

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association



July 2004

Cover Page

FROM THE EDITOR

To the membership:

Sorry to be so late with the newsletter, but we are in the process of moving. This has been an exhausting six weeks for Sheri and me. Hopefully we will be all finished by the end of the month. For those of you who visit the web, and for those who don't, the ballots are in, and the next reunion will be at Ft. Benning in 2005. The date has not been chosen but will be out soon. Hope you all have a great summer, and will have more for you in September!



Bob Gold

Sorry to report that we lost one of our members last month. Andy Soltis, may the good Lord be with him, and may he rest in peace.

For those of you who need to contact me, our new address is:

Bob Gold
4181 Manchester Rd.
North Lawrence Ohio 44666.
330-837-4490
9/67-3/68 D (Track 425, mortars) WIA

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Member contributions welcomed. Please contact Bob Gold at robertjrrjunkie@aol.com Phone: (330) 305 1495	



April, 2004 - SSgt. Jason Edwards and co-worker search for an American soldier listed as MIA in Vietnam. Read excerpts from his journal in this issue. Jason is the son of Dotty and Jim Edwards, Association members.

THE MAN WITH THE RIFLE

Men may argue forever what wins their wars,
And welter in cons and pros,
And seek for their answer at history's doors,
But the man with the rifle knows.

He must stand on the ground on his own two
feet,

And he's never in doubt when it's won,
If it's won he's there, if he's not, it's defeat.
That's his test, when the fighting is done.

When he carries the field, it's not with a roar
Of armored wings spitting death.
It's creep and crawl on the earthen floor,
Butt down and holding his breath.

Saving his strength for the last low rush,
Grenade thrown and bayonet thrust;
And the whispered prayer, before he goes in,
Of a man who does what he must.

And when he's attacked, he can't zoom away,
When the shells fill the world with their sound,
He stays where he is, loosens his spade,
And digs his defense in the ground.

That ground isn't ours till he's there in the
flesh.

Not a gadget or bomb but a man,
He's the answer to theories which start afresh,
With each peace since war began.

So let the wild circle of argument rage
On what wins, as war comes and goes.
Many new theories may hold the stage
But the man with the rifle knows.

MEMORIAL

Andy Soltis

2004

*Earth has no sorrow that
heaven cannot heal*

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Toby Jordan

O R N E R

Hello to every one, well summer has finally arrived in full force here in Southeast Missouri. The temperature is in the 90's every day, but I guess that is the norm so I'll live with it. Got the e-mail the other day inviting us to the change of command at Ft. Benning, sure wish I could have made it but the job wouldn't allow it on such short notice.

I hope each of you are in good health and are doing well. I've got to the point were I don't like to watch the news any more, seems as though every day we lose some of our service men and women in a place that really doesn't appreciate what we are trying to do for them. But as always, I support the President and our Nation in this effort. Which brings me to the requests that I have for each of you.

- ✧ Each day say a prayer for our Nation and her leaders.
- ✧ Each day pray for our service men and women and their families.
- ✧ Keep the patriotism that we celebrate on the 4th of July alive and strong each day of the year.
- ✧ And remember to thank God each day for your family and the freedom that we all have in this great nation.

May God bless and keep each of you.

REUNION 2005

Make plans to join the association for this event. Keep checking the newsletter for important updates.

DIPLOMA BILL FOR VIETNAM VETS

Saturday, June 26, 2004

A bill has been introduced in the Ohio House of Representatives, which will give some Vietnam Veterans who left high school early, a better chance of getting their diploma.

The bill calls for Vietnam Veterans who left high school early, but have since has gotten his/her G.E.D., to be presented their diploma. A similar law allows World War II Vets that privilege.

State Representative John Schlichter of Washington Courthouse, who sponsored the bill, says the bill is now in the House Education Committee.

Was it really 35 years ago?
Gladys Grubb

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, 1969



Friday, May 30, 1969

I had a holiday off from work. I spent the day with my sister and was finishing up my nightly letter. The phone rang. It was my sister-in-law wanting to know if I was home along and she then asked where my sisters were.

