



INCOMING



www.101namveteran.com

3003 Beason Ct., Abingdon, MD 21009-2723

Fall 2020

From the Desk of our President

I am honored to have been selected to represent each of you as your President. My ability to lead stems from the examples set by those of you who I had the privilege to both serve under and side by side within our great Division. The leaders that I served with had two distinct traits. That being “laser focused on the mission” and “taking care of their soldiers”! I tried my best to emulate those traits as a soldier and in my civilian career.



Ron in Vietnam D Co. 1/502

President Ron Long

A brief overview of my military history started with basic training, AIT and jump school at Ft Benning, GA. Then on to



the 82nd Airborne Division (2/504) at Ft Bragg. In the fall of 1967 I received orders to report to Ft Campbell, KY to join the 101st Airborne Division (Co. D 1/502) and prepare for deployment to Vietnam. I deployed as an infantry SGT in December when the 2nd and 3rd Brigades departed from Ft Campbell. The camaraderie that I have experienced at our reunions is the driving force that will guide me to do my best to continue to foster the success of our organization. With the great staff that we have, it will surely come to pass.

The very best to you and your families!

Ron

Ron with daughter Jordan and wife Julie

Chaplain's Corner

Reflections from Our Daily Bread



The Hope of Christmas: a Savior is Born

“Daddy, did they have a lot of snow at Christmas when you were little?” my four-year-old asked as we drove through gently falling flakes on the way to church. “No,” I replied. “We didn’t have *any* snow.” Before I could remind him of my upbringing in West Africa, he piped up with the perfect explanation. “I know why, Daddy. It’s because you are *older* than snow!”

I think it was Tuesday when my wife finally stopped laughing.

Fathers may seem infinitely ancient to their children, yet there is only one truly timeless person. Before fathers—or even time itself—existed, there was God the Father. Now consider this: the Baby we celebrate at Christmas grew up to say, “The Father and I are one” (JOHN 10:30). That is the real power of the Christmas story!

Paul writes of Jesus, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation” (COLOSSIANS 1:15). Jesus has preeminence over everything because “everything was created through him and for him” (V.16).

Although we usually associate Christmas with happy celebrations, it’s also an appropriate time for serious reflection about eternal matters. When we’re busy with holiday activities and surrounded by friends, family, food and fun, it’s easy to forget about the temporary nature of earthly life. Preoccupation with plans and dreams makes death seem distant. But there will come a day when our bodies are laid in the grave and we must stand before God.

This Christmas when you gather with your family around the tree, stop for a moment and worship the One who came as a baby and died as a man to give you everlasting life. When you see the presents, think of His gift of salvation. And remember that Christmas is a personal promise to you—a promise of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. If you can trust Christ to save you, surely you can believe every other promise He’s made. “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through Him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God” (2 COR 1:20).

Since we won’t have another edition of INCOMING until after the new year, we want to take this opportunity to wish you all Happy Veterans Day, Happy Thanksgiving, Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa and Happy New Year. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him.

As we began work on this newsletter, we asked for prayers in our search for a new Chaplain, as that slot was vacant due to the retirement of our faithful Padre’ Wally Morrow. Our prayers were answered almost immediately, Wally has agreed to lead us again. We are so grateful. *Dave Nesbitt, Secretary*



From the Desk of the Secretary

Dave Nesbitt
mdnesbitt@aol.com

Covid-19: Is it over? As we prepare to go to press the news media assures us that at least two, maybe 3, drug manufacturers have a vaccine that will soon eradicate the corona-virus. I hope they are correct and we can soon return to what we consider a normal lifestyle. Some would argue that it is the most serious issue we've faced during our lifetime; others would say there were a few times of uncertainty in the jungles of Vietnam that were equally serious, if not more so. Hopefully we can soon look back at 2020 and be grateful we survived. I know there were some that did not.

