



GOLF COMPANY 2ND BATTALION 5TH MARINES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Happy Holidays!

Vol. 6, Issue 3

December, 1999

President's Corner:

I sit here and contemplate the end of the year, which also is the end of the millennium (depending on who you ask), and I find myself evaluating how the past year has gone. Some parts of it I would rather forget, but there have been some very memorable times. It was a busy year for me, quite busy. As I mentioned before, Sherry and I put a new house on our property. It "landed" (remember, it's a manufactured house) here on January 5, 1999...what a New Years' present! I've learned since how much stress and work is involved in a project such as this. I thought once the house got here everything would become easier...how wrong could a person be! After going through many permit issues with our Building & Safety Department, and with the California Air Resources Board, I think they are out of my hair (what's left of it). Of course there is still more construction to do, a storage room, patio, and garage, and we'll have to deal with them, but we have a little experience now and I hope it will go smoother. I'm probably not the only one who has gone through such trials with construction, and I'm sure I won't be the last. Even with all the troubles it was all worth it, we have a wonderful new house to celebrate Christmas and New Year in!

The year 2000 brings the Golf 2/5 Association to another reunion year. I hope many of you will be able to attend the gathering in San Diego, California. By the time of the next newsletter I hope to have all the plans for us ironed out. The 1st Marine Division Association hosts the event, but we're also trying to include some memorable events for those who attend. 2/5 is currently at Camp Pendleton and that's just a short distance from San Diego, and MCRD is even closer. Tours to both are being worked on. I can't wait to see how much has changed and how much has stayed the same.

For those "Hollywood Marines" out there, MCRD should be a great visit. I have heard many rumors and stories about the changes at both places, it will be interesting to see for myself. Of course the Quonset huts for the recruits are gone, but I haven't ever seen what replaced them. Even with all the changes with what the Drill Instructors can and cannot do, I'm sure they are still very much "in your face" to the recruits. What would Marine Boot Camp be without the piercing voices of a DI!

Camp Pendleton holds a lot of memories for me too, as I'm sure it does for many of you. Not only did I go

through my BITS and ITR there, after coming home from Vietnam I spent my final 29 months in the Corps there. As I remember it, in training we were housed in tents, with portable showers, an outside movie theater, and classrooms by name only. I'm sure there have been many changes there too. Ever wonder what happened to all those guys? I do. I even found my ITR Company photo not that long ago. Was I ever that young? And what about the others? I know some went on to special training schools, but the bulk were riflemen headed to Vietnam. Hindsight being what it is, I wish I had identified everyone so I would have their names now. I only heard about one Marine in that picture being KIA, and odds say there probably are more.

Recently our newsletter editor, Lance Machamer, had to give up his duties due to health issues. I want to thank Lance for all his time and efforts in making our newsletter a great communication tool for us. Good Job Marine! Larry Ortiz has volunteered to take over the editing chores. Thank you, Larry! We need your input for the newsletter, as always. I encourage you to send your submissions to Larry whenever you come across something you'd like to share with the rest of your fellow G 2/5ers. His contact info will be found in this newsletter, or go to the website and check there.

Speaking of websites, I recently "inherited" the duties of webmaster of the 2/5 site. It is a lot more complex than anything I've ever done before so I am now just getting everything caught up. If you have been to the site lately and nothing new has been posted, check again soon. Foxtrot & Hotel Companies are up to date, and Golf should be by the time you read this message. I'm also up for any suggestions for improvements, additions, or changes you might have for the site. Pictures are also welcomed. We already have a lot of great ones of An Hoa and many personal pictures, but there can never be enough. For myself, the pictures mean a lot. I lost all the ones I took years ago, and have been real excited to see those from others. If you don't have a scanner, you can send pictures to me and I'll scan them and get the originals back to you. That's totally up to you, I know how much my pictures meant to me and I will understand if you are uncomfortable sending them in the mail. When I said mine were lost, I'm not really sure...I have this awful feeling that I may have gotten rid of them during some of my more difficult times. So, if you're

comfortable sharing your pictures, they mean a lot to those of us who don't have ours anymore.

