

6-31ST - BATTALION NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2006

SYRACUSE REUNION RECAP The 31st Regiment Association annual reunion was a grand time again this year, the 6-31 had 95 men in attendance, and I think it is safe to say an amazing time was had by all. Congratulations to Vin Zike and his wife Jackie who coordinated the event. Thank you to Chaplain Burns (HHC), Charlie Tapp (DELTA), and Dean Hess (ALPHA) for their very moving words at the 31st memorial service.

Delta Company did it again, they had the most men in attendance, Congratulations Delta Co – you are an inspiration to the rest of us. The troops are rallying and 2007 will be another opportunity for another company to gain the high attendance recognition – Jerry White (on behalf of Delta Co) has offered a new challenge to us for 2007, perhaps the combined efforts of Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Echo and HHC will be able to gather more attendees than Delta Co.

This year at the reunion, thanks to Chuck McCammon, there were a number of slide show presentations featuring photo submissions of the 6-31st. We were also able to present the fantastic slideshow Nam Rocks created by Dan Ezso (Echo Co). We are hopeful that next year we will have even more presentations for the 6-31st.

A huge thank you to Chuck for his creation of the 6-31 memorial service presentation; Chuck created a slide show honoring our KIA's, and those that have since passed. At the last minute, we decided to add the names of the deceased members of the battalion, Chuck was under pressure to complete it in time for the showing and he did a great job.

It is hard to describe how moving it was to see the names slowly scroll to fill the screen in the theatre, and I believe it touched all those attending deeply. This year the presentation including the names of the 146 men that are on The Wall and over 200 names of our deceased brothers – because of the search efforts underway it was the first time that many have seen these names that were added to our Honor Roll.

After the conclusion of the service Jerry White said it best... *“All the more reason for us to reach out to all our brothers and do our best to encourage them to reunite in whatever way is possible for them. Time is slipping by us and we have to make a concentrated effort to find and reunite with our brothers.”*

Also Jerry had these comments to add – *“The 6/31st Memorial Service was most moving. Thanks Chuck and Mary. I would like to suggest that we hold this service every year, and I would suggest that we read the names of those brothers who have passed the year before, and have members of their company stand as their names are read. In addition, if we could view the pictures that we have for our KIA's, that would be appreciated. Jerry”* We will do what we can to make this a possibility and incorporate your suggestions.

There were many amazing stories at the reunion, and thankfully a few people have been gracious enough to share their experiences with us... I hope you enjoy Reunion 2006 Reflections ~

ALPHA COMPANY ***Joann and Kenny Manley*** (Kent Matthews KIA 1/18/70)

“The reunion was a dream comes true for me. As most of you know, my husband, Kent Matthews, was killed in Vietnam. I had wished for so many years to have contact with the guys that knew Kent. Not only did I mourn for Kent's loss, but I knew there were others that served with Kent that mourned his loss as well. I prayed that God had blessed them with a good life after the war.

Quite often, I would thumb through the 31st Infantry yearbook, wondering who these guys might be. One evening while on the internet, I came across a site that mentioned Kent's name. How excited I was! I was hesitant to come forward, but Mary Doyon gave me that nudge that I needed...and I am so thankful for that.

The reunion was all that I thought it would be and much more. There were hugs, tears, laughter, stories, pictures, remembrances, and much more. Once I met everyone it was as if I had known them for years.

I can't thank you enough for inviting me to the reunion, and for all those responsible for putting the reunion events together. It was one of the most memorable experiences of my life.

Join in on the chats, get reacquainted, attend the next reunion...you will be so happy that you did!"

Rick Ollendorf –

The reunion in Syracuse was not what I expected it to be. Everyone that had attended them before told me it would be emotional, therapeutic, heartwarming and fun. I thought I had been through all of these emotions already over the past years and it would just be good to see some old friends again.

I was wrong, it hit me pretty hard. Even now, when asked about the reunion by my children or family, I have a hard time keeping my emotions under control.

This was the best thing I've done since I married my wife, bless her soul. The feelings of kinship with those of you I served with and those I just got to know was like we never parted. And hearing the wives and family members talking about the same things I went through when I came home gave me the feeling of having a weight lifted off of me that I have been carrying for 35 years and didn't know it.