Reunion 2021 Branson: As indicated in the Summer edition of *INCOMING*, we are making plans for the next reunion to be held during the period of August 25-29, 2021. Our headquarters will be located in the Radisson Hotel at 120 South Wildwood Drive, Branson, MO 65616. If the corona-virus is no longer a factor, we anticipate a large turnout since most of us have been closed in for over 9 months; we need to get out, see our friends and do a little socializing. Branson is just what we need.

I know it's early but you can make hotel reservations now by visiting our website at www.101namveteran.com and looking under "Upcoming 2021 Reunion" for the direct link to Radisson Hotel. Our group code has already been added to that site. If you don't use the link, you may call the hotel at 417-335-5767, just be sure you tell the person who answers that you are with the 101st Airborne Vietnam Veterans reunion. A special room rate of \$92.95 is available for all double, queen or king rooms; the price includes two hot buffet breakfasts each day. Should you need a handicapped room, please call the hotel directly to ensure you receive what you need. If you encounter any problems, call Dave Nesbitt at 803-491-4186. The special room rates offered are good two days before the reunion start date and two days after the ending date.

For those planning to fly in, you should know that Branson only has a small Regional Airport. I suggest you call your local travel agency or check online for flights. You may wish to consider flying in to Springfield, MO and renting a car for a 60 mile drive to Branson. When Reunion Chairman Ed Barbour did recon in that area, he flew in to Springfield and drove to Branson on a nice 4-lane highway, less than an hour drive. If you plan to rent a car, you may want to reserve one well in advance. We will not have shuttle service.

As people register for the reunion, their names and units will be posted on our website at www.101namveteran.com. Please make an effort to pre-register for the reunion as advance registration helps in planning many things we do at the reunion, for example, ordering the reunion shirts, setting up meals and stocking the hospitality room. If you haven't registered already please do it before next August. If, by chance, the reunion is postponed or canceled for any reason be assured that we will refund your reunion fees in full. Again, it's still months away but, you are invited to bring your photo albums, DVDs, flash drives and other military items to share with those in attendance. We will have an overhead projector there for anyone to use. As usual, we also need door prizes and auction items donated so clean out your garage and closets. If you've never attended one of our auctions, you are in for a wild time. We will accept credit/debit cards or cash for your purchases. We look forward to having auctioneer Michael Santure run the show!!

Annual Raffle: An annual fundraiser is held for the purpose of receiving donations to take care of the month to month expenses of running the organization. We have listed our prizes on page 8 of this publication. Please check it out and buy some tickets. We think you will like the prizes offered this year; you can't win unless you have a ticket. Buy some today.

Cruise the Lake Tour: While on recon at Branson, Ed Barbour took a cruise on the Branson Belle, a Showboat where you too can cruise, dine and be entertained. The Belle, a 700-seat paddle wheeler travels the waters of Table Rock Lake. I'm working on getting us set up for an early evening cruise, with dinner and a show. I'll have more on this in the next newsletter.

Melbourne Florida Event: In 1994 a group of 101st Vietnam Veterans met in the campground at Wickham Park, located at 2500 Parkway Drive, Melbourne, 32935. This was the very first meeting of those who formed the organization to which we now belong. Over the years since that first gathering, we have continued to have an "unofficial" reunion there and we intend to do so again April 15-18, 2021. We have retained Lot 130 in Campground C for all these years and we will set up a tent there as our Headquarters. There's room for one Motor home or Camper; if you're willing to share some hospitality, bring it on down. Do not show up without calling first if you plan to bring a motor home or camper; my number is 803-491-4186. We do not plan to set up in the vendor's area of the park this year. So, if you attend please come to the campsite to visit. There will be a massing of the colors on Saturday, April 17 at 11:00 A.M. and an LZ Helicopter landing with a Huey and Cobra. Live bands will play music throughout the weekend and the Traveling Wall will be set up on Sunday, April 11th and remain in place until April 18th. Thomas Trott is our Melbourne coordinator and he will place a wreath at The Wall.

Happy Holidays: I'm an old traditionalist, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I know we have members of different religions and I'm certainly OK with that. Christmas began many years ago to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He's the reason for the season and that's why we have Christmas. I hope you will have time to recognize that and when it's your religious holiday, let me know and I'll add a message for you. Be safe and enjoy!!

