

STORIES OF WAR: Vietnam to the Gulf War



By
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DEDICATION

To all of those who have given their lives so that we may live in freedom.

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And especially my wife, Diane, for supporting me all these years. Like the bumper sticker says, “Navy Wife, The Toughest Job in The Navy.”

PREFACE

Although I served with many brave men, I am no hero. While many around me were wounded or disabled, I was not.

9th Engineers Reunion Association meets once a year somewhere in the U.S. and serves to keep us in touch. This year I was privileged to have the reunion in my home town of St. Augustine.

It was not until the 2008 reunion that I began to write this after finding most of the official records from Vietnam were destroyed when the battalion pulled out in 1970. Many phone calls, emails and interviews were necessary to ensure accuracy.

Research about the Navy stories was far easier because every time we deployed a Cruise Book was printed replete with names and photos of all hands.

What follows are stories of my experiences during my 23 years of military service.

I guess that I was always writing in my head. As I said goodbye to my fellow Marines in Vietnam in 1969, I told them I was going to write a book about our experiences and publish it under my nickname there. Well here it is, plus a little more.

Marvin Mobile

STORIES OF WAR

Hiding under a desk during “Duck and Cover” drills in elementary school, Khrushchev ranting “We will bury you!”, movies like “Fail Safe” and “Dr. Strangelove”, made for a problematic childhood.

And then there was the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In St. Augustine, Florida, we had a firsthand view of it in October 1962. Clouds of war planes overhead for days, convoy after convoy of troops on US 1, trainload after trainload of tanks on Florida East Coast Railway, all heading South.

My brother Jim was a navigator in the Air Force flying KC-97s to refuel flight after flight of fighters coming from the Pacific. My father, Bill DuPont, gathered the men in our family to assess the situation. Having just turned 15, that included me. A retired army officer down the street, Major Dodd, had a bomb shelter in his back yard, so we all walked down there to see what that was about.

Being partners with his brother Andy in W.D. DuPont & Sons Construction Company, Dad was thinking about building a bomb shelter. After the tour, Major Dodd explained that after the 30-day supply of food and water ran out you would emerge back into a nuclear contaminated world. When Dad asked what the advantage was, the major responded “You get to die last.”

Later my uncle Dave DuPont came to our house for an oyster roast. It was October after all. He worked at Patrick Air Force Base in Cocoa Beach and, in his own humorous way, relayed a message from the fighter pilots camped out in the tents along the runway there: “If nuclear war broke out we could kiss our ass goodbye.”

The next year Dad and Uncle Andy helped form an Explorer Post to help the St. Johns County Civil Defense Director Fred Willis maintain the county’s emergency supplies in the old Casa Monica Hotel, then abandoned and owned by the county. My cousin Ed DuPont and I teamed together for the monthly inventories of the canned water, food, and medical supplies. But, the entire time, Major Dodd’s comment echoed in my head.

Riding the crest of the baby boom forced the Class of 65 to face the stark reality of the Cold War in its latest manifestation, Vietnam. We had three choices after high school: go into the service, get married and have a baby right away, or go to college and make good grades. Since I had no steady girlfriend and was not a good student, I joined the Florida National Guard with several of my classmates: Larry McGowan, Jimmy Taylor, Marty Sanders, Nick Marianni, and the twins, Michael and Wayne King.

I had four older brothers: Dan was in the space program at Cape Canaveral, Jim and Michael were in the Air Force and Ralph joined the Navy with friends Gary Gardner, Michael Casto, and Chuck Weston early in 1966. Our younger sister Judy later married Victor Capo after he joined the Marine Corps. Two of Uncle Andy's sons, Drew and Frank, also joined the Air Force.

Everything was fine until Jim got orders for Vietnam and it looked like Ralph was headed that way in a naval fighter squadron. I felt like I was hiding in the Guard and enlisted in the Marines, placing a terrible emotional weight on our Mother.

ARE YOU ONE OF THE DUPONTS?

Throughout my time in the military, I was repeatedly asked that question. Curiosity about the name had to do with the rich and powerful E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company. Most just wanted to know if I were rich, some had a connection with that company, and others, as I was to find out later, were respectful of the influence my rich cousins had on the military in the past.

Sometimes it worked to my advantage and other times not.

The biggest "not" happened in Marine boot camp with Sergeant Nelson. Sgt. Nelson was from West Virginia and resented anyone named DuPont. It had to do with that company's influence in his home state and his family's troubles, perceived or otherwise, in dealings with my rich cousins. He was a bull-necked Marine who suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress caused by his multiple tours in Vietnam, and he was quick to fly off the handle. He never hit me but I witnessed his wrath being visited upside the head of other recruits.

He would to play this head game with me when he had the duty. We had three drill instructors and each would be with us for 24 hours every third day. The platoon would be arranged by height front to back. The tallest would lead when marching and the tallest of the tall, which was me when the other drill instructors were on duty, would carry the guidon pendant. Sgt. Nelson would have none of it. He would chew my ass and make me march in the back with the short guys. One day he did this while we were marching. As usual, I passed the guidon to the guy behind me, stepped to the side and let the platoon pass and as Sgt. Nelson passed yelling at me, I said "fuck you" under my breath. The only thing that kept him from mopping the pavement with me was probably the fact that we were passing in front of Second Battalion headquarters.

The next day, I was sent to “One Day Motivation”, a very real attitude adjustment led by three Marine sergeants who made Sgt. Nelson look like a nice guy.

Camp Pendleton, California was the staging for all Marines heading to Vietnam. Arriving there in June 1967, I learned that Sgt. Nelson had been busted to private and confined to the brig there for severely beating someone who questioned his authority. Coincidentally, my barracks was next to the brig. Every morning at reveille, I would walk to the end of the second-floor squad bay, look down at the brig exercise yard and yell “How’s it going, Private Nelson?” He would look up toward me with a scowl. Karma is sometimes a bitch.

I got used to the question about my connection to my rich cousins and started having fun with it. In Vietnam, we were using Remington ammunition in our rifles. Remington is owned by DuPont and I would tell my questioner that my father wanted us to have the best so he sent me to field test our product. A quizzical look would come over him before he realized I was pulling his leg.

Years later, after joining the Navy, I was reporting to Basic Electronics School at Great Lakes, Illinois and had arrived at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport in the middle of the night. I found that the most expedient and cheapest form of ground transportation was to hire a limousine. It only cost me \$20 and when we arrived at the school’s duty office, the driver carried my sea bag in for me. You should have seen the faces of the Officer of the Day and the Petty Officer of the Watch. They didn’t know what to make of it and, after they read my name, automatically assumed I was one of my rich cousins. I did little to dispel their error.

Learning of the USS DuPont (DD-941), a destroyer named for Rear Admiral Samuel Francis DuPont (1803-1865), one of my rich cousins, I wanted to serve on it. It was decommissioned in 1983 and I never got the chance. But, the fact that there was an admiral with the same name led others to believe I might have more influence than I let on. Even though I never inferred that I was “connected,” their assumptions led me to work harder in every task I was assigned.

Pride I guess.

PARRIS ISLAND

Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island is an “Island with no escape.” At least that is what the drill instructors led you to believe. It is surrounded by swamps and “There are only two ways to get off of it: With your chest out proud to be a Marine, or in a body bag.” If you wanted to be a Marine, then by God you would do everything they told you to do, or die trying.

The recruiting posters say “The Marine Corps builds men: body, mind, spirit.”

When I stepped off the Greyhound Bus at the main gate, I thought I was physically fit after a summer helping to build aircraft hangars for the Air Force’s new KC-135 in Clearwater, Florida. Boy was I wrong. Still, I’ll never forget the exhilaration when I finally did the 50 push-ups the DI had been screaming for me to do. However, physical strength is nothing compared to the mental toughness it takes to be a Marine.

The mental part starts out with being called a “maggot,” and other nice names, until you are turned into a trained “Devil Dog.” It was as if they squeezed your heart until you realized there can be no failure when it comes to following orders on the field of battle.

The closest I had come to this level of discipline was at football practice on Francis Field as a member of St. Joseph Academy Junior Varsity. The Friday before, in a game with St. Augustine High School’s Freshman Team, my job as defensive end was to turn the play in to the middle which I failed to do because Victor Capo (my future brother-in-law and fellow Marine) and Mike Thibault double teamed me all night long. At the next practice, Coach Stathis pitted the varsity offensive line against our defensive line. Ron Mickler and Ted McCormick were the seniors who repeatedly crumpled my skinny ass in pulling-guard drills until I figured a way to get through them. It matters not your physical pain or emotional fear. Do your job or the team will lose.

There is no giving up in the Marines. Through class room training, you learned the history of the Corps from its birth on November 10, 1775, at Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, to “the shores of Tripoli” in 1805, and every major battle ever fought in every one of America’s wars. But more importantly, you learned that you were being entrusted with a sacred honor and tradition that is worth your life to uphold.

In 2008, I attended my first reunion with my fellow Vietnam Veteran Marines in Washington D.C., all members of the 9th Engineer Battalion. While

there, we attended a Friday night Sunset Parade to watch the young Marines of “8th and I” perform with such a tumultuous, precision performance that there was not a dry eye in the group as we loaded back on the bus.

I was originally in Platoon 298 at Parris Island, caught pneumonia during service week (just before graduating), spent several weeks in Beaufort Naval Hospital, returned to training and graduated with Platoon 219 on January 7, 1967. My strongest memory of boot camp remains the senior drill instructor of Platoon 298, Gunnery Sergeant Nathaniel Weathers. He was one of the wisest men I ever met. He encouraged me to achieve more than I thought myself capable of with the quiet manner of a mentor. He told us he would see us in Vietnam and was killed there January 22, 1968, just down the road from where I was at the time.



Gunny Weathers



That is me on the upper left holding the 219 Guidon.

CAMP GEIGER

The basic fighting unit of the Corps is a Marine and his rifle. Two of the eight weeks of boot camp were spent on the rifle range learning basic marksmanship with the M14 rifle. All Marines, despite their eventual job specialty, are infantry first. Boot camp was followed by four weeks of infantry training at Camp Geiger, part of the Marine Corps complex at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. We were trained to safely use other light infantry weapons such as: the M-60 machine gun; the M-9 flame thrower; the M-20 rocket launcher.

and multiple types of hand grenades, both high explosive and smoke. Both night and day infantry tactics were taught. How to move as a unit without killing each other is important to say the least. We used blanks for those exercises.

The physical training continued through obstacle courses and forced marches between the firing ranges. On one of these hikes through the woods we ran into these old, fat guys undergoing the same training. It turned out they were Seabees, enlisted by the Navy as Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) because of their journeyman construction skills. They didn't go to boot camp, but trained to fight before being sent overseas. On occasions in Vietnam we worked together and I grew to respect them.

COURTHOUSE BAY

Courthouse Bay is also part of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and is home to the Marine Corps Engineer School. Located south of Jacksonville, North Carolina, all Marines with a 1300 MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) were trained there with the exception of the "Hollywood Marines" from Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) San Diego who went to the Seabee schools in Port Hueneme, California.

An MOS is assigned in boot camp after a brief interview with the "Classifier." He must have listened to me after I told him I grew-up around heavy equipment in the family's construction business, because I was assigned an MOS of 1345. It was routine for me to learn the various Marine Corps heavy equipment. After all, the first vehicle I ever operated was a D-7 Caterpillar bulldozer sitting next to my father when I was seven. But I have to admit I never got a handle on road graders. Too many levers.

One thing I did learn at Court House Bay was the insane art of "swooping," where several Marines pile into a car Friday afternoon and drive all night to go home for a few hours only to return by reveille Monday morning. It took at least two people to pull this off so as to share the driving and the "expensive" 25 cents per gallon gasoline. I only made seventy-five dollars per month back then. It is 500 miles from Jacksonville, NC to Jacksonville, FL and it took 10 hours on US 17, there was no interstate back then.

Later in the Navy I continued to hone my skills to the nth degree in this insanity. San Diego was my duty station for my first couple of years in the Navy and my wife Diane was 350 miles away in San Miguel, CA. The last four years in

the Navy, Diane was in St. Augustine, FL and I was stationed for two of those years in Norfolk, VA and the last two in Mobile, AL and then in Pascagoula, MS. It is difficult to remember the exact figures, however, 500,000 miles during my 23 years in the military is about right.

The most memorable, single event while I was at Court House Bay was reading a letter from my brother Jim. He was a captain then and stationed at the Combined Intelligence Center in Saigon. The intent of his letter was to protect his little brother and convince me not to come to Vietnam. The essence of the letter, however, proved to illustrate the controversy that plagued many Vietnam veterans for years to come. That war was different. It was not an all-out effort to win but was mired in political intrigue. I wrote him back a very short letter stating that I was coming and he could not stop me. Shortly after I arrived in Vietnam, he arranged for me to visit him in Saigon.

8TH ENGINEERS

After the two months of heavy equipment school, I was assigned to the 8th Engineer Battalion at Camp Lejeune for a brief period of time because I volunteered for Vietnam the day I reported aboard. The duty sergeant told me I was crazy. I told him that my brother was there and I was going. That was a Friday; by Monday I had orders to report to 9th Engineers in Chu Lai, Vietnam via Camp Pendleton, CA, for another month of infantry training and was sent home on 30 days' leave.

FAMILY LEAVE

In May 1967, Jim was in Vietnam and Estela and their kids were in Virginia. Michael was out of the Air Force and he, Pat, and their kids were living in Cocoa, FL near Dan, Suzanne and their kids on the "Space Coast." Ralph had completed his training in the Navy and was on leave with Cathy pending his assignment to a fighter squadron at Naval Air Station Miramar, CA. Minus Jim and his family, we all gathered at Sebastian Inlet for a memorable fishing trip in Dad's boat.

While fishing on the offshore coral reef it was decided that I would help Ralph drive his car across country, since we were both heading to Southern California. Cathy was eight months pregnant and would have to fly. To save

money we drove straight through, driving a 1962 Plymouth Valiant pulling a U-Haul. It took us 47 hours to reach San Diego on US 90 with short stretches of the new Interstate 10. After the Arizona Desert, we stunk so bad that we were embarrassed to go into the motel lobby to get a room.

On Tuesday July 4th, I was hanging around the barracks at Camp Pendleton when Ralph came to take me to his house in San Diego for a cookout. By that time, Cathy had arrived and given birth to their first child, Johnny. Spending that day with them has meant a great deal to me over the years. I soon left on ship bound for Vietnam.

U.S.N.S. GENERAL JOHN POPE

We left San Diego on 7 July and by 21 July, arrived in Okinawa. Fourteen days at sea with 3,000 Soldiers and 2,000 Marines was not a pleasant experience. The first day out, almost everyone was seasick. Yuck. The other days were spent waiting in the chow line. As soon as you ate one meal you got in line for the next. I had bought all of Ian Fleming's books about James Bond and read all 20 of them by the time we arrived in Okinawa. The Army used Okinawa for jungle training and the Marine Corps used it as a staging area for Vietnam. There we put all of our working uniforms in one sea bag and the rest of our belongings in another for storage should we be lucky enough to make it back. They gave us \$20 and opened all of the beer halls for our pleasure. Tried as I might, I found I could not drink that much beer. It was fun trying though.

On the 29 July, we arrived at Vung Tau to disembark the remaining Soldiers and sailed on to Da Nang, arriving there 1 August to disembark the Marines.

It was a 10-day trip with no air conditioning, "to acclimate us" for what lay ahead. It was so hot in berthing that I took my blanket up to the cargo hatch on the focile (the forward part of the ship). Falling asleep while gazing at the stars was the last peace I would enjoy for the next year. About two in the morning on 1 August, I awoke to the war. The ship was waiting off the coast to pull into the harbor as I watched a startling show of rockets firing, artillery exploding, and "Puff the Magic Dragon" raining death from the sky. Da Nang was under attack and fighting back.

My apprehension that morning was best expressed by Linda Seebeth in her book, *An Introduction to War*, "When you're in the middle of war, you just never know what kind of day it's going to be."

DA NANG

Imagining my 19-year-old self to be John Wayne storming the beach in “The Sands of Iwo Jima”, I climbed down the cargo net into the landing craft with a hundred other Marines, including another from St. Augustine, Dan Plunkett. Only, we had no rifles, no helmets, and no battle gear at all, just a half-filled sea bag of three changes of clothes slung over our shoulders. How could this be after what I had seen last night? Apprehension does not accurately describe my emotions until the ramp dropped onto a concrete boat ramp with a little girl selling “Ice cold Coca Cola!” Huh? This bewildering aspect held true for the rest of my time in that country, the abject terror of combat followed by a little kid selling you cold drinks.

Riding on the back of a five-ton, 6-by truck through the streets of Da Nang, we witnessed damage wrought by the attack the night before: smoking buildings and burning aircraft piled at the end of the runway. Four Marine fighter pilots treated us to a brief air show as they buzzed the airstrip and performed a “victory roll” before landing.

Dan Plunkett and I parted company there. Although I saw pictures of him in the St. Augustine Record sent to me by my mother, we did not meet again until our 40th class reunion in 2005.

It was there I met a Marine I would serve with for the remainder of my time in country, John Dixon from Detroit. He was a heavy equipment operator also assigned to 9th Engineers and one hell of a Marine. Although I have tried to contact him over the years, I last saw John in March 1969, just before he was medevacked to Tokyo with hepatitis.

CHU LAI

The 56 miles to Chu Lai was a brief ride in the back of a C-130. The thermometer on the air operations shack was pegged at 120 degrees as we waited for another truck to take us to 9th Engineers.

Chu Lai did not exist on any map until 1964, when the commander of the Fleet Marine Force Pacific, LtGen Victor H. Krulak, flew over the area looking for a place to establish a beach head along the South China Sea. The letters, Chu Lai, are the Chinese characters for Krulak. He was stationed in China back in the 30s.

It was a large white sandy area just south of the village of Tam Ky and was little else until the Seabees and 9th Engineer Battalion built an airstrip, a field hospital and living quarters for the Marines, Sailors, and eventually the U.S. Army's Americal Division.

9th ENGINEERS

The 9th Engineer Battalion arrived in Vietnam in May 23, 1966, and became a part of 1st Marine Division and Third Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF), whose area of operation was I Corps, the northern five provinces of the Republic of Vietnam.

At first it was a small contingent with the rest of the men and equipment arriving in several ships over the next few weeks. In all about 1,100 Marines and Sailors divided into six companies: Headquarters, Service, Bridge and the letter companies; A, B, C, & D.

Company A was immediately detached and sent to Da Nang to become part of 7th Engineers at Freedom Hill. The rest of the battalion built its base about a mile west of the beach, up against the hills that defined the whole area but still on the white sand.

9th Engineers main task was to "keep open and passable" the more than 47 miles of Route 1 from Chu Lai to the Cau Lau River. This two-lane road had 41 bridges and 97 culverts.

Based in Chu Lai, 9th Engineers established outposts to the north to facilitate the removal of mines and repair other night-time sabotage to the road, bridges and culverts. Eight mine sweep teams were sent out each morning to clear the road for convoys and construction. This was not always successful because most of our casualties were from these mines.

We also provided engineering support to the 1st Marine Air Wing, U.S. Army, Korean Marines, and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Major construction projects included mess halls, airplane hangars, bunkers, helicopter landing pads, clubs, artillery pads, water towers, fuel and ammunition dumps.

Various civic actions included medical teams and construction of schools and orphanages.

MARVIN MOBILE

Everybody in Vietnam had a nickname. Mine was Marvin Mobile. It was given me by John Lacresse from Springfield, MA crawling back from the club one night. Soon after my arrival I was assigned to operate Delta Company's mobile crane and he thought it only fitting. And it stuck. During the change of command ceremony in November 1967, my platoon sergeant even introduced me as PFC Mobile to our new CO, Capt. J.T. O'Kelly, Jr. while he was inspecting the troops.

When I was leaving for the last time in March 1969, I was trading names and addresses with members of the company. Paul Ricard from Bangor, ME said "Who is Fred DuPont?" Incidentally, he e-mailed me a copy of that piece of paper from his home in Montana in 2010. In 2008, when I called our reunion coordinator in response to a notice in VFW Magazine, the first thing he asked me was "Did you have a nickname over there?" Then he said, "You're Marvin Mobile. We have been looking for you for years!"

The coordinator's name is Herb Shaw and he was mayor of Jessup, GA. In 1968, he and I did the same job operating a mobile crane, he on the south end out of Chu Lai and me on the north end out of Hill 63. Comparing stories at the reunions, it turns out he hit a mine with his crane early in that year, blowing-out his eardrums and destroying the crane. It also explained why they kept running me up and down the whole 47 miles stretch of Route 1 with my crane during the spring and summer of '68.

SAIGON

Upon my arrival in Chu Lai, Jim was an Air Force captain based at the Combined Intelligence Center in Saigon. Ralph would soon arrive off the coast on the USS Enterprise. Jim made the arrangement with my chain of command for me to visit him "for or about five days" in September.

How he made the arrangement was hilarious. Land lines in Vietnam were limited by military seniority, a general could bump a lieutenant, etc. Jim was a captain in Saigon, so the chances of him getting a line to Chu Lai were nil. He had a lieutenant working for him who had a sense of humor and got on the phone to say that General DuPont wanted a patch to 9th Engineers in Chu Lai. My warrant officer, CWO4 Gleyzal, came running over to my hooch to tell me that there was a

General DuPont on the phone in the division office. I figured out what was going on and played it straight in front of the warrant while Jim was laughing on the other end. I handed the phone back to the warrant and smiled all the way back to the hooch to pack my stuff.

It took two days in the back of a C-130 to reach Saigon with an overnight stay in Cam Ranh Bay. Arriving at Tan Son Nhut Airbase in full combat gear, unshaven, and smelling to the high heavens with everyone else in dress uniform, I felt like a fish out of water.

