



Newsletter of "The Ghost Battalion"

Vietnam Veterans of 2nd Bn 1st Marines

www.FirstMarines.org



Volume 8 Issue 1

February 2011



Message from the President

Brothers, Family and Friends of 2/1



By the time you receive this Newsletter your Christmas and New Years festivities and gatherings are over and I hope all had a healthy, safe and happy holidays. Your hard working Trustees are gearing up for next year's reunion and are pledged to make our Memphis area 2011 reunion as good or better than last years, but it's going to be hard work to beat the 2010 reunion in San Antonio which was full of activities and camaraderie.

I arrived at our hotel on Thursday 4 November, (as many of you know I drive my pickup to the reunions because I'm hauling a bunch of our 2/1 gear each year) and while checking into the hotel I noticed familiar faces of other early arrivals, which meant a readily available work party to unload the truck and get gear into the PX and Hospitality Suite in less than fifteen minutes. The benefits of showing up early were etched clearly on all their faces.

As folks started to arrive and take advantage doing tourist stuff before the reunion opening reception Sunday evening, the immediate camaraderie was if it had been only a few days since we had seen each other last. Some made it to the Veterans Day parade in downtown San Antonio on Saturday and others shopped at the Mercado or just hung around the hospitality suite and jaw-jacked with one another. Sundays evening about two thirds of our attendees gathered in the hospitality suite for an opening toast to a successful event and then went about what we often do at 2/1 reunions, getting together with those that we were in country with and those that we've met over the years for some laughter, tears and all around good times.

Early Monday morning we were humping along the Riverwalk to the Post 76 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars where we were hosted with a San Antonio tradition, breakfast tacos, our brother Gary Gordon went back for a sixth helping I think. After breakfast our brother, and Corpsman, John Weed conducted a breakout session on how to work with VA service providers and shortly after, all attendees were able to take advantage of Healing Touch therapy sponsored by Heart to Heart Connection. A special thank you to Nannette Sagastume for her organizing and participating in the program as both a therapist and as a presenter, your enthusiasm for Healing Touch made all very comfortable. And of course no 2/1 reunion would be complete without 'Jim Page Movie Night',

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Presidents Message Continued

this year Colonel Page (Foxtrot Company Commander '65) sent us the World War I epic, "What Price Glory". Everyone ate pizza and refreshments and enjoyed the evenings 'flick' and as happens every year during the movie, a discussion about 'shot in the dark' became a topic of discussion, including new details from a couple of brothers who were at the movie the night it happened.

Tuesday 9 November was our Annual business meeting and the agenda was full. Two items on the agenda was the election/reelection for the position of Vice President and to fill a trustee vacancy, Phil Leslie was unanimously re-elected as Vice President and Harris Himes was unanimously elect to fill the remaining term of Doc John Weed. Doc Weed had announced earlier that he reluctantly needed to step aside to attend to some important family business, we will miss your level headed and knowledgeable comments, not so much your pipe. After the adjournment of the meeting brothers, families and friends of 2/1 boarded a bus and other transportation for a drive to the country and a good old fashion Texas BBQ hosted by Col. Will Wright (2/1 S-3 '68) and his bride Wilma, followed by a horse and cowboy lasso demonstration. Thanks Will and Wilma for your hospitality and a great time at your ranch. Tuesday evening we had a presentation from the Texas Tech University on their Oral History project for the Vietnam Archives and a presentation on trips and excursions back to Vietnam, and both speakers received interest from attendees.