And the stories! Just the few that I had a small part in like Terry Barrix, who was severely wounded, wanting to thank the Medic who saved him and seeing the two of them together after all these years. I don't think Doc Manderscheid or Terry Barrix will ever be the same. Or the story of how people I don't even know called around Kansas and found Norm Alexander and had him call me, he and I met at the reunion. Or finding Capt. George Lavezzi and being able to thank him for all he did for us, and being able to tell his wife about those times. Bonnie said she knew nothing of George's time in Vietnam, he never spoke about it.

Thank you all for being there and accepting my wife and I back into your lives, I will remember these days together for the rest of my life.

I can't tell you how much we are looking forward to San Antonio. Maybe one of these reunions (LA?) I will ask my kids to stop by; I want them to meet the heroes I served with.

Chuck McCammon –

"Let's say there are a few friends on earth who are so dear to you, so incredibly cherished, that there is nothing, nothing at all you wouldn't do for any of them - forever. That statement doesn't even come close to describing how I feel about the men I served with in Vietnam. Now consider these men and their families – the feelings are multiplied hundreds of times – that is what a Reunion feels like. This year's reunion had many unforgettable moments – both sobering and intoxicating.

Moses Callahan arrived early in the week and Mary and I had the distinct pleasure of getting to know this biker dude at the biker hangout, the Dinosaur BBQ.

Herman Spoto gave a gift that etched itself into a hotel lobby table - John Quick, Charles St. Omer (Duke of the Delta), Kenny Steed all imbibed the gift with me and a happening formed late Wednesday night...this story is to be continued in San Antonio, Texas, 2007.

Kent Matthews was remembered and honored by his widow Joann Manley (Matthews) and her husband Kenny (also a Vietnam Veteran). It was a sobering moment during our formal dinner when the Regimental Commander had Joann and Kenny stand in honor and remembrance of Kent.

4-Alpha Company Commanders attended the reunion, Harry Whitmore, Alexander Nicolini, Ron Corson, and George Lavezzi – all I can say is wow, what a tremendous honor to be near these guys again – and I have to say the intimidation factor was much less sipping a glass a wine at dinner with these Commanders (smiling).

And our chat room buddies, Jan and Terry Barrix, Marion and Mike (doc) Manderscheid,

Rick and Joyce Ollendorf, Jim and Joann Tierney, Dean and Pat Hess, Robert Hill, Kenny Steed, Herman Spoto, and of course Mary Doyon (Mik's Sis) – we have so much fun in the chats – but in person, it went way over the top (intoxicating). And there is so much more...much more...to be continued, forever.

BRAVO COMPANY Tom Barry – the man of million stories, this guy remembers everything and then some. Tom was sure of story that John Atkinson had a helicopter land on him. John swore if one had, he would have remembered it.

Two days later, Alex Nicolini (Alpha Co) and Harry Whitmore (Every Company's LT) were having a conversation and Nic told the story of how he was rushing to the helo-pad and tripped; the chopper came down with Nic under it... how amazing is that for a confirmation of an event! Wrong guy, but the event happened.

Tom Barry -

I recognized Callahan immediately, but was the blond beauty next to him his wife? No it was our webmaster Mary Doyon. It was Weds day afternoon on the hotel's bar patio and Callahan's drinking coke. A changed man? Maybe! Saturday night Callahan wanted some of that punch made in our SHANGHAI BOWL. I could see the old Callahan coming out. Fortunately it was 12:30 am. My first platoon leader Harry Whitmore wasn't nearly as fearsome as 37 years ago; John Atkinson is now a Major General so I ratted out one of our captains to him. You know the day Cary Bellinger got the Silver Star out at Gettysburg. Cary died in 2000. The reunion was 4 days of heavy drinking with Dan, Pete, Wil, and Arthur Decker who fit into his old uniform and can sing. And the booby-trap to watch out for THE BAR BILL.

Harry Whitmore –

“It was so good to see again all the men I hadn't seen in 30 or more years. It was worth the exhaustion of the trip. It brought back memories that I had forgotten, can't wait to go to the next one. We aren't getting any younger and every year we loose a few more brothers... I hope all will try to get there next time”

Moses Callahan – transferred to the 6-31st from the 2-39th and told us how it affected him to make that move. Coincidentally, Jim Tierney (Alpha Co) also transferred from the 2-39th and one evening, in the hotel lobby – Moses and Jim reunited, Jim remembered Moses. Moses arrived in Syracuse not remembering a lot of the guys, after a few days, the flood of memories were visible by the smile on Moses' face.

