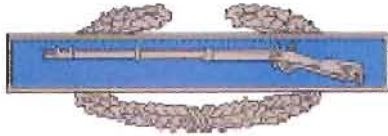


ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association



June 2006



Cover Page

FRIENDLY FIRE

Randy "Doc" Smith, President

The recent investigations into the death of Pat Tillman, the National Football League player who enlisted in the Army and went to Iraq, brought to mind an incident from nearly 40 years ago.

When I saw the term "friendly fire" used in the article, I was reminded of a night long ago. I was awakened from what little sleep I had gotten so far that night for my turn at guard duty. I took my place on top the track and manned the M-60 machine gun. It was raining hard, monsoon hard. It was dark, monsoon dark. I strained my eyes trying to see into the darkness, wondering **how I could ever see anything out there.**

And then I heard it. A sound out there. What was it? There! There it is again. Footsteps! Muffled voices. Now, I was really straining my eyes and there, something IS there! A person, no, two -- no, more, a column of men! Oh Lord, what do I do? Do I fire? Quick, safety off. No, I can't identify my target. But I can't let them walk into the perimeter if they are enemy. Oh Lord, I'm only a medic, what do I do? Kick, yeah, kick somebody and wake them up. But not enough time for that. I got to shoot, and I got to do it now. Wait, I can't, but they are right there now. Close enough to nearly touch, and they can't see the track.

Hey, the password! "Airborne Ranger!" Our password for Delta Company was always "Airborne Ranger!" So I blurted it out, loudly -- "AIRBORNE RANGER!" Much louder than I had intended, and tightened my finger on the trigger of the M-60. There seemed to be some confusion, and then I heard "Airborne Ranger! Airborne Ranger!" in reply. I said, "Come to me, to the sound of my voice before you get shot." It was our ambush patrol coming in, and they didn't think they were that close to the tracks yet. I told them I was so glad to hear "Airborne Ranger" from them, and was told that if I had issued the challenge, "password," instead of mistakenly giving the answer, "Airborne Ranger," there would have been less confusion on their part. I told them I was just happy I hadn't fired on them.

I have thought about that night many times. How close, how close I came to doing the unthinkable. How could I have lived with myself if I had? Thank God the end result was as it was. May God bless all parties involved in all friendly fire incidents, no matter which end of the weapon they were on, and give them peace.

REST IN PEACE



Toby Hamon

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MONSTERS AND THE WEAK

Author Unknown

The sun beat like a hammer, not a cloud was in the sky.
The mid-day air ran thick with dust, my throat was parched and dry.
With microphone clutched tight in hand and cameraman in tow,
I ducked beneath a fallen roof, surprised to hear "stay low."

My eyes blinked several times before in shadow I could see,
the figure stretched across the rubble, steps away from me.
He wore a cloak of burlap strips, all shades of gray and brown,
that hung in tatters till he seemed to melt into the ground.

He never turned his head or took his eye from off the scope,
but pointed through the broken wall and down the rocky slope.
"About eight hundred yards," he said, his whispered words concise,
"beneath the baggy jacket he is wearing a device."

A chill ran up my spine despite the swelter of the heat,
"You think he's gonna set it off along the crowded street?"
The sniper gave a weary sigh and said "I wouldn't doubt it,"
"unless there's something this old gun and I can do about it."

A thunderclap, a tongue of flame, the still abruptly shattered;
while citizens that walked the street were just as quickly scattered.
Till only one remained, a body crumpled on the ground,
The threat to oh so many ended by a single round.

And yet the sniper had no cheer, no hint of any gloat,
instead he pulled a logbook out and quietly he wrote.
"Hey, I could put you on TV, that shot was quite a story!"
But he surprised me once again -- "I got no wish for glory."

"Are you for real?" I asked in awe, "You don't want fame or credit?"
He looked at me with saddened eyes and said "you just don't get it."
"You see that shot-up length of wall, the one without a door?
before a mortar hit, it used to be a grocery store."

"But don't go thinking that to bomb a store is all that cruel,
the rubble just across the street -- it used to be a school.
The little kids played soccer in the field out by the road,"
His head hung low, "They never thought a car would just explode."

"As bad as all this is though, it could be a whole lot worse,"
He swallowed hard, the words came from his mouth just like a
curse.
"Today the fight is on foreign land, on streets that aren't my own,"
"I'm here today 'cause if I fail, the next fight is back at home."

"And I won't let my Safeway burn, my neighbors dead inside,
don't wanna get a call from school that says my daughter died;
I pray that not a one of them will know the things I see,
nor have the work of terrorists etched in their memory."