Wednesday morning was full of "Happy Birthday Marine" handshakes, hugs and high fives. We had another outstanding breakout session, which was well attended, conducted by Doc Weed and the rest of the day was for sightseeing and relaxation in anticipation of the evenings Banquet and 'Birthday' celebration. Our annual banquet and celebration of our Corps Birthday was again a huge success, with one minor exception, thanks to the hard work of a lot of behind the scene participants, we were honored to have the colors presented by the Color Guard from the 4th Recon unit from San Antonio and our speaker MajGen Timothy Donovan gave an excellent speech. One of the highlights of the banquet was the posting of the Guidon of Bravo Company 3rd Tanks. As most of you probably know, our association's membership guidelines states that membership shall include all who served with or were attached to 2/1 and we are proud to now have officially added our brother tankers to the family. Welcome aboard Tankers, Oooh Raah! Now about that 'one minor exception' I mentioned previously, it seems that not even reunions of old salts like us are immune to a 'stolen valor' experience. Before the start of ceremonies a young man approached us and announced that he was a 1st LT on leave and wanted to celebrate the Marine Corps birthday with us and, as most would expect us to do, we invited him to join us. Within a short while however, it became apparent this person was a fake and thanks to the folks at the table he was seated he was quietly, yet forcefully invited to leave the building. One bright side of the encounter was that some of us got glimpse of what happens when one of our wives gets hold of one of these &%\$^#*!), I'll not mention her name but when it became apparent a fake was at her table she lit into him like a bulldog. Outstanding!!! I also want to suggest that any of you attending the banquet that took pictures of this person to delete or destroy them so as not to give satisfaction to those that steal the honor of our fallen brothers.

Your Trustees have not wasted time since the reunion and have been working on the 2011 gathering; we'll see you in Olive Branch, Mississippi in November.

Paul Mangan - Foxtrot '65-'66



Attention on Deck!

Brothers, Family and Friends of 2/I

The location and hotel for this year's reunion has been changed!

The short story (details to come later) is that the hotel we contracted with for the 2011 reunion recently had its Franchise cancelled for a variety of reasons so your trustees decided to seek a new location.

We are meeting in Mississippi! Actually we are still going to be in the Memphis area, only our hotel is in a suburb of Memphis that is a few miles across the state line in Olive Branch, MS.

You will still fly or drive to Memphis and the Hotels shuttle will bring you to our reunion location, The Whispering Woods Hotel.

The best thing about the change is that we have a much better hotel at a lower room rate (\$82.00 per night, single, double or whatever) that also includes complimentary breakfast, internet access, free shuttle service to Beal Street, the Casino, and to the upscale Mall. Oh, and shuttle pick up at the airport as I mentioned previously.

Here is the information to make your reservation and set your travel plans.

Reunion dates: 9 - 13 November (with the majority of the reunion events occurring on the 10th, 11th, and 12th)

To make your reservations and to get driving directions for your GPS;

**Whispering Woods Hotel & Conference Center
11200 East Goodman Rd.
Olive Branch, MS 38654
662-895-2941**

www.wwconferencecenter.com

When you call to make reservations just tell them you are with 2/I and you will get the eighty-two bucks a night room rate.

We have also been updating our mailing list and have found that a number of our Brothers may not be getting mail from us, so if you know one of our men that is not on the E-Mail Update list and relies on snail mail for the associations news, please contact them and ask them to let you know if they don't get their copy of the newsletter.

See you in November! Semper Fi, Paul Mangan



2010 Annual Meeting - San Antonio

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF 2/1
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 8 NOVEMBER 2010**

0900 Meeting called to order by the President Paul Mangan.

A roll call of officers and trustees was taken. Those present:

President-	Paul Mangan
Vice President-	Phil Leslie
Treasurer-	Mario Sagastume
Secretary-	Ben Dickson
Trustee-	Vin Burdziuk
Trustee-	Mike Valdez
Trustee-	John Weed
Trustee-	Gary Gordon
Trustee-	Bruce Oliver



The President announced special recognition to Bravo Co., 3rd Tanks members joining the organization.

Special recognition was given to members Phil Odom, Ron Bates, and Frank Adams all members of Fox Co. from 1968-69. Each man has had life threatening illness this year and has recovered and they are here today.

A hearty welcome was given to all first time attendees.

MGySgt Ski noted a correction to last year's minutes, the reunion date correction is 2011- Memphis, 2012 San Diego, 2013 Washington D.C. Corrections duly noted.

