

Bravo Regulars



B Company 3/22



Vietnam Service

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March 2019



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President's Message

Art Gormley
President
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Greetings Bravo Brothers,

To our Brothers in the mid-west who experienced the sub-zero temps of the polar vortex, take heart, spring should be only days away as you read this. Through late February, we have had nothing in the way of measurable snow here in New York City. We are hoping our luck holds out for a few more weeks. Fresh fallen snow is always beautiful, even in the city. It's the shoveling, the slush and the many days of slippery streets that's treacherous.

I gather from Dave Lowell that our email distribution list continues to grow slowly. That's great, but he is still mailing a lot of newsletters. If you haven't done so already, please add your name and email address to our electronic distribution. The Bravo treasury remains in good shape under John Otte's watchful eye, but because of the dues holiday declared at our reunion in Branson, the cash flow is only flowing in one direction. Newsletter mailings are by far our biggest quarterly expense. Not everyone has, or wants, an email address, but if you do have one, please send it to Dave and request email distribution.

In February, Ted Silbereis reached out to us with the sad news that we had lost two Bravo Brothers earlier that month, Dick Blanchard and Larry Young. Those of you who had a valid email address on file with us received this news within days. Both Dick and Larry were Bravo originals. I can remember seeing Larry at our reunion last June in Branson. May they rest in peace. You will find additional information about their lives on the Bulletin Board.

Ted was unable to reach me with the news by phone, and I want to thank his lovely wife, Judi, for letting me know by email that the phone number they had for me was not working. It was a 15-year-old number. I sent Dave Lowell the updated information. It's funny how certain numbers stick in your mind. Like me, I'll bet many of you can still recite the "US" or "RA" serial number the U.S. Army awarded you when you were drafted or enlisted. Please remember to let us know whenever your mailing address, phone or email information changes.

Wishing all of you and your families the joys of spring's renewal.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Art Gormley', written in a cursive style.



Association Business

John Otte
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Financial Report Income and Expense		
Nov. 30, 2018 Balance		\$15,977.44
<u>Income</u>		
Dues	\$105.00	
Total Income	\$105.00	\$16,082.44
<u>Expenses</u>		
Bank Fees	\$ 15.00	
Newsletter	205.05	
Ink & Stamps	272.27	
Envelopes & Labels	42.53	
Website Charge	59.85	
Website Update	70.00	
Total Expenses	\$664.70	
February 28, 2019 Balance		\$15,417.74

John



Editor's Notes

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Editor
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Welcome back Bravo Brothers! I sincerely hope this finds all of you well. As I write this column on May 4th, it is 73° and sunny in southern Arizona while the Midwest and Eastern parts of our country are having one big storm. I wish I could share our warm air and sunshine in exchange for some of the water causing you guys problems, but I can't.

With sadness I must report that three of our Brothers have passed on. They are Bill Meachum, Dick Blanchard and Larry Young. Available information is on our Bulletin Board. Bravo sympathy cards were sent. We received a response from Dee Blanchard, which is also on the Bulletin Board.

Larry Young and I served together as originals in Second Platoon. We were on an M-60 crew together for a while and I carried him off of LZ Gold when he was wounded. You can't get much closer than that. He will be missed. Lisa has accepted our offer of honorary membership, so will be remaining with us.

Timely notification of their passing was sent via email to all members for whom we have a valid email address. If you did not receive a notice and/or would like to receive future ones, please provide us with your valid email address.

Thank you, John Kapor (3rd Platoon—Basic Only) for submitting "A Veteran's Poem". I published this once before, but it's worth repeating. It can be found on our Bulletin Board.

Thank you, Art Gormley (3rd Platoon Leader—C.O.—67/68) for submitting a newspaper article about Microsoft and its development of military hardware. Check it out on our Bulletin Board

Since we have room this issue, I'm including two more sections from the book *Whitewash/Blackwash—Myths of the Viet Nam War* by Bill Laurie and R. J. Del Vecchio. They can be found on our Bulletin Board.

Robert Benson (3rd Platoon—4-69/70) has been moved to our Inactive List, due to his address no longer being current.

Our next issue will be out in June and we will be accepting submissions through the end of May. Until then, may peace be with you.

Dave out

BULLETIN BOARD**Submitted by Editor—Obituaries**

Bill Meachum, 68 (1970) - We received word from Bill's mother that he passed away from cancer on October 31, 2018. No further information is available.

Richard Blanchard, 72 (1st Platoon—9-66/67 Original)

Richard was born August 1, 1946 in New Iberia to the late Loveless Blanchard and the late Lucilia LeBlanc Blanchard, and passed away peacefully Thursday, February 7, 2019 at Ochsner Foundation Hospital surrounded by his loving family. Mr. Blanchard worked in the automobile parts business with Acadian Pontiac, JP Thibodeaux and retired from Musson-Patout Automotive Group after a career that spanned over three decades. Outside of his work, Richard relaxed by going fishing or doing woodwork. He will be missed dearly by all who knew and loved him. Left to cherish his memory is his wife of 50 years, Sylvia Talley Blanchard.