As I close this message to you all, I want to extend my warmest good wishes for the coming New Year. May the year 2000 be a great one for one and all of you. From Tom & Sherry Hohmann, Happy Holidays!

Semper Fi!

Tom Hohmann

A word from the Sec/Treas.:

I want to thank Larry Ortiz for taking over the duties of the newsletter for me. It is a relief with the vision problems I have been having from the Myasthenia Gravis.

I know all you are looking forward to paying your 2000 dues, but don't despair; I will mail them out in January. So have your pens and checks at the ready! Our treasury is doing very well with over \$2500 in the bank. We need your ideas of what you want to do with these funds. Please send or e-mail your ideas to Tom, Larry or myself. We have the reunion coming this summer and we can do something for all those that attend. We can make T-shirts up for the reunion, have a hospitality room, someone send some ideas! *This is your Association!*

The U.S.S. Hue City Memorial will be in Mayport, FL (Jacksonville) the first weekend of February, due to the ship having sea trails the end of January. I hope many of you can attend, we will be presenting the picture of the Battle to the ship that weekend. I hope to have copies of the painting available for purchase there or at the reunion. I will have details in the next newsletter; I am awaiting sizes and price from the Artist Austin Deuel.

I wish all of you and yours a Happy and Healthy New Year. I hope to see many of you either in Florida or California in 2000. Semper Fi, Marines.

Lance Machamer – FQBandG@aol.com

A few words from the new Editor:

It's actually with great honor that I take over the duties of editor for our **Golf 2/5** Newsletter. Since the inception of the G 2/5 Association, and with the first issue of the Association Newsletter, I've anxiously looked forward to receiving the next issue as I'm sure all of us have. Lance and Tom, and the rest of the officers of the Association, have done a tremendous job in keeping the Association alive and they deserve our sincerest thanks.

In addition to our reunions over the year, the newsletter has been a valuable source of disseminating information on a periodic basis between reunions. I have been particularly fortunate that another vet, Henry Perez, sent in an article about a family that would like to be contacted by any G 2/5 vets that knew their brother who had been killed in Vietnam. It turned out that the family was that of my A-gunner, and very good friend, Fernando "Pache" Camarillo. I corresponded with Pache's sister, Mickey, (who lives in San Antonio, Texas) for a year prior to the reunion in San Antonio where Melba and I met her and her mother, and Pache's two other sisters. It was a very emotional meeting but very rewarding as well. It's turned out to be the start of

a very close and continuing friendship which would not have occurred without our newsletter.

It's also been interesting to read the articles and letters sent in by other vets. Since we all share that common experience that no one but us can understand, it's been a help and comfort to find out how others are doing. In that vein, I have written a couple of articles in the last two newsletters about the trip three other G 2/5 vets and I took in June 1968. In addition to just writing some facts about the trip, I've shared a lot of the feelings that were stirred up because of the trip back to *the Nam*. All the direct responses I've received from other vets have been positive—I hope that feeling is shared by the rest of the members. I certainly don't mean to come across as someone who knows it all and has all the answers—because I don't. My hope is that by sharing these experiences and feelings it may be some kind of help because I truly believe we are the only ones who can help each other better deal with the residual debilitating effects from *the Nam*.

Also, all those of you with computers and access to the Internet please visit the Golf 2/5 website and sign up with your personal profile. I have to admit I've been derailed in signing up which was pointed out to me by Richard Durrum. As Richard has pointed out, it's a great place to try and find other vets you've wondered about and wanted to get in touch with but didn't know how to contact them. Sign on at <http://members.aol.com/gco25/index.html>. Also visit <http://www.2ndbn5thmarines/GOLF> (the address **IS** case sensitive so remember to capitalize **GOLF!**)