CHARLIE CO George Mauldin – Forrest Adamson A few months back, George had asked if we had any information on his SFC Forrest Adamson, the contact info was forwarded and George confirmed we had the right man. Forrest and his wife Avi attended the reunion in Syracuse and it was a pleasure to be in their company. Forrest showed us the anniversary card he sent Avi for their 15th wedding anniversary from Nam. It was a roughly constructed piece of cardboard with the SFC yelling ‘Happy Anniversary’ to his bride.

Dale Mills –

“In April I received a newsletter from 6bn 31Inf. I was skeptical but I opened it anyway. I had not had any contact with anyone from my tour in Viet Nam since I left in January, 1969. My lack of contact with any of the guys was intentional. “Leave me alone and I'll deal with it my own way” was my attitude. I built myself a mental wall around me and only let a very few people inside.

From time to time I wondered about certain guys. I wondered about what they were doing, how they were doing, how they were coping, were they the same old guys I once knew. I even thought about trying to contact a couple of the guys, but, I never got around to it. What is this reunion about in the newsletter? Maybe it would be good to see some of the guys again....maybe I better not. It might mean making an opening in my wall and letting someone see inside my feelings. I talked to my wife, Deborah, of 19 years about the reunion and about some several hundred slides and other things I have kept hidden in the attic all these years. She wanted me to get them out so she could see them. So, over the weekend, I went digging in the attic and the basement and drug it all out. All those boxed memories were about to just climb out of those boxes and climb all over me. Am I ready for this? Go

ahead, what can it hurt? After looking at the slides, digging through the box of patches, dog tags, metals, etc. I told my wife "I think I would like to go to the reunion". Her response was "you should go". I filled out and mailed the registration form and made our hotel reservations. What am I doing??

In the newsletter was a list of contact people for the different companies as well as a general information contact person, Mary Doyon. There were no contact names for Charlie Company so, on Monday, I called Mary. I told her about my slides and that my wife and I had discussed having them put on a CD. She encouraged me to have it done and send them to her so she could post them on the web site. I asked about several of the guys. The first I asked about was Randall Prater. Unfortunately, he passed away in 1994. None of the others had been located. I gave her all the information I could remember about them. Mary sent me the contact information she had for Charlie Company and I tried several numbers without success. The first of the guys I actually talked to was Freddy Gresham from Texas. I enjoyed the conversation and reminiscing about Ft. Lewis and our time in Viet Nam. Finally, I had actually broken the ice and talked to one of the guys. My reluctance and fears turned into excitement about talking to and seeing the guys again. I swapped e-mails with and phone conversation with about a dozen other guys over the course of the next month.

I received a call from Bill McMullen one night in June. I remembered Bill mostly because he was in one of my pictures. We knew each other, way back when, but were not friends. Bill was retiring and heading out on a six week long trip which would take him to the reunion and back. He was coming through Macon, GA and would stop by to see me. This eventually turned into a detour for Bill. He came to my house on July 4th and we took off to Nashville, TN, Winchester, VA, York, PA, Washington, DC, Cleveland, VA, and Boone, NC. I was able to visit with 7 guys I had not seen for 38 years over the course of 6 days and 2300 miles. The most memorable experience of the trip was a night time visit to the Viet Nam memorial with (Capt) Bill and Janet Owen, Lanny and Linda Smith and Bill McMullen. If you have friends or comrades whose names are on the wall, you really should go there at night and talk to them. As Lanny put it "they talk back through your heart".