A short time later my sister, Jean, came in with her boyfriend Norman. She was crying. I asked her what was wrong and she told me that Army officials had been to my mother's house looking for me and Mom had told them where to find me.

Someone knocked on the door. Norman opened the door and I heard someone asking for me. When I went to the door, a man in uniform asked me if I was married to PFC Steve F. Grubb. I answered yes and he said "The Army is sorry to inform you that your husband, Steve is missing in action and that everything is being done to find him." He also told me not to talk to the media because this could hinder his rescue. I called Steve's parents and told them what the Army had just told me and that I would let them know as soon as I knew something more.

Saturday, May 31, 1969

This is the day that a telegram came by way of Western Union to verify what the Army Chaplain had told me.

The next week I stayed home crying and walking the floor. I kept wondering what had happened and where he was - the nightmares of him being wounded or hungry. Was he a POW or was he being tortured? I just couldn't understand how he could be missing.

Saturday, June 7, 1969

Another knock on the door and there was the Chaplain again. The message this time was "The Army is sorry to inform you that your husband, Steve, was killed in action on May 28, 1969". Before he left he said that the Army would be in contact with me regarding his remains.

Sunday, June 8, 1969

A telegram arrived verifying what the Chaplain had told me.

Monday, June 9, 1969

I went to tell Steve's parents. I can still see my mother-in-law's face when I told her he wasn't coming back. Telling her was pure hell. To this day I can still see the pain in her eyes.

Wednesday, June 11, 1969

A telegram came informing me that Steve's remains would be arriving at Dover AFB, Maryland and asked me what funeral home would be taking care of the service.

Friday, June 13, 1969

Steve's remains arrived home today. All this time I had kept hoping that it wasn't him. To this day, I am glad that it was an open casket so that I was able to identify him. The sergeant that was his honor guard told me that he had died instantly.

Sunday, June 15, 1969

Steve was buried in my family cemetery. It was a rainy day, but while Taps played the sun came out to shine brightly.

Ten days later I lost our child. I was 20 years old.



STEVE GRUBB

Gone but not forgotten

JASON'S JOURNAL

SSgt. Jason Edwards

Jason is the son of Dotty and Jim Edwards. These excerpts were taken from one of his missions to Vietnam in search of MIAs.

April 22, 2004 - We finally moved up to the base camp today. It has been a very long day. Our anthro, the medic, the EOD guy, and I went up to the site and set up our initial grid to start excavating tomorrow. The rest of the team stayed behind to build the base camp. It rained a lot today which slowed us down a bit. The rain made it especially tough on the site. The site is on a sixty-degree slope and we don't have our ropes up there yet. It was challenging, to the say the least, but it was fun.

We've got a pretty good team. Our team sergeant has really gone out of her way to get some extra amenities to make us more comfortable out here. She got us self inflating mats to sleep on, mirrors for shaving and grass mats for our tent floors, to name just a few. Today was tough, but it didn't get anybody down. It only gets easier from here.

The hike up to the site is not as tough as the last time I was in Vietnam but it's still rough. It wouldn't be so bad if it weren't slick all the time. The path goes down into a ravine and then up the other side. It's a good workout no matter which way you're going.

It's kind of weird being back in Vietnam so soon. I have a hard time not detesting our Vietnamese hosts. They were the bad guys 30 years ago. These are the guys that shot my dad and killed the people we are here looking for. The villagers that work for us are a different story. It is heartbreaking to see the conditions in which they live and how the VNO (Vietnamese Officials) treat them. We pay a lot of money to have these people here but they see very little of it. The VNO keep most of it for themselves. The VNO are thieves, too. They steal our water and our equipment. They don't bring enough supplies for themselves and they think they are entitled to walk into our camp and take whatever they want.