I would encourage all of you to share memories of your Nam experience, your readjustment to *the world* and how you're doing 30 years later. You can reach me by e-mail at LSOrtiz123@aol.com. Semper Fi,

Larry S. Ortiz

FORMATIONS:

Battle of Hue City Memorial, Mayport, Florida

The 8th annual Battle of Hue City Memorial Weekend will be 4-6 February 2000. All events will be held at Naval Station Mayport, near Jacksonville, Florida. The schedule of events is as follows:

Fri, Feb. 4 th	1800 to 2000	Reception at Bogey's Golf Club
Sat, Feb. 5 th	1200 to 1500	Picnic at Kavanaugh Park (shuttle provided to ship for tours)
Sun, Feb. 6 th	1030	Memorial Service aboard USS HUE CITY
	1200 – 1500	Tours in USS HUE CITY

The speaker will be Brigadier General Mike Downs, USMC (Ret.) who was Commanding Officer of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, Fifth Marines, during Operation Hue City. For more information contact the Association officers, call the ship at (904)270-6524, or by e-mailing the ship's chaplain at riggsjl@chcnavy.org.

Lance received the following e-mail explaining why the date was rescheduled:

"I thought about you when we had to change the memorial to the first weekend in February. I hate to think that you'll have to go to extra expense. Here's what happened. We are currently in an extended maintenance period. Among the many upgrades and renovations, we are receiving a new inertial navigation gyro (WSN-7), which we call Wizzen 7. The maintenance will be completed the 14th of January. The week of 17-21 we run exercises and light off our engines in preparation for getting underway the following week. Our plan had us underway on Monday the 24th and home on Friday morning, the 28th, conducting self-assessments as part of the inter-deployment training cycle. Recently we were tasked with performing a 96-hour evaluation on the WSN-7. To conduct the test properly, we must do it from Thursday, the 27th, through Sunday, the 30th, so it won't conflict with other evaluations we're performing that week. That means the memorial service is pushed back a week. I hope you'll decide that it was worth the extra money you'll have to pay to change your tickets."

Sincerely,
Chaplain Jason Riggs

Reunion—San Diego, CA August 9 – 13, 2000

Our next reunion will be combined again with the First Marine Division at the Town & Country Hotel in San Diego. Planned activities to include an MCRD Boot Camp Graduation and visits to the Division at Camp Pendleton. Detailed information will be provided with the first newsletter of 2000 but **start planning for it now!**

Golf 2/5 Website

Earlier in the newsletter, I provided the G 2/5 website addresses and encouraged all those with computers and access to the Internet to sign up—here's another good reason why. In early November Tom Hohmann forwarded an e-mail message to Lance and me that he had received from a family member of a G 2/5 vet who had been killed in Hue City. The family was interested in contacting any G 2/5 vets who may have known Clyde Carter. Clyde got in country in Dec. '67 and was killed on the first day of Tet in Hue City on Jan. 31, 1968 (although the official date he was killed was listed as Feb. 1, 1968). Through a stroke of luck, Clyde's sister, Pat Brown, spoke to a colleague who happened to be a 2/5 vet (although not with Golf Co.) who knew about our website. Her husband, Jerry Brown, logged onto the website and sent his inquiry to Tom.

As it turned out, and through another stroke of luck, Clyde Carter was in my gun team when he first got in-country so I knew him well and even have a couple of pictures of him. I contacted the Brown's and have spoken to them a couple of times. Jerry Brown (Clyde's brother-in-law) also scanned some photos of Clyde's that included a picture of Clyde and "Pache" Camarillo (my A-gunner) which I've included in the newsletter. The scanned photos also included a picture of Clyde and George Haught who was near Clyde when he was killed. George also contacted the Brown's and through some of the information George

and I have been able to provide, the Brown/Carter family has finally been able to achieve some peace after 32 years not knowing the details about their brother's death.

I had no idea how powerful and useful a tool our website could be but this certainly proves it. The Brown/Carter family would like to hear from any other vets who may have known Clyde Carter who was from Oklahoma City. Please contact them at the following address:

j.l.brown@worldnet.att.net

Jerry and Pat Brown
36 Flower Hill Rd.
Huntington, NY 11743
Phone:

The Editor. . .