A motion was made to waive the reading of the minutes; it was seconded and passed by voice vote.

The President made the announcement that Doc John Weed would be resigning the remainder of his term as trustee due to personal reasons. Doc said he will still be around to help with VA and Vet issues if needed. He will be greatly missed.

The President called for treasurer's report:

Treasurers report:

Mario ran through a detailed financial statement, covered the main highlights, and notified the Members that copies of the report are available to anyone who requests it. We do not publish the Details on our web site but do make them available. A motion was made to accept the report, Seconded by voice vote.

The President called for committee reports:

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2010 Annual Meeting - Continued

V.P. report: Phil Leslie discussed the insurance policy that covers the organization and the banquet. It gives protection to the board and members from liability claims, etc.

Hospitality: Mike Valdez gave a detailed account of the donations, costs, and functioning of the hospitality suite. Our costs were substantially reduced this year from donated items (beer, coffee, etc.) and the help from the VFW Post 76. Randy Leverne was recognized for all of his efforts to help Mike.

Membership: Gary Gordon is in charge of updating our membership roster and it will be the focus of his committee this year. The goals are to identify and obtain hard data on new and old members, and to audit the current roster for corrections. Mike Mcneely was recognized for his efforts and help with this. Gary encouraged anyone with time to help out since it is a very large task and more people helping would reduce the time involved.

Communications: Vin Burdziuk gave details and numbers on the hits to our web site, average is around 60 visits per day. We have approved the purchase of an offsite archival storage service to back up our files so no pictures, documents and important information we retain would be lost in case of a computer problem. Submissions for posting to the web site have increased this year and that is a good thing. Everyone is encouraged to submit articles, pictures, or items of interest to the webmaster for inclusion in our updates and to the web site. We have started a Sick Call and Condolence Card service to the membership. The Sick Call card will offer a word of encouragement to those who are ill. It will have the current year battalion picture on it, taken at the reunion. The Condolence Card will have a picture of our missing man table and words of sympathy for the loss of a fallen brother on the inside. Please notify the webmaster if you know of someone who is sick, or has passed away so we may respond.

The President announced elections for the position opened up by the resignation of Doc Weed and the election for Vice President whose term is expiring.

V.P. - Phil Leslie was nominated to continue another term as Vice President. A second was heard and a voice vote taken. The vote was affirmed and Phil was re-elected. Congratulations Phil.

The trustee position with a 2 year term was opened for nominations: Harris Himes from 3rd Tanks was nominated and he accepted. No other nominations heard a call for the vote and second were made. Voice vote approved Harris and it was so affirmed. Congratulations Harris.

Old Business: Gunny Ski asked for a clarification on unrestricted vs. restricted funds and how these are allocated. Mario gave a detailed explanation that restricted funds are those that a person specifically designates to go for a certain cause. Any other donations to the organization are used for the general good of the memberships as the trustees deems appropriate.

New Business: A discussion was made on having the reunion at different times of the year to possibly make northern locations available for the reunion. Having it in November limits many sites due to weather considerations. Some felt it should be near a holiday or during the summer months. A discussion of the costs at some locales was a factor. The board will study the issue and come to the next meeting with some recommendations.

The President read a letter from the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior program. It acknowledged our donation last year of \$1000.00 and thanked the membership for their support. It was suggested that this be made an item of old business each year and a donation be made.



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2010 Annual Meeting - Continued

A suggestion was made to have something on the website with a roster of people who plan to attend a reunion and what year. This way others would see who might be there and hopefully boost attendance. This will be investigated by the webmaster for implementation.

A motion was made to donate again this year to the Wounded Warrior Fund in the amount of \$1000.00. This was passed by voice vote. Vin Burduik will work on a tab for the web site that will allow people to donate to the WWF.

The President made several other announcements about the events this week and the meeting was adjourned at 1010.

