

The 2/4 Association



Sea Horse

Third Quarter, 2002

The Newsletter of the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines Association

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President's message

Dear Friends, Members, Marines and Corpsman---

Having just completed the 2002 edition of our annual reunion that was held in the beautiful, historic city of Savannah, Georgia, it's time to write a little about our activities.

First thing to do though is to commend Association member Jimmy Hieronymus and his fiancé Brenda on putting together a very fine reunion that will remain forever in the minds of those who were in attendance. Jimmy and Brenda took on the responsibilities for hosting the reunion on short notice and they did an outstanding job.

The tour and history lesson of Old Fort Jackson was super and for those of us who completed boot training at Parris Island the attack of the sand-fleas was an added bonus...especially at dusk, as the trolley took off for the hotel and left some of us stranded there until they returned. We were supposed to have three trolleys, but

one of them was called away which left us with two. I still say the only reason they came back is because one of us who was left behind was Brigadier General Weise and that Jimmy is a Captain with the local PD.

Parris Island was well worth the trip. Upon arrival we pulled up in front of Receiving where Drill Instructors boarded the buses and "rousted us off" just like they did years ago. I myself stood in the exact same spot (maybe not the same spot but the same position within the yellow footprints) as I did on Sept. 3d, 1963. I could not help but wonder what the actual recruits were thinking as they watched us old farts "fall-in." Probably something like the war on terrorism isn't going as well as they thought it was. Turn about was fair play as we informed the Drill Instructors as to the rank of some of the men they were ordering around...for some reason eyes light up when you preface a person's name with General, Major, Captain or Sergeant Major.

We were served our noon meal at the Rifle Range Mess Hall where all the stories about Marine chow and Boot Camp that our wives and children heard over the years were just blown out of the water. Now this was not a special meal because we were there, but rather a meal that is served at all mess halls on the Depot on a rotating basis...T-Bone Steak, Lobster Tail, Shrimp Scampi...not a choice of one or another, but all of it if you wanted it. One wife was overheard remarking as to whether or not the DIs tucked us in at night, too. I was told by the S/NCO-IC that next month recruits would no longer be working the mess halls either; it's being turned over to civilian personnel to assist the mess staff.

After lunch we walked over to Starlite Range (one of the four rifle ranges on the Depot), which is named for Operation Starlite, where men from Operation Starlite gathered for a remembrance of our friends who gave their all in that battle. One of the highlights was when we were boarding the buses again. Our assigned Drill Instructor asked us to wait for a few minutes as the Range Officer of Starlite Range had heard that we were

there (men from Operation Starlite). It turns out that he was making a wooden plaque for "his range" and asked those of us who fought on the operation to autograph it for him. The real highlight was as the buses pulled out, the Range Officer, CWO2 James Woodfish, in perfect Marine Corps style and movement, snapped to attention, rendered and held a flawless salute until all the busses had passed. I'm told that off in the distance one could see the Colonel repeating the gesture also. I don't know about the others but it gave me goose bumps and something to remember for the rest of my days.

The Saturday Banquet was set up in a private section of the Savannah International Trade and Convention Center where we stuffed ourselves on a wonderful buffet full of down-home southern style cooking. Only question I have for those who eat this way every day...Do you guys put bacon in or on everything?

Almost two dozen raffle items were donated by Gunny Brandon and Lt. Fred Williamson. My apologies for mispronouncing your name from the podium; I know it as well as my own. Congratulations to our winners; and to Pete Schlesiona, I'm sorry you didn't win (not).

Our guest speaker was Brigadier General Steve Cheney (USMC, Ret.) who recently was the CG of Parris Island. General Cheney was accompanied by his wife Colonel Roxanne (Waters) Cheney (USMC, Ret.).

Semper Fi...Jim Mazy

Second Battalion, 4th Marines---the Best in the Corps
"America should always remember---Vietnam was a War...Not a Movie"

In memoriam

Mary Awkerman passed away on August 29, 2002. Mary was the wife of Association Past President SgtMaj Charles Awkerman. All who have been fortunate enough to have known her will miss her. Association Chaplain Frank Valdez will be preaching on September 1 at his church in California and will make mention of Mary in prayer so that everyone can join us in our time of sorrow at losing such a fine lady.

✦ ✦ ✦

(Please notify the Association President or Newsletter Editor should you learn of the death of a member or their spouse. Include the date of death and other details, such as immediate survivors.)

The Malnar Awards

On 2 May 2002, the 34th anniversary of SgtMaj John Malnar's death in Vietnam, the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines Association, Inc., presented the annual "Malnar Awards" to the Marine NCO and the US Navy Corpsman of the year as selected by their peers of the active duty 2/4. This year's recipients are Sgt Matthew M. Arnzen from Golf Company, 2d Battalion 4th Marines, and HM3 Brian Massey from Weapons Company, 2d Battalion 4th Marines.

The Association congratulates these fine men in achieving this point of recognition in their military careers.

