

# ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry Association



November 2005

Cover Page

## FROM THE TC HATCH

Randy "Doc" Smith,

The website and message board continue to be our number one problem. Some suggestions have been made and the best of these has come from Jim Sheppard our historian. It has been proposed by Jim that we form a committee to help Ray Sarlin, our webmaster with the chores of the website.

Jim has volunteered to be on the committee and Ray has requested that the officers send items regularly to post on the site. We will need additional people with some computer knowledge to help with the following chores that Jim has pointed out:

- A man or two to keep the e-mail addresses updated.
- Someone responsible for the photos area.
- Others responsible for keeping the message board "policed" and spam free.
- Any other areas that Ray would deem too time consuming for him.
- Anyone in our membership with time and skills that would benefit our webmaster please contact him at [raysarlin@yahoo.com](mailto:raysarlin@yahoo.com) or myself at [smittys@comcast.net](mailto:smittys@comcast.net).

Another point of interest is that Jim Sheppard has located another "PLAY THE GAME" battalion on the internet. This one is comprised of WWII members and we have been in touch with them through their website. I have e-mailed their webmaster and requested communications with him directly in an attempt to further relations between the two groups. Hopefully we can get together in the near future. Can you imagine 1/50th stories from the Battle of the Bulge? Their website address is [www.50thaib.org](http://www.50thaib.org).

*Never in the history of the world has any soldier sacrificed more for the freedom and liberty of total strangers than the American soldier.*

Zell Miller (D) Georgia 2004

I'll end my column with a reminder that Veterans Day will again be observed on November 11. This was not always the case. Formerly known as Armistice Day, it was changed by Congress on June 1st, 1954 to Veterans Day. However new legislation in 1968 changed Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent that November 11 was a date of historic significance to many Americans and in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

Official, national ceremonies for Veterans Day center on the Tomb of the Unknowns. To honor the men, symbolic of all Americans who gave their lives in all wars, an Army honor guard, the 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), keeps day and night vigil. At 11:00 A.M. on November 11, a combined color guard representing all military services executes "Present Arms" at the Tomb. The nation's tribute to its war dead is symbolized by the laying of a presidential wreath and the playing of Taps. Having been there to observe the ceremony of the laying of the wreath myself, I would encourage anyone with the opportunity to go to not miss such a beautiful and extremely emotional ceremony.

*In war, there are no unwounded soldiers.*

*José Narosky*

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## EDITOR'S PAGE

John Topper

## Veteran's Day 2005

As you read this, the calendar should be approaching Veteran's Day. A special day for all of America and especially for those of us who served our nation during war. The battalion, at Fort Benning, will conduct a service at the memorial our Association dedicated a couple years ago. The service starts at 0900. There have been some improvements to the monument, (concrete pads and sidewalk), since our reunion earlier this year.

Colonel Burns, in a recent message told me about a most interesting website link that First Sergeant Robinson, who made the CDs from our reunion, has established at <http://www.charlierock150.com>. He has also instituted a "Legacy Card" to be carried by each soldier. On this card is the name of a 1-50 Soldier who gave the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War. No two names are alike. Each Soldier took a pledge to keep their Legacy Card in the left breast pocket of his uniform as a way to honor these outstanding Veterans. When challenged when the chips are down and he thinks he wants to give up, he is told to pull out the Legacy Card and remind himself why he is there. During their last training event which will be a 12 mile road march to Honor Hill in December, a place where they will receive their Infantry Crossed Rifles; they will march down to the Battalion and return the Cards to the 1-50 Vietnam War Memorial which has each name engraved in bronze. How great is that? Thanks First Sergeant.

I do believe our battalion is in very capable hands and those hands are crafting Infantry soldiers of great character. Colonel Burns and Command Sergeant Major Kauffman are a great command team and have been most supportive of our Association and we owe them much. Many thanks to both.

I am developing a new schedule for this newsletter starting with this edition. I want to have this one in your hands before Veteran's Day. I also want to ensure we have a Memorial Day edition since these are the principal days that are dedicated to us and our comrades who gave their all in Vietnam (and other wars) and I would like to do so in a timely fashion. If you have something you would like to put in the newsletter, send it to me. I will fit it in as space permits.

And remember, Veteran's Day is your day. God bless you for your service.



