during the cold war. The actual bomb is relatively small, shaped much like a watermelon. This nuclear projectile was attached to a piston by two clips and sent down an open ended tube that was mounted on a tripod. At the end of the tube was placed a charge that would hurl this 75 lb nuclear payload at an enemy force.



Davy Crockett Device with Launcher

When we launched the weapon we had to move back 25 meters and fire it with

detonation chord to keep being killed by the back blast.

Ten years after I left the army I learned that the bomb was rated at 0.01 kilotons (equivalent to 10 tons of TNT) and the maximum effective range of the recoilless rifle that launched the bomb was about two miles. That is to say, all of us who would have had to fire this weapon in a war would have been radiated by the nuclear fallout. They never told us that. I guess they didn't want to worry us, huh?”

Today the Davy Crockett System for delivering a nuclear bomb has been described online as one of the 8 wackiest ideas to come out of the cold war.

You can read more and see a video on the system at these two web sites:
http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=c43_1355300816

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/11/wacky-worst-nuclear-weapons>

“From March until the time that the battalion was deployed to Vietnam in September, Bob, I and around 25 other men trained on the Davy Crockett in addition to 4.2 Mortar that was part of the HQ Company.

During this period, I got to know Bob well. I judged him to be sociable but he was a quiet sort of guy that didn't readily speak much of his past. I had no idea he had a musical background, much less, that he had written a top ten country song. It just never came out in conversation. Apparently, he was too humble to toot his own horn and probably felt it was best to just blend in like all the rest of us in HQ Company.

I don't recall him ever going into either Tacoma or Seattle during the time that I was with him. He tended to stay in the barracks most of the time. He probably was sending most of his money home.

Time passed and just before deployment to Vietnam, the Davy Crockett group was pared down considerably. I don't

⁶ Source: <http://spaceghetto.st/?q=node/46688>

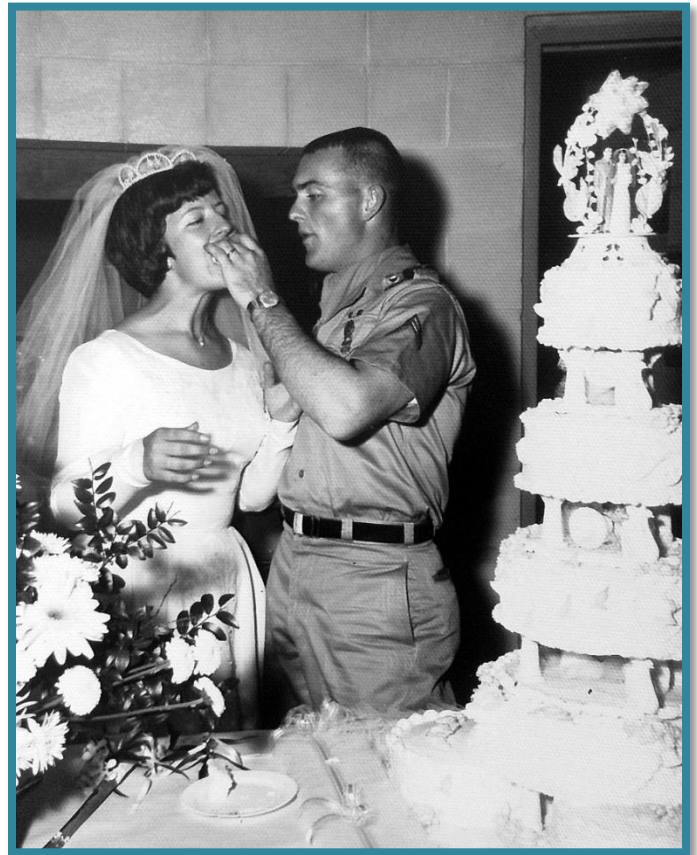
know why men were chosen as they were, but some remained in the group and others were sent to HQ/2/12's 4.2 Mortar Platoon. Bob Gold was in the latter. Ultimately he was chosen to be a forward observer for the mortar platoon.

VIETNAM LEAVE

Starting in early August, the men of the 2/12th were allowed a two week leave to go home for a final visit. Bob Gold was sent out with the first group to go home.

This time was used by some of the men to get married. Bob Gold was one of those and so was Don Evans. Plans were made while Bob Gold was in AIT and everything was in place when Bob got home at the start of August.

On August 6, 1966 Carleen and Bob were married during a beautiful church ceremony.



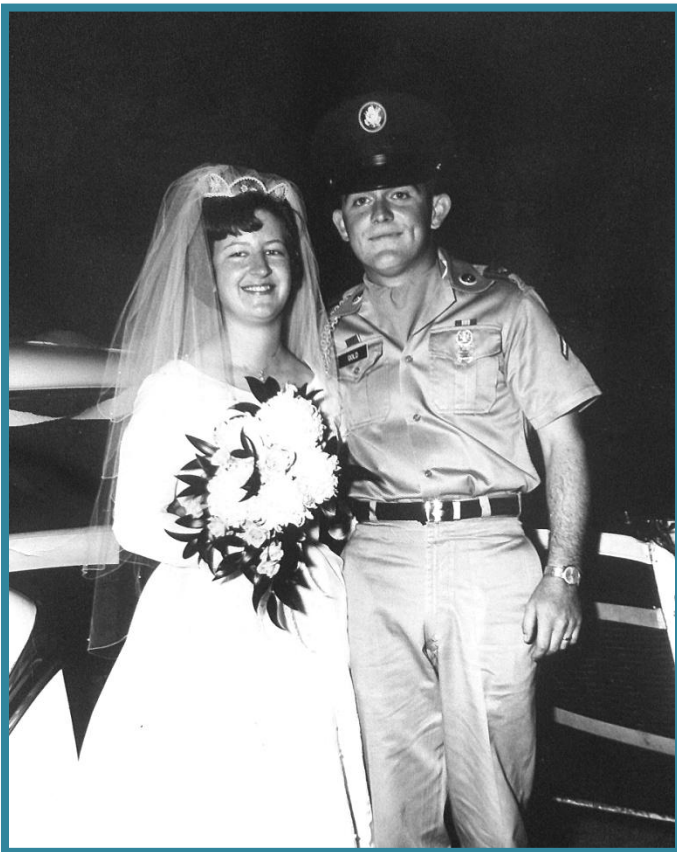
Carleen and Bob lived as man and wife for the remainder of his two week leave. Sadly, it would be the only chance to do so in their short marriage.

Two days after they were married, he learned that he would have a problem getting back to base when he was supposed to report.

The airlines had gone on an industry wide strike.

From July 8 to August 19, 1966 over 35,000 airline workers across the nation employed by five airlines went on strike.

After several years of stilted wage gains as the airline industry invested heavily in jet technology, aircraft mechanics and other ground service workers represented by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) were anxious to share in the substantial profits of 1965. Facing a bargaining impasse between the IAM and the five carriers (United, Northwest, National, Trans World and Eastern) covered in the industry's first multi-carrier labor contract, a Presidential Emergency Board presented a "compromise"



Carleen and Bob Gold in happier times

Both Carleen and Bob understood the dangers that Bob would be facing, but love triumphed over the concerns of the risk.

package. In the summer of 1966, IAM members rejected this compromise and walked off the job in the largest strike in airline history. For 43 days during the peak summer travel season, 60 percent of the U.S. commercial airline industry was literally inoperative as 35,000 workers stayed out on strike.⁷

The strike caught Bob out in Ohio and he had to manage the best that he could to get back to Fort Lewis.

When he made it back a second group was sent out on leave.



8

Gathering our equipment in preparation for our transportation to the troop ship

Finally, a month later, we collected all our gear and stood outside our barracks waiting for the buses that would bring us to the Tacoma dock where the Nelson M Walker was moored.



9

Gangplank being removed from the Walker

It was September 21st when we boarded the ship that would take us to Vietnam. On the next day we set off.

⁷ History of strike obtained online at: http://www.communitywalk.com/location/1966_airline_strike/info/2611054

⁸ Source: Gary Barney collection

⁹ Source: 2/77th Veteran John Mascaro

JUST IN TIME FOR THE YEAR OF THE OFFENSIVES

As I illustrated on page six, the big push was on and we were in the vanguard of the American buildup that would reach a zenith in January 1969 when the troop totals would reach 536,100 men.

Preceding us in the capitol district and surrounding provinces was the 1st and 25th Infantry Division supported by the 196th Infantry Brigade that had arrived four months earlier, and assorted other units committed in the Capitol district area.

