

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association



December 2003

Cover Page

CHAPLAIN'S

Toby Jordan

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Hello to every one, I hope that each of you are getting ready for the holiday season. Each year it seems that the time span between the holidays gets smaller and smaller, maybe it is just another sign of the years that are creeping up on all of us. I'm sorry I missed getting a note in the last newsletter but my computer fell victim to a virus. Anyway it is my prayer that all of you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I also hope that we can all remember the reason for the season. And give thanks for the many blessings that we have received over the past year and the many we receive each and every day. And let us remember our men and women in the service of our country stationed all around the world. Hope to see you soon. God bless you.

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BOB GOLD

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Well here it is December and the year is almost over. It seems that the older we get the faster time flies. I hope everyone had a great Veterans Day.

I would like to extend special thanks to my wife Sheri, and Jim Edwards. In October we took the membership list and sent a letter to all who were behind in there dues. As of this month I received 35 letters for dues, 18 of which became life members. This is not a good percentage for sending out 248 letters. If you received a letter you were in the rear for your dues. **KEEP IN MIND THAT THE DUES FOR 2004 HAVE BEEN RAISED TO \$25.00.** All donations for dues are due from January through March of 2004, and should be sent to Chuck McAlleer. His new address is:

P.O. Box 4863
Oak Brook ILL. 60522-4863.

I would like to wish everyone a very happy and prosperous New Year. On a special note I would like to wish all those who are serving in the Armed Forces a very Happy New Year. We all know what they are enduring being away from there loved ones over the holidays, as most of us endured those hardships while serving are time.

May God bless all of them and all of you.

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Billie McGregor, Editorial Assistant

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"Remembrances on Veterans Day"**Ray Sarlin**

As Australia stopped on the eleventh hour of the eleventh month of the eleventh day to recognize veterans, a few things came to mind that I thought I'd share. They don't have a lot to do with Veterans Day, but more with why veterans are worth remembering.

Veterans Day came into being on 4 June 1926 as a legal holiday to recognize the cessation of World War I. The holiday was named "Armistice Day" on 13 May 1938, and the day was "dedicated to the cause of world peace." On 1 June 1954, it was renamed "Veterans Day" and November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars. Other countries including Britain and Australia also celebrate "Remembrance Day" on November 11th with veterans' parades and events.

On 28 June 1968 President Johnson "rationalized" holidays to fall on Mondays to give federal employees three-day weekends from 1971. The first Veterans Day under the new law was observed with much confusion on October 25, 1971. Many people rebelled and stuck with November 11. 1971 was another bad year for holidays when President Nixon unilaterally proclaimed that not only were the birthdays of Lincoln (Feb. 12) and Washington (Feb. 22) to be celebrated on the same day, but that both would be replaced by the third Monday of February which would honor all past presidents. Sigh.

Some sanity prevailed when it became obvious that most people wanted to celebrate Veterans Day on a historically significant date. On 20 September 1975, President Ford returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to November 11, effective from 1978.

Before moving on, let's look at the difference between Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. Veterans Day is the day to thank and honor all Veterans, living and dead, who served honorably in the military. So we have two special days each year to honor our comrades who died in or in the aftermath of battle.

Before becoming web-master of our battalion website (<http://www.ichiban1.org>), I spent hundreds of hours assembling a list of Ichiban troopers who died in Nam. The dust is long settled on that undertaking now, but I have to say that it was very rewarding for me... and not just a little bit eye-opening. Some Charlie Company soldiers who were at my change-of-command ceremony just before my DEROS were on that list, which came as a shock. Those were men who were familiar to me, and who I had never thought of except as alive and well... and young. For example, SGT Gary Cokley (Panel 06W - Row 034) joined Charlie a few weeks before I left, and died just nine days before Veterans Day, 1970. He was our battalion's very last man killed in action in Vietnam.