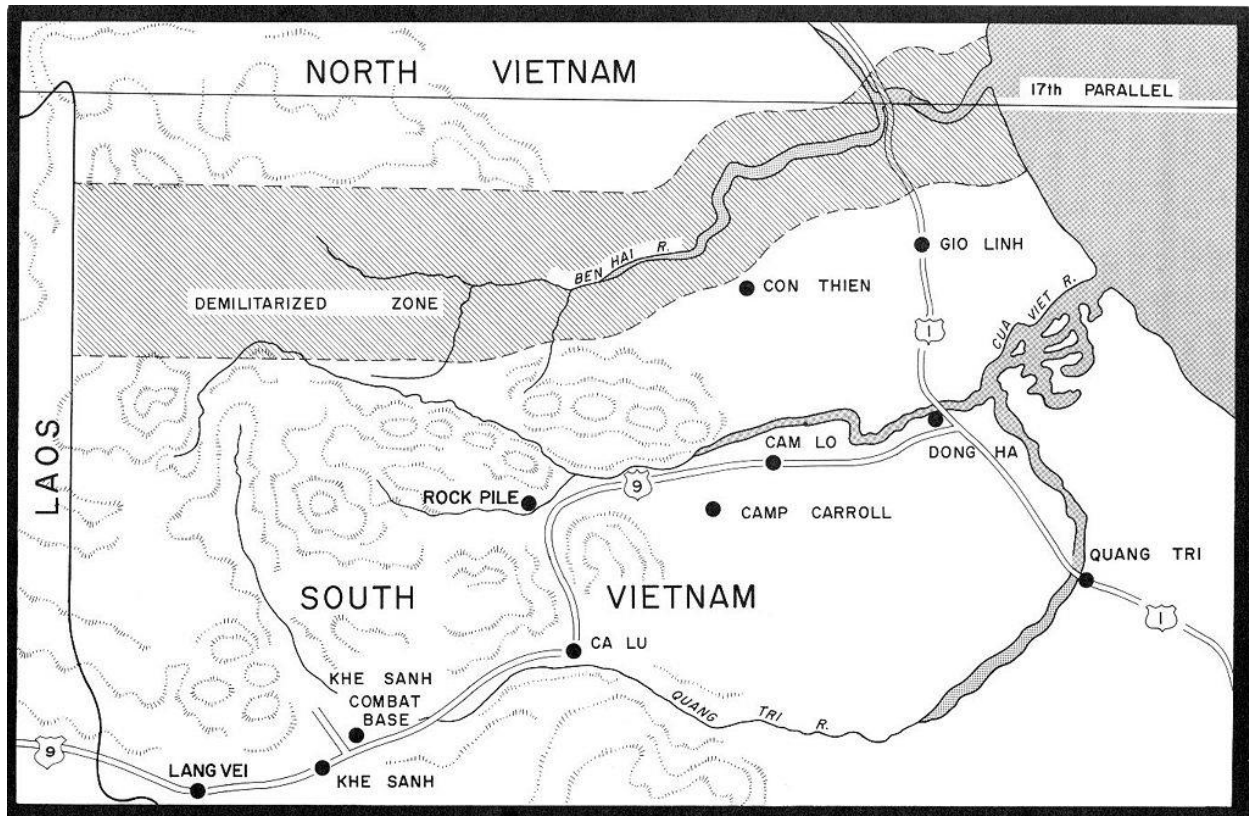
I called the number Jim had given me and waited while the Combined Intelligence Center located him at a farewell party for his commanding officer atop a hotel in downtown Saigon. When he arrived, he was in uniform and his jeep driver was in civvies. After saluting the Air Force captain who was my brother, we headed out for his BOQ (Bachelor Officer Quarters). In route, his driver stopped at the Air Force Officer's Club and asked if I was hungry. A silly question to a young Marine and he went into the "O Club" to procure me a sandwich.

I thought it odd that an enlisted man could go into an officer's club until Jim explained that he was not his driver but his boss, a lieutenant colonel. Knowing that the guys back in Chu Lai would not believe that a colonel had taxied me around and served me a sandwich, I just enjoyed it during the rest of the ride. My orders read "for or about 5 days" but the only reason I went back after seven was that we were out of money.



Capt. James F. DuPont USAF and friend in Saigon 1967

CA LU



In November 1967, Capt. O'Kelly led most of Delta Co. north to assist 11th Engineers in building a fire support base at Ca Lu in northern Quang Tri Province, just below the DMZ. It was at the end of Route 9, four miles from Khe Sanh. I was dispatched from Chu Lai in early December to relieve a fellow Marine so he could go home on emergency leave because of a death in his family.

Carrying 12 sacks of mail, I flew from Chu Lai to Dong Ha with a three day lay over in Da Nang because of the monsoon rains. In Dong Ha, I loaded onto a truck convoy for the remainder of the trip. As I off loaded the mail to some anxious Marines, I could smell the booze that had gotten broken along the way. There was one bottle that made it unscathed and was shared with me. The rum soaked, maraschino cherries were about as close to home as we would get that Christmas. It belonged to Bob Molossi from, Daly City, CA, who was killed in an ambush on 13 January.

At first, we lived in fox holes filled with monsoon rain most nights. Fifteen feet tall elephant grass interfered with our field of fire. They tried to get a field kitchen going but walking a quarter of a mile in mud up to your knees prompted

me to eat C-Rations the whole time. I had one bath in my three months there and that was with all my clothes on, standing in the Quang Tri River. When I finally got back to Dong Ha in March, my uniform was rotting off of me.

I was on a listening post the night of Christmas Eve. Listening post is another way of saying “sacrificial lambs,” three Marines positioned in front of the perimeter to give warning when the enemy was approaching. It’s not very conducive to sleep. All night long you kept your ear pressed to a PRC-25 radio handset listening for a command radio check to which you clicked your talk button one, two, or three times depending on what was chosen for that night.

That way, command knew you were alive, awake, and not the enemy, without giving your position away. There were two other Marines with me but they kept falling asleep when it was their turn to listen, so I didn’t get any sleep at all. If the enemy slipped slip up on your position, it was expected to sacrifice yourself to alert the Marines behind you. Getting caught in crossfire is not very comforting, but at midnight, CPL Rudy Jason, the command radio operator, started in on “Twas the night before Christmas.” I didn’t laugh but it sure put a smile on my face.

Another night I was in a foxhole with another Marine who could not stay awake when it was his turn. The elephant grass had been cleared for 20 feet in front of our position and the little guys in black PJs could have slipped out of that grass at any time. It was pouring down rain and the hole was chest deep in water. I tried waking my “buddy” repeatedly only to find him asleep again in a few minutes. Better to be awake and alive than to wake up dead. As I sat there all night, I kept thinking about my brother Ralph off the coast on the USS Enterprise, sleeping between two clean sheets after a hot shower and hot meal. I took a vow that night if I ever came back into the service, it would be in the Navy.

We cleared 225 acres of brush, constructed fences, and laid the concertina wire that defined the mine field. Later, I was put on the “sighting and recording party” to mark the places for the mines. The team consisted of John Green, John Hutchins and me. Our job was to lay out sectors where the 16,683 antipersonnel mines would be placed utilizing bench marks, a compass, a transit, a tape measure, and sticks (tongue depressors).

The cluster pattern used was like the shape of a hand whereby a bounding mine would be in the palm and several quarter pound mines at the finger tips. These clusters were laid in four or five rows through the depth of the minefield with each pattern rotated in subsequent rows to confuse anyone trying to disarm the mines.

We recorded all of this on a map which Green and Hutchins had to sign as to its accuracy, because someone had to come back and disarm them one day. They were back in Dong Ha at 11th Engineers, and since I was left behind with the Ca Lu 16, they radioed that one of the sector azimuths was wrong. I took a compass to the offending benchmark and reshot the azimuth for that sector, which corrected the problem.

After the layout was complete for each sector, the mines were placed next to the appropriate stick in their factory boxes. Our team and the armors then buried the mines, leaving the arming pins just above ground level. Then everyone except the armors had to leave the minefield while they pulled the pins to arm the mines. I can remember watching them slide down a muddy hill side on their butts, pulling pins as they went. When you're young, you do stupid shit sometimes. They were CPL Cummins, LCpl Morgan, LCpl Peterman, LCpl Spencer, PFC Degennaro, and PFC Davis. They all volunteered for that job and I admire them for their courage.

Our first shipment of mines came from Dong Ha by convoy in early January. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) ambushed it before it reached our compound. Lima Co. of 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment (3/9), with us at Ca Lu, responded on foot to rescue the Marines on those trucks. We sent a bulldozer to clear the road of burning trucks and salvage what we could pull into our area.

In addition to the many casualties they inflicted in that ambush, the NVA used the mines scattered by the explosions to set up their own minefield along that section of Route 9. When they ambushed the next convoy on 13 January, the Marines on the second convoy bailed off the trucks into the NVA's minefield. According to the Headquarters Marine Corps publication, "U.S. Marines in Vietnam":

"Under an overcast sky and a slight drizzle, about 1120 on the morning of the 13th, the 20-vehicle convoy departed the Rockpile area. Marine artillery had already fired 15-minute preparation fires at suspected ambush sites. With two tanks in the lead, the convoy consisted of 10 six by six trucks interspersed with two more tanks in the center of the column, four "low boy" tractor trailers, and two of the Army "dusters" bringing up the rear. The vehicles carried about 200 men including engineers, drivers, the M42 crews, support personnel, and Company I, 3d Battalion, 9th Marines."

Once again Lima Company of 3/9 responded from Ca Lu, this time with three Marines from Delta Company, 9th Engineers on an EIMCO bulldozer: CPL Michael F. Pehrson, from Sacramento, CA, LCpl John T. Eads from Dayton, OH and LCpl John W. Dixon from Detroit, MI. Their objective was to clear the burning

trucks off of the road so that the remaining trucks could get through. Both Pehrson and Eads were awarded Bronze Stars for heroism. Dixon told me that, even though the enemy fire was heavy, Eads repeatedly stopped so that dead or wounded Marines could be moved out of the way. Pehrson coordinated with the convoy commander to extract the wounded and clear the road. One of the dead was LCpl Robert J. Molossi from Daly City, CA and one of the wounded was Lt. Rishard Matteson, both members of 9th Engineers.

The result was 19 dead and 70 wounded Marines.

(The following photos were captured on a camera taken to the scene by LCpl John Dixon.)







LCpl John W. Dixon



LCpl John T. Eads

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the BRONZE STAR MEDAL to

CORPORAL MICHAEL FREDRICK PEHRSON
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS


for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For heroic achievement in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam while serving as an Engineer Equipment Mechanic with Company 0, Ninth Engineer Battalion, First Marine Division. On 13 January 1968, Corporal PEHRSON was a member of a reaction force dispatched from the Ca Lu Combat Base to assist a convoy which had been ambushed by a North Vietnamese Army company utilizing small arms, automatic weapons, rockets and grenades. Several disabled vehicles were blocking the road and the main body of the convoy was pinned down by continuous enemy fire. Upon arrival at the ambush site aboard a tractor, Corporal PEHRSON disregarded his own safety as he assisted in removing the casualties from the trucks and clearing the damaged vehicles from the road although the enemy was concealed in the brush only a few meters away. Coordinating with the convoy commander, he then assisted in consolidating the scattered convoy and, for three hours, repeatedly exposed himself to hostile fire and mined terrain as he evacuated casualties and removed disabled vehicles to a secure area. Corporal PEHRSON's courage, bold initiative and selfless devotion to duty at great personal risk enabled the remainder of the convoy to continue and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service."

Corporal PEHRSON is authorized to wear the Combat "V".

FOR THE PRESIDENT,



V. H. KRULAK
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, U. S. MARINE CORPS
COMMANDING GENERAL, FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC

After the second ambush, a B-52 strike was called on the valley. We were ordered out of the mine field and to stay close to center of the compound. Two of them came from the east, either Guam or Okinawa. Their wings glinted from the sun light as they made their turn to go home. That was our cue to watch the valley as both sides of Route 9 exploded not a half a mile from us, the site of both ambushes. God bless the Air Force for pin-point accuracy.

Back at the compound, a great deal of boxes and trash were left in the last sector of the minefield armed the day before.

This is where it got surreal.

Someone in the chain of command could not stand to see the “trash” laying in that sector and ordered the armors to clean up the sector. Peterman was the first to step over the barrier fence and, you guessed it, immediately stepped on a quarter pound “toe popper”. I was at the top of the hill when we heard the explosion. When I got to the fence, Spencer and Sgt. Johnson were lifting Peterman over the fence. The corpsman brought a stretcher, hit him with morphine, and bandaged his foot.

Peterman always had an 8mm camera with him and as soon as we put him on the stretcher, he started filming a close up of his foot. The toe of his boot was gone and his toes looked like spaghetti going every which way. He passed the camera to Spencer as we carried him up the hill to the Medevac chopper, with Spencer capturing the entire thing on film. Just as the chopper began to lift off, Spencer threw the camera to the door gunner. Peterman is probably the only Marine to ever have a home movie of his own wounds and Medevac.

One more thing about Peterman, he is the only avowed atheist I ever met. We had that discussion one night in a foxhole at Ca Lu while on perimeter duty. So, I guess that myth is busted.

Delta Company finished the firebase at Ca Lu on January 19, 1968. The main body of the company departed for Dong Ha by air at that time. A contingent of 16 engineers, led by Lt. J. P. Brady, Jr. remained. Calling ourselves the “Ca Lu 16”, we cleaned up the company area, buried all the remaining fuel, and dug slit trenches to hide the two bulldozers below ground. A small contingent of us, headed by CPL Norman Ryan, left by truck shortly thereafter with light equipment, tents, cots, etc. TET was in full swing by then and every truck capable of hauling heavy equipment in Quang Tri Province was out of commission. The few engineers that remained stood by to help in any way possible.

The ground shook day and night from the B-52 “Rolling Thunder.” The artillery shells from Camp Carroll sounded like freight trains passing overhead.

We were lucky the NVA never turned their attention to us the way they did the Marines at Khe Sanh, only four miles away.

After several weeks, the commander of the 3/9 at Ca Lu, LtCol Gorton C. Cook, ordered us to leave. The CH-46 was so loaded that LCpl Paul Kozak and I had to ride on the rear tailgate. We were stranded in Dong Ha until the end of February. We rejoined Delta Company in March 1968 at LZ Baldy (Hill 63), about 20 miles below Da Nang in Quang Nam Province.

In a larger sense, the North Vietnamese threw everything they had at us and we beat them back. We had won militarily and the North Vietnamese were ready to return to the negotiating table. But, according to General Tran Do, North Vietnamese commander at the battle of Hue:

"In all honesty, we didn't achieve our main objective, which was to spur uprisings throughout the South. Still, we inflicted heavy casualties on the Americans and their puppets, and this was a big gain for us. As for making an impact in the United States, it had not been our intention—but it turned out to be a fortunate result."

Walter Cronkite stated on the CBS evening news that we had lost the war and LBJ is quoted as saying "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost the whole country," and he made his famous "I will not seek nor will I accept..." speech. The North Vietnamese leaders could not believe their luck. The war could have ended right then but our country, led by our commander in chief, quit on us.

LZ BALDY



Our home for most of 1968.

LZ Baldy, a.k.a. Hill 63, was home to 'C' Company, 23rd Medical Battalion and the 196th Light Infantry Brigade of the Americal Division. It was close to the intersection of Route 1 and Provincial Route 535 in Quang Nam Province. This was Delta Company's base camp for my remaining year in Vietnam, I got there in March 1968 and left in March 1969.

It was not a bad base camp. We had running water.

I was only there half that time, however. My crane was in high demand up and down Route 1 and would stay overnight at various compounds where I was working: Hill 10, Hill 29, Chu Lai. In August, I operated a bulldozer for 1st Platoon near Hoi An while we established a compound for the Korean Marines. I went home on 30 days leave in September and lived with 3rd Platoon when I returned at another Korean Marine compound near the village of My Hat to build a bridge

over the Song Ba Ren River. In February 1969, I was back with 1st Platoon constructing a rock crusher to the west of LZ Baldy at Hill 441.

Gary Weaver recently told me that after I returned to the states in 1969, the entire complex was nearly overrun by the NVA. He was the senior medic at the Army aid station on Hill 63 (think M.A.S.H without the pretty nurses).

BAILEY BRIDGE

Once during that summer, I was sent to provide crane service for the construction of a Bailey bridge. The bad guys had partially blown the permanent bridge at a creek along Route 1 and we had to construct the temporary Bailey across the gap in the bypass causeway to facilitate repair of the damaged bridge.

The Bailey was brought up from battalion on trailers by Bridge Company with a first lieutenant in charge. On the trailers were parts of the bridge constructed of an aluminum alloy. By using a chain sling, I would swing over the trailer where a Marine from Bridge Company would hook the sling into the davits for the purpose. Each part was attached to the previous one via steel pins and a four- pound hammer swung by other Marines.

The parts were constructed into a section atop rollers and pushed out over the gap by my crane as soon as we had enough sections on the near side of the rollers to counter balance the sections on the far side of the rollers. As the Bailey grew in length I would back my crane to push another section over the gap. This went on until we closed the gap to the other side where stanchions were placed under the far end to hold it in place on that end. A ramp was then constructed on that end so vehicles could drive onto the surface of the Bailey. Once the gap was closed, I then deconstructed the counter balancing sections, placing them back onto their trailers. It all went smoothly until it was time to pick up the near end of the bridge to replace the rollers with stanchions.

As the sun set, the anxiety level rose, you did not want to be on that road in the dark. Turning on lights would make you an easy target for the bad guys when they came out to do the evil things they did. This anxiety caused me to step lively as I attempted to replace the light weight chain sling with a stouter cable sling I carried with me. It also caused the lieutenant to make a terrible mistake. He started yelling at me for getting off of the crane because he wanted me to lift the end of the Bailey with the chain sling. I had the cable sling in my hands, it would have only taken another minute and he was yelling to use the light

weight sling. I should not have argued with him and just used the proper sling. Sometimes military orders can cause nightmares for the rest of your life.

After lifting the Bailey to a height sufficient for removing the rollers and wrestling the stanchions in place, the chain sling broke with two Marines under the bridge. The first thing that happened was the 100-pound hook of my crane came through my wind shield, knocking me backwards off of my seat. When I got back to my controls there was nothing I could do but dismount and hook up the proper sling to free the Marines. The Marine on the left fortunately escaped unharmed. The one on the right was not so lucky.

There is a metal ridge about two inches high on each side of the rollers. Turning it on its side to make room for the stanchion, this Marine's face was slammed down on that ridge. As I jumped down to get the sling, I saw him flopping in an attempt to free himself. As I hooked up the sling that is exactly what he did. As we rendered first aid, we saw that his teeth were knocked out, his jaw and both cheek bones broken. God forgive me.

We could not get a Medevac due to an operation west of us, so we flagged down an Army APC rushing to beat sundown themselves. They carried him to an aid station at Hill 29 to the south. We finished the job and pulled into the compound at Hill 10 the night.

The next day I returned with my crane to Delta Company at Hill 63. The dispatcher told me to report to the commanding officer. An ass chewing would not make feel any worse, as I drug myself across the equipment yard to his office. To my surprise, I was forgiven of all my sins because the Bridge Company lieutenant had contacted my captain and told him that I tried to do the right thing and that he was the one to blame. About a week later, word was passed to me that the Marine I had injured survived and was receiving medical care on the Hospital Ship Hope. I wish I could remember his name so that I can ask him to forgive me.

IT WENT BOOM

Another assignment I had that summer was to Hill 10 to assist an Army artillery battery with the replacement of an engine on a self-propelled, 175mm howitzer. The mechanic hooked my crane to the defective motor and began unfastening it for removal. It would take several hours, and having nothing else to do, I began quizzing the other solders about the other gun in the battery.



M107 175 mm Self-propelled Gun

The projectile weighed about 200 lbs. and would kill anything within 100 yds. when it exploded. The maximum range was 23 miles with three bags of propellant, all they were allowed to use at that time because of possible damage to the barrel. While I was finding out all these neat facts, a firing order came in and they asked if I would like to help.

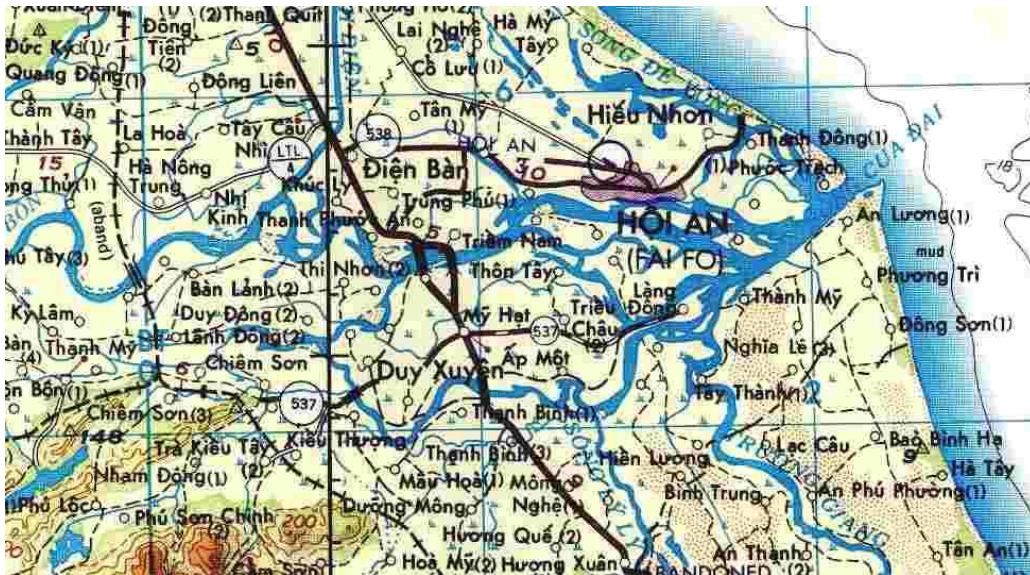
It took four of us to hump the shell into the breach with a cradle built for that purpose. Two other cannoneers used a ramrod to slide it off of the cradle and into the firing chamber.