April 25, 2004 - The last couple of days have been interesting. The day before yesterday a major storm blew in while we were still up on the site. We had to stop working. We tried to just take cover and let it blow over, but it only got worse. We had to hike down the mountain in the pouring rain and wind. The path was destroyed in several places, making it really tough to pass. We got back to the base camp and everything was soaked. Even inside our tents. Luckily, I brought a small, spare sleeping bag with me or I would have had nothing to cover up with that night.

Yesterday was the first day that we didn't have to close down early because of weather. We got a full day's work in, but we've still only closed one grid unit so far. This dig is very slow going.

When we got back to base camp yesterday, the Vietnamese colonel was heading up to our shower tent to take a shower. This is something they are not supposed to do. We pump our own water for our showers and we have to use it sparingly. Then we discover that the VNO had taken most of the water that we had pumped! They filled up our water cans and carried it off. That was the last straw. Our team sergeant told us to go get it back, so the medic and I went over there. We found where they were storing our water and started carrying it back over here. When we got back, those bastards were dumping it into buckets so we couldn't get it. I went up to one of them and took the can right out of his hand. This, of course, pissed them off. So the colonel came over to bitch at our captain. He said they need water and now they have none. The captain told him that that was the water we pumped for ourselves and they had to get their own. I guess they finally came to some sort of agreement and it won't be happening again. It just reaffirms my hatred for them.

April 26, 2004 - Moist. That's one word to describe this mission. Nothing gets dry here. Every morning we put on damp clothes and damp boots and we go to work. Today, I opened up my camera bag and everything inside had condensation on it. The digital camera did not work properly for several hours after that. It seems to be ok now, but I'm worried about what two more weeks out here will do to it.

May 2, 2004 - We had a good morning and then got rained out again in the afternoon. It rained hard, but it wasn't nearly as bad as that first time. There really wasn't any wind this time so nothing got messed up. We were also ready for it this time. Everything getting soaked is a mistake you only make once. We only have 28 grid units left to dig. At the rate we are digging, it should be no problem if we don't get rained out too many more times. We opened two units this morning and closed two. That's good for less than half a day's work. We should have no problem doing three or four units when we work a full day. Some units will slow us down though. The one side of the hill is very rocky. That makes for some seriously hard digging. But the other side is very easy, so it all balances out.

May 4, 2004 - Today was a seriously great day. We closed six grid units! It's funny how in the beginning it looked like there was no way in hell we would close this site. Now we are way ahead of the power curve. If we keep up this pace we will close it very early. If that happens they may send us to another site. We won't have enough time to actually dig a second site. But we may end up setting up a base camp so the next JFA doesn't have to send an advance team.

JASON'S JOURNAL (continued)

SSgt. Jason Edwards

This morning I was working on the screens when I noticed an itch in my belly button. I tried to scratch it discreetly, but it gradually got worse and worse. So finally I lifted up my shirt to inspect. A leach had taken up residence in there and was having a feast! I went and got my camera and had someone shoot some photos of it before hosing it with Off. Our anthro seems to think it laid its larvae in there. If so, I will have to get more photos when I give birth. The team was teasing me about having a baby shower. I told them I am registered at off.com.

This afternoon I had to take final photos of two different phases of the excavation. For one of the photos I had to climb up a tree and shoot down on the site. Our anthro picked up my other camera and shot a picture of me while I was up there. I thought that was really cool because I never get pictures of me actually working. This was a particularly good moment too because the tree actually grew out over the slope. So if I had fallen I would have also tumbled all the way down the hill. He was probably hoping to catch me falling down the hill.

May 7, 2004 - We have been kicking ass all week now. We are closing five and six units a day. We got rained out today but still closed four units. I personally opened three and closed two before lunch. We have maybe two days of digging left.

May 8, 2004 - We started phase six of August's five-phase plan today. We still haven't found shit so he went back up to the site last night to review the data we have from the previous excavation and investigations. He decided to add seven more grid units. Basically, we are here to find this guy and we do not want to leave without him. This won't set us back at all since we are already so far ahead of schedule. We will still get out of here as scheduled.

