

Bravo Regulars



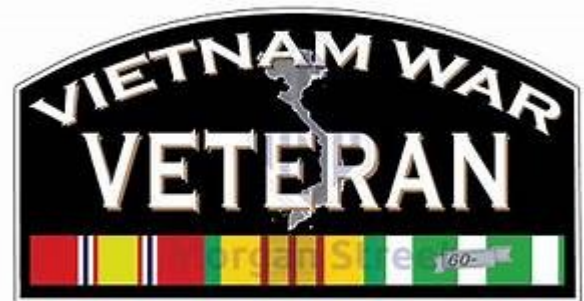
B Company 3/22



Vietnam Service

www.bravoregulars.com

March, 2025



U.S. ARMY

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President's Message

Mike Detmer
President
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Hello everyone,

Well, another winter is almost past, and it's been a doozy here in southern Illinois. The good news is that Spring is right around the corner, and I can't wait. The smell of fresh cut grass, over, and over and over again is waiting for me! I have to be careful what I wish for!

There has been a lot going on in our family since the beginning of 2025. I lost a very dear brother-in-law. Margie's brother, Jim, passed away on February 13, after a brave battle with leukemia, complicated by pneumonia. He lived in northern Indiana, and leaves behind his wife, four sons and ten grandchildren.

He was a successful farm machinery dealer, plus a solar dealer. He was an inventor, earning twenty-two patents, but above all, a family-first type of guy, and loved playing with his grandkids, and teaching them about anything they wanted to learn. We will miss him dearly.

On a happier note, two new great-granddaughters were born to us this year...Elliza in January and Adeline in February. They join our two other great-granddaughters, Charlotte and Haven. Marge and I are blessed.

The Bravo Board of Directors have recently been in conversation regarding the next reunion. It was determined that, for the sake of finances of the organization, we would not plan for a reunion this year, but will plan for the next reunion to be held in 2026, honoring the 60th anniversary of Bravo Company going to Vietnam. The reunion location and other details will be forthcoming. We are encouraging all Bravo Brothers to attend this reunion.

Just a little reminder about receiving your Bravo newsletter by email. Provide an email address to Editor, Dave Lowell, to save on the high cost of mailing and printing. His email address is davidwlowell@aol.com.

Treasure the most important things in your life...your family and your friends!

Mike



Vice President's Message

Kenneth Neveaux
Vice President
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Hello Everyone,

I hope everyone had a happy Valentines Day! It's already March. Boy this year is flying by. Winter is almost over. Speaking of winter, we had some weather here that's not normal for this area in Louisiana. There was 10 inches of snow here with low temperatures getting to 5 degrees. The last time that temperatures were that low here was over 100 years ago. We're not accustomed to that type of weather; it shut everything down for a few days. Again, I would like to say if you haven't attended a Bravo Reunion, please consider coming to the next one.

Later. Your V.P.

Ken



Association Business

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Financial Report Income and Expenses

December 1, 2024 Balance \$ 4,394.49

Income

Dues \$ 185.00

Total Income 185.00

Expenses

Bank Service Charge \$ 23.12

Newsletter 396.12

Website Update 65.00

Reunion Rosters 48.59

Total Expenses 532.83

February 28, 2025 Balance \$ 4,046.66

Matt



Editor's Notes

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Welcome back Bravo Brothers! I hope this finds all of you well.

We have received several inquiries about the schedule for our next dues drive. It is planned for our September issue. At our reunion in Branson in 2018, it was decided the association was holding too much money in our business account at about \$16,000 and it should be reduced. We are now down to \$4,000. The suggested dues will be \$35.00 and are voluntary. Members may also donate at any time.

The Suoi Tre group has made plans for their March Memorial Service. Details are on the Bulletin Board.

Bill Ervin (3rd Platoon Leader—7/68-12/68) has shared with us more recollections of operations in the vicinity of FSB Crook. It is on the Bulletin Board.

Blair Moran (Co RTO—1-69/70) has shared with us a poem titled "The Badge of Glory" regarding the CIB. It is on the Bulletin Board.

We have received information that Michigan authorities are dedicating a memorial bridge in honor of Spec. 4 Herman Anders, Jr. He served with 1st Platoon and was KIA at Suoi Tre. They would like contact from anyone who served with and remember him. Mentioned was paying expenses for someone to attend. If you qualify, please contact Paul Roe at 607-349-8700.