We received a thank you card from Dee Blanchard which reads: Thank you for the beautiful card. Richard loved all you guys! God Bless. Dee & Eric Blanchard.

Larry Young, 72 (2nd Platoon—9-66/67 Original)

Larry passed away on February 14, 2019 at the Mission Regional Community Hospital in Mission, TX. Larry was born on April 21, 1946 in Mexico, MO, the son of Ray and Georgia Frank Young. He married Sharon Howter in May of 1967 and she preceded him in death in April of 1999. He later married Lisa in 2000 who survives him. Larry and Lisa were snowbirds and enjoyed several winters in Mission, Texas where they made many friends. He served in the United States Army during the Vietnam War where he received the Purple Heart for injuries received in battle. After leaving the U.S. Military, he was a union meat cutter for Schnucks for 25 years. During his later years Larry attended many of his Bravo Company reunions all over the United States. It brought him great joy to re-connect with his fellow comrades. Larry has been accepted for burial at Arlington but a date has not been set.



BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by John Kapor (3rd Platoon—Basic Only) - A Veteran's Poem

He was getting old and paunchy and his hair was falling fast,
And he sat around the Legion, telling stories of the past,
Of a war that he once fought in, and the deeds that he had done,
In his exploits with his buddies; they were heroes, every one.

And 'tho sometimes to his neighbors his tales became a joke,
All his buddies listened quietly for they knew where of he spoke.
But we'll hear his tales no longer, for ol' Joe has passed away,
And the world's a little poorer for a Veteran died today.

He won't be mourned by many, just his children and his wife.
For he lived an ordinary, very quiet sort of life.
He held a job and raised a family, going quietly on his way;
And the world won't note his passing, 'tho a Veteran died today.

When politicians leave this earth, their bodies lie in state,
While thousands note their passing, and proclaim that they were great.
Papers tell of their life stories, from the time that they were young,
But the passing of a Veteran goes unnoticed, and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution to the welfare of our land,
Some jerk who breaks his promise and cons his fellow man?
Or the ordinary fellow, who in times of war and strife,
Goes off to serve his country and offers up his life.

The politician's stipend and the style in which he lives,
Are often disproportionate, to the service that he gives.
While the ordinary Veteran, who offered up his all,
Is paid off with a medal and perhaps a pension, small.

It is not the politicians with their compromise and ploys,
Who won for us the freedom that our country now enjoys.
Should you find yourself in danger, with your enemies at hand,
Would you really want some cop-out, with his every-waffling stand?

Or would you want a Veteran, his home, his country, his king,
Just a common Veteran, who would fight until the end?
He was just a common Veteran and his ranks are growing thin,
But his presence should remind us, we may need his likes again.

For when countries are in conflict, we find the Veteran's part
Is to clean up all the troubles that the politicians start.
If we cannot do him honor while he's here to hear the praise,
Then at least let's give him homage at the ending of his days.

Perhaps just a simple headline in the paper that might say:
"OUR COUNTRY IS IN MOURNING, A VETERAN DIED TODAY."

BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by Art Gormley (3rd Platoon Leader-C.O.—67/68) - Reprint of an article from The Wall Street Journal—written by Robert H. Scales—The Geeks vs. the Infantrymen

Microsoft employees last week sent an open letter to CEO Satya Nadella and President Brad Smith demanding that they immediately cancel a Defense Department contract for the Integrated Visual Augmentation System, on grounds that IVAS is “designed to help people kill.”

Damn right it is. Microsoft’s employees should take pride that they have been entrusted with the privilege of providing a game-changing technology that will allow American soldiers and Marines, not the enemy, to do the killing.

In wars over the past 70 years, 90% of all uniformed military personnel killed by enemy fire were infantrymen, a cohort of some 50,000 who comprise less than 4% of all who wear the uniform. Outside the infantry, men and women in uniform stand a greater chance of dying from accidents than they do from enemy action.

One reason for this asymmetry of sacrifice is that for decades the U.S. has underfunded its close-combat branches. Jim Mattis, a combat-tested Marine infantryman, was the first defense secretary to attempt to overcome this record of neglect. Shortly after taking office, he inaugurated his Close Combat Lethality Task Force and appointed me a special adviser.

Before the task force began its work, infantrymen received less than 1% of the defense budget for training and equipment. The task force looked at many technologies that promised to make America’s infantry dominant in battle and help prevent combat deaths. So far we’ve found only one technology that promises to be a game changer: IVAS. The innocuous device looks like a pair of sunglasses.

The 1986 movie “Top Gun” depicts the Navy’s Fighter Weapons School, which teaches pilots how to outfly the enemy by subjecting them to several bloodless air-to-air battles before facing a real enemy. Mr. Mattis challenged the task force to build a Soldier’s Top Gun. We sought a means for every infantryman to “fight 25 battles before the first battle begins.” IVAS will expose infantrymen to close combat virtually using its augmented-reality function.

