



6/31st Battalion Newsletter ~ Winter 2006

The holiday season is behind us, decorations safely put away for another year and many of us have settled in for a long winter. Of course, some will have a more pleasant winter than others; still we will all experience some impact from the winter doldrums.

Now is the time when one tends to think of vacation and plans begin to form on how we will spend that much needed reprieve from the reality of our day-to-day lives. So before you plan how you will spend that time off work we thought we would ask you to consider reserving a few of those vacation days for the 31st Regiment Association annual reunion in Syracuse, New York, which will be held August 3rd – 5th.

The reunion is without doubt one of the most rewarding experiences you could ever expect. To meet face to face, after all this time with your brothers! And just in case you were wondering... we continue to encourage your attendance for one reason and only one reason... we want to be reunited with you.

What does a Vietnam Veteran think about so many years after their tour? Here are some thoughts from one of our own... "While I cannot speak for anyone else, I do know that most of the Veterans I have spoken with and mailed letters to want to know about their buddies, the guys they served with. I know personally how the simple act of contacting a Brother I served with brings a smile to my face and I suspect by the conversations and mailings those that have been found are happy someone cared enough to touch base with them as well.

For many families that have lost their loved one (Killed in Action or lost later due to some other, not officially recognized cause) their wanting to know more, to connect with someone who was with their loved one can be extremely rewarding for both the Veteran and the family members...it does require courage and dignity to make contact in these cases, but the healing and gratification from these kinds of reunions are truly at the heart of the matter.

Searching and finding for a Brother you served with can be both rewarding and on occasion a little disturbing (in cases where you discover they have passed away or wish not to be contacted for any number of reasons). But I believe the rewards of finding your buddies far out weigh the occasional 'passed-away' or 'no-contact-requested' condition. And the numbers bear this out – as of 23 December 2005, the Battalion had: 2266-Total-names, 159-deseased (7%), 146-KIAs (6.4%), 831-Located (36.7%), 22-No-Contact-Requested (0.97%), 715-Searching (32%), and 393-Incomplete names (17%).

The number of Located Brothers can be directly attributed to the search efforts of those willing to seek and find the guys. The website; <http://www.vietnam6bn31inf.com> was constructed to assist anyone wishing to make contact with a Veteran who was a member of the 6/31 – the Newsletters sent to half of the 831-Located without computers, lists addresses for the purpose of making requests for contact.

The Reunions are a fantastic way to reunite with the Brothers you served with and to meet the families. For me, the Reunions are one way to express my gratitude to my Brother's who served, to Honor our Fallen and their families, and to express how the Veteran is the core of American Patriotism. I recommend becoming a life member of the Regiment, and to participate in the yearly Reunions – you will find, as I have, the true meaning of Brotherhood."

Over the past year there has been a huge effort to locate each and every man of the 6/31st that served. Many dedicated individuals have spent countless hours searching every available means to identify and located the men. Literally thousands of postcards, letters, and of course this newsletter have been mailed to all addresses we have identified, using e-mail where available to reduce the cost of the mailings. Telephone calls are made on a regular basis to further enhance the connections being made.

The cards, e-mails, letters we receive are usually so expressive of thanks for our efforts at finding the men, and establishing contact. Even when we happen to send mail to an incorrect address, we receive a note back thanking us for the effort and wishing us well on finding the 'right' guy. It is a rewarding experience that mere words cannot describe.

The contact letters and calls encourage a visit to all the websites that promote the 6/31st and to stand up and be counted. Through the guestbook and membership entries we have apprised that our search efforts are very successful, we have also received a huge amount of e-mail and regular old-fashioned mail that confirms our search efforts. I know when I started this effort, there were very few men that had been located, and in my humble opinion our results are staggering...

	TOTAL	DECEASED	KIA	LOCATED	NO CONTACT	SEARCH INCOMPLETE	INCOMPLETE
ALPHA	456	37	24	142	4	192	57
BRAVO	262	10	24	70	0	42	116
CHARLIE	455	27	34	161	4	140	89
DELTA	650	51	46	384	14	130	25
ECHO	189	9	9	77	2	48	44
HHC	346	37	9	46	0	175	79
UNKNOWN	6	0	0	2	0	3	1
BATTALION	2360	171	146	881	24	728	410

Over the past few months, the work force has increased and we have realized more participation from Charlie, Echo and HHC men, thus increasing our ability to reach out to even more of the men. Thanks guys, we really appreciate all your help and your willingness to make calls and reach out to your brothers. We are still looking for someone from Bravo to join the ranks and the fun! With each contact made, more men are identified and our search continues. In a very short time, we were able to reduce the amount of men counted as information incomplete to actively searching by well over 200. We have included a list of the men we are searching for whose information is incomplete; if you are able to fill in any missing details for these men we would appreciate your assistance. Contributions have funded the expense of paid searches when all other efforts were exhausted.