Report by: Ben Dickson Fox 2/1, 1968-69

Message from Mario Sagastume - Treasurer

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF 2D BN 1ST MARINE REGIMENT
2010 REUNION
MARIO'S COMMENTS**

Because of the participation and generosity of our membership, we had another successful reunion in San Antonio in 2010. The new items, such as polo shirts, t-shirts and new coins were a hit. Thanks Phil Leslie for walking point and choosing the colors and styles, also the design of the new coin. OOH-Rah.

Thanks also to Bruce Oliver, Archie Williner, Phil Odom, Steve Susavilla and Pat Morris for the contributions of raffle and auction items. If I missed someone, please forgive me. It's hard to keep track when we are all excited to see each other.

For the first time, we had a silent auction and it was also a success. This will become a tradition at all future reunions.

The raffle and auction at the banquet was a little rushed because we had a band on the clock that we were paying for and Bruce "Bo-Jangles" Oliver was getting nervous. The dancing was a lot of fun, but we'll have to plan this better next year. Nonetheless, we raised a lot of money selling raffle tickets; thanks Gunny Anne Williner for squeezing those dollars out of the guys. You have a life time job if you want.

Each year, it seems the reunions get better and this year in Olive Branch, MS should be no different.

Semper Fidelis, Mario Sagastume - Treasurer

Did anyone of our 2/1 members take a picture of the ladies dancing around the wheel-chair of Frank Adams and his wife Patti at the dance during our San Antonio Reunion. Frank would like a copy of the picture so he can treasure the moment! Thanks in advance, Bill Duncan billduncan48@cox.net

Message from Gary Gordon - Membership Committee

Greetings to all our 2/I members, their families, and the many other friends we have that support this wonderful organization. It is with many thanks that I know that I walk along side this band of brothers and friends.

Thanks to all that took the time to complete our registration material and for those who sent their reservations in prior to our November reunion. I have that information and am in the process of going through our membership roster to make corrections and or updates. Some of you will get an email or phone call from me to determine if you served with 2/I and/or listed in our organization as a family member or other interested party. I thank you for your support in this effort.

I also wish to thank all those who have completed our phone call review of the current, outdated roster. We are making progress in this area and if you have not been called we hope that you will be reached soon. If you do relocate or change email information, please let either Vinnie or me know so that we may remain in communication with you. For some that have not ventured into the computer world, you may want to talk to a spouse, one of your children, or even a friend that does have email, to see if they would be willing to get a short message to you on occasions. If so, we can use their email address to communicate with you.

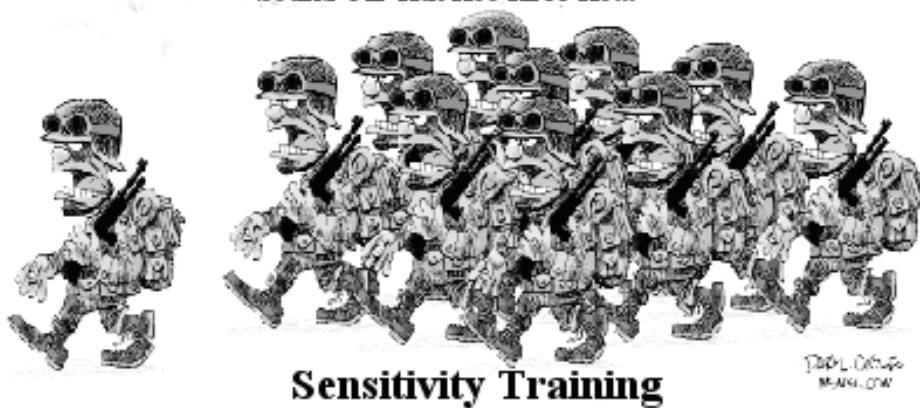
I lost my notes for those Marines that were willing to help our Roster update committee. I did drink more than is my current behavior so I was not as organized as I thought I was. So... if anyone that has a computer with Microsoft Excel, or related spreadsheet, and unlimited phone call service that would like to spend a few hours a week auditing our current roster; please fill free to email me for more details.