2000 - 2002 2/4 Association Officers

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The 2/4 Association Sea Horse is published quarterly, and is the official newsletter of the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines Association, Inc.

The new 2/4 Association web site

The 2/4 website <www.2ndbn4thmarine.com> (no "S" on the end) is receiving almost 100 hits per day. This has proved to be the most successful way of communicating with the Association and the world. It has links to page after page of information about your Association and I try to update it at least once a week. Visit it often. Send comments or ideas to <webmaster@2ndbn4thmarine.com>.

The "My Phone Book" site that many of you have used is no longer a working website. While it allows one to access the opening page, it no longer functions beyond that. I am looking for another phone book type of page for us to use. I'm also looking for a message board and a comments posting board that function better than what we have at present. If you know of a good one that does not insert page after page of SPAM, please send the URL to the <webmaster@2ndbn4thmarine.com>.

Election of Association officers

The annual business meeting of the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines Association, Inc. was held on Thursday morning, August 1, 2002 in the city of Savannah Georgia.

While the minutes of this meeting are not yet copied and published, the results of the election of officers of the Association for period of 1 July 2002 through 30 June 2004 are as follows:

- President: James Mazy
- Vice President: Yahya Kariem
- Secretary: Jack Petrowsky
- Treasurer: Roger Pittman (will vacate sometime next year)
- Treasurer-elect: John (Pete) Townley
- Board of Directors: Logan Walton
- Board of Directors: Tim Doble

Words of wisdom

"For most of life, nothing wonderful happens. If you don't enjoy getting up and working and finishing your work and sitting down to a meal with family or friends, then the chances are that you're not going to be very happy. If someone bases his happiness or unhappiness on major events like a great new job, huge amounts of money, a flawlessly happy marriage or a trip to Paris, that person isn't going to be happy much of the time. If, on the other hand, happiness depends on a good break-

2/4 Association PX Merchandise	
General Items	Price
Polo shirt. Maroon with "2/4 Magnificent Bastards" embroidered on the front.	\$25.00
Polo shirt. Red, white or blue with "2 nd Bn, 4 th Marines" embroidered on the front.	\$25.00
T-shirt. Gray with 11" full-color 2/4 logo decal on the front.	\$12.50
Cap. White with black bill. Embroidered with "2 nd Bn, 4 th Marines, Magnificent Bastards."	\$12.00
Cap. Navy blue or Marine Corps red. "USMC" embroidered on the front; "2 nd Bn, 4 th Marines" embroidered on the back.	\$17.00
Golf towel. White with red 2/4 logo.	\$6.50
Logo. Stitched patch, 3 1/2" x 4", multicolored. (Currently out of stock - on order. Call for price and availability.)	
Logo pin. For lapel or cap. (Call or e-mail for price and availability.)	\$5.00
Word pins. "Sniper," "Chu Lai," "Point Man," "Doc," "Life Member," "Marble Mountain," "Corpsman," "Da Nang," "Dong Ha," "I Corps," "Vietnam Veteran," "Quang Tri," "Rock Pile," "Chaplain," "Grunt," "Combat Vet," "Vietnam," and "Korea." (Call or e-mail for price and availability.)	\$3.50 Each
Mouse pads. Red and white 2/4 logo.	\$6.50
Aprons. With pocket, for home and shop use - red and white 2/4 logo.	\$8.00
Thermal travel mug. Champagne with black "USMC" emblem and 2/4 logo.	\$5.50
Coffee mug. Black with white 2/4 logo and Marine Corps emblem.	\$5.00
Full rear window decal. For pickups and SUVs. "2 nd Bn, 4 th Marines - The Magnificent Bastards."	\$25.00
Videos	Price
Dai Do. Documentary.	\$25.00
2001 Reunion. Includes visits to The Wall, Iwo Jima Memorial, etc.	\$10.00
Books	Price
The Magnificent Bastards. Keith Nolan (hard cover, only).	\$25.00
The Proud Bastards. Mike Helms.	\$12.00
One Last Mission. LtCol Oliver North, USMC (Ret)	\$5.00
Ordering Instructions: Please add \$1.25 per item for shipping and handling. Make checks payable to "2/4 Association." Some items may be out of stock and, therefore, will not be shipped immediately. Call or e-mail Jack Petrowsky first for information. Send your order to: 2/4 Association PX c/o Jack Petrowsky PO Box 7214 Las Cruces, NM 88006-7214	

fast, flowers in the yard, a drink or a nap, then we are more likely to live with quite a bit of happiness."

* * *

Andy Rooney, discovered July 24, 2002 at <<http://quotes.prolix.nu/Happiness/>>.



"2/4 "Dining In," 29 May 2002, MCB Camp Pendleton, CA.