Wednesday, August 2, my wife and I head out to Syracuse for the reunion. Thursday, we arrived in Syracuse at the Genesse Grand Hotel. As we moved about checking in and picking up our reunion registration packet, I started seeing a few familiar faces. I finally met Mary Doyon with whom I had exchanged so many e-mails. The next three days were an experience I'll never forget. There were no enlisted men, NCO's or officers...just brothers united by a bond that is as strong as any family bond. I had read about this bond, but did not fully understand it...yet. I met brothers that were in other companies as well as those who were in Charlie Company after I left and the seven or so that were in Charlie Company at the same time I was. It was like we all had known each other for ever. At times, I just sat back and observed what was going on. Guys who just met were like old friends. I felt a peace and warmth I had not felt in many years. In preparation for this reunion, I had read comments from attendees of past reunions; I had read all the comments on the web site and in the newsletters trying to prepare myself for this reunion. The emotions, the friendships, it was just a wonderful experience. I found out that nothing I could have read would have prepared me for what happened there. Every one I met became an instant friend with whom I had a bond. This was not limited to just the vets of Viet Nam, Korea or WWII, but the wives also. What a group! I only wish more of our brothers had been there. As (Capt) George Mauldin said "it's therapeutic". I'm already looking forward to the reunion in San Antonio and we who have experienced a reunion owe it to our brothers who have not experienced a reunion, to encourage them to be there next year."

David Bovill – Bruce Denton... an Alpha/Charlie Co connection, brothers-in-law as well as brothers-in-arms. David found all his orders, awards, even the card that specifies the inoculations he had before being sent over to Nam, a treasure trove of information.

DELTA CO Robert Hill and Ricardo Coronado... Lt and RTO reunited! Two absolutely amazing men, very different in so many ways and the bond between them so strong. I met Ricardo before Robert arrived, Robert did not know that Ricardo would be attending the reunion. WOW!

Charles (Harris) St. Omer "Duke of the Delta" –

I went to the reunion without a clear picture of what to expect. I'm very glad I went and encourage others to do the same. It was great to see old friends and hear what's happened and is happening to them. I saw it as a celebration of our service to our country with people whom I am proud to have served with. There were some sad memories; but I have them throughout the year and enjoyed being with people who share some of the same memories and who appreciate the fact that this was a defining time of our lives. It is a good feeling knowing that you are not alone and that you can laugh about some of some of your experiences with someone who understand what you're talking about. From Fort Lewis to Dong Tam it was a hell of a year and we all need to recognize our contributions. Like someone much smarter than me said. "When I die I know I'm going to Heaven; because I've already been to Hell."

John Knode –

"Syracuse 2006 was the first reunion, I attended. The reason it was my first reunion had more to do with timing, rather than some deep seeded thought process. I had recently retired and the time seemed right to see some of my old friends. My expectations were not that great after all I had not seen any of the guys in 36 years.

Attending the 2006 Syracuse Reunion was an incredibly rewarding experience for me. I cannot count the number of meaningful conversations I had with other veterans. These conversations were not "war stories" but rather stories of relationships that evolved to friendships. Time after time, I heard people thanking someone for something they had done for them.

After returning home I had a chance to mull over the event and came to this conclusion. We were all about the same age and placed into a very stressful environment. Everyone had a common goal, survive. There were no false pretenses. There were no attempts to manipulate someone for your own gain. This was life stripped of most everything that we had to deal with once we were back in the real world. This is why the relationships are so much different than the ones I have accumulated over the last thirty-five years. Needless to say I will be going to San Antonio Reunion in 2007."

Ron Chavez (and Maria) had his reunion wish come true, Al Galindo attended. Unfortunately Felix Melendez had been hospitalized and couldn't make the Syracuse reunion. But Ron... there is always next year!

Roy Raymond (and Janice), despite his affliction with shingles, made the reunion and we were ever so glad to see them there.

There was one very special man missing amongst the Delta Company masses this year, Gary Spears, and we all took a moment, more than once; to remember Gary fondly. I am sure that he was smiling down on all of us in Syracuse as he shared in the 6-31st reunion of the brother's in heaven.

ECHO CO Dan Ezso, thanks a million for the wonderful Nam Rocks journey, the presentation although composed of Echo memories touched all that viewed it. There was an element in the show that any and all of the brothers could relate to. Prior to the reunion commencing we were sitting on the patio, previewing some of the slides... the speakers on the laptop were turned up and the music blaring away. A few guys attending a conference at the hotel, made comment about the sounds and I explained to him what it was about... they joined us and watched the presentation. One of the guys explained he was in Nam with the 11th armored Cav. Later that day, his buddy said to me; thank you, you have opened a door for him that was closed for a very long time by letting him watch that slideshow. Dan, your wish came true, the presentation opened that door for another brother even though he wasn't 6-31 E Company.