Next came the three bags of powder weighing about 100 lbs. each. Once the breach-block was closed, the aiming part came into play. With the recoil being so strong, the bulldozer like blade in the rear was used to dig an abutment into the earth to keep the gun from being pushed backward. This direction of fire being just a rough estimate of the azimuth needed. The fine tuning of azimuth and range/altitude was done above my pay grade and I just stood by and watched. After the gun was dialed-in, they let me pull the firing lanyard, a twenty-foot cord

to pull the trigger. I hope that round helped who ever called for it along the Ho Chi Min Trail.

I spent an uneventful night there. When the new engine arrived the next day, I helped them mount it before returning to LZ Baldy for my next assignment.

DIEN BAN



On August 5, 1968, Capt. Rizzo was leading 30 Marines from Delta and Service companies in a convoy of seven vehicles loaded with bridge materials from Da Nang. Just south of the village of Dien Ban they ran into an ambush of an estimated 100 NVA. Capt. Rizzo's Jeep, driven by LCpl E.J. Hayward, was hit with an RPG, spilling the captain, SSgt Edwards, and SSgt Nehila into the mud on the west side of the road.

LCpl John Ruley from Headquarters Company was driving the second vehicle in the convoy, the "gun truck." A 6x6 stacked with sand bags and some armor plating with a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on the back. The gun truck was designed to be the lead vehicle, blast through any trouble, and keep the convoy moving. LCpl Ruley covered the 200 yards from the edge of the village to where the Jeep left the road with LCpl Pete Triosi blasting away with the 50 cal, taking tremendous damage from the small arms fire. LCpl Triosi was hit in the arm but, never quit firing along with PFC Paul Ricard manning "everybody's M16s,"

giving their CO as much covering fire as they could. Faced with turning his truck and everybody in it into Swiss cheese and trapping the remaining vehicles in the ambush, Ruley continued to draw fire as he drove through the ambush, as was the original plan for the gun truck.



LCpl John Ruley and his “Baby”
(Photo provided by John Ruley)

Sgt. David John Green, Delta Co., 1st Platoon, was the senior U.S. Marine present when Ruley pulled the gun truck into the Korean Marine Compound near the village of My Hat. By this time, the radio was crackling with gun fire and a call for help. Green called in a Medevac chopper for Triosi and with the help of the Korean Marines repaired the truck as best they could. As they began mounting up to go help, 1st Lt Dean Marcellus of 2nd Platoon, busy at the Ba Ren Bridge, radioed Green to wait until his arrival. Together, elements of the 1st and 2nd Platoons under Lt Marcellus moved north on Ruley’s gun truck to relieve the situation in Dien Ban.

I was at the bridge with 2nd Platoon and was ordered to return to Hill 63 with my crane. Even though I wanted to go with them, the existing bridge was too unstable for the crane and I could not leave it there.

North of the Thu Bon River, the gun truck overheated and stopped. The

Marines dismounted and advanced on foot. Sgt. Green led a column on the east side of the road and Sgt. Willie Linner, 2nd Platoon, did the same on the west. They took cover and returned fire as they approached the tree line south of Dien Ban. Major Caleb Wall, Executive Officer of 9th Engineers, arrived by helicopter from Chu Lai at the Provincial Forces compound in Trung Phu' and established contact with the Australian Army Advisors to the 2/4th ARVN Cavalry Regiment at the scene in Dien Ban. They engaged the enemy for over an hour, until Lt Marcellus was advised to pull back to the compound before a counter attack by helicopter gunships began.

Back at the Jeep, before they could get their bearings, an NVA soldier was standing over them with an AK-47 blasting away. Edwards caught three rounds in his stomach before he got his hands on an M-16 and emptied the whole 20 round magazine into him. Nehila was wounded in the back and legs. Capt. Rizzo was shot in the chest, passing through his right lung with the bullet lodging next to his spine.



Captain Rizzo's Jeep after the ambush
(Photo provided by Reno Rizzo)

Desperately wounded with no cover, Edwards and Capt. Rizzo crawled about 100 yds. back to a well surrounded by a dirt berm. Their 45 pistols were full of mud, Edwards washed them off, chambered a round and handed Capt. Rizzo's

back to him. His back to the well facing the enemy, with Capt. Rizzo facing him, he began stuffing mud in the bullet holes to stop the bleeding. The surgeon told him later it was that action that saved his life.

Nehila lay wounded and dazed during the entire ambush and could not be found in the confusion. He wandered into the Provincial Forces compound at Trung Phu' the next day and was taken to Da Nang by Medevac. Provincial Forces were local Vietnamese with either Australian or U.S. advisors.

When the NVA opened fire, the rest of the convoy stopped about 200 yards from Capt. Rizzo's Jeep. After Ruley's gun truck blasted on ahead, LCpl Ray Cummings' tractor/trailer was now the lead vehicle taking the brunt of the NVA punishment. LCpl Bill Lee's tractor/trailer was behind Cummings'. Everyone on those two trucks bailed out and began returning fire. Firing from the back of the third truck, PFC Bob Uderitz was only able to get off one round with his M-60 machine gun before the firing pin broke.

From the back of the convoy, Sgt. Lee and Cpl Larry Barabaz advanced to Uderitz's position and took the M-60 with two boxes of ammunition off of the truck to repair it at a house at the south end of the village. Not being able to fix the broken firing pin, they moved forward to the well. Uderitz then ran back to the ARVNs position north of the village to use their radio and call for help. Not knowing what the call signs and frequencies, he procured an M-1 carbine from them and advanced to the well to assist the wounded.

By this time, the automatic fire from the NVA had died down as they started walking mortars in on the Marines. The Jeep caught the first round and exploded taking their only radio with it. One round exploded next to the well wounding Edwards again, this time in the head. A piece of shrapnel stuck into his forehead. He pulled it out and placed it in his flak jacket. It was later returned to him by a nurse at the 95th Evacuation Hospital in Da Nang.

Exposing themselves to fierce enemy fire, the Marines on the convoy left their cover to aid and protect Rizzo and Edwards at the well. Capt. Rizzo gave the call signs and frequencies to LCpl Lee and told him to find a radio.

The only radio in the convoy having been destroyed in the Jeep, LCpl Lee, despite the intense enemy fire, ran to use one of the radios on the APCs north of the village from the 2/4th ARVN Cavalry Regiment at Hoi An. LCpl Lee was hit in his flak jacket by a round that knocked him face down in a rice paddy. Shaking that off, he again proceeded to carry out his orders. After calling Delta Company Headquarters at Hill 63, LCpl Lee exposed himself to enemy fire for the third time to return to the well. Under the covering fire of two ARVN APCs, directed by

Australian Army Advisors WO1 James Francis Harrower and WO2 Terence Francis Malone, LCpl Lee coordinated the retreat from the well. As soon as all the Marines stood to carry the wounded back to the village, LCpl Moore from Delta Company was shot in the shoulder. For the fourth time, LCpl Lee exposed himself to enemy fire this time carrying Capt. Rizzo to safety.

At this point the Australian advisors took control of the situation and called for a helicopter Medevac. Determining that the LZ was "too hot" for the U. S. Army "slick," four U. S. Army gunships arrived from the 176th Assault Helicopter Company out of Chu Lai. After pacifying the NVA, one of the gunships landed to lift out Rizzo, Edwards, and Moore.

On the south end, under the command of the XO, the counter attack began. The gun truck having been repaired again at the PF compound in Trung Phu', Lt Marcellus and his men mounted up and moved south to the KMC compound at My Hat. Sgt. Linner manning the .50 cal as they passed the Korean Marines from My Hat moving north.

Battalion records show that five Marines were wounded in this battle: Capt. Reno Rizzo, SSgt Charlie Edwards, SSgt Nehila, LCpl Moore, and LCpl Pete Triosi. These were the five that required Medevac, however, two more were wounded. Sgt. Mike Cummins was hit in the leg by a ricocheting bullet as he dismounted one of the low bed trucks and was treated by the Corpsmen at 7th Engineers that night. Also, PFC Larry Organ was knocked unconscious when a round struck his helmet as he left the truck in which he was riding.



LCpl Bill Lee pointing out the hole in his flack jacket
(Photo provided by Bill Lee)

(Special thanks go to: Major Rick Ryan of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam for “Persevering” to provide the information about the Royal Australian Armored Corps Officers; The “Minutemen” of 176th Assault Helicopter Squadron; Lt Col Caleb Wall for providing the information about the efforts from the south; Dr. Gary Ward for providing the information about SSgt Nehila; [Gary Ward was a 1st Lt. at the time and XO of Delta Co. He relieved Capt. Rizzo as CO.]; All of the Marines caught in the ambush and the ones who came to their aid from the south for helping me piece this story together, especially Bill Lee, who deserves a medal.)

This story was given to Lt. Col. Wall at his home in California a few years ago. Together we submitted a Silver Star award for Bill Lee and Lt. Col. Wall passed it to the commanding officer of Camp Pendleton. It was then submitted to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. I guess the Corps was too busy fighting in Iraq at that time to worry about an award from 40 years ago.

HOI AN

In the latter part of August 1968, 1st Platoon was sent to the area of Hoi An under the leadership of Lt. Anthony Pack and Sgt. John Green. I was their bulldozer operator and we were tasked with building a base for part of the Second Korean Marine Regiment. This was the third Korean Marine compound we would build while 9th Engineers was there.

The Korean Marines hated the Vietnamese. In one battle, down in Quang Nai Province that ended in hand to hand combat, they killed 300 NVA soldiers. After receiving fire from the Viet Cong in the village of My Hat, they leveled the village with 106 Recoilless Rifles.

When we first got there, Lt. Pack ordered LCpl Mike Maxfield and myself to stay with the bulldozer while he and the others went down a narrow road to the Thu Bon River to survey a possible outer perimeter of concertina wire along its bank. After about thirty minutes, a fire fight broke out at the river. Bullets were coming our way so we got down behind the dozer and debated what to do next. Max said he was going up there and I argued that our orders were to stay with the equipment. He went anyway and I can still see him doing his best “John Wayne” going side to side down the road under heavy fire coming from the other side of the river. I followed him.

When I got there, I rolled into a huge bomb crater, the remains of a previous action, to find the corpsman and the FAC (Forward Air Controller). The FAC, himself an F-4 pilot, was talking to his pilot buddies trying to get us some help. I fired 40 or so rounds across the river before the fighting died down. In the calm, Lt. Pack was returning to our position across open ground when the shooting started again. He was a big man who had wrestled in college, but the bullets snapping around turned him into a sprinter. I dumped another magazine to try and cover for him. He came over the top of me feet first and caught the corpsman upside the head, knocking him out cold. The lieutenant was very apologetic as he revived the corpsman, who was dazed to say the least. For some reason we started laughing, much to the chagrin of the corpsman. Fortunately, none of us were wounded.

Living with the Koreans meant that we ate their food, which consisted of boiling rice in our steel helmets and opening cans of warmed K Rations. Octopus and Kimchee suck. It wasn't long before Sgt. Green found a MACV compound in Hoi An that had a full galley. MACV stood for Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. So, on Sundays we loaded up and went to town. Steaks to order with all the fixings and a full bar where Lt. Pack taught me how to drink scotch at 25 cents a shot. I still drink scotch and think about that bar when I do.

One time at Hoi An, a spotter plane was making an emergency landing, caught a gust of wind, and ended up on the roof of a church outside our compound. It must have been the CIA's Air America because the pilot and the crew of the helicopter that came to rescue him were all wearing civilian blue jeans.

They unbolted the wings, lowered them to the ground, and stuck them through the doors of the chopper. All of them climbed aboard as they hooked a cable to the fuselage of the plane and took off.

Interesting afternoon entertainment.

At the end of August, Lt. Pack informed me that my six-month extension had kicked in and I was to take the mail chopper back to Hill 63 to begin my leave.

As soon as we were in the air, hovering about 1,000 feet, two F-4 Phantoms arrived to give our friends across the river a wake-up call. What an amazing observation platform we had to watch the show. The chopper pilot and the door gunner on his side had their Super 8 movie cameras going until they ran out of film. Then they reversed their hover so the co-pilot and the starboard gunner used their cameras. The F-4s made repeated passes, first dropping bombs and then using 20mm cannons until they expended everything they had. I never did

find out how effective they were but I'm sure everyone on that side of the river had a bad day.

TURNING 21

After spending the night at Hill 63, John Dixon, Larry Barabaz, and I set out on the first leg of our journey on the back of a dump truck heading south to Chu Lai. The three of us had the same rotation date and agreed to extend our tour of duty for another six months, which included 30 days leave anywhere in the Free World. Originally all three of us were going to Taipei, Taiwan, but I got home sick and changed plans to go home.

The next couple of days we processed paper work, turned in weapons, and got drunk at the club while we waited for a flight to Da Nang. A couple of more days there were not much different, especially since we celebrated my 21st birthday at the Seabee base on 6 September.

Our journey then took us to Okinawa, the staging area for all Marines in Vietnam. My brother-in-law, Victor Capo, was stationed there at Camp Hansen and we were housed in the transit barracks there. Through the mail, my sister Judy had provided me a phone number to reach him. He and I were friends back in St. Augustine and I told him where we were and that we needed three passes to get off base. Marines in transit were not allowed liberty. After processing paper work and retrieving our dress uniforms left in storage, we caught a few hours' sleep.

Partying for days takes a lot out of you. Victor finally showed with two of his buddies and the six of us went to the Non-Commissioned Officers Club to "buy" our passes under the table from a disreputable sergeant who apparently made a living taking advantage of Marines in transit. The party continued out in town until 5 am, when I had to leave to catch my plane at Kadena Air Force Base. I did not see Larry or John until returning to Delta Company at Hill 63 in October. It was a 12-hour flight across the Pacific and the last thing I remember before passing out were all of the B-52s lined up in their revetments at Kadena.

I awoke as the plane descended for landing at Travis Air Force base outside of San Francisco. In processing, they told us to get out of our uniforms and change into civilian clothing. It pissed me off to sacrifice my pride to avoid a possible incident at San Francisco International with war protestors, as if the hippies couldn't tell I was in the military from my haircut.

What a culture shock.

It was the strangest feeling, standing in the corner of the airport waiting on my flight to Atlanta among all these civilians who had long hair and who possibly hated me for doing my patriotic duty by joining the military and fighting in a war to which my country had sent me. I guess my confusion was obvious because a man came up to me and asked if I had just gotten back and said, "Come on. Let me buy you a beer." He was older than me, possibly an officer from Travis, clearly in the military because of his haircut despite his civilian attire but, most importantly he realized I needed someone who understood what I was experiencing. I was so screwed up that we didn't even converse enough for me to get his name and just sat there next to him at the bar sipping the beer.

There was a two-hour layover at Atlanta's Hartfield Airport before my final flight to Emerson Airport in Jacksonville, so I sought out a bar to kill time. When I sat at the bar, I was told I needed a coat and tie. Since my dress uniform was in checked baggage, I explained that I had just returned from Vietnam and did not own a coat and tie.

The bartender said, "Wait a minute," went to a closet, threw a coat over my shoulders and tie around my neck and said, "What do you want to drink? It's on the house." That bullshit about war protesters was starting to evaporate and I wished even more that I had ignored the warnings at Travis and kept on my dress uniform, especially when I arrived in Jacksonville.

You could see the disappointment in my father's eyes as he greeted me with, "Where is your uniform?" During the one hour ride to St. Augustine, I tried to explain to him and Mom the BS being put out at Travis and they seemed to accept that I was ordered to wear civilian clothes.

America lost its pride in that war.

News from home kept demoralizing us the whole year. The false reports of us losing the Tet Offensive; the President's resignation; the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy were like clubs hitting us over the head.

While at home on leave in September, the news was mostly about the riots and Democrat's Convention in Chicago. I listened to the likes of Tom Hayden protesting the war half the day and then partied the other half with my life-long friend, Marty Sanders. It set off a debate in my head that was not resolved until I left Travis Air Force Base heading back to Vietnam. I remember looking out the window watching the fading coastline of California and facing west with this thought: If the protesters are correct and this war was being fought for the sake

of money, then how is that different than World War II ending the Depression. My Uncle Ralph died in that conflict and if I die in this one, so be it.

When I got back to Delta Company I found a lot of Marines gone. Sergeant Terry Corson blew himself up while trying to disarm a mine. Corporal Paul Kozak's truck hit a mine, killing Hospital Man Third Class Kurt Duncan and Private First-Class Arlon Shaffer, injuring Kozak and several other Marines. Paul explained it in his own words.

MY LAST DAY By Paul J. Kozak

"Vietnam, September 19, 1968. I eased the gun truck forward and nudged through a group of hot and tired Marines. We had just completed a mine sweep and I was to drive ahead, turn around in an old French built schoolyard, and pick them up. The truck accompanied the platoon during the sweeps and today it was my job to drive. It was not a good practice, but today, like other days, some would climb on early. "Doc," our Navy Corpsman, would be no exception. He climbed in the cab and sat alongside of me. It was my 365th day in Vietnam. A Marine's tour of duty was thirteen months, so, this was a special day, only one month to go. However, I did not expect it to be such a chilling, painful, and deadly experience.

Whom! Without warning the Southeast Asian air erupted in a furious cloud of red earth. I had hit a land mine, and so powerful was the blast that I was knocked unconscious and literally taken back to my childhood. "Draw!" I shouted to my mother as she entered my bedroom. Excited with laughter I drew my six guns and while running backwards hit the back of my head on the bureau. Tears ran down my face and my voice stammered as I cried out, "Mommy I hit my head." Rushing to my aid she lifted the red cowboy hat, which now covered my face, and hugged me ever so tightly ... reality returned.

Stunned and semiconscious I began to hear sporadic rifle fire — soft sounds at first then becoming louder. Suddenly, and with my hearing now restored, the fire intensified. Simultaneously, my sight returned; However, all I could see was a light brown mist. Then, with the force of a left hook to the jaw, it hit me what had happened. 'Oh my God, I've got to get out of here', I shouted. I believe I then stood straight up since the truck was now on its side. The door was now overhead and I climbed out.

Although I had survived the main blast, I was still to meet agony at its worst. An explosion occurred when one of the fuel tanks ignited, capturing my entire body in a vicious breath of flames. I stood motionless, frozen for the moment while observing a fellow Marine, named Yearwood, taking cover behind a pillar. He turned his nervous and trembling face towards me then shouted, "Koz! You're on fire!" With that he ran towards me in an attempt to pull me to safety, but instead pulled the skin off my arm.

Together, Yearwood and I ran toward a rice paddy as the sounds of rifle fire and

small explosions continued. When we reached the paddy, we found it was dry. I rolled feverishly absorbing what moisture of what was left in the mud. After I extinguished the flames, I stood to my feet stunned and in a semi-shock. With 80 percent of my body burned and a severe wound to my left leg, I stood in want of a sniper round. The shock value which helped suppress the pain was now wearing thin. Anger grew in me. I think it was my body's attempt to counter the torment. I turned toward the tree line and screamed. An enemy round cracked as it passed close to my ear.

"Get down, get down," someone shouted. I next heard my platoon leader's voice, "Kozak, we called you in as KIA (Killed In Action)." I could see the look of surprise on his face. I then saw my pain in his eyes. 'Kozak, you're going home,' he exclaimed.

Our rifles were now quiet. The fire crackled, and the hot metal made noise. The smell that smoke carries the odor of burnt flesh and a dry rice paddy. Lt. Hawkins Signaled that it was time to go, I was led up the slope and out of the paddy. Death greeted me as I made my way to the waiting chopper; It was my final review. Boom! Boom! Grenades and loose ammo that had been trapped in the fire exploded and cooked off as me and some others passed the burning truck.

Just beyond lay two fallen Marines. One was Glenn, Arlon Glenn Schaeffer, who would die five days later. Platoon members to my right returned my glance with quiet stares. Their stunned expressions seemed to bid me farewell. Farther along and to my left two Marines stood over a lifeless figure. It was the body of 'Doc', Corpsman Kurt William Duncan. Minutes earlier he and I had been only inches apart. Now he was far away; Never would I see him again.

I reached the chopper and joined the wounded. My raw skin stuck to the diamond plate deck as the aircraft ascended. Looking down I viewed the fatal scene for the last time. So close were the tree tops, I thought to myself as the helicopter made its way to the base camp. The trauma had been so overwhelming, the pain so intense, and the result so final that I thought it absurd that I would notice the tree tops.

I was leaving Vietnam, but the struggle had only begun. The journey would be very far. Sixteen months would heal my wounds, followed by 20 years of bad dreams, sleepless nights, crushed beer cans and a whole lot of inner hurt. I had a sad heart. I would often think of how much easier it might have been had my life ended that September day.

But then things changed. I changed. A feeling came over me that, no matter what, things are better than before. My life was spared and I know why. I have three fine sons and a great family. What more could anyone want? So that is why I can honestly say today, I'm truly grateful to be alive."



Truck driven by Cpl. Paul Kozak (Photo supplied by Paul Kozak)

THE SONG BA REN BRIDGE



My first assignment upon returning was to take my crane to assist 3rd Platoon, commanded by Lt. Jack Hawkins, Jr., in building a 722-foot-long bridge across the Ba Ren River, 29 miles south of Da Nang. We were stationed at the Korean Marine compound we had built near the village of My Hat in Quang Nam Province, north of Hill 63, just below Hoi An.

The dilapidated bridge we were to replace was made of reinforced concrete repeatedly made weaker by small enemy explosives. They used small explosives on bridges and culverts and large mines on the edge of the road to stop our heavy vehicles, not their bicycles and three wheel buses.

Our bridge would be constructed of creosote pilings, cross timbers and steel I-beam stringers, which was then topped with heavy lumber decking. These materials were brought by convoy from Da Nang in the northern part of Quang Nam Province. Battalion HQ in Chu Lai sent additional Marines driving low-bed tractor-trailers to assist Delta Co. with these supply convoys. They also sent a homemade, heavily armored six-by truck sporting a .50 caliber and two M-60 machine guns to blast through any ambush, which happened once. In that ambush, Captain Rizzo and six other Marines were wounded. That was in August and Lt. Gary Ward had relieved Captain Rizzo as commanding officer of Delta Company.