May 9, 2004 - Today was a hard day. But it was good. We moved a thousand pounds of dirt and didn't screen any of it. The last seven grid units are buried under all the back dirt from the previous JFA. So we had to move it before we can excavate them. Our anthro did something really cool for our team sergeant today. She has twins back home. Since today is Mother's Day he arranged to have the workers bring her a bouquet of flowers when they came up this morning. She nearly cried. It was really awesome. Van, our linguist, is cooking again tonight. She made chicken curry two nights ago. It was delicious. She is making us fried rice tonight. We are also planning a second spaghetti night. We had spaghetti night the night the journalists were here. It was so good everybody wanted to do it again. So, I think our last night here will be our second spaghetti dinner.

May 10, 2004 - Anyone who has been on more than one of these missions can tell you of a phenomenon known simply as "Day 23." Today is day 23. For some reason, day 23 is the day that everyone gets tired of the mission and wants to go home. This is the day when people say mean things to each other and many fights occur. There were a couple of incidents today, but nothing too terrible. This team seems to get along better than any I've been on before. There is one team member who is always pissed off about something. Nobody likes him. Other than that, the team is pretty tight.

We had a friendly competition with the VNO today. They challenged us to a push-up and pull-up competition. They showed up with villagers to compete in their place and tried to change all the rules as we were going. We beat them and they still insisted that they won. They finally conceded when the captain told them that he had less respect for them for being sore losers and that we would never again compete with them. They have to buy us dinner in Hue now at the restaurant of our choice.

Today at our daily meeting, we took care of some pressing business. Our linguist, Van, is getting out after this mission to be a housewife and have babies. She has been on about twelve missions to Vietnam. One unique thing about Van is she never gets dirty. We come home filthy every day and she looks like she's ready to go to church. So we prepared a nice mud pit for her. Our EOD tech (affectionately known as Papa) grabbed her and put her in the mud. Then he rolled her over a couple of times to insure maximum saturation. It was a lot of fun.

May 12, 2004 - We closed the site today. We did not find a trace of our guy. We dug every possible place where he could have been and he is simply not there. We know that he was not buried and the locals took his watch, wallet, boots, etc. We assume that animals carried off the rest of him and he probably rolled down the hill into the stream. From there he simply washed away. This site is now considered closed and no more teams will be back here. Before leaving the site, the team took a moment to drink a shot of bourbon. We toasted the team, the mission, and of course, the soldier we were searching for, may he rest in peace.



John Topper

VIEW FROM THE TC HATCH

President

The balloting is in and Fort Benning has once again been selected for Reunion 2005. The next phase will be to visit Fort Benning and arrange the logistical and operational aspects of the reunion. One of the remaining issues to be resolved is what time of the year is best for the greatest number of members. Of the few opinions I have received, spring is the most popular. Anyone wishing to have his or her desires considered should contact me prior to 1 August.

Also, anyone interested in helping with the reunion arrangements, please call me 812-454-3029. I am especially interested in having some of the women involved in the planning activities.

I intend to talk with the Executive Committee about a proposed change to our bylaws that call for a reunion every two years. An idea that has merit, I believe, is to formalize a reunion on the odd numbered years at Fort Benning and then on even numbered years, have a get together alternating parts of the country. This will optimize opportunities for all to attend at least periodically.

I don't intend to politicize this newsletter, but there is something I feel compelled to bring to the attention of the members of this organization. It has to do with the upcoming presidential election. I am writing this now, so that if there are any opposing views, they will be printed in the September edition of the newsletter, before the election.

I will be voting for George Bush in November, not because I agree with all he has done although I think that overall, he has done a good job. I simply cannot vote for John Kerry because I believe he is unfit to hold the office.