Dan Ezso (As only Dan could describe something) –

VOICE OVER: JAMES EARL JONES

Men of Echo, (How weird does that sound?)

Sorry this took so long, I wanted to get the slide show finished – finally – and get it off to you and the other guys. The new version and it isn't anything like what you've seen, was shown at the reunion and although I missed the showing (I was at the bar with a Bushmills in hand because like I told Mary Doyon, ah, I've seen it a few times), was extremely well

received. The new version will play with your TV DVD and should look good, it will look better in your computer because the computer is capable of interpreting 1.4 million colors. Problem is you need extensive free memory or your computer won't handle it. If you do look at it on your TV use the remote to add color, adjust the chroma (tint) and sharpen as needed.

All I can tell you about the reunion is that it isn't anything like I expected. I can't remember a time when I laughed so much, cried a little and spent time with some guys, after so many years, that can only be described as a truly rewarding experience. As a writer, I'm well aware that in any experience there are as many versions as there are people that experienced the same happening. My personal take on our tour was multiplied by four; Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta and I can't thank you all enough for turning a black and white memory into living color. Art Decker and I were the only two Echo "originals" but it didn't matter. We fell right in with the guys from the line companies. And the stories...no kidding, so funny I laughed until my cheeks ached and so poignant they brought a tear more than once.

VOICE OVER: JAMES EARL JONES
Men of Echo,

You've got to go next year. Mike Medina, unsolicited by me, but definitely prompted by the slide show I sent him, sent me a letter and said he will absolutely be there. John DeVore e-mailed me and asked for a report on the reunion and I hope I made it compelling enough for him to attend next year. I can't talk anybody into anything, but for the guys that don't go I can say you are definitely going to miss something. For the people that put this on – bravo. It was extremely well run and even the ceremonial events though brief, were inspiring as we remembered our fallen brothers.

To the guys on the veranda and you know who you are. Thanks.

Arthur Decker –

"If you can contact at least one associate that has never been to a 6bn31stinf reunion it will be a worth cause. This was my first reunion and was leery about going until I had been contacted by you and one of my Co members. Seeing someone that covered your back in a tight situation was very breathtaking and very exciting. The 2006 reunion was very well planned thank to Col. Zike and his wife Jackie being that they lived in the area. Had a Great Time and hopefully intend on going to Texas next year."

Another caution to Jerry White – Art and Dan are preparing to gather the Echo troops for San Antonio and take away that Delta high attendance trophy!

HHC David (and Pat) Bledsoe are still the strongest supports of the reunion from HHC. We are trying to find more HHC guys David... and we will find them!

David Bledsoe -

I was asked to make a few comments about the reunion so here goes. I have been looking for old friends and members of the 6th Bn 31st Inf. for a long time when I stumbled across the web site of the 31st thru a 9th Div web site. After signing in with my name and address I received no response from anyone and after looking at the names on the roster I found that I did not remember any of them and that was because they were from the time period after I had left. I also noticed that there were reunions scheduled for Nevada and other far away places that made it difficult if not impossible for me to attend.

When I returned from RVN in April 1968 I was assigned to the 13th Eng Co at Ft Meade, MD and was stationed with a cook, Jack Toliver, he was with E Co in Nam and we became friends even after he was discharged we still visited along with out wives until I was discharged and returned home and after that I lost contact with him. A good friend named Ron Kitelynn contacted me after I was home but we never got together and lost contact until this year. I visited Ron early this year for the first time in 37 years. Ron is not in good health I hope to see him again soon. I also have been in contact with a friend from before VN who was stationed with us at Ft Lewis and VN. We lived a few miles apart and never visited until this year. I just got off the phone talking to him he is in bad health and if I don't see him again real soon I may never see him again.

I have not had any contact with any 6/31 members until I found that we were having a reunion at Ft Benning, GA in Aug 2005. I made plans to attend .As time drew close I began to wonder if me being a REMF would affect how the real Heroes would receive me. I was in E Co but worked in the motor pool with the other Mechanics and was as I admit a full fledged REMF but along with the other Has personnel spent time at the fire support bases. I kelp the Generators running along with the trucks no big deal as far as combat goes but that's what I did.

