

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association



September 2004

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Here it is September and getting closer to winter. Hope all is well and all enjoyed the summer. This has been an exhausting summer for us, as most of you know we moved. Sure glad that is over. On August 22nd. to the 24th. I went to Benning with John Topper, Randy Smith, and Randy's son R J. I flew to Atlanta and Randy picked me up at the airport. Upon arriving at the Battalion, we were warmly greeted by the new commander LTC. Frank Burns. He stated that he was looking forward to meeting us and was waiting for our arrival. After the introductions he asked us what we would like to have and do when we have the reunion here in May. John mentioned several things, which I will not disclose at this time, but I'm sure you will all, have a grand time when we come back. After all the options were discussed, LTC. Burns said that there would be no problems for what we wanted to do. After the meeting, LTC. Burns ask John if there was anything we wanted to see, and John said that I was an 11C in the service. He said that there was mortar training going on that day and he would take us out to the training grounds. Before we went to see the troops, the Battalion chaplain was there and we went out side to the memorial and had a short prayer for those who gave their lives in Viet Nam. LTC. Burns said he had a lot of comments of the memorial and was impressed of what the Association had done.

Upon arriving at the training area, we were greeted by the staff. They then proceeded to show us how they did there mortar training. The troops were real good in the set of the mortars. One team set it up in 34 sec; I was impressed with that. This was a dry fire exercise only. After we bent the ears of the instructors, and told them how we did it Nam, they said they were teaching hip shooting also. We had a lot of laughs and some good conversations with them. As always we were treated with the utmost respect. We wish to thank LTC. Burns and his staff for taking the time with us.



EDITOR

BOB GOLD

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We then proceeded to the Holiday Inn, where we had a meeting with Michelle Spivy. Otis Ponds was there also. We went to lunch and had our meeting, discussing what we wanted to have, and the rates. The meeting went very well and a rough draft was drawn up with the prices we needed. We wish to thank Michelle for the lunch and the complimentary rooms she gave us. Later that evening we had the pleasure of taking LTC. Burns his wife and LTC. Payne and his wife Linda out to dinner. Bill and Linda were glad to see us again. We had a wonderful evening and some great food. We talked about the last reunion and the fun that we had. LTC. Payne commented on how well mannered we were and organized. They are looking forward to seeing us in May, and I'm sure we will have a great time again. Tuesday morning we went back to Benning to take care of some loose ends. John had mentioned that there was an Officer's wall of fame there and he would like to see it. Upon looking at the pictures, Randy noticed John's picture on the wall. John said that he heard that it was there but never saw it. What an honor that is for John. He is truly a remarkable man, and he accomplished a lot during his military career. What an privilege for our association to have him as our President. Time was running short and we left to get to the airport in time for my flight home. I wish to thank John and Randy for inviting me to go with them and getting to and from the airport. Thanks guys. It was a pleasure to meet Randy's son R J. John and Randy will give you all the info for the next upcoming reunion. Until the next time remember to PLAY THE GAME and may God Bless all of you.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

The dominant news of today is on the presidential election, without much emphasis placed on the congressional elections. It is, after all, the Congress that enacts legislation that affects the state of the union. Presidential contenders aver that they will do certain things, but only if Congress enacts the legislation. If the president doesn't agree with the bill sent to his desk, he can veto it - but his veto can be overridden. I have seen the headlines that stated, "*Congress Supports The Troops*", which is as it should be. Similar signs appear in storefront windows, and on the lawns of concerned homeowners, but I don't see any signs that say, "*Congress Supports the Veterans*."

Congress is not totally absent in enacting legislation favorable to veterans, but this administration (the legislative bodies and the executive branch, have come up short on what the major veterans organizations have projected as adequate. Yes, the budget for veterans has been increased, but not in proportion to the increase in the number of veterans who now are aging, with more health problems, and many have lost their previously available health insurance, paid in part by their employers. There is a reluctance to adequately fund the Veterans Administration's health care system. A plan recently initiated, called PAYGO, better described as pay-as-you-go, would require increased spending to be offset by cuts elsewhere. An amendment to the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution to boost FY 2005 spending for veterans' health care by \$2.5 billion was defeated by a vote of 230-184. The plan would have been funded by tax increases of \$19 billion on people with incomes greater than \$1 million. Three bills recently introduced by members of the majority party, H.R. 3800; H.R.3295 and H.R. 3973 contain provisions that would limit spending, resulting in cuts to the V.A. budget. Mandatory programs, such as disability compensation for veterans suffering from the effects of their military service, and dependency and indemnity compensation (D.I.C.) for dependents of certain veterans, would be targeted. While these cuts are designed to curtail the bulging deficits, there doesn't appear to be any cuts in "pork barrel projects". "Pork barrel" refers to projects that members of congress approve for their home districts and states, and are a way to help them get re-elected. While we can vote for a president, we are limited to voting for our own state senators, and the representatives from our own district. But it is imperative that we should exercise the privilege of voting.