In our December 2024 issue, we reported on the passing of Chester Gorski. We mistakenly reported on the passing of his son in October, thanks to M C Toyer for the catch. We now have correct information on Chester on the Bulletin Board. With sadness I must also report that four more Brothers have passed. They are Thomas Rati-gan, Gery Schirado, Mark Westrich and Jerry Takacs. All information is on the Bulletin Board.

Donald Freeman has been moved to Inactive at his request.

Thanks to all who contributed to this issue. 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 Bill King (C/2/22 1967) and Paige Lanier (LNO 2-77th FA)**

Bill, I am sending this letter for you to add anything you might like to it. Please forward to all you have on the roster. I have visited with the BN CO 1-12 Inf. LTC Travis Stellfax and his CSM Philip Pruchinski and CO 2-77FA LTC Erik Jorgerski and his CSM Robert McGinnis. We will be celebrating the Memorial Service of The Battle of Soui Tre on March 21, 2025. It will take place in the 2nd BDE HQ in the regimental room as we have done for the past several years. I have discussed this with Michele Lessor at The Radisson Hotel. She will give us a favorable rate. Bill and I have decided it is too much of a job for us to make plans for a full blown service as we have done in the past. We will entertain receiving any who would like to come and be with us and the active duty troops who will be having a ceremony.

As Paige said, this is a ceremony Ft. Carson puts on with us like we have most every year, not a large reunion with activities. If you can tie a visit with other plans you might have, that would be great! With sad heart, the Julian family has informed us that Jean Julian, wife of our Battalion Commander at Soui Tre, Ralph Julian, passed away December 10, 2024. We're so glad she and her sons were able to attend and speak their hearts to us at our 55th reunion. We have invited her sons and their wives to join us, sounds somewhat promising. We told the hotel our tentative dates were March 10th through 23rd. Contact Page or I by email, text or phone for further questions. Bill King - 719-494-3590 (cell) or 719-748-8219 (home) - billkingsouitre@aol.com ... Paige Lanier—719-330-6638.

To clarify, for special rates at Radisson Hotel, if you come to town for the March 21, 2025 Ft. Carson Battle of Soui Tre ceremony, call 719-638-3344. Again, this is not a full blown reunion, just the yearly ceremony Ft. Carson puts on to honor us and our fallen Brothers and to keep their men informed of their unit's history. Hope all is well for you and your families.

Submitted by Bill Ervin (3rd Platoon Leader—7/68-12/68)

Thank you for the newsletter. I was saddened to hear of the death of David Judkins. He was one of my squad leaders in the 3rd Platoon of Bravo Company. He was a good man. Also thank you for including his picture. He looks just like I remembered him. I recall having a long conversation with him on the top of Nui Ba Den in November 1968.

I tried to retrieve the Fire Support Base Crook document you mentioned in the newsletter but my poor skill set in social media and electronic communication capabilities prevented me from retrieving the document. I would like to read the document if someone can send it to me.

I was a young first lieutenant and commander of Alpha Company when we secured the terrain and built FSB Crook in April 1969 with engineers and artillery folks. Alpha Company occupied to newly constructed FSB Crook in April-May 1969 along with the highly skilled artillery battery personnel from the 7th Bn 11th FA. During that time, we scouted the surrounding terrain on daily operations.

BULLETIN BOARD

Continuation of Bill Ervin Story

Several miles north of FSB Crook, we scouted the trail the main force of the enemy later used to approach and attack FSB Crook in early June 1969. The trail was 3-4 feet wide with no enemy activity and was covered with leaves.

Fast forward to June 6, 1969. Following the attack on FSB Crook on the evening of June 5, 1969, I took nine helicopter loads (54 soldiers) from FSB Washington (due east of FSB Crook) where my company occupied and flew into a landing zone north of FSB Crook near the trail where the large enemy force had probably withdrawn into the jungle. Immediately after exiting the helicopter and less than 100 meters in front of us was the same trail I had scouted in early May 1969. It was almost five feet wide with hundreds of Ho Chi Minh sandal tracks and nothing but mud with three WD-1 black communication wires running north-south from the enemy approach from the north towards FSB Crook to the south. I then radioed the battalion commander/battalion TOC of my observations and intention to follow the three communication wires into the jungle to the north in pursuit of the enemy force.

We moved silently north on the muddy trail through the jungle. Three hundred meters into the jungle we heard enemy voices talking and laughing. We silently moved into the enemy bunker complex and overran it without firing a shot. We overpowered three enemy soldiers and knocked them to the ground before they could get to their weapons. The rest of the enemy force ran northeast into the jungle. At this point, the enemy knew I was among them.