The enemy was the 9th NLF Division that was composed of the 271st, 272nd, 273rd VC Regiments, the 101st NVA Regiment, and the 70th Security Regiment, which protected the Headquarters element of the Division.

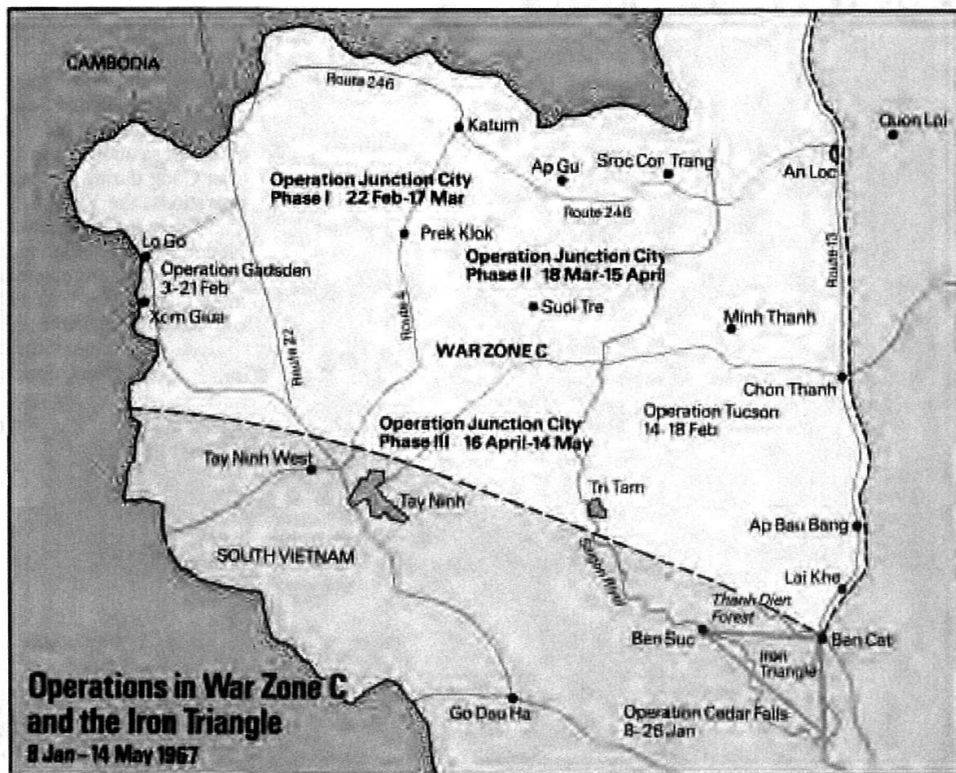
The 9th VC Division had been established in 1965 and had been creating havoc in the Saigon area and the outlying provinces reaching all the way into the border area with Cambodia.

Not long after the 196th Light Infantry Brigade arrived in June, they were sent to Tay Ninh to establish a base camp to be used to pursue the enemy deep into his sanctuary in War Zone C. As long as they had that luxury, they could exert control over the populous region northwest of Saigon and undermine the government's control over the region.

We of the 3rd Brigade of the 4th ID arrived in mid-October and by late November were sent to establish a base camp at Dau Tieng. This necessity was twofold. The local population was under the control of local enemy units who were exploited them and the local Michelin Rubber Plantation was a source of support through taxes being forced onto the workers and the plantation owners.

We spent most of December and January dealing with the local marauding VC patrols in the immediate area. That was to change significantly in February.

OPERATIONS CEDAR FALLS, GADSDEN, TUSCON AND JUNCTION CITY



¹⁰This map shows the major operations that were undertaken to find and destroy the elements of the 9th VC Division.

The pieces were in place by 1967's New Year's Day but were delayed for a few reasons. The American 9th Infantry Division, deploying from Fort Riley Kansas, were delayed and were not entirely in country in time to be used for the assault. In addition, things were heating up in the notorious 'Iron Triangle' just north of Saigon. As a result of this and other logistical problems, the major campaign was held

back a few weeks.

Operation Cedar Falls began on January 8th, 15,000 American and South Vietnamese troops sent into the Iron Triangle and was the first multi-divisional operation of the war. The operation resulted in the capture of huge caches of supplies and weapons killing 750 enemy combatants. It ended in late January just in time for the big show to begin.

Originally, what was to be called Operation Junction City was to be named Operation Gadsden (after Gadsden, Alabama, home to Fort Rucker, the home of primary flight training base for Army Aviation). Unfortunately, the name of that operation became compromised and known to the enemy.

Gadsden, nonetheless, was the name used as one of the two diversionary operations that would set up the major campaign in War Zone C.

On February 3rd, Operation Gadsden began when the 3rd Brigade of the 4th ID and the 196th Light Infantry Brigade were sent into the western zone of War Zone C. It lasted 19 days and successfully exposed huge supply caches and killed 161 enemy troops. More importantly it placed us in position to be a blocking force for the upcoming major operation.

On February 14th two brigades of the 1st ID began Operation Tucson east of Dau Tieng. It was over by February 18th. Both operations were cover for the big buildup taking place in anticipation of Operation Junction City. The intent of the diversion was to force the major components of the 9th VC Division to move into the central area of War Zone C, the ultimate objective of the offensive. It worked well, but it would be a month before mainline forces would mass for an attack where they would attempt a knockout blow on a major American force near a small village named Suoi Tre.

¹⁰ Source, Vietnam Center and Archives, University of Texas 'JUNCTION CITY, on the offensive in War Zone C, Jonathan Reed

JUNCTION CITY AND THE EVENTS LEADING TO BOB GOLD'S LOSS

Operation Junction City began on February 22nd when components of 3 Infantry Division began a massive invasion into the War Zone C strongholds north of Tay Ninh. Our brigade was attached to the 25th Division and was in place at the end of Operation Gadsden near what was known as the 'elephant ear' (note the shape of the land) to become a blocking force to prevent the escape of enemy forces into Cambodia as other units swept westward. As such we would conduct search and destroy operations east and west of Highway 22.



Fire Support Base Lee (indicated on the map by a red star) was set up on Feb 12th, off Highway 22 near a

small village just two kilometers south of the junction of highway 20. Most of 2/12th was transported there by chopper on Feb 15th, from a blocking position further south along Highway 22. A Company was sent to Dau Tieng for two days of rest and equipment maintenance.

By the time Junction City began on the 22nd, all 3 companies had that same opportunity.

There was only one day where the 2/12th made contact with an enemy patrol before we left the FSB LEE security detail. Early on the 20th A/2/12 reported that a sniper fired several rounds of automatic rifle fire at a passing vehicle. They returned fire with an M79 and sent out a patrol to pursue the sniper. They ran into a 4 man VC patrol and pursued them, but lost them in the thick brush. During this pursuit they came across a dead VC who had been killed in earlier action (see red dot).



4.2 Mortar Platoon Vets
Company for the week.

(The other two in the picture are: in the rear, Terry Roberts and Del Eyer in the front).

¹¹ This was the situation in the battalion as the event leading to the loss of Bob Gold's death loomed in the near future.

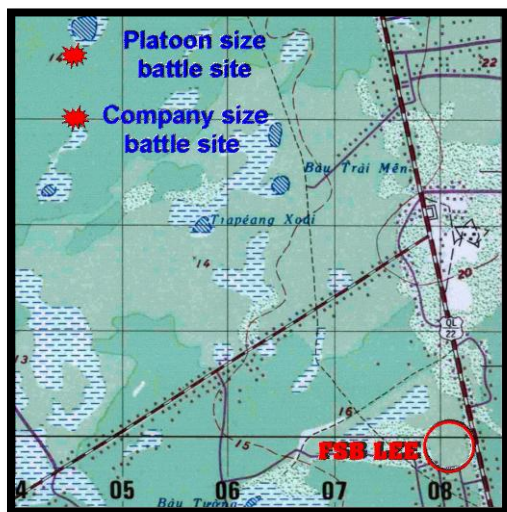
With the help of 4.2 mortar Platoon Veteran Bill Irish, I learned that Bob Gold was not supposed to be with a line company when the battle took place that took his life.

The 4.2 Mortar Platoon supported the infantrymen who were searching out the enemy in War Zone C. To coordinate with the men who manned the tubes and call in fire missions, they sent out two men per company who would be imbedded into the each of the infantry companies in the battalion.