Ted Evanosky, Life Member
AMVETS, D.A.V. & V.F. W.
2 Hallmark Drive
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412-793-7690

**VICE-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
By Randy "Doc" Smith**

Sunday morning started early, before 4:00 A.M. My son and I were making ready to leave at 5:00 a.m. for the two-hour trip to John Topper's new home in Santa Claus, Indiana. We arrived there at 7:00 A.M. as scheduled and picked up John. We left John's house for the Atlanta airport to pick up Bob Gold.

After greeting Bob at the airport, it was off to Columbus, Ga. We checked into the Holiday Inn, where we'll be staying for the reunion. Monday morning we went to Ft. Benning and met with the new battalion commander LTC Frank Burns. Discussions and planning were followed by a memorial service with the battalion Chaplain at the Memorial in front of Battalion Headquarters.

As we were leaving the base we passed through the Officer Candidate School (OCS) area and I was kidding John about not being able to walk anywhere while there. He laughed and admitted to a lot of running. Then he pointed out buildings he had attended classes in and his old living quarters. As we were driving out of the area he mentioned that they had a Hall of Fame building somewhere and that he had been inducted. I asked if he knew where it was and he didn't. Well I pulled hard on the right lateral and initiated a U turn declaring that we were going to find that building.

At the headquarters building we were told that the Hall of Fame was three buildings away. There we looked for and found John's picture and statistics that had been in place since 1987. John had not seen it before that day and I felt privileged to be there with him. And very proud that he calls me friend.

Bob Gold and I estimated that there were probably less than 1000 inductees in the OCS Hall of Fame. I don't know how many officers have gone through OCS but in 1967 alone there were 67,000. For whatever reasons I didn't see some names I expected to see, like Powell, Schwartzkopf, North, and other well known soldiers. Maybe that's because the officers in the Hall of Fame are your basic infrastructure of the Army. The Get "R" Done guys.

Anyway, when you see John at the reunion offer your congratulations on his induction into the OCS Hall of Fame, and offer your hand to a man who really deserves it

78th JFA

JASON'S JOURNAL

25 June 2004 - Here I am again back in Danang barely three weeks after leaving. The staff at the Furama all seems to know me now. This place is all too familiar, yet still so strange. I hate being gone again so soon. I just want to be at home with my family right now.

The trip here was a lot longer than normal. We flew to Kawajalein before going to Guam. That added about seven or eight extra hours to the trip. It seems awfully far out of the way just to refuel. I guess a 757 just can't go as far as a C-17. Fortunately, the flight was quite comfortable. I had three seats to myself so I was able to stretch out and sleep most of the way. I am unreasonably tired right now considering how much I slept on the way here. It is only 6pm and it is all I can do to not just go to bed for the night.

2 July 2004 - The last week has been very eventful, albeit slow going. I have already experienced more this time than I did the last two trips combined. We left Danang on the 27th for Dong Hoi. We stopped at the same dirty little seafood restaurant where we ate last time. The food there is good but the place is filthy. After lunch we drove on up through Hue and Dong Ha, and on to Dong Hoi. The drive took seven and a half hours. It is only about a four-hour drive but we made several stops along the way to buy beer and use the bathroom.

Dong Hoi is a much nicer town than Dong Ha. It is much cleaner and the people are much friendlier. People come out just to say hello as you walk down the street. In Dong Ha, if anyone approaches you it is just to beg for money.

The hotel was nice enough. Definitely not what we are used to, but I've stayed in worse. It is very minimalist with no amenities to speak of. The bathroom doesn't even have a tub or a shower stall, just a showerhead on the wall. The air conditioner doesn't work too well, but at least it had one. I slept pretty comfortably there.

Our first night in Dong Hoi we had a team dinner with our VNO hosts. These are the best VNO I have ever worked with. They are friendly and generous. They treated us to our entire meal. We ate at a wild game restaurant where we actually got to see dinner before it was killed. This included a four-foot Kimoto Dragon. The dragon turned out to be very delicious, but very tough. The VNO also brought Iguana blood to dinner. They believe it brings vitality and asked us all to partake. Some of us, including myself, actually drank some. This is something I have heard of before but never thought I would do. For some reason on this trip I am eager to experience things that I never have before.

Getting all our equipment up to the base camp was very slow going. The workers up here are very slow and lazy. Plus, the base camp is almost a mile up the mountain from the landing zone.

