

Bravo Regulars



B Company 3/22



Vietnam Service

www.bravoregulars.com

December 2018



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President's Message

Art Gormley
President
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Holiday Greetings to my Bravo Brothers,

I hope everyone of you felt a great sense of pride in commemorating Veterans Day this year and every year. When the call came, you answered it. Many did not. For me, 2018 marked 50 years since my return to civilization...such as it was in 1968. For those of us who remain, these 50 plus years have been a gift from God that too many of our brothers did not live to enjoy. I trust they were in your thoughts and prayers this year and every year.

Thanksgiving marked the beginning of the 2018 Holiday Season, and I hope you and your families have a chance to celebrate this joyous season together. Christmas is a time of giving and for sharing that spirit with family, friends and others less fortunate than ourselves. Whether you do that through your church, a favorite charity, as a volunteer or in reaching out directly to someone in need, that is the spirit that puts the joy in Christmas.

Our congratulations to Bravo Regular Bob Best (68/69) of Goldsboro, NC, who has been named Host for our 2020 reunion. We received verbal expressions of interest from several Bravo members, but Bob's was the only actual proposal received by the November 30 deadline set by the Board. Please join us in wishing him all the best in making our 2020 reunion a memorable time for all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'AG' with a flourish.





Association Business

John Otte
Treasurer/Locater
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Financial Report		
Income and Expense		
Sept. 1, 2018 Balance		\$16,486.09
<u>Income</u>		
Dues	\$ 105.00	
Total Income		\$ 105.00
<u>Expenses</u>		
Newsletter	\$498.80	
Website Hosting Fee	59.85	
Website Update	35.00	
Bank Service Charge	20.00	
Total Expenses		\$ 613.65
Nov. 30, 2018 Balance		\$15,977.44

John



Merry Christmas!



Editor's Notes

David W. Lowell
Editor
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Welcome back Bravo Brothers! Hope this issue finds all of you well. Dee and I wish all of you a happy holiday season and a healthy New Year.

Bill Brown, former Mess Sergeant to the 'Originals' has informed me that he and his church are making a quilt memorializing the LZ Gold/Suoi Tre battles, to be raffled off at our next reunion. Thank you, Bill, for your thoughts and efforts on behalf of our fallen.

Preliminary plans for Reunion 2020 were finalized just as we were going to print! Bob Best (2nd and 1st Platoon—3-68/69) will be hosting in his hometown of Goldsboro, North Carolina, located 65 miles southeast of Raleigh. Early June 2020 is the timeframe being considered. Bob will be reporting his progress in future columns in our newsletter.

We have received two separate requests for information on the location of grave sites at the battles of Suoi Tre and Crook. Details are on the Bulletin Board. Please help if you can.

We have received word from Jim and Pam Adams that Jack Wood (Bn. Sgt. Major—Original) is in declining health. Their emails are on the Bulletin Board.

Blair Moran (Co RTO –69/70) has notified us of a replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall being erected in Perryville, Missouri. Information is on the Bulletin Board.

Sadly, I must inform you of the passing of two of our members: Tom Ragazine (2nd Platoon—69/70) and Louis Biengiel (10-67/68). Information on them is on our Bulletin Board.

Keith Ogata (8/67-1/68) has been moved to Inactive status at his request.

Thanks to Cliff Weese (3rd Platoon—3-67/68) for a poignant story about those involved in the flag raising at Iwo Jima. The story can be found on our Bulletin Board.

Thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. Our next issue will be out in March and we will be accepting input through the end of February. Until then, may peace be with you.

Dave out



BULLETIN BOARD**Submitted by Michael Doolittle, Chairman, Hawai'i County Veterans Advisory Committee; Vice Chairman, Hawai'i Island Veterans Memorial Inc.**