I was at Bearcat, Nab Be, FSB Smoke, some bridge close to Smoke, some place built up on cross ties above the swamp, Tan An, Dong Tam, FSB Moore and several other nameless places I don't care to remember.

I made the reunion in 2005 and had a great time with the 31st members even though I knew none of them and they were from a later time. In 2006 I also had a great time in New York saw people from 2005 and saw some new faces. I even got a hug from my old company clerk that was totally unexpected. I will try my best to attend the 2007 reunion and it looks like I will. I would like to see some 6/31 people there from 67-68-69, Ft Lewis to Nam what an experience it built character.

I may not have expressed myself clearly but what I am trying to say is it makes no difference what your job was in the 6/31 you need to be a part of this, infantryman, cook, clerk or mechanic you will be well received.

The newest HHC attendee was Robert Osterheld from CA. Robert it was great to finally meet you in person, and I hope that you enjoyed your time in Syracuse. We do know that through conversation with Chuck McCammon we were able to connect some names of brothers you remembered.

FORT LEWIS There is a new group forming amongst us, although company assignments were varied there are now the men of Fort Lewis – the guys that started it all. Some were sent to Nam, some remained stateside but they are the 6-31st. We welcome into the fold and we look forward to sharing our experiences with you as you share yours with us. Our Fort Lewis contact Herman Spoto has a new resource, Joe Bradley. Joe was able to provide us with an original listing of men assigned to Fort Lewis from Fort Dix. We've added the names to the member list and will begin the search efforts to locate them.

Herman Spoto -

The reunion last year in Columbus was for me a magical experience. I was called "Brother" for the first time by the men from my platoon and battalion, and for me I have never had a greater honor.

This year in Syracuse was a different experience for me. I was hoping to reconnect with two men from my platoon, one of them did attend, Mel Tapper and I met for the first time since June of 1969. Mel and I met Jim Ward, who remembered both of us from our platoon at Fort Lewis. Jim had pictures with him that we were in. This was certainly magic but it didn't end there.

I spent time with some of the most memorable men I could imagine. I was able to sit and drink and be loud with the guys that sit and drink and get loud (laughing). I met new brothers, and reunited with others. Despite the fact that I had almost no sleep, and little food, the reunion was great, and as I felt after Columbus, I can hardly wait for the next one - San Antonio 2007.

We hope that these comments lend a little insight into what it means to attend a reunion. It doesn't matter where you are in life today; whether you are an auto mechanic or a corporate vice-president. It doesn't matter if you had a 20-year military career or joyfully left the army on the final day of your 'service contract'. It doesn't matter whether you are fit and healthy or suffering with ailments. It doesn't matter if you were the party dude in Nam, and now an ultra conservative... ***don't mean nuthin!***

The only thing that does matter is that you join us at a reunion. You are remembered by your brothers and they want to sit back and spend time with you. The bonds that you formed so many years ago are remembered... and that is what reuniting is all about.

Three very short days – filled with so many memories – recollection of days gone by and new memories created with old friends. New friendships formed, and the knowing that despite time, the bonds that were formed so many years ago still exist and are stronger than ever.

To our brothers that could not attend this year; whether due to prior commitments, family issues, and health problems... you were with us in our thoughts and prayers... Please do all that you can to try and attend a future reunion and reunite with us. The clock is ticking for all of us, and we want so much to be in your company once again. We missed having you share this weekend with us.

THE RIDE Thursday morning – how neat it was to see the “Bike Gang” saddled up and roar out of the hotel parking lot for the ride. Led by Vin Zike and his wife Jackie the gang headed off on their bikes for a bit of NY touring.... we won't tell anyone that a certain Delta Honda didn't participate in the ride (smile). From the reports we heard it was a fun time had by all. Some of us non-riders managed to find Dinosaurs and partake in the atmosphere of the best BBQ in NY....

Ed Latini was one of the 4-31st men that planned on attending the reunion and participating in the ride. Ed and his friend Kathy were involved in a motorcycle crash on their way to Syracuse. We have had contact with Ed – they are both doing fine. Kathy was hurt badly but has received great medical care and is on the road to recovery; Ed has returned to Colorado and hopes to join us in San Antonio next year.

