



Newsletter of "The Ghost Battalion"

Vietnam Veterans of 2nd Battalion 1st Marines

www.FirstMarines.org



Volume 7 Issue 2

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Officers & Trustees



Message from the President

Brothers, Family and Friends of 2/1

It's been a year since our last fundraising effort and the purpose of this letter is to ask those of you that have a few extra bucks and are able to make a donation to your association to please consider writing a check for whatever you can.

The association owes a great big thank you to those of you that were in a position to make a donation to our 2/1 family. Your combined generosity contributed over what was needed to run our association.

Last year's effort was so successful that during our annual business meeting last November the membership voted to create the Espirit de Corps Fund. The fund is set-up so that 10% of all non-restricted funds received by the association will go into it. (non-restricted funds are those monies received by the association that are not earmarked for other purposes – such as paying for PX items or checks received that spell out a specific use such as paying for banquet dinners for those that can't afford it, etc.)

During the Mid-Year Officers and Trustee's meeting, action was taken to donate to the Wounded Warriors Project in two equal checks of \$500.00 to be paid to the projects Camp Pendleton and the Camp LeJeune projects activities.

As I asked last year, if you have a few extra bucks you can spare - and if you're flush and can afford to send some big bucks our way, we will be equally honored by your contribution - and are willing to send it to our treasury it would help us a lot to continue our efforts to educate others about our history in Vietnam, reaching out to families of our KIA's and supporting the efforts of our 2/1 little Brothers serving with Battalion today. It's also possible that some may not be in a position to help this year and that's okay, don't feel obligated if personal finances are not that good at the present time, there is no pressure on any 2/1 Brother, family member or friend.

The envelope enclosed has all the details you need to send a donation.

Thank you very much for your Brotherhood and any donation.

Semper Fidelis, Paul Mangan , Foxtrot '65-'66

President Vietnam Veterans of 2/1



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Message from Gary Gordon - Membership Committee



Like many of you, I look forward to our Reunion in San Antonio this coming November. A good bit of work is going into improving our organization and the services we can provide for each other. In this regard we continue to work toward updating our current membership roster. Within the month many of you will be hearing from 2/1 members who have volunteered to help reconfirm your contact information to include e-mail addresses. We use this information to send you our newsletter, either via postal or e-mail, that keeps you informed about issues relating to Vietnam 2/1 veterans. We can also help you reestablish communication with members you may have served with in the past.

If anyone with a computer and unlimited long distance phone calling abilities would like to serve on the Membership Committee please let me know at: glgordon21@yahoo.com Thank you for your continued support of Vietnam Veterans of 2/1.

Semper Fi, Gary Gordon

Message from Mario Sagastume - Treasurer



Vietnam Veterans of 2nd Bn 1st Marines is, and always will be, the members' organization. As such, transparency should be the goal of your Financial Officer/Treasurer. We have always shied away from publishing our Financial Statement on the web site or our newsletter, not because we have any secrets, but because we never know where this information might end up. However, anytime any member wants to receive this information, please feel free to request it, it will be my pleasure to provide it.

In the mean time, I can attest that your Organization is healthy, thanks to your donations and participation in our reunions. Those who have attended reunions have been generous with your hard earned dollars and your Trustees take the stewardship of your funds very seriously.

Hope to see you at the reunion... Mario Sagastume, Treasurer

PARKING:

San Antonio is one of those cities with limited parking downtown.

The hotel has a parking lot and there will be an \$18.00 daily charge for using it.

There is also a public parking lot across the street that charges less, but will require two trips a day to pay for the parking, \$3.00 daytime and \$8.00 overnight, except weekends when the price is \$15.00 for twenty four hours.

We will have more details on this and other items when you get your reunion packet at registration / sign in.



BASICS OF MILITARY RECORDS RESEARCH - By Ben Dickson Fox 2/1, 1968-69

Most vets who start a process of VA compensation claims, replacement of DD-214's, or a quest for information on medals and awards are confused as to where to begin. Then there is the task of finding old buddies, or information about a unit, place, and battle and where one served. Let's face it our memories are not as sharp as we would think they are. Just sit around one of the tables at a reunion and listen to the comments about " gee, I didn't remember that!" I intend to start a primer on these subjects over the next few updates. Feel free to comment, correct me or add insights on how to help others.