As will be noted in other communications you will find that this will also be a year that a large effort will be made to locate our Brothers who remain "out there" and offer them information regarding joining our organization. This will be done with all due respect for there wishes.

Not related to the above, I wish to remind us all that the focus on being "the season to be jolly" is countered by bad and sad memories from our collective Viet Nam past. If you or your loved ones feel that these memories and emotions are disruptive in these times please find someone to talk to in you family, your church, Vet Centers, or even the VA medical facilities. I am of the thought that we can not, nor should not, forget these important times in our lives. We can learn to live with these memories without them doing harm to ourselves or those around us that care for us.

Gary L. Gordon
2/I, H&S, Radio
1968 – 1969

**I Dunno but I've Been Told... Shootin' Things is Gettin' Old...
Kiss a Baby - Hug a Tree... Show Some Hospitaliteee...
Sound Off Hut Hoo Hree Ho...**



Trustee - LtCol Harris Himes - Bravo Co 3rd Tanks 67-68

TANK-INFANTRY BROTHERHOOD: 2/I AND TANKS



As Second Battalion, First Marine Regiment, First Marine Division shipped out from San Diego for Vietnam in 1965, B Company, First Tank Battalion mounted out on an LSD from Del Mar to join them. Captain Jim Collier was the company commander. Commanding the heavy section of tanks in third platoon was Sergeant Bob Embesi (who retired as a Marine Gunner, CWO4). They were involved together in Operation Harvest Moon.

Fast-forward to May, 1968. First Marines had been involved in Operation Pegasus for the relief of Khe Sanh Combat Base, as had first platoon, Bravo Company, Third Tank Battalion. First platoon had been sent in to replace third platoon, which had endured the lengthy siege of Khe Sanh. Several convoys had gone back and forth along Route 9 during April and May.

This article involves those tankers—so far—who have been graciously “adopted” by 2/I.

Early on the morning of May 19, 1968 -- Ho Chi Minh's birthday -- elements of F Company, Second Battalion, First Marines had teamed up with two tanks from first platoon to sweep the road for mines in preparation for a large convoy leaving Khe Sanh later that morning.

One of the two tank commanders was Corporal Fred Kellogg.

Unknown to the Marines, the NVA had prepared a massive ambush for the convoy. The ambush consisted of units from several North Vietnamese Army regiments and divisions. The sweep team spotted some movement, and the tanks brought them under fire, prematurely triggering the ambush. The tanks and the sweep team were immediately brought under heavy enemy return fire, which severely wounded many of the team.

Both tanks' crews fought for several hours. Kellogg's tank killed several RPG teams. In at least nineteen instances, Kellogg approached craters where NVA were concealed, then fired his main gun right over their positions to stun them with the 90 mm.'s concussion. This was a very creative solution to the problem. Afterwards, even while the NVA were concentrating their fire on the tanks, in order to dispatch the stunned NVA, whether he dropped grenades into the crater or kill them with the tanks "grease gun," it was necessary for Kellogg to lean well out of the cupola -- thereby exposing himself and risking his own life. He did this repeatedly, especially when NVA tried to creep up close to the tank to disable it.

At one point, the other tank had been hit by an RPG. Its blast deflector was canted up about forty-five degrees. The other tank commander radioed that he had been badly wounded.

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Tank-Infantry Brotherhood: 2/1 and Tanks - Continued

To protect that tank, Kellogg immediately maneuvered his tank in between the damaged tank and the NVA. He continued to fight.

Kellogg's tank was heavily engaged when it took another RPG in a weak area of the turret near the range finder. Shrapnel sprayed throughout the turret, injuring all the crewmen. Kellogg received over seventy wounds of varying severity to his face, throat, both arms, both hands, and his chest. Extremely bloody, he fell to the floor of the turret. His loader thought he was dead. Fortunately, he wasn't.