From the Editor

Brothers,

I am going to do my best in 2021 to take this job over from Dave so he can focus on his duties as the secretary-treasurer. I know Dave has done it for years and he's done a great job with it but he just has too much to do. **We need your help.** If you have any items or information you'd like to see in the newsletter please send it to me rather than Dave. This alone would save Dave a lot of time since he'll just have to forward all those emails to me. My email is **Earle.Prior@gmail.com.**



Earle Prior, Editor

I would like to wish everyone a very blessed and Merry Christmas and hopefully a much healthier and Happy New Year. I pray 2021 brings this amazing country some much needed peace and healing. Please be safe as we go into the 2020 holiday season.

Wash your Hands Wear a Mask Watch your distance.

BOOSTERS

Members and non-members who donate to help defray mailing costs, etc. Names will stay in 1 issue (an * indicates an additional donation in that time frame). (Any amount accepted) Mail to: 3570 Green View Pkwy., Sumter, SC 29150

William Hage, Edward Pye, Leslie Carter, Dan Harelson, John Sorge* and Malcolm Craig**

SICK CALL

Johnnie Lindsey, HHC (Medic) 1/327 (66-67) has been fighting pancreatic cancer and is still undergoing chemotherapy treatments every two weeks in Texarkana, TX. He had surgery that removed a good portion of his pancreas and he says that he feels great. He has 5 more chemo treatments and the doctors tells him at that point, they will see where they go from there. He tries to stay busy; he and a friend have been working on a boat for awhile and they plan to cruise the intercostals waterway someday. Please pray for Johnnie and contact him by phone at 903-293-5722, he would love to hear from you. You can also e-mail him at: toplindsey@aol.com.

Rodney Green, A Co. 1/502 (68-69) Our webmaster reports that he had three surgeries since July, the most recent was on November 23, last Monday. He has been hospitalized three times for heart issues since last October. He describes this period in his life as, "a rough and painful four months". He's improving. Please remember Rod in your prayers. (See related story below)

Engagement Announcement



Rodney K. Green and Eunice Huxford have announced their plans to marry on January 2, 2021. Eunice lost her husband four years ago and Rod lost his wife, Helen, two years ago. Eunice and Helen were classmates from first grade through Nursing School and remained lifelong friends. We extend best wishes to the couple and hope to see them at the Branson Reunion.

Quilts of Valor

We recently had a request from a lady who works for the Quilts of Valor, asking for permission to use our logo. I assured her it was okay; it's not copyright protected. She wanted to find a site where she might purchase shirts with the logo on them; she would then take the logos off and use them to make the quilt top for someone, hopefully a fellow veteran from the 101st. I had several shirts so I donated them. She made a really nice quilt, I didn't save the photo but as a thank you to me for mailing her five shirts, she made me a nice pillow, shown below. The Mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation is to cover Service Members and Veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor. Check out their website: www.qovf.org/



TAPS

Ray Littlejohn Garren, (B Co. 1/502 Inf., July 69-Dec. 69; HHC 2/502 Dec. 69-July 70), of Greenville, SC, passed away on Thursday, May 14, 2020. He was born in Greenville, SC on April 3, 1949, and he graduated from Wade Hampton High School. He worked many years with Michelin, as a test driver, and was a charter member of Lee Road United Methodist Church.

Ray served honorably in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne from July of 1969 until July of 1970. While in the army, he received the National Defense Service Medal, a Combat Infantrymen Badge, a Vietnam Service Medal (with two Bronze Service Stars), a Bronze Star Medal, and a Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 Device.

Ray had a passion for the outdoors and loved to hunt, camp, and water ski. He was a football fan in general, however, he mainly loved the Clemson Tigers. Ray also enjoyed eating out, and when he did, he always ordered flavored tea.