His loss reminded me of another of my E5s, SGT Dennis Moore (Panel 14W - Row 069). Dennis was a platoon sergeant who died from wounds received disarming a booby trap, a job he could have left to others. Just a week earlier, he had performed one of the most courageous acts that I saw in Vietnam, trying to save the life of a squad leader, SP4 (Acting SGT) John McDaid (Panel 14W - Row 047), who was badly wounded after his small ambush opened fire on a NVA company. Arriving with the reaction force, Dennis sized up the seriousness of John's head wound and carried him in his arms through heavy enemy automatic fire to allow the Dustoff that miraculously flew in through NVA tracers to load John without slowing down in the beaten zone. John was alive then but died before touchdown in Phan Thiet.

All three of these men were very sharp NCOs and fine young men. The loss of each was tragic, not only for our unit and our country, but for their families and friends.

The loss of Dennis, a fellow Ranger and one of the people that I'd come to rely on, hit me extra hard. I took the time the next few days after the battle to interview a number of other soldiers who had witnessed Dennis' act so that I could write up an award. What he did was truly heroic. I had in mind a DSC, especially since the chopper company CO had been on the horn to ask if we would support DFCs for the pilots. He said the pilots reported that Dennis' quick and heroic action probably saved their bird, which still took numerous hits, and that he deserved a Medal of Honor. As an orphan battalion, we were seldom in line for major awards. I figured the paperwork would likely be downgraded to a Silver Star, but I put him in for a DSC.

(Continued on pg 4)

MEMBER LETTER

Dennis Driscoll

Dear Brothers & Sisters of the 1/50th:

Meeting with many of your again after so many years has been most wonderful for Ginny and I. Meeting new men that served with the 1/50th was just as rewarding and wonderful. Ginny and I were also exceptionally pleased to meet your wives, children and grandchildren. This is a brotherhood beyond explanation. The following are a few thoughts I shared with veterans in Gardner, MA on Veterans Day. I thought of what we went through, from those early days of 1966 at Ft. Hood, TX until each finished their tours. This is part of my speech.

A veteran has many traits, characteristics and experiences that are unique to them. A veteran is someone, when called upon, is perseverant and loyal. Is obedient, yet has the ability to question an order to determine if it is lawful and moral. In which way will this order most protect his men? A veteran is reliable and dependable. He or she does not shrink from their responsibility. They may complain but the mission is accomplished. A veteran is generous and sharing - more than anyone else in the world. Sharing many times what little they have. Veterans have great faith in other veterans. Veterans can be very persistent and optimistic despite the odds. During the Battle of the Bulge in the village of Bastogne during WWII, several German infantry and armor divisions surrounded the 101st Airborne Division and the 10th Armored Division. A wounded American paratrooper was brought to the aid station. He asked the medic why the wounded were not being evacuated. The medic replied that they were surrounded by the Germans and were outnumbered 10 to 1. The paratrooper responded "those poor Germans." That is optimism and persistence.

Veterans are adaptive and innovative. In 1968, on a small hill south of Khe Shan, a Marine patrol was cut off and surrounded by a North Vietnamese unit. The rainy season was in full force. Helicopter supply and gun ships could not reach the besieged Marines despite many attempts. During the ensuing battle, the Marines ran out of ammunition. To keep the final assault of the NVA back, the Marines threw rocks and sang. I'm sure the song was the Marine Corps Hymn. That is adaptive and innovative.

The two stories are so much like the men that I had the honor to serve with. A veteran rarely compares himself to others. They are their own person. Veterans have courage and integrity. Veterans have helped the less fortunate and needy. They appreciate what they have because they have been without. Veterans have seen others worse off than themselves. Veterans are thoughtful and compassionate. The patron saint of many units is St. Martin of Tours. On one of his campaigns he noticed a beggar on the side of the road. He took off his military cloak, cut it in half and covered the beggar. That evening he dreamed that the beggar was Jesus Christ.

Their experiences are many. Exhausting forced marches, through choking dust, burning sun, stifling heat, even in the shade, swampy bivouacs, air laden with all types of smells, bitter cold, blizzards, monsoons, typhoons, strange forms of sickness, unexplained and irremediable, experiences borne by patience or heroic pride. There are many other experiences that you could add.

