



THE THUNDERING THIRD NEWSLETTER



THIRD BATTALION, FOURTH MARINES ASSOCIATION

44 Old Marlborough Road, Maynard, MA 01754

Letter from the President

Dear Fellow Marines:

For those members who were unable to attend the reunion in Quantico, it was a huge success and arguably our best so far. It was great to return to the Washington, D.C. area with its many military attractions. We toured Quantico USMC Base, laid wreaths at Iwo Jima, the Korean Memorial and The Wall and were treated to the twilight parade at the 8th and I. Once again, the memorial service held by Chaplain Stan Beech was the highlight and we reaffirmed our promise never to forget. Reunion chairman, Mike Corbett, Rich Scolio and Roy Jobber, did an outstanding job and deserve our heartfelt thanks. I was particularly impressed to see so many new faces. I heard from many whom expressed the joy of renewing old friendships and acquaintances. If you were unable to make it, you missed a great time. Now is the time to plan for the next one.

Another round of thanks should go to Congressional Medal of Honor winner, Col Harvey Barnham for his inspirational talk as the guest speaker at the banquet dinner. A special presentation was made by Don Miller to recognize for Dennis Thun for his outstanding contributions to our association with a gift of a NCO parade sword. Dennis was actually speechless, for once.

Many items were discussed during the business meeting and complete details are available in the Minutes, which are included inside. Most importantly, Seattle was chosen as the site of the next reunion set for July 2003. James Wright (3/12) volunteered to be reunion chairman. He is already hard at work and has reviewed several hotels in the area. It will be our first visit to the Pacific Northwest and I for one look forward to it. A committee comprised of our Directors was appointed to determine a plan with which to best utilize the Association finances. They will be evaluating several ideas. Please contact any of the Officers or Directors if you have any ideas on this issue.

On a different note, the events of September 11, 2001 have threatened and terrorized our Nation. The military is preparing for war and Third Battalion; Fourth Marines will in all likelihood be on the front lines. On your behalf, I will pledge any support that may be appropriate to the Battalion. At this time, the best we can do is to keep the men in our hearts and prayers. In addition, I have set up a fund to make a contribution to this disaster on our behalf. I have selected the Firefighters Disaster Relief Fund as the recipient. Many consider firefighters much like the marines. They too, are often first to fight. I have authorized a five hundred dollar donation to be made from association funds. I urge each of you to supplement that with whatever you can afford. Your checks should be directed to Mr. Chuck Lear, 708 SE Basil Ct., Lee's Summit, MO 64063. Please note the name of the fund on your check.

This morning, I wore the 3/4 memorial shirt for my morning jog. I noticed that I ran a bit taller and even a bit faster. I couldn't help but to observe others that I passed, nodding approvingly. It dawned on me that each one of us is, not only a symbol of the Marine Corps, but of America's military might. During this crisis, we can help by displaying Marine leadership in our homes, neighborhoods and communities.

Now is the time to join together and show strong support for our nation's efforts as we prepare for war. Some Vietnam Veterans have expressed anger over the overwhelming support shown by the American people towards this war effort. Thirty-five years ago, our Nation did not rise up and show us such support, however; we must not allow that to happen again. I believe the country has learned from its past mistakes. As combat veterans, it is time for us to show solidarity and leadership to our fellow Americans.

Please show your loyalty and support and send your check today.

Semper Fi, and God Bless America

James B. Conklin
President, 3/4 Association

A Good and True Story

In October 1954, Chesty was the base commander at Camp Lejeune. I was the commanding officer of A/1/2. In those days (and maybe now) we had a rifle company on each coast that was combat ready and on the alert to fly anywhere on a couple of hours notice. The duty of alert fell to one company for a period of time, then to another. In early October 1954 Able Company was the 'clutch company' when the panic button was pushed. I was called to battalion. The battalion CO and I then rushed to regiment. We picked up the regimental CO and sped to division, straight to the war room. In the war room was the division commander, the G3, G2 and an awful lot of brass. And, in the back of the room sat Chesty Puller. The briefing started.

First, one colonel then another briefed on where we would be going and why, how soon we had to be in the aircraft, initial destination, and all that. Maps were brought out, various opinions offered, and contingencies discussed. As I recall, when the division commander asked if I had any questions, I was so overwhelmed that I did not. Then, the division commander turned towards Chesty Puller in the back of the room, "General Puller," he asked. "Is there anything you would like to say?" Chesty looked at me for what seemed an eternity, then said rather quietly and very seriously, "Son if they give you any shit, level the place."

Hope you enjoyed the perspective of a Marine who knew how to get to the point.

Were you at Con Thien?

