

Bravo Regulars

B Company 3/22



Vietnam Service

www.bravoregulars.com

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President's Message

Carl Lammers
President
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Greetings Bravo Company,

I am looking forward to the end of a very hot summer and the slower pace of fall activities. The Illinois crops of corn and beans are as tall and green as they were at the 2000 reunion in St. Rose, IL.

It is with great sadness we received word of our Treasurer John Otte's passing on June 17, 2022. John was our Treasurer/Locator since the 1990s. In addition to keeping Bravo's finances in good order, he was responsible for locating many of our brothers. I've spoken to many who remember their initial contact with John fondly.

My wife, Helen, and I chose to attend John's wake on July 8th to offer Bravo's condolences in person to John's wife, Bennie, and their family and friends. We were joined by fellow Bravo Regulars Max Torres, Doug Smith, Rudolph Candelaria, Ron Thompson and Ted Silbereis. It was very rewarding to attend John's Celebration of Life.

John's passing has created the position of Treasurer to be filled. If anyone is interested in filling this important role, please contact me at 618-741-1002 to leave a message or email me at fuel5903@yahoo.com.

Our reunion expenses have increased compared to having an event in someone's hometown. Before the end of the year, the Bravo Board will consider reinstating annual dues. Dues have always been voluntary and remain so. Our operating expenses remain very modest but reinstating dues will help us prepare for our future and the 2024 reunion.

We are checking into Nashville, Kansas City or St. Louis for the 2024 reunion. We would appreciate your opinions before the end of September.

Carl



Editor's Notes

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Welcome Back Bravo Brothers!

I hope this finds all of you well. Thank you very much for the card signed by the attendees at the reunion. My health is improving, I have gained about 10 pounds and my food tolerances have improved. Thanks again for your concern.

We received a financial breakdown for the 2022 Reunion. It is Bravo Regulars policy that dues pay for the association business expenses, while reunions are planned to pay for themselves. The association provides seed money as needed to plan the reunions, usually about \$3,500, with hopes of having it returned and breaking even. If there is a deficit, the association covers it. In this case, we came close, but didn't recover the seed money, which is close enough in my opinion. Thank you Pam and Art for your diligent planning. It is at the top of the Bulletin Board.

Thank you Larry Robinson (1st Platoon—67/68) for sharing with us his recollections of a combat action on 15 January 1968. It is on the Bulletin Board.

With sadness, I must report on the passing of three of our Brothers-In-Arms since the last newsletter. They are former Treasurer John Otte, Mike Restelle and Ellison Lawson Jr. Available information is on the Bulletin Board.

James Hammer (Cook—9-67/68) has been moved from Inactive to Active. James' address is 6422 58th Road, Maspeth, NY 11378-2806. His phone number is (917) 604-7053. His email address is buoyeighteen@live.com.

Ed Keeler (3rd Platoon—9/68-12/69) has been moved from Active to Inactive due to his contact information no longer being valid.

We received a reply to our condolence letter to Charlsie Restelle. She will be remaining with us as an Honorary Member.

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

Dave out

BULLETIN BOARD

REUNION FINANCE REPORT
COMPLIED BY PAM ADAMS

Money Report for 2022 Bravo Reunion			
INCOME	Amount		
Registrations collected, Shirts and Hats Ordered	\$12,090.00		
Bravo Unit Help	\$3,500.00		
Total	\$15,590.00		\$15,590.00
50/50 monies deposited plus donation	\$435.00		
Registration, Hat and Shirt sales at Reunion	\$540.00		
Bar monies deposited	\$408.00		
Raffle Monies Deposited after \$500 DJ tip, \$100 Bus driver tip	\$1,186.00		
Total	\$2,569.00		\$2,569.00
Grand Total			\$18,159.00
EXPENSES			
One Stop Custom: Shirts and Hats	\$1,493.00		
Branson.com deposit	\$5,000.00		
Oriental Trading: Bags	\$49.47		
130 Custom Ink Pens	\$155.26		
Printing, Roster etc.	\$152.41		
Target: Soda and snacks	\$133.47		
Dollar General: paper goods and soda	\$43.40		
Sam's Club: Alcohol, water, snacks soda, etc	\$788.31		
Branson.com: Monies toward Bill	\$5,000.00		
Final Bill and monies to Branson.com	\$5,157.55		
Total	\$17,972.87		-\$17,972.87
Difference			\$186.13
Items to be noted from 2018 Reunion to the 2022 Reunion			
One bus seating 56 people \$1500 in 2022			
3 buses in 2018 for \$800 each (110 people)			
Boat dinner cruise in 2022 was \$58.50 per person			
Boat dinner cruise in 2018 was \$50 per person			
DJ in 2022 cost \$500 played approx 3 hours			
Band in 2018 cost \$320 played 4 hours			
After reunion expenses:			
Walmart for Group Photo to be handed out at Saturday Evening Dinner	\$79.09		
Postage – Jump Drive to Dave Lowell with Photos etc for Newsletter	\$26.95		
Postage – Lisa Young and John Turco	\$25.99		
Postage – Art Gormley and Ron Atkinson	\$24.40		
Postage – Mrs. Reyes and hat to Bob Best	\$42.95		
Total	\$199.38		

BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by Larry Robinson (1st Platoon—67-68)

January 15, 1968—Tom Watts was a First Platoon Squad Leader who hailed from California. Tom, the son of a doctor, came from a wonderful family. Tom and John Otte trained together in the States before going to Nam shortly after Suoi Tre, to replace the Originals killed at Soui Tre. Everyone respected Tom. He treated everyone well, even the new guys, like me who hadn't earned the respect of anyone yet. Tom died on January 15, 1968. I will try to chronicle the events of that tragic day to the best of my ability.

Our Platoon Leader, Lt. Richard Walker, was an overweight fellow, who had humped off a lot of weight out in the boonies. When I first got to Bravo Company, Walker caught a lot of flak for various things, including being so heavy. But as time passed, he continually gained the respect of everyone in the platoon. This was Walker's last day in the field. He, as was customary, was being transferred to a much safer place, Dau Tieng Basecamp, after serving his 6 months in the field. Tom was to be transferred back to the basecamp too because he had spent 10 months in the field and was such an exceptional soldier. The fact that this was Tom and Walker's last day in the field makes this story particularly heartbreaking.

Bravo Company was out on a typical search and destroy mission that day, January 15, 1968. A little after noon we stopped for lunch in a wooded area. I quickly scooped down some C-rations before taking out my bible to do some reading. I was never much of a bible thumper, at least not before Suoi Cut, the all-night human wave attack which happened a couple weeks before. It was such a miracle to be alive after that battle that I guess reading the bible just came naturally. A new guy came in on the helicopter while we were eating. What a baptism of fire James Bieber had bestowed upon him that afternoon.

Anyway, we saddled up around 1300 hours to resume the S&D through an open field of elephant grass. About a half hour later we came to a screeching halt when a cacophony of weapon fire erupted inside a wood line about 250 meters on our right flank. It was 3rd Platoon getting bombarded by AKs, machine guns, RPGs and hand grenades. Third Platoon must have been taken by complete surprise.

We all rushed toward the wood line. When we arrived, we saw 3rd Platoon strewn on the ground with virtually no cover or concealment. Yells and moans filled the air. Third Platoon lost two good men that day, point man Spec 4 Chuck Irby and paceman Spec 4 Kenny Howell. They were killed early in the encounter. Lt. Walker told the Third Platoon Leader, Lt. Art Gormley, that we would circle around the VC to catch them in a crossfire.

Lt. Walker said, "Come on guys, let's go!". We kind of circled to the left through the trees for about 25 meters when all the sudden we received a burst of small arms fire. We all hit the ground except for Lt. Walker. Lt. Walker told us not to worry, that the gooks were shooting at Third Platoon, not us.

So, we got up and proceeded for about another 25 meters, when all hell broke loose with another sustained burst of small arms fire. Again, we all hit the ground except for Walker who repeated that the gooks were not shooting at us, they were shooting at Third Platoon. This happened a third time with the same results.

However, the fourth time was a disaster. We got ambushed. Lt. Walker walked right in front of a gook bunker. I saw the bullets hitting Walker's chest up, down, and sideways, like a cross. He finally started falling to the ground, but not until one of the bullets had punctured a smoke grenade. Even in death, Walker helped his platoon because yellow plumes of smoke afforded us some concealment. We were pretty much in the open without cover, so the concealment helped to at least obscure the gooks' view of us for a little while. I had never been in such thick gunfire. Guys were getting hit right and left. They had us pinned down good.