The second day of moving stuff up here I was down at the lower LZ loading equipment on the helicopter and sending it up to the upper LZ with one other guy while the rest of the team was up on the mountain. At lunchtime the helicopter had to go back to Dong Hoi to refuel, so we had about three hours to kill. Our VNO host took us into the village for lunch. This was the first time I have ever actually gone into one of the villages. It was like walking into Gilligan's Island. The village is very poor and the people are very friendly. Our host took us to a little shack. The people there cooked for us. They showed us the two ducks they were making for us before they killed them. They also made pork, rice and soup. It was an incredible meal. It is customary in this particular village to take a nap after lunch. So after our meal, they got out a mat and some pillows and prepared a place for us to lie down. Also, the village is just off the Ho Chi Min trail. So, Thip and I took pictures standing on the trail. The whole lunch and visit was an experience I will never forget.

Yesterday, I was at the upper LZ pushing equipment up the hill with the same guy, Thip (pronounced 'tip'). This time we had lunch with the guards who watch our equipment. Again, lunch was very good. They told us after we ate that we had just eaten dog. Our linguist told us later that it was pork and they were just messing with us. But it didn't look or taste like any pork either of us had ever eaten. Whatever it was, it was damn good. Don't get me wrong. I have no plans to take up eating dog on a regular basis. That's just something I can't do, nor would I have had I known beforehand. But it was damn good.

Last night we had a promotion party for our team sergeant, SFC Henshaw. He got promoted to sergeant first class yesterday. Again, our VNO hosts joined us. We went to another restaurant in town. It was absolutely incredible. We had clams, squid, giant prawn, rice, soup and pork. It was a great meal and a fun evening. The VNO brought three gallons of Kukloi, and we had no problem drinking every last drop. The VNO colonel, along with many of our team members was very drunk.

Today we finally moved up to the base camp. We came out to the airstrip at 8am. We loaded up all of our luggage and four team members for the first lift. After an hour and a half the helicopter came back. The pilot said the wind was way too strong up in the mountains and we couldn't go back up until this afternoon. So the rest of us went back to the hotel with no luggage and hoped we would get up here today. At 2pm we did actually fly out and get up here.

78th JFA**JASON'S JOURNAL**

This was a relief because the last time the winds picked up our advance team didn't get up here for a week. The wind up here has gotten up to sixty knots at times. Having no advance work done seriously slowed us down. The base camp should have been built already. We have been working this whole time on building the camp. It is still not entirely done. We haven't even gone to the site yet. As of tonight the base camp is really coming together. We all got our tents up this afternoon. The latrines here are like none other I have had before. We actually brought real toilets up. We are using a gravity feed from a water source farther up the mountain and our toilets actually flush! The camp itself is entirely enclosed under tarps and with screens up around the sides. It is like a giant house. Some people didn't even put up tents. They are just sleeping on cots under the tarp. I don't think any base camp has ever been this nice.

The camp is not without its downfalls though. This place is crawling with Green Bamboo Vipers. They are quite deadly. One of our workers was bitten yesterday and had to be flown to the hospital in Dong Hoi. Last I heard he was recovering. But he would have died had we not gotten him off this mountain.

I am looking forward to getting up to the site. A couple of folks have already gone up there to see it. We can't work up there until our climbing gear gets here on the third. Those who have already gone up there say it is the steepest site they have ever seen. I am looking forward to the challenge. It should **prove interesting**.

3 July 2004 - I slept like a baby last night. I always do out here. The Vietnam jungle has a way of singing me to sleep. The buzz of the cicadas, the crickets chirping, the wind in the trees, it all comes together as a sort of lullaby. I sleep better here than anywhere else in the world.

I went up to the site to do my initial photos today. They were not exaggerating. This site is a killer. The project area is on a 70-90 degree slope. At the very bottom of the site is a straight drop-off. We are at 1,800 feet, too. Basically, you do not want to fall here. I started at the datum, which is top dead center, and worked my way around and through the whole site. I had to do it with my camera bag on my back because I couldn't just carry my gear. I needed my hands for climbing. We had workers on site still setting up safety lines. We still don't have our climbing gear though. It took me a good while to get through it all, but it was a lot of fun. It only gets easier now.

5 July 2004 - Yesterday was Independence Day. We worked half a day and then celebrated. We had brought a pig up to roast for the party, but it died on the helicopter and went rancid. The villagers also brought a second pig up as a sacrifice to appease the spirits of the mountain before we break ground. But we ate him instead. Damn, he was delicious too. I sure hope the spirits don't mind.