I'm a former Marine, Vietnam veteran doing research for a book on Con Thien. I would like to here from any 3/4 vets who were part of the May 1967 battle for Hill 174, and or who were at Con Thien July/August/September of '67. If interested in helping tell the Con Thien story, contact Jim Coan, (209) 857-3104 or e-mail Zzjimco@aol.com.

Taps

Sadly right after attending the reunion, one of our members, Ken Patton, 3rd platoon Kilo Company died of cancer. He was buried August 8, 2001 at Arlington National Cemetery. Several members of our Association were there to honor his memory. God Bless and Sempre Fi.

Sister searching for anyone who knew her brother

Anyone who knew PFC James Conway, L/3/4 who was KIA 17 March 1967 in Quang Tri please contact his sister Kate Hickman, PO Box 954, Mattapoisett, MA 02739 or by e-mail etak52@gis.net

Dues

Dues of \$15 are due now. Please send your dues

check to **Chuck Lear, 708 SE Basil Ct., Lees Summit, MO 64063. Please use this address only.**

Currently there are 1070 members in our Association and each one receives this mailing. If you haven't paid your dues yet, do so now. Remember only members in good standing (have paid their dues) can vote. Thanks.

Next Reunion

The site of the next reunion (July '03) will be in Seattle. Jim Wright, reunion chairman reports that initial inquiries he has made are positive and the Hospitality Room, which has been the sticking point that has eliminated so many other prospective sites, seem to be no problem. Much more on this will be forthcoming in future Newsletters.

DA HERD

Submitted by Don Rait

VA Update

Since so many members of our Association are receiving Service-Connected Compensation and VA Medical care, we thought an update on all the hot issues to the VA would be helpful to our membership.

The new secretary of the VA, Anthony Principi, has made a number of changes that should serve Veterans better and faster.

Appeals of Claims The VA has reinforced the DRO program. If the VA denies your claim on part of your claim, file a Notice of Disagreement and ask for a DRO hearing at your regional office. (ADRO- Decision Review Officer is a senior VA employee who can overturn any previous decisions) If you haven't requested a DRO hearing and are entitled to one the VA should send you a notice. Make sure you are represented at the hearing by a Veterans Service Organization i.e. DAV, American Legion, etc.

Type II Diabetes Veterans with adult-onset Diabetes who served on the ground in Vietnam and were exposed to Agent Orange are now eligible for service-connected compensation.

Older Veterans The VA has announced an unprecedented effort to speed up the process on long pending claims. Claims from Veterans over 70 years of age will be expedited. A special section will be set up to expedite over 6,000 pending claims.

VA Duty To Assist Many Veterans are receiving a lengthy and confusing letter from the VA regarding claims made in the past few years. The bottom line is that Congress has told the VA that they have a 'duty to assist' Veterans in developing their claims. *Don't be fooled by this! 85% of the time your claim will be approved if you obtain the written proof necessary and send it to the VA. Don't rely on the VA to get medical evidence, military records. Etc. to prove your claim. Get the evidence yourself and send it to them. If you can't find military records, use the 3/4 Website (www.Thundering-third.org) to request them from other former Marines to document your claim. It's your claim...you should do everything possible to ensure that it is approved.*

The new VA Secretary, in making these changes said..."America didn't have to wait when our brave Veterans were called to active duty. Our Veterans shouldn't have to wait in their hour of need while we speed up decisions on all Veterans applications." We've heard all this before but it sounds good to hear it again.

Don Rait, former Mike 2 Actual and Division A.O. "Southern Mike"

Chaplain's Corner

Though the Chaplain did not submit a 'formal' article for this Newsletter I thought I would include our exchange of e-mails. I believe they speak volumes.

Back before the attack on America on 11 September I had written to Chaplain Beach and requested that he think about an article and also to contact Jim Riley as I had lost his email address. On 21 September I received the following email from the Chaplain copied verbatim here: Unable to do newsletter item..did contact Riley, and I assume he filed minutes. I am on the road, hard to get any thinking in about article. Secondly, I just find it hard (emotionally and intellectually) to say anything that would be appropriate right now. So many of our guys (email board) have a mixed bag of thinking and this disturbs me as well. Thirdly, the Association has no Chaplain in its organizational chart.

I responded that I understood how neither he nor anyone else can think any positive thoughts given the events as they were unfolding and that I would check with Jim Conklin about getting the T.O. changed to include the Chaplain's slot. On 22 September I received the following: Doc, no need for including a chaplain in orgainz chart...I was merely stating that there were many chaplains in 3/4; just like corpsman. To call one of the battalion corpsman to write items might not fly. I considered it a privilege to serve with you guys (your book brought many memories and the accompanying tears!)

I have tried to screen my articles to ensure I was politically correct (religiously not offending to anyone). This was my choice out of respect for others—nobody said I had to. I did get some flack from some even then because I mad a confident referenced to God. Other 3/4 vets of strong faith refused to return to reunions because they had to listen to offensive language and other's views, but where their own expressions of faith were not allowed.