In the past, our mailings have been that only confirmed addresses would receive a newsletter and all active searches would receive postcards... this newsletter mailing is being sent to all 1600 men identified, whether confirmed or actively searching. We are hopeful that the receipt of the newsletter, will remove any doubt from those that may be hesitant in thinking about getting in contact with us. We are very serious about wanting to reunite with each and every man. If you would like to contribute to the funding of this project, please contact any of the persons listed at the close of this newsletter.

The number of men that have chosen to request no further contact is few; and we respect their wishes and will not initiate any contact. In as much we will continue to hold them in our thoughts and memories and pray for their continued good fortune. They are not forgotten.

If you are interested, and if you have internet access, the complete member listing can be viewed by visiting the website: <http://www.vietnam6bn31inf.com>, follow the link to the 6/31st Members page. If you do not have Internet access and are interested in finding the status of someone in particular, please use any of the contact information at the close of this letter and we will do our best to help you out.



Some of the recent additions to the website have been the addition of the 1969-1970 Yearbook. Chuck McCammon had carefully taken his copy apart and scanned each page to a digital format. He completed the programming efforts to bring the book online at the website, enhancing the photos to provide the best viewing quality.

In memory of those fallen, and in gratitude to those that survived – an account of the January 12, 1969 battle has been published. Many thanks to Jim MacMaster, and to all that gave testimony to Jim in writing this recount and for permission to use the recount of that battle;

6/31st Songs From Vietnam – is a four cd set that was produced by Stan Hutchison, a friend of the 6/31st, at the request of the Delta men. The cd set contains 119 audio tracks; the favorite songs of the times; Stan's original poetry; and songs since recorded about the Vietnam experience. Stan graciously has agreed to fund one paid search for a member of the 6/31st with every cd set purchased. Details about ordering a cd can be found on the contributions page of the website, by contacting Stan directly at nighthawksh@msn.com or if you do not have internet access, contact one of the names at the close of this letter.

Although I knew the recording had great reviews, I was amazed at the profound impact of Stan's writings. His words touched me in such a way I couldn't wait to share the cd with my family. My parents and other family members were so touched; to them it brought an understanding about what my brother endured and experience during his time in Nam.

Sadly we report that we have found more members of the 6/31st have passed on ~ Virgil Dale (Bravo), Merlin Grulke (Echo), Roger McClelland (Echo/Charlie) Sherrill Pennington (Charlie), Jimmie Hampton (Alpha), Robert E. Barnes (Charlie) and Johnny Tucker (HHC). Our sympathies to the families and our prayers for our

departed brothers... May they rest in peace. The complete list of men from the 6/31st who have passed on is being forwarded to the 31st Regiment Association for inclusion in their memorial roll call at the August reunion.

Delta Company, Gary Spears has been hospitalized with leukemia. Gary was the company RTO, and a significant member of the January 12th 1969 battle. Please hold Gary in your prayers... we send him our very best wishes for his recovery.

Eagle Flights by Chuck McCammon A/6/31 10-69/70



Huey's on an Eagle Flight, troops at the ready with legs dangling out the door, watching and waiting to see the color of smoke and to see if the LZ was in the mud. As the Huey's descend, we prepare to bail out – remember...how cool it was at altitude and hot it was on the ground, figuratively and physically.

I always sat behind the right-seat (co-pilot) with my M60 pointed down and forward as we approached an LZ. Hearing anything was absurd, the blade pop, engine whine, and air rush all but made us deaf. Sight was our only sense worth a damn as we tried to comprehend if we were rushing head long into a hot LZ. I don't know how the RTO's could hear anything, but apparently they not only could hear but they also could talk to the commanders.