Finally, Lieutenant Himes, the tank platoon commander, was allowed to bring his two shot-up crews and tanks back behind the wire. Himes then sent out two more of his tanks, together with the rest of F Company loaded onto these tanks and in six-by's. Shortly after the troops' deployment, F Company's commander was killed, together with several others in his command group who were either killed or wounded.

As a loader on one of these tanks, Corporal René Cerda helped his tank commander in spotting the enemy while the tank commander helped the infantry. While doing so, Cerda frequently exposed himself to hostile fire, at the risk of his life, in order to warn of approaching enemy. As a result, he was wounded many times. Additionally, he helped to command the tank while the tank commander was involved with tank-infantry coordination. Notwithstanding his many debilitating wounds -- including a severe wound in the back of his head -- René never complained but continued loading the heavy 90mm rounds and changing barrels and ammunition belts for the .30 caliber machine gun during the many hours of constant combat. Hundreds of NVA were slain.

Cerda's tank took over thirteen RPG hits, which wounded everyone in the turret. The radio antennas were shot off, the radios were out, and the turret power was gone, forcing the turret and the guns to be operated manually. The infantry were almost out of ammunition and were preparing for hand-to-hand combat. As smoke filled the turret, everyone donned gas masks. Wounded, with blood pouring off him, René was indefatigable in his duties, even though hindered by the gas mask.

Then, flames began to come up into the turret. Cerda fought on. It was not until replacements finally came that they evacuated the tank, now on fire. Cerda was so badly injured that he had to be lifted out of the tank and carried to a nearby bomb crater where the crew continued to fight with side arms and grenades.

In the other tank, Corporal Rick Oswood, the gunner, was deadly in wiping out enemy targets, on several occasions firing to protect the other tank. On one instance, he spotted an enemy RPG team lining up to fire yet one more round into the other tank. One round from Oswood -- they disappeared.

Rick's tank had taken at least seven RPG rounds itself. The eighth round entered the tank near the range finder next to Oswood, severely wounding him in his eye, face, and the upper part of his body. Everyone in the turret had been wounded. Rick's tank was ordered back into Khe Sanh, while Cerda's tank remained in the fight.

There is no question but that the combined efforts of F Company -- and later E Company -- working in concert with first platoon's tanks and Colonel Duncan's calling in effective air support -- effectively vanquished an ambush that would otherwise have caused cataclysmic damage to the waiting convoy. It was the battalion's second bloodiest day of combat in Vietnam, and more than half of the tank platoon's Marines were medevaced following the battle.

What a day - and what a privilege for first platoon's tanks working with Second Battalion, First Marines!

Harris Himes - Bravo Company - 3rd Tanks 1967 - 1968

2010 San Antonio Reunion



Sign Up - Change Address or Update Information

**Send this form to: Gary Gordon - 8206 Evert St, San Antonio, TX 78240
or E-Mail Gary Gordon at: glgordon21@yahoo.com**

Full Name:

Address (street, city, and zip code):

Home Phone:

Cellphone (optional):

E-Mail Address:

Organization name (i.e. Golf, Foxtrot, etc.):

Rank:

MOS:

Year(s) of service in Vietnam: _____ to _____

(include nickname if your buddies knew you by that): _____

Are you a member of the "1st Marine Division Association"

Yes _____ No _____



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Vietnam Veterans of 2nd Bn 1st Marines 2011 Reunion in Olive Branch, MS

2011 Reunion - November 9 - 13

Majority events occurring on the 10th, 11th, and 12th

Whispering Woods Hotel & Conference Center

11200 East Goodman Rd., Olive Branch, MS 38654

662-895-2941

Room Rate \$82.00

Same Rate for Single, Double, Triple or Quadruple Occupancy.

Reservations Code: 2nd Bn 1st Marines Reunion

Hotel Parking & Wireless Internet FREE

Includes complimentary breakfast, FREE shuttle service to Beal Street, the Casino, the Upscale Mall, shuttle pick up at the airport.

Newsletter of "The Professionals"

Vietnam Veterans of 2nd Battalion 1st Marines

2209 Cushendun Ln, Garner NC 27529