Next we gathered up all the enemy equipment and documents. We put the three enemy soldiers and enemy documents on a helicopter and sent them back to the Tay Ninh brigade base camp for intelligence value. We could, at this point, see that FSB Crook was going to get hit with a large enemy force later in the evening of June 6.

Next my small combat force moved further north on the jungle trail several hundred meters until one of the three communication wires split off to the east. I then halted further penetration of the jungle to the north and had elements of my second platoon scout a short distance on the second jungle trail to the east with the single communication wire. Less than 20 meters on this second trail, the four man scout team (including the platoon sergeant) encountered a fallen tree laying over this trail. Once the scout team stepped over the fallen tree, the enemy opened up with machine gun fire cutting down all four members of the scout team including the platoon sergeant.

We fought for three hours to recover the four fallen soldiers. I called for artillery fire and had my forward observer bring 105mm high explosive round with fuze delay to almost 35 meters (the killing radius of an 105mm HE artillery shell) of my position to suppress and disrupt the enemy. Subsequently, we were able to recover the bodies of three soldiers without any further casualties. We could see the fourth soldier was deceased but the enemy machine gun fire was so intense we could not recover his body. I made the painful decision to withdraw with my remaining small 50 man combat force.

BULLETIN BOARD**Continuation of Bill Ervin Story**

The enemy was positioned to my north and east and could have easily reoccupied the vacated bunker complex to my south. To my west was the small stream that flowed to the south towards FSB Crook...the enemy could not get to my small combat force from the west because of the stream. So with artillery pounding enemy positions, I slowly exited along the stream to the south and to our landing zone where we embarked on helicopters for the short flight back to FSB Washington.

Early evening of June 6, 1969 I planned an operation to retrieve the body of my MIA. I was given 17 helicopters in a single lift (102 soldiers)....the largest number of UH-1 helicopters I had seen in over a hundred combat operations in my six months as a platoon leader in Bravo Company and my six months as commander of Alpha Company.

I planned an operation to hack through the jungle and come in from the east behind the enemy positions on the second trail. I planned to use my first and second platoons to provide 360 degree security around the remaining fallen soldier (still on the battlefield). I had the senior NCO of the second platoon lead his platoon to retrieve his platoon's fallen comrade. Also, I had the NCO bring a grappling hook to slowly roll over the body of the remaining soldier in case the enemy had placed hand grenades with pins pulled underneath the body. In addition, I had the NCO wrap each of the four steel tongs of the grappling hook with burlap so there would be no further scars to the body. To me, it was painful enough for the family of their fallen loved one without inflicting more harm. I told the senior NCO of the second platoon that he was leading an Honor Guard as he gently recovered our fallen comrade, and once his second platoon was in place that he was in charge of the operation. Alpha Company would not move or withdraw until he was ready.

On June 10, 1969 I turned over command of Alpha Company to a new commander that had been planned weeks earlier. Nine days later (June 19, 1969), FSB Washington was attacked. The enemy left numerous casualties behind but none for Alpha Company.

Over the years, I have thought about FSB Crook and the loss of those four soldiers. In eleven months (from mid-July 1968 to early June 1969) I had not experienced the loss of a single soldier in numerous combat operations and night ambushes.

Please forgive me for being long winded but your newsletter triggered some thoughts I had to get off my chest.

Submitted by Blair Moran (Co RTO—1-69/70) - The Badge of Glory (Author Unknown)

Of all the medals upon our chests
From battles and wars we knew,
The one admired as the very best,
Is the one of infantry blue.

It's only a rifle upon a wreath,
So why should it mean so much?
It is what it took to earn it,
That gives it that magic touch.

To earn this special accolade,
You faced the enemy's fire.
Whether you survived or not,
God dialed that one desire.

For those of us who served the cause,
And brought this nation glory,
It's the Combat Infantryman's Badge
That really tells the story

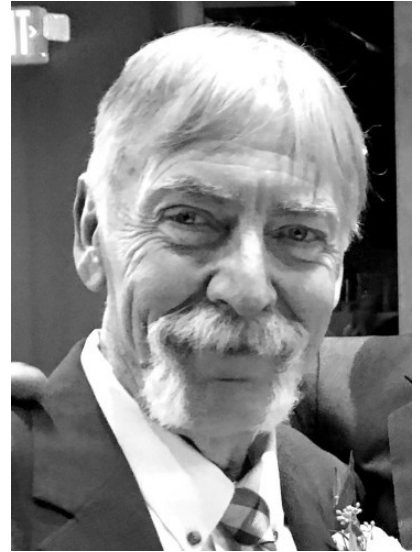


BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by Editor—Obituaries

Chester Gorski (no unit information available)