I hated jumping from a Huey that wouldn't get low enough over water or mud – I knew, with my 60 at the ready, I would sink or get stuck in the muck. I am sure I wasn't the only one, anyone packing a substantial weight was in the same predicament. Big Jim Sittig pulled my ass out of the mud more than a few times and I would venture to say Carl Cedars (also a 60-man) was helped a time or two by a buddy out of the mud. Once down, getting away from the Huey's was paramount, if any enemy were around, 60 and 81-millimeter mortars could be deployed and effectively dropped in on an LZ if Charles had his shit together.

I am sure the pilots didn't want to sit around and wait for anyone too long. Same was true when the Eagles came to pick us up – best be quick about getting onboard. Depending on the nature of the operations, we might find ourselves making several insertions in a single day.

Of course the worst part of the Air Mobile ops was the intended surprise to the local VC – with troops being placed in locations so quickly, we needed to be extremely alert regarding the local's dispositions. And the booby-traps were perilous even when completely devoid of enemy troops, they appropriately named these areas, "Tu Dia," which means, Land of the Dead.

CIB's and AM's were two of the first awards given to Combat Infantrymen. Air insertions were common, most of us made at least 25 within a few months. John P Mikolaycik and I received our AM's together on General Order No. 286 dated 24 January 1970 for Air Mobile actions in the last quarter of 1969.



Reunion Information

Thanks to Vin Zike, Delta Co and the Commander of the 31st Regiment Association, and his lovely wife Jackie we have reunion 2006 details and registration information.

Syracuse is in upstate New York located by the Finger Lakes. Located in downtown Syracuse, the Genesee Grande Hotel is a beautiful hotel with premium guest rooms and luxury suites. Its' sister facility is the Parkview Hotel that is located two blocks from the Genesee Grande (free shuttle service is available). The Parkview Hotel is also a lovely hotel that offers premium guest rooms at a bit more modest rates. The two hotels are close to the historic district and the eclectic shopping and restaurant area known as Armory Square. All rooms include a continental breakfast. There is a hotel phone located at the kiosk at the airport for the free shuttle service to the Genesee Grande/Parkview.

Guest Rooms

The Genesee Grande has 160 separate accommodations that consist of premium guest rooms and luxury suites. Their premium queen and double guest rooms are tastefully appointed and complete with in-room coffee makers, digital cable TV, and high speed internet access. The luxury suites feature king or queen bedrooms, elegant living areas, offices, high speed internet and fine Brazilian Granite baths. *Rate does Include a Continental Breakfast* LOCATION of Continental Breakfast will be located in the Tuscan Room off of the Lounge Area. (PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE 13% NY STATE & COUNTY ROOM TAX)

The Parkview Hotel has 83 separate accommodations that consist of premium guest rooms. Their guest rooms are tastefully appointed and complete with in-room coffee makers, and high speed internet access, complimentary continental breakfast each morning. *Rate does Include a Continental Breakfast* LOCATION of Continental Breakfast will be located in the lower level in Conference room A and B. (PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE 13% NY STATE & COUNTY ROOM TAX)

The Genesee Grande and Parkview Hotels agrees to secure the following overnight accommodations for 31st Infantry Regiment Annual Reunion from August 2, 2006 – August 5, 2006. Rates for the accommodations are as indicated below.

Genesee Grande Hotel Room Block

	Queen/Full Bed	Handicapped Room	Standard Double-Double	Deluxe Suite	Boardroom Suite
08-2-06	33	7	40	24	1
08-3-06	33	7	40	24	1
08-4-06	33	7	40	24	1
08-5-06	33	7	40	24	1
1 Person Rate	\$92.00	\$92.00	\$92.00	\$115.00	\$149.00
2 Person Rate	\$98.00	\$98.00	\$98.00	\$121.00	\$149.00

Genesee Grande Online Reservations (www.geneseegrande.com) If you are making reservation online – you will need to enter the special code under GROUP on reservations (Special Code is**) for the **Genesee Grande Hotel Only 0608MILITA(.)** The different rates will appear and allow you to book and get a confirmation number online.

Parkview Hotel Room Block

	Standard King	Single Handicapped Rm	Standard Double-Double	Kitchenette Suite
08-02-06	25	3	25	15
08-03-06	25	3	25	15
08-04-06	25	3	25	15
08-05-06	25	3	25	15
1 Person Rate	\$86.00	\$86.00	\$86.00	\$86.00
2 Person Rate	\$92.00	\$92.00	\$92.00	\$92.00

The Parkview Online Reservations (www.theparkviewhotel.com) If you are making reservation online –you will need to enter the special code under GROUP on reservations (Special Code is**) **for the The Parkview Hotel Only 0608PV31ST(.)** The different rates will appear and allow you to book and get a confirmation number online.