*In the beginning of a change,  
the patriot is a scarce man, and  
brave, and hated and scorned.  
When his cause succeeds, the  
timid join him, for then it costs  
nothing to be a patriot.*

~Mark Twain, Notebook, 1935

## AMBUSH PATROL

Mick Hawkins

I had talked with John Topper about telling a story about an ambush that I went on while at LZ English. I hope no one takes this wrong, it is a true story and as I age my brain hates the pressure of trying to remember things, dates, names and places. I hope I get the names right that went on this ambush if I do not most will read it in the newsletter except Jim Derwitch I don't think he is a member.

As a young boy I was raised to be a Pitch player. How well you played Pitch would determine your rank or status in the town of Browning where I lived as well as in the Hawkins family.

Browning is a rather large town in my part of Missouri. Being about 200 in size.

When I was a small lad of about 6 years of age, me and my brother, who is a year younger than me, would play my dad and grandfather in Pitch and they would invariably beat us bad. Crying did no good they would just say shut up and deal. When I got to be about 12 my brother and I could hold our own and if we won grandpa or dad would hurt their leg, have to go to the bathroom and never come back or something to stop our run of luck. If they were winning we would have to play until wee hours in the morning.

Now you might be asking yourselves about now what a Pitch game is and what it has to do with an ambush at LZ English. Pitch is a card game and only the most elite and higher status individuals in the community are good at it - at least that's how it is in Missouri.

Around November and December of 1967 we spent a lot of our time around LZ English looking for the NVA. The first part of December some of the mortar platoon was at LZ English some were at LZ pony. I was at LZ English where we mostly worked patrols.

I met Jim Derowitch who was from a small town like Browning in Kansas, (Bellville, Kansas) He, like me was a born Pitch player and I think only someone with my world class skill could ever beat him.

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## A Reunion Story

by Rick Tuchscherer, 1SG. USA (ret)

*A good friend has encouraged me to tell this story so here goes. It is a story of hope, faith, love, and courage. Thanks Pat.*

In 1966 I, like many young Americans went to Viet Nam. I was assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment. This Regiment was a part of the famed First Infantry Division, better known as the Big Red One.

I arrived in country in early January 1966 fresh out of advanced Infantry Training. Upon arrival I was assigned to the 1st Platoon of Charlie Company. A short while after settling in I was assigned duties as a rifleman.

I remember our Platoon Leader Lt. Marshall Raymond Hirsch. He was also new to the unit and took over the Platoon a short time after my arrival. I clearly remember him bringing soft drinks and beer by our tent. Beer and Soda was hard to get so it was a moment that I will always remember. He was a very likeable officer, tall and lanky and had a smile of confidence on his face.

On February 21st Charlie Company was on a mission when we were ambushed. I remember the distinctive and rapid "cracking" of automatic weapons fire, and a thunderous explosion. I heard someone say that we needed more ammo for the machine gun. I crawled back down the line a short distance, got a can of ammo from another soldier, and crawled back up to head of the column. Another man quickly grabbed the ammo from me and I assume took it to the M-60 gunner. I remember at that point looking to my right and seeing LT. Hirsch in a sitting position up against a large termite mound slumped over. He was dead. A good man, a good officer . . . gone after only three weeks with the unit. He died trying to protect his men and directing fire against the enemy in order to "break" the ambush. SGT. Stan Hill, a few others and myself were wounded and were evacuated on a Dust Off (Huey Helicopter).

Although I was to be wounded again at a later date, I managed by the Grace of God to survive "in country" until January 1967 when I returned to the states. For some reason I decided to remain in the Army and over the next 20 years I thought often about LT. Hirsch and the young family he left behind. All I knew was that he had three little girls and a wife he left behind that day in the ambush. I frequently asked myself what I might have done to help him. I pondered why I had been spared and this man, with a young wife and family, had been taken from us. I wondered what happened to this family over the years. I also thought often about the all the other men from Charlie Company who taught me how to stay alive. They were a wonderful group of brave, resourceful men who would give you their last drop of water and at the same time chew you out for not conserving your own. They took care of one another, and anyone else who came into the unit. They passed on lessons learned, and scolded you when you were wrong. After all a mistake in this type of environment could get you, or someone else killed. They were a proud, and confident group of soldiers. We were a family of young warriors trying to do a job the best we could . . . and survive. I don't think a day ever passed in my Army career that I didn't think of these men, and especially of the grisly scene of the aftermath of that firefight that took place in February 1966. One of our leaders had been taken from us, and some friends had been severely wounded.