Lest We Forget. . .!

<i>Sgt. William E. Adams</i>	<i>KIA</i>	<i>2/26/68</i>
<i>Cpl. Michael D Hale</i>	<i>KIA</i>	<i>8/18/68</i>
<i>PFC Eugene Richardson III</i>	<i>KIA</i>	<i>6/21/68</i>

Sit Reps

Vet Newsbriefs:

- Rudy & Rosie Bustamante visited Tulsa a while back and spent some time with Barney and Dennis Studenny. Rudy and Rosie were in Okla. visiting their daughter who is going to college in Okla. City. Dennis also reports that he just finished the National Academy in Little Rock, and "yes it's true when I left the town was Dry!" He's now working for the VA as a Police Officer. Dennis further reports that the Academy "sucked, it was my third academy so it was all old material for me. Though I can say 50 year old men aren't meant to do PT everyday."

STU.

- George Haught (former Guns, 2/5) is heading the Toys for Tots campaign near Pittsburgh. "This is our first year here in Beaver County with the program and it is doing well I think for the first year. To date we have raised close to \$5,000 and still have contributions coming in. This weekend I'm working a craft show to get more donations and hope to pull in around \$3,000. If all goes as planned we will be providing toys for about 4000 children in this area, that coupled with the Pittsburgh area that the reservist do will reach close to 9000 kids. For us this year it was a real big challenge and learning experience that so far has done better than we expected going in."

George also adds, "I was doing a function for Toys For Tots and we had some toys donated and these kids had never seen a pogo stick before, well I proceeded to get on the thing and demonstrate it. After about three bounces I came off of it and onto the floor and broke the toe and tore the tendon away from the bone. So I'm limping around now for awhile until it heals up."

Hope the toe healed up and the campaign was a big success! The Editor.

- Lester Tully is organizing a golf outing as a part of the Hue City Memorial reunion from 4 to 6 February 2000 for

those interested. Please contact Les directly by phone at (850)421-1476 or via e-mail at LTully6771@aol.com. Les asks that all those interested please contact him as early as possible in January so he can make the necessary arrangements.

- If you get the VFW mag, in it on page 35 of the Nov 1999 issue you will find an article on Jim Webb. Jim wrote the book *Fields Of Fire*. He wants to make it a movie and he wants to film it in Nam and in An Hoa. He plans on rebuilding portions of the combat base just as it was when we called it home. He also plans on leaving it there after the filming as an historical site. Also he plans on building three hamlets for the film. Jim wants every detail to be exact. Jim Webb was a platoon commander with D 1/5 1969.

A big SEMPER FI for Jim Webb!

Russ Jones

- Regarding the *Battle of Hue City Painting* Lance commissioned, Lance provided the following details:

"Artist Austin Deuel, was on Hill 881 with Marines, MOS, believe it or not, Combat Artist. Doing this picture was sort of decided by Jason and I at the Hue City christening. He told me I had to do something; we didn't have any idea how to let the young sailors know what the battle was like. I met Austin after Jason's death in 1998. This is the artist's view of the battle. No names or faces, just Marines doing what we did. Just something I had to do, he gave me a very good deal on the cost as it was going to the ship."

Semper fi

Lance

Veterans Benefits

My brother, Jerry Ortiz, sent me the following information regarding veteran's benefits I was totally unaware of. If you didn't know about it, it might be worth looking into.

A bill was recently passed by Congress entitling veterans to dividend on the GI insurance they had while in the service. Both current and former military personnel are entitled to this dividend regardless of whether on not they still carry the insurance. If you are eligible, you will not receive a dividend unless you ask for it. The VA will review each individual case and determine eligibility; A general schedule of dividends is as follow:

2yrs of service \$261.00

3yrs of service \$391.00

4yrs of service \$528.00

To apply for the dividend write to:

Veterans Center

P.O. Box 8079

Philadelphia, PA 19101

Include your name, address, GI insurance number (if you know it), branch of service, date of birth, dates of military service. If you can find a copy of DD214 it would be helpful to attach to your letter; Remember, the VA will not automatically send you a dividend refund; you must apply for it.