The bridge was built from south to north. A crawler crane was mounted on a barge to drive the pilings. A surveyor would site the level to cut the pilings. A crew, working from scaffolding on another barge would cut the pilings and bolt the cross timbers to the pilings. The I-beams would then span from one row of pilings to the next, fastened to the cross timbers. I explain these machinations because it was my job to lift heavy material in place without killing or injuring my fellow Marines.

Every morning two sweep teams would leave from each outpost, one north and one south, to clear the roads of mines before any work could commence. Our teams usually consisted of two Marines with metal detectors, two with bayonets to probe any suspected spots in the road, and two with grappling hooks out ahead in the rice paddies to snag any wires running to explosives planted in the road. We had as many Marines with as much fire power as we could muster that day. Since my crane was left at the bridge each night to be guarded by the ARVNs, I was one of the Marines providing fire power should anything happen.

On one mine sweep, the Korean Marines thought that the best way to provide security from repeated sniper fire was to walk artillery down the road ahead of us. When the first shell exploded behind me to the east about one

hundred yards away, I found the mud in the west rice paddy comforting until the second exploded on that side. Luckily, our only injury was to Sgt. Lee, who caught a piece of shrapnel in his right forearm. Lt. Hawkins yelled “Cease fire! Cease fire!” into the radio but the village to the south was destroyed. As we progressed toward the bridge, HM3 Kurt Duncan, our corpsman, was bent over this little girl trying to remove the white phosphorus burning into her stomach. Kurt did the best he could, but I don’t think she made it. The Koreans were heartless bastards.

I think it was Winston Churchill who said “The most exhilarating feeling in the world is to be shot at and missed.” I agree. Sniper fire became a way of life for us. Most of it was H&I, Harassment and Irritation, a few shots fired from 500 yards away with a wore-out rifle from the French colonial days.

It regularly happened at one place on the road at the end of the day, heading back to the KMC compound. One day, Lt. Hawkins stopped there, put us all on line, and led a sweep through the rice paddy to the west, into the tree line. This was not new to me. I grew up hunting like this in Florida. The trick is to keep abreast of the man on your right and the man on you left so you don’t shoot each other. Only this time the game could shoot back. We progressed like this until we were so deep in the woods; I lost sight of my fellow Marines. I’ll never forget that feeling of loneliness when I got to a clearing, alone. After a few minutes, I decided to leave this sort thing to the infantry and retreated back to the road to find everyone else way ahead of me.



Marines of 3rd Platoon pinned down by snipers and returning fire
(Photo supplied by Mickey Ryan)

As we progressed on the bridge, however, the NVA moved in with more sophisticated weapons and the sniper fire became more intense. It always came from the west about 500 yards away where the river bent towards the north.

Defensively we did several things. As materials were delivered, we stacked them on the western edge of the bridge. This provided cover when we dropped our tools to return fire. Another thing we did was mount machine guns behind armor plating. A .50 caliber in the middle and an M-60 on each end. As the bridge got longer, so did the distance between the machine guns.



One of the machine gun placements
(Photo supplied by Johnny Burleson)

One day we were pinned down behind stacks of timbers. Lt. Hawkins called in an air strike. I got impatient and climbed the boom of my crane with the surveyor's transit, hoping to direct fire from that position. While concentrating through that scope, 30 ft. above the bridge, 50 ft. above the river, I heard a noise behind me. I turned to see two Forward Air Controllers grinning at me in a "Birdog" spotter plane. They had cut their engine to sneak up on me. Soon I had an amazing vantage point to watch two A-4 Skyhawks bomb the shit out of

the NVA. I wasn't close enough to see them, just the explosions.

Another occasion involved the South Vietnamese Army. The ARVNs, as we called them, guarded the two bridges and all the equipment when we returned to the Korean compound at night. At the end of the day, Lt. Hawkins would give us permission to do a little "redneck fishing" with a grenade or two. The ARVNs would then paddle out in a small boat to collect their evening meal.

One day the ARVNs mounted an aggressive operation to go after the bad guys, only they forgot to tell us. When the shooting started, we thought it was the typical barrage of sniper fire that occurred almost every day about that time. Drop your tools, man your guns, blow the hell out of the tree line across the river, and go back to work... Wrong! I was at the south end of the bridge when the fire fight broke out. The ARVN Lieutenant came running out of his bunker shouting "ARVN! ARVN!"; and pointing in the direction of the tree line. To yell over the roar of 20 or 30 fully automatic weapons would have been useless, so I ran down the bridge, slapping helmets, and yelling at the top of my lungs to cease fire. Later, they brought the wounded to the bridge. We administered first aid as best we could and got them on a Medevac Chopper; another not so proud day for the good guys.

Another incident involving snipers must be mentioned. Lt. Hawkins was by himself on the old bridge inspecting our work on the new. He was just opposite my crane, when all hell broke loose. They were trying to kill him and two rounds came through the cab of my crane. He jumped for cover, missed the ledge, plunged into the river, and was injured. In the excitement, as I was standing from cover, I sprayed a few rounds into the old bridge. As I was reloading, my attention was drawn to Hawkins, laying on the rocks 20 ft. below. He was already being helped, so we moved our base of fire to the old bridge to cover his rescue. He was awarded his second Purple Heart and, in my opinion, it was well deserved.

I recently confessed to him my premature trigger finger. He gave me back a sarcastic "Thanks!" He doesn't tolerate ineptness and he was the finest officer I ever served with in my 23 years of military service. He is currently the chancellor of Troy University and has made several trips back to Vietnam to visit the campuses of Troy in Hanoi and Saigon.

We finished the bridge in early January and returned to Hill 63.

USS ENTERPRISE

I awoke at 5 a.m. on January 15, 1969 in the usual manner in our 12-man squad tent, drank a beer from under my rack and got ready for another day on Route 1. We had just completed the Ba Ren Bridge and I was back at Hill 63 with the bulk of Delta Company. The news was blaring on Armed Forces Radio that the USS Enterprise (CVN-65) had caught fire and was exploding off the coast of Hawaii.

After showering and shaving, I was standing in the chow line for our normal ration of “phony eggs” when I realized that my brother Ralph was aboard the Enterprise. I went to the motor pool and took a jeep to the top of the hill where the Red Cross was located with a Ham Radio. I explained my situation to the gentlemen there and they told me to wait outside. I was there until sundown that evening when they said that Ralph’s name was on no casualty list, neither wounded nor dead. Thank God!

The incident is well documented now but in 1972 I got Ralph drunk one night to get him to talk about it.

A MK-32 Zuni rocket mounted on an F-4 Phantom cooked off after being overheated by the exhaust of an aircraft starting unit, a “huffer.” All of the planes on deck were fully loaded as the rocket exploded, igniting the plane’s 18,500 gallons of fuel across the deck to other planes. As the fire raged, bombs started exploding.

Ralph’s general quarter’s station was on a 2 ½ inch hose team on the flight deck. They had just secured from a fire drill and he thought it was just another drill when the alarm sounded. His Bronze Star citation states that “on three separate occasions” he waded into the conflagration to put out the fires, when a bomb would explode killing half his hose team on each of three occasions. After the third explosion, he said he could not do it again. Then, with the help of a shipmate, he began moving the dead and wounded to an aircraft elevator to lower them to the hanger deck for aid, when another explosion blew those casualties into the sea. After that he said he wandered aimlessly about the ship trying to get himself together. Twenty-seven of his shipmates were killed and 314 were injured.

The ship pulled into Pearl Harbor for emergency repairs and Ralph “military hopped” in the back of various aircraft to St. Augustine. There, as the story goes,

he, Jim, and Dan were stopped by a St. Johns County Sheriff's deputy for crossing US 1 on foot while drunk. Hearing the reason, the deputy let them go.



Looking aft during *Enterprise's* fire, January 1969

NIGHTMARES

Witnessing the carnage of war alters your soul.

In April 1968, I suffered from an abscessed tooth. I reported to the Army aid station at LZ Baldy manned by medics from Charlie Company, 23rd Medical Battalion. There the dentist informed me I needed a root canal and that he did not have the facilities to do it. I had to go to the Naval Hospital in Da Nang. He handed me a bottle of Darvon and told me to get on the Medevac chopper to the hospital.

Every morning the chopper would evacuate the seriously wounded first, followed by the dead, and then the ambulatory patients like me. The flight crews called it the "Milk Run". After the fourth run, it was my turn and by that time the bottle of pills was empty. The door gunner was laughing as he strapped me into the seat; apparently, you should not ingest that many pills in two hours but the pain was intense.

At the Naval Hospital, the doctor said he could pull the tooth or I could opt for the four appointments it would take to do a root canal. It didn't take me long to decide to spend three more days in Da Nang with its beer hall and movie theatre. Besides, the chopper pilot told me to be at the hospital at 5 p.m. unless I wanted to spend the night in Da Nang. Four days out of the field sounded good to me.

It was on one of those days that I witnessed something that haunts me to this day. While waiting for the return chopper, Marine Medevac choppers began arriving. I remember vividly the stout Marine stepping on to the field with his clothes burned off and as he walked to the Triage area, the flesh from his chest fell on the tarmac. He just kept walking to the help of the corpsmen and nurses running to his aid. More choppers streamed in with even more gruesome wounded Marines. I gravitated to the Triage area, not that I could do much but just couldn't stand by and watch. The medical people did not need me and I just stood there helpless. The last chopper came with the ones who didn't make it. I watched the Corpsmen unzip body bags to identify the dead Marines and then lost it. I ran around the side of the Hospital and puked my guts up. The smell is still with me.

The Marines that day had been riding in an Amtrak that had hit a mine. That type of vehicle is designed for amphibious assault with the fuel tank underneath. Once it hit the mine, it became an oven.

Every morning when we were living with the Koreans at My Hat, we went out on mine sweeps north and south. Most of those mornings we were greeted by a pile of dead Vietnamese. They had been killed in the night by the Koreans on patrol or ambush and dropped outside the gate when they returned to the compound. One morning heading south we met a Papasan pulling a cart north loaded with the mangled bodies of men and women.

Another nightmare was also associated with the Army Aid Station at LZ Baldy. In February 1969, a battle was underway at the Laotian border to the west and we were told stay in the compound, that no road work would be done that day on Route 1.

After doing per-functionary maintenance on the equipment, Larry Barabaz and I started playing our favorite game of "millionaire," where one of us would say "Here's a million dollars. How would you spend it?" and the other would fantasize about all that loot.

All of a sudden, the sky was dark with choppers trying to land at the Aid Station. A firebase we had help build earlier on the border and manned by an

Army artillery unit had been overrun in the night and the Medevac choppers were bringing in casualties. The landing pad at the Aid Station could only handle two of them and the other dozen or so began setting down anywhere they could, as close as 50 yards from us. Baz and I ran to them and found that the air crews were all shot up. That must have been one hot LZ those poor bastards flew into. The Triage area soon became overwhelmed. The medics worked feverishly to save lives. The air crews could not even help themselves much less the wounded they so bravely went into save. We started carrying them to the medics and bandaged who we could. At the end of it, we were covered in blood and shaken to the core. I recently spoke with Gary Weaver who was the lead medic that day and we were both shaken to the core once again.

Baz and I shared two more nightmares involving mines on Route 1.

The first involved a local villager swatting fish with a bamboo pole in a rice paddy that the ARVN had mined to protect themselves at night. He hit a "Bouncing Betty" instead of the fish, wounding himself and a dozen or so others in range of the shrapnel. We were working just down the road and administered first aid to the most serious and loaded them on the Medevac chopper the ARVN had called.

The second involved two Marine Corps mine sweep teams. John Dixon, Larry and I had extended back in September for six months to stay with the company. We got one month's leave out of the deal and were headed to Chu Lai for transportation to the "World" when we came upon a mess. The sweep teams had met on the road, one heading south and the other north. As was the custom, greetings and other BS were being exchanged when one Marine stepped on a mine that they had missed. He took two other Marines with him. We helped gather the body parts scattered across the rice paddy and placed them in the body bags.

WE WERE TIGHT AND STILL ARE

On my phone, you can find the names and numbers of many Marines I served with in Vietnam. When you share the experience of battle, you become brothers for life. A few of the Marines that I still trust with my life include:

Mike Maxfield (Lake View, MI) – Max was assigned to the Equipment Platoon of Delta Company as a welder who volunteered to go on any operation that would allow him to carry the copious amounts of weapons he mysteriously

accumulated in the two years he was there. He never went on R&R because he “didn’t want to miss anything.” R&R quotas were based on time in country, usually every six months. When his turn came, he would give it to a buddy.

Mike Pehrson (Sacramento, CA) – Sgt. Pehrson was the kind of supervisor every Marine would gladly serve under. Originally assigned to Equipment Platoon as a diesel mechanic, he is a natural leader. When the chips were down you could depend on him to back you up no matter how heavy the fire was, be it from above or from the enemy. Diane and I visited with him and his wife Ginny when they lived in Orlando. They now live in Oregon.

John Green (Grand Junction, CO) – Another sergeant that you could count on. He repeatedly stepped into the breach when enemy devices needed to be disarmed, never sending one of his men in his stead. When we weren’t under fire from the bad guys, he taught me a lot about explosives. Diane and I have visited with him and his wife Lynne in Grand Junction.

John Dixson (Detroit, MI) – Dick was a heavy equipment operator like myself who was also a black belt in judo and karate and could recite for you the manual for every weapon he could get his hands on. We both came over the same ship and reported to Delta Company the same day. He taught Baz and I how to set the head spacing and other aspects of the 50-caliber machine gun when we were stationed at Hill 10 together. When the sniper fire got heavy on Route 1, he went to the Army at Hill 63 and gathered an arm load of Light Anti-Tank Weapons (LAWs). We put them on our bull dozers and instead exchanging rifle fire with the bad guys all day, we just blew the hell out of the tree line where they were and ended that bullshit. Dick is the only Marine I have lost contact with. After years of trying to contact him, I have given up. If you’re out there, go to 9th Engineers.com to get my number. We miss you, buddy.

Larry Barabaz (Chicago, IL) – Baz was originally assigned to the 11th Motor Transport Battalion in Da Nang as a truck driver. He came to Delta Company about the same time as Dick and I. As previously stated, we share some of the same nightmares. He is probably the single most person that got me through the bad times. His sense of humor got me through those “Catch-22” moments that would drive any man insane. In August 1970, I flew to Chicago and we jumped in his cherry red GTO convertible, the one he said he would buy with his “million dollars” and took off on a road trip that could have been featured on the TV show “Route 66.” I met his mother in Chicago and he met mine in St. Augustine. I introduced him to a girl I had been dating who was working at a summer camp in the Poconos. He introduced me to his cousin in Washington, D.C. and visited the

Smithsonian. We camped out in the Keys and got drunk at Sloppy Joes in Key West.

We lost contact until 2008 when Diane and I went to visit him. He finished college, owned a chain manufacturing business, and lost his first wife to cancer. He was dating Debbie in 08 and the four of us laughed our ass off for a few days, he still has that sense of humor. He has since married Debbie, sold his business and retired to Cartersville, Ga. We recently visited them there.

WELCOME HOME

When a Vietnam veteran greets another the usual expression is “Welcome Home.” This is very meaningful to us because when we came home from that war we were usually treated like pariahs. I can remember being asked by a college professor at St. Johns River Community College to stand up and confess the atrocities I committed over there. That sentiment existed for all of us in many different ways. However, this story is not about the negative appreciation of my service. On the contrary, it is about how the people of St. Augustine greeted me upon my return home.

I joined the Marines in September 1966 to catch up with my brothers Jim in the Air Force and Ralph in the Navy. They were headed to Southeast Asia and I did not want to be left out. God forgive me for the pain it must have caused my mother to have three sons in combat at the same time. I was a combat engineer with Delta Company, 9th Engineer Battalion, in the northern part of Vietnam. Ralph was in a naval fighter Squadron on the USS Enterprise off the Vietnamese coast. Jim was an officer at the Combined Intelligence Center in Saigon. Both of them received Bronze Stars for their heroism. Me, I was just glad to come home with all my fingers and toes. Thank the Lord. We all came home without any physical wounds.

I returned to the states in March 1969 and drove across the country in the car I had left in California. I stopped in Pensacola to get some rest and called home to let them know I would be in St. Augustine the next day. My mom asked what I would like to eat upon my arrival and I responded without hesitation, “Corned Beef Willey”. CBW was a humble dish of corned beef hash poured over rice. My father’s nick name was Willey and when we were growing up without much money, there were six kids to feed. They would fix us dinner the best they could. Upon my arrival, in addition to my favorite dish, there awaited most of the

family, Ralph and his family were still in California.

Pulling up in front of 16 South Wind Circle, with everyone standing out front to greet me, is a feeling I will never forget. After all the hugs and tears, I went inside to find a Christmas tree standing in the corner with presents for me underneath. I questioned my mother as to the wisdom of keeping a dried out pine tree in the house for three months, to which she responded, "How could I not?"

Being 21, the next item on my agenda, was to visit the Trade Winds Lounge in downtown St. Augustine. Walter "Duke" Leonard owned the bar and "Jim, John, and Joanie" were the entertainment. Gary Gardner, who had enlisted in the Navy with my brother Ralph, was there. Gary was a gunner on an LCAC (Landing Craft Air Cushion) boat during the battle of Hue in 1968 and we began swapping war stories. It was not long before Jim Williams, the lead entertainer, stepped to the microphone and recognized Gary and I. Soon afterwards, Duke announced that in honor of our return from the war, the drinks were on the house and he locked the doors and the house was full.

The SAPD knocked on the door every hour or so to tell Duke that he could not be open after 1AM. He repeatedly told them until dawn that he owned the property and it was a private party. What a wonderful way to return.

CIVILIAN LIFE

After Vietnam things did not go well in my life. Death was all around us in Vietnam and I saw many brave men suffer the carnage that visited us almost daily. I later found that not all wounds are physical. The nightmares persist to this day.

Dad had lost a brother in WW II and himself served in the Navy just prior to the war's end, though he never saw combat. When I returned home, he gave me a bottle of bourbon, a copy of Rudyard Kipling's poem "IF", and a copy of Joseph Heller's "Catch-22.". Heller's satirical account of his experiences during WW II helped me understand that war is sometimes absurd and started me on a quest to comprehend what the hell I just went through. Today they call it Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. Back then it was Survivors Guilt, a term given to me by William McKean, a WW II and Korean War veteran. I had the privilege of taking a psychology course from him at St. Johns River State College. He was a retired Marine Corps brigadier general and was the commanding officer of the

Weapons Training Battalion at Parris Island in 1956 when six Recruits under his command were drowned one night by a drunken drill instructor. He was forced to retire over the incident and wrote a book about it called "Ribbon Creek." His wisdom furthered my quest for understanding.

It took me a long time, a loving wife (thank you Diane), and 20 years in the Navy before coming to grips with that convoluted portion of my life.

My father made it painfully clear that in order to work for him at W.D. DuPont & Sons, (W.D. being my grandfather), you either had to have a college degree or be in school working toward it. When I came home in 1969 I wanted a job and he said he needed an architect, therefore, I enrolled at St. Johns River Community College in Palatka, FL, with the intention of eventually transferring to the the School of Architecture at the University of Florida in Gainesville. I completed two semesters with a C average and worked for the company in between, but I was still was not a good student. I just wanted a job working construction.

On March 21, 1970 my grandmother died after suffering a brain aneurism during my grandfather's birthday celebration at Saltwater Cowboy's Resturant in St. Augustine.

The following month, on 26 April, my father tragically died in a plane crash at St. Augustine Airport in a plane he was flying. In May, my uncle controlled the company and we did not get along. In September, the girl I was dating from Flager College dumped me. On 15 December, my grandfather died of a broken heart at a hospital in Orlando, Florida.

By 1971 I no longer had a foundation, so I drifted on the sea of life. By 1976, I found myself in San Miguel, CA trying to make it as a self employed contractor. About that time, Ronald Reagan came to town and gave a speech near where I was working at a ranch owned by one of his supporters. I stood in the back of the crowd and listened as he reminded me that the Cold War was still on. His positive view of America awakened in me the pride I had felt when I joined the Marines. It was then that I decided to go back in the service.

Holding true to the vow I made to myself in that foxhole at Ca Lu, I went to the Navy recruiter hoping to join the Seabees. Construction was all I knew and it only seemed logical that I could find a home with them. He said my rank would be Seaman, one pay grade less than I had finished with in the Corps. I would not have to go to boot camp but I could not go into the Seebees because they were downsizing after the war. Not to be detered, I reasoned that if I joined the Navy, surely someone would listen to my logic and let me join the Bees. So I enlisted for

three years under the Program School Input (PSI) Program, whereby I would go to the fleet for a year and then go to electronics school. I knew squat about trons but it was the rating recommended by the classifier at the AFES station in Los Angeles. The plan was to request a transfer as soon as I got to my first duty station.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE NAVY

I was to report to the Armed Forces Enlistment Station in Los Angeles for my physical and swearing in on June 22, 1976. I was going to catch a bus on the 21st and spend the night in a hotel across from the AFES Station. Instead, a wonderful woman I had been dating, Diane Minshull Mcquire, offered to give me a ride there. Though we had only been dating for a couple of weeks, I had known who she was for several years. She was a widow with two children, Ken and Kim, and I knew I would never find a better woman, so somewhere on the road to Bakerfield, I asked her if she wanted to go to Vegas and get married.

To my surprise she said yes.

Traveling through the desert, we negotiated our marriage contract. She wanted to make sure I was still going to join the Navy, a thought that had never entered my mind since I had sold everything I owned and settled-up with my creditors before leaving town. I told her that I could not do forever, selfishly thinking a five year contract, and she countered with "How about 50 years?" I agreed to that but told her I wanted the option to renew. We laughed and she said OK. After a night of fun and games on the Strip, we had breakfast at the local Denny's Resturant and after a sobering cup of coffee, I asked if she was sure she wanted to do this and she again said yes.

We asked the cashier where the county courthouse was and she indicated that it was two blocks down the street. Vegas was very small back then. We have been married ever since and I still can't figure out how she has put up with me all these years.