I retired from the Army in 1985 nineteen years after that terrible day. One evening in early 2002 I received a phone call from a man identifying himself as Lee Banicki. He asked me if I had ever served with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment. I was, needless to say, stunned! His name was vaguely familiar from somewhere in the past. I thought for a moment and replied that I had been in that unit in 1966 in Viet Nam. He went on to tell me that some of guys had gotten together to form a reunion group, and invited me to attend the next reunion that summer in Orlando, Florida. Making no promises I told him I would think about it and let him know. To make a long story short - and with much encouragement from my wife and my father - I did attend the reunion in Orlando. Good decision; it was a life-changing event for me and started me on the road to healing some very old wounds.

I began looking for a way to contact our old Regiment who had recently returned to Germany from a combat tour in Iraq. I found the name and email address of a CPT Jeffery Blank. He was listed as the Battalion Adjutant. I immediately sent him a synopsis of the HIRSCH family story, and what I would like to do. He replied in short order that he was no longer the Adjutant and had transferred to Washington State. He did furnish me with his replacement's name and email address. CPT Alex Haseley. He was the new Adjutant and CPT Blank has assured me I would get the assistance I needed through him. Also CPT Blank offered to support my quest in anyway possible. I thanked him and continued my mission.

A short time after that reunion I was at my computer and quite by accident came across the Virtual Viet Nam Memorial Wall. It took me a few minutes to figure out how it worked. I could have used a 5th grader about that time show me what to do! Once I had that figured out I entered the last name of HIRSCH. Up jumped the name of LT. Marshall Raymond Hirsch. I don't know why but all of a sudden I was taken back 36 years in a "mental time warp" to that tragic day when he was killed. All over again I could smell the smoke and hear the explosions and screams of the wounded. I felt thankful that I had known this man, even for just a short time. I recalled a phrase that I had encountered many times in my Army career. They are the words of George Orwell, "We sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm". Lt. Marshal Raymond Hirsch gave his last full measure in the service of his country. As I continued on the Virtual Viet Nam Wall site, I found a place on the web page where someone could leave a "sentiment" if they wished. There was also a place for you to enter your mailing address and email address if you so desired. I did so and left a very brief sentiment, and continued looking up other men that I knew had died in those hot steamy jungles a long way from the safe shores of America. Some had been in the same unit with me and some were childhood friends who died in other units, and actions in Viet Nam. All are sorely missed.

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Shortly after Veterans Day 2004 I was mailed a long business envelope from Chicago. The return address was from a Law Firm. "Hmm" I thought, rarely does anything good come from a Lawyer so I placed the letter unopened on my table next to my chair and ignored it for a day or two. Finally curiosity got the best of me and I opened it. It was a handwritten note on a torn piece of yellow legal paper. The sender wanted to know if I was the man that had left a message on Marshall Hirsch's page on the Virtual Wall. The person inquiring was Debbie HIRSCH Dentzman. Marshall Hirsch was her father, and she was only 2 years old when he was killed. She told me that she had tried to contact me by email, but the email was returned. (I had changed my email address at some point after I found the Virtual Wall) Debbie was able to track me down through the "snail mail" address I had left on the web site. What a shock this very brief note was! Once again I conjured up some very painful memories, but at the same time it was full of hope and love for a father long passed from this earth. At the end of the short note Debbie left her mailing address and her email address. I knew I had to respond to this cry for information.

I was pretty nervous, only having met her dad once or twice, and he was only with the unit for 3 weeks before his untimely death. I didn't have much information but at least I could pass on what little I had. I answered her in an email and told her that "yes I was the one who had left the sentiment on Marshall's web page on the Virtual Wall". Almost immediately I received an email back from her telling of her accidental discovery of the Virtual Wall. She had been "fooling around" on the computer on Veterans Day and up it popped! She had never known of its existence all these years. She wrote that she had 2 sisters, Beth and Holli. Marshall also had an older sister, Elaine. They had been searching for any information on Marshall all of these years, but had not found out very much. Now here we are 38 years after the fact, they actually found some one who had served with their dad! The girls had grown up never really knowing their father. They were two, three and four when he died.