PROCEDURE FOR MAKING RESERVATIONS

All reservations will be made by guest individual calls (1-800-365-4663) or by booking online at www.geneseegrande.com or www.theparkviewhotel.com(.) Please note when making reservations by phone the individual must specify 31st Infantry Regiment Military Reunion and which hotel they want Parkview or Genesee Grande.

All reservations must be made by the **cut-off date of Saturday July 1, 2006** to guarantee the discounted group rate and availability of rooms. Reservations will be accepted based on The Genesee Grande Hotel’s availability after the cut-off date at the best available rate. Check in time is 3:00 PM; check-out time is 12 noon. Every attempt will be made to accommodate either early arrivals or late departures based on guest accommodation availability and business trends. Late check-outs must be requested and approved in advance to avoid additional charges after the 12 noon check-out time.

2006 Reunion Itinerary
All Reunion Events are at the Genesee Grande Hotel

Thursday, August 3

1000-2100 Reunion registration -- Cost \$25.00 per person. Syracuse Visitor’s Bureau will be present to assist with local tourism and restaurant information. Name tags with additional tags for tour and banquet given at this time.

1000-2200 Hospitality Room (In the Mayflower Conference Room) Beer, soda, water and snacks available. Memorabilia Room (In the Capital Room A & B) this room is available to place your mementos and photo albums – it will be locked up at night

- 1130-1630 Informal trips for: Golfing (there are several courses within 10 miles)
 Shopping (Waterloo Shopping Outlet, Armory Square).
 Casino Gambling (Turning Stone Casino about 30 miles – (transportation may be available).
 Motorcycle Ride around the Finger Lakes (a 150-200 mile roundtrip)
 with lunch (pay there) at the Dinosaur Bar-B-Que in Syracuse

[1800 Board of Directors Meeting](#) (Board Suite Room 214 in the Mayflower wing)

Dinner: On Your Own – The Syracuse Visitor’s Bureau will be at the Registration Table to assist you with making restaurant decisions and reservations.

Friday, August 4

[1000-2100 Reunion registration](#) -- Registration Desk will be open

All Day Reunion Tours – Choose one per person

“Men’s” Ft. Drum Tour or “Ladies” Finger Lakes Tour

[800-2200 Hospitality Room](#) (Mayflower Conference Room)

[1500-2200 Film “Band of Brother’s”](#) (Mayflower Theater –45 seating capacity)

Dinner: On Your Own – The Syracuse Visitor’s Bureau will be at the Registration Table to assist you with making restaurant decisions and reservations.

Saturday, August 5

[0800-1500 Reunion registration](#) -- Registration Desk will be open

[0800-2200 Hospitality Room](#) (Mayflower Conference Room)

[1000-1100 Memorial Service](#) (Tiffany Room)

[1100-1200 Association Meeting](#) (Tiffany Room)

[1200-1300](#) Lunch on your own

[1300-1500 Presentations or Film “Band of Brother’s”](#) (Mayflower Theater –45 seating capacity)

[1830-2200 Banquet](#) – Cost \$35.00 per person (Tiffany Ballroom) (Coat & tie for men, cocktail dress for ladies)

This will be a sit-down dinner with Entertainment provided Rich Wilson –DJ and fantastic singer of “oldies” and patriotic songs A cash bar will be available

Sunday, August 6

Good-Byes and Departures

[0800-1200 Hospitality Room](#) (Mayflower Conference Room) Memorabilia Room (In the Capital Room A & B) Please be sure to pick up your items prior to your departure.

Notation: although membership in the 31st Regiment Association is not required for reunion attendance it is a benefit to all in preserving the history of the 31st Regiment. Membership forms can be found on the Association website or we will be happy to furnish you a copy upon request.

We’ve added a feature to our member list; a column to indicate whether you plan on attending reunion 2006 – let us know and we’ll update the list with your intent to attend. We hope this will be a benefit to those planning on attending in hopes of reuniting with one of their brothers.