Dear Friends and Fellow Survivors of the Battle of Suoi Tre. 51 years and six months ago we landed at LZ Gold, a day so long ago it seems like yesterday. I am writing to you now to ask for your help. I am asking you to try to remember that day again...this time to help heal a very long wound that is unseen yet felt very deep, at times so deep it's hard to want to remember. Let me tell you what has been the hardest thing for me to live with these past 618 months. I remember that day in small snapshots like photos, some hard to put into the puzzle of events, like someone put a piece from another puzzle into the mix. The image of the huge hole that was dug by the M-88 Tank Retriever, filled with the broken remains of hundreds of soldiers lost to the world in a day of chaos, a huge hole in Humanity, an image burned into my memory that can never be removed or deleted from my mind. I do not recall anyone saying a prayer over that hole, for the grace of God go I. It's not the kind of memory that is the makings of a nightmare, but one that has numbed by soul, and taken from me the ability to feel real deep down happiness and joy. In March 2019, a group of veterans are going on a journey to the battle site near Suoi Tre, Vietnam in hopes of identifying this grave. We are being joined by many of the family members of those missing and suspected of being buried in that grave. The trip is sanctioned by the Vietnamese Government and a dedicated group of citizens who want to bring closure to the many thousands of the missing, peace to their families and healing for all. What I am asking of each of you is for your memory of that day, your position on or in the perimeter of FSB Gold, and your memory of the grave location relative to your position. I know that day was beyond anything that I could ever imagine being a part of, it's hard to want to remember, but impossible to forget. I am anxious about this trip, but I know for me to ever find peace in my life, I must help locate this grave for their peace and to give those lost souls the respect that their nation and families deserve. We accept nothing less for our lost, it is the RIGHT THING to do. Thank you all. Michael Doolittle, Mystic Palms Plantation, P.O. Box 342, Hakalau, Hawaii 96710—(206) 719-8916—migueldd45@gmail.com.

Submitted by Richard W. Magner, Tiger38, D/229th (Smiling Tigers), 1st Cav, 68/69

Gentlemen, I am searching for veterans of the 5/6 June, 1969 Battle of FSB Crook in an effort to locate a possible mass grave resulting from the battle. I am working with a group of American Vietnam Veterans and some Vietnamese in an effort to find mass graves near various battle sites from the war. This is purely a humanitarian effort to find closure and solace for the families and loved ones of these Vietnamese MIAs. A veteran of the war myself, I am focusing on western III Corps, the area I am most familiar with having flown there. We have already made progress with grave sites at Bien Hoa Air Base, FSB Mahone II, Dau Tieng, LZ Burt and LZ Gold. Here is a link to a BBC interview of my friend, Bob Connor, who is also involved in the project—<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswlmO>. Any information you may provide on the FSB Crook battle or others and help us find veterans of Crook would be greatly appreciated. Richard Magner—rwmagner@gmail.com.

BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by Jim and Pam Adams (2nd Platoon, 9-66/67 Original)

Sent November 18, 2018—I would like to pass along information that we received from Hazel Wood, Jack's wife. Following a biopsy, Jack's melanoma has returned and has metastasized, but she did not explain. He is able to do daily care, but they have called in Hospice for comfort care. He is not in pain but is weak and doesn't eat a lot.

Sent November 30, 2018—Jim went to see Jack over Thanksgiving. He is frail and feels that he will not be here by Christmas. He gets around with the help of a walker, but does not have much appetite. If anyone wishes to send him a card, his address is Jack L. Wood, 11185 Old Highway 190, Chillicothe, MO 64601-7300.

Submitted by Blair Moran (Co RTO (69/70))

Please profile this multi-million dollar project at Perryville, MO. This Wall is the exact same size as the Wall in D.C. I thought you might like this story from KFVS. <http://www.kfvs12.com/2018/09/01/warriors-wall-event-moves-many-honoring-veterans-perryville-wall/>.

Submitted by Editor—Obituaries

Thomas “Rags” Dominic Ragazine (2nd Platoon—69/70) passed away February 22, 2014, at Cleveland University Hospital after a 10 year battle with cancer. He was born Jan. 17, 1950, in Youngstown. Tom was a veteran of the Vietnam War, where he received a Purple Heart and numerous other awards. He graduated from Girard High School in 1968 and retired from General Motors. Tom was a very caring and compassionate person, always putting the needs of others before his own. He was a very descriptive and great story teller, who was able to befriend everyone he met. Tom enjoyed the beauties of nature and had a true appreciation of the outdoors. He was an avid hunter and fisherman, taking many trips out West including elk hunts in Colorado with his closest family and friends. Tom also took great pleasure in riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle, going to bike nights, gambling and playing cards. It was the simple things around him in life that he never took for granted, commenting daily how fortunate and thankful he was. Tom's source of pride was his family. Above all, he was absolutely devoted to his three children. Most recently, he proudly welcomed his first grandson which was one of the greatest joys of his life. He is survived by his fiancée, Kyla Moore.

Louis Biengiel (10-67/68) - We were notified by his family that he passed away nine years ago. No further information was found.



BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by Cliff Weese (3rd Platoon—3-67/68) - Six Boys and 13 Hands

Each year I am hired to go to Washington, DC, with the eighth grade class from Clinton, WI where I grew up, to videotape their trip. I greatly enjoy visiting our nation's capitol, and each year I take some special memories back with me. This fall's trip was especially memorable.

On the last night of our trip, we stopped at the Iwo Jima memorial. This memorial is the largest bronze statue in the world and depicts one of the most famous photographs in history — that of the six brave soldiers raising the American Flag at the top of a rocky hill on the island of Iwo Jima, Japan, during WW II.

Over one hundred students and chaperones piled off the buses and headed towards the memorial. I noticed a solitary figure at the base of the statue, and as I got closer he asked, 'Where are you guys from?'

I told him that we were from Wisconsin. 'Hey, I'm a cheese head, too! Come gather around, cheese heads, and I will tell you a story.'

It was James Bradley who just happened to be in Washington, DC, to speak at the memorial the following day. He was there that night to say good night to his dad, who had passed away. He was just about to leave when he saw the buses pull up. I videotaped him as he spoke to us, and received his permission to share what he said from my videotape. It is one thing to tour the incredible monuments filled with history in Washington, DC, but it is quite another to get the kind of insight we received that night.

When all had gathered around, he reverently began to speak. Here are his words that night. 'My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin. My dad is on that statue, and I wrote a book called 'Flags of Our Fathers'. It is the story of the six boys you see behind me.

'Six boys raised the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is Harlon Block. Harlon was an all-state football player. He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game. A game called 'War'. But it didn't turn out to be a game. Harlon, at the age of 21, died with his intestines in his hands. I don't say that to gross you out. I say that because there are people who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were 17, 18, and 19 years old—and it was so hard that the ones who did make it home never even would talk to their families about it.

(He pointed to the statue.) 'You see this next guy? That's Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph...a photograph of his girlfriend Rene put there for protection because he was scared. He was 18 years old. It was just boys who won the battle of Iwo Jima. Boys. Not old men.

'The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was Sergeant Mike Strank. Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the 'old man' because he was so old. He was already 24. When Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn't say, 'Let's go kill some Japanese' or 'Let's die for our country'. He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, 'You do what I say, and I'll get you home to your mothers'.

The last guy on this side of the statue is Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona. Ira Hayes was one of them who lived to walk off Iwo Jima. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, 'You're a hero.' He told reporters, 'How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only 27 of us walked off alive?'

BULLETIN BOARD

Six Boys and 13 Hands (cont'd)

So you take your class at school, 250 of you spending a year together having fun, doing everything together. Then all 250 of you hit the beach, but only 27 of your classmates walk off alive. That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes carried the pain home with him and eventually died dead drunk, face down, drowned in a very shallow puddle, at the age of 32.

'The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky. A fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. His best friend, who is now 70, told me, 'Yeah, you know, we took two cows up on the porch of the Hilltop General Store. Then we strung wire across the stairs so the cows couldn't get down. Then we fed them Epsom salts. Those cows crapped all night.' Yes, he was a fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of 19. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store.

A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother's farm. The neighbors could hear her scream all night and into the morning. Those neighbors lived a quarter of a mile away.

'The next guy, as we continue to go around the statue, is my dad, John Bradley, from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews. When Walter Cronkite's producers or the New York Times would call, we were trained as little kids to say 'No, I'm sorry, sir, my dad's not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don't know when he is coming back.' My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually, he was sitting right at the table eating his Campbell's soup. But we had to tell the press that he was out fishing. He didn't want to talk to the press.

'You see, like Ira Hayes, my dad didn't see himself as a hero. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes, 'cause they are in a photo and on a monument. My dad knew better. He was a medic. John Bradley from Wisconsin was a combat caregiver. On Iwo Jima he probably held over 200 boys as they died. As boys died on Iwo Jima, they withered and screamed, without any medication or help with the pain.

'When I was a little boy, my third grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, 'I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys who did not come back. DID NOT come back.'

'So that's the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima, and three came back as national heroes. Overall, 7,000 boys died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps. My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time.'

Suddenly, the monument wasn't just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero. Maybe not a hero for the reasons most people would believe, but a hero nonetheless.

One thing I learned while on tour with my 8th grade students in DC that is not mentioned here is...that if you look at the statue very closely and count the number of 'hands' raising the flag, there are 13. When the man who made the statue was asked why there were 13, he said the 13th hand was the hand of God.