BULLETIN BOARD**Continuation of Larry Robinson story**

PFC Glen McDonald, a new man, was walking point that day and caught a bullet in his ankle. Sergeant Watts was behind him and was shot three or four times by AK gunfire. Following Watts was Lt. Walker, our Platoon Leader. Shoulder to shoulder with Walker was Sergeant David Ash who got shot in the leg by AK gunfire shortly after Walker was cut to pieces. Ash was right in the firing lane until a brave Spec 4 Pat Hoffman ran up and pulled Ash back behind a tree for cover. John Stupor was Lt. Walker's Pace Man, keeping track of the number of steps we had traveled. Machine gunner John McClean, who got shot in the side by an AK was up to the right of the bunker. All afternoon we thought he was dead being so close to the bunker. John bravely kept quiet, calm. Today he is a retired Captain on the Boston Police force. To my right, about 15 feet away, was Spec 4 Randy Seering. He carried the other machine gun. I saw him get hit by an AK 47 in the rim of his helmet, which sent pieces of shrapnel through his leg and face.

Then our own incoming artillery rounds came right on top of us. Platoon Sgt. Ernest Martin from Philadelphia, father of eight children, yelled to Gary Payton, his RTO, who we nicknamed armadillo, "Tell them to get that goddamn artillery off us". Before Payton could even get on the horn, a round came in landing on top of Sgt. Martin. Being about 20 feet from him, I got some of the back blasted twigs and stones while Sgt. Martin got nailed. Payton survived a chunk of artillery shrapnel that hit him in the chest. He had always told us he wanted a Purple Heart. He got it.

After that, the clacking and popping continued relentlessly. All I could hear was guys yelling "I'm hit". I thought everyone was going to die. The AKs and RPGs were whizzing by. At the moment that I wondered to myself when I was going to get hit, I got hit! I thought I was dead, but it sure didn't look much like heaven. It was only a superficial head wound, but the blood was pouring out of my forehead. Doc Reisch, about 15 feet to my left, threw me a couple of first aid bandages which stopped the bleeding. Doc was scampering here and there trying to help as many of the wounded as possible.

I noticed that about 25 feet behind me was an ant hill. The cone shaped ant hills were big in Nam — about 30 inches to the pointy top, by about 24 inches in diameter at the base. The ant hills are shown in the ambush scene in the movie "Platoon". So, I put my backward low crawl training to use and worked my way back as quickly as I could. No sooner did I get to the ant hill than the bullets started kicking dirt off it. Fortunately, it was sturdy enough to sustain me throughout the afternoon.

Some other guys got back behind the ant hills, but Tom took too many bullets to get there. Tom was about 25 feet in front of me, a little to my left, trying to crawl back until he just couldn't crawl any more. I saw another bullet rip through his arm. He had been shot several times. I wanted to run out to get Tom but would have been in the firing lane. I didn't even know if my rifle would fire since it was chewed up badly by the AK round that had hit it. I couldn't see very well either since the bullet that hit me went right through the center of my glasses. I didn't even know if Tom was alive.

About this time, I thought I saw Tom move, giving me renewed hope that he was still alive. Our medic, walrus-mustachioed Doc Rick Reisch, ran out and pulled Tom back behind my ant hill.. Doc was a big boned, gentle man of raw courage and a huge heart. He should have received a Silver Star that day. Doc Reisch became a prison warden serving at several prisons when he returned to the "world". We need more prison wardens like Doc. Today he raises pheasants on his land for hunters to come and have a blast.

Sitting up with his back supported by the ant hill, Tom almost looked green. He was not crying or moaning but did have some blood dripping from the numerous bandages Doc had wrapped him with. I kept telling Tom he was going to make it, that he was looking better. But Tom just remained still sharing the cover of the ant hill with me and being extremely brave.

BULLETIN BOARD**Continuation of Larry Robinson story**

After a while, Tom started to moan a little. There was too much incoming fire for Doc to risk coming over to our ant hill, so Doc threw me a syringe filled with morphine. I had never given anyone a shot before but just kind of pinched Tom's upper arm, making a little mound of flesh, then stuck in the needle. I asked Tom how he was doing. He said "better". He did not appear to be in any pain. There was no wincing of his face any more. An hour or two later Tom started to moan again, so I asked Doc to throw me another shot of morphine. This seemed to ease Tom's pain once more.