After making contact with Debbie, I started receiving emails from Beth, and from Elaine. They were so excited by this turn of events! One of the girls said they always thought their dad died alone in some far off jungle. They were elated to find out that there were many men with him when he fell in that hot steamy jungle firefight 38 years ago. They had never given up hope that someday they would find out what happened to him, and Marshall's sister Elaine would find out what happened to her "little brother". We all passed emails for weeks. They would ask questions and I would supply answers as best I could considering 38 years had passed, and I had spent much of that time trying "not to remember." I also gave them email addresses so they could contact our old Company Commander Tom O'Keefe, now a retired Colonel, and to Stan Hill who was seriously wounded in that firefight. It was the same Stan who was hosting the Colorado reunion. I also gave them the email address to Lee Banicki who was instrumental in starting the reunion group. Incidentally, Lee has published two books about Charlie Company's actions in Viet Nam.

I asked LT. Hirsch's family if they would attend our Colorado Springs reunion in September 2005. The response was initially negative because most of them had already made other travel plans, or had used up all their vacation time. I kept asking them to reconsider and try to find a way. I knew that if they were able to attend it would be a life changing experience to meet with the men who had served with their dad/brother. Unbeknownst to me, the three sisters were also being encouraged by their Aunt Elaine to attend the reunion. Elaine lives in Colorado not far from the reunion site. Finally I received an email that Aunt Elaine had convinced all the sisters to attend -- they were all coming! Aunt Elaine had made them an offer they couldn't refuse. Things were falling in place and picking up speed rapidly.

After the good news I sat back to ponder these recent events. Perhaps I had made a mistake? Would they be pleased with meeting these men who had served with their dad? Would they harbor resentment? Would the reunion cause more hurt than healing? What could we do for them? Well at this point there was not much I could do about the first three questions, but maybe we could do something for the last one. I felt that considering that 38 years had passed, and they barely knew their dad, and they certainly probably had no idea what a Regiment was, and more than likely didn't have much contact with the military. Maybe we could get them some little tangible gift that they could hold in their hands. Something to bond them to us and to our old Regiment to which their father gave his life.

I next fired off another email to the new Adjutant explaining what we were trying to do for the HIRSCH family. Just as importantly I explained why I was trying to gather some small items from the unit that these ladies could keep as memories -- some tangible evidence that they are a part of this Company and this proud old Regiment. A day or two went by before I had a response from Captain Haseley. He replied that he would look into helping us and would get back to me. CPT Haseley's next email requested further information on LT. Marshall Hirsch and his family. Debbie had sent me some old photos of her and her sisters taken a short time after Marshall's death. She also sent me some newspaper clippings and other assorted materials from the family history. I gathered up these things, made copies and sent it all off to Germany to CPT Haseley.

After what seemed like forever, I grew impatient. I had heard nothing from our old Regiment. Had we been forgotten? I sent another email to CPT Haseley to confirm he had received the materials, and asked again if the unit would help us with some small gifts -- perhaps a Regimental Coin, or some unit crests that we could give to these ladies. His reply was short and good . . . "We have received your package and we are all over this" thus leaving no doubt in my mind that we were in business! He added that he would round up some stuff and send it to my home address. I breathed a huge sigh of relief. After all the time that passed, my buddies and I were not going to send these ladies home empty handed!

I emailed Stan Hill and told him that I was going to be able to get "something" from the unit to give to the family members so that he could add a presentation ceremony to the reunion agenda. A few days later I received another exciting email from the Regiment in Germany. "Would it be alright" if they were able to send someone from the unit to attend our reunion? I was flabbergasted, and replied "definitely" without hesitation or consultation with Stan Hill or anyone else. I knew in my gut that there would be no one against such an offer! After spending more than 20 years in the Army I knew that in all probability no one would approve a TDY trip of this nature. Well, I was wrong! After several more days I received another email that the trip had been approved and that a Lt. Matthew (Matt) Pareti, current 1st Platoon leader, of our old Charlie Company would be attending the reunion! The Regiment would make all the arrangements and send me his itinerary. You could have knocked me over with a feather! I think I also shed a few tears as I read and re-read that beautiful email!