Then the battles, horrible scenes shocking to the senses, burrowing into the memory to live again in dreams, or haunting visions. Yet the veteran continues on. That is American grit. They are warriors – tried and tested – to defend and secure what is right and ought to be.

In the Old Testament, Exodus, Chapter 15 Verse 3 states; "The Lord is a Warrior." I pray we all will be accepted into His presence as Warriors for Peace.

Daniel Webster stated: "God grants liberty to those who love it and always ready to guard and defend it."

Thank you to all veterans and their families. God bless each and every one of you.

TAM QUAN, MISSING AWARD & LZ LITZ
Dennis Driscoll

During the Battle of Tam Quan I was wounded on the second day. The first day part of our recon platoon and I were moving north along the S. China Sea. The orders I had received were to serve as a blocking force. A small group of Viet Cong were heading to a small village in the area. By 1300 hrs we received another order. A helicopter would pick us up and return to LZ Ollie. There we were to pack our tracks and head north to Bong Song.

When we arrived we formed a line on Rt. 1. Our recon platoon was the right flank. We were the southern end. As the assault moved forward, we noticed the flame platoon was firing to the northeast of us. That was on Dec. 6th. That evening we set our LP's and prepared for the morning.

On Dec. 7th we formed one line and swept forward encountering enemy resistance. After some engagement, we pulled back. At that time CS gas was dropped in the area, and artillery barrage followed. During this phase of the battle many of the men from the 1/50th were wounded. I was one of them.

While I was in the hospital in Qui Nhon a general pinned a Bronze Star for meritorious service. He stated it was for units of the 1/50th. That was Dec. 11th or 12th. After I was sent to Japan another member of the 1/50th who was with me confirmed that units of the 1/50th received the Bronze Star for meritorious service. Many of the men that I mentioned this story to had not heard of it. Therefore if any of you have received any orders confirming our award, please write a note to add to the newsletter. There are many men who received awards and do not have proof to add to the DD214. So in researching your records, make copies so we may inform our brothers of any other awards that they may be entitled to.

Many served at LZ Litz. If you have any information that you would like to share, please send it to Dennis Driscoll. At our reunion at Ft. Benning, I was able to compile a great deal of information pertaining to the battle. What you could send is the location of your track and it's number. Try to recall where you were in relationship to Rt. 1. Include what directions your track was facing and what was the number or members of the track next to you.

I pray that all of you have a wonderful and blessed holiday season. God Bless each and every one of you, your families, and friends.

Remembrances on Veterans Day
Continued from Page 2

Last year I was in touch with one of Dennis' cousins, who had retired as an Army Master Sergeant. He told me that he had been inspired to join the Army by Dennis' example. While talking with him, I learned that the award citation for Dennis was proudly posted in the local Community Hall nearest the tiny hill community of Bodines, PA where Dennis hailed from – and that it was for a Bronze Star with "V" device.

Was Sergeant Moore's heroic sacrifice blemished by the political pettiness of people in our chain of command? I've thought on this question long and hard, and I'm at peace with my final answer. Dennis is a hero to me and, far more importantly, he is a hero to his family and people in the hills where he grew up. Dennis himself told me in the morning just before he was mortally wounded, he didn't need a medal... he was just doing his job.

I still think about Dennis often, even more so on Veterans Day. Most combat veterans had difficult jobs that were routinely heroic... to me, that is what Veterans Day is all about.

**MAKE ONE OF YOUR
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
TO PAY YOUR 2004 DUES.**

**Send your \$25.00 check or
money order today to:**

**Chuck McAlleer
P.O. Box 4863
Oak Brook, IL 60522-4863**

Veterans

Our military seemed to always understand that there are things worth fighting for, although at times I know I was unsure. Naturally, we as citizens must share these same responsibilities that go with the freedoms we have with our children, and their children, to keep alive the honour of those who fought for those freedoms, and to also honour those who died. And, this should not only be on Memorial and Veterans Day, but every day. However, how do we get that message across strong enough so it will sink in, and maybe, just maybe, a few will understand and continue to educate their peers to these facts?