Jerry Ortiz

(Thanks for the information! The Editor).

ENEMY MISTAKE IS FATAL

The following is an article sent to me by Richard Durrum and is from *Stars and Stripes*, date unknown.

"An enemy hit-and run squad ran the wrong way and ended up on a dead-end mission when they made the mistake of crossing in front of a squad-size leatherneck "wolf-pack."

The wolfpack from "G" Co 2nd Bn Fifth Marine Regiment, set up in a night ambush during a search and destroy mission southwest of Da Nang. "It was about 9:15 in the evening when we spotted them, Explained Cpl. William Brent (Crystal Springs, Miss.) 3rd squad leader with the 3rd plt. "It looks like they were getting ready to sneak up and surround us."

The 10-man enemy squad was later identified as the same group that had staged a hit-and-run assault against another Marine ambush patrol in the same area earlier in the evening.

"They were going to try to do the same thing to us," said L/Cpl. Mike Haveard (Gainesville, Fla.) a fireteam leader.

Brent triggered the ambush with a grenade and M-16 automatic weapons fire. The stunned enemy was able to answer the Leatherneck outburst with only one grenade and a single bullet.

"We could see them dragging off some of their dead," said LCpl. William French (Bells, Tenn.) the squad's M-79 grenadier. The one-sided battle lasted about 30 seconds as the Wolfpack made quick work of the enemy. The Marines killed four in addition to seeing others wounded."

Semper fi,

Richard

Surviving "The Nam" by Larry Ortiz

It was the winter of the El Niño in California where our usual rainfall is about 16 inches during the year and we had already had over 40 inches. Valentine's day in 1998 started out with another heavy rainstorm that had begun the day before and continued all through the night. About noon on Valentine's day the rain began tapering off and I thought this would be a good opportunity to drive into town and run the few errands I had been putting off.

I began merging onto the freeway in a steady drizzle when a compact car whizzed by me at a high rate of speed (given the wet road conditions). About 100 yards in front of me I saw the car lose control, skid and make a 90 degree turn to the right, hit a guardrail, flip over and land on its roof in a flooded drainage ditch. Fortunately, there were no cars either in front or in back of the car that were close enough to be hit by this out-of-control car. I immediately drove to where the car had flipped over and pulled off to the side of the road. I could see the car partially submerged lying on its roof in the drainage ditch with a man and a woman frantically pounding on the car window and yelling for help. I waded into the drainage ditch and tried the door handle, which I could not open. The car was tilted toward

me and I think the door was lodged in the mud at the bottom of the ditch. I could also see a small boy in the back seat who was barely managing to keep his head above the water.

Since I couldn't open the door to free the trapped people, I ran back up the embankment to the freeway and started waving down cars to get some help. Very quickly several cars stopped and I was joined by about four other men down in the ditch. When we got back to the car, the two adults were screaming that they needed to help their daughter who was also in the back seat but was trapped under water. We tried to roll the car back over onto its wheels and after we were joined by a couple of other men, we were able to roll it over. We still couldn't open the door so I asked one of the men to get a tire iron so we could break the window and get the people out of the car. In a matter of seconds the man had returned and we were able to break the car window and pull the man and the woman out through the front door window. We also had to break the rear window to get the little boy out. Meanwhile the parents continued screaming for us to help their daughter that was still trapped in the back seat.

After we finally managed to get the car door opened, one of the other men got into the back seat of the car and managed to pull the little girl out. As he carried her out of the car we could see that she was bleeding profusely from one ear and from her nose. He carried her up the embankment and laid her on a blanket that one of the other drivers had laid out on the hood of my car. The little girl, who must have been about four years old, did not appear to be breathing and the man that had carried her out of the car started giving her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. He tried frantically to revive her and was certain he could see her breathing on her own but I didn't believe she was breathing.