31ST Infantry Regiment 2006 Reunion Registration

NAME : _____ \$25.00 ea \$ _____

Family Member(s) _____ \$25.00 ea \$ _____

Or Guests _____ \$25.00 ea \$ _____

(The registration fee is required for all members and guests)

Address _____

City _____, State _____ Zip _____ - _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____

Company/Battalion of the 31st Inf. _____

When _____ Where _____

EVENTS:

TOURS: Ft. Drum tour \$35.00 X ____ (# participants) = \$ _____

“Ladies” Finger Lakes tour \$50.00 X ____ (no participants) = \$ _____

This is a great tour. Lunch, Women’s Rights National Park, a Winery (yes... wine tasting), and shopping! Tour costs are per person, and include bus transportation, tour fees, entry fees, and lunch. Seating for tours must be reserved in advance. Space may not be available last minute.

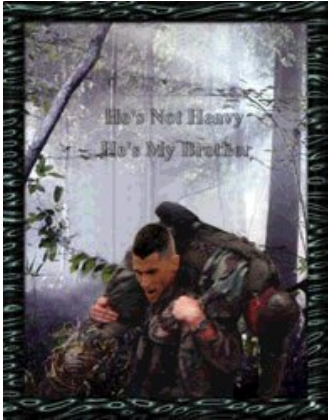
BANQUET/DINNER DANCE \$35.00 X ____ (no participants) = \$ _____

Banquet fee is per person, and includes sit down dinner, entertainment, and dancing.

TOTAL: \$ _____

PLEASE SEND THIS COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORM WITH YOUR CHECK MADE OUT TO **31ST INF. REGT. ASSN., NO LATER THAN JULY 1ST** – TO:

**VIN ZIKE
21 CASKEY RD.
GLEN SPEY, NY 12737-5800**



The High Ground By Robert Clark

(This article was taken from the World Wide Association of Army Rangers. Bill Morgan, Alpha Company and Echo Company Recon Platoon leader forwarded it along through Don Varenhorst. It was thought to be a poignant read, one that shares thoughts that many deal with.)

A couple of years ago someone asked me if I still thought about Vietnam. I nearly laughed in their face. How do you stop thinking about it? Everyday for the last twenty-four years, I wake up with it, and go to bed with it. But this is what I said. "Yeah, I think about it, I can't quit thinking about it. I never will. But, I've also learned to live with it. I'm comfortable with the memories. I've learned to stop trying to forget and learned instead to embrace it. It just doesn't scare me any more."

A psychologist once told me that NOT being affected by the experience over there would be abnormal. When he told me that, it was like he'd just given me a pardon. It was as if he said, "Go ahead and feel something about the place, Bob. It ain't going nowhere. You're gonna wear it for the rest of your life. Might as well get to know it."

A lot of my "brothers" haven't been so lucky. For them the memories are too painful, their sense of loss too great. My sister told me of a friend she had whose husband was in the Nam. She asks this guy when he was there. Here's what he said, "Just last night." It took my sister a while to figure out what he was talking about. JUST LAST NIGHT. Yeah, I was in the Nam. When? JUST LAST NIGHT. During sex with my wife. And on my way to work this morning. Over my lunch hour. Yeah, I was there.

My sister says I'm not the same brother that went to Vietnam. My wife says I won't let people get close to me, not even her. They are probably both right.

Ask a vet about making friends in Nam. It was risky. Why? Because we were in the business of death and death was with us all of the time. It wasn't the death of, "If I die before I wake." This was the real thing. The kind where boys scream for their mothers. The kind that lingers in your mind and becomes more real each time you cheat it. You don't want to make a lot of friends when the possibility of dying is that real, that close. When you do, friends become a liability.

A guy named Bob Flanigan was my friend. Bob Flanigan is dead. I put him in a body bag one sunny day, April 29, 1969. We'd been talking only a few minutes before he was shot about what we were going to do when we got back in the world. Now, this was a guy who had come in country the same time as myself. A guy who was loveable and generous. He had blue eyes and sandy blond hair. When he talked it was a soft drawl. Flanigan was a hick and he knew it. That was part of his charm. He didn't care. Man, I loved this guy like the brother I never had. But, I screwed up. I got too close to him. Maybe I didn't know any better. But I broke one of the unwritten rules of war. DON'T GET TOO CLOSE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO DIE. Sometimes you can't help it.