From left to right, SgtMaj Robert E. Howard, USMC, Sergeant Major of 2/4; 1stSgt Billy Armer, USMC (Ret), Golf Company First Sergeant during Vietnam; Mrs. Becky Valdez, wife of 2/4 Association Chaplain; SgtMaj Charles Otto, USMC (Ret), Echo Company First Sergeant during Vietnam; LtCol Andrew Schlaepfer, USMC, Commanding Officer of 2/4. (Photo compliments of SgtMaj Robert E. Howard, USMC.)

A young Marine restores my faith

Submitted by: Huntington Beach. Story Identification Number: 200273122914. Story by Ann Baker

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA (June 30, 2002)
-- It was our normal Thursday morning business meeting at our real-estate office. No big deal. Before the meeting we hung around the bagel table, as usual, with our coffee. He stood aside, looking a little shy and awkward and very young, a new face in a room full of extroverted salespeople. An average looking guy, maybe 5 feet 8 inches. A clean-cut, sweet-faced kid. I went over to chat with him. Maybe he was a new salesman?

He said he was just back from Kabul, Afghanistan. A Marine. Our office (and a local school) had been supportive by sending letters to him and other troops, which he had posted on the American Embassy door in Kabul.

He stood guard there for four months and was shot at daily. He had come to our office to thank us for our support, for all the letters during those scary times. I couldn't believe my ears. He wanted to thank us? We should be thanking him. But how? How can I ever show him my appreciation?

He stood guard there for four months and was shot at daily. He had come to our office to thank us for our sup-

port, for all the letters during those scary times. I couldn't believe my ears. He wanted to thank us? We should be thanking him. But how? How can I ever show him my appreciation?

At the end of the sales meeting, he stepped quietly forward, no incredible hulk. As a matter of fact, he looked for all the world 15 years old to me. (The older I get, the younger they look.)

This young Marine, this clean-faced boy, had no qualms stepping up to the plate and dodging bullets so that I might enjoy the freedom to live my peaceful life in the land of the free. No matter the risk. Suddenly the most stressful concerns of my life seemed as nothing, my complacency flew right out the window with his every word. Somewhere, somehow, he had taken the words

honor, courage and commitment into his very soul and laid his life on the line daily for me and us. A man of principle. He wants to do it. Relishes it. And he came to thank us? For a few letters?

I fought back the tears as he spoke so briefly and softly.

He walked forward to our manager and placed a properly folded American flag in his hands. It had flown over the Embassy. He said thanks again. You could hear a pin drop. As I looked around I saw red faces everywhere fighting back the tears.

In a heartbeat, my disillusionment with young people today quickly vanished. In ordinary homes, in ordinary towns, kids like him are growing up proud to be an American and willing to die for it. Wow. We'll frame the flag and put it in the lobby. He only came to my office once, for just a few minutes. But I realize I rubbed shoulders with greatness in the flesh and in the twinkling of an eye my life is forever changed.

His name is Michael Mendez, a corporal in the USMC. We are a great nation. We know because the makings of it walked into my office that day.

* * *

This article is reprinted from the Marine Corps web <<http://www.usmc.mil/>>, July 4, 2002.

Veg is the edge - expert riflemen makes clothes that don't turn heads

Submitted by: MCB Camp Pendleton. Story Identification Number: 200232119127. Story by Sgt. Matthew Shaw

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.(March 21, 2002) -- Scout snipers' lives depend on cover, concealment and their comrades.

Peering through scopes between twigs and shrub stems, they rely on vegetation to hide them from enemy eyes.

"Veg is the edge," said Cpl. A. Alvarez, a scout sniper with 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, while tying various vegetation to a ghillie suit that makes him nearly invisible to passersby. "It might be one twig that breaks up your outline to keep you concealed."

Scout snipers of 2/4 construct their own suits. Each one takes three to four full days of tedious sewing, cutting and ripping to complete. The bushy suits also require constant maintenance, Alvarez said. After three or four uses, the suits begin to fall apart and must be repaired.

Like most Marines who spend hours of effort on their uniforms, the pride of accomplishment drives scout snipers.

"For me, there's a lot of pride involved because I've had to put out a lot of effort to get here," said Cpl. Milo Afong, a 2/4 scout sniper.

The only ones knit tighter than the ghillie suits are snipers themselves.

"I think this is the best job in the battalion," said Cpl. Sean McPherson. "The brotherhood here is tighter than just about everywhere else."

Scout snipers usually operate in small groups of two to four. One obvious movement by a scout sniper can draw

attention to him and may compromise a mission - or get his whole team killed.

* * *

This article is reprinted from the Marine Corps web <<http://www.usmc.mil/>>, Mar 22, 2002.

2003 Reunion Cruise, July 31 - August 4, 2003

A four-day western Caribbean cruise aboard the Carnival Cruise Line's "Jubilee"

Plan now to sail off to a paradise where you don't have to think about anything more serious than which hat to buy or how long to sun before you turn over! Best of all, the ship is not Navy Gray, there are no rope nets to climb in order to board or disembark, no fire watch in the cabins, private heads, the food is on plates (not stainless steel trays), you don't have to swab the decks in your free time, and the foreign port visit does not involve rifles, bullets or C-rations.