While this was all happening, one of the other motorists that had stopped to help had called 911 and the ambulance arrived a short time after we had laid the little girl on the hood of my car. The paramedics took over and continued trying to resuscitate the child to no avail. Since I had been the first on the scene, I was interviewed by the Highway Patrol and I explained what I had seen. The patrol officer asked me how long I thought the child had been under water before she was brought out. Everything happened so quickly that the whole incident seemed surreal and it was hard to determine exactly how long she had been under water, but I thought it could have been no more than five minutes. Another patrol officer was talking to the parents while a paramedic was holding the little boy that I estimated to be about 6 years old. The boy was expressionless and it appeared he was in a state of shock.

Shortly after that, the ambulance headed off to the hospital and instead of continuing on to run my errands, I returned home. On the short drive back to my house I felt an overwhelming sadness and guilt that if I had only been able to get the little girl out of the car sooner maybe we could have saved her life. A couple of hours later the Highway Patrol Officer called me at home to ask a few follow-up questions. After she asked her questions, I inquired

as to how the little girl was doing. The officer said that the little girl was DOA and added that after the Doctor's had examined her, it had been determined that the little girl had died from the impact of the car hitting the guardrail and did not die from drowning. I still felt sad that the little girl had died and even though the officer had told me there was nothing I, or any of us, could have done to save her, I still felt guilty that there should have been something I could have done.

The sadness I felt continued after the accident, as did the feelings of "guilt" (even though there was nothing I could have done to change the outcome). This incident then triggered a lot of feelings about *the Nam* that I hadn't had for quite awhile. I fell into a serious depression that I couldn't shake and I started having frequent dreams about Vietnam again. On top of that, I would be going on a trip back to Vietnam in June ('98) and I felt I could not handle the trip in the depressed state I was in. I even thought about canceling the trip, but on the other hand, felt the trip back to *the Nam* would ultimately be a good experience for me.

I knew that if I were to go on the trip back to Vietnam, I needed to be as emotionally prepared as possible. My wife and I talked about the trip and we thought I should see a counselor before I went back to Vietnam. Of course I procrastinated as the depression intensified and a few weeks before my trip to Vietnam, I finally made an appointment to see a counselor (fortunately, I found an excellent counselor). As it turned out I only had the opportunity to see the counselor twice before my trip back to Nam. He suggested that I write down what I hoped to accomplish by going back. I hadn't thought of it in those terms and even though I thought I knew why I wanted to go back, even compelled to go back, I couldn't articulate the reasons effectively. Actually doing this exercise was very difficult. I finally completed the task and came up with seven reasons and/or goals for going back (one of which I wrote about in the last newsletter).

I did go back to *the Nam* in June '98 with four other Marines from Golf Co., one of my brothers and our tour guide (and wrote a detailed account of that trip in a previous newsletter as well). As I had previously described, it was a great trip yet it did stir up vivid feelings and emotions about Vietnam and my experiences there thirty years before. The short-term effect of the trip was increased depression which is the opposite of what I had hoped to achieve. I continued seeing the counselor after I returned yet I felt I was making no progress in being able to control these intrusive feelings about Vietnam that were now controlling me instead of the other way around.

During these counseling sessions it was necessary to discuss the details of my experiences in the Nam including the fears and the sadness I felt losing so many friends and fellow Marines. Throughout these sessions the counselor zeroed in on a recurring theme and that was a feeling of "guilt". He told me a lot of the feelings I have about Vietnam revolve around what's called "survivor's guilt" in the counseling world. He also added that this is very common among Vietnam vets.