One of the most common questions asked is "How do I get a copy of my DD-214?"

The dog ate it back in 1975, it burned up in a fire back in '80, my wife threw all that stuff out when we got divorced in '90---there are a million reasons why we don't have one and need it now. Have no fear. There is a place that keeps all military records. It is called the National Archives and Record Administration or NARA for short. The web site is www.archives.gov and has a wealth of information that is available to the vet. Most of the requests are done free of charge or at a nominal cost for copies. The site has a system called eVetRecs that allow you to request copies of your DD214, service records, medical records, and a host of other stuff. There is basic information that you must have to generate requests so be prepared ahead of time. The list includes:

- The veterans complete name used while in the service
- Service number
- Social Security number
- Branch of Service
- Dates of service
- Date and place of birth (especially if the service number is not known)

The site will have instructions on how to sign and date the request depending on whether you do it online or send in a form (SF-180) that can be downloaded. Next of kin are able to request deceased vets records by supplying information designated on the web site. If your request involves burial in a National Cemetery run by the VA, NARA will work directly with them to help you obtain the records needed. The info needed to do this is on the web site with phone numbers to fax, or in the case of Marines, a Liaison Officer number who will help.

This is the basic starting point of most research about a vet or to process a claim with the VA. In the next few updates we will discuss how to obtain your Military Service Records, places to obtain your Medical Records, how to apply to get a replacement set of medals, how to Correct Service records and Discharges. We will also discuss the National Personnel Records Center and what their function and role is.

Many vets will say "my records got burned up in the NPRC fire". It is true that 16-18 million records were lost in the fire in St. Louis in 1973. Millions of records had been loaned out to other agencies at that time so there are alternate sources to find them. As Viet vets, we really don't have to worry about it because of the time frame of the records involved. These are the services and years involved in the loss:

Army-	Personnel discharged 1 Nov 1912 to 1 Jan 1960	80% loss
Air Force-	Personnel discharged 25 Sept 1947 to 1 Jan 1964	75% loss

So if some Marine tells you that they don't have records because of the fire and they were not in these time frames they are either smoking some weird stuff, or maybe their service is a little suspect. Good luck with your searches.

Message From Bruce "Ollie" Oliver

Subject: Pre 2010 Reunion San Antonio, Texas
After Action Report of the Officers and Trustees of the
Vietnam Veterans 2nd Bn 1st Marines Midyear Meeting

From 29 April to 2 May 2010, the officers and trustees met in San Antonio to reconnoiter the area for the 2010 reunion. If you have any doubts about going to San Antonio (SA) this November, please read on and I will dispel them.

San Antonio (SA) is very visitor and reunion/convention friendly and your reunion committee, has successfully negotiated with the El Tropicano Riverwalk hotel to provide us with a rock bottom room rate as well as other perks for our stay. Our point man in SA is Gary Gordon and he has done a great job of setting things in motion to showcase Texas hospitality.

San Antonio is famous for the Alamo but a precious jewel, just outside the hotel, is its renowned Riverwalk. A short, 5 or 6 block walk along the river toward the center of the SA brings you to an intersection; turning left will put you on the Riverwalk Loop. On this Loop you will find hundreds of eateries, restaurants and bars. At street level, shops of all kinds await the interested buyer along with more restaurants, the Market Square, (more shops), Mexican Fiesta, Rivercenter Mall and, of course, the Alamo. Getting around is a snap with the blue and red water taxis: blue will take you where you want to go and red will take you on a tour. If you want to venture a little farther, the Trolley that stops just outside the hotel is available to get you there. Other sites within a short distance of the city are Sea World, Six Flags, Lackland Air Force Base, the Mission Trail (remember the Spaniards), A Taste of Texas Wine (who knew), Wimberley Glassworks (watch it done), Natural Bridge Caverns, Louis Tussauds' Wax Works and Fort Sam Houston. A little farther still in Kerrville is a real nice western museum and in Fredericksburg, the Nimitz Museum (Nation Museum of the Pacific War).