Itinerary

Day one (Thursday, July 31, 2003) finds you aboard Carnival's Jubilee that leaves the port of Galveston, Texas, at 4:00 PM. You spend your time doing all the fun things aboard the ship until she docks in Cozumel, Mexico, at 8:30 AM on Saturday. You can go ashore and spend the day wandering through the shops or touring the countryside until 5:00 PM. The Jubilee then sets sail back to Galveston, arriving in port at 8:00 AM Monday morning, August 4, 2003.

Category rates - all cabins are double occupancy (2 to a cabin)

If you're a single traveler and want to save the added expense of being the single occupant of a cabin, either pair up with someone who you know is also a single occupant or ask the travel agency to pair you up with another 2/4 member when booking your cruise.

Reunion Cruise Per Person Pricing	Inside Cabin		Outside Cabin	
Riviera Deck	4A	\$400.00	6A	\$450.00
Main Deck	4B	\$430.00	6B	\$480.00
Upper Deck	4C	\$440.00	6C	\$510.00
Empress Deck	4D	\$450.00	6D	\$540.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plus port tax of \$99.00 and government taxes and fees of \$10.50. Optional prepaid gratuities package (takes care of all tips during the cruise) is an additional \$39.00. Third or fourth passenger in a inside cabin: \$330.00. Outside cabin: \$360.00. Plus port taxes and fees. 				

Payments and deposits

- First deposit: \$25.00 per person, due by October 15, 2002. After this date, reservations will be on a space available basis. The deposit is fully refundable if you should have to cancel your reservation up to 60 days prior to departure.
- Second deposit: \$175.00 per person, due by March 21, 2003.
- Final Payment: due by May 23, 2003.

Carnival offers a Cruise Cancellation Protection Plan for \$49.00 per person (\$29.00 for 16 years and under). This insurance must be purchased before the final payment. It's well worth it, should almost anything unexpected cause you to cancel your cruise.

Additional Information

Cancellation insurance

If you must cancel your reservation due to an unforeseen illness or emergency involving yourself or a family member, traffic accident, quarantine, jury duty or subpoena, Cancellation Insurance assures that you will receive a refund.

Cancellation Penalties (without Cancellation Insurance coverage)

- From 60 to 30 days prior to sailing: loss of deposit (\$200.00) (May 31-July 1).
- From 29 to 8 days prior to sailing: 50% of total fare (July 2- July 23).
- 7 days or less: 100% of total fare.

Air transportation, transfers and parking

Any of the below travel agencies can book your air transportation along with your cruise.

Transfers from Houston Airports (IAH or Hou) are \$60.00 per person round-trip. If you are driving, the Jubilee leaves from Pier #25 at the Texas Cruise Ship Terminal, 2502 Harborside Dr., Galveston, TX 77550.

Beverage service

There are dispensing machines on the Lido Deck with juice, coffee, tea, and water; these are available at no charge. "Soda Cards" that allow unlimited sodas during the cruise may be purchased on board at the Casino Bar or the Pool Bar. Cost is \$12.00 for anyone 21 years or younger, \$18.95 for adults over 21. Beer and mixed drinks cost from \$3.00 to \$6.00, depending on brand. There is usually a "drink of the day" at around \$4.00.

Captain's Welcome Aboard Party

Cocktails are served as the Captain introduces his crew and welcomes you aboard. The dress is coat and tie, or suit for gents; for ladies, cocktail dress or gown.

Dress code

Dress aboard ship is casual – shorts, tee shirts, swim suits (there are pools). Dress in Cozumel is casual. You may also dress casually for breakfast and lunch in the dining room and on the Lido Deck for buffet meals.

Shorts are not allowed in the dining room at dinner. Slacks and shirt (no tie required) for men and dress or pant suit for ladies.

Miscellaneous

Beauty shop appointments, photos, Espresso's Café, some spa amenities, gift shop purchases and personal services are additional expenses.

For reservations or more information

Silver Wings Travel
2670 McCall Road
Englewood FL 34224
941-475-7979
800-881-8828 <<http://www.swingstrav.com/>>

Becky Valdez (2/4 Member)
Home 714-281-2846
Fax 714-281-2308
fxala@hotmail.com

Becky works for:

American Pride Travel
Office 714-771-7730
800-842-4368
Fax 714-771-7738
Contact: Chris DeRose <<http://www.americanpride.com/>>
* * *

The Pearl of the Orient

A Vietnam veteran returns - Part 2

By Tom Kilduff

(Editor's note: Tom Kilduff served in Vietnam with Fox 2/4 in the late '60's. He first returned to Vietnam in 1977 and has returned each year with Military Historical Tours. In the "The Pearl of the Orient," Tom recounts that first trip for us. This is part two of his story; part one was included in the second quarter issue of the *Sea Horse* and the remainder will be continued in future issues of the *Sea Horse*.)