I heard some outgoing fire for a while earlier that long afternoon, but soon I realized all of it was incoming because our guys were either dead, wounded, or out of ammo. The longer the afternoon went without reinforcements, the scarier it got. It was particularly frightening since sundown was approaching. This was the time when the gooks would come out of their bunkers to shoot the survivors in the head with their pistols. They only did this if they thought we were without ammo. I could hear them in the bunker about 20 meters in front of us, jabbering to each other. I surmised their conversation was about finishing us off.

At this time a miracle happened. Members from Second Platoon came out to save us. Oliver Stone, along with Crutcher Patterson and two or three other guys, radioed that they were lost and unable to find us. I had the only bullet remaining in our platoon. Out RTO, Gary Payton, asked me to shoot the bullet in the air so 2nd Platoon could pinpoint our location. I hesitated because the bullet that had hit me had ricocheted up off my rifle chewing up the chamber. I could look down and see a bullet in the exposed chamber. I held my rifle out as far as I could and pulled the trigger hoping it did not blow up in my face.

The round went off fine and shortly thereafter up ran Stone and the others from 2nd Platoon. They wanted to know what was happening. I told them about the guys up front by the bunker. I told Oliver to be careful, that there were gooks all over the place. Stone just said, "We'll go get 'em". The guys from 2nd Platoon ran toward the gook bunker. I lost sight of them. Then all the sudden I heard that old familiar clacking and popping of AKs. I heard a couple M16 bursts, then the 2nd Platoon guys came crawling back. Stone and the others had been shot, but all survived. It was Stone's second Purple Heart. I call this a miracle because what it did was let the gooks know we still had live bodies to fight and live ammunition to fight with. I was hoping that would keep them in their hole for a while longer. It did, thank God.

About 1700 hours, I heard the most beautiful sound I had ever heard in my life. It was Fullback (2/22nd Infantry Regiment), our mechanized sister battalion, coming to the rescue like the cavalry in those old movies. Oh, that sweet sound of 50 calibers blazing from the top of the APCs! I learned later from Captain Robert Hemphill, our Company Commander, that we had pulled Fullback out of so many scrapes in the past that they had volunteered to come out to save us. Apparently, they were suited up ready to roll even before the decision to rescue us had been made. Fullback lost 2 men coming out through those woods to get us that day. One of the triple deuce guys told John Stupor that it was a miracle we weren't all blown up by landmines since the gooks had placed them where we were hit.

2nd Platoon cleared a quick LZ allowing a helicopter to come in to take out the most seriously wounded, including Tom Watts. The rest of us scrambled up on top of the APCs for a bumpy, but wonderful ride back to FSB Burt before being taken to Tay Ninh's army field hospital. Tom was alive when he went on board, but dead when he arrived at the field hospital in Tay Ninh. I sure would like to know what happened after Tom got on that dust off. His sister Dee Dee told me that the Army said he died by stepping on a landmine. It would have been impossible for Tom to have died that way. Tom, up in heaven, we all sure miss you buddy. Today you are up there with another great grunt, John Otte.

BULLETIN BOARD

Submitted by Editor—Obituaries

John Otte (2nd Platoon—Company RTO) - John Otte, of Harbor City, California, passed away on June 17, 2022.

Editor: John has been our Treasurer/Locator for decades. I assume that most of the current Bravo Regulars members had been located by John. He will be sorely missed. He is survived by his wife, Bennie. As Carl mentioned in his column, there was a Celebration of Life ceremony in July.



Michael Allen Restelle, 74 (1969)- Michael Restelle of Queen City, Texas passed away peacefully at his home on August 12, 2022, surrounded by his loving family. Mike was born on February 15, 1948 in Orange, Texas to Walter "Bud" Restelle and Virginia Earline "Sis" Allen Restelle. Michael served his country proudly in the United States Army.



Curtis McFarland: Bravo Company was represented at Mike's funeral by Dee and Cheryl Anderson and Curtis and Wanda McFarland. Dee was Mike's RTO and Curtis was his Platoon Leader.

Ellison Lawson, Jr., 75 (1970)—Ellison Lawson passed away on August 24, 2022. Ellison of Camden, South Carolina, was born in Summerton, South Carolina.

M.C. Toyer: I received word from Ken Pottmeyer that Ellison had passed away. Ken and Ellison were transferred to Bravo Company in early 1970 when the 1st Division stood down. Both were SWIA on April 2, 1970 by a booby trap and sent stateside for treatment and rehabilitation.