Taking a 5 or 6 block stroll from our hotel in the opposite direction brings you to VFW Post 76, the oldest post in Texas. Eighty percent of its membership served in the Marine Corp; some of the members either served in 2/1 or supported 2/1's activities in Vietnam. Needless to say we received an enthusiastic welcome. When we return in November, we were assured that their doors will be open to us and they will support us in any way they can.

Our former 2/1 S-3 in Vietnam Col. Willie Wright has graciously offered to host a Texas style BBQ at his ranch just outside of SA. Transportation from the hotel will be provided or directions if you prefer to drive.

I want to encourage you to come to San Antonio. The reunion is sure to be a memorable one. San Antonio offers an abundance of sights and activities for all (that means wives too!), so consider arriving a few days before the reunion or staying a few days after. You will not be disappointed.

Semper Fidelis, Bruce "Ollie" Oliver

Golf 2/1 1968-1969

Questions: 973-960-8239 or Olliegolf21@gmail.com

PS: More information to follow soon including a date and time for a ladies orientation, and will be posted to the website.

2010 Annual Reunion Agenda - 1st Draft

As part of our agreement with the Holiday Inn Hotel Tropicano the room rates for our reunion is extended to begin on the 5th of November, which means you have a great opportunity to enjoy the sites of San Antonio for an additional three days prior to our **Official Reunion Opening of November, 7th** during which we will have our opening ceremony and welcome. Enjoy your stay in Texas!

Friday 11/05 to Sunday 11/07 [All day][Official Reunion Opening Day]

Arrivals and Hotel Check-in [Daily]

Officers / Trustees / Volunteers set up PX and Hospitality Rooms

Registration - [Location TBA]

Hospitality Room / PX opening [Location TBA]

Great opportunity to tour San Antonio starting November 5th

Vietnam Veterans Parade – 1200 – 1400. [Details & Location TBA]

Monday 8 November

0700 Hospitality Room Open

0800 PX Open

0900 - 1030 Breakout Session - Doc John Weed [Topic & Location TBA]

1300 - 1800 Healing Touch Session - Details to Follow

1800 - 1900 Opening Reception – Hospitality Room

1930 - 2130 Jim Page Movie Night [Title TBA] Hospitality Room

2330 - Hospitality Room Secured

Tuesday 9 November

0700 Hospitality Room Open

0800 PX Open

0900 - 1100 Annual Business Meeting – [Location TBA]

1030 - Hospitality Room Closed

1100 - 1430 Texas BBQ - Hosted by Col. Willie Wright & Wilma [Bn S3 Khe Sanh]

Transportation [Location TBA]

1600 Hospitality Room / PX Open

2330 Hospitality Room / PX Closed

Wednesday 10 November

0700 Hospitality Room Open

0800 PX Open

0900 - 1030 Breakout Session Doc John Weed [Topic TBA]

1400 until Set up Banquet room / flags, guideons, sound system

1600 PX / Hospitality Room Closed

1830 - 2030 Marine Corps Birthday celebration / Annual Banquet

2030 - Hospitality Room – Music / Dancing [depending on availability of band]

Thursday 11 November [Veterans Day Holiday]

0700 Hospitality Room Open

0800 PX Open

0800 – Until Pending

2/1 - The Beginning. - Bob Hughes

Everytime I attend a reunion, I get one or two people who thank me for putting 2/1 together. I try to explain that it was not me, but I still get the credit. Well, I think it is time to put the story down in an article so everyone will be on the same page. You see, there are a lot of people responsible for the present 2/1 Organization, and you might, or will be one.

The story starts in or about 1976. I was at home, drunk, and thought it would be neat to find what was left of my Vietnam group, Hotel 2/1, 3rd Platoon, 1966 - 1967. So I started to call around to areas I thought some of the guys came from with the help of a few long distance operators. Well, the next morning I had one hell of a hang-over and "no hits" on the people I was looking for.