"So you can keep your trophies and your fleeting bit of fame,
I don't care if I make the news, or if they speak my name."
He glanced toward the camera and his brow began to knot,
"If you're looking for a story, why not give this one a shot."

"Just tell the truth of what you see, without the slant or spin;
that most of us are OK and we're coming home again.
And why not tell our folks back home about the good we've
done.
how when they see Americans, the kids come at a run."

You tell 'em what it means to folks here just to speak their mind,
without the fear that tyranny is just a step behind;
Describe the desert miles they walk in their first chance to vote,
or ask a soldier if he's proud, I'm sure you'll get a quote."

He turned and slid the rifle in a drag bag thickly padded,
then looked again with eyes of steel as quietly he added;
"And maybe just remind the few, if ill of us they speak,
that we are all that stands between the monsters and the weak."

The Vice-President's Column**Jimmy Segars**

Dear Association Members,

As you know, we as a nation recently celebrated Memorial Day 2006, a time to honor beloved family members and friends who have gone on before us. As a military association, we continually remember those of our ranks who gave the ultimate sacrifice for us and our country by giving their very lives for the cause of freedom. Many times in our nation's history, brave young men and women have been called upon to honor and defend America. It is no different today. Those who currently wear the military uniform and those of us who once served continue to honor our country by being ever vigilant to protect her and the freedom that we hold so dear. One way that we can do so is to participate in the next Memorial Service to be held at the 1/50th Battalion Headquarters during the 2007 reunion. This service is especially meaningful since the names of those of the 1/50th who died serving in Vietnam are recalled at that time by our viewing the memorial bronze the association placed and dedicated at Ft. Benning during the last reunion. I encourage all members to be a part of this memorial service by attending the 2007 reunion.

While attending a Change of Command ceremony at Ft. Benning this month, the officers will be making plans for the 2007 reunion. Information regarding the plans will be released as soon as they are finalized. For now, I hope all of you have a great summer.

This is an information paper from the US Army Training and Doctrine Command that was sent out to all their commands. Editor

INFORMATION PAPER**SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS LOST PERSONAL DATA**

1. **Purpose.** To provide information and guidance to those veterans and their families who are potential victims of identity theft.

2. **Facts.**

a. **Background.** In May 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) discovered that personal information for over 26 million veterans and their spouses was stolen during a robbery at the home of a VA data analyst. The analyst took the information home in violation of VA policy and is currently on administrative leave pending the result of the investigation. The stolen information includes names, social security numbers, disability ratings and dates of birth of veterans who have retired since 1972. No medical records were stolen.

b. **Investigation.** The FBI and the VA are conducting a full-scale investigation into this matter. Authorities believe it is unlikely the perpetrators targeted the personal data or are aware they have this sensitive information. To date, authorities have not detected any suspicious activity connected with the lost data. In an effort to fully inform those potentially affected, the VA will send out individual notification letters to veterans and their families.

c. **Reporting Suspicious Activities.** If you receive a notification letter from the VA, it is because your personal information was stolen. You should be especially vigilant for any signs that other people may have attempted to exploit your personal information. While there is no evidence yet that any missing data has been used illegally, all veterans should carefully monitor bank statements, credit card statements and any other statements relating to recent financial transactions. If there is any suspicious activity on your statements, you should report it immediately to the financial institution involved and contact the Federal Trade Commission at www.consumer.gov/idtheft or at 1-877-ID-THEFT (438-4338) for further guidance. Such complaints will be added to the FTC's Identity Theft Data Clearinghouse, where it will be accessible to law enforcement agencies for their investigations. You should also contact the local police. Be sure to get a copy of the police report because many creditors require an official report to absolve you of fraudulent debts.

d. **Fraud Alert.** If you receive a notification letter, you should seriously consider placing a fraud alert on your credit files. Initiating a fraud alert would be the most prudent action for most victims, with the exception of those persons who are about to seek a substantial credit line (such as buying a house). A fraud alert stays on a credit file for 90 days and may be extended. The alert tells creditors to contact you before opening any new credit accounts or changing any of your existing accounts. To place a fraud alert, call any one of the three major credit bureaus listed below:

(1) Equifax at 1-800-525-6285 or write to P.O. Box 740250, Atlanta, GA 30374-0250 or visit their website at www.equifax.com.

(2) Experian (formerly TRW) at 1-888-397-3742, or fax at 1-800-301-7196 or write to P.O. Box 1017, Allen, TX 75013 or visit their website at www.experian.com.

(3) Trans Union at 1-800-680-7289 or write to P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92634 or visit their website at www.transunion.com.