Just as the operation was set to begin on February 22nd, the man normally attached as the FO for B/2/12, Tony Bartolotti, shown in the back rear wearing glasses, was due to go on Rest and Recuperation.

Bob Gold, left front in the picture, was chosen to take his place in B

¹¹ Source: Bill Irish, 4.2 Mortar Platoon Veteran



engaged with an estimated VC platoon. The VC used the ruse of tying a piece of commo wire, similar to the type used to command detonate mines, across the anticipated route of the American unit. When the point man reached the wire, he followed it to the end where he was ambushed and killed by small arms...



Casey Kramarczyk

As what happens on many occasions when I am writing a newsletter, new information comes forward which requires me to alter a story. In this case, a week before this newsletter was published I happened to mention to Bruce 'Sarge' Holzhauser, (that remarkable man who assembled an extensive history of the 2/12th on his website) that I was doing a story on Bob Gold's medal. He mentioned a man named Casey Kramarczyk who was there. I contacted him by email and arranged a telephone interview. Much of what I learned of the battle itself came out of that 90 minute conversation.

You can read a short piece that he wrote on Holzhauser's site here: <http://community-2.webtv.net/bhbim/1967/>

Here in his words is how he described the events leading up to the ambush of February 16th

Casey Kramarczyk: "On the 24th, we were told that we were starting Operation Junction City. We were trucked north to a staging area by road. The staging area was secured by APCs, some of which were mounted with twin 40 on them.

It was a moonless that night and pitch black. All of a sudden, we heard fire in the jungle. I could hear communication coming over the radio from a nearby Long Range Recon Patrol. They had arrived at where the VC unit that opened up on them. (If I was to guess, I would say it was the most western clearing along their path on the map on page 13.) I heard that one was killed and one was wounded from the LRRP. We were told to mount up to go rescue them, but luckily, that never became necessary. The patrol moved to another clearing and they were choppered out with their wounded and dead man. (There were 3 options to bring in choppers)

The next morning we received orders to enter the jungle and head to where the LRRP had their firefight. We didn't have a problem finding where the action took place as there still were things around smoldering from it.

I surveyed the area and found three empty bunkers nearby with an adjoining trench line. Looking further, I found a number of old punji stakes. I figured that these guys weren't rookies.

It would not be until February 25th before a company from the 2/12th would leave the fire base and join the search and destroy operation deep into the jungle surrounding the base.

That morning B Company was taken by road (there were no Junction City heliborne airlifts of our brigade units until March 11th) northwest of FSB Lee on a search and destroy mission. I can piece together what happened on that day through after action reports and a battle Book that I will write more about later.

Third Brigade, 4th ID Junction City AAR, Intelligence Update, dated 12 May, 1967:

During Operation Junction City I, until 14 March there was only one unit with significant enemy contact. On February 25th, early in the day, B/2/12, vic XT046836, was

They'd been here a while. Looking to my right, I caught sight of a huge tree. I investigated the tree and on the back side I saw a homemade claymore mine packed with TNT and obviously intended to be used against mech units coming through. It was not armed with a detonator. I don't know why they didn't take it with them. I destroyed it in one of the bunkers.

After more searching I happened to notice a wire hanging 20 feet in the air from a tree near a path. It was blue, which I already knew meant that it came from the French army that fought there in the 50s. This worried me as it indicated that a seasoned unit was in the area and had communications.



We followed the wire, staying off the trail. I was on the flank at the time, near the overhead wire. When the wire reached down low enough where I could get to it, I told the men to pass me by and I climbed a tree to cut the wire. As soon as I cut the wire a firefight broke out (*seen on the map to the left*). I got real nervous as I figured that the GIs might panic and start

spraying the trees. Luckily, I managed to get down unhurt and work myself up to the front where I was when I stopped to cut the wire.

I got into the fight up front on the flank and before long the man on my right was hit. It seemed to me that there wasn't a lot of fire coming from up front so I yelled for everyone to toss a grenade on my order. They did so and it became quiet all along the front.

We got the Medic to treat our man and I headed to the front of the main column to find out what was going on there. I was saddened to learn that Leon Eckhart, the point man was killed in the initial fire...."

When I spoke to Clark Hamm, another B/2/12 survivor of the ambush about the incident, he wrote me this:



Clark Hamm: "I don't recall much of that first day other than the fact that my best buddy was walking point and was killed when an ambush was triggered. He was shot in the head and the enemy tried to drag off his body. We laid down some heavy lead and they abandoned the effort. The man's name was Leon Eckhart and he lived around 25 miles north of where I lived in Pennsylvania.

On February 25th, 2007, 40 years to the day after the battle, I did a Memorial service for Leon in his hometown American Legion Post in Lehighton PA.

There Clark Hamm in Vietnam
and and at our 2007 reunion
keep in contact with his family."

were 90 people present in the hall including his two sisters his brother. I met his former classmates and to this day still

Casey Kramarczyk: "...I remember that a VC was trying to take his gear and ammunition from Eckhart but was driven away by fire from the front but not before he made off with Eckhart's M16. When I checked him out I recalled that Eckhart's girlfriend had sent him a gold chain and a gold St. Christopher's medal. We were playing cards when it arrived and he showed it to all of us. The VC took that.



Eckhart was at a trail intersection when he was killed. Investigating around, I discovered that the unit (*later determined to be a VC platoon*) that hit us was busy pulling down the telephone wire, correctly reasoning that we would follow it back to their basecamp. I figured it

would be simple to figure out how far away their camp was by stretching out the coiled wire that was left behind when they broke contact.

In addition to Eckhart we had another man killed named Warren Muhr, who was a medic. We had a few other men who needed to be evacuated. I could just barely make out a clearing in the distance to my left, but it was too small for a Huey. A bubble chopper came in to remove the dead and wounded and we finally moved towards the base camp.



We followed the direction that the VC were coming from and before too long came to an intersection of two trails. It was obvious that the men who trailed us headed east and that was where their base camp was located.

Captain Leon Mayer was commanding the company at this time replacing Captain Robert Kavanaugh who left the month before. My feelings at this time were, "we know that the enemy is at the end of this trail. Let's go in and duke it out before they can call in reinforcements." Captain Mayer had other ideas. He would send us to the right.

Not far from the junction we came across a bomb crater where CPT Mayer orders us to dig in for the night. I thought being this close to the old base camp was unwise. They would be waiting for us the next morning with a much larger force than we would have faced on the first day.

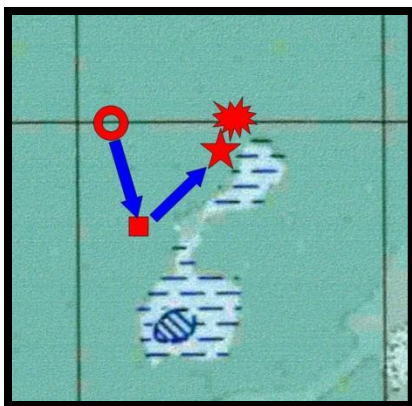
I had my buddy take this photo of me at the bomb crater site, just before just before we began digging in.

While digging in, the two VC who were trailing us opened up full automatic while our backs were to them (according to the AAR, that happened at 1700 hrs). Bill Coggeshall, one of our medics was killed at that time and a number of our men were wounded.

The VC escaped and it got quiet. We used the clearing to our south to evacuate the wounded and Coggeshall and then went into our defensive position for the night. In the distance we heard the Vietcong preparing to engage us the next day."

FEBRUARY 26, 1967, THE DAY OF THE AMBUSH

On the next morning I was sent out with a machine gun crew to check out the area to the east where we knew the base camp was situated. I got to the site and found some freshly dug foxholes near the camp. I reported back to CPT Mayer what I saw. He said nothing.



Casey did not recollect what I learned from after action reports about that morning prior to the ambush. The company moved out heading southeast. At 1115 according to the records, they made contact with 8 VC. No casualties were listed for the incident. There was no location reported on the document, but the next incident had a location and it took place at 1135 hrs, so it was near that location. I marked the 1135 hrs location with a red square icon.

1135 hrs: 3 gallon can of documents were found at XT 043827.

1400 hrs: found base camp at XT 045829, several bunkers, huts and a trench system were found. All huts were destroyed.

1535 hrs: Made contact with 20-40 VC at XT 046830.

Were they ever wrong with that assessment at the time! It was

a reinforced Company! They had set up a U shaped ambush that B Company walked into.