The sacrifices of us, as veterans, and those of our fathers and his father, brought about all those freedoms that our new generation (and some of those before) take so much for granted these days, and seem to not remember all of the pain, the suffering, and yes, the death, that our veterans encountered, except for when it is to their benefit to remember. All Americans, not just our veterans, must remember and appreciate to their fullest the liberties and freedoms, and the peace, that each of us has.

Veterans that returned home from Vietnam were mostly ignored or harassed by the anti-war movement people, the same people so many of our brothers and sisters died for to save those freedoms. So many of those hero-veterans from that time came home and hid the fact they had even been there...afraid or ashamed to admit they had given their all to defend the right of everyone, and yes, even those against the war and against even the veteran. This was an exception to how the American people once honoured their veterans, and thankfully, it did not last long. Several years ago, during the first Iraq War, those veterans came home to a hero's welcome, as will those currently involved with this new war.

So many days, we, as veterans from the Vietnam War, spent alone, frightened, drenched, and minus all the comforts of home that those protesting the war had. We watched, as those who refused to serve this country were establishing their lives, their careers, while we did not have that opportunity. As the veterans returned, they found they could not pick up their lives where they had left off, they could not return to their jobs, or go back to school and just simply get on with their lives, as had the previous generations of veterans.

After time, however, most of us were able to merge into society, slowly at first, as if we were a trickle of water. Gradually, most of us got back into the grind; working at a job, paying our taxes, and buying those things we felt were needed. The ability to put behind us all the destruction, death, and horrors that go with a war eventually took place, although it was slow at coming.

Today, Vietnam Veterans serve as postmen, delivering our mail, as bank presidents, as CEO's or even owners of Fortune 500 Companies. Some go about filling prescriptions, pulling teeth, treating the sick, volunteering for the Red Cross and so many other organizations, or work in other meaningful positions. The ability to put behind us this horrible thing we had to endure makes most veterans a hero twice over, in my mind.

For these reasons, we have to instil in our children and their children the responsibility to honour all veterans, if only on those two sacred days ... Memorial Day and Veterans Day. In fact, it would not hurt us, as veterans, to thank those who are and will be returning from the Gulf Region. It won't hurt a bit. The fact is, as we all know, we cannot thank them enough!

From the TC Hatch**John Topper**

As the holiday season winds down, it seems like an appropriate time to reflect on the year that is ending. This has been an eventful year and one many of us will long remember, one that has brought joy to some, sorrow to others and some of each to most of us.

The Association has prospered rather well, as best I can tell. We have increased our general membership and the ranks of our Life Membership has swollen, thanks in large measure to the hard work of Bob Gold. Bob has taken on the unofficial office of membership chairman. His efforts are seemingly tireless and he spends a great deal of time and energy touting the benefits of being a member of this great organization. I for one and I know there are many who agree, feel that Bob has made a significant contribution to our Association and deserves a very big THANKS!!! from all of us. So if you can make the time, give him a call at 330-305-1495. Allow plenty of time to hear about his current project or projects when calling – but they are interesting and it is a joy for me to hear his voice, because I know it will be both enlightening and uplifting.

Also, get on line and let Ray Sarlin know how much he is appreciated for all the hard work and personal expense he puts into our website. Call him if you wish, but remember he lives in Australia. I just received the new Life Member Certificates which Ray designed, layed out and printed. Again, he has come through with another great, very professional job. All you life members should be receiving your certificates within the next few weeks. They are currently in the able hands of our Secretary, Gary Quint who is proofreading them, ensuring proper spelling, checking addresses, the sort of thing for which he has no peer. He is another of our unheralded, hard-working, underpaid officers who does a fantastic job.

Looking ahead to next year: Ben Foster, the artist who created the bronze statue we presented to the 1/50 in Fort Benning this past April, has completed work on the plaques that will be attached to the statue. We are planning for a formal presentation and dedication of the statue after Ben has attached the plaques. Tentative date for that dedication is the 25th of February. The side plaques contain the names of all those who died in Vietnam while serving with the battalion. The front plaque has representations of the Purple Heart, Play the Game Crest, Combat Infantryman Badge, Combat Medic Badge and a commemorative inscription. Anyone wishing to participate in the dedication ceremony is welcome and encouraged to attend. Watch the website for confirmation of the date, time and place.