When you notify one credit bureau, they are required to alert the others. All three credit bureaus will then send credit reports, free of charge, for your review. You should review your credit reports for any suspicious activity regularly for at least eighteen months.

e. **Additional Information.** The Department of Veterans Affairs has established a dedicated toll free telephone number (1-800-FED-INFO) for questions or concerns connected with this loss of data. You can also visit their website at www.firstgov.gov for updates.

BAYONET BATTALION
Family Readiness Group Newsletter
Francis B. Burns
Lieutenant Colonel, Infantry, Commanding

Greetings to all in the Bayonet Family! With summer upon us and school winding down, we owe you an update on happenings in the battalion.

The Battalion again had two very successful FRG events: the 1-50 Ball on Saturday, the 8th of April, and a week later the Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday the 15th of April.

We cannot thank everyone enough who made the 1-50 Spring Formal possible. We have heard all positive comments ranging from the location, the atmosphere, the formal dinner, the DJ and the babysitting service. There was enough pomp and circumstance to make it a formal combined with the Guest Speaker comments that made everyone feel welcome. A truly fantastic time was had by all.

The Easter Egg Hunt a week later was also quite a hoot. With the Easter Bunny – aka – 1LT Seth Spicolli Womack and Major “Boom-Boom” Adkins controlling the event – it went extremely well. There are pictures available of this and the 1-50 Spring Formal provided by Ms Anna-Marie Warren.

With a new command team coming on board 21 June, Darlene and I wish to send out a personal thank you to all who do so much, day in and day out for the battalion and the US Army. Your devoted efforts and commitment to Soldiers and Soldiering have greatly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the battalion. It is gratifying to know that we will leave the battalion in the hands of such incredibly talented, energetic and capable professionals.

It has truly been an honor and pleasure to serve as your Commander.

Godspeed!
Fix Bayonets!
Ave Atque Vale!

YOU MIGHT BE AN AMERICAN
(With apologies to Jeff Foxworthy)

You might be a true American, if:

It never occurred to you to be offended by the phrase,
"One nation, under God."

You've never protested about seeing the 10 Commandments
posted in public places.

You still say "Christmas" instead of "Winter Festival."

You bow your head when someone prays.

You stand, remove your hat and place your hand over your heart
during the playing of the National Anthem.

You treat veterans with great respect.

You've never burned an American flag.

You know what you believe and you aren't afraid to say so,
no matter who is listening.

You respect your elders and expect your kids to do the same.

Historian Report – Summer, 2006**Jim Sheppard**

Greetings everyone! I can tell you all one thing...I have been one busy 1/50th Association board member this past year!

About this time last year, I finally cleaned out what had been my daughter's bedroom...and was able to set up all my 1/50th files for easier access. I wasted little time in getting to work catching up on filing and scanning. I've organized quite a bit, but have not had the time to return to the Archives to continue obtaining documents from 1970. So many things keep cropping up...just when I am ready for a trip...something else prevents me going...but I am determined to make at least two trips between now and the fall. I've promised several men I will look for information during this 1970 period...and they have waited patiently for me to produce. Special thanks to Larry Lewis who sent me a check for \$25.00 to offset my expenses in this archival activity. I am going to focus on helping him find information on Charlie Alphas so he can get that air medal he was due years ago. It's sad so many clerks did not give proper attention to these awards for our men. I know Wallace Chow, Charlie Company, 1/50th was always right on top of all our awards in 1967 and 1968. I recently talked with him on the phone for the first time in 38 years!

Most notable in my acquisitions have been several items for our archives, including an original photo of the unit in October of 1917 at Syracuse, New York. The photo measures 8 by 44 inches and is awesome! Believe it or not...this photo was won at an eBay auction for less than \$30.00! I believe it is the only remaining photo of the 50th Infantry from that era and, as such, is priceless! (Check out the Regimental Marching Band on the left hand side of the group!) I am having it framed and also hope to have a copy made for possible presentation to the Battalion Headquarters at the next reunion. Because of the odd size, I will have to have a frame custom made & may do this myself...having some carpentry skills...I think it can be easily done...especially in light of how much it costs to have a frame of such an odd size custom made! (I checked!)



The inscription on the photo reads "50th U.S. Inf., Camp Syracuse, N.Y., 10-16-17"

I've also obtained a manual on the M113 APC and a set of Crossed Rifle Officer's Brass with the regimental "50" attached. These were reportedly from the estate of a World War II officer from the 50th Armored Infantry Battalion in the 6th Armored Division.