He is survived by his two children, Kelly and Kylie Garren; one brother, Frank Garren; and one sister-in-law, Christina Garren. The family would like to express their deepest gratitude to Ray's long time caregivers, Jamie Axelson and Roxanna Coifield. Ray will lie in state at Mackey Funerals and Cremations at Woodlawn Memorial Park on Saturday May 23, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. A private service will be held at Woodlawn Memorial Park. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Richard M. Campbell Veterans Nursing Home in Anderson, SC.



Ray Garren was confined to a wheelchair for a number of years but attended several reunions with his caregivers.



Cindee and Don Legg

Don D. Legg, B Co. 1/502 Inf., 1967-68, passed on November 24, 2020 after a battle with cancer. Don and Cindee were in attendance at our 2017 Reunion in Colorado Springs and 2018 Reunion at Fort Benning, GA. Don was born December 29, 1948. He resided in Akron, OH and was a member of our group. We're sorry for the loss of our friend Don. He will be missed.

James Pickett, of Norwalk, CT passed on July 28, 2020. James was the brother of **Wilbert 'Bill' Pickett**, who served with A Co. 1/502 in Vietnam 68-69. Bill relates that his brother had complications due to Covid-19. Brother Bill Pickett resides at 936 Lake Village Drive, Apt. G, Chesapeake, VA 23323.

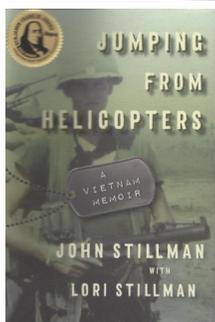
Forrest E. Stephens, A Co. 1/501 Inf., 1970-71; we received a letter from Forrest's brother, **Ernest Stephens** (Associate Member) informing us that Forrest had passed away on September 28, 2020 after a year long battle with cancer. Forrest was born March 18, 1943 and resided in Painted Post, NY. He was in the Army for a total of 32 years with 2 tours in Vietnam, the first with the 25th Infantry and the second with the 101st. Ernest said that Forrest was very interested in our organization, that attending our reunions was some of the best times for he and his brother, having attended in 2017, 2018 and 2019. I apologize for not having a photo of Forrest; some who attended our 2017 Reunion in Colorado will remember seeing Ernest, the winner of the AR-15 donated by Bryan Morrow. Ernest plans to continue his Associate Membership in honor of Forrest.

Richard H. Elliott, D Co. 1/506 Inf., June 1970 to October 1970, passed away March 20, 2020 at his home in Beverly Hills, FL. He was member 682 on our roster. We only learned about his death after his mail was returned to us; sorry, no other information could be found.

Please keep all of them and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

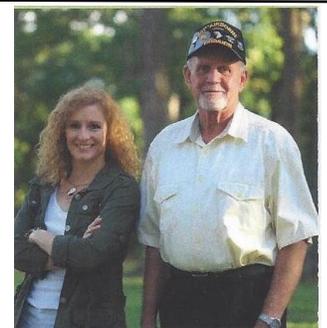


Bryan Morrow with Ernest Stephens



Jumping From Helicopters

As a rule, we don't run advertisements in the newsletter. So, this isn't an ad, it's a book review. Our friend and member, John Stillman and his brilliant daughter, Lori have co-authored a book. It's a must read for all you grunts that served in Vietnam. Usually, it takes me a month or two to read a book, this one only took two days. It's that good and I highly recommend it. Until John was invited back to his high school in 2012 for a tribute to Vietnam Vets, he had never spoken to anyone about his time overseas. In this book he unearths fifty years of repressed memories, interwoven with entries from his own journal. You can get your copy at Barnes & Nobles or Amazon. Or, contact John by email at: stillman101@icloud.com





**101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans
27th Annual Reunion
Branson, Missouri
August 25-29, 2021**



Reunion Registration Form

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ MI: _____

Guest(s) Names: 1. _____ 2. _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Alt. or Cell Number: _____

Email Address: _____ Unit in Vietnam: _____

Emergency Contact Name/Phone: _____ ****How many will attend Ladies Luncheon? _____**