ONCE A MARINE

When you graduate from Marine Corps boot camp they tell you "Once a Marine, always a Marine.". That phrase meant little to me until I joined the Navy

on June 25, 1976. On several occasions in the first part of my career in the Navy, the fact that I was once a Marine impressed my supervisors and fellow Sailors to a greater degree than it did me.

When I reported aboard the USS Juneau as a seaman, Chief Nat Stevens took me to the Command Master Chief and told him that because I was a Marine in Vietnam, I would not be going over the side cleaning or mess cooking, both of which were six month stints for junior sailors, and that he would mentor me in the electronics shop. It is a very rare thing to dictate terms to a Command Master Chief but that was Nat and I will forever be eternally grateful to him. Once a Marine!

When I was working in the electronics shop at the Ship's Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) in San Diego as a Petty Officer Third Class we had a change of command ceremony and it came up again. SIMA was a very large command that encompassed many buildings and over a thousand Sailors. Just in the Electronics Division we had over 100 electronics technicians (ETs) and that didn't include any of the other electronics rates like Electronic Warfare Specialist (EWs), Fire Control Technicians (FTs), or Data System Technicians (DSs). The ET Division was the approximate size of a Marine rifle company and, as we fell in outside our building for the change of command, the division officer called me front and center, not a good thing for someone of my lowly rank, and told me to march the Division to the front of the command building on the water front at 32nd Street Naval Station, about six blocks away.

When I asked, "Me, Sir?" he responded, "You were a Marine weren't you?" Without hesitation I saluted and said "Aye, Aye, Sir!", did an about face and, in a manner that would make my bootcamp Drill Instructor proud, marched those men around buildings, through parking lots, down alleyways and centered them on my waiting division officer. And after giving them a left face, dress right dress, did an about face, saluted my DO and returned to the back rank of the formation, wondering where the hell that came from. Once a Marine!

After I reported aboard the USS Oliver Hazard Perry as a Petty Officer Second Class, the Gunner's Mate Chief, GMMC Michael McDonald came to me and said that the commanding officer, Commander Stoddard, wanted to form a self-defense Force to protect the ship from any threat that did not warrant the ship's main weapons systems. Since I was the only crew member that had combat experience, the 10 Chiefs on the ship decided that I would be its leader. After much discussion about this new mission of mine, it was decided that I would pick 10 Sailors from the crew and train them in small arms and, additionally, the force

would also serve as an honor guard when we had ceremonies on the ship. Once a Marine!

USS JUNEAU LPD-10

As the recruiter promised, instead of boot camp I attended Other Service Veterans (OSVET) School in San Diego for two weeks while we got outfitted with our uniforms, learned how to march again and attended classes to learn the basics of how the Navy does things. I had to wait a few days for the ship to return to San Diego. It was in Juneau, Alaska, helping the folks there celebrate the Fourth of July. I reported aboard on July 20, 1976.

LPD stood for Landing Platform Dock, meaning it had a well deck that flooded to launch and recover amphibious assault boats, a flight deck for helicopter assaults big enough to carry six CH-46 Helicopters or service a Harrier Jump Jet. It had berthing for 930 Marines, 35 officers and 400 Sailors. Appropriately, my first command was a “Gator Freighter.” Once a Marine!

I immediately submitted a special request chit to the Chief of Naval Personnel to be transferred to the Seabees, detailing my experience in construction. While I waited for a response, I stood fire watches, participated in the fire party, stood messenger of the watch, and was taught the basics of doing preventative maintenance on electronics equipment. Additionally, Chief Stevens took me under his wing and taught me to “cumshaw”, which means to procure needed parts and material from the “Sand Crabs” at the various maintenance shops ashore. It is amazing what you can get with a #10 can of coffee. About six months later I got a response from Naval Personnel: “Tuff shit, you’re an ET.”

Having lost my gamble, I knew I had to get smart on electronics, quick. I went to my LPO (Leading Petty Officer) and asked how to get started. He handed me a correspondence course on basic electricity and electronics. I took that book home and tore into it. I used the kitchen table after dinner while Diane and the kids watched TV. After completing that, I asked what’s next and was given another correspondence course on electronics. Same thing, devoured it at the kitchen table with a pot of coffee every night until it was done.

By that time the Juneau was preparing to depart on another WestPac (cruise to the western Pacific). I felt compelled to go with them but my agreement with the Navy was formal schooling after a year in the fleet. At that juncture, Chief Stevens invited us to dinner at his house. After dinner the two

families took a walk on the Imperial Beach pier and I sought his advice on what to do. Staring out to sea at the end of the pier I remember him saying, "If they offer you a school, take it." His counsel stood me well for the next 20 years. Thanks, Nat.

Basic Electricity and Electronics School in San Diego was self paced, allowing the student up to six weeks to complete the course. Having just finished those correspondence courses, I did it in three. Two weeks of leave and on to Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois for Advanced Electronics, "A" School.

When I had completed Phase 1 of Advanced Electronics, I was offered a "Push Button" promotion to Petty Officer Third Class (ET3) if I extended my enlistment for four more years. At the same time, orders for Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) San Diego were offered to me with no promotion. I knew enough about the Navy by then to know that shore duty was hard to come-by and that I could take the test for ET3 that was being given, coincidentally, while I was in the Career Counselor's office.

So I hurried a special request chit to take the test. The commanding officer granted permission and the career counselor took me to the testing site and told the administrator to "Split" a test with another candidate. He got 75 questions and 75 were given to me. Since I had just been taught the material on the test, I breezed through my portion and waited for him to finish his and then we swapped questions.

I graduated from "A" School in September 1977, went home on leave, reported to SIMA in October, and was promoted to ET3 in January.

SIMA SAN DIEGO

Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity was started in the 70s as an experiment in saving money. Over 70 specialty shops assist the ship with any maintenance problems they have when they pull into port, rather than have that work contracted out. A work order request would come from the ship months in advance of the ship's availability so that each of the shops could order the parts and knew what to do before the ship arrived. It worked.

Assigned to the Radar/Electronic Warfare Shop (67A), we overhauled radar display equipment in the shop and aligned and calibrated the radars on the ship. We went aboard the ship as soon as it tied up, with a work order in our hands and a box of standard parts sitting on our work bench back at the shop. Off loading

the subject equipment with a crane, trucking back to the shop, and completely disassembling it were the easy part. Sanding, painting, sonic cleaning, reassembling, aligning and calibrating were the challenge. The true test of your workmanship was when you brought it back to the ship and demonstrated to the ship's electronic chief that it worked in accordance with its tech manual.

All of that took a couple of weeks and you might have to do more than one depending on our manpower and the ship's availability. It was truly a team effort and the leader of my team was ET1 Rick Maloney from San Francisco. Rick was more than my supervisor, he was my mentor. Beside teaching me a great deal about "Trons," we became friends. Diane and I socialized quite a bit with him and his wife, Linell.

While at SIMA, world events challenged our capabilities. The Shah of Iran was deposed by the Ayatollah Khomeini on January 16, 1979. We worked around the clock for weeks getting every ship we could underway and headed to the Persian Gulf. After they were gone, we stood around wondering if this was the beginning of World War III. Concluding that if it was, San Diego would be Ground Zero and we might as well throw a keg party, which we did.

I was head of the SIMA Rifle and Pistol Team, Once a Marine!, and had at my house six match-grade M-1 Carbines, six match-grade .45 caliber pistols and thousands of rounds of ammunition, not exactly in accordance with Naval Regulations but I had signed for them and they did not supply me with a vault in which to keep them.

About that time, I hatched a scheme, shared with no one but Diane. If it was WW III, with that kind of fire power, a 4 wheel drive vehicle, and freeze-dried food, we would survive in the mountains some place. As I was pricing 4 wheel drive Suburbans, a show on PBS popped the bubble of my scheme. The show was "First Strike." In it, the head of NORAD states that there is no defense against a nuclear attack, none. Within a couple of weeks 200 million Americans and 200 million Russians would be dead or dying. That film and the words of Major Dodd spoken in October 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis caused me to give up any thought of being a "survialist." When I deployed overseas, I told Diane that if a nuclear weapon was dedonated anywhere in the world, the genie would be out of the bottle and within two weeks the nuclear holocost would probably occur, so just tell your family you love them.

Besides marrying Diane, splitting that test back at Great Lakes and taking the orders to SIMA turned out to be the best deal I ever made. When my initial three year contract was coming to a close in 1979, we decided to re-enlist. Naval

Personnel said I owed them two more years because I signed an extension to get the “Push Button” promotion to Third Class. Re-enlisting for four years was a \$10,000 bonus, a down payment on a house at my next duty station. Naval Personnel maintained that I still owned them two more years and denied the bonus. The phone conversation got very hot when I demanded that the Chief Petty Officer on the other end produce the piece of paper that I signed to extend in the Navy for four more years back in 1977. He couldn’t, so I re-enlisted with the bonus and orders to the USS Oliver Hazard Perry out of Mayport, Florida.

USS OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

In August 1979, I moved Diane, with the kids kicking and screaming, to St. Augustine, FL, before reporting to my new command homeported in Mayport. Since the Perry was in Buffalo, New York, on a recruiting cruise in the Great Lakes, the Personnel Support Detachment gave me further travel orders and a plane ticket to Buffalo. After unloading the furniture into our new house, Diane dropped me off at the airport in Jacksonville and has never forgiven me for “dumping” her and the kids in a strange land with Hurricane David bearing down on Florida.

Thankfully my brother Jim, then out of the Air Force and working for the St. Johns County Sheriff Department, protected my family while I was gone.



USS Oliver Hazard Perry under the Makinac Bridge

The Great Lakes Cruise lasted several weeks with port visits in all of the major cities along those bodies of water. In Erie, PA, the town threw us an outdoor bar-b-que in their downtown park after which we laid a wreath at the location of the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812 where the our ship's namesake defeated the Royal Navy under the command of Robert Heriot Barclay.

All of the cities we visited welcomed us with open arms: Mayor Burns in Chicago turned city police into taxi drivers for us to go anywhere we wanted; in Milwaukee, the Miller Brewing Company gave us a steak dinner banquet; a group of us spent one night in Buffalo looking for "chocolate covered buffalo wings" in every bar in town, resulting in free drinks in each. A great time was had by all. I had been aboard for a month before I was assigned any meaningful work when I climbed the mast to reinstall the TACAN (aircraft homeing beacon) antenna left in Quebec so we could fit under the bridges along the St. Lawrence Seaway.

A humorous thing happened while I was at SIMA 1979 that affected the Great Lakes cruise. We were reinstalling the overhauled electronics on the USS Turner Joy, one of the ships involved in the Gulf of Tonkin Incident back in 1964, the supposed reason LBJ used to expand the Vietnam War. We took a break to watch the filming of the music video of "In the Navy" on the USS Reasoner across the pier. The Navy had hired the Village People to do a recruiting video of their song. Whenever we pulled into port on our Great Lakes cruise, the song was blaring on our loud speakers.

On November 4, 1979, 52 Americans were taken hostage by Jihadists of the Iranian Revolution. Much debate ensued amongst the crew of the Perry. I strongly called for retaliation by military force. Others argued that the hostages would be killed and I countered that I was sorry but letting any country hold Americans hostage would be a big mistake. I still believe that to be true.

I learned at an early age, if you let a bully push you around, you will always live in fear. On the playgrounds of Cathedral Parish School as a child, my brother Ralph took me aside and explained that if anyone tries to bully you, walk up to him and punch him in the nose. You may get your ass kicked but he will never bully you again because he knows you will hurt him. This playground philosophy holds true on the world stage. If your enemies know you will hurt them, they will be hesitant to try and hurt you. If we had hit Germany hard when they took over Poland, the last war in Europe would have been totally different. Doolittle's raid on Tokyo showed Japan we would not tolerate such actions as Pearl Harbor. If we had hit Tehran with an immediate show of force, our citizens would not have been held hostage for 444 days and the Middle East might not be the mess it is today.

Reagan's philosophy of "Peace through Strength" works.

SNAP is the acronym for Ship's Non-tactical Automated Processing for large ships, the II version was meant for small ships. There were to be 51 FFG-7 Class ships in the U.S. Navy and we had the prototype of this system. Upon reporting aboard the Perry, I was taken to the ET Shop by ET1 Rick York, my LPO. It was located in the Gyro Room where the ship's inertial navigation system was installed. Next to the Gyro was the division's computer terminal that was part of the SNAP II System. Except for Basic Electricity and Electronics School, I had never used a computer in my life and up to that point in my Navy career all maintenance records were done on paper: "Press hard, three copies." Yikes, I now have to cross the rubicon into the digital age.

On duty nights, every fourth day, I could not go home so I would spend half the night teaching myself what this system was all about. It was created by Texas Instruments and they had one of their technicians living onboard as the Site System Supervisor. I can't remember his name but I found that he too would stay up half the night working to improve the system and understand the Navy's Material Maintenance Management (3M System), a subject I understood. For the next couple of years, I taught him the 3M System and he taught me about computers. When he left the ship he recommended me as his replacement as Site System Supervisor but that honor went to FTMC Tim Morris, who went to Austin, Texas to be trained at the TI facility there.

Soon after, the SNAP system was due to go into production and various companies were competing with Texas Instruments for the contract, one of which was Harris Computers. My brother Dan was their System Engineer for the project. He asked if he could be my guest to tour the ship and see the layout for the bidding process. I was denied permission by the Commanding Officer out of concern for a possible conflict of interest, so Dan had Harris send a letter to the CO asking for permission. It was with a great sense of pride that I got to escort my brother around the ship to show him the various terminals and the main frame. Harris was awarded the contract.

When I visited the ship a couple of years later, everyone was cursing my brother for the slow speed of the Harris system. Apparently the TI upgrades in memory on the prototype did not make it into the production contract.

Before any ship from the east coast deploys overseas it must pass Refresher Training (REFTRA) in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (GITMO). REFTRA is a test that stresses the equipment and the crew to its limits. The Navy wants to know the ship can stand the unbelievable pressure of a combat situation. If any of piece

your equipment failed a test, you stayed up all night if necessary to get it ready for the next day. If the crew could not pass any of the tests for fire-fighting or damage control they drilled around the clock until they could. The motto of REFTRA is "Sleep is for the weak!"

My second time through it in 1981, I was told to report to the Combat Information Center (CIC) at midnight. I arrived shortly before that to meet with the GITMO Electronics inspector. He asked if my radar was ready to which I assured him it was. He skeptically said he would see. The SPS-49 is a long range, air search radar capable of painting targets 500 miles out and 80,000 feet in the air. He sat at the controls waiting for exactly 12 midnight to flip the appropriate switch and, boom, there was a target moving at Mach 3, and 80,000 feet. Satisfied the radar worked as advertised, he shut it off and stood up to leave. I asked what the hell that was and just smiled and left the ship.

Only one plane during that era was capable of that altitude and speed, the SR-71.

On December 19, 1979, Commander Howard Stanford Stoddard relieved Commander Steven James Duich as commanding officer of the Perry. After much preparation and testing, the ship deployed to the Mediterranean on July 14, 1980.

It was the first deployment of a new class of ship and the Soviet Union wanted a close look at us. As we approached the Straits of Gibraltar, they sent a Russian Bear Bomber to welcome us to the front line of the Cold War. NATO had given us advance notice that they were coming and, as they got close, we picked them up on our radar. As they flew over us, I went to the focile and greeted them with a double single digit salute. They made repeated passes to take pictures and as I saluted them standing next to the missile launcher, I yelled, "Take that to the Kremlin!"

I don't think they heard me but, a picture is worth a thousand words.

La Spezia is a beautiful seaport on the west coast of Italy between Genoa and Pisa. On each side of the town proper, the bay was surrounded by waterfront homes with small boats at anchor in front of most of them. During the summer of 1980 the USS Puget Sound, a destroyer tender and flagship for the Commander of the US Sixth Fleet, was located there. In July, the USS Oliver Hazard Perry was moored abreast the Puget Sound for a "Tender Availability" to do heavy maintenance.

Anchored in the middle of the bay, we had to take a "Liberty Launch" (a small boat to shuttle personnel) to fleet landing and ground transportation to visit the area. Walking was my favorite way to visit any port in the Mediterranean. It

gave me a chance to stretch my legs, get a little exercise, and see the town up close and personal. One time, though, several of us carried bikes ashore to tour the hillsides surrounding the bay, a strenuous ride going up and a relaxing one coming down. We passed a couple villages and vineyards on the way up, and sailors being sailors, we stopped at each of them on the way back. Vineyards in that part of the world are family affairs consisting mainly of a grape arbor surrounding a pavilion with picnic tables and barrels of wine served by pitcher or jug. It was a beautiful summer day away from the hustle and bustle of shipboard life.

One night, the setting was aglow in the light of a full moon, a tranquil picture that fills the heart of more mature souls with how wonderful life can be at times. Not so much for two young sailors from the OHP, seamen Kunkel and Stargell.

After walking up to one of the vineyards to purchase a jug of wine, these two decided to sit on the edge of a cliff overlooking the bay and enjoy the view. After consuming most of the jug, they started baying at the moon, violating the first rule of a sailor visiting a foreign port: "Do not cause a disturbance." Unbeknownst to them, the residents of a nearby village believed in werewolves. It was like a scene from a Frankenstein movie when the villagers ran them off the cliff with pitchforks and rocks. The Carabinieri rescued them and, after rendering first aid, returned them to fleet landing to receive further medical attention in the Puget Sound dispensary.

The story made every major newspaper in Europe and the U.S. Wherever I was stationed for the rest of my Navy career, when the subject of the Oliver Hazard Perry came up, other sailors would say, "Oh, the werewolf ship." These two knuckleheads forever entered U.S. naval folklore as the Werewolves of La Spezia.

My portion of the cruise was cut short by orders to attend the AN/SPS-49 Radar school at Fleet Training Center Norfolk, Virginia. So, some shipmates and I departed the ship in Naples on 19 September. We reported to US Air Force Base Aviano and loaded aboard a C-141 that was configured for cargo, not passengers. "It's not a job, it's an adventure."

We stopped overnight in Rota, Spain, to give the air crew rest. I was the only one of the Perry crew members to have any money, which made me very popular that night. I can't remember if they ever paid me back.

The next day we re-boarded the Starlifter for the 3,700 miles across the Atlantic with box lunches for our dining pleasure. Moron Air Base in Rota is noted

for its gooney birds and sure enough we sucked one into the inboard starboard engine just as the wheels were lifting. Shut it down, return to the flight line, de-board, and wait for two hours in holding at customs.

The large picture window gave a good view of the mechanic climbing the stepladder to crawl inside the engine with a flashlight to inspect the blades of the turbine. Finally, after tossing the remains of the bird to the ground, he declared us clear for flight. We re-boarded the plane with a little trepidation as to its airworthiness to cover almost 4,000 miles of open ocean. We made it to Norfolk, Virginia, without further incidents and the flight engineer reassured me that we could make it on three engines should there have been a need to do so.

I graduated from the school on 19 December and rejoined the ship upon its return to Mayport.

Throughout 1981, I kept saying to myself, "This is just a test to see if you can handle it." It started with the Pre-Commissioning crew leaving.

When a ship is built for the Navy, it is manned in the yards prior to launch and commissioning. In the case of the Oliver Hazard Perry, that was in 1977 at Bath Ironworks in Maine. That meant all of the "PRECOM" electronics technicians had been on board for four years and needed to rotate to shore duty. Since I was the senior of the non-PRECOM and other extenuating circumstances, the burden of maintaining all of radios, radars, and test equipment on the ship became my responsibility.

The circumstances mentioned are best summed by discussion of the personnel involved. The Electronics Readiness Officer (ERO), CWO4 Jerry Stanley, was retiring with no relief for that position, meaning I did not have a division officer for the foreseeable future. The Division Leading Petty Officer, ET1 Rick York, was up for re-enlistment but instead had accepted a civilian job at John Hopkins University to develop the next generation of the SPS-49 Radar. In a meeting with those two, it was decided that it was best for all concerned that ETC Cecil Dykes attend the Navy's Alcohol Rehabilitation Program. It wasn't my idea; Rick had suggested it and Mr. Stanley said he would make it happen.

No sooner than the three of them departed most of the division either rolled ashore or were sent to schools. The three Data Systems Technicians: DS2 Steve Waddell, DS2 Bruce Fairchild, and DS3 Randy Pierce; ETSN Phillip Amos and I were soon put to the test when Vice Admiral John D. Bulkeley and his staff came to inspect the ship's readiness.

Admiral Bulkeley was one of the most decorated officers in U.S. Naval History. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions as commander of a

squadron of PT Boats during the first four months of WW II in the Philippines by taking the fight to the Japanese. It was also his squadron that evacuated Douglas MacArthur, his staff and his family from Corregidor to Mindanao to escape capture by the Japanese. He also commanded squadrons in the D Day invasion and the Battle of La Ciotat. In April 1981, when he came aboard the Perry, he was the commander of the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey, better known as INSURV, an acronym that strikes fear in the heart of every Sailor.

When the results of the INSURV were read, the mess deck was very crowded with Admiral Bulkeley, his staff, the commander of Destroyer Squadron Eight, the CO, the XO, all department heads, and division officers. I was sitting in the back with my department head, Lieutenant R. B. Borries. My heart sank when they got to the results of electronics readiness as the inspector started with the phase, "It's not Petty Officer DuPont's fault but..." Lt. Borries put his hand on my arm and whispered "Don't worry about it."

Shortly thereafter, Ensign Lou Janik reported aboard as new ERO and Chief Dykes returned to the ship to relieve me of the responsibility for CS4 Division. The rest of my year was filled with building a work package to correct the discrepancies discovered during INSURV and getting those discrepancies corrected during a Ship's Readiness Availability (SRA) with various shore commands; qualifying the members of the Self Defense Force in small arms; deploying back to the Med in August; qualifying as Officer of the Deck In-port and Junior Officer of the Deck Underway, and became designated an Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist.

I guess I passed the test because I was meritoriously promoted to First Class and named Sailor of the Year.



Diane cutting the Sailor of the Year Cake.