The recent 3/4 site (e-group) of political exchanges is a case in point of how people feel free to express controversial points, but won't tolerate other's views. This attitude and the personal reaction to the overuse of the word 'hero' of recent has shut down my creative writing juices! There were a lot of heroes in Vietnam, who clearly understood their danger every day – but they were never afforded anything close to 'hero' status. I am not for a mono-second suggesting the fireman and cops at WTC were anything less than true heroes in this. I am so glad the word has found its way back into our vocabulary. But, I still think you guys deserve more. When I see our vet shed a tear of express thanks for these modern heroes, I appreciate you guys all the more!

Guess I just couldn't sleep last night...answering so much email and counseling with chaplains reporting a sudden surge in counseling by soldiers seeking for spiritual answers in the face of possible war. I leave to visit Army bases in southwest next week, then Miller and I go to Japan in October.

I received permission from Chaplain Beach to print this. His points raise food for thought expressed by many others as well. Doc.

Reflections on Reunion 2001

By Doc McNiff

By all accounts Reunion 2001 was a great success in content as well as attendance. Many old friends and more than a few new ones met in Washington DC at the Courthouse Quality Inn (not to be confused with the soon to be renovated Quality Inn about 3 blocks east, which many of us did). When I arrived shortly after 1500 on Wednesday, July 25th the Hospitality Room was open and in full operation, save for the A/C which was most noticeable by its absence. Even in the swelter and sweat laughter and good cheer were evident from quite some distance away. It wasn't until much later in the evening did we realize that we also 'owned' the adjoining suite that did have air. No matter. It was great to see those that I had not seen for far too long. For some, like Captain Ross, former skipper of India Company it had been 35 years. You know, for an old guy, he still looked pretty good.

Thursday morning we mustered early for the most scenic and roundabout trip to Quantico on Marine Corps busses. We had been traveling for about 45 minutes and had not gone more than eight blocks from the hotel. I don't know who had the point, but it is fore sure he couldn't read a map. Anyway, we arrived at the Air/Ground Museum and still had extra time to spend watching the OCS Canitadates working out on the grinder adjacent to the museum. If you had forgotten why it is called a grinder, watching those kids learning their close order drill in that late morning July Virginia heat would have quickly reminded you.

At HMX 1, home of the presidential fleet of helicopters, we received a briefing on the 53 and 46 birds they had rolled out for our inspection (I have corns older than those pilots), but it was the old 34 tucked away in a hanger that got most of the attention. The 34 isn't in service anymore and the 46 and 53 are being phased out, but then, most of the stuff we used can only be found in museums now.

Chaplain Beach conducted a wonderful and moving memorial service at the base chapel. For many, me included, this is the focal point of the reunion.

A great lunch followed at the NCO club. Now THOSE people know how to run a chow line! We were provided with temporary passes to allow us to make purchases at the PX and, after a brief shopping trip we rode back to the hotel in a spectacular Northern Virginia Thunderstorm.

The hotel claimed they had the A/C fixed in the Hospitality Suite but the difference between last night and this night were marginal at best. Once again though, it didn't interfere with a good time.

On Friday morning, after several false starts on the civilian busses, we arrived the Iwo Jima Monument just as the Navajo Code Talkers were visiting and having their

pictures taken. It was quite a thrill to get to meet and talk with these giants of the Corps' history. We laid a wreath and left a prayer at that hallowed location.

We got the Korean War Memorial just as a ceremony there was breaking up and again we got to meet, in person, even more of the living history of the Corps. In a brief service we left a wreath and a prayer before walking to the muster area for the Vietnam Memorial.

Once again the Park Service told us that we couldn't hold any service 'at the Wall itself' so before we held our service 'at The Wall itself' we had a very somber and emotional service in the muster area. Then, Park Service be damned, we marched right down inside of 'The Wall itself' to its apex where we left another wreath and a prayer. After this short service the 'formation' broke up and most began searching for the names of our friends, forever etched on that black granite wall (3/4 lost a total of 374 Marines during its service in Vietnam). The busses then took us back to the hotel so we could shower and change before being taken again by bus to the Navy Yard for a great dinner and then on the 8th & I for the Evening Parade. You know, I have seen that show several times before and am still convinced it's the greatest show in town! If you have never been you should go. It is held each Friday evening, weather permitting, Memorial Day through Labor Day and I guarantee you will not be disappointed. Even old bucks like us stood straight and tall when the Drum and Bugle Corps leads the Silent Drill team off the parade deck after the show playing The Marine's Hymn. Talk about swelling with pride!