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The symbolism of what the Regiment was doing was very apparent to me after spending 20 years in the military. It was the highest honor and expression of love that the Regiment could bestow on us, the Hirsch family, and all those like LT. Marshall Hirsch who did not come home. They were going to send the man who currently held the same position of leadership that Marshall Raymond Hirsch held when he died in that jungle so many years ago. A direct successor to Marshall's position of Platoon Leader, this young officer would fly halfway around the world to be with the old Viet Nam Veterans of Charlie Company. He would do this just after returning from a combat tour in Iraq! What an honor we were going to receive from a unit that we all served with 38 years ago! Most of us thought we had been forgotten long ago.

Well, almost everything went by the book. The Hirsch sisters and their Aunt Elaine made it to the reunion as scheduled. Lt. Matt Pareti gave us quite a scare when he didn't show up on time. When his plane didn't arrive I called Air operations at the airport and told them about Lt. Pareti, who he was, and why he was coming. The operations director said she would page him every few minutes. She added that another plane was due in shortly and he could be on board that one. Lt. Pareti finally called and explained his plane was delayed for two hours in Germany, but he made it on okay. The whole cast of characters was now in place.

Finally we all met with lots of tears and hugs. Photos, newspaper clippings, memorabilia were displayed throughout our hospitality room. Stories were told and retold as grandchildren scurried about. Each of the HIRSCH ladies was given a tour of our display table that included a small "area of honor and remembrance." In this area we have twenty-two crosses with the names of our fallen brothers. Also among these crosses was one small "Star of David" honoring and bearing the name of Lt. Marshall Hirsch, who was of the Jewish faith. These ladies were overcome with emotion, as were many of us old soldiers as we watched all this unfold.

We caught up with old friends and made new ones. We were a family who had endured unspeakable hardships and tragedy many years ago, and we were bound forever by those circumstances. We were the survivors. The Hirsch family bound by love of their father and brother and each other kept the faith that someday they would find out what happened that 21st day of February 1966. They had the courage to keep hope and persevere in their search. It was indeed a happily tearful night in Colorado Springs as we paid tribute to our fallen brothers, and at the same time recognized the family of our fallen leader.

As our evening continued Lt. Matt Pareti explained what is like to be a leader in combat, and the decisions that have to be made, and sometimes the ultimate sacrifice cannot be avoided. Then it came time for the Hirsch family presentation. Each of us in a very special way was moved as we watched each of Lt. Hirsch's daughters, and sister Elaine come forward with misty eyes to be recognized and receive a small but very meaningful gift from Lt. Pareti and the Regiment. Unchecked tears flowed throughout the room as this very simple ceremony unfolded. It was then that I realized that Faith, hope, love, and courage had brought three young girls through 38 years of searching, and wondering about their dad into the midst of those men who had fought and served with their father in "another lifetime." It was a very proud and moving moment and one that I will tell my children and grandchildren about for many years.

Thank you Lt. Matt Pareti for your kindness, and your sacrifice in listening to the tall tales of a bunch of "older brothers in arms." Thank you to CPT Haseley for spearheading my initial request. A special thanks to Lt. Colonel Glaze, current Commander of our old unit who had to "approve" this mission. Most of all thanks to Elaine, Beth, Holli and Debbie for never giving up hope. You have been true to the motto of the Big Red One: "No mission too difficult no sacrifice too great, Duty first!" Marshall would be proud of all of you. Welcome home!

**AMBUSH PATROL** (continued) I received in the mail one day a deck of cards from my dad with a note attached, "maybe you can beat someone over there that has never played the game before". My dad was a big kidder.

I got Jim and we developed some complicated signs, not that we needed to cheat to win, it was just our ace in the hole. We had signs like one finger means spade, two means hearts and things like that. We then went to look up two old Vietnamese women who cleaned tents at LZ English. They couldn't speak much English and I asked them if they wanted to learn how to play cards. They nodded yes and I said to make it fun we would play best of seven games and if they won Jim and I would clean their tents and if we won they had to clean our APC, wash our socks and feet, get us a 6 pack of coke, fan us as we ate our dinner and the like.

They agreed and Jim and I let them play one game for fun to see how the game is played and of course I told them that the rules can be changed as the game is played, but only by the dealer and as the cards were mine, I would always deal. Jim and I chuckled as I dealt the first round of cards. Things didn't go exactly as we had planned and, since Jim was always very good at math, he did some addition and some subtraction and declared there was no way we could mount a comeback being down five games - after five games. After Jim and I cleaned out the tents we thought we would find some GI's to play Pitch with. We found two guys from New York that had never played cards before and it looked too easy. Two great card players like Jim and I playing two city boys. Like taking candy from a baby.