On October 6, 1981, the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, was murdered. We had just completed a port visit in Izmir, Turkey to “fly the flag” in the Bosphorus Straits before heading to Sigonella, Sicily to resupply. We were redirected to Alexandria, Egypt, to be the eyes and air defense for a U.S. Marine Amphibious Task Force at anchor there. We were resupplied by air after our arrival.

His funeral was at Noon on the 11 October and three of our ex-presidents were in attendance: Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter. The pucker factor was maxed out as I watched on the radar scope as 80 planes from the Libyan air force streamed toward the border at one time. We were locked and loaded with 40 missiles ready to go when Muammar Qaddafi chickened out and the planes returned to their base in Tripoli.

Close, very close.

I was proud to help provide air cover for the Marines off the coast of Alexandria for the month we were there. Once a Marine!

On 28 October, Commander Richard F. Beal relieved Commander Stoddard as Commanding Officer in Naples, Italy. In route to Naples, he arrived aboard by repelling from a helicopter in true Navy Seal fashion. He had served multiple tours in Vietnam and was the most flamboyant officer with whom I ever served. He had a pet cockatoo that lived on the bridge of the ship, keeping the personnel serving there entertained while underway. He was a body builder that rivaled Arnold Schwarzenegger and had a presence that John Wayne would envy.

The Commander of Sixth Fleet, Vice Admiral William H. Rowden, presided over the change of command, and I rendered honors with the ship’s Honor Guard. Later the Admiral wanted to tour the ship since he had never been aboard a Perry Class ship. When he got to Radio Central, I was there to explain the electronic systems to him. He asked to see one of the newest systems in the Navy, the Link 11, which was way behind on installation throughout the Navy. When I showed him the empty space that was to house the system, he was incensed.

He said the main reason we were sent to Alexandria was because we had Link 11. I can’t go into detail of how it worked but, basically, it increased the range of our sensors by linking it with sensors on other platforms and vice-versa. He turned to his chief of staff and demanded that his staff come aboard and familiarize themselves better with our class of ship.

With Commander Beal as our new captain, we crossed the Mediterranean toward Barcelona to do some Christmas shopping before heading home when we ran into one hell of a storm on Thanksgiving Day. I always started my day by

reporting to the bridge to see if there were any problems with the electronics during the night.

Since there were none, I had a cup of coffee with QM2 Paul Bonin the lead Quartermaster. Paul was also a native of Florida, hailing from West Palm Beach, and a damn good navigator. When I arrived on the bridge, the Officer of the Deck and his assistant were taking bets as to which wave would come over the bow. By the time the coffee cup was empty, the bet was which one would slam into the bridge windows, 42 feet above the normal waterline. As we continued to imitate a submarine, I was glad the day was holiday routine and went back to bed.

The law that Congress used in prosecuting Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North for the "Iran-Contra Affair" was signed by President Reagan on December 21, 1982 as part of the Defense Appropriations Act. The "Boland Amendment" to that Act forbade the U.S. Government from assisting the Contras in overthrowing the Nicaraguan government.

Just before that, while it was still legal, the Oliver Hazard Perry deployed on a "special operation" off the coast of Nicaragua in the summer of 1982. Transiting the Panama Canal, we spent six weeks cruising up and down the Pacific shore line in support of the "bearded guys in blue jeans." Captain Beal was well suited for this mission, after many years of service as a Navy Seal in Vietnam and god knows where else. We had "special" listening devices and a SH-3 Helicopter aboard. On that bird, Captain Beal would often take a ride to "look- see" the situation inland.

In Vietnam, I encountered the "guys in blue jeans" a couple of times. Each time we asked them who they were and what were they doing, only to be answered with a stare that said "You don't want to know." It was pretty much the same this time. At night, we would drop anchor and they would arrive on a small boat to take showers and eat a hot meal. We were ordered not to question them, just give them anything they needed.

During the day, we would cruise the coast "listening" and, thanks to the forethought of Electronics Chief Renniger, fishing for dolphin. He had gone to Moral Welfare and Recreation before we left Mayport and procured a supply of fishing rods, bait, and tackle. I got tired of eating "Mahi-Mahi" at the cookouts we usually had on Sunday afternoons. Every couple of weeks we would pull into Panama City, Panama, to resupply and refuel.

Twice during the cruise, the self-defense force was called out. My job was to man a M-60 machine gun on the bridge wing. My orders to these 10 young Sailors were to hold their fire until I fired, which would have been at the order of the captain. The first incident was during daylight hours when a small boat

approached the ship from the Gulf of Fonseca, where El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua meet. I had my sights on the pilot of the boat as they came along side flying the El Salvadorian flag, friend not foe. The other incident was in the middle of the night, when a fishing trawler came too close to the ship, caught his net on our anchor chain, and slammed into the side of the ship about where I my bunk was.

The crew of the trawler was very apologetic looking down the barrel of my machine gun, begging for forgiveness. Once a Marine!



CS4 Division 1982

In the back: DS2 Bruce Fairchild. Second row: Commodore Kalares, DESON 4; ETC Renniger; ICC Harrison; ET2 Brian Martel; ET2 Ralph Rice; ET3 Bruce Waddill; IC2 Pat Barrett; ENS Lou Janik; Commander Richard Beal. Front row: ET1(SW) Fred DuPont; DS2 Randy Pierce; ET2 Phil Amos; DS2 Steve Waddill; ET3 Jeff Marks.

KRISPY KREME

The rating for cooks in the Navy is Mess Specialist (MS). On the Oliver Hazard Perry in 1982, one of our best cooks was MS1 Steve Bechtold. Steve was a bear of a man who regularly baked bread in the middle of the night that filled the ship with an aroma that could drive you crazy. He wasn't supposed to, but if you went to the galley and asked nicely, he would set out some butter and a fresh loaf which made you glad you joined the Navy. He was our head cook and was learning to do all of the ordering for a crew of 180 men.

We were in port at Mayport one morning in 1982 and I was the Officer of the Deck for the early morning watch when a Krispy Kreme truck pulled up to the brow to off load our donut order. The vendor handed me the invoice and asked me to sign. I questioned the order before signing and he told me that it was our order and I had to accept it. There was little I could do at 5 a.m. without waking the Command Duty officer so I signed, set out a pallet and let him bring the donuts on board. I handed MS1 Bechtold the invoice when he arrived about 6 a.m.

You should have seen the look on his face when he realized that when he thought he was ordering 12 dozen donuts he actually ordered 12 grosses. Each member of the crew gained a couple of pounds that day.

In January 1983, I was up for reenlistment again. I took the whole month off to look at my options. I consulted with my old LPO and friend, Rick York. Rick was the first SPS-49 technician to get out of the Navy and I would have been one of the first school trained, technicians to follow him out of the Navy. Hughes Aircraft Corporation had the current contract to supply tech support for the 49 and offered me an acceptable salary to work for them in Los Angeles. Rick cautioned me about the expense of medical insurance in the civilian world and, after talking with Diane about our options, decided to stay in the Navy. I was at the critical 10-year mark in my career and she stated that, "If you re-enlist, we're going all the way. I'm not putting up with this shit for nothing," a critical appraisal by a Navy Wife.

The Navy was offering the Enlisted Education Advancement Program (EEAP), whereby they would send me to school for two years to complete an Associate of Arts degree for an additional six-year enlistment. I opted for the EEAP Program to pursue a degree in computer science and another cash bonus. The preponderance of the decision did not manifest itself until 2009, when Diane

had a stroke. As Rick had cautioned about medical insurance, if I had not made a career out of the Navy, the medical bills would have wiped us out financially.

The only trouble was that the selection board for EEAP did not meet until May and I had to choose orders starting in February. Shore duty for my rate, Electronics Technician, was limited to instructor duty or recruiting duty. After begging the un-sympathetic "Detailer" in D.C. to leave me on the Perry until May, I chose recruiting.

SHORE DUTY

On February 4, 1983, I reported to Recruiter School at Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit, Naval Training Center Annex at Orlando, Florida. It was a Friday and, besides the induction paperwork, we attended a short briefing on the rules for the month that we would be there. Two of those rules came into play before we started classes on Monday.

After the briefing, we were given liberty for the weekend. I returned to St. Augustine to be home with my family and drove back to Orlando Sunday evening. Arriving about 10 p.m. full of coffee from the two-hour trip, I decided to sit in the lounge and watch TV until the caffeine allowed me to relax enough to go to sleep.

Around midnight the door to the lounge burst open with three guys wrestling with a fourth who had a pistol. "Holy crap," I thought to myself. "After all the combat I had seen, I was going to die at the hands of a gun welding, crazy man." There was a small kitchen off of the lounge with a phone in it. Rule 1 came to me. Because of the remote location and non-critical mission of the Annex, we were told there were no base police and that if anything happened to just dial 911, which I did rather than join the wrestling match at the other end of the lounge.

The 911 dispatcher kept me on the phone while the police were in route. I stuck my head out the doorway, there was no door, and yelled at the crazy people to get the hell out, that the police were on the way. The fight went back out the door they came in, the fire alarm went off, and a shot was fired. Just after that, the crazy guy with the gun appeared in the doorway with the pistol pointing toward the floor. Screaming into the phone that I was about to be shot, the dispatcher tried to calm me and describe the man, I guess so that during my murder investigation they would know who to look for.

With the fire alarm screaming and me screaming through the phone, I briefly thought of dropping the phone and rushing the guy and try to get the gun from him, but instead just cringed in the corner waiting for the first bullet. He just stood there and looked at me for a few seconds which seemed like an eternity and then walked away.

The fire department was the first to arrive and since the phone was next to the fire alarm control panel in the small kitchen, I was still talking to the 911 dispatcher when the fire fighter came in to reset the alarm. He looked at me as if I was crazy and I got the impression that he thought I was the source of all the confusion.

He was not the only one to give me that impression that day. After the police showed up, the 911 women let me go to talk to them. I relayed the story to them and they looked at me the same as the fireman. Next to arrive was the Officer of the Day (OOD) from the main base, the Naval Training Center, Orlando. After telling him the same story, I got the same skeptical look that I was the problem here. Then the Command Duty Officer (CDO) arrived, again from the main base. Again, same story with the same look in response. Now I'm starting to wonder if I am the one that is crazy.

Just then the real crazy guy walked in the lounge, this time in his pajamas and without the gun. I pointed him out to the OOD who was grilling me again trying to get me to change my story. The crazy guy had two other pajama clad buddies with him. He denied my accusation and his buddies swore they had all been asleep in the barracks until this crazy person, me, set off the fire alarm. They also said they never heard the gunshot.

It went on like that the whole day. Instead of attending classes, as was my purpose for being there, I told the same story over and over separately to the police, the OOD, the CDO, and finally to the Chief Master at Arms from the main base, who had my story typed up and made me sign it. The Chief Master at Arms of any command is the person that does the official investigation when charges are filed against a Sailor, so I was real close to seeing my career go down the drain because of Pajama Boy and his buddies. The Master at Arms was a smart man, however, and procured the 911 tape from the Orlando PD and listened to it several times while I was sequestered in another room. He also sequestered the pajama boys in another room and bounced back and forth trying to get somebody to change their story. Finally, the pajama boys confessed.

The three of them had been the Orange Blossom Trail, in clear violation of Rule number 2: Don't go to the OBT. It was full of strip clubs and nefarious

characters and you will get into trouble. Apparently, they had failed to pay a girl for a lap dance and three of her male companions took issue with the pajama boys over the subject and chased them back to the Annex where crazy boy went to his car and got a gun before the three Sailors retreated to the barracks. When the three irate civilians confronted them over the money, crazy boy brandished the gun but it didn't scare them. Hence, that is where my story began when they busted through the door to the lounge. The civilians got scared when I threatened them with the 911 call and ran from the building back to their car, pulling the fire alarm as they left. Crazy boy fired a shot over their head as they ran.

At the end of a very long day, the Commanding Officer of the Recruiting School called me in to his office, thanked me for my trouble, and gave me a Letter of Appreciation to that effect.

From: Officer in Charge, Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit,
Orlando, Florida 32812
To: ET1 Fredrick R. DuPont, USN
Subj: Letter of Appreciation

1. On 7 February 1983, an incident between six civilians and three service personnel, which included the discharge of a firearm, occurred in the vicinity of Building 7332. You acted in a quick and decisive manner by contacting and remaining in communication with proper authorities. Your actions resulted in the prevention of possible injury to the involved parties.

2. Your performance was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Navy. Well Done!

P.E. Hewitt

After school, I was given orders to Naval Recruiting Command Kansas City and spent one month as a recruiter in Nevada, Missouri, before being selected for the EEAP program. Thanks Detailer. Fortunately, Diane's family was rendezvousing in Kansas City that Memorial Day to celebrate John and Mary Minshull's 25th wedding anniversary and we partied for three days before returning to Florida.

I re-enlisted for six years to get the Enlisted Educational Advancement Program. It allowed me to attend Florida Community College in Jacksonville,

Florida for two years to get a degree in Computer Science, with remaining four back at sea. While at school, I reported to the Commanding Officer of the NROTC program at Jacksonville University once a month in uniform. Other than that, my duty was to study, which I did, graduating Summa Cum Laud in 1985 with an Associate Arts Degree.

While I was in college in 1983, the Mideast raised its ugly head.

Since Vietnam, I have always maintained that you should not build a fort in a war zone. The single most important strength of our military is mobility, e.g. Patton in Europe or Nimitz in the Pacific during World War II. They never stopped moving forward, rolling the enemy back as they went. Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq were “hold in place wars,” making targets out of America’s finest and bravest. So, it was in Beirut, Lebanon, from 1982 to 1984.

When you put troops in harm’s way the only rule of engagement should be to kill the enemy. In these hold in place wars, American troops have been told by the politicians in Washington when, where, and under what circumstances they can engage the enemy. The Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers were STATIONED in Beirut to help the Christian Lebanese defend against the Syrian and Iranian backed forces, and it was a disaster.

American “presence” was the only goal in Lebanon, as if showing the flag was enough to scare “jihadists” into retreating. After the U.S. and French embassies were bombed in April 1983, the troops were finally authorized to shoot back and the fighting grew more intense until October 23, 1983.

On that date, a terrorist drove truck bomb was into the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment of the 24TH Marine Amphibious Unit. The death toll was 220 Marines, 18 Sailors (mostly corpsmen) and three Soldiers. Additionally, more than 128 Americans were wounded. The fighting continued until the last of the Marines were pulled out on July 31, 1984 after which the embassy was bombed again. “Never build a fort in a war zone”.

After graduating from school, I received orders to the USS Saratoga.

USS SARATOGA

In June 1985, I reported aboard USS Saratoga for duty. The Saratoga was off the coast of Florida doing “work ups” (preparations for deployment). I arrived in a manner that is the only way to report aboard an aircraft carrier, by air. I flew out on an E2 COD (Carrier Onboard Delivery) from Mayport. When you fly in a

COD, you face backward because when you are “trapped” by the arresting gear your body goes from 120 mph to zero in 2 seconds, pressing you into your seat like you would not believe. When we arrived over the SARA, they were in doing “Cats and Traps,” training where by the pilots take off with the assistance of the catapults and are trapped with the assistance of the arresting gear. We circled high above waiting for our turn to land, an amazing observation point to witness carrier operations. After a while, I fell asleep looking out the port hole. When our “tail hook” grabbed the No. 3 wire, I was rudely awakened back into the Cold War.

The commanding officer of SARA was Captain Jerry L. Unruh. He was well liked throughout the fleet and referred to as “Captain Mighty Fine,” and later “Admiral Mighty Fine.”

We deployed in August headed for the Mediterranean. The commander of the Task Force was Rear Admiral David E. Jeremiah. After turning over with Sixth Fleet we made various “flag showing” port visits, one of which was Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia (now Croatia). On the evening of 10 October, as we were preparing to enter Dubrovnik, we were ordered back into action in the Eastern Med.

Terrorists from the Palestinian Liberation Front had hijacked the Italian cruise liner Achille Lauro off the coast of Egypt, killed an American tourist, Leon Klinghoffer, and fled ashore at Port Said, Egypt. Intelligence told us that the terrorists were aboard an Egypt Air 737 headed for Tunisia. We launched seven F-14 Tomcats and supporting aircraft. The Tomcat pilots were given the tail number of the 737 and merely flew up, with their lights out, to every aircraft on their radar in the Eastern Mediterranean and read the tail numbers with a flashlight. As absurd as this may seem, given the technology available, they found it with a flashlight. Finding it, they radioed the ship from 350 nautical miles away.

That is when I was called to CIC (Combat Information Center). As Leading Petty Officer for Electronics Division/Radar and resident expert on the 500 mile SPS-49 Radar. The approximate 100 Officers and Sailors crowded in CIC were in a confused state because they could not see the 737 on the display consoles. It took me two seconds to figure out that the radar’s range was set at 250 miles and changed the setting to 500. Cheers went up immediately and later they awarded me a Navy Achievement Medal for flipping a switch. Life can’t be this simple.

The pilots of the Tomcats switched on their lights, waved their wings (the international signal for a forced landing) and the E-2C Hawkeye radioed the pilot of the 737 to land in Sigonella, Sicily. Landing immediately behind the 737 was an Air Force C141 loaded with the Delta Force. I briefly viewed an infrared satellite

picture of the two aircraft on the ground with Delta Force personnel surrounding the 737. It was immediately pulled because of its classified nature. I later attended the Senior Enlisted Academy with a Navy Seal, Senior Chief Danny O'Toole (and yes, he did have red hair). Danny told me that he was in that picture with orders to shoot out the tires if they tried to move the plane.

The five terrorists were captured and, after a tense standoff, turned over to Italian authorities. In the diplomatic confusion, the Italians released Mohammed Zaidan, who was thought to be a PLO negotiator but later found to be the ringleader. In 2003, he was captured by U.S. forces in Iraq and died in captivity.

The other four were tried and convicted in Italian court and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Admiral Jeremiah later became Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was hosting a dinner for Defense Intelligence personnel which included my brother Dan for his work in the space industry. In a private moment with the Admiral, Dan relayed the "flashlight story" to the Admiral, who responded "Shhh" with his finger over his lips.

Worried about retaliation after we captured the Achille Lauro terrorists, I called Diane from Dubrovnik and told her to cancel her planned trip to meet me in Rome. Then I found out that the admiral's wife as well as many other Saratoga wives were still coming. I called her back a couple of days later and told her to come.

When we dropped anchor in Naples for our scheduled two-week port visit, I caught the train to Rome and took a bus to Leonardo da Vinci Airport to meet her. Waiting in the concourse for the plane to arrive, I watched Admiral Jeremiah and dozens of others from the ship nervously pacing back and forth. I can remember wondering if it even crossed their minds that we were now terrorist targets because it certainly was on mine. Think about it, if they wanted to retaliate against us, the admiral and God knows how many of the fighter pilots were right here in one place. A month after that, Libyan terrorists hit that very same concourse, killing and wounding more than 100 people.

Bus transportation in Rome is cheap, convenient, and thorough. The central hub for it is the train station, making getting in, out, and around Rome very easy. The bus from the airport took us to the train station. From there we caught a bus to St. Peter's Square, giving us a scenic view of the heart of Rome along the way. It was a short walk from St. Peter's to the hotel I had picked out on a previous visit when I was on the Perry. I was in Naples so many times I would take the train to Rome whenever I could.

It was a nice bed and breakfast on a street that offered the taste of Europe featured in the many restaurants there. It was on the Via Belvedere and you get there from St. Peter's with a short walk on Via di Porta Angelica.

Vatican City is the capital of Catholicism and its wealth was apparent. The Museum, Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's Basilica all caused me to contemplate my catechism classes at Cathedral Parish Elementary School in St. Augustine. After a few days touring the other major cathedrals, some of the many ruins including the Coliseum, and taking a la dolce vita night tour, we threw our coins in the Trevi Fountain and caught a train to Florence.

If you try to do Florence in a couple of days like we did, wear your running shoes. There are so many masterpieces in so many museums you'd need a life time to properly appreciate them. In between museums we would duck into a café to warm-up with a cappuccino. It was raining and winter was coming. I had been to Venice when the Perry visited Trieste and wanted to show Diane the sites there, but the cold put us on a train back to Rome.

A couple of more days enjoying each other's company and it was time to go. We parted at the train station, Diane on a bus to the airport, and me on a train to Naples.

Back at sea the 49-radar started malfunctioning. ET3 Andy Edwards and I tried every trick in the book to get it to stay at full power but it cut out every time we approached that setting. We worked around the clock checking values, replacing inexpensive parts and cleaning the power bay with rubbing alcohol. Finally, after days of this, we needed sleep and decided to do the Hi-Pot Test. It is taught in school and the procedure is in the book but we were warned to perform it only as a last-ditch effort because of its potential damage.

We informed ETC Rizzi of our intentions and he said don't do it. I maintained that it was an approved test and I as the senior technician was going to perform it. Besides I had to get some sleep.

The radar was fairly massive with half the equipment in one space and the other half in a connecting space. I put Andy at the main processor that had the power setting controls and myself with the transmitter. The test consisted of disconnecting the transmitting tube, about four feet long and two feet in diameter, from the power supply in the cabinet next to it and turning the power up until something blew.

The tube would transmit a 10-thousand-watt pulse at full power from the 50-thousand-watt power supply. Because of the danger involved, fiber optic

cables were used to turn the tube on and off. Fiber optics do not conduct electricity and kept the power insulated to its cabinet.

The hope was that, as Andy slowly turned up the power, I would see the electric arc coming from the defective component before anything drastic occurred. I sat in the dark with another technician sitting next to me with a CO2 fire bottle. As Andy passed 40-thousand-watts the high-power control cabinet violently erupted into flames. The young sailor next to me almost shit his pants trying to get out of there over the top of me. I grabbed him and made him dump the CO2 through the protective screen doors that kept the pieces from flying in our faces.

It was several more days before we repaired all of the damage. As I stood my ground against threats of prosecution from Chief Rizzi and our division officer, Lieutenant Commander Walker, Andy used his superior skills as a Micro-Miniature Tech soldering the on and off decks back together.

Andy and I even got a couple of days of liberty in Haifa, Israel before the ship passed through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea and on into the Indian Ocean.