Before leaving Hanoi we presented the first plaque from our 2/4 Association that the brand new United States Embassy had received. We also visited the war museum which had displayed prominently on its grounds the tank which had crashed through the gates of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1975. One room in the museum was dedicated to captured Americans, and, for

me, seeing those photos of POWs proved to be one of the hardest parts of the entire trip.

Once we got into what we knew as South Vietnam, the tour took on an entirely different feel. Gone were tourists seeing the sights of Hanoi; instead we Marines were filled with vivid memories of what had been. We revisited places which had haunted our memories and tried to understand the part America had played in Southeast Asia. We traveled through villages and battle positions whose names will live on in our memory forever: Saigon, Da Nang, Dong Ha, Cua Viet, the Eagles Nest, the Rock Pile, Muttters Ridge, Cam Lo, Lang Vei, Con Thien, Khe Sanh, Jones Creek, Lam Xuan East, Nhi Ha, My Loc, Mai Xa Chanh, Bac Vong, Dong Huan, Thuong Do, Dinh To, An Lac, and Dia Do.

Throughout the country, we witnessed the destruction of the American presence, machinery and shot down planes, now piled together in some morbid sculpture, still showing the numbers of airplanes and sometimes the names of the American pilots who had flown them, such as, a "Lt. J.D. Green." Nothing was as we remembered it! In Da Nang, the Liberty Bridge was now but a few pilings surrounded by pepper fields. At Phu Bai, the airfield was deserted and ringed with a fence that barred entrance. At Camp Carrol, a field was being plowed by a water buffalo. On the way to Khe Sanh, at the Eagles Nest and the Rock Pile, I couldn't help but crawl around in the overgrown trenches, bunker sites and foxholes which had at one time been my home. We also found ourselves doing the same at Lang Vei, where a Special Forces outpost had been overrun with enemy tanks, in '68, giving the NVA a straight shot to Khe Sanh. Reinforcements should have been sent, but the commander at Khe Sanh chose not to.

At the old Khe Sanh Marine outpost and airstrip, the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the war, it was hard to tell if it had even been there. Now it's a coffee plantation. In '68 it was an area of god-forsaken soggy, red mud, filled with shot-up planes, helicopters and trucks; also filled with tents, bunkers, foxholes, trenches and artillery shell holes, which had stagnant water with millions of breeding, malaria carrying mosquitoes. When we reached the site of the overgrown airstrip, our group became quiet, as we stood and looked across the broad plateau in both directions along the valley to the distant mountains. I could only get distant pictures of mountain tops, such as, 861A, 861B, 881 North and 881 South, Hill 950 and Hill 1015, which from June to December 1968 had also been my home where so much heavy fighting had occurred. Parts of the base can still be seen and the local Montagnards have obviously found a great deal of American artifacts, because they were selling everything from ordinance to insignias to boot and helmet liner remains. We were able to uncover pieces of

sandbags, tarps, rifle and machine gun casings, and incoming bullets, which meant more to us. Who had all these artifacts belonged to?

In Hue, memories revolved around the bullet-ridden Old Redemptorist Cathedral and the stadium where hundreds of South Vietnamese sympathizers had been executed. From the huge compound of the Emperors Citadel in Hue, I listened to men relate detailed accounts of the action as it had taken place. Some of the men talked of the month-long '68 Tet Offensive Battle for Hue, when they had fought there; of the 30-40% casualties received every day; of the medivacs and body bags which no one could ever become accustomed to. Early in the battle for Hue City, because of concerns about Hue's significant historical buildings and ancient history, Washington bureaucrats would not let the U.S. forces use artillery, air support, or tanks. The North Vietnamese did not seem to have this same regard for historical architecture, so they used all that was available to them; consequently, much of Hue was destroyed. To bring an end to the battle, U.S. baptized-by-fire commanders in the field, through much persuading, were allowed to use what was necessary. What a way to fight a war! By the Perfume River where the 5th Marines were located, there is now just a peaceful green field. When we left the cities for the jungle and rice paddy battle sites up North, we tried to reconstruct troop movements in areas now so overgrown that you could no longer see what had once been a clear view.

In the entire Vietnam War there were very few battles where the enemy stood toe-to-toe with American troops, held their ground, and fought it out. The majority of the time they preferred to hit the American troops, do as much damage as they could, then disappear, or "didi," as we used to call it. Yet, the battle of Dong Ha was one battle in which they stayed and fought it out. Supplies were brought in from U.S. ships on the South China Sea, up the Cua Viet River to the Bo Dieu River, and off-loaded at Dong Ha which supplied the whole Northern I Corps area of operations in Quang Tri Province: Khe Sanh, Cam Lo, Con Thien, Camp Carrol, Vandergrift and other fire support bases (FSBs) such as: Tabat, Fuller, Khe Gio, Nui Ba Ho, Sarge, also A-1, C-2, just to name a few. We finally found ourselves at the village of Dia Do, near Dong Ha and the main reason for this tour. It was here, 29 years ago during a planned attack on the Dong Ha supply base, that the 320th NVA Division decided to cut the main river supply line to northern I Corps and to destroy the Dong Ha combat base. We met some of the 320th NVA soldiers that we fought against. It was revealed that BLT 2/4 faced not one or two NVA Battalions, as our Marine Corps Military History Archives stated, but three full regiments and they, most defiantly did not "didi"! We called this