Each **101st Veteran Registrant** gets a FREE Polo Shirt w/ Collar & Pocket, Size: Sm - Med - Lg - XL - XXL - 3XL - 4XL (Circle One)

Number Registering _____ X \$80.00 per person Registration Amount Enclosed: _____

Late registration fee is \$90.00 after July 31, 2021. Send check or money order only. Make all checks/money orders payable to: 101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans NO REFUNDS ALLOWED AFTER July 31, 2021

Mail completed form and payment to:

101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans, 3570 Green View Pkwy., Sumter, SC 29150-7066

Our Saturday evening banquet meal this year will be a plated dinner with three options, please indicate your selection and that of your guest(s) by writing number 1, 2 or 3 in the appropriate block below. If you have special diet needs please so indicate by note with your registration or email the secretary at mdnesbitt@aol.com no later than August 1, 2021.

Registrant's Selection _____ Guest Selection _____ Add'l Guest Selection _____ Add'l Guest Selection _____

(Each person please select one meal option)

1. Beef Tenderloin Medallions with Demi-Glace.
2. Chicken Mansfield, a Boneless Breast of Chicken Stuffed with Herb Dressing & Topped with Mornay Sauce.
3. Vegetarian, Choice of Vegetable Lasagna or Eggplant Parmesan or Zoodles Spaghetti* (*Denotes gluten free)(Circle choice)

Each Banquet Dinner will be served with Ozark Salad (Mixed Greens, Tomato & Cucumber) and a choice of dressings, Chef's choice of Starch & Seasonal Accompaniments, Hot Rolls and Butter, Chef's choice of Dessert, Coffee, Iced Tea and Water.

Registration fee includes the hospitality room with free refreshments the entire weekend, the Friday evening Pizza party and Auction, a **reunion shirt for 101st veterans**; admission to the awards ceremony and banquet meal on Saturday evening.

****The ladies lunch is free to all ladies in attendance. we just need a head count to order the meals (See above).**

If you need additional copies of this registration form for your guests please make as many copies as you need.

Those not pre-registering will be allowed to pay the late fee upon arrival at the reunion registration desk in Branson, MO.

Please note that we need you to register no later than July 1, 2021 if you wish to have a reunion shirt as these must be ordered well in advance of the reunion; without early registration you may not receive a shirt. We may have only a few extras; we cannot afford to stockpile shirts. In the past some have requested extra shirts. If you wish to order extras we need to know how many and the sizes now. Each standard size shirt will cost \$18 per shirt. There is a charge of \$20 for shirts size 3X and those 4X will be \$22. If we are requested to mail these shirts to you, add \$7.00 per shirt for S&H.

Payment for extra shirts must be received before they can be ordered. *All shirts are men sizes only.*

To order extra shirts, state how many: _____ and show Size: _____ Amount \$ _____ submitted for extra shirts.

101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans 27th ANNUAL REUNIONAUGUST 25-29, 2021 BRANSON, MISSOURI**



Our reunion for 2021 will be held in Branson, MO during the period of August 25-29. Reunion headquarters will be at the Radisson Hotel, conveniently located where there's plenty of entertainment for our guests. Branson is famous for it's veteran friendly atmosphere and events.

The hotel is located at 120 South Wildwood Drive, Branson, MO 65616. Our special reunion room rate is \$92.95 plus taxes per night for a double, queen or king room. The price includes two hot buffet breakfasts each morning. We have set aside 50 rooms each night and requested that a good number of handicapped rooms be available for our guests. If you require handicapped facilities, it is suggested that you call the hotel directly to ensure you get the accommodations you need. If you encounter any problems with your reservation, contact Dave Nesbitt at 803-491-4186. Also, be aware that the special room rate will be available two days prior to the reunion start up date and for two days after the close of the reunion.

You can make hotel reservations by copying the following link and inserting it into your computer search box:

<https://www.radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-branson/deals/101st-airborne-vietnam-veterans> .