When I was in San Diego and Diane was in San Miguel back in the seventies, I shared a barracks room with a Seabee who had just returned from helping to construct the base at Diego Garcia. He explained to me how they blew up the coral reefs to form a basin deep enough for ships. They used the excavated coral to build the roads and airstrip. The main purpose of the base was to provide the U.S. and British military with an uncontested base in that part of the world to protect the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz.

Part of the British Indian Ocean Territory, the atoll is approximately 1,100 miles south of the southern tip of India. It is below the equator, so that meant that all of us Pollywogs had to become Shellbacks in route, a naval tradition that gives the crew something to do when it's in the middle of nowhere. I became a proud subject of King Neptune's Realm, even though I stunk for three days afterward.

The Saratoga was the first aircraft carrier to pull into "Fantasy Island" and amazingly it had phones and a branch of the Navy Federal Credit Union. Not wanting to spend Christmas there, Captain Unruh requested permission to spend the holiday in Singapore. The Joint Chiefs said it was too far from the Strait of Hormuz and we could not go. The Captain countered that if he could launch an air strike on the Strait from Diego Garcia, about the same distance as Singapore from that critical piece of real estate, he could do it from Malaysia. He was an

innovative leader who would later take the first aircraft carrier battle group into the Persian Gulf as a rear admiral aboard the USS Independence. Coincidentally, Rick Maloney was with him then as a chief warrant officer.

We pulled out of the harbor and immediately launched an air strike on the Strait. Utilizing Air Force tankers from Saudi Arabia we recovered the strike force and headed for Singapore.

I graduated from Florida Community College in May 1985 with the desired degree in computer science. The final test of my studies was presented at Christmas of that year in Singapore.

After two years of chemistry, physics, math, and the computer languages of COBOL, FORTRAN and Basic, it did not dawn on me how big and fast the computer revolution would be. I guess my mind was bogged down in the machinations of the tasks at hand and did not see the bigger picture. I talked frequently with my brother Dan about his expertise in the computing world and he never mentioned it. He kept telling me to learn more about structured languages of C, C+, and C++ because that was what they were using in the space industry.

The picture was further clouded with the fact that I was there to further my Navy career by applying what I had learned in school to help the Navy, which I did. During the next few years on the Saratoga, I wrote several programs to help solve problems in Career Counseling and tracking the myriad of tests necessary to successfully complete the vast changes in the Combat Systems equipment during our yard period.

My final exam in Singapore came while I was on liberty one day in the electronics mall. It was a very large three-story structure that housed many stores selling everything from a Walkman to household appliances, especially desk-top computers. As I leaned on the rail of the third-floor walkway there were two stores selling computers, one Apple Macintoshes and the other IBM Personal Computer clones.

The Apple store was empty with the exception of one salesman. His main interest was signing up people for courses in how to use their computer. Already having that knowledge, I pressed him for a deal on selling me an IIE, Apple's latest model. After haggling for a while, he said he would sell me three of them for \$1500 each, which was half the going price in the States. I told him I would get back to him and went to the other store selling PC clones.

The line was out the door so I sharpened my elbows and waded into the madness. I found Electronics Chief Wilson, a computer geek who ran the Radio Maintenance shop on the Sara. I bugged Chief Wilson as to why a PC clone? All

he told me was the price was half that in the States, just like the Apple IIE down the way.

The test was trying to discern the difference in the two types of computers and I failed. The major difference was in the operating systems. Each was proprietary with Steve Jobs controlling Apple's and Bill Gates controlling Microsoft's. I'll never figure out why IBM let Gates retain the copyright for the PC's operating system.

If I had just focused on Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, I would have aced the test and be a rich man today.

On December 27, 1985, there were two terrorist attacks in Europe. One at the Vienna International Airport in Austria, killing three and wounding 39. The other at the Leonardo da Vinci Airport in Rome, killing 16 people and wounding 99. When I saw the newspaper picture of the carnage in Rome, it was the same concourse that Diane and many other Saratoga wives used in November.

Now it was getting personal.

President Reagan blamed the attack on "The Mad Dog of the Middle East," Muammar Gaddafi, and ordered us back into the Mediterranean. There we joined forces with the USS America and the USS Coral Sea aircraft carrier battle groups. Admiral Jeremiah was senior and he became the commander of the Sixth Fleet with 225 aircraft and some 30 warships.

The three battle groups were designated: 60.1 under Rear Admiral Jerry C. Breast on the Coral Sea; 60.2 under Rear Admiral David E. Jeremiah on the Saratoga; and 60.3 under Rear Admiral Henry H. Mauz, Jr. on the America.

We flew around the clock for weeks across Gaddafi's "Line of Death" into the international waters of the Gulf of Sidra, trying to entice Libyan forces to come out and "play." It became so stressfully repetitive on the flight crews that a back-seat aviator of an EA-6B Prowler held up a hand-written sign to the canopy before launch, knowing the press was aboard. The sign read "SEND COOKIES." That picture made all the major newspapers and before long we were buried in cookies. They came to the ship by the pallet load; one lady even sent a pallet of See's Candy in one pound boxes. Helicopters air lifted them to all 30 ships in the task force. Nice to know they loved us back home, especially the candy lady in California.

On 24 March, Admiral Jeremiah ordered three ships close to the coast and that was enough for Gaddafi. He sent his missile patrol boats to attack us at midnight only to be sunk by our aircraft firing Harpoon anti-ship missiles. We took out his Russian built radar installation at Surt and he fired multiple, Russian

made SA-5 missiles at our aircraft; all of which missed and we took out the launch site. He sent out two Russian made MiG-25s that only turned tail and ran from our F-14s. There was a Soviet warship in port at Tripoli that requested “Rite of Passage” to avoid getting involved and was warned not to even so much as turn on his fire control radar or he would be part of it. The battle lasted 12 hours and it was unknown what their casualties were. Approximately 100 Libyans manned each of the three patrol boats we sunk, plus their casualties ashore. Ours was zero.

On 5 April, a bomb exploded in the La Belle disco in West Berlin, killing two American servicemen and a Turkish woman and wounding 200 others. President Reagan again blamed Gaddafi and launched Operation El Dorado. On 15 April, 22 F-111 aircraft left England to join with 16 aircraft from the USS America and USS Eisenhower in attacking targets in Tripoli and Benghazi.

Within ten minutes of active fighting, 60 Libyans were killed. Unfortunately, one of the F-111s was shot down over the Gulf of Sidra, killing two U.S. airmen. The Saratoga Battle Group had already “out chopped” and headed home in the Atlantic. Eight months was long enough. The Coral Sea Battle Group was relieved by the Eisenhower Battle Group and was headed east to their homeport in Japan.

It is very unfortunate that we did not kill Gaddafi in 1986 because he was behind the bombing of Pam Am Flight 103 that killed 270 people over Lockerbie, Scotland on December 21, 1988. “The Mad Dog of the Middle East” was finally killed by his own people on October 20, 2011, after he survived a NATO airstrike that bombed his convoy when he was trying to escape Libya.

The phrase in the Marine Corps Hymn, “to the shores of Tripoli”, refers to the Battle of Derma where Lt. Presley O’Bannon led eight U.S. Marines and 500 mercenaries from Alexandria, Egypt, to capture the town of Derma in what is now modern-day Libya. Fought in 1805, it ended the Barbary Pirates from extracting ransom from the United States for captured merchant ships and it was the first time the American flag was raised in victory on a foreign soil. Being a Marine in an earlier life in Vietnam, Lieutenant O’Bannon’s spirit was with me in 1986. Once a Marine!

USS STARK

In May 1987, the Saratoga was in-port at Mayport Naval Station preparing to deploy to the Mediterranean. Having made Chief Petty Officer, I was in charge of maintenance of all radio communications equipment of the ship. On 17 May, the USS Stark was hit by two Exocet Missiles fired from an Iraqi fighter aircraft in the Persian Gulf. As the casualty list came in, my heart sank. There were 37 dead and 21 wounded. I knew two Sailors on those lists. Operational Specialist Chief Lawrence Barrow was wounded and Data System Technician First Class Randy Pierce was killed, both of whom I had served with and had a close personal relationship on the Perry from 1979 to 1983.

Larry was from the west coast of Florida and we used to banter each other about the first settlement of Florida. Yes, Pensacola was first but St. Augustine was the first "permanent" settlement, all in good fun. Later I ran into him in a restaurant in Jacksonville Beach and we talked about old times on the Perry and about the Stark. We toasted the memories of the casualties of the Stark, especially Randy Pierce. We both retired as Senior Chiefs from the Navy in the 90s. I will forever feel guilty about Randy's death.

On the Perry, I was Randy's supervisor as the LPO of CS-4 Division. At the time, Randy was a Data Systems Technician Third Class and he was good at his job. However, liked to party. After several instances of him reporting late for work, I told him he had two choices, report to the Navy's Alcohol Rehabilitation Program or I would bust him out of the Navy. He choice the former and salvaged his life. He sobered up, proved his worth as a technician and I put him in for meritorious promotion to Second Class. That was in 1982.

Before he deployed on Stark to the Persian Gulf in late 1986, he came up to me at the Navy Exchange in Mayport. I was embarrassed as he thanked me for saving his life. In sobriety, he found religion, married a good woman, and they had one child and were expecting another. I told him that he made those choices by himself and that I was merely a catalyst. We shook hands and parted company.

When I learned of his death, I went to the Family Services Center at Mayport and inquired about his wife and family. They told me that she refused to see anyone from the Navy, so I went home and got drunk.

I recently communicated with his children, Randi and Logan. When Randy was killed, Randi was three and Logan was six months. Randy only saw his son, Logan, through pictures.

1987 CRUISE

The Saratoga Battle group deployed back to the Mediterranean Sea in June 1987 under the command of Rear Admiral Jeremy Boorda. Captain David Frost was the ship's commanding officer. If there ever was a "recruiting poster" cruise, this was it: 10 port visits, two USO shows, no hostile shooting and we were home by Christmas.

The beaches of Mallorca and Benidorm in Spain, and Cannes and Nice in France, were fabulous in the summer. They are Europe's playground. While in that part of France, Monte Carlo is just a taxi ride away. The architecture of most of the ports or nearby cities is something to behold: the Parthenon in Athens, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and Rome. I had been to Naples so many times that during both port visits there, I would grab a bottle of Courvoisier on the way to the train station and share it with my fellow passengers on the way to Rome. I stayed in the same hotel off St. Peters Square that Diane and I used back in 85. Marseille, France, Haifa, Israel, and Alexandria, Egypt were working ports, but The Pyramids of Giza were fascinating to say the least. The ladies of the two USO shows, "Sizzles" and "Queens," for sure kept the hearts of the young Sailors pumping.

We did have one accidental shooting, however. During NATO exercise Display Determination at sea, one of our young, F-14 Tomcat pilots mistakenly placed a Sidewinder missile up the exhaust pipe of a U.S. Air Force F-4C Phantom trying to jam our radar defenses. Captain Michael Ross and 1st Lieutenant Randy Sprouse ejected and were rescued by helicopter. When visited by Admiral Boorda in sickbay, Captain Ross stated "I thought we were supposed to be on the same side?" To which the Admiral responded "We're sorry about this, but most of the time we are."

The French Navy helped us celebrate our 4th of July on the deck of Saratoga while we were in Marseille. Ten days later we were anchored off Cannes to celebrate Bastille Day with the people of France.

One day Johnny Carson pulled up to the stern of the ship on his yacht, Serengeti. He and his wife, Alexis, were on their honeymoon. He yelled to the Officer of the Deck for permission to come aboard. The Chief Petty Officer on duty yelled back, "Permission denied!" Carson then yelled, "Do you know who I am." The Chief responded, "Yes sir, Mr. Carson but, this is a United States warship and no one comes aboard without the Captain's permission." Carson accepted that and pulled away.

That night I understand Carson sent one of his crew members in his launch with a hand-written invitation to Captain Frost and Admiral Boorda to dine with him and his wife the next evening on his yacht, which they did. Cannes being the most popular harbor for the rich and famous, especially during the celebration of Bastille Day. The Serengeti was anchored just outside the breakwater, so the Admiral's Barge was used to convey the brass to what I can only imagine to be one memorable dinner.

The next day was Sunday and I was aloft positioning a new antenna when the admiral and captain escorted Carson and wife for a tour of the flight deck. Something to remember.

During the 87 Cruise, we were playing games again with Muammar Gaddafi and his Line of Death in the Gulf of Sidra. He was still claiming these international waters as his and we were there to prove him wrong, again. This time it was just the 10 ships of Carrier Task Force 60 (CTF-60) under Admiral Boorda.

When an aircraft carrier goes into action the first two planes off the deck are fighters to protect the E-2C, the next is the E-2C, and then a "fueler" to keep them up there. Then all other aircraft needed for the operation are launched as needed. Prior to launch all aircraft are loaded with predetermined frequencies for appropriate communications for different tasks while airborne. Since the pilots don't have time to be tuning radios, those frequencies have "Buttons" assigned to them. All planes use "Button One" for primary flight control to take off and land on the ship. The whole operation is under the control of the Tactical Operation Officer (TAO), who has written authority from the Commanding Officer to fire the weapons, including the planes.

When I made chief back in the fall of 86, I was assigned duties as the Communications Maintenance Chief for all of the radios on the ship. About two weeks into the operation, the TAO called me at my desk and said that Button One was down. I immediately ran to Radio Central and grabbed the radioman I most trusted, RM1 Freed, and explained the problem to him. He ran a back-to-back check at that frequency on the radio that the shipboard Air Traffic Controllers used with a spare radio and declared it working.

He suggested that we might be jammed from somewhere. I then called the "Spooks" in SSES, the Ship's Signal Exploitation Spaces, and asked them to do a DF or Direction Find on that frequency. They said they would contact their counterparts on the USS Virginia, because it takes two vectors to DF and the Virginia was operating below the "Line of Death". I then ran to SSES and watched as Spooks communicate with each other and gave me a source of jamming

coming out of Benghazi. I then ran to the Combat Information Center (CIC) where the TAO was located.

The whole thing took 10 minutes at the most and I reported to the TAO what I had found and pointed to the chart where we suspected to be the source of the jamming and recommended that he use Button Two for Primary Flight Control until we recovered all the planes and the communications officer changed all the frequencies. We had been using the same frequency plan for two weeks and the Soviets had obviously figured out the most used was the one to jam. He started cursing me, yelling that I was “a lazy SOB,” and that my radio was broken “fix it.” Damn, he was a commander and I was just a boot chief but I stood my ground, even when he got in my face and kept yelling.

Shortly my division officer, LTCDR Crockett, was standing behind me listening to the argument and finally agreed with me. About that time, the Assistant TAO said, “Sir, the chief is right. We can do what he says.”

Whew, I’m not going to be court marshaled.

TURNING 40

It all started with my brother-in-law, John Minshull, devious soul that he is, sent a package to the commanding officer, replete with black balloons and crepe paper streamers and a banner stating something about being “over the hill.” This was passed down the chain of command to the technicians that worked for me in Communications Repair Division. My guys did John one better and procured an oxygen bottle and mask from sickbay to complete the decoration of my desk that morning. Too funny and what happened next really surprised me.

We were about to make our second port visit to Palma, Mallorca and I was further humbled when the Captain ordered me to fly into Palma with Lt. Anthony Galanides to set-up the “Beach Guard.” Before the ship arrives in a foreign port, hotel rooms have to be procured and communications have to be established and since Lt. Galanides could speak five languages, he was the usual choice. We flew into Palma on the COD (Carrier Onboard Delivery). Trust me, going from 0 to 120mph in 500 feet beats any “E ticket” ride at Disneyland.

Diane had arrived from the States that day and was staying at some unknown hotel with one of the other wives. Since she and I were not expecting me to arrive at “Fleet Landing” until the next day, I spent the rest of my birthday with Lt. Galanides, plying every bar and hotel in downtown Palma looking for her.

We finally connected the next day at the appointed time and place and spent seven wonderful days together touring Mallorca.

We could not find a hotel room in Palma. The concierge at the hotel where Diane had spent the night before helped us find a room at a hotel in Playa de Palma, the German beach just a short taxi ride away. The room would not be ready until later in the day, so we went to a café on the water and had lunch. The menus in Southern Europe are printed in five languages. It was hilarious for me to watch Diane get used to the fact of European women bathing topless.

Given our schedule that day, it was easy for us to adapt to what I call European hours, whereby you awaken around noon, go someplace to enjoy your surroundings for a few hours while they clean your room, come back to the hotel for a few hours' sleep, wake up around 8 pm and have dinner about 10, then find a night spot and party your ass off until dawn. They all do it and it is a fun way to enjoy the warm Mediterranean weather.

Mallorca is a small island and its beaches are divided by the major countries of Europe: German, French, Spanish, Belgian, etc. One day we rented a car and drove around the whole island. From the beaches to the south and east, the mountains to the north, and the cliffs to the west, it is a beautiful place. We ended up at the British beach that evening and had dinner at a restaurant that served the best leg of lamb I have ever eaten. Diane did not believe me when I told her I had not been there since my days on the Perry because as soon as we walked in the place, the proprietor immediately called out my name. The first time I went there four years before, he did the same thing to the shipmate I was with then. The restaurateur had one hell of a memory.

We partied with the Brits that night and said our farewells at fleet landing the next morning. What a great time we had.

ADMIRAL JEREMY MICHAEL BOORDA

Admiral Boorda was a very likable person, noted for hanging out in the Chief's Mess on ships he was aboard, playing pinochle and finding out what was going on at the deck plate level.

While he was in the Mediterranean that year he was the head bubba. As commander of Carrier Task Force 60 (CTF60), he was Commander of Battle Force Sixth Fleet. Part of that turnover required me, as communications maintenance chief, to take possession of a radio that, at that time, I had no idea what its

purpose was except that it was important. I was told to report to the armory, draw a .45 Cal pistol, and report to the USS Belknap, the current flag ship. There was a car and driver, also armed, waiting for me when I got ashore in Cannes. We drove to Nice, France, where the Belknap was ported and signed for the radio.

Another system I was responsible for was the Joint Operational Tactical System (JOTS). The sea story was that it was named after Jerry O. Tuttle's Secretary, apparently, she was HOT, and he was the Admiral that developed the system. I can't go into what it did but, I can tell you it was my job to make sure it was working when Admiral Boorda arrived in his command center on the ship.

Those two systems allowed me to personally interact with Admiral Boorda on occasions that found me liking the man who had risen through the ranks from seaman to admiral. And therein lays the rub.

In 1994, Admiral Boorda became Chief of Naval Operations whose quarters are in the Naval Yard in DC. He was the first CNO that did not graduate from Annapolis, making those who did jealous. His "Littoral Navy" (Brown Water Navy) directives further infuriated the Admiralty, but the final stroke was his siding with President Clinton in his handling of the "Tail Hook Incident," which made his detractors livid. In that, he hung out to dry senior aviation officers, some of whom I had served with and knew to be good leaders.

The issue his detractors concentrated on was the Combat "V" he wore on his Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal and his Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. Those who wear that distinction know what it means. He started his career as a personnel man whose job it is to prepare awards submitted by department heads for approval to the commanding officer. His detractors maintained that, apparently, he submitted a few for himself in the stack he laid on the CO's desk after a significant action during the Vietnam Era. When he left that command, he awarded himself and reported to his new command wearing awards he never earned.

When confronted with his lack of integrity, he walked outside his quarters at the Navy Yard in D.C., put a .38 slug in his heart, and died May 16, 1996.

DON'T LET THE BEAR GET YOU

As a teenager working construction in Florida, the men I worked with had a saying on hot and humid days, "The Bear is slipping around today boys. Don't let him get you." It got my father once when I was a kid and the men brought him to

our house. With my mother on the phone with Dr. Britt, we put him in a tub of ice water to bring down his body temperature before taking him to the hospital.

One August day in 1988 the Bear got me. I was in charge of the overhaul of the mast of the USS Saratoga while we were in Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Virginia. It was one of those sweltering days, 95 degrees with 95 percent humidity. The standard uniform in the yards was boots, long sleeve shirt, hard hat and safety glasses. Because I had to go aloft to check on the installation of a new fire control radar platform, I had to don coveralls over that, strap on a climbing harness with a safety lanyard and a ladder climber safety device, better known as a “nut buster” because of where it hung when not in use.

It attached to a D ring on the belt in the front of the safety harness and had a spring-loaded lever that clicked into the notches formed into a pipe that was mounted in the center of every ladder on every mast in the Navy. That way if you slipped while climbing the ladder you only fell two feet to the last notch you clicked past. The lanyard is attached to a D ring in the back of the safety harness between your shoulder blades and is used to safety off when you get where you are going.

That day, I was going 100 feet above the flight deck to check some detail of the new fire control radar platform, my third trip up. Just before I reached my target level everything went blank. I don't know how long I was out but, when I regained consciousness I was dangling by the nut buster. No one else was on the mast at that time and the closest people were one 100 feet below on the flight deck. I thought of yelling but with all of the noisy machines down there no one would hear me. I was just below a platform and pulled myself up on it to rest for a while and to further assess my predicament. After clipping the lanyard to the hand rail of the platform, I knew that I had to somehow get myself down. My chest felt like it was in a vise and I could hardly breathe. Yelling for help was out of the question and I knew I had better figure this thing out quick before I passed out again.

Since normal power was disconnected from the ship, we had only one space with an auxiliary AC unit on the O3 Level to provide relief from the stifling heat. If I could just make it there I would survive.

Slowly, click by click, I lowered myself down the ladder, clipping and re-clipping the lanyard every two or three rungs in case I passed out again. I finally made it to the AC, stripped off my gear down to my t-shirt, grabbed a Coke out of the refer and tried to cool off. By the time I finished the Coke, I knew I was in deep trouble. The Bear still had my chest and I could not stop sweating. I put my

uniform back on and headed across the pier for sick bay on the troop ship we used as living quarters while in the yard.