Later that afternoon after playing twenty-two games of pitch, Jim, again being quick with math, calculated that if we won this last game that would be one game for us. About that time Johnny Johnston came by to say Sergeant Ward was looking for volunteers to go on an ambush that night.

After we lost the twenty-third game the boys from New York allowed as how Pitch was a fun, easy to learn game and wanted to play some more. I hate playing with amateurs that don't know how to play the game. Jim and I told them we were in the infantry and had to go on an ambush, we didn't have time to play games. We left and I took my cards with us. We reported to Sergeant Ward's APC where he told us there was a VC that had been shooting into camp every morning about daylight. It was believed he might be from a small village north of English and we were to set up between it and the spot he always shot from in hopes of capturing him.



**MEMORY OF THE BATTLE OF LZ LITTS****By Louis Frisbie**

On March 8, 1968, we were ordered to LZ Litts in the afternoon. After we got the tracks (APC's) set in place, I remember quite a few people were in our perimeter from the refugee village next to Highway 1. Some of the men got haircuts from them. (I suspect some of these were spies). I was one of the radio operators for the company commander, Captain Bruce Braun. I had the battalion radio and Fred Bantle had the company radio. We usually set up close to the center of our encampment.

On the command track #406, were SGT Montabano, SP Fred Bantle, SP Louis Frisbie, Captain Bruce Braun, and three others whose names I have forgotten but they were the artillery forward observer, his radio operator and the driver for the track. At night, Fred Bantle and me would take a piece of metal about 6ft long and stick it above the tracks on the APC at the back. Two ponchos snapped together making a tent. SGT Montabano, the driver, Fred and I had radio watch every night.

As I remember my turn was sometime early morning. For some reason I woke up early. (I think it was God protecting me). I guess it was around 2 AM and I thought it was time for me to go on radio watch. I put my shoes on and went to the front of the APC where we sat in the driver's seat to monitor the radios. I don't remember if SGT Montabano or the driver was on duty. I asked if it was time for me to start, he said I had another hour to go, so I went back and crawled in the tent. I was taking my shoes off when I heard what sounded like a mortar land close by. I woke Bantle and told him we had better get under cover. We crawled under the APC between the tracks. We were there just a few minutes when there was a big blast. The next thing I knew Bantle was hitting me on the arm asking if I was ok. I was on the side where the B-40 rocket hit the APC above our tent. The next morning the tent was in pieces. I had a writing tablet an inch thick, it had a shrapnel hole all the way through. I finally realized the round had hit the track. I opened the small back door. Smoke was boiling around. The Captain slept on the side that got hit, right under the track radios and they were knocked out. He had shrapnel wounds all on his left side. The artillery forward observer slept on the other side, he was alright. I pushed the Captain out and Bantle and I helped him under the APC. Then I could not believe I heard him cuss saying something about a snake where he was. This was true because the next morning when the APC was moved, there lay the snake he had squeezed to death with his hands.

The forward observer was firing his .357 after we got the Captain under the APC. I remembered we had a back pack radio. I went back on top and got it going and talked to battalion headquarters telling them we were under attack. I remembered the artillery and got on his radio, I was trying to adjust fire before one of the lieutenants came on the line. I remember one of the Flame tracks was on fire. One of the medivac helicopters got shot down. I don't remember if the wounded were medevaced out or not. They brought out LT Schroeder the next morning, they promoted him to Captain and he became the commander. I think we counted about 110 enemy dead.

We were moved back to Uplift for a few days. I believe God had his hand on me that night at LZ Litts and kept me out of harms way by waking me up early. I did have a scratch on my wrist that night and my left ear was ringing which turned out I had a concussion. When we moved back to LZ Uplift I went on sick call because my wrist became infected. The medic pulled a piece of metal (shrapnel) out of my wrist and said I had an ear concussion. My ear had a ringing in it for along time after that.

This is my memory of the way things went that night. I realize everyone had a different situation.

*But fame is theirs - and future days  
On pillar'd brass shall tell their praise;  
Shall tell - when cold neglect is dead -  
"These for their country fought and bled."  
~Philip Freneau*



**THE HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK**

By Jim Sheppard

John Topper has asked for contributions for a special Veteran's Day edition of the Association Newsletter. This is a perfect opportunity for me to expound on a recent turn of events...a "theme" which is a fruitful reward of this labor of love I have embraced...our History and our Records Archives...more specifically, how I often interact with men in need of documentation and, on occasion, just a loving word of understanding.