Today we started digging. We are off to a slow start because this is a seriously tough site. But we will get a groove going pretty quickly, I'm sure.

11 July 2004 - This dig has been pretty slow going. We are averaging two grid units or less a day. We are making progress, but the site is just so damn dangerous. There is a lot of preparation every time we open up a new grid.

We finally found bone today. It was only a couple of small fragments, but we are definitely moving in the right direction.

Happy birthday, Jake.

18 July 2004 - We closed the site today. It was a seriously tough one. All the other teams have been back in Danang for four days already. We are the fourth team to excavate this site. We could have extended it another hundred meters down slope and probably found more stuff. But it just isn't worth it. We got what we came here for. Another \$300,000 to send another team out here would be just ridiculous. Plus the site is way too dangerous. The grade gets steeper toward the bottom. We have been more than fortunate so far that nobody has been seriously hurt up here. We push out tomorrow for Dong Hoi. It will be nice to have a hotel room and a good shower. We are all looking forward to some down time. We have earned it.

Yesterday, on my way to the site I heard something big growling at me. It was out of my sight but very close. It made me a bit nervous since I was the only one on the path at that time and I wasn't carrying a machete. About an hour later one of the workers saw it hanging out just off the site. It was a big tiger. I don't know what the hell he was doing hanging around so close to so many humans. That is unusual for tigers. There have been some animals around here throughout the JFA lingering a little too close to the base camp for comfort.

21 July 2004 - We are finally off the mountain. The VNO took us out to dinner again last night to another wild game restaurant. This time we ate porcupine and turtle and drank turtle blood. I didn't just sample the turtle blood. I actually drank a lot of it mixed with Kukloi. I have discovered a newfound love for Kukloi. I got drunk on it three nights in a row in the base camp. It doesn't leave me hung over like beer does.

VIEW FROM THE TC HATCH

John Topper

The Reunion 2005 committee, Bob Gold, Randy Smith, Otis Ponds, Linda Payne and myself met in Columbus/Fort Benning, GA and began preparations for next year's reunion. There are still some details to be worked out, but the overall plan is in place.

The current battalion commander, Frank Burns, couldn't have been more hospitable. He gave us an overview of the battalion's training calendar for next spring and we selected 3-7 May as the best period for the reunion. There will be a reception the evening of 3 May; the next day we will spend at Fort Benning engaged in garrison activities, lunch at the Officer's Club, culminating with a BBQ that evening with the battalion cadre. 5 May will be devoted to observing training with the battalion and lunch with the trainees and our semiannual general meeting that evening; 6 May will see us in attendance at a battalion graduation ceremony, followed by trips to local area attractions and a free evening. Saturday morning we will have the New President's Breakfast and that will wrap up the official portion of the reunion. Elsewhere in this newsletter is a registration blank that has additional information.

The host hotel is Holiday Inn North, just off the Interstate. Their Sales Director, Michelle Spivey was most gracious in helping us put together a program that I believe will meet our needs at an affordable price. She also went out of her way in providing suggestions, and volunteering her services, for activities for the ladies; specifically a shopping trip to the nearby historical town of Warm Springs with lunch at the Bulloch House. We have blocked 70 rooms for guests @ \$68 per night. For those arriving early or leaving late, the rate applies to the nights of 2 and 7 May as well. Please make your reservations by calling 800-465-4329 or 706-324-0231. Identify yourself as a part of the group **1st Battalion, 50th Infantry - Group Code IRR** to ensure you receive the contracted rate. The cutoff date for the contract is **11 April 2005**.

The cost of next year's reunion will be somewhat more than last year's, primarily because of the increase in gasoline prices. Buses next year will be \$2100 more than last year. Other prices have gone up as well, but not as dramatically. Overall though, I believe we will be able to provide a good value for the cost. Please make your reservations early for both rooms and registration. We must guarantee the amounts to all the vendors (hotel, caterer, buses, club and recreation center) so a firm count is needed. Planning is predicated on a total headcount of 120 - last year we had 101 - so we need to know a firm number of attendees prior to **11 April** in order to make necessary adjustments.

The committee used the results of last year's post-reunion survey in our consideration as well as ideas that have been offered throughout the year either directly or via the website. Any further suggestions will be given equal consideration, so let us hear from you.

A short history lesson on the privilege of voting... submitted by John Topper

The women were innocent and defenceless. And by the end of the night, they were barely alive. Forty prison guards wielding clubs and their warden's blessing went on a rampage against the 33 women wrongly convicted of "obstructing sidewalk traffic."