Upon my arrival at sick bay, I couldn't speak, so I walked up to the Warrant Officer in Charge, a Physician's Assistant, and just pointed to my chest. He immediately lowered me to the deck and started barking orders to corpsmen. Nitro pill under my tongue, IV in my arm, placed on a table and soon on my way to Portsmouth Naval Hospital in the back of an ambulance. In the emergency room, I tried to explain the "Bear" to the doctors but the head cardiologist insisted that there was something wrong with my heart. After a few days of give and take with this naval captain, I finally consented to the heart catheterization that he insisted on performing before he would certify me fit for duty. Thank God it came back negative, the inner workings of my heart were fine, and he gave me two weeks' convalescent leave before returning to the ship.

Diane's parents, John and Orma Minshull, were fortunately visiting from California at that time and helped us understand what was happening. John had experienced several heart problems himself and I am eternally grateful for their emotional support through the whole ordeal. Besides he agreed with me that it was just the Bear.

Many technological innovations have come from the Department of Defense: the Internet, HD TV, and one in particular, GPS. When I first came back from Vietnam in 1969 my brother Dan explained to me what the Internet was and how he was using it to program satellites for the space program. For security reasons, he did not go into any great detail but, I got the idea. In 1987 while installing the Joint Operational Tactical System in Saratoga, I was exposed to HD TV through that systems display. It had three huge, wide screens, flat mounted HD TVs. As the Saratoga was leaving the yards in 1989, I was the Combat Systems Test Coordinator for all of the "Trons" on the ship, including the first Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver ever installed on a US Navy surface ship. Before GPS, we used Ship's Inertial Navigation System (SINS) and the Coast Guard's Long-Range Navigation (LORAN) system.

Unlike today with 24 satellites and hand-held receivers, in 1989 we were using the initial Block I satellites for the GPS system that was supposed to be 12 satellites, but one was lost at launch from Vandenberg Air Force Base back in 1981. The receiver was about the size of a microwave oven.

The testing of this system ran into difficulties because of only eleven "birds" and we were experiencing a solar maximum that year and has been recorded to occur every 11 years. Solar flares were interfering with all satellite

communications. According to the February 3, 1996 issue of The New Scientist: In 1989, NASA lost track of satellites; the Aurora Borealis was seen at latitudes not seen in 30 years; and the entire power grid for the province of Quebec was knocked out.

As Combat Systems Test Coordinator for the Saratoga, I briefed the Captain daily and attended a weekly meeting with the staff of Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Of the hundreds of tests, we conducted, GPS was the only one we could not complete for the reasons stated above. When I tried to explain this the commander in charge of the weekly meeting he scoffed at me.

FLEET TRAINING CENTER NORFOLK

On August 1, 1989, I reported aboard Fleet Training Center Norfolk, Virginia for instructor duty. After a one-month school on how to be an instructor, I was assigned to the Radar Maintenance School as an instructor for the SPS-49(V) 1. On 1 April 1990, I was “frocked” as a Senior Chief and appointed Director of Radar Maintenance School, responsible for 60 instructors and 120 students.

During my tenure in that position, I qualified as a Master Training Specialist: developing curriculum, performing evaluations on instructors in the other four electronics schools of the division and trying to enhance the careers of the people who worked for me. The things I learned about being a good instructor, I gleaned from evaluating some very talented Sailors. These lessons were: take 10 minutes to get the students to focus on you and then turn that focus to the subject matter, ask thought provoking questions at least every 10 minutes and use humor wherever possible.

As Director of Radar Maintenance School, one afternoon a gentleman stuck his head in my office and asked to speak to me. Although I cannot remember his name, he identified himself as a representative of the State Department. After offering him a cup of coffee, the door was closed and he asked me point blank if I hated the Japanese. Racking my brain trying to get a handle on such a loaded question, I couldn't remember any statement I had made to that affect, so I responded no, and asked him why he would ask such a thing. He told me that because my Uncle Ralph had been killed by the Japanese during WW II, he wanted to know if I harbored any hatred toward them. I complimented him on doing his homework but, no, that was a long time ago and life moves on. He went on to explain the United States was selling five Aegis class destroyers to Japan that

included the MK-XII IFF System (Identification Friend or Foe), the training for which was under my control and that there would soon be two Japanese technicians reporting to me. The State Department did not want an international incident that would jeopardize the sale.

The following Monday I walked into my office to be greeted by two Japanese sailors, a petty officer second class and a female lieutenant who could not be taller than 4'10". Since we were indoors and uncovered, I bowed instead of saluting and her return bow was so low that she won the contest. Fortunately, she could speak English since I did not know a word of Japanese. After summoning the chief in charge of IFF and explaining the situation to him, he left to induct them in to the class starting that day and I was left worrying if this was going to be the end of my career, since the class was four months long and anything could happen.

A few weeks later at the open mess hall for lunch, I saw the lieutenant sitting by herself and asked if I may join her. My hope was to exchange pleasantries about the differences in our cultures, like if she had been to Busch Gardens in Williamsburg and that sort of thing. Instead she almost immediately turned the conversation to WW II and apologized for Pearl Harbor. The alarm went off in my head, "Danger! Danger! Career ender! Danger!" Not knowing what else to say, I responded that I thought Hiroshima and Nagasaki more than made up for Pearl Harbor. She immediately went into a prayerful chant about Hiroshima. I got up and left, fully expecting to pack my bags and head home when the State Department got hold of that conversation. Nothing happened and I even received a note from her after she left my school, thanking me for my hospitality and professional courtesy.

The following is a reprint of the letter my grandparents received from the Secretary of the Navy concerning Uncle Ralph:

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

19 November 1945

Mr. and Mrs. William Daniel DuPont
2812 LaViere Street
Jacksonville, Florida

My dear Mr. and Mrs. DuPont:

Your son, Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Ralph Cornelius DuPont, United States Naval Reserve, who was attached to Fighter Squadron EIGHTEEN, based aboard the USS INTREPID has been carried on the official records of the Navy Department as missing in action since 12 October 1944 when his plane was lost during an aerial engagement with enemy planes over Formosa.

On the evening of 11 October 1944, the ships of Task Force THIRTY-EIGHT of which the USS INTREPID was a member, headed for launching points from which attacks against the enemy were to be made. Flying conditions were generally unfavorable, especially over the target areas. There was wind, cloudiness, and squally weather. Your son's plane took off from the USS INTREPID in a flight of sixteen planes on the first fighter sweep mission over Shinchiku and Matsuyama Airfields, Formosa. Over Shinchiku Airfield heavy anti-aircraft fire was encountered but no enemy aircraft. Near Taien Airfield, several enemy bombers were attacked and destroyed. The formation was counter-attacked by the enemy fighter planes in great numbers. In the ensuing melee, division formations were broken up and all pilots in the flight were fully occupied in combat. Several planes were seen to crash and one or two pilots were seen to bail out, but no pilots returning were able to identify either planes or pilots. Your son did not return.

In view of the fact that the plane your son was piloting was lost during an aerial engagement, because his name does not appear on any captured and translated Japanese interrogation reports, because his name has not appeared on any lists of personnel liberated from Japanese prisoner of war camps, because there has been no official nor unconfirmed reports that he survived, and in view of the length of time that has elapsed since he was reported missing, I am reluctantly forced to conclude that your son is deceased. In compliance with Section 5 of Public Law 490, 77th Congress, as amended, the death of your son is, for the purpose of determination of pay and allowances, settlement of accounts, and payment of death gratuities, presumed to have occurred on 13 October 1945, which is the day following the expiration of twelve months in the missing status.

Sincere sympathy is extended to you in your loss. It is hoped that you may find comfort in the thought that his sacrifice was made in order that the freedom of his country might be preserved.

Sincerely yours,
James Forrestal

THE FIRST GULF WAR

In June 1990, President H. W. Bush ordered a 20 percent per year reduction in force for all military units until further notice. I objected to my superiors with the question “Just because the Cold War may be ending, it does not mean the world is any smaller. How are we going to cover our commitments?” Their answer was the National Guard and the Reserves. Since the Florida National Guard is headquartered in my hometown of St. Augustine, a lot of the men I grew up with made careers in the Guard and I just couldn’t picture them going overseas to fight. They would all have to lose 40 pounds first. Since an order is an order, I got my 10 chiefs together to figure out how we were going to do this. Before we even finalized a plan, Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August and the presidential order was suspended by Executive Order 12727, ordering the Selected Reserve of the Armed Forces to active duty. Operation Desert Shield went into effect that day and 33 nations joined us in kicking Saddam Hussein’s forces out of Kuwait. Thinking of Randy Pierce and all those who lost their lives on the Stark back in 1987, it was pay-back time.

Similar to the hardware at SIMA, during wartime the Navy doubles up on all training to get as many Sailors to their ships as soon as possible. We worked night and day to get them out the door. When the ships were scrambling to get underway, they put out requests for volunteers from shore duty facilities to fill the critical positions that they needed. That resulted in most of my instructors volunteering to go. It was hard to tell them that their job was to get the younger sailors trained. Of course, as soon as I got them back in the classrooms, I went to my superior and volunteered myself and, of course, permission was denied. We did end up sending a few of the instructors from the division to the ships over the next couple of months.

Finally, on January 17, 1991, everything was in place and Operation Desert Storm was launched, initially an air campaign. As with the end of the Cold War, when the Berlin Wall fell, my brothers Dan and Jim and I spend many hours on the phone discussing what was happening. The one burning question in the news media was “Where was the Iraqi Air Force?” No one could answer the question, or at least was willing to discuss it in the open. One morning in January, I awakened from a nightmare with a one word answer: Iran. On my way to work at Norfolk Naval Station, I stopped at a pay phone to call Dan. This was before cell phones. He mumbled his complaint that it was 5 am. I told him my theory and he argued that Iran and Iraq had just finished a 10-year war with each other.

I countered “Yes, but they hate us more than each other.” The only way to confirm it was to point the satellites at Iran, I said. He responded that he did not control the satellites he had programmed. My retort was that he knew who did and that he should convince them to at least look. My nightmare was that the Marines afloat off the coast would be attacked from Iran. Once a Marine!

That evening, when I was home watching TV, Dan excitedly called and told me to switch to CNN. Dan had done what I had suggested and told me it was the key for finding the Iraqi Air Force. There on CNN was Rear Admiral David Frost, then commander of Task Force 60 in the Persian Gulf telling the news media, with his usual aplomb, that any plane launched from Iran would not be a problem. According to U.S. Department of Defense, after 38 Iraqi Migs were shot down, the remaining planes in Iraq were destroyed by coalition forces on the ground. Over 100 Iraqi Air Force planes flew to Iran, catching the coalition by surprise because they expected them to flee west to Jordan.

Operation Desert Saber, the ground war, commenced on February 15, 1991. We worried about our neighbors, the Navy lieutenant nurse across the street and the Marine staff sergeant next door, both deployed there. We tried to console their wives that their husbands would be OK and when they returned in the spring, the neighborhood celebrated.

Years later, I spoke with a retired Army colonel in my neighborhood in St. Augustine and he told me that the ground war was such a complete success that it was cut short because, “American Soldiers were sickened by shooting the Iraqi Forces in the back as they retreated.” Actually, as soon as the Iraqi Forces were driven out of Kuwait, which was the only mandate from the UN, President Bush ordered a halt. The Saudis did not want Saddam overthrown for fear of the instability it would cause in the region.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

In January 1985, Reagan began his second term as President. During his first term, he strove to put the “Evil Empire,” the Soviet Union, on its financial knees primarily by getting Saudi Arabia to flood the market with cheap oil, the main source of income for the Russians.

In March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power knowing that the Soviet Union was in dire straits, especially the military. Deployed overseas later that year, there was much discussion among the crew of Operation Electronics

Division on the Saratoga about these events and it was Ensign Turner who first brought it to my attention that Reagan's plan was to "spend the Russians" into bankruptcy. Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), nicknamed "Star Wars," was an expensive project that would construct a space-based anti-missile system that would make the Soviets ballistic missiles obsolete. They couldn't keep up with us as it was and something like SDI would totally bankrupt them. A graduate of Vanderbilt with a degree in mathematics, Ensign Turner was an engineering duty officer assigned to the SARA to "punch his ticket" to get into the space program. One of the most intelligent men with whom I ever served.

Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva that November to try and stop the madness of the nuclear arms race.

They met again on October 11, 1986, in Reykjavik, Iceland. It has been well documented that this Summit resulted in no treaty because Reagan refused to budge on SDI, which was a deal breaker for Gorbachev. This meeting did further negotiations behind the scene that resulted in the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty being signed by these two world leaders in Washington, D.C. This meant that tactical nukes under the control of field commanders were to be removed and they were, much to our relief. Sleeping with nuclear weapons is not fun.

On June 12, 1987, Reagan stated the following in his celebrated speech at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin:

"We welcome change and openness, for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

On November 9, 1989, the Brandenburg Gate was opened and the people of East and West Germany began tearing down the Berlin Wall.

My brothers Jim and Dan and I spent many hours on the phone comparing notes during this heady time. I truly did not believe that the Cold War was over until I saw a satellite picture with all of the Soviet submarines in one port at one time just after President H.W. Bush and Gorbachev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) on July 31, 1991 in Moscow.

INF and START resulted in the destruction of half the nuclear weapons of both countries. On December 26, 1991, Gorbachev dissolved the Soviet Union into 15 separate states. The Cold War was over.

I guess I just don't know when to quit because on October 30, 1992, I re-enlisted for Navy Senior Enlisted Academy and orders for the USS Flatley.

I liked what I was doing.

USS FLATLEY

The billet I would be filling on the Flatley was 3-M Coordinator, the same billet I wanted back on the Perry in 1981. The billet would finally make me the Site System Supervisor of the SNAPII System. The two-week school was boring after all these years. The Academy was not.

The United States Navy Senior Enlisted Academy used the same instructors as the United States Naval War College in Newport, RI. Talk about intense. Three months of academic research and lectures. We had to write a term paper every week with a college professor grading each. The lectures were eye openers about how the U.S. military fit into the scheme of things and its future. Probably the most accurate predictions were: 1) the Navy would continue play the most important role of all the services because 75% of the earth's population lives within 100 miles of the coastline; and 2) the Special Forces would continue to grow in order to match the ever-increasing threat of terrorism. While the Navy has shrunk in the recent past, it needs to catch up. Terrorism continues to spread our special forces ever thinner but they are still quite effective.

Diane came to our graduation on March 10, 1993, and caused me a major headache. She had been to three of the four corners of the United States and wanted to go to Maine before going home. She had been born in Seattle, lived in San Diego and visited Key West. I had orders to meet the Flatley in Halifax, Nova Scotia, which meant that I had to drive to Florida and then get on an airplane in Jacksonville to get there, at least that's what the ticket said. The headache was labelled the Storm of the Century. I argued that, with the storm predicted to head our way, we needed to head south as fast as possible. My fellow graduates took Diane's side and cajoled me to take her until I relented.

I have to admit the lobster was excellent but the car was buried in snow the next morning. After borrowing a snow shovel from the maintenance man at the resort, we headed south right into the storm. We stopped at Hagerstown, MD,

for the night and were warned by the desk clerk not to go any further. Speeding down Interstate 81 through the Shenandoah Valley we got the same warning everywhere we stopped. After crossing the mountains at Charlotte, NC, it was raining on the front bumper and snowing on the back. Stopping in Savannah for fuel, I had to hold onto the gas pump to keep from being blown across the parking lot. When we pulled into St. Augustine, the trees in our front yard looked like they were about to come out of the ground. We made it.

The next day we drove to Mayport to buy some working uniforms at the Exchange Uniform Shop. While there I ran into a young seaman wearing a Flatley ballcap. Explaining who I was, I asked why he was there and not with the ship. That was when my headache turned into a nightmare.

The Flatley was with a NATO task force in the Gulf of Mexico when the Storm started blowing. They raced south through the Straits of Florida and, once in the Atlantic, proceeded north. The admiral in charge was warned to remain south of the 30th Parallel, which is about Jacksonville. He ignored the warning and got caught in the storm. The German destroyer in the task force lost a five-inch gun off of its focle. The Flatley could not handle 40 foot waves and the CO, Commander Larry J. Watson, radioed he was detaching the ship and pulled into Mayport for emergency repairs.

After talking with the seaman, I grabbed Diane and headed home. I was putting on my Class A uniform when the phone rang. It was Washington, D.C. telling me my orders had been changed. I raced back to Mayport to report aboard one fucked-up ship and I was the maintenance coordinator. We were lucky in the sense that none of the crew was killed or seriously hurt.

Thus began my last tour of duty in the Navy.

The Flatley was a reserve frigate controlled out of Naval Reserve Headquarters New Orleans, Louisiana. Commander Watson and I were the only active duty members of the crew and, as he told me, his orders were to get it ready to deploy, reinforcing what my superiors said back in 1990 at Fleet Training Center.

Starting out in the hole from the damage caused by the storm, we spent the next year performing intensive maintenance to put our ship back together in our homeport of Mobile, Alabama. We then took the ship to the Caribbean for six weeks of drug ops under the Coast Guard flag. The Coast Guard is the only legal entity to stop and board ships during peace time.

When we returned, Congress in its infinite wisdom closed the not yet completed Naval Station Mobile and we changed homeports to Pascagoula, MS.

In a conversation about the “Redneck Riviera” with the CO, I maintained that if a hurricane kicked up in the Gulf our only recourse was to steam up the Mississippi River as far as we could go to get away from it. At Pascagoula, we had a change of command and Commander Michael D. Crocker relieved Commander Watson as CO. (Naval Station Pascagoula was totally destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.)

UN Resolution 841 in 1993 mandated that member nations blockade Haiti until their first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was returned to power. During the month of July 1994, we deployed to take part in Operation Support Democracy, to do just that. While patrolling the coast of Haiti, more than 1,500 Haitian migrants came out to the ship on any vessel they could, no matter how dilapidated. We counted them as they came aboard with numbered wrist bands that had to be cut off to remove. Because of the prevalent diseases in the Haitian population, we had to wear latex gloves, surgical masks, and long sleeve shirts when around them on the main deck.



Senior Chief Fred DuPont off the coast of Haiti 1994

When we had a boat load, two to three hundred, we would pull into Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and turn them over to the U.S. Coast Guard. My job was to keep count of the Haitians. When we arrived in Gitmo, I would meet a Coast Guard lieutenant hand the count list to him and together we would count the

Haitians as they left the ship. One time the count was off by one, the lieutenant demanded to know where the missing Haitian was. It took me a few minutes to remember and called the Chief Master at Arms. He had come to me a few days before and reported one of the Haitians had removed his wrist band and wanted to eat. Our policy was they could not eat without a wrist band so I told the Chief to give him another and that threw the count off. This satisfied the lieutenant. It was Sonar Chief Conklin who then dubbed me "Tallyman." God, I got tired of hearing that song.

We returned to sea to pick up more. The Coast Guard put the Haitians in a compound and told them they could get a free ride back to Port-a-Prince any time they wanted, but they were not going to the United States.

In September, Operation Uphold Democracy went into effect and Aristide was returned to power under threat of a military invasion by the United States. By then we were on our way back to Mississippi with a Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation.

I retired in the next year and returned to St. Augustine in January 1995. I'd had enough.

THE NINETEEN MARINES KILLED IN THE CA LU AMBUSH

PFC Charles S. Sickler, Ewan, NJ, C Co, 3rd Shore Party Bn
LCpl Robert J. Molossi, Daly City, CA, D Co, 9th Eng Bn
2nd Lt Michael T. George, Erie, PA, H&S Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
LCpl Arthur Bustamante, San Fernando, CA, H&S Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
HN Dennis K. Rice, Phoenix, AZ, H&S Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
1st Lt Alfred B. Russ, Peterborough, NH, I Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
Cpl Robert A. Jackson, Providence, RI, I Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
Cpl Lewis J. Parker, Gates, NC, I Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
LCpl Edward Sanchez, Jr., Los Angeles, CA, I Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC Rudolph J. Bielek, North Braddock, PA, I Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC Ernest Howard, Memphis, TN, I co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC Bruce A. Morrison, Proctor, VT, I Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC William O. Saunders, Jr., Tulare, CA, I Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
LCpl Jackie R. McElwee, Sidney, IL, L Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC Mark A. Lamprecht, Douglas, AZ, L Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC Harold L. Schreckengost, Rural Valley, PA, L Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC Gerald A. Hiukka, Albany, OR, M Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
PFC Eugene Law, Linden, NJ, M Co, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines
LCpl David G. Stewart, Memphis, TN, Trans Co, 9th Motor Trans Bn

THE WALL

According to The Vitual Wall website, there are 49 Sailors and Marines from 9th Engineer Battalion listed on the Wall in DC. They are (by date of death):

Robert E. Bryant
Kenneth C. Friddle
Linza Norris
Thomas J. Brooks
Bernard J. O'Donnell
Jeffery T. Dines
John P. Eads
Bobby G. Jackson
Aaron B. Jones, Jr.
Michael J. Kehoe
Leroy Pierson
James R. Moore
Joseph E. Lavigne
Icnacio E. Sablan
James R. Simmons
Robert J. Molossi
Jerry L. Collier
Peter B. Hedlund
Wayne D. Robbins
Howard L. Savare
Carl M. Macabe
William G. Wilkins
Charles L. Yates
Monty D. Prush
William M. Livingston

Terry C. Corson
George A. Yarbrough
Kurt W. Duncan
Arlon G. Schaeffer
Steven L. Leach
Phip Giglio
Willard F. Prochaska
Martin R. Powers
Randy W. Molkentine
Victo A. Burris
Richard L. Nottingham
John T. Boone
Carlyle M. Bowden, III
Michael E. Lex
James L. Wilks
Norman J. Chavarie
Johnnie M. Speight, Jr.
William J. Roberts
Keith D. Mehaffey
Stephen M. Welch
Charles D. Newman
Terry B. Lund
Kenneth H. Kanaman
Alan Ross

There are ten names on the Wall from my hometown, St. Augustine, Florida. They are:

John William Charton
Leo Curtis Chase, Jr.
Jimmie Don Cox
Tom Davis, Jr.
Leon Fairden Huber
Robert Earl Miller
Richard Arnold Osteen, Jr.
Henry Leroy Quigley
Stephen Andrew Shelley
William Arthur Thomas, Jr.