If that doesn't work for you, it will be on our Facebook page, which is at 101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans or by calling the hotel at 417-335-5767. The link will also be added to our website, www.101namveteran.com. This link will allow you to make reservations online with the reunion information already entered for our group. You just need to insert your arrival and departure dates and select the room you desire. They will also require a major credit card number. If you call the hotel, be sure to tell them you are with the 101st Airborne Veterans group so that you will be shown in the block of rooms we reserved for the reunion. **The cut-off date to reserve rooms at our special rate is June 25, 2021.** After that date reservations will be based on hotel availability. The Branson area is really busy during the Summer months so book early. If for any reason you make reservations and have to cancel, the hotel will release you from the reservation if you notify them at least 24 hours in advance of your planned arrival date.

The Branson Regional Airport (BKG) is nearby but it has limited flights and no airport shuttle service. I learned that Frontier Air flies in to Branson. If you plan to fly, we suggest you go in to Springfield Airport (SGF) and rent an auto and make the 45 minute drive on a four-lane highway to Branson. When Ed Barbour, Reunion Chairman, conducted recon on this site, he flew in to Springfield, MO and found that renting a car was the best way to reach his destination. There are many other attractions located in the city, go online to: www.ExploreBranson.com. They will send you a free Visitors Guide.

As is always the case, the Reunion Registration and the Hotel Registration are two separate items so be sure you register early for both. There is a Reunion Registration Form in this newsletter on page 6 that should be completed and returned to the 101st Secretary with your registration fee in the near future. If you encounter any problems reserving your room or have questions about the schedule, contact Dave Nesbitt, Secretary at 803-506-3120.

***We look forward to seeing everyone at the reunion, please register
and reserve your room early!! Thanks.***

2021 Annual Fundraiser - Free Reunion Hotel Room or Cash

Each year we have one fundraiser to help defray the expenses of running the organization. This year we are raffling “3 Great Prizes” to choose from; your choice of either Hotel Rooms during the reunion in Branson or Cash. **First prize would be a free 4-Night Stay at the Radisson Hotel during the reunion week or \$400 CASH; Second prize would be a free 3-Night Stay at the Radisson during the reunion week or \$300 CASH; Third Prize would be a free 2-Night Stay at the Radisson during the reunion week or \$200 CASH.** Now that’s a deal, whether you attend the reunion in Branson, MO or not, you can still win!! If you attend the reunion, you may have your hotel room paid in full for 2, 3, or 4 nights; you could win more than once. If you don’t attend the reunion, you will get the CASH if you’re the lucky ticket holder. We suggest you buy lots of tickets now!!!

Tickets: The price of (1) ticket is \$5.00, (6) tickets are \$25.00 and (12) tickets are \$50.00. Desire more tickets? Simply make copies of those shown on this page. Once you have the desired number of tickets and have inserted your name, address and phone number, please forward them with your check or money order made payable to: *101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans*, at 3570 Green View Pkwy., Sumter, SC 29150. The winning tickets will be drawn at our reunion banquet in Branson, MO on August 28, 2021. A separate ticket will be drawn for each prize offered. If you are the winner, and not in attendance at the reunion, we will call you.

You do not have to be present to win!!



Name (First, MI, Last):

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone Number:



Name (First, MI, Last):

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone Number:



Name (First, MI, Last):

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City:

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Name (First, MI, Last):

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Name (First, MI, Last):

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone Number:



Name (First, MI, Last):

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone Number:

The McKenzie Story at Phuoc Yen

By 'Doc' Ed Barbour

Introduction: For those of you that read the story of Jon Patrick McKenzie in the Summer edition of INCOMING, you should realize that initial story came from our Historian, Charles Allen, who was present when McKenzie lost both legs on May 1, 1968. That story was beautifully written from Charles Allen's perspective. Now we have another eyewitness to the event from the perspective of the Company Medic, 'Doc' Ed Barbour. The incidents described all occurred while these men were fighting with A Co. 1/502 Infantry.