Casey Kramarczyk: "We finally entered the deserted base camp near the clearing from the south at 2 in the afternoon. First we came across some foxholes that were interconnected by a trail. Before long, we found very old trench line that probably went back to the French War. I learned later that this was their old base camp position that was destroyed a year earlier and they just moved their new camp back a bit. Luckily, none of these positions were booby trapped.



Clark Hamm and Casey Kramarczyk

¹² In the short distance I could see an elevated observation post hut. This was in a somewhat open area in the jungle and that hut offered an ideal view of our approach. We stopped for about a half an hour. During this time CPT Mayer had artillery (*and probably mortar fire*) brought into the position.

It was during this time that Bob Gold, standing near me, hit me up for a cigarette. He knew that I smoked Luckies and he thought they were too strong for his taste. He took it none the less and said, "You know Case', I'm getting used to these things."

After the prepping was completed we began to move out past the trench line. (*By then it was 1535 hrs*). Within a few minutes all hell broke loose. We got hit from the front, but the most intense action came from the rear. Weapons Platoon, which didn't come out in the field too often with us, was taking most of the fire. The enemy was using heavy machine guns and a heavy mortar attack.

They tried to take me out with a grenade but I didn't notice it until later. It noticed a Chicom grenade lying nearby under some leaves later and lucky for me, it was a dud and never went off.

They had us in a U shaped ambush with only the side facing the field open.

The defensive artillery fire was coming in all around us as they moved it closer and closer to our lines. They got the artillery pretty close and then were told to move back in the same direction that we entered the base camp. I and another buddy of mine started pulling back and before we made it to the trench line I hear someone calling out to me, "Casey, over here."

It was a medic, who I can't quite identify right now. He was treating Bob Gold who was propped up against a tree facing towards the trench line to our rear.

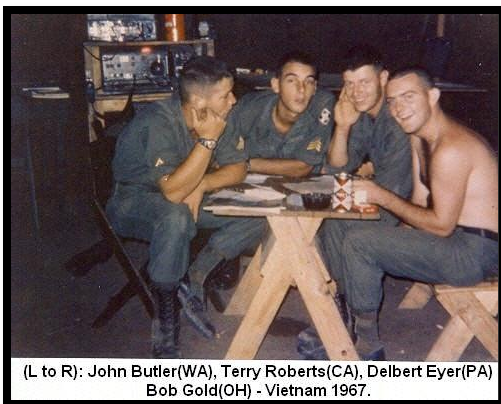
I went over to him and saw that he had wounds and was bleeding badly. He was in a ¹³bad

way. It told the medic that we needed to pullback and soon as the artillery would be moved into this position shortly. The medic told me he wasn't leaving Gold. I told him, "Of course not. We're going to have to work together to move him." I looked down at Bob and told him that we needed to move him or we would be killed by the artillery that was going to be raining in soon. I explained that it was going to be painful but we had no choice.

I bent down and he grabbed me by my sleeve and pulled me down to tell me something. He could just barely speak but I believe he said, "My wife, tell her I love her." I told him there was no time for that right now. All of us had

to get away.

I told Dennis, who had moved back with men to grab Bob's shoulders; I'll grab his feet and walk backwards towards the trench line. I'll still be able to cover us as we move back.



(L to R): John Butler(WA), Terry Roberts(CA), Delbert Eyer(PA)
Bob Gold(OH) - Vietnam 1967.

¹² All Casey Kramarczyk photos, including this one, obtained from his personal collection

¹³ Photo of Mortar Platoon men provided by Bill Irish

We made it to the trench line which was filled with B/2/12 men looking for cover and injured soldiers laid out helter skelter. I told the men to make room and me and Dennis placed Bob in the trench, and squeezed into the ditch.

Shortly after that the artillery began walking in towards our position from where we were earlier. One of the rounds hit a nearby tree and rained shrapnel on us. It put a piece of shrapnel in my left arm and blew my hearing. I tried to pull out the hot shrapnel and burned my trigger finger. Things were only getting worse.

I carried a lot of magazines loaded with 18 rounds (*we spoke of the necessity of never filling the magazine up to its 20 round capacity. The rounds would jam. Most guys loaded 19 but Casey said he wasn't taking chances and loaded 18*). My Platoon Sergeant came looking for ammunition and I reluctantly shared some ammunition. I never fired automatic. I wanted to see what I was killing (*which was difficult in the jungle*)...."

Meanwhile at 1600 hrs B/3/22 (yes, Oliver Stone's Old Company once again) was attached to the 2/12th and ordered to leave their position and link up with B/2/12 at the ambush site. They would not arrive there until 1754 hrs, almost two hours later.

Casey Kramarczyk: Bob Gold died in that trench before the battle ended. The artillery and small arms fire went on for quite a while but eventually took its toll on the VC and the enemy fire gradually subsided. By the time B/3/22 arrived the battle basically had ended. I don't believe that they did us any good by that time.

It was now time to collect the wounded and dead, collect their gear and prepare them for medevac. I noticed some of the guys were walking around the jungle in circles with their arms high in the sky. They had dropped their gear, but held onto their weapons. They were sent out on medevac as victims of shell shock. I'm not so sure that all of them were. I suspect some had seen enough and just wanted out anyway they could.

The groups that suffered the most casualties from that day were the officers, their radio operators (CPT Mayer's RTO was killed) and NCOs."

Six men were killed and 24 were wounded, not counting the men who Casey described walking around in circles.

"Lt Haxton, my platoon leader, ordered me to take a headcount of the company after the battle and I distinctly remember the figure that I gave him; 37 men. That was all that was left after the last two days of action. We were already undermanned when we began Operation Junction City as replacements for our wounded were slow or non-existent before the battles. By the end of the day on the 26th, we numbered less than a platoon in the company."

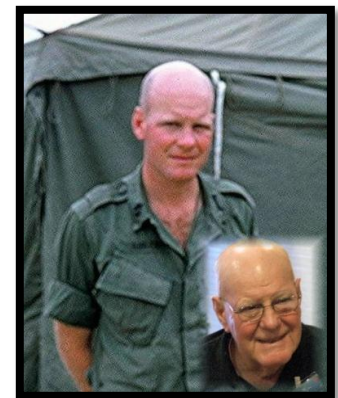


Casey Kramarczyk today

When I read Bob Gold's citation to Casey he told me that Bob should have received a Silver Star for his action on that day.

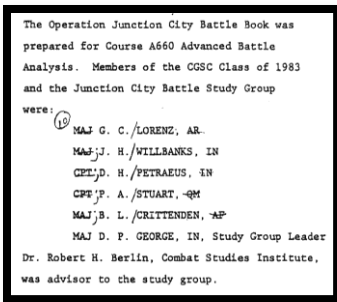
Ed Smith was with Brigade S-3 at the time of the ambush and I asked him what he recalled from the ambush episode.

Ed Smith: "I recalled that battle for a couple of reasons. First Colonel Garth had been upset at how the brigade was picking up what he considered needless casualties. Point men were being shot and their buddies were being picked off as they moved up to retrieve them. He put out a directive that he would no longer approve any medal for soldiers other than medics who moved up to get to the fallen lead man. This was said at a Brigade staff meeting and I would



later learn that the edict was never passed down to the line companies. I assume that everyone at the meeting thought that Colonel Garth was just venting because of the recurring loss of men who moved up to the front to help point men who were hit. By the book, the best way to help your buddy is to take out the source of the fire that took him down in the first place. Of course, when your buddy is on that point position, sometimes the book gets thrown out.

The second thing that I recall was the intensity of the artillery fire that was sent hurtling to that border battle. The fire was nonstop. During the battle the 2/77th artillery Forward Observer was relentless in calling in fire missions from three different batteries around their position. He was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor for his action on that day."



In 1983 the Command and General Staff College commissioned study of Operation Junction City. The task was undertaken as analyses of the success and failure of the operation. Its name was called the Operation Junction City Battle Book and it is readily available online. It was prepared by students of the college under the supervision of the Combat Studies Institute. If you look at the list of the five students who participated in the study you will see the name of CPT D.H Petraeus. You might know him as Four



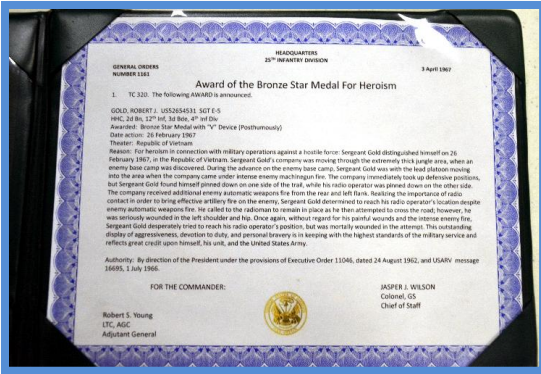
Star General David Howell Petraeus, Commander of American forces in 2007 when the successful surge operation took place. The year that he graduated, 1983 he was the General George C. Marshall Award winner as the top graduate of the CGSC. I don't know if this study influenced him to adopt the 'win the hearts and minds of the people' philosophy, but he did assure that the American presence in Iraq would be felt by the people as he established that the army would be placed within the citizenry, giving them a sense of security. It wasn't how we fought our war.