To understand how IVAS will help infantrymen in combat, recall the October 2017 tragedy at Tongo Tongo, Niger, where four special-forces soldiers were killed in a three-hour firefight against an overwhelming force of heavily armed militants. Had these soldiers been equipped with IVAS, the fight might have turned out differently. The device will have several tiny, build-in sensors that give the wearer an ability to detect an enemy ambush. Its heads-up display will mark the soldier’s surroundings and inform him of potential enemy positions. Later versions of IVAS will connect to a soldier’s weapon, allowing him to see and engage a hidden enemy virtually using a Bluetooth link connecting the device to a weapon’s integrated sight.

As I read the Microsoft letter, I juxtaposed the mental image of those four brave soldiers with that of the letter’s geeky authors. “We believe that Microsoft must stop in its activities to empower the U.S. Army’s ability to cause harm and violence,” they complain. IVAS, they write, “works by turning warfare into a simulated ‘video game,’ further distancing soldiers from the grim stakes of war and the reality of bloodshed.”

In reality, the infantryman knows well “the grim stakes of war and the reality of bloodshed.” They call it “intimate killing.” Soldiers may not feel comfortable in the quietude of the Microsoft campus. But those men died in Tongo Tongo defending Microsoft employees’ right to enjoy their lattes.

I hope that enough of their colleagues appreciate how vital is the task to put in the hands of our intimate killers a device that will keep them alive in tomorrow’s close fight.

Mr. Scales, a retired U.S. Army major general, is a special adviser to the Close Combat Lethality Task Force.

BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by Editor—Excerpts from Whitewash/Blackwash—Myths of the Viet Nam War by Bill Laurie and R. J. Del Vecchio

Myth #2—Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist and a benevolent leader of his people. There has been a great deal of publicity about the central figure of North Viet Nam (NVA), known best by the name Ho Chi Minh. (This was not his birth name, in fact he used several names at various times in his life, but settled on Ho Chi Minh ‘he who enlightens’ as an effective enhancement of his public image.) He is usually depicted as a kindly old man, but with a lifelong history as a nationalist struggling to free his homeland from the French. However, in fact he left Viet Nam in 1912 to live in France, where he became a founding member of the French Communist Party. Later he lived in Russia, where he attended the Lenin Institute to be trained as a professional revolutionary. “Uncle Ho” only returned to Viet Nam in 1941 for a brief visit, did not actually take up residence there again until 1944. The record of his activities shows him to have been a devoted communist first and a nationalist second. And like the Bolsheviks who took over the Russian Revolution from all the other political groups fighting the czars, the Vietnamese communists, under Ho’s leadership, carefully eliminated all the purely nationalist groups who had fought the French. A variety of means, including betraying them to the French, direct violent action, and “disappearing” individuals and groups, were used by the communists over the years. (Ho was no stranger to such tactics, having betrayed a famous nationalist leader ‘Phan Boi Chau’ to the French many years before.) After the division of the country in 1954 and full takeover of the North by the communists, the imposition of a communist system there was marked by brutality and injustice, and sparked various levels of resistance. An estimated 60,000 people were killed in the so-called “land reform” between 1954 and 1956. In Ho’s home province of Nghe An, a farmer’s rebellion broke out in September 1956. He dispatched a full army division to suppress it, and up to 6,000 people were killed or deported as a result. Years earlier Ho had made a brief and pointed comment on how he regarded all forms of dissent—“All those who do not follow the line that I have set out will be smashed.” Despite all the heavy propaganda depicting Ho Chi Minh as a kindly, long-suffering, and heroic patriot, this image is also a myth. He was a clever, unprincipled, dedicated communist first and foremost, given to the brutal practices he had studied at the Lenin Institute. (Ho considered Lenin a superhero and hoped to meet him in the afterlife.)

Myth #3—The South Vietnamese government denied the people a free election on unification. Another commonly held position is that the communists in the South had every right to continue the guerrilla warfare there (and the North had every right to support them with men and material), since the government of South Viet Nam (SVN) refused to hold free elections called for by the Geneva Accords; which were the diplomatic tool by which the French left the country and the opposing Vietnamese factions were to settle things. In reality, neither the US nor the Diem government of SVN had signed the Accords, which were actually drawn up between the French and the Viet Minh. In addition, only the Final Declaration drafted in Geneva called for elections, and no one signed that document. Thus, it is entirely a myth that the South Vietnamese had any obligation to set up or take part in elections connected to political parties in the North. (Of which there was effectively only one, the Communist Party; the numerous other nationalist groups who’d fought the French had been decimated by then.) It is worth noting that the Accords were in fact violated by one of the signing parties, the government of Ho Chi Minh. On the one hand, they did not allow free flow of people wishing to leave the North (about 900,000 people did manage to flee to the South ‘often with major hardships and difficulties’, at least 300,000 more were prevented from leaving), and on the other hand did not require all the remaining Viet Minh agents to leave the South. Both of these had been principal elements in the Articles of the Accords.