Chester Gorski, 69, of Pittsfield, MA passed away peacefully on March 17, 2019 at Berkshire Medical Center surrounded by his loving family. Chester was born in Mulheim, Germany on July 4, 1949. He is predeceased by his parents, Antoni and Cecylia Gorski, who emigrated to America from Poland after the war. Chester grew up in Chicago and was a Vietnam veteran. Following the service, he met and married Ellen Richardson and lived in Chicago before they moved to Hancock in 1977. Chester was owner and master chef of the Hancock Inn, which was featured on Good Morning America and PM Boston, as well as in a variety of magazines. Chester was an entrepreneur through and through, rebuilding businesses throughout his life and taking much pride in the restoration of the 200-year-old inn. He also built a successful billiard hall and rehabbed many rental properties. He was a master craftsman whose talents were endless. He worked at the Christian center for many years. He will be remembered for his quick wit, charm, and generosity to the communities in which he lived. He was a teacher of all things. His method was simple; he taught by example. He was self-made and self-reliant. He was loyal and his faithfulness to the important people in his life could be seen in his constant support for others; the word no was never in his vocabulary. During his retirement years, Chester enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren and being a part of his daughter's recent wedding in Breckenridge, CO.

**Thomas Brian Ratigan (Arty. FO—6/67-12/67)**

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Brian Ratigan, born on October 11, 1939, in Brooklyn, NY, peacefully ascended into heaven on June 14, 2023. Aside from being a distinguished and highly decorated man of the military, he will always be remembered for his quick wit, engaging sense of humor, and profound ability to find a teachable lesson in the least studious of moments. Colonel Ratigan, otherwise known as husband, dad, grandfather, treat giver to all dogs, or simply Tom, was born to Eleanor and Edward Ratigan. Tom was the third of four children and often spoke fondly of his time spent growing up in New York. Tom was a writer for his high school paper, a team manager for each of his school baseball and football teams, and star/captain of his high school golf team. While in high school, Tom would spend his summers caddying at the Sagamore Golf Resort in Lake George, NY—once even for President Richard Nixon.



BULLETIN BOARD

Continuation of Ratigan Obituary

Following high school, Tom attended Florida Southern to play college golf and tangentially work on his studies. Tom eventually enlisted in the military and completed his educational endeavors with a Masters Degree. While serving as a signal officer in the U.S. Army, Tom received twelve respective honorary service awards; to include the bronze star, the Vietnam Campaign medal, and the meritorious service medal. While rightfully celebrated for his career achievements and service to the country he loved, his most spoken about moment in the military came on July 4, 1985, when he shot a hole in one while playing at, and for, Norton Air Force Base. Tom's hobbies not only included playing the game of golf, but also attempting to reap his riches in the stock market as an avid trader to keep his mind tidy during his later years. Tom enjoyed retirement, and a long-wedded life, with his beloved wife, Hope Ratigan. Tom and Hope were married on September 9, 1961 and honeymooned in Hawaii when he was in the service. Tom was survived by his wife, who he professed, while on the last day of his life, "was the absolute love of his life" while they held hands.

Gery John Schirado (2nd. Platoon leader—68/69)

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Gery John Schirado of Portland, Oregon, who passed away on January 8, 2024, at the age of 79.

Submitted by Stephen Earp (68/69) on behalf of Gery Schirado

Honoring Mayor Gery Schirado—On January 8, 2024, the City of Durham's beloved mayor, Gery Schirado, passed away. Gery moved to Durham in 1975 and raised a family with his wife, Patti. He began his service to the Durham community as a member of the Planning Commission in 1977. He remained on the Commission until 1988 and served as Chair for many of those years. In 1993, Gery began his service on the City Council and was selected by members of the Council to serve as Mayor each year since 1997. At the time of his passing, Gery had the longest tenure of Oregon's serving mayors, with 27 consecutive years. Gery was known for bringing a sense of balance and fairness to meetings. He will be fondly remembered for his exceptional service to his country, our city, and for his impeccable sense of humor. A flagpole and plaque have been installed outside of City Hall in his honor.