Kerry is using his Vietnam service as a fundamental advantage over Bush. He would have all assume that his service guarantees the vote of other Vietnam veterans. Not so. John Kerry has the blood of American soldiers forever staining his hands, and he will go to his grave with that shame. Irrespective of his actions while serving in the war, his actions after he returned to the US are, in my view, those of a traitor and cannot be ignored or excused. He was an enemy sympathizer and propagandist that the military leader of the North Vietnamese, General Vo Nguyen Giap, used and even credited with bolstering the will of the NVA. Giap reportedly wrote in his memoir that because of Kerry and his organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War, along with the help of Jane Fonda, Ramsey Clark and others, Hanoi rallied from certain defeat and was able to drive the US out of South Vietnam.

John Kerry is ambivalent on a number of issues, and alternating between being proud to being ashamed and apologizing for the same service in the war, is representative of that ambivalence. I have never known another veteran of the war feel the need to apologize or feel ashamed of his service. Why does Senator Kerry? He voted against the Gulf War but was in favor of it, voted for the Iraq war but was against it. He believes that the US should only participate in combat operations led by the United Nations. This is not the kind of Commander in Chief our military needs at the helm.

Kerry, as a senator, has a history of voting against improving the military and federal intelligence agencies. As a leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, he sullied the service of fellow war veterans, saying we all participated in atrocities, "we were sent to Vietnam to kill Communism. But we found instead that we were killing women and children."

He now seeks to sell himself as a patriot when thirty years ago he was willing witness to the burning of our flag, the most significant symbol of patriotism in our nation.

David Householder wrote in a commentary published by the Washington Dispatch, "Yes. I question John Kerry's patriotism. I'm not saying he doesn't have any. But I seriously wonder if he has enough. The question isn't whether he loves America more than George W. Bush. Kerry's running to represent America on the world stage. The real question, therefore, is whether John Kerry loves America as much as Jacques Chirac loves France or Vladimir Putin loves Russia. If he doesn't, he's going to get pushed around, which means America is going to get pushed around."

America lost much of the world's respect and got pushed around a lot under the Clinton administration. America's standing in the world today isn't as good as we would like, but it is better than it was four years ago. George Bush might make it worse, but he has the ability to make it better. John Kerry can only make it worse



SURFING THE NET FOR VETS

By Billie McGregor

Politics – it's in the air. Can you smell it? We hear about it, talk about it and worry about it. Surfing the Net for Vets has been searching for interesting and informative websites regarding the candidates. Member contributions are most welcomed and appreciated.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST JOHN KERRY

<http://www.vietnamveteransagainstjohnkerry.com/>

Ted Sampley, Mike Bengé & Jerry Kiley have put together a website that offers you almost everything you wanted to know about their feelings toward John Kerry. Their site current boasts 93 pages in the guest-book, so somebody out there is visiting this site and contributing their comments.

JOHN KERRY FOR PRESIDENT

<http://www.johnkerry.com/communities/veterans/service.html>

There are two sides to every story. This website is funded by John Kerry for President, Inc.

GEORGE W. BUSH FOR PRESIDENT

<http://www.georgewbush.com/>

Here's what our President has to say. This website is funded by Bush-Cheney 2004, Inc.

BUSH OR CHIMP

<http://www.bushorchimp.com/index.html>

This is by far one of the funniest things I've ever seen. Need a chuckle? Then you should visit this site.



October 15, 2004-January 16, 2005
Albuquerque, New Mexico

*Endorsed by
Vietnam Veterans of America
and
New Mexico Veterans Service Commission*

VIETNAM: VOICES AND VISIONS UNFILTERED is a multi-component symposium that will present a public history of the Vietnam War.

The purpose of the project is to provide additional insight and knowledge about the nature of the war and its effects on everyone involved, including those at war and those at home.

The symposium serves to inspire discussion, instigate learning and elucidate some of the myths that have pervaded the war. Project components will lay bare the personal experiences of the Vietnam War, and in the process, spawn a more accurate discernment of an extremely painful and contentious period in our history – on the divided a nation and engendered controversy that refuses to die.

<http://www.vietnamvoicesandvisions.org/index.html>