Another goal I had for this two year period between reunions was to obtain more maps from our Areas of Operation. Hard copy maps of most of our area are already a part of our archives, but I needed to acquire more from the Phan Thiet vicinity. Finding the Texas Tech website with all Vietnam Maps available for download saved me hours of scanning, as they had everything I needed. They even offer hard copy maps at a very reasonable price. I intend to purchase the few "hard copy" maps we need from them in the future. Thanks to Rick Rajner for mentioning this site to me! I owe him BIG TIME for that one.

The new Third Edition Document CD will be loaded with items of interest to many. ALL the aforementioned maps will be available in both Adobe Acrobat .pdf format as well as image .jpg format...the latter enabling easy copy and paste of map portions for many uses! All Association Newsletters are also to be included as well as photos of graffiti specific to the 1/50th taken of the canvases from the bunks on the USS Pope! Of course, there will be new official documents and other items of interest included in this CD.

So much of my time since January has gone into the website. As most of you know, I have been filling in for Ray Sarlin...and updating the website as needed. It's been a learning process for me to be sure, and thanks go to Randy's son, RJ for helping me with the basics and getting me started. There have been some mistakes...and I am still learning, but have managed to master most of the most important pages and make necessary changes. There is still much that could be changed and/or updated...but I have prioritized and only done what I felt was most pressing...or what members have asked to have done. I have learned to add photos to the photos page, but can tell you this is very time consuming...and if I get swamped with photos to be posted, as Ray Sarlin did, I doubt I will be able to accommodate them all very quickly.

I have also spent considerable time reconstructing the certificates we offer on our PX page. We now offer a nice, 1/50th Infantry specific certificate for the Combat Infantry Badge, Combat Medic Badge, and Vietnam Service Medal. Contact me if interested, or wait and see the product on display at the next reunion. I will have the appropriate printing hardware on hand to produce these for sale in my room along with my archives setup.

I also managed to recreate our Lifetime Member certificate and Certificate of Appreciation with much sharper graphics than those we hastily constructed at the last reunion. We are going to try to get Gary Quint set up to produce the Life Member and Achievement certificates at the 2007 reunion.

Please feel free to contact me with your questions about any documentation or the website & PX items, including certificates and document CD's.

FROM THE TC HATCH**Randy "Doc" Smith**

Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day was started after America's Civil War. A day to remember those who had fallen in combat and to decorate their graves. In 2000, Congress passed the National Moment of Remembrance Act, asking all Americans to pause for a least a moment at 3:00 PM local time on Memorial Day to honor those who have fallen. I hope everyone enjoyed their holiday but also took the time to remember those who gave, as Abraham Lincoln put it, "the last full measure of devotion."

Flag Day is June 14th and will be passed by the time this newsletter reaches most members, but if you missed it, lets be sure to get the red, white, and blue out for July 4th.

On June 20th the following people will converge on Ft. Benning with the intention of attending the Change of Command ceremony the following day: John Topper and his wife Janet, Gary Quint and his wife Kay, Jim Segars and his wife Loretta, Bob Gold, and myself. LTC Frank Burns is leaving and LTC Humphreys is taking command. We wish both well in their future assignments.

The members at Ft. Benning for this ceremony will also take this time to set dates, reserve buses and the hotel and meet with people in the area. Watch the website for future announcements about this next reunion, and information will be forthcoming in future newsletters.

By now everyone has probably seen the news of Al-Zarqawi and seven of his aides being killed by our troops in Iraq. That should make an impact on al-Qaida and their ability to wage war and terror on our troops and their own people. It certainly looks like our men are getting the job done under extremely difficult conditions. God bless them all.

As I bring this article to a close I'd like to remember and bring attention to the passing of one of our own. Toby Hamon, who many of you met at the last reunion, will not be attending the next reunion in body, but will be there in spirit I'm sure. Thinking of him now I find myself smiling, as that is how it was around Toby. He made the world smile around him. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Play the Game.

In Vietnam, during festivals or party times, Vietnamese serve betel leaves and areca nuts for chewing as a conversation opener. In fact betel leaves and areca nuts are symbolic of love and marriage and are a must during an engagement. This is the legend of how the custom came about.

Once upon a time, long ago there lived a man who had identical twin boys named Tan and Lang. They looked so much alike that people often mistook one for the other. The two loved each other very deeply and they both studied with the same teacher who had a very beautiful young girl at a marriageable age.

It was a Vietnamese custom that the elder was to marry first. So the girl's parents invited the two young men for dinner. However, they only served one pair of chopsticks and hid behind a bamboo screen and watched. It is also a Vietnamese custom that the younger brother must pay his respect to his older brother at all times. So Lang, the younger brother offered the pair of chopsticks to his older brother Tan. The decision was then made; the elder Tan got married to the young beautiful woman, leaving behind his brother Lang very sad and disappointed.