They beat Lucy Burn, chained her hands to the cell bars above her head and left her hanging for the night, bleeding and gasping for air. They hurled Dora Lewis into a dark cell, smashed her head against an iron bed and knocked her out cold. Her cellmate, Alice Cosu, thought Lewis was dead and suffered a heart attack. Additional affidavits describe the guards grabbing, dragging, beating, choking, slamming, pinching, twisting and kicking the women.

Thus unfolded the "Night of Terror" on Nov. 15, 1917, when the warden at the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia ordered his guards to teach a lesson to the suffragists imprisoned there because they dared to picket Woodrow Wilson's White House for the right to vote.

For weeks, the women's only water came from an open pail. Their food--all of it colorless slop--was infested with worms. When one of the leaders, Alice Paul, embarked on a hunger strike, they **tyed her to a chair, forced a tube** down her throat and poured liquid into her until she vomited. She was tortured like this for weeks until word was smuggled out to the press.

So, refresh my memory. Some women won't vote this year because--why, exactly? We have carpool duties? We have to get to work? Our vote doesn't matter? It's raining?

Last week, I went to a sparsely attended screening of HBO's new movie "Iron Jawed Angels." It is a graphic depiction of the battle these women waged so that I could pull the curtain at the polling booth and have my say. I am ashamed to say I needed the reminder.

All these years later, voter registration is still my passion. But the actual act of voting had become less personal for me, more rote. Frankly, voting often felt more like an obligation than a privilege. Sometimes it was inconvenient.

My friend Wendy, who is my age and studied women's history, saw the HBO movie, too. When she stopped by my desk to talk about it, she looked angry. She was--with herself. "One thought kept coming back to me as I watched that movie," she said. "What would those women think of the way I use --or don't use -- my right to vote? All of us take it for granted now, not just younger women, but those of us who did seek to learn." The right to vote, she said, had become valuable to her "all over again."

HBO will run the movie periodically before releasing it on video and DVD. I wish all history, social studies and government teachers would include the movie in their curriculum. I want it shown on Bunco night, too, and anywhere else women gather. I realize this isn't our usual idea of socializing, but we are not voting in the numbers that we should be, and I think a little shock therapy is in order.

National Woman's Party
Come
 TO THE
White House
Tuesday, August 6
 AT 4:30 P. M.
 TO
Protest
AGAINST THE DELAY OF
WOMAN SUFFRAGE

It is jarring to watch Woodrow Wilson and his cronies try to persuade a psychiatrist to declare Alice Paul insane so that she could be permanently institutionalised. And it is inspiring to watch the doctor refuse. Alice Paul was strong, he said, and brave. That didn't make her crazy. The doctor admonished the men: "Courage in women is often mistaken for insanity."

Please pass this on to all the women you know. We need to get out and vote and use this right that was fought so hard for by these very courageous women.



1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association

Reunion 4-7 May 2005

Fort Benning, Georgia

REGISTRATION FORM

Member Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____ Badge Name _____ Shirt Size _____

Guest Name _____ Badge Name _____ Shirt Size _____

(Use separate sheet for additional guests)

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____ Hotel Name _____

(Host Hotel is Holiday Inn North)

Registration Procedure:

Registration Cutoff Dates:

Registration Costs:

(Per Person)

Mail this form along with check to: Early: **15 April 2005**

Early Registration: **\$150**

After 15 April: \$175

Chuck McAleer, Treasurer

1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Association

PO Box 60522-4863

Oak Brook, IL 60522-4863

Host Hotel is the Holiday Inn North 800-465-4239 for reservations (Michelle Spivey)

Make check payable to: 1st Bn 50th Infantry Association

Registration Fee Includes:

3 May Evening Reception

6 May Buses

Dinner for Guests

4 May Lunch, Dinner, Buses

7 May Breakfast

Gifts for Hosts

5 May Lunch, Dinner, Buses

Golf Shirt

Door Prizes

Email Scam: Beware!

Have you received an email from banks lately asking you to update your account information? Beware. Identity thieves are using fictitious emails to acquire a person's Social Security Number and other important information. Emails, such as the one below, ask the recipient to update their information via a fake confirmation page. If the recipient offers confidential information, it can be used fraudulently to steal one's identity or access online accounts. In the example below, please note how the email address looks like it's coming from Citizens Bank.

-----Original Message-----

From: CITIZENS BANK [mailto:identdep_op6080@citizensbank.com]

Sent: Sunday, September 19, 2004 12:48

Subject: Important information: your account



CITIZENS BANK

Not your typical bank.®

Dear Citizens Bank customers!

Technical services of the Bank are carrying out a planned software upgrade. We earnestly ask you to visit the following link to start the procedure of confirmation of customers' data:

http://www.citizensbank.com/customerservice/cust_serv_gtway.asp