It was darkness before light on May 1, 1968, the Communist May Day, in a place only 6 clicks from Hue, South Vietnam. It was the Spring Offensive to take Hue again only a few months after the Tet Offensive in February. The abandoned village of Phuoc Yen/Duong Son along the "Christmas Stocking" meander of the Song Bo (River Bo) was surrounded by thick bamboo hedge rows with an interior 5-foot-deep trench circling the village beneath the overgrowth of vines, thick vegetation and banana fronds. Outside the village was a berm lined bamboo perimeter along a grassy field, longer than a football field, with Buddhist burial mounds at one end where Gomez's 30 caliber M-60 machine gun crew was set up behind the mounds.

Alpha Company 1/502, 101st Airborne conducted a combat assault by chopper at 1700 hours, April 28, 1968, to complete a cordon around Phuoc Yen and Duong Son villages along with other units of the 101st and Vietnamese Black Panther ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces. After many incursions into the village by Alpha Company under heavy machine gun fire, RPGs, and assault weapons, 9 airstrikes, and over 14,000 rounds of 105/155 artillery, the enemy within was desperate to break out in the morning hours of May 1. We all wondered how anyone could survive all that American firepower.

All night long, Communist blue machine gun tracers targeted against our positions mixed with 101st red machine gun tracers from Gomez's position toward the enemy. All night long, parachute flares danced light and shadows along the field's escape route. I was busy along with David Kirk carrying machine gun ammo to Gomez's crew that included Ron Ensminger and another guy we called 3rd Lieutenant because he had flunked out of a Naval ROTC program. I learned later his name was Lawrence Merschel. Others who I could not recall were Joe Brown and George Olesek. At about 0300 hours that night, there was a lapse of about 20 minutes of the parachute flares. This was when about 70 of the enemy made a dash towards Gomez's position. The blue tracers stopped for a spell but the red tracers continued. When the parachute flares resumed, I carried more ammo down to Gomez only to find him dead along with 3rd Lt. Merschel. Ensminger said a bunch of the enemy ran right over their position. The enemy knew that when first light came, it would be all over. I could not wait for first light, a time when I thought a new birth of life. Yet, little did I know the worst was yet to come for me. When daylight finally came, machine gun fire ceased and all was quiet except for sporadic rifle fire.

At around 0730 hours, I and others retrieved Gomez and Merschel to the command post and placed them in body bags. Then I observed Lt. John House, 2nd platoon leader near the crumbling broken down schoolhouse in the escape field. He apparently saw movement from a freshly dug foxhole and was beckoning for the enemy soldier to "Chieu Hoi", the call for "open arms" surrender. There were others along with Lt. House to include Alford, Holmes, McKenzie, and I think also Tingwald. I was going about my business when I heard a swoosh sound and curdling screams of "oh-no" and crying pain.

Tears were rolling down my cheeks at the sight of Lt. House, almost split in two from a direct hit from the RPG (rocket propelled grenade). Others were on the ground moaning with pain. The worst hit and still alive was McKenzie. I called other medics to help me out, but none came. I got other soldiers to get McKenzie on a poncho. I gave McKenzie a shot of morphine and started an IV (100 cc albumin). I believe he was hit with the same RPG as House. The only thing holding McKenzie's legs to his body was his fatigues. Four of us carried McKenzie on the poncho to the chopper. Both his legs were pointed to his head when I heard McKenzie say, "Hey doc, I guess I got the million dollar wound." The only thing I could think to say was, "You're going to make it! You'll be between white sheets soon, God bless you brother." He did not need tourniquets on his legs because the RPG cauterized his wounds as well as the body's natural tendency to constrict blood vessels in traumatic inflicted wounds. We got him on the chopper and I never saw him again. Later I heard some of the guys getting letters from him saying he finally arrived at Letterman Hospital in San Francisco.

Continued on page 10

The McKenzie Story at Phuoc Yen

By 'Doc' Ed Barbour

After we loaded McKenzie on the chopper, I went back for the others. As I remember, Alford, Holmes, and Tingwald were somewhat ambulatory. I grabbed an M-16. I recall, Tingwald (hopping along) and I went out towards that foxhole with anger and tears in my eyes from the sight of House and McKenzie. I saw a most pitiful soldier not more than 14 years old in appearance with mouth wide open in fear. The foxhole was lined with more RPGs. I was about to kill him when Captain Spiegelberg ordered, "back off, get the hell back," so I did.