As time passed by, Lang felt that his older brother no longer cared about him, so he wanted to go away.

One day, as he came to the study room to see his brother Tan, he found instead his sister-in-law. Since the two of them were alike, the young woman showed her deep affection without realizing she made a mistake. Lang did not say anything but felt very ashamed afterwards about what had happened, decided to run away. Miles and miles away from home, he came upon the river and sat there crying, days passed then weeks passed, he died and at the spot of his death, grew a tree with nuts in the shape of the heart. The tree was known as the areca nut tree.

His older brother Tan was naturally deeply concerned and went and looked for his younger twin brother everywhere but had no luck. He finally ended up at the same place by the river and learned of his brother's death. In grief, he leaned against the areca nut tree and cried and cried until he too passed away. His body was transformed into a block of limestone.

The young wife decided to go and search for her husband and ended up at the same place by the river. Upon being told of her husband's death, she too wanted to die and cried until she no longer could. She was then transformed into a betel vine creeping and twining around the limestone and continued to grow up the areca tree.

REUNION PLANNING COMMITTEE**JOHN TOPPER**

The reunion planning committee along with some of the Association Officers, met at Fort Benning to attend the change of command ceremony where LTC Frank Burns relinquished command to LTC Paul Humphreys. Frank was a great friend of the Association, hosting us on several occasions for memorial celebrations and the reunion of 2005. He has done much for our Association and we welcome him to the ranks as an alumnus - he bought a Life Membership last year. Frank was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his two-year stint as battalion commander and is moving on to Fort Hood where he will assume duties as Deputy Commanding Officer of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Paul Humphreys is now the newest commander of 1/50 and he is imminently qualified and capable. We spoke with him and he was most reassuring in pledging his support to our Association.

The 2007 Reunion Planning has begun. The dates are 15-19 May and the headquarters hotel will once again be the Holiday Inn North. Michelle Spivey once again proved to be an outstanding hostess, taking Randy Smith, Bob Gold and Gary and Kay Quint to the Hunter's Pub for dinner. They all were most impressed with her selection and delighted with the offer to have us return next year. The reunion format will generally follow the same itinerary as last year.

While the others were at Hunter's Pub, Jim and Loretta Segars, Janet and I had dinner at the Burns' where Jim presented Frank with a statuette of the 1/50 Memorial that resides in front of the battalion headquarters.

I later met with LTC Sean McCaffery, Commander of the 1st Battalion 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment. These are the folks that conduct Airborne Training at Fort Benning. Each of the last two reunions I have sought to get us into the Airborne School and both times been told, "not possible, they only do demonstrations on the first Monday of each month". When I asked Sean if there might be an exception made to that policy he assured me there would be no problem. He will not be there next year, he is assuming a DCO position in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg later this summer, he has pledged to link me up with his new S3 who will be there next year. We will get an Airborne 5000 demonstration and then observe an actual jump.

The sequence of events are: 1) Tuesday (15th) night reception; 2) Wednesday, Fort Benning activities (Command Brief, G2 Intel Brief on Iraq, New National Infantry Museum update, lunch at Officer's Club, airborne demo and jump, evening BBQ at Uchee Creek campground pavilion with battalion members; 3) Thursday, visit with 1/50, Memorial Service at monument, participate in trainee activities and have lunch with the troops. Thursday evening business meeting and banquet at hotel; 4) Friday morning graduation ceremony with E Company 1/50 and remainder of day and evening free; 5) Saturday, on your own.

Still to be nailed down are the buses needed to transport us from the hotel to Fort Benning and around post; and, the exact activities we will be participating in with the troops as that level of detail is not currently available. I am working with some folks trying to get the bus issue taken care of and the training schedule is simply a function of time. Overall, it appears we will have another successful reunion and I hope we have a great turnout.

I will have registration forms in subsequent newsletters and posted on the website. Costs for most things are going up, but I am hopeful of keeping attendee cost at about the same level as last year.

Any thoughts or questions please let me know.



Dear Association Members :

This will be my last edition as Editorial Assistant for your newsletter. It has been my honor to serve you since 1998 in this small capacity. My thanks to Ken Riley for allowing me the opportunity to begin in this position. Robert Melendez, Bob Gold and John Topper have permitted me to continue until now. The recent death of my mother and multiple commitments have made it necessary for me to resign at this time. God bless you all and keep up all your good work.

Billie McGregor