The next time I thought about locating the guys was in 1983. I saw several ads in various military newspapers and magazines listing a reunion for Hotel 2/5, so I called the number listed. I did not remember a Hotel 2/5 being in Vietnam, so I thought it might be a "type-o". I talked to a Charlie McMahon who said it was Hotel 2/5, but the group would love to have me attend their get together, you know, "brother Marines" and all. I politely declined, but Charlie said I should talk to their "LT", so he took my phone number.

Within a day or two, I received a call from Ken Kromer, their "LT". He also extended me an invitation and I again politely declined. That is when Ken hit me between the eyes with this statement "It is better to attend the wrong reunion than no reunion at all". I thank him for his offer again and hung up. The next few days that statement, "It is better to attend the wrong reunion than no reunion at all" kept popping up in my brain. It was profound, and I kept thinking more and more about it.

The only 2/1 veteran that I had met since my medical retirement was "Doc" Steve Harper, the Corpsman that had treated me for my first wounding in Vietnam. We found each other by telling the 2/1 story of "A Shot in the Dark". There is more to that episode, but that is for another time. Anyway, I called Doc and told him about the reunion for H 2/5 in Washington, D.C. and Ken Kromer's statement. I said I owed Doc a "house call" payment, and if he would go with me I would pick up the tab. Doc Harper said yes, and we were off. If Doc had said no I am sure I would not have gone.

The reunion was on the Marine Corps Birthday in 1983, and yes Paul, the Birthday fell on the same day in that year too! Doc and I were well received and had a great time. Thirty-nine (39) members showed up for the get together, along with a few wives and kids. They had a sit down banquet that was quite impressive. On the way home from Washington D.C. Doc and I started to talk about how great it would be if we could get what was left of the "Third Herd" (H 2/1 3rd Plt.) together. So, we started to make a list of people we could remember. We also tried to remember what state they were from. We also decided to run ads.

As time passed, Doc and I found that we were having more success with the ads run in the military magazines and newspapers than by trying to locate people by phone. There was a catch though with the people that were responding to the ads, none were my "Third Herd" personnel. They were veterans of the Hotel Company 2/1 Vietnam experience, but from other time periods in 3rd Platoon, members of 1st and 2nd Platoon and lastly, other 2/1 Companies. All pretty much said the same thing, that nobody was putting anything together for their specific groups and can they "hang around" with us. Of course the answer was yes.

By March of 1984, there were over 30 people in the Hotel 2/1 group, and each month, more people were popping up. To keep everyone up to date, and let them know who else had joined us, I started to send out a Hotel Company Newsletter to all the members. Around the end of March or April 1984, one of the "Third Herd" guys contacted me. We talked for quite a long time, and at the end of our talk, he put me in touch with about another six or seven guys from the "Herd".

Once we connected, and found that most lived on the east coast, we set up a reunion for the Marine Corps Birthday in November 1984, the year that the statue was dedicated. There were about twenty-four 2/1 veterans (plus wives and kids) who attended the first reunion at the Holiday Inn at C Street, Washington D.C. under the name Hotel Company.

(Continued on Next Page)

2/1 - The Beginning. - Bob Hughes - Continued

I had yellow tee shirts in various sizes and yellow ball caps printed up with the logo HOTEL COMPANY 2/1 VIETNAM in red, which I sold at cost. Everyone was wearing them, guys from Echo, Foxtrot, Golf and H&S. I even believe one or two buddies of 2/1 veterans bought some and were wearing them around the hotel.

From that time on we did a reunion each year. Our group grew, but there is a reason for that and it was NOT MY DOING. 2/1 came about due to a number of things and a number of people. Follow me on this.

First, if it was not for the H 2/5 ads, then Ken Krommer with his insistence and statement (wrong reunion vs. no reunion), I would have never gone to Washington or anything else. **Second**, if Doc Harper had not said yes to going and he and I had not had a great time, we would never had talked about finding the "Third Herd". **Third**, if the 2/1 guys from other time periods and companies had not responded to the ads, Doc and I would have given up OR ended up with the "Third Herd" guys only.