I had to get a body bag down to where Lt. House was. His body was so torn we needed to get all his body parts in and carried him up to the command post. That's when I saw General Barsanti arrive in his Screaming Eagle emblazoned chopper, step out to see the body bags lined up. I saw him unzip some of the body bags and shake his head. That's when General Barsanti began handing out medals and pinned the Silver Star on Captain Spiegelberg.

Then the "psy-ops" choppers came in with loudspeakers attached to the Huey frames to appeal for the enemy to surrender. At about 1000 hours, a lone NVA (North Vietnamese Army) Sgt., stepped out of the hedgerow with a white flag. As I remember, Sgt. Jorge Otero headed out to escort the enemy soldier to our command post. I said to Otero, "watch out, it may be a trap." Sgt. Otero proceeded out to bring the NVA soldier to the command post. That's when Captain Spiegelberg told me to give him some food and water and clean him up. I took the soldier behind the berm, gave him water and a can of c-rations. He was clean cut and answered my basic questions in my fractured Vietnamese. Then I got our interpreter, Chin (Vo Chut), to ask more detailed questions. I found out this NVA Sgt. Nguyen (the most common name in Vietnam) was with the 90th North Vietnamese Regiment and had been coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail for the last 6 weeks. I asked what he did in civilian life. He said he was a pianist with the Hanoi Symphony.

Captain Spiegelberg hastened me to bring our captive to get on the horn and appeal for his comrades to surrender. As I was leaving my position behind the berm, one of the choppers fired a rocket right where we had been huddled. How fortunate in our timing. I heard Captain Spiegelberg yell out a bunch of expletives to that chopper pilot to cease fire. When this incident was settled, the NVA soldier started to broadcast his appeal over the psy-ops chopper's loudspeakers. Before long, enemy soldiers trickled out in surrender, I believe 94 in the next few hours.

Down near Gomez's position behind the Buddhist burial mounds there were 40 NVA bodies that had been shot in front of the mounds. Among them were two female nurses, one still alive. I gave her blood expander and she was later evacuated.

Some images from Vietnam I cannot erase while others are forgotten. McKenzie was one of the images that stuck in my mind. Possibly it was our verbal exchange that amazed me. I guess the morphine helped. I wished that I had been more forceful in following up on our brothers in arms, yet there were times when I just wanted to forget it all. I was one who allowed myself to get close to Lt. House and Sgt. Galesio Gomez. There are many incidents to be told about House and Gomez since I started out as a medic in 2nd platoon and got to know them. Their deaths weighed heavily on my mind. I did not know McKenzie well, but we crossed paths in 2nd platoon. It is strange that I recall so well the image of McKenzie's response to me as we carried him out.

Then, soon I became Company Medic. If the enemy tried to kill me, I tried to kill them. Otherwise I had no animosity towards the enemy in an undeclared war where we all were thrown into the pit to fight it out, to fight the communists. And I wonder whatever happened to the NVA Sgt. who was the first to surrender and for a moment in time we were non-combatants.

It is hard to believe that over 400 NVA and 50 Viet Cong were dug in this little village of Duong Son, not more than 10 acres. After the 5 day battle with main force NVA, there were 40 dead down near the Buddhist's burial mounds, a final 104 surrendered, about 30 escaped over Gomez's position during the parachute flare blackout, and a small number of others were killed trying to swim underwater with reed breathing tubes by the Black Panthers and Alpha troops down by the river.

In the year 2000, I returned to Vietnam to visit Phuoc Yen/Duong Son at the very ground where Lt. House and Sgt. Gomez were killed and where McKenzie was severely wounded. Fifty years later, I learned from Charles Allen that McKenzie, before he died, had won a gold medal in skiing in the Paralympics.

It was just one day in the life of McKenzie and I.



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