OK, let's see what Petraeus and his study group had to say about what took place on February 25th.

"On 26 February, a company from the 3rd Brigade, 4th ID had successive contact against an estimated reinforced company in the area of a discovered base camp (XT 046830). The VC showed a willingness to fight, and inflicted thirty-seven casualties, eight killed on the US forces. (They lose points on that answer as the correct number of fatalities was seven.) Eleven VC KIA were found. The VC unit that engaged them was the 3d Battalion, 271st Regiment."

So through a little research, we now have a glimpsed into the events that took place while Bob Gold served as an FO in B/2/12. It took men like, Casey Kramarczyk, Clark Hamm, Bill Irish, Ed Smith to come together and fill in the blanks left by the official documents describing the period in black and white. I will be forever indebted to these men for sharing their insight, recollections and assessment relative to the chaos that was surrounding the B Company ordeals of February 25-26. This all brings us up to that Bronze Star that Bob earned but was never awarded.

On February 26, 2013, forty-six years after he died from his wounds suffered that day, Carleen Pettit, his wife at the time, was presented with his medal. It took place at the American Legion Hall in Bob's hometown in Sidney Ohio. Over 75 people were in attendance, including the mayor and the County Commissioner. The man who presented the award was Jon Johnson, the same man who introduced Bob to Carleen. Remembrance candles were lit not only lit for Bob but also for each of the seven men who lost their lives over that two day period.



Citation



Medal



Carleen and Jon Johnson

14



Lisa Goebel, Carleen Pettit's sister at the ceremony



Theresa Manteuffel, from the local Veterans Office who helped Carleen with the search for Bob's Bronze Star



Bill Benner, A Co and Mortar Platoon Company veteran with Carleen

You will note in the photo that seven candles were lit up during that ceremony in Ohio. It was a thoughtful gesture on the part of the local veteran's group that sponsored the event. It wasn't just Bob Gold that was to be honored that night. It would be all the men of B/2/12 who found themselves in a life and death struggle in a far away jungle against a determined foe that had every intention of overrunning the American unit that they enveloped. It was a credit to Bob Gold and the other defenders who prevented that catastrophe. The seven candles represented the men killed during the period dated February 25-26, 1967 in B/2/12. They paid the ultimate price that saved the majority to go on and return to America with horrible memories for sure, but also a new beginning. The candles represent the men who never had that chance.

Joe Kirkup once told me that your remembrance of an event is not stored in our memories in movie form, but instead a series of stills. I thought about that for a while before realizing that he was correct. I only have to look to my recollections of events on March 21st 1967 to understand the premise. I see snapshots of what happened. It is the same for the men of B/2/12. They told me what little they recalled sharing these snapshots. Some were old and faded. To exasperate the situation, the thick jungle revealed only a smattering of the battle that was in the immediate vicinity of where they dropped when the shooting started. Citations tell the true story, written in the immediacy of the action. Here is Bob's citation. It is sad to think how much this would have meant to his family had it been recognized when it was authorized back in 1967.

¹⁴ Source: all photos from Bill Benner's personal collection except for the candles photo which I received from Bill Irish

HEADQUARTERS 25th INFANTRY DIVISION GENERAL ORDERS 3 April 1967 NUMBER 1161

Award of the Bronze Star Medal For Heroism

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.
GOLD, ROBERT J. US52654531 SGT E-5HHC,
 2d Bn, 12thInf, 3d Bde, 4thInf Div



FEBRUARY 28, 1967

Sidney Army Man Killed In Vietnam



Specialist Fourth Class Robert J. Gold, 20, son of Mrs. Rose Mary Gold of 816 South Miami avenue and the late Joseph Gold was killed by enemy fire in Vietnam while on combat patrol at 9:15 a.m. Sunday.

R. Gold The news was released to Gold's mother and wife today by personal notification of a U. S. Army representative.

A forward observer, the deceased was a member of Headquarters Company, 2d Bn., 12th Infantry, 3rd Brigade, Fourth Infantry Division.

Born Sept. 20, 1946, Gold was last stationed at Fort Lewis, Wash., before heading overseas in September.

In mid-January, his Army outfit which includes a number of other Sidney soldiers, reportedly was located on a rubber plantation near the Cambodian border.

A 1965 graduate of Sidney High School, Gold entered service in December 1965. He was assigned to Fort Lewis for all his training for overseas duty.

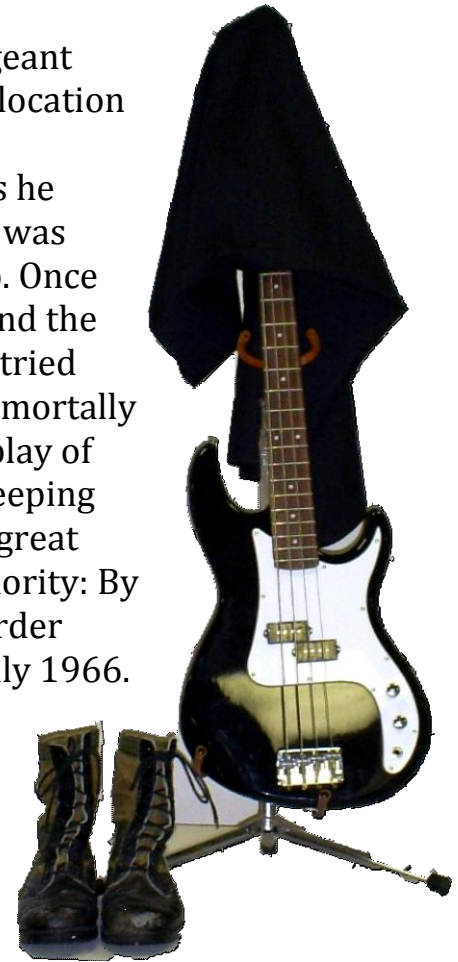
He was married last August to the former Carleen Fridley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Fridley of Pemberton, with whom she resided while her husband was overseas.

Surviving besides the mother and widow is an older brother, William, who is a USN petty officer, first class, located at Key West, Fla., Naval Base.

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device (Posthumously) Date action: 26 February 1967 Theater: Republic of Vietnam Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: Sergeant Gold distinguished himself on 26 February 1967, in the Republic of Vietnam. Sergeant Gold's company was moving through the extremely thick jungle area, when an enemy base camp was discovered. During the advance on the enemy base camp, Sergeant Gold was with the lead platoon moving into the area when the company came under intense enemy machinegun fire. The company immediately took up defensive positions, but Sergeant Gold found himself pinned down on one side of the trail, while his radio operator was pinned down on the other side. The company received additional enemy automatic weapons fire from the rear and left flank. Realizing the importance of radio contact in order to bring effective artillery fire on the enemy, Sergeant Gold determined to reach his radio operator's location despite enemy automatic weapons fire. He called to the radioman to remain in place as he then attempted to cross the road; however, he was seriously wounded in the left shoulder and hip. Once again, without regard for his painful wounds and the intense enemy fire, Sergeant Gold desperately tried to reach his radio operator's position, but was mortally wounded in the attempt. This outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty, and personal bravery is in keeping with the highest standards of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army. Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 11046, dated 24 August 1962, and USARV message 16695, 1 July 1966.

FOR THE COMMANDER: JASPER J. WILSON Colonel, GS Chief of Staff Robert S. Young LTCAG Adjutant General

This simple jungle boots/guitar/ black cloak were on display at the presentation in Sidney Ohio. It represents the aspirations and sense of duty that marked Bob Gold's short life. His family can take comfort in the fact that his gallantry was finally acknowledged to his loved ones.



REUNION 2013

With the annual reunion fast approaching, John Stone has dusted off his drill sergeants uniform (yes, it still fits, lucky him) and has gone on a recruiting drive. Listen up troops!