PHOTOGRAPHS For those attending the reunion, you know that there was a photographer amongst us, Frank Gubala. Images of the photos are posted on the 31st website (www.31stinfantry.org). The order form to request photos is also available at the 31st website. If you do not have web access and are interested in the cd or the yearbook you can contact Frank via regular mail or phone at: Frank J. Gubala In-Focus Photography, 199 Oakridge Avenue, Kenmore, NY 14217-1144 (716) 873-4821

Anyone that took photographs at the reunion and would like them posted can send the images to webmaster@vietnam6bn31inf.com and we will get them posted at our 6-31st website.

A PERSONAL THANK YOU Imagine my surprise on Saturday evening during the banquet when Vin called me up to the podium. The bouquet of flowers for the work I've done at the 31st website was very much appreciated ***BUT*** the next presentation blew me away completely. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for the beautiful appreciation plaque. It touched me so deeply, and to turn it over and see all your signatures took my breath away.

There really aren't enough words to express my feelings – the men and their wives of the 6-31st are the greatest bunch of people one could ever hope to be acquainted with. It is my honor and privilege to be in your presence. It is because of you, that my family and I found peace with my brother's passing, and it is because of who you are that I am so committed to help find each and every man that served with the 6-31st. It is your stories, your presence that motivates me to continue these efforts.

I won't mention names least I forget someone but, I have to acknowledge that it is not me alone that has made this all possible... there is no 'I' in team... and the team of guys dedicated to making this all possible is the reason we have come so far. It is their deepest wish to find their brothers, and together we are stronger... together we can accomplish the arduous task of locating all the brothers. Working together we are able to get through those low spots when nothing seems to work, to rejoicing in the victories of locating more men. A year ago, after the Columbus reunion, Jerry White and I compiled the first 6-31st member list with a few more than 800 names, most of them incomplete, information gathered from the 69/70 Yearbook... today we have over 2,900 names.

How amazing is it to see a man who was there in October of 70 sit and talk with an original 67 Fort Lewis man... to see the camaraderie and feel the emotions that they share... How great is it to see the look on the grunts face as he witnesses the feared C/O is really a great guy that cared deeply for his men in tumultuous times and now in a more pleasant atmosphere he finds there was nothing to fear... The C/O's will forever be the Lt's and Cpts... despite their

careers and achievements in the ranks... and each one of them, understands the respect and admiration of their men and it's okay to call them Lt or Cpt once again.

I am the one that is blessed to be a part of the 6-31st reunion of men and I thank you for that honor. The plaque stands prominently in my house, a constant reminder of the greatest bunch of guys that exist, my brother's brothers - the men of the 6-31st.

MEMORIAL FUND Sadly we are finding more and more of our brother's passing. In 2006, we have lost three of our brothers; CSM Dewey Creasey, Charles Perea and of course our beloved Gary Spears. We were notified at the time of death on both Charles Perea and Gary Spears. For Gary's memorial, a few of his brothers sent flowers on behalf of the 6-31st.

We would like to establish a Memorial Fund, so that when we learn of a brother's passing we will be able to send a floral memorial or a charitable donation to the family on behalf of the 6-31st family. If you are interested in contributing to this fund; please contact Jerry White, Chuck McCammon or myself. With over 1000 men located, the individual contributions do not have to be large in order to make this program a success.

What is needed from you, is that if you learn of a brother's passing, that you send that information to us as soon as possible so that an appropriate memorial can be sent to the family in a timely fashion.

SEARCH EFFORT UPDATE Our efforts continue to be a worthwhile venture. As of this writing we have 2,911 names on our member list.

Although we are identifying the men, the search and contact efforts could really use some more help. Right now there is a small group of men that are making the phone calls and the contacts. When we have found an address; cards are mailed in hopes that the brothers will respond, unfortunately we are not always notified if the card reached its destination and if that is the man we were searching for. A personal phone call goes much farther in changing the status from searching to located, or for that matter to let us know to start searching again.

Won't you consider helping us out in this effort? If you are willing to contact the men that were in your squad, or your platoon it will help. It would mean so much more to them if they heard a voice they remembered as opposed to a card or a call from someone they didn't know. Delta Co had great success with Jerry getting a Platoon contact for the 69/70 guys. We have a great team assembled but we can always use more help. Let Jerry or I know if you want to assist and we will get a roster out to you.