You hear vets use the term "buddy" when they refer to a guy they spent the war with. "Me and this buddy of mine..." Friend sounds too intimate doesn't it? "Friend" calls up images of being close. If he's a friend, then you are going to be hurt if he dies, and war hurts enough without adding to the pain. Get close; get hurt. It's as simple as that.

In war you learn to keep people at that distance my wife talks about. You become so good at it, that twenty years after the war, you still do it without thinking. You won't allow yourself to be vulnerable again.

My wife knows two people who can get into the soft spots inside me. My daughters. I know it probably bothers her that they can do this. It's not that I don't love my wife, I do. She's put up with a lot from me. She'll tell you that when she signed on for better or worse she had no idea there was going to be so much of the latter. But with my daughters it's different. My girls are mine. They'll always be my kids. Not marriage, not distance, not even death can change that. They are something on this earth that can never be taken away from me. I belong to them. Nothing can change that. I can have an ex-wife; but my girls can never have an ex-father. There's the difference.

I can still see the faces, though they all seem to have the same eyes. When I think of us I always see a line of "dirty grunts" sitting on a paddy dike. We're caught in the first gray silver between darkness and light. That first moment when we know we've survived another night, and the business of staying alive for one more day is about to begin. There was so much hope in that brief space of time. It's what we used to pray for. "One more day, God. One more day." And I hear our conversations as if they'd only just been spoken. I still hear the way we sounded, the hard cynical jokes, our morbid senses of humor. We were scared to death of dying, and trying our best not to show it.

I recall the smells too. Like the way cordite hangs on the air after a fire fight. Or the pungent odor of rice paddy mud. So different from the black dirt of Iowa. The mud of Nam smells ancient, somehow. Like it's always been there. And I'll never forget the way blood smells, slick and drying on my hands. I spent a long night that way once. The memory isn't going anywhere. I remember how the jungle appears almost dream like as the pilot of a Cessna buzzes overhead, dropping parachute flares until morning. That artificial sun would flicker and make shadows run through the jungle. It was worse than not being able to see what was out there sometimes. I remember once looking at the man next to me as a flare floated overhead. The shadows around his eyes were so deep that it looked like his eyes were gone. I reached over and touched him on the arm; without looking at me he touched my hand. "I know, man. I know." That's what he said. It was a human moment. Two guys a long way from home and scared shitless. "I know, man." And at that moment he did.

God I loved those guys. I hurt every time one of them died. We all did. Despite our posturing. Despite our desire to stay disconnected, we couldn't help our selves. I know why Tim O'Brien writes his stories. I know what gives Bruce Weigle the words to create poems so honest I cry at their horrible beauty. It's love. Love for those guys we shared the experience with. We did our jobs like good soldiers, and we tried our best not to become as hard as our surroundings. We touched each other and said, "I know". Like a mother holding a child in the middle of a nightmare, "It's going to be alright." We tried not to lose touch with our humanity. We tried to walk that line. To be the good boys our parents had raised and not to give in to that unnamed thing we knew was inside us all.

You want to know what frightening is? It's a nineteen-year-old boy who's had a sip of that power over life and death that war gives you. It's a boy who, despite all of the things that he's been taught, knows that he likes it. It's a nineteen-year-old who's just lost a friend, and is angry and scared and determined that "Some *&#*s gonna pay." To this day, the thought of that boy can wake me from a sound sleep and leave me staring at the ceiling.

As I write this, I have a picture in front of me. It's of two young men. On their laps are tablets. One is smoking a cigarette. Both stare without expression at the camera. They're writing letters. Staying in touch

with places they would rather be. Places and people they hope to see again. The picture shares space in a frame with one of my wife. She doesn't mind. She knows she's been included in special company. She knows I'll always love those guys who shared that part of my life, a part she never can. And she understands how I feel about the ones I know are out there yet. The ones who still answer the question, "When were you in Vietnam?" "Hey, man, I was there just last night."

In closing we wish you all the best for a happy and prosperous new year. We hope that you will consider the 2006 reunion in your vacation plans and we look forward to reuniting with you our brothers. As always, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions for this newsletter and your contribution of articles of interest

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6/31st Battalion Newsletter – Winter 2006 is a 6/31st Team Production. Newsletters archive:
<http://www.vietnam6bn31inf.com/id35.htm>