ROLL CALL

By Drill Sergeant Stone

**"OKAY GUYS FALL IN!!!
COMPANY ATTENTION !!!!!"**

Remember that old enlistment poster of Uncle Sam's: I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY. It was created by James Montgomery Flagg, as an Army military enlistment poster in 1916. The act of requesting people to join voluntarily is called military recruitment. No! I'm not trying to get anyone to re-enlist, but I am trying to recruit some of the members of Alpha to attend the next reunion.

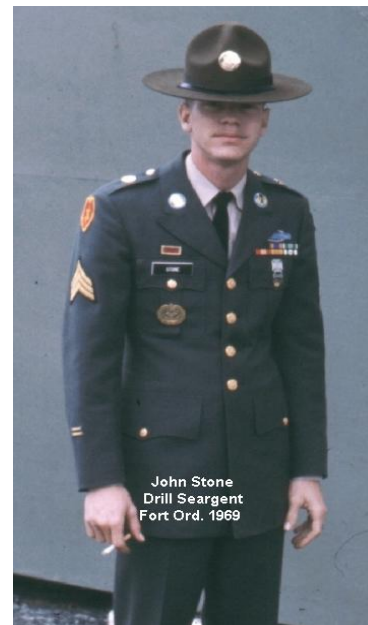


There are members of the Alpha Association that are reading this right now that have never attended a reunion. You have thought about going, but just haven't done it. You've wanted to go, but something is preventing you from making the commitment. Maybe you still follow that old army rule, don't volunteer for anything! "STAND AT EASE MEN!!!" Attending an Alpha reunion would be the easiest and most enjoyable mission you've ever been on.

I have only missed one reunion since attending my first one in 2004. Traveling to and from some of them, I had auto transmission failure, withstood a hurricane, had a house fire, drove by a tornado, had 4 flights, and before the last reunion, had

bypass surgery, and none of that has prevented me from attending the subsequent reunions. For a guy who doesn't like to go anywhere, or hadn't talked about Vietnam much, and who has fearfully avoided flying since 1968, the reunions must be good.

The members of A Company, that are AWOL from the Alpha reunions, are missing an experience of a lifetime. It is difficult to describe the feeling to be surrounded by the same Alpha guys you flew with on air assault missions, humped through the jungle with, and shared the same hooch and foxhole. You have to attend, to experience that incredible feeling that keeps us coming to the next one. All I can do is say few words about what you are missing, and try to convince you to come to your first one.



"OKAY PEOPLE, LISTEN UP!" We all look older now and at first glance, a bit difficult to recognize, but as the first greetings are spoken, you will hear the same familiar voice you knew so well. It could be your buddy that you helped carry, or he helped carry you, to a chopper during a dust-off, and never seen again until now. Whether you are a First Wave Original or Replacement Soldier, you're missing out on being with the same guys that worried about each other, and were so glad to see return from each mission.

You could be sitting at a dinner table across from the same guy that that you used

to joke with and made you laugh, or the guy who told the best stories that helped get you through another day. You could be next to the guy that shared his "goodie pack" from home, or the same guy you pawned off a can of ham and lima beans for something you thought would taste better. Now you are among those same guys, enjoying a delicious dinner that wasn't carried in a sock and heated with C-4!

My deep desire to be reunited with as many of the guys I knew in Nam goes back to the day I left. Without the efforts of the founding members of the Alpha Association, the wives, the board members, and all the people and families that attend, it would still be only a dream. They make it happen and you can too. Your absence is cheating both of us out of this amazing experience of being with the same guys we have thought about since Nam. A life time has passed, but after catching up on each other's life, and meeting the wives and families, for some reason now, it just doesn't seem that long ago.

Whatever the reason you haven't attended a reunion, please put everything aside. Your buddies want to see you again! Take the forward step. Make it happen, not only for yourself, but for your buddies as well. The hardest thing about coming to a reunion is saying goodbye. Once you attend, you'll say, "Why did I put this off all these years?"

If some of the wives are reading this now, do what [I've heard] so many other wives have done. YOU go... and bring OUR buddy with you! Think of it as a variation of the "Buddy Program"!

I can't think of a better time and place to be reunited with your brothers than during a visit to the Vietnam Wall, where we ALL could be together again.

I recruited some others to tell you more about the reunions and what it's like to be there.

From Jerry Virzi A 2/12

Coming to the reunions has been great therapy for me. I feel a great sense of bonding with my infantry brothers while attending. Paula has spoken to a lot of our friends who never served in a combat infantry unit and always tells them that "Jerry has changed. Attending the reunions has been the best therapy he has received." We will always keep attending the reunions for as long as we can.

From Ernie Jarvis A2/12

"Yes we are going to the reunion and have already purchase our airline tickets and also have requested tickets for the White House tour. We arrive on Wednesday. My great friend Francis (Tom) Femi is buried about 130 miles from the hotel in Rocky Gap Veterans Cemetery Flintstone MD. I never got to see him after we left Vietnam. Jerry Virzi and I are going to his grave on Friday. I'm going to give him hell for passing away! We are also going to the Vietnam Wall where we all can show our respect and honor those guys who did not make it back. I just hope many more make the decision to attend the reunions."

From Jerry Peterson: A 2/12

"I have tried for years to avoid talking or thinking about my time in Viet Nam, but then heard about the Alpha Association in December 2011. My wife convinced me that we should attend the reunion. I wasn't sure how I would feel about it, but once I met everyone there, especially those that I had served with, my fears went away and we had an extremely enjoyable time there. I found it very cathartic. My wife enjoyed meeting the people and learning a little more about me and what we had all been through. As soon as we left, I started thinking about the reunion for this year and seeing everyone again."

From David Todd A 2/12:

"I probably wouldn't have gone to the reunion last year if I hadn't got Ron Woycehoski to go with me. I thought I would be sitting by myself and everyone else would be with their wives. I would have been wrong. It was really great that Ron and I could go together but things would have been fine if Ron hadn't. Everyone was so friendly, I really felt welcome. The reunion itself was fabulous. I am really looking forward getting back together with the guys I made friends with last year. I'm looking forward to seeing Jose Lopez this year and Larry May, who was unable to make last year's reunion."



When I contacted Larry May for a few words, he was down with a fever and strep throat. So his wife Susan took command.

From Susan May, for Larry A 2/12:

"When my husband and I decided to attend our first A/2/12 reunion, I was concerned that the week end would be filled with bad memories. Pleasantly surprised, that was not what happened. The guys laugh and joke together. They visit about what has happened after Viet Nam. A beautiful tribute is performed for fallen comrades at a candlelight service. Even though experiences in Viet Nam are shared, new perspectives are given. The women visit and enjoy each other's company. Those who want to can go sightseeing and shopping. A/2/12 encourages participants because they want to include as many family members as possible."

From Brooke Stone

"The 2012 reunion was my first. It was a wonderful experience to meet in person, people that my husband John had spoken about for so many years. Our meeting was brief, but I truly feel connected with family. I am counting the days until the next "family reunion."

There are two members of Alpha that have a different perspective and a very important message.

From Paul Manske II, the son of Paul Manske A 2/12 Lost on May 13, 1967
Family

"Obviously I can't talk about what my experience was like in Viet Nam, but what I can say is that the friendships that I have made with members of Alpha are priceless!! I truly believe there is a bond with this group that can never be broken. We are always there for each other, whether it be a phone call, text or letter. I will never truly understand the hell that you all lived through, but know that I will always be there for you!! My friendships with some/all of the people in this group are stronger than I have ever had with people I have grown up with. I've only spent 6 or 7 weekends with this group, all together, but I always feel that everyone is just one call away, God forbid anything happens. The toughest part for me is saying goodbye on that Sunday. I have a difficult time with that and that is when I start getting excited about the next one."

From Christian Culleton, the son of Carson Culleton, A 2/12, lost on July 25, 1968.

"Since attending my first Alpha Association reunion in 2004, there has been consistent growth in attendance by replacement guys; men that served at roughly the same time as my father in 1967-8. Some of these men have become very ill, and some have already passed. I don't want to miss another reunion because I want to know that I did everything

could to meet and visit with people while they were still alive. While I have a selfish interest in learning more about the dad I never knew from the guys who fought alongside him, it has been highly satisfying for me to observe how quickly the new attendees acclimate to the group, feel completely welcomed, and truly enjoy the experience of attending their first Alpha Association reunion - and the first is never the last. I have watched decades of denial and personal suffering melt away after a hearty embrace from a fellow comrade. I have had the honor of being present at a gathering of replacement soldiers where they intently drew maps of significant events, each excitedly adding a small detail that many had forgotten, but that ultimately resolved questions that took 45-plus years to answer. Knowing that my dad's photos and letters in some small way have added details to these discovery sessions has helped me cope with my grief over his death in Vietnam and deepened my respect for the work that all of you ground-pounders did over there. Ultimately, many of us silently suffer from some kind of trauma directly related to our connection to Vietnam. I have found no greater constructive outlet for my grief and suffering than to be in the midst of my Alpha Association family. However, it's up to me to show up, to be present and engaged, and to contribute what I can to the greater good. It has been worth every ounce of time, energy, tears and money to maintain my status in the family."