As I've written before, I got to the Nam during Operation Essex and went out to the field as a replacement after the heavy fighting was over. I got out there during the mop up operation when we encountered mostly sporadic sniping by the NVA. Probably on the second day I was out in the field, we were starting to set up the perimeter for the night and four other Marines and I were standing on a rice paddy dike. All of a sudden, and out of nowhere, an artillery shell landed in another paddy about fifty yards to my right. I was not hit by any shrapnel but two of the other Marines in front of me were hit, one very seriously.

I think we all remember the innumerable minesweeps between An Hoa and Phu Loc 6 in Nov. and Dec. '67 and again when we returned to An Hoa in late July or Aug. '68. I frequently walked either the right or left flank and as you all remember, the flanks used to take one or two (or more) casualties from booby traps on almost every minesweep—yet I was never hit.

During Hue City I was shot in the right thigh on Feb. 5th on top of the "Yacht Club" but didn't have any bone or serious nerve damage so I returned to Golf Co. to finish the nine months remaining of my tour.

In April during the operation on Bach Ma, when we finally reached the top of the mountain, an ammo-humper in my gun team tripped a booby trap and was wounded seriously. I caught a few pieces of shrapnel in my left arm and leg that did not penetrate very deeply and I could remove them myself.

In June '68 when we were stationed at Hill 88, I was sent on R & R to Tokyo. I didn't even put in for R & R nor did I want to go to Tokyo as I had been there at an Air Force hospital after I had been hit in Hue. But orders came down one day and I was on the next truck to Da Nang. While I was on R & R the company went on an operation on some hills south of Hill 88. When I returned, I found out that half of 3rd platoon (my platoon) had been wiped out after walking into a minefield.

In August '68 (I think), Golf Company was on an operation around An Hoa. During the day's march, we came across an unexploded 500-lb. bomb. After the perimeter was set up for the night, my gun team was sent out with a squad to set up an ambush near the unexploded bomb. Just after dark we headed out for our ambush site which was probably a third to a half a mile away from the perimeter. As we walked out to the site we came across a hedgerow with an obvious opening through it. I was about the eighth Marine in the column to go through the hedgerow and shortly after I had passed through, the second Marine behind me (the tenth in the squad) to go through the hedgerow tripped a booby trap. The Marine who was hit was José Orozco whom we all called "O-rozcoe." The blast went backwards and the two Marines behind him were also hit very badly, although not as badly as José who lost his left leg below his knee.

We all probably had similar incidents that occurred and can't help but wonder why we were spared. Why wasn't I hit by the shrapnel from the artillery round on Operation Essex when two other Marines very near me were

hit? Why was it that so many other Marines tripped booby traps while walking flank on the minesweeps between An Hoa and Phu Loc 6 when I walked flank as well on almost every minesweep and I was not hit? How was it that I was shot during Hue City and not wounded more seriously or even killed like so many other Marines from Golf Co.? Why was it that I was ordered to go on R & R when I didn't even want to go in June '68 and half of my platoon was wiped out in a minefield while I was gone? And why was it that even though I walked through the opening of the hedgerow on that operation around An Hoa, I didn't step on the booby trap? These are only a few of the incidents I recall where I could have (or should have) been the one that was hit, and wasn't, and there are many more incidents as well.

Why was I spared? Was it because I learned how to adapt to Vietnam better than some of the other Marines who were more seriously wounded or killed? Was it purely through luck, or "Karma", or fate, or pre-destination, or was I protected by a very conscientious guardian angel or some other "divine intervention?" I certainly can't answer why I made it through when so many others didn't. However, through the counseling I've undergone, I only now realize how much guilt I've carried for thirty plus years because I did make it through. I also learned that in my subconscious, I've wondered that maybe if I had tried harder or done something differently, maybe I could have saved one Marine or maybe even others. But I've finally learned that just like in the case of the little girl in the car crash, just as in Vietnam, I didn't have the power to control anybody's destiny and no matter what I may have done, I couldn't save them all. That was a powerful discovery to have made. And even though I still feel the pain and loss of so many friends that were seriously wounded or killed, I'm beginning to learn how to deal with my "survivor's guilt" and get on with my life.