While at Fort Benning, we will begin to put into place the arrangements for the 2005 reunion. Anyone interested in working on the reunion committee, please contact me at 812-454-3029, or email at jt@wyoming.com.

I follow closely the message board on our website and find the amount of institutional knowledge resident within the Association to be nothing less than amazing. The level of detail that is recalled for events, times, places and people involved is extraordinary and I am grateful we have a Webmaster (Ray Sarlin) and a Historian (Jim Sheppard) that is capturing and chronicling our collective remembrances.

Our Army has done a fantastic job this past year in its fight against terrorism – please keep those brave soldiers who have died in your thoughts and for those who are still fighting, please keep them in your prayers.

Happy New Year to all – I trust 2004 will be kind to us and that each of you will find health, happiness and prosperity as you travel through it.



Surfing the Net for Vets

Any member who has website suggestions, please submit them to the Editorial staff.

1. Web Gateway for Veterans

The communications revolution sweeping the country in recent years has brought numerous benefits to veterans. On the internet vets can now get information about government veterans programs, assistance in finding old service buddies, and even get help looking for jobs.

2. National Veterans Legal Services Program

Our nation has long recognized the great debt to those veterans and their families who have been injured because they answered the nation's call. Yet, our country's institutions too often fail to provide these veterans the help they have earned through their dedicated service. The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) is an independent, non-profit veterans service organization that has been assisting veterans and their advocates for more than 25 years. NVLSP achieves its mission through education, advocacy, litigation, training advocates who represent veterans, and publications.

3. Vets for Justice

This website states that *"our goal is to help America's Veterans actually find justice."* Judging from their guest-book they have had quite a few hits in the year since this site was established. Check them out, see what you think.

CONGRATULATIONS NEW LIFE MEMBERS

The Association now boasts 31 new life members, who will soon be receiving their certificate of honor.

As of December 31, 2003 the Association counts among the membership a total of 108 life members.

Join this elite group of Association members and send in your life membership payment today.

Watch for future editions of the newsletter for the names of our life members.

Vice-President's Column Randy "Doc" Smith

Here's hoping everyone had a Merry Christmas and the New Year treats us all good. This time of year always seems to make us reminisce about seasons past, and one in particular stands out to me: Christmas 1967. I remember sitting outside the battalion aid station at Uplift listening to Christmas carols from a loudspeaker aboard a helicopter circling overhead. Off in the distance another chopper was firing a mini gun with all tracer rounds, and it looked like a laser beam arcing to the ground. It somehow reminded me of Christmas lights back home. I was drinking a quart of eggnog that was supposedly stolen off a truck that was headed for a general's party somewhere. Every year since then I have always gotten a quart of eggnog during the holidays and slipped off by myself to remember and give thanks to those who cannot join us. I would like to take this chance to congratulate our troops in Iraq for their outstanding job of finding Saddam Hussein. To find him hiding in such a small hole in all of Iraq is simply amazing. We must remember that in order to find him a lot of soldiers had to lay their lives on the line and enter holes all over Iraq in search of him. That made me think back to our very own tunnel rats, and one in particular, James John Murphy. Murph literally laid his life on the line and I was with him the last two days in the 67th evac hospital in Quin Nhon. Although I was in another ward, I went to Murph's ward for two days and spent time with him. He couldn't talk because of tubes in his throat but he was awake and alert for those two days, and I talked enough for both of us. The second day he seemed to be better, although the nurses told me on day one that he had no chance. When I came into his ward on day three, the nurse turned her head and didn't speak as before, and when I got to the back room, his bed had been made. When I turned back toward the front door, the nurse whispered, "I'm sorry," and she had tears in her eyes. God bless all those nurses. Murphy died of multiple fragment wounds from a booby trap, and every time some troop crawls down a hole in any combat zone, they risk the same fate. God bless all those troops.