END OF ORIENTATION MEN!
 ATTENTION!!!!
 GROUP! DISMISSED!!! FALLOUT!!!!

It took many years to convince the men who arrived in our company to replace men being sent home to join us in our celebration of our brothers. Men like John Stone, Jim Bisson, Larry May, and Jerry Virzi walked point through those lonely years.

Their perseverance paid off last year when many of their buddies who served with them in A/2/12 after the original troops went home were convinced to attend the reunion. The association is richer for it.

Our Relief Corps Men

Front row: left to right, Jerry Peterson, Carl



***Swon, John Stone, David Todd, Ron Woycehoski
 Back Row: Curtis Lovick, Tony Furrh, Jerry Virzi, and Jim Bisson***



***Frank De Angelo, Ken Kruse, W.G. Brown,
 Donald Bunel***

In addition to these new arrivals and their wives we had a few originals surprise us with their attendance.

We are hoping that all of these last year new arrivals return again and maybe convince those that haven't taken that first scary step to join us.

The brothers and yes, sisters, of Alpha Association have always impressed me with how inclusive we are as a club. We've all been to social gatherings where we were made to feel left out and not wanted. I guarantee you that no matter what table you sit at during the reunion, you will be made to feel welcomed. Tell me if that is not the case. It will be a first!

"THEY'RE GOING TO NEED ME"



**Staff Sgt. James
Mosgrove**

When we visit a new area, I customarily check to see if any of our Honor Roll men were buried nearby. I discovered that Jim Mosgrove was interred in Oak Lawn Cemetery in Baltimore.

Immediately upon learning this plans were made to visit his gravesite to pay our respects to an A Company

man who was killed while serving in Vietnam in 1967. The most opportune time to do so was during the return trip from Fort McHenry on Saturday morning.

We hastily informed Janie Dixon, Jim's cousin, about our plans to visit the grave. This inspired her to announce that she would leave her home in Florida to join us for the testimonial at Oak Lawn. She also told us that other members of Jim's family may also be with us on that day.

The story of the tragic death of Jim Mosgrove has been told in the past, but merits repeating.

Jim did not have to remain in the 2/12th Infantry battalion when he was sent to Vietnam. He had less than a year to go in his hitch in the army. Jim would have none of that and informed his family that the men would be needing him and he was going with them.

You may recall the song that Janie's mother wrote about the enthusiasm that Jim felt as the ship set sail for the South China Sea and Vietnam in late September, 1966.

Jim served in HQ/2/12 during his tour in Vietnam and was an effective non-commissioned officer. He was particularly successful in intercepting contraband that was making it through roadblocks around the Michelin Plantation destined for local Vietcong cells in the rubber. An article was written about him in the May 8th, 1967 issue of *TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS* :

May 8, 1967

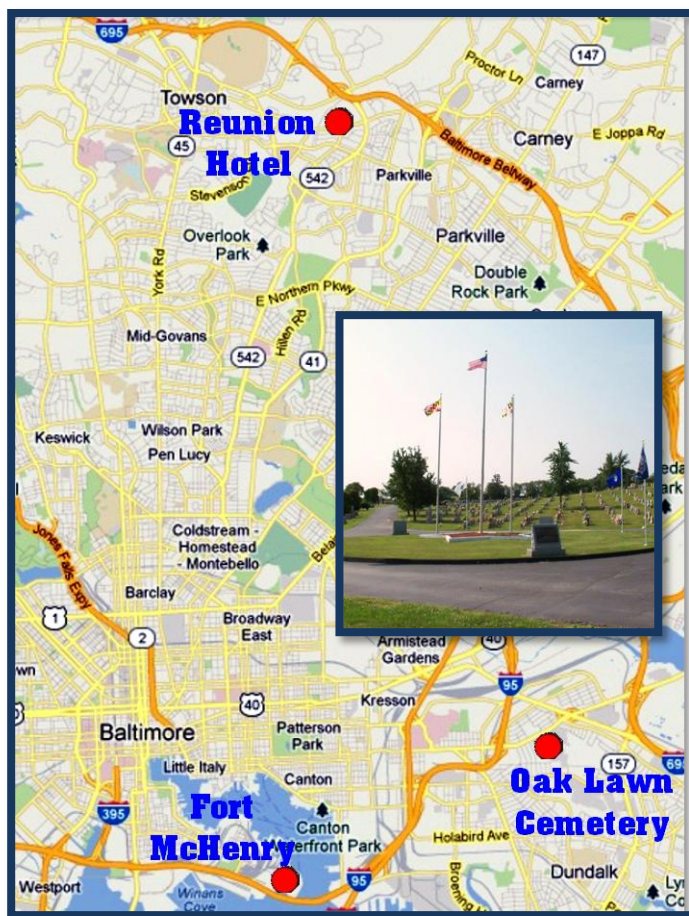
TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

Michelin Plantation Roadblock Nets VC Bicycle Load of Supplies

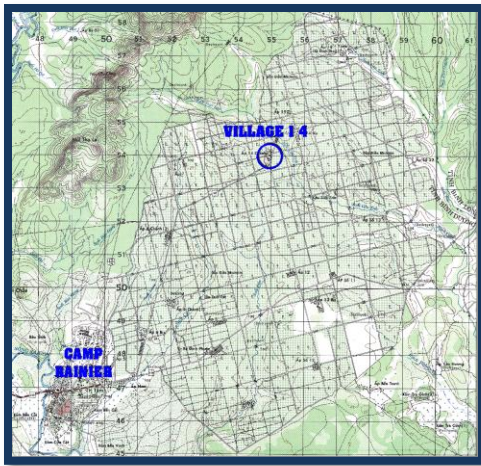
DAU TIENG - A roadblock outside the 3rd Bde., 4th Div., base camp at Dau Tieng netted a bicycle full of supplies destined for Viet Cong elements hiding around the Michelin Rubber Plantation.

Early in the morning, a bicycle pulling a cart was stopped by SSG James M. Mosgrove of Baltimore, Md., during the routine operation of the 2nd Bn., 12th Inf., roadblock on the road which runs around the perimeter of Camp Rainier - the only road from Dau Tieng into the Michelin Plantation.

The cart was filled with 25 lbs of dried fish, five gallons of rice wine, 10 lbs of coffee, five lbs of tea, five



bottles of wine, 30 lbs of soap, and an assortment of toothbrushes, toothpaste and writing materials.



It was found that the supplies were destined for Village 14 of the Michelin Plantation.

The local guerillas were dependant on the civilian workers in the rubber plantation for their supplies. When this delivery was intercepted by alert security soldiers at the check point at the only entrance into the massive plantation, life became very difficult.

When the workers showed up in the villages empty handed, the local Vietcong took it very seriously. It meant that they very well may have gone hungry, not only that day, but maybe for a number of days.

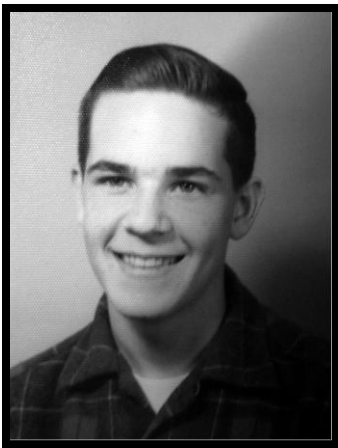
I don't know if this particular seizure led to the contract that was put out for Jim's life, but it surely was part of the reason of his being targeted.

On May 19th, eleven days after this article was published, Staff Sergeant James Mosgrove and Private E2 Ronald Waldrop became victims of an assassination plot.

Waldrop had a deros set for Sept 22nd. Jim was due to leave Vietnam and return to civilian life in exactly 7 days. It was such a tragedy as Jim had the opportunity to remain behind safe in the United States and would have none of it. His friends needed him.

Forty-six years, to the month, the men of 2/12th will travel to Oak Lawn Cemetery to pay tribute to the man who put his life on the line and told his family "these men are going to need me". It's time we acknowledge his sacrifice at his resting place.