"Post-Tet" which came right after the Tet Offensive of 1968. The Magnificent Bastards fought one of the most bloody and costly campaigns of the war, although it never gained the immortality of Hue, or Khe Sanh, or Con Thien. It certainly should have! BLT 2/4, outnumbered, but superbly led and already battle hardened, dug the North Vietnamese Army's 320th Division out, hamlet-by-hamlet, trench-by-trench and spider-hole-by-spider-hole. This battle lasted for three days and was Tarawa-like in its intensity. Although casualties gutted our battalion, the enemy units were practically obliterated and their smashed entrenchments were filled with their dead, as the survivors were driven back across the DMZ, returning fire every step of the way. Near this site we had a ceremony and released a cross into the river in commemoration, "for the extraordinary men, in extraordinary times - men who were larger than life," as "Doc" Roger Pittman put it. (After nearly 30 years this ex-Navy corpsman still feels a deep and special bond with his Marines.)

At an old wooden bridge crossing Jones Creek, Doc told us his story of Sergeant Robert O'Bannon III on 13 March 1968: "Second Platoon, Echo Company was part of a two company assault on a small village named Lam Xuan East. Fox Company had been ambushed the day before, leaving behind 19 bodies (17 Marines, 1 Corpsman and the battalion historian/photographer). The two companies were given the task of taking Lam Xuan and recovering the bodies. Units of the 320th NVA Division aggressively defended this village. This would be Echo Companies fifth casualty producing assault in 5 days.

"We *knew* they were waiting for us and probably - just like us - they had all the flies, heat, sweat, thirst, fear of death. Life had become very simple, but hard! This did not look good at all. I kept repeating the words, "just another walk in the park, another day in paradise." Sweat was stinging my eyes, my gut was tied up in knots, mouth was dry. I wondered how did I wind up here, this date, in this exact spot? I was Navy, not a damned Marine. Well, *welcome to hell!*

"I was approximately right over there when I heard 'Corpsman up!' It seemed that the NVA were throwing every machine gun and automatic weapon they had at us! Dust, smoke, screams filled the air. I looked up and 15 feet away, in a *very* exposed position was Sgt O'Bannon, firing his M-16 from a small shallow bomb crater. He turned and yelled that he had wounded trapped in a trench; 'Doc, when I open up, you move up to my position!'

"I did, but his position was in a very bad place and getting worse each minute. First, it was much too small of a hole that I now shared with this hard charging Marine who was drawing fire from a complex of prepared trenches in a tree line not 30 or 40 feet away! Second,

the prone, not moving, wounded Marine was still 20 feet away, to our left.

"From behind a 5-foot cone shaped mound, 30 to 40 feet from us, there was a Marine, stripped to the waist and firing an M-60 machine gun. He would step out from its cover and fire, then duck back, just as bullets hit the mounds front!

"Sgt O'Bannon stood up, exposing himself to the heaviest firing yet, fired on full automatic, and yelled 'Go!' That's all I remember until I found myself lying next to the wounded Marine. I turned him over; he had a sucking chest wound and was in shock. Sgt O'Bannon constantly provided covering fire; more times than I could count, he would go to a full standing or kneeling position, fire with full automatic, drop down, reload, look over at me and start again. I kept thinking how does he do that without getting hit? Certainly any second he would be my next patient? He was in his element; it was the bravest thing I ever witnessed and it continued for what seemed like hours.

"I finally got the Marine's chest patched up, started an IV in his arm and held the bottle up with my left hand thinking, if I got hit it would not be my good arm. The NVA fired rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) into the trees above our heads, which exploded. Shrapnel hit all around our positions, finally a large chunk hit my thigh. Then Sgt O'Bannon, under a hail of machine gun, rifle, and RPG fire, dashed across, this area here, to assist me in carrying the Marine over to about here, which was an area of relative safety."

Doc Pittman told this story in such vivid detail, it was obvious he had gone back to that day when bullets were flying and he barely escaped the oncoming charge of the NVA. Sgt O'Bannon was killed in action five days later while assaulting Vinh Quan Thuong, another small village just 2 kilometers away. Over the last 28 years Doc has felt Sgt O'Bannon should have been recognized for his bravery. In 1996, Doc wrote a letter to LtCol "Fritz" Warren, who along with Brigadier General Bill Weise, Major General James Livingston (O'Bannon's "Echo" Company Commander), along with the help of General Charles Krulak, Commandant of the Marine Corps, managed to award a Silver Star, posthumously to Sgt O'Bannon. Only because of Doc Pittman retaining this memory of loyalty and heroism over the years was this heroic action finally recognized! Some of us learned about this, for the first time, while standing at this bridge at Jones Creek. At such times we would remember more than names, we remembered voices, attitudes, smells, fears, and relief that we survived, yet still, we remembered the guilt we had of surviving. War has never been easy. Now, instead of the sounds of battle, all that could be heard were the birds, the river, the chil-

dren laughing and playing, and a periodic scooter throttling by.