Recently a man, Edwin Lapuerta, from Puerto Rico, posted a request for information on Rigo Ordaz's new Message board. There was some back and forth and not much accomplished until Rigo telephoned the man and cleared up some of the misunderstandings. Once correct dates were obtained, I was able to send along copies of the Daily Log for the date of an action in which Lapuerta was wounded. Then one of those "coincidences" came up that I truly feel is God at work.

Lapuerta, from "B" Company, was looking for documentation on his war experiences from late 1968. Chances are usually very slim that anything in the way of military documentation with names included, such as Special Orders, will be available.

By "chance" another man, Dennis Larocque, who was also in "B" Company in late 1968, read the postings and forwarded not only a copy of the individual's Combat Infantry Badge Special Orders, but also pictures of himself and this other man! I forwarded all to the man seeking the documentation.

In the midst of all this communication, I received an e-mail from Larocque's wife, who was sending the copies of orders and pictures. She informed me that her husband had been forced to put the memories aside...having "reached his limit" on what he could emotionally handle in bringing up the "remembrances".

I responded with the following letter. I hope I was able to help...and I feel I may have.

Dear Dennis and Hope,

Please do not feel any obligation to me because of the difficulty Dennis has with these "remembrances". Send whatever you can whenever you can...if you can. It is not as important as is Dennis' mental well being. We have ALL had these type "issues" in one way or another...some very little...and others never adapt.

I always try to be sensitive to those feelings in our men, since I went through a period of "adjustment" myself.

When I first began research at the National Archives (Before becoming the Association Historian), I could barely last a half day immersed in the "remembrances". It took me months at first...putting away the past and returning when I felt stronger...and I was only in a "Line Platoon" Combat Company for a period of about 4 months! (Charlie Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon)

I did notice, however, that each time got slightly more bearable. When I found and joined the Association, I noticed again a "withdrawal" of a few months while I collected my thoughts. I recall it being quite a roller-coaster ride of emotions...beginning with that high feeling of finding old friends...followed by conjured up dark recollections of very difficult mental and emotional times.

I was reluctant to attend my first reunion (September of 1999 in Kansas City). I went back and forth in my mind...but finally decided to go. It was at the same time my son was going through Basic Training in Missouri...and I also looked forward to visiting him. The reunion was fantastic! I was elected Historian and the work that followed has helped me and many others. I literally cannot wait for these reunions now!...and have practically no ill effects any longer from the hours upon hours I spend in research and documentation. Our first reunion at Fort Benning (Now the home of the 1/50<sup>th</sup>) was VERY emotional. I recall visiting Charlie Company Trainees on the rifle range...and seeing the Charlie Company "Guide-On" (Flag) for the first time since Viet Nam. I took my basic training with Charlie Company, 1/50<sup>th</sup>, in 1965, and then stayed with the unit for nearly 3 years. I could barely hold back the tears and a loving God and all those lost friends came back to stand with me in spirit at that moment.

Tell Dennis not to be ashamed of his hurt and pain. I understand. Have him take all the time he needs. I believe in time he will be able to visit with the thoughts again without the pain. I do know of several men who had severe difficulty and found the reunions painful at first, but helpful in the long run. Others have said our reunions are "better than all the therapy I've had for years". I hope Dennis will be able to join us, but if not, let him know we will ALWAYS be here for him if he needs someone to talk to or help out with his emotions.

It is my Honor and Pleasure to know and serve you.

Regards,

Jim Sheppard

1/50<sup>th</sup> Association Historian/Archivist

I recently responded to Hope Larocque with a thank you note. I can only "assume" her husband Dennis will realize he has helped a fellow soldier. Edwin Lapuerta sent me the following note in a thank you card: *"Mr. Sheppard, Thank you for all the help that you gave me for obtaining part of my old army records. The photos of Dennis Larocque brought me back a lot of good remembrances. If you ever visit Puerto Rico, don't hesitate to give me a call. Best wishes, Edwin LePeuerta-Vega"*

I may not always be able to help, but it is a great comfort when I can. Thanks to all involved in the "process".

I wish you all the best of everything American on this Veteran's day.