Fourth, that the 2/1 guys went out on their own to find more of their buddies which seriously increased the number of 2/1 veterans. **Fifth**, that a number of "Third Herd" guys were found, and in turn found more people. **Sixth**, Doc Johnson had become very active in the group and realized that I was getting burned out with the newsletter and took over that responsibility.

Seventh, David and Marion Novak sponsoring, editing and producing the "WE REMEMBER" books, I and II. **Eighth**, when I stepped down in 1995, Mike Rodriguez and others stepped up to continue on. **Ninth**, Pete Meadows started to run an internet Sunday morning "coffee" newsletter that was very popular.

Tenth, past and present officers (Paul, Phil, Mario and Ben and others). **Eleventh**, Vin Burdziuk, the 2/1 Web Master, with his great web page. **Last**, but not least, the great Board of Directors, present and past.

The truth is, **THERE ARE A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE AND THINGS THAT HAVE GOTTEN 2/1 TO ITS PRESENT POSITION.** So, I now ask that the next time you hear someone say that it was Bob Hughes who put this thing together, **SET THEM STRAIGHT, EVERYONE HAS HAD A HAND IN IT !** See you in San Antonio, Bob Hughes

Guest Speaker - Major General Donovan USMC Retired - October 2006

Served 1971-2006. 1st Tank & 1st Service Battalions, 1st Mar Div 1973-75. In Okinawa 3d Tank & 1st Tracked Vehicle BNs, 3d Mar Div during 1975-76. Promoted Captain 1976, commanded Company B 3d Tank Bn, Twenty-nine Palms 1977. Bn Assistant Operations Officer 1979. Amphibious Warfare School 1980, Instructor, Advanced Tactics Division, at the U.S. Army Armor School, Fort Knox. Major 1982. 1983 Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Naval Air Station, Alameda, California. Marine Corps Command & Staff College 1988. Lieutenant Colonel & Contingency Plans Officer, Assistant Chief of Staff, C-5, United Nations Command and ROK/US Combined Forces Command, Seoul, Korea. 1990 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Twenty-nine Palms, Brigade Plans Officer for Operation Desert Shield. Lead operational planner for I Marine Expeditionary Force offensive for Operation Desert Storm. Following Gulf War, commanded two M1A1 Tank Battalions: 3d Tank Battalion 1991-1992 and 1st Tank Battalion from June 1992 until June 1993. Graduated MC War College 1994, promoted Colonel and served Dean of Academics, MC Command and Staff College, MC University till June 1996. Briefly assigned to G -3, II Marine Expeditionary Force/Marine Forces, Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, before returning to Quantico May 1997 to serve as Director, Marine Air Ground Task Force Staff Training Program. Promoted Brigadier General October 1998, Assignments were Commanding General, Marine Corps War-fighting Lab & Vice Chief of Naval Research, Office of Naval Research. June 2000, returned to Okinawa as Commanding General, 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and Deputy Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force. Returned to Seoul, Korea 2001 as Assistant Chief of Staff for Strategy, Policy, and Plans (C/J-5), United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and US Forces Korea & as Commander, U.S. MC Forces Korea until June 15, 2004. Returned to Camp Pendleton as Commanding General, MC Base from 1 July 2004 to 20 April 2005 when he departed for Iraq. He served as the Chief of Staff, Multi-National Force-Iraq in Baghdad until 5 May 2006 when he returned to Camp Pendleton to retire after 34 and ½ years of service...

Major General Donovan's personal decorations include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with two Gold Stars in lieu of second and third awards, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, and the Republic of Korea Chonsu Medal.

Or make reservations by eMail at: reservations@ektropicanohotel.com

Call Toll Free at: 866-293-1842

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2010 Reunion - November 5 - 12

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Vietnam Veterans of 2nd Bn 1st Marines 2010 Reunion in San Antonio, Texas



Newsletter of "The Professionals"
Vietnam Veterans of 2nd Battalion 1st Marines
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