(After our trip on 4 June 1997, at Camp Pendleton, in a special ceremony with the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, Sgt O'Bannon's widow, Patricia, received his Silver Star award and his daughter, Kathleen, was presented an NCO sword as a special SgtMaj "Big John" Malnar award. SgtMaj Malnar was a recipient of two Silver Stars for valor in combat; his second for assisting his wounded Battalion Commander, LtCol Weise, to safety on 2 May 1968 at the battle of Dia Do. The fighting was very close and violent. He was killed by a rocket round while helping to defend all the casualties that had been moved to the battalion command group rear area, as he blasted away with his 12-gauge shotgun, dropping enemy assault troops within yards of his position!)

As the group walked the trails along a creek bordering Dia Do, even the village children stopped and listened to General Weise tell about the battle which had taken place where they now live. When we reached the canal banks of the creek near Dai Do, the General related, "Over there Captain Jim Livingston, knowing Echo Company was badly needed here at Dia Do, came upon this wide, 5 1/2 ft. deep, fairly swift, nearly unfordable creek. Captain Jim solved that problem in typical Livingston fashion. He had half a dozen of his tallest Marines strip down, plant themselves in the deepest part of the stream, and pass the shorter, heavily-laden Marines, hand-to-hand, to the shallow water on the other side. Not very fancy, not found in any field manual, but the 'Livingston stream-crossing expedient' worked!

"Later, Jim was wounded for the third time. Unable to walk, he steadfastly remained in a dangerously exposed area, deploying his men and supervising the evacuation of casualties. Only when assured of the safety of his men did he allow himself to be evacuated."

General Weise continued on, "Major Vargas's Golf Company was pinned down over there, they engaged in hand to hand combat, Vargas although wounded for the third time in three days, observed me sustain a serious wound. Disregarding his own excruciating pain, he crossed this fire-swept area and carried me to cover, and then he assisted in organizing the battalion's defense. I ordered him to withdraw to the rear, it was a fighting withdrawal, he was everywhere, giving orders to small groups of Marines, helping move the wounded. His inspirational leadership, personal actions and total disregard for his own safety averted complete disaster!"

As I watched Brigadier General Weise relate to us what he was forced to ask of his Magnificent Bastards, I saw tears fill his eyes as he quoted Lt Vic Taylor, who said it well for all of us: "I waited and watched those young Marines about to go into battle. Some were stand-

ing watch, some readied equipment, some slept or rested, but all were quiet. No nervous jabbering, no false bravado, no whining, no melodramatics. They were professionals. Most were teenagers, many, far less than a year away from home; but they were seasoned Marines by months of fighting with a determined enemy. Despite their youth and their relatively short time in the Corps, they were as willing and as professional as anyone who has ever wore a uniform. I was proud to be among them!"

The General bowed his head and the tears spilled out over his cheeks. For his leadership during the battle of Dai Do, then LtCol Weise received the Navy Cross and Maj Vargas and Capt Livingston both were the recipients of the Medal of Honor. Also, Maj "Fritz" Warren, 2/4's Operations Officer, received the Legion of Merit, and later retired as a LtCol. There were far too many acts of heroism and citations to mention them all here, but I have always said that my, and many other's survival was solely based on these heroic Marines.

We also heard someone relate the story of 3/1's area of operation during the battle. They had three Amtracs which had gotten stuck coming out of the water. The loading ramp of one of the personnel carriers was not able to drop completely and became stuck against the high banks, trapping the men inside. As the NVA fired down from the banks, bullets ricochet inside the vehicles, wounding and killing many of the Marines.

The memories would not stop, but followed each member of our group as we reached Con Thien where, instead of the desolation that we had left behind, we were greeted by the sight of trees climbing 50 ft. into the sky, fields and fields of peanuts. And as we looked to the South China Sea or towards the DMZ, out over the gently sloping land as it fell away from this once very important, strategically located fire base, all we could see were small rolling hills with the regrowth of shrubs, trees and plantings. Once, this was mostly brown, bare, devastated and lifeless "Indian territory." As it has for half a century, the old French bunker still stood proudly, but as with most things, it is getting covered with regrowth and cracking with age. As our group was led by children up a path to the summit where we could see the DMZ, Ben Hai River, and the bridge crossing into what use to be North Vietnam, even I who had become known for my adventuresome streak did not stray from the trails. The children warned us over and over about land mines, still loaded and active. When we reached the Ben Hai River, the 28 of us walked across the historic bridge that separated the North from the South, and with the General leading, we marched in strict military fashion, back across, from North to South, carrying a Marine Corps flag, that had flown from Tom William's Amtrac during the Battle of Dai Do, with it *own* shrap-



Group photo from the 2002 reunion

Sorry folks. I only have a few of the names. If you are here, let me know for future reference. (Photo compliments of Randy Kington and Ted Gray.)