For those that attended the business meeting at the reunion – the 31st Regiment Association has voted to reimburse up to \$1,000 for paid searches conducted to locate those that served with the 31st. We have already done the searches and our request has been submitted for reimbursement... that reimbursement however, will only allow us to conduct paid searches for 166 men.

We have approximately 300 men identified with SSN waiting for funding to search; we still need your support. There are an additional 450 names, with active searches (no response to date) that could require follow up SSN searches. Following the Association guidelines it will take us years to complete these searches and that is if we are the only ones requesting search reimbursement from the Association – our brothers from the 4-31, as well as the Korean Vets are entitled to this distribution as well.

If you would consider a small donation to help in this effort, it would be appreciated. Searches cost 6.00 each – if you can find it within your means to sponsor a few searches we would be able to reach out to these men sooner and hopefully bring them back to the brotherhood of the 6-31st. We have already received generous commitments for support from a number of our Delta and Alpha brothers, but are still short of the funding necessary to search for all the men.

A special thanks to Bill McMullen, Robert Osterheld for their generous donations at the reunion. We were able to submit paid searches for Charlie and HHC personnel because of their generosity.

Just since the reunion the following have been confirmed as located; Alpha Co – Russell Swinson 68/69, John Moyer 68/69. Bravo Co – Duane Behrend 69/70. Charlie Co – Bill

Burke 68/69, Daniel McCarty 68/69, Robert Robbins 69/70 and Robert York 68/69, Echo Co – George Stofflet 68/69, Jack Snodgrass 68/69.

NEW PHOTO ADDITION with thanks to Capt. Alex Nicolini, we have added some treasured photos of a very special Shanghai Bowl ceremony to the website. It was 1969 and then Col Carson asked Capt. Nicolini to put together a bowl ceremony. On New Year's Eve, in Can Giuoc, they gathered in the Officer's club to honor the tradition of the Polar Bear. The photos can be viewed from the link on the Photo Album page. Tom Farragher, Bravo Co is also on a mission to provide us with photographs of his tour, check out his album.

REUNION 2007 will be held at the El Tropicano Riverwalk Hotel and Conference Center in San Antonio, TX. Chaplain Bill Burns and his wife Florence will be the coordinators of the event. Registration and check in will be Thursday, August 16th, Friday will be the Ft Sam and Ladies tour, Saturday the memorial service and banquet and Sunday the 19th goodbyes and departures. Mark your calendars now and save the dates... more information regarding Reunion 2007 will be coming in future newsletters.

Bill and Florence are looking for volunteers that can assist with/during the Reunion if you are interested in lending a helping hand, let us know and we'll get your contact information to them. We've heard suggestions for things that can be done to improve on the reunion and we will be forwarding those along to Bill and Florence, a few of those worth mentioning are:

- 1) Hold a social hour (or two) on either Thursday or Friday evening – cash bar for the purpose of introducing new attendees – the hospitality suite isn't always conducive to those introductions as many are busy catching up with others.
- 2) During registration, provide a list of reunion attendees – it would make it easier to track people down and make the connections... include tour dates on the list. Have an agenda of presentations and times shown – many missed out on presentations because they were not aware they were available
- 3) Have a place (white board) where squads, platoons or company can announce or advise members of an event – for instance Alpha Co dinner Friday evening meet in the lobby at 6:30 – some guys missed out because they didn't know about the arrangements
- 4) Provide a list of local establishments that are reasonable in cost for lunches and dinners – the hotel staff does not always provide the best recommendations for the audience. If Visitor Bureaus are available make sure they are known – many asked at the front desk as opposed to asking the Visitors Bureau representatives.
- 5) Consider having the Memorial Services this just prior to the dinner dance so it isn't in the middle of the day Saturday. (Notation – the 6-31 Memorial service held Saturday at 3 pm was not part of the official reunion events, this was something that we did for our guys – it is note worthy however that if we intend to make this an annual event that we schedule it at a more conducive time for those wanting to attend).
- 6) The Board meeting could still be held at 10am so volunteers can attend. Post an agenda ahead of time so members can decide if they wish to attend the meeting. Make sure roll call personnel are listed

If anyone has additional suggestions be sure and let us know so that we can forward them along. It is said that all things are bigger in Texas so with your help we can make this the biggest reunions ever... are you up for the challenge?

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