IMAGES OF A SOLDIER



15

Baynes McSwain was living in San Marcos, Texas when he arrived in the military on May 9, 1968. He was sent to A/2/12 to serve as an infantryman and was there when he lost his life in the

Baynes McSwain battle of October 10th, 1968. That was a tragic moment for A Company as seven men were killed and numerous men were injured. It was also the day that Gene Handrahan was injured during the firefight and was never found at the conclusion of the battle.

Baynes was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross for the

extraordinary heroism he displayed on that day.

His citation read:

*"His company came under heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire from a fortified Viet Cong base camp," McSwain's DSC citation notes. "Sergeant McSwain's platoon was pinned down and the point man lay wounded in an open field completely exposed to the communists' barrage. Though wounded in the leg by the initial volley, he immediately deployed his men to provide covering fire and disregarding his safety, crawled further into the enemy line of fire to help his stricken comrade. Shielding the man with his body, he quickly administered first aid and was pulling him to safety when he was mortally wounded by the hostile fusillade."*¹⁶

Baynes' body was returned to his

¹⁵ Photo provided by his cousin, Ed Wiley

¹⁶ Source: Art of War on the Web website: <http://vva.org/blog/?p=1315>

family in Texas who mourned his loss and did their best to continue on with their lives.

Baynes was an avid photographer and took many photos during the five months that he served in our company. I suspect that they went unviewed and stored away after Baynes was killed. Why would they want to be reminded?

Forty years after his loss, Linda Thompson, a realtor in San Marcos came across the McSwain collection during a liquidation sale. The McSwain home was going up for sale and everything in it was to be sold. Linda came across a box of slides and when she put them up to the light and realized that they could be of some importance to the men who serve with McSwain. She purchased the collection and began a search for the men who may have served with McSwain.

That led to an email to me. We exchanged emails and finally spoke by phone. She asked me if I could share the photos with the men who served with him and I told her I would be glad to do so.

She mailed me a disk with the scans of 158 photos from the collection.

I asked the men who served in the company while Baynes was there to see if they could identify the men in the photos. It turned out that not only had some recognized the men, but some were actually in the pictures. That was two years ago.

In October 2012 I received an email from Linda Thompson informing me that the Walker Gallery in San Marcos was holding an exhibit of Bayne McSwain's photo starting on November 9th. Knowing that Jim Bisson served in the company at least some of the time that McSwain was there and lived fairly close to San Marcos, I told him of the exhibit. He expressed an interest to attend so I introduced him to Linda and they arranged to be there on the same day.

Jim arrived at the gallery with his wife Cheryl at the predetermined time and they

were escorted through the collection by Linda.



Jim Bisson and Linda Thompson at the Walker Gallery exhibit of McSwain's photos

Jim Bisson:

"The Baynes McSwain art exhibit was a wonderful event. The photos or posters of his work were shown in two places at the museum; very well done. I made brief remarks.

The McSwain's photos show the real Vietnam veteran, not the stereotyped "baby killer", etc. for which most Vietnam veterans were ignored, or in some cases shunned by their fellow countrymen. His photos also show the hardships of serving in combat and the day to day challenges of living in the dirt, jungle, mud, etc.; the care displayed for the people that we saw especially the children. His photos show a fun loving side and a caring side of him. He obviously was courageous as evidenced by the DSC."

Linda Thompson is a very special lady for doing all that she has done to preserve this material."

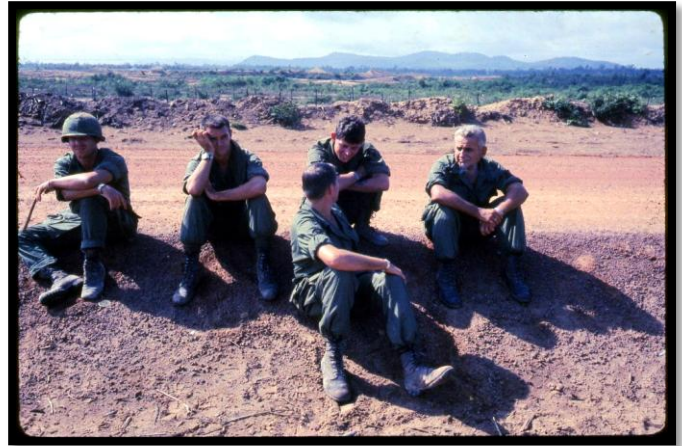
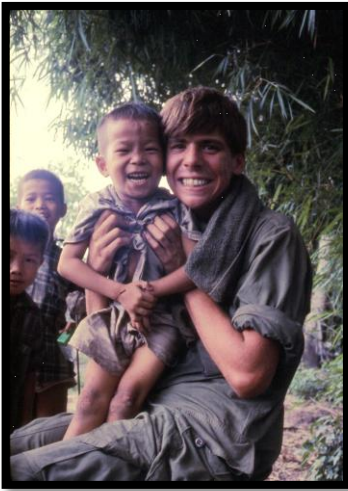
Linda Thompson:

"Enjoyed meeting General Bisson. Jim and Cheryl were very gracious and he helped me fill in some information gaps and really put our exhibit in context. The exhibit was a wish on my part to bring these amazing photos to a broader audience. I was put in touch with the curator for the Walker's Gallery Linda Kelsey Jones. Without her help

and expertise this would never have happened. When I emailed her a sample of the photos, her reaction was immediate and plans for an exhibit soon followed.

This story and the photos have touched a lot of people, and with luck it will continue to do so."

SOME PHOTOS FROM THE EXHIBIT



Baynes McSwain-Bill Braniff, association member- Ron Woycehoski- also a member, 3rd from left of group waiting for choppers at Camp Rainier chopper pad.

Baynes playing with the children in Dau Tieng village.

On patrol in one of the plantation villages- A/2/12 Medal Ceremony in the company area.

LAST MINUTE UPDATES

Just as I am about to go to print (or release the publication digitally, I receive last minute "Hey, don't forget to mention this" messages.

OK, as I prepare my printer for the printing the newsletters:

1. The thought may have occurred to you that perhaps the descriptions of the events surrounding the two day ordeal that B Company faced when Bob Gold was killed may have been embellished. It certainly occurred to me, so I contacted Clark Hamm to verify the story as told to me by Casey Kramarczyk. In the words of Ronald Reagan's admonition, "Trust, but verify" seemed like a prudent course to take with such an important story. I contacted Clark Hamm, who was also in B/2/12 at the time and asked how much I could depend on Casey's memory of the events. Clark gave Casey an unhesitating endorsement. In the words of Clark, if Kramarczyk said it, you can take it to the bank. Casey was one of the toughest, gutsiest soldiers in our company. If he could have stopped all the article 15s raining down on him from his aggressive behavior, he would have gone far in the army. His recollections of events that he shared with me were always dead on, even when he had to stoke the embers to help me remember.
2. I received an email today (luckily, as if I didn't get it now it would not have been in this newsletter. Be aware that the hotel is allowing members to book up until April 29th to assure that you get a room and at your price. That means, if you're going to the reunion and want a room, you have to book it before then or there may not be rooms available, at any price. Going to need to move on that.
3. Lorene Kitzmiller, Larry Walter's daughter who spoke to us last year at the reunion has been coordinating with me for the Wall Ceremony. She will be there with a chaplain from her air base to speak to us. In addition she is looking into acquiring a motorcycle escort to the wall on that Thursday. Stay tuned on that. She is also asked if some of our folks would like to take a trip to her base and get a tour. I told her that Friday is an open day and she said that would be perfect for those not going to the Civil War battlefields. I'll update everyone on that as plans are formulated.
4. If you are taking the trip to Washington on the bus, please be sure to fill in the form on the insert which tells us your cell phone number. We don't want to leave anyone behind.
5. Finally, five minutes ago, I received a telephone call from Casey Kramarczyk. He called to make sure that I gave credit to that medic that was treating Bob Gold as he was pulling back from the front. He couldn't recall his name, but he wanted everyone to know how much he had put his life in danger to administer to Bob when the artillery was closing into his position and all the other men were racing to the rear to save themselves. It took a lot of guts to stay with Gold and if he knew the name of that medic, he would pin a silver star on him.
Only a war hardened infantryman would go out of his way to acknowledge a man whose name he couldn't recall, nor even read this. That's why it takes one of us to understand what stands out as important after what we witnessed and experienced.
6. See you in Maryland. It's going to be great!