Another group photo from the 2002 reunion

Likewise. Again, if you are here, let me know for future reference. (Photo compliments of Randy Kington and Ted Gray.)

nel holes and own story to tell, singing the Marine Corps Hymn. Our eyes were set and proud, but moistened with our own tears and memories.

Over the two weeks of travel, we found ourselves in conversation with men and women who we had fought against. In Dong Ha we were met and guided by Mr. Duong Thu Anh, a 68 year-old NVA who at age 38 was put in charge of preparing and fortifying the local area. We were all very impressed by this dignified gentleman. He verified that there were three regiments instead of two, as our General has believed all these years. He also told how approximately 6,000 to 10,000 NVA soldiers were able to infiltrate our area of operations. There was no doubt in our minds, just by looking at this "old warrior," that he had been one *hell* of a soldier. But today, all this man hopes and prays to Buddha for is peace and prosperity for our two countries.

We also met a retired Colonel Bat (NVA), former Plans Officer of the 320th Division. Colonel Bat also confirmed that there were 3 full NVA regiments in Dia Do.

* * *

This article is reprinted by permission from Tom Kilduff. The third part of the story of his trip to Vietnam will appear in the fourth quarter, 2002, issue of the *Sea Horse*.

Mazy's reminder

From the Prez...

Don't forget to make contact with Becky Valdez as-soon-as-possible for making your tentative plans to join us on the 2/4 Association 2003 Reunion Cruise. Please see the additional information

posted elsewhere in this issue.

* * *

Membership Application

Second Battalion, Fourth Marines Association

Required Information

Name: _____ Home phone: (____) _____
 Address: _____ Work Phone: (____) _____

 E-mail address: _____
 Current rank if active duty or highest rank if discharged or retired: _____
 Personal awards and decorations: _____

 Period(s) of service (total): From _____ To _____; From _____ To _____; From _____ To _____
 Period(s) with 2/4: From _____ To _____; From _____ To _____; From _____ To _____
 Place(s) served with 2/4: _____
 Unit(s) assigned to while with 2/4: Company ____ Platoon ____; Company ____ Platoon ____; Company ____ Platoon ____
 Other military affiliations: _____

Optional Information

Married ____ Single ____ Widowed ____ Spouse or significant other's name: _____
 Hometown while in the service: _____ Nickname while in the service: _____
 Current occupation: _____
 Hobbies and interests: _____
 Personal achievements, public offices, organization offices, notable feats, works published, etc.: _____

 How did you hear about the 2/4 Association? Friend/member (name) _____
Leatherneck: ____ *Marine Corps Gazette*: ____ DAV: ____ VFW: ____ VVA: ____ American Legion: ____ PVA: ____ TROA: ____
 MOPH: ____ *Caltrap*: ____ Internet web site (please specify) _____
 Other (please specify) _____

Dues Information

Life membership can be paid in up to three installments over a period not to exceed nine consecutive months. Dues guidelines are the same for Regular Membership and Associate Membership. Please indicate below the type of membership you desire.

Membership class:	Regular Membership: ____	Associate Membership: ____
Life Member:	____ 54 and under:	\$175 (lump sum or two payments of \$58.34 and one payment of \$58.32)
	____ 55 to 64:	\$125 (lump sum or two payments of \$41.67 and one payment of \$41.66)
	____ 65 and over:	\$75 (lump sum or three payments of \$25.00 each)
Annual Member:	____	\$20

It is the applicant's responsibility to schedule payments, since the Association will not send invoices. If the applicant fails to complete payment of life membership dues as set forth above, amounts paid and received towards life memberships will be converted and credited as annual membership dues.

Please mail checks (payable to "2/4 Association") and application to:

2/4 Association
 c/o Mr. Robert Bliss
 43 Meads Mountain Road
 Woodstock, NY 12498

Additional Information

If you have a picture of yourself, either as an individual or in a group setting from your Marine Corps/Navy years (boot camp, cruise book, etc.) and/or a recent photo, please enclose with this form. Also, please identify all persons in each photo. The photos will be returned after scanning. The scanned pictures, along with the identity information, will be assembled into a computer CD photo album for historical purposes of the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines.

Change of Address Form

Please fill in the following information and slip it into an envelope addressed to:

2/4 Association Roster Manager
6122 Shasta Street
Englewood, FL 34224-8161

Name: _____

New Address: _____

(Street)(Apt #)

(City)(State) (9-digit zip)

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address:_____

2/4 Association Roster Manager
6122 Shasta Street
Englewood, FL 34224-8161

New Address:

(Street)	(Apt #)
(City)	(State) (9-digit zip)

E-mail Address: _____

Postage
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