Semper Fi!

Larry Ortiz

What is a Grunt?

Over the years, many people have asked me why the Marines in Nam were referred to as Grunts. I don't really know the origin of the term but my response is because of the *grunting* noises we make when we were all loaded up with our combat gear and weapons and we felt like pack mules—sounded good.

I received the following via e-mail from a former Marine and co-worker that I think describes what a grunt is a little more eloquently than my definition. The Editor. . .

"THE GRUNT" (USMC – 1965)

("I" Corps, Republic of South Vietnam)

"VIETNAM – This may be your finest hour, for you're about to meet a Marine "Grunt." Doff your cap, if you will; wave a flag; choke back a sob in your throat; wipe a tear from your eye, for this is a man who is fighting your war. He is the Marine up front, the one that sees the enemy at twenty-five yards. He is the one who knows what it is

like to be shot at at close range by small arms, to feel the searing pain and smell of the burning flesh of a wound.

He is the one that dies a thousand times when the night is dark and the moon is gone. And he is the one who dies once and forever when an enemy rifle belches flame. If you have ever slogged through sticky rice paddies or waded a stream carrying 200+ rounds of ammunition, two canteens, a rifle and a pack with enough field rations and spare clothing to last a week, then you know why they call him "A Grunt". . .it is fairly obvious.

But look at him well and know him, for he is really something; he wears in dirty dignity, a helmet and flak jacket and faded uniform. His hands are ripped and torn from contact with barbed wire and elephant grass. His wrists are swollen from mosquito bites and his legs bear the scars of leech bites. His pockets are full and his boots are mud-caked and his eyes never stand still; they move and squint and twitch. He is nervous, aware of every sound, for he operates in a never-never world where the difference between death and one more tomorrow often depends on what he sees or does not see, what he hears or does not hear.

A Grunt is the man who lives as close to war as it is possible to get. His rank varies, he may be a Lt. Col. A major, a captain or a lieutenant, but mostly, he is a private, a lance corporal, a corporal or a sergeant. He likes pilots because the planes give him a measure of protection. He likes artillery outfits because they can knock the bejabbers out of an enemy unit. He cares about supply units only to the extent that they can provide him with something to eat and more ammunition to shoot.

He lives first for the day his tour will be up and he can go back to "the World." He lives next for an R & R (Rest and Relaxation). He'd like to get his hands on a cold beer because it would drive the heat from his throat and ease the corroding pain in his gut. He'd like to feel the softness of a woman. But he is a "Grunt" and if he can live through today, then there will be tomorrow. And if there are enough tomorrows, there will be R & R, the cold beer, the feel of a woman, the end of his tour.

The "Grunt" as he stands in dirty, muddy majesty, is as fine a fighting man as the United States has ever produced. He is tough, intelligent and knows how to kill the enemy. But he is a lot more than that. . .there is something of a builder in these young men. They speak, sometimes of what must be done to South Vietnam to make it right and workable; they speak of the government and how it must work and, if you are lucky, you may get a "Grunt" to speak his mind about the war. He may tell you things in a language that is largely unprintable. But it may not be surprising to learn that, for the most part, he understands why he is here and believes in the purpose that put him where he is today. . . . He is hard and calloused; he grits his teeth and curses as he assaults the enemy but is also a warm and tender person as he hangs his head and lets the tears roll down his cheeks as he lifts the lifeless body of his buddy into the medevac helicopter for the last ride.

This man is really something for if you take a "Grunt" out of his muddy, water filled bunker, remove his helmet, his flak jacket, his field uniform, take away his rifle, clean him up and dress him in a sports shirt, slacks and loafers, you've got a kid who was playing on last years high school football team. He is a national asset to be cherished; he is the difference between freedom and communist slavery, he is a United States Marine and because he has fought for it, life has a special flavor the cowards will never know."

Anonymous (from the First Combined Action Group Cruise Book, Chu Lai, 1965)

A big "OOORAH" to all us GRUNTS. . . .!

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