Saturday morning of the reunion weekend is always reserved for the business meeting and we were no different. Getting a bit wiser it was held in the suite with the A/C though the room was so full it hardly seemed to work. I have listed the minutes of the meeting elsewhere in this Newsletter so I won't be redundant, but I will say that business meetings never fail to entertain. We did, however get some word done and, as usual, managed to defer most of it until another time.

Saturday evening is always the banquet and the initial difference with this one was that we were about twenty seats short with no more room in the hall. The hotel wanted to put the overflow in another room, but we complained successfully that it would deter from the program. Anyway, we won out and, the Fire Marshall probably would have had to look the other way, but we all got in and we all got fed. We were fortunate enough to be visited by Mgen David Richwine who addressed us during dinner. It was good to see him again. He is retired now and living in the Northern Virginia area.

(Continued on page 6)

**3RD BATTALION 4TH MARINES ASSOCIATION
CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE PERIOD 07/01/1999-09/30/2001**

CASH ON HAND 07/01/1999		\$12,044.84
<u>RECEIPTS: 07/01/1999-09/30/2001</u>		
REUNION:		
HOUSTON REUNION	\$ 4,650.00	
ARLINGTON REUNION	14,084.00	
CONTRIBUTIONS:		
CONTRIBUTIONS (HOUSTON)	106.00	
CONTRIBUTIONS (ARLINGTON)	3,014.00	
CONTRIBUTIONS (OTHERS)	1,005.00	
MEMBERSHIP DUES	12,979.00	
INVENTORY SALES	13,968.90	
ADVERTISING	70.00	
CORPSMAN MEMORIAL DONATION	520.00	
MONEY COLLECTED FOR TRIKE FOR DISABLED MEMBER	645.00	
INTEREST EARNED	2,087.86	
MISC.	<u>277.13</u>	<u>53,406.98</u>
TOTAL CASH TO ACCOUNT FOR		<u>\$ 65,451.82</u>

EXPENSES :07/01/1999-06/30/2001

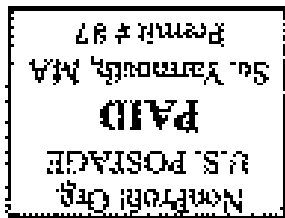
REUNION EXPENSES:		
HOUSTON-1999	\$ 7,326.63	
ARLINGTON-2001	17,024.00	
INVENTORY PURCHASES-HOUSTON	3,347.04	
INVENTORY PURCHASES-ARLINGTON	<u>5,080.42</u>	32,778.81
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES:		
NEWSLETTERS/DUES NOTICES	3,446.78	
WEB SITE	81.39	
AWARDS-NCO SWORDS	1,546.57	
POSTAGE/SHIPPING	1,269.88	
OFFICE SUPPLIES	321.75	
FEDERAL/STATE FEES	5.00	
CORPSMAN MEMORIAL DONATION	520.00	
DONATION OF TRIKE FOR DISABLED MEMBER	647.00	
DONATION OF COMPUTER VOTED@MEMBERSHIP MTG	1,000.00	
SCHOLARSHIPS/DONATIONS	<u>900.00</u>	<u>10,138.90</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES		<u>42,917.71</u>

CASH ON HAND 06/30/2001 \$ 22,534.11

FIRSTAR CHECKING ACCOUNT	\$ 6,073.57
FIRSTAR CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT	15,000.00
FIRSTAR MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT	<u>1,460.54</u>

CASH ON HAND 09/30/2001 \$ 22,534.11

THERE WILL BE SOME ADJUSTMENT TO THIS STATEMENT BUT NOTHING MAJOR



THIRD BATTALION, FOURTH MAINE ASSOCIATION
44 Old Northburgh Road, Newry, MA 01754



Reflections on Reunion 2001

(Continued from page 4)

By Doc McNiff

Our Guest of Honor for the evening was Col 'Barney' Barnum, Jr. MOH. Colonel Barnum, never know to be shy about telling it the way he sees it, was both entertaining and informative. He had just accepted the position as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Reserve Affairs and was anxious to begin his new duties.

During the banquet Dennis 'Reddawg' Thun was surprised when the Association presented him with an NCO sword in a presentation box for his work on our behalf on the web. I wonder how he got the sucker back to LA? Anyway, to say he was surprised and happy, well, that just does not seem to cover it.

The end of the 'official' evening and banquet ended as the hospitality suite opened and remained so until the wee hours.

On Sunday morning after breakfast, those who were still standing shook hands and pledged to meet again in Seattle in '03. It was a great, great time.

Downside? Well, yes, frankly, there were several members concerned that the wives and particularly the children were exposed to language used by some was better suited to Camp Carroll and than back her in 'The World'. To be honest, if the word 'fuck', in its many forms, were suddenly stricken from the English language some of our members would not be able to communicate. Just thought I'd mention it.