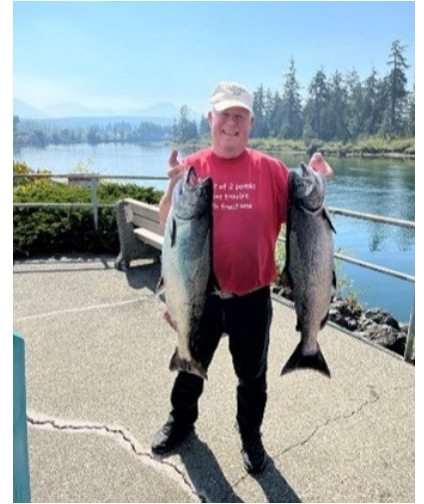


Not sure which gentleman is Gery Schirado but decided to include the photo anyway.

Obituaries (continued)

Mark Patrick Westrich (3-67/68)

Mark Westrich, 76, of Boulder City, NV, passed away of natural causes on March 8, 2024 in Las Vegas, NV. He was born on August 8, 1947 in Dallas, TX to Julius Noel (Duke) and Ingrid Westrich. Mark is survived by his wife of 57 years, Cathy Stevens Westrich. Mark attended San Ramon High School in Danville, CA, and then served in the Vietnam War in 1967. He received two purple hearts during his service. Upon his return, he received his associates degree from the Richard Bland College, an extension of Williams & Mary in Petersburg, VA. As a husband and father, he provided unwavering support for his family. His generosity and kindness touched the hearts of everyone he encountered, whether it was offering a helping hand to a friend in need or providing words of encouragement to his children. Mark had many hobbies including fishing, scuba diving, woodworking to make toy trucks for the VFW, and building kit cars back in the 70s. He loved the outdoors, especially any activity near or on the water.

**Jerry Takacs (HQ Clerk—9-66/67 Original)**

Jerry D. Takacs, 79, of Bloomington, IL, passed away September 12, 2024, at his home with his family by his side. Jerry was born March 20, 1945, in Harrisburg, Illinois, the son of rural coal miner Charles J. and beauty shop owner Emma Griffiths Takacs. He married Barbara Schneider on March 22, 1969, in Alton. She survives. Jerry was a noble combat veteran of the U.S. Army, serving in the 4th Division at Ft. Lewis and the 25th Infantry Division Tropic Lightning during the Vietnam War. He received a B.A. degree in Art & Graphic Design from Southern Illinois University. Jerry worked for State Farm Insurance Co's for thirty-four years, retiring as Claims Consultant and editor of the Claims Quarterly Magazine. Jerry built his own home and spent a lifetime on projects. He fed his personal entrepreneurship running his own advertising design business, and he enjoyed many long friendships. Changing tires, hanging drywall, traveling to the mountains, explaining airplanes and car parts, and art techniques, he was a charming visitor who told a really good story and would usually bring donuts. Jerry spent many hours measuring and sawing to produce cozy homes. He loved a fast car, a motorcycle on the dirt or asphalt, the sound of a mountain brook, the quiet halls of a museum, and his grandchildren's skilled theater, ballet, sports, drawings, and academic achievements. He was a philosopher of quantum physics, space, time, and a good novel with strong characters. He always brought the most thoughtful gifts, and shared his drawings on greeting cards liberally. He knew the power of place and ancestry and his family will greatly miss his words, his times of silent solidarity, and his humming of Christmas carols throughout the year.



Hello Mr. Lowell, I am Jerry's daughter. I have been hunting the right battalion details, and I finally found him on the Bravo Company 3/22 rosters from 1967. He never shared much detail, only enough to have clues to follow; but his time in RVN left a lasting impact. His thoughts were always near the soldiers and situations from those years.. Dad died in September. He had Acute Myeloid Leukemia diagnosed in June. He was down a kidney from another cancer and did not tolerate the attempts at chemotherapy. I regret that his obituary did not have complete and correct service details, and I suppose he was purposely vague with us. I have been surfing using paperwork and notes and then found Albert Comeaux and James Watanabe on the 3/22 web pages—names of men who he had mentioned as funny and kind. He had been dancing with the VA for years over his kidney cancer and heart disease being related to Agent Orange. When he died, I engaged in frantic and frequent conversations with the coroner's office, funeral directors, and hospice to get his death certificate documentation just right. That result caused the VA to finally write my mother to say his death was caused by herbicide/dioxin/Agent Orange exposure. We are still filing and refiling paperwork for them to reopen his medical review case. I wanted someone who understood to know that we got that last task down for my dad. The VA acknowledged responsibility. I miss him terribly. And I offer my condolences to the 3/22 for the loss of another soldier. Thank you for your service then, and please know I appreciate the presence of the 3/22 webpages. Jennifer Takacs (jefnnifer.takacs.hess@gmail.com).