

the Pointman Company F

Newsletter - January '93



FAREWELL

by Joe Little

Rest my man you've earned the right.

*I have seen the glory of carnal man
while you have risen to touch the sky.*

*I have felt the torment of my soul, probably like those you left behind,
as your name was etched in granite.*

*You captured my trust, my friendship, my love,
and now my anger as you have others with your magical blend of steel and velvet.*

*I have felt your hunger to learn ways of survival.
You tucked yourself under my armor of knowledge
while I smiled at your curious ways.*

*I knew you would survive the lot man has dealt us.
I nursed you through the course of manhood
when you saw and felt your first man fall by your hand—did I not hold you while we both cried.
You knew you crossed that line for you are no longer chaste.
I promised you we would leave this madness and come home,
that we would meet and probably cry.
Now I weep alone.*

*I thought I was the one waiting. I wait no more.
For your name was etched in granite.
I did not know, but you knew someday I would be by.*

*I wasn't there to hold you in my arms.
I wasn't there to say goodbye.
I wasn't there to dress you in your civilian charms.
I wasn't there to thank you for sharing your life,
for it was a part of mine.*

*I just want to say I love you.
Farewell my friend.*

"Lawless Cobra 21"

from the Editor's Desk

Hi Guys! The action's heated up a bit since the last newsletter. You'll notice there are fewer pictures, and the type has gotten smaller. Mrkvicka and I made some telephone company stockholders happy with our abortive attempts at transferring electronic data between our computers. Speaking of which, if any of you are aware of any good bulletin boards for veterans please let me know.

The Newsletter, the Newsletter . . . so whadda ya think? Mailed 210 copies the end of September of which 35 were returned, half with forwarding addresses so I sent 'em again. I got back 24 questionnaires, numerous letters, and a number of phone calls. All but one of those communicated their permission for me to give you their addresses. Cool, Huh? I am publishing those 53 this time (the guys who said yes + the ones who attended the Reunion and obviously aren't hiding from you). Brings up a point that I need to get out of the way . . . The biggest request I get from everybody is, "Where's the list?" So, lest I pass into the "netherworld" waiting for the remaining 186 questionnaires to be filled out and return themselves, please, **IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO PUBLISH YOUR ADDRESS FOR THE OTHER MEMBERS OF COMPANY F, THEN YOU NEED TO FIND A WAY OF LETTING ME KNOW ABOUT IT!** Call me (or my answering machine), send a postcard with your name and the word "NO!" and I will figure it out . . . Otherwise, prepare to become famous in the next issue. Telephone numbers will not be provided.

"So what does it cost to publish the newsletter Dave?" Glad you asked. By the time you figure paper, printing, postage, and re-mailing, the newsletter costs about a dollar a head. A couple of you have generously contributed some dough to help defray my expense. God love you, I appreciate the help. Any of you who can, and I realize there are many who probably can't, but if you could support the N/L with a 4 or 5 buck donation I'll appreciate it. If you can't, don't worry, I'll find a way to keep getting it to you. (End of pitch).

Suggestions for naming the N/L were as follows- Newsletter, Company F LRRP, Pointman, Ranger, Short Timer, Sit Rep, F Troop, Call Sign Cobra, Ranger Ramblings, Tropic Ranger, Ranger Review, Ranger Update, Rapelling, Recondo, Ambush, Commo and, Azimuth. No good way to take a vote so I selected the Pointman. I hope that meets with majority approval?

This time I sent off six letters asking a few Rangers to write something for the newsletter.

One was returned as undeliverable, one Ranger promised he would, "try to get something out", one has yet to respond, and three sent some real good stuff Joe Little, Jim Freeman, and Ray Armstrong. Remember, the guys really want to hear from/about YOU, what was and what is, anything! They are literally starving to hear from you who mean so much to them, believe me. So, watch your mail box for my next letter requesting participation, you could be next!

Consistent literary contributors have been Bill Mrkvicka, Bruce Craft, Charlie Rose and, "Speedy" Gonzales from O/75. Jack Madden wrote and wants to hear anything anyone knows about "Dapsone" or experimental medications used on 'Nam Vets. Andy Osman got his hands on some After-Action Reports and sent me copies. Ray Armstrong says if anyone has Bob Camp's ('69-70) address, social security, or service number on old orders, please let him know. Bruce Kochy from C/75 called me . . . turns out we went through Basic together, and I do remember him. I have recently had the pleasure of talking on the telephone with Bill Evans, Joe Stevens, Tom Besser and, Joe Little. Also got mail from Jeff Sandell, James Gericke, Tom Finnie and, Fred Stuckey.

On page 7 of this issue is a list of our guys who we don't have addresses on. There may be misspelled names, certainly some have been omitted. We're counting on you to help us fill in some of the blanks . . . if you know where anyone is, have corrected spelling, service or social security numbers or additions, **please help us get it right!** The way I see it, these guys stood alongside us in some pretty tough times, and didn't let us down. Some covered your butts, some fed you, others made the best decisions they could in your behalf, or saw to it you got the right equipment or ammo when you needed it. Everyone gave their best. **It's time to reciprocate, don't you think?**



Look Who's Talking (Letters)

October 22, 1992

Dear Fellow Rangers,

I feel very remiss in not writing to anyone sooner than this. With a wife, three kids, and a very busy job schedule it seems that time goes by without me even knowing what the hell happened.

First off, let me say that the reunion in June was one of the greatest three days I have ever spent. I went to Georgia with many thoughts in my mind. Twenty years can play havoc with the brain and I wasn't sure that seeing all these people would really be the thing I needed to do.

I had always been a loner. Joe Hard gave me the nickname of "One" because that was all I ever thought I would need, just myself. But I have found over the years that I needed you guys. You all played a very important part in my life and, to this day I am indebted to you.

As we sat around the hotel rooms, the bar, the parade field, and the picnic area we shared stories of what has happened in our lives. We talked about past missions, past successes and also about our failures, whether they be real or perceived. We were able to listen to one another and understand the feelings of pride, success, and guilt. I think for the few days we were all together we were able to reestablish what we all felt some twenty plus years ago. We were good, we were damn good.

As I got on the plane in Columbus and returned to Maryland I had a sense of pride that I had not felt for many years.

I was able to discard some of the emotional baggage I had carried for so many years. I knew that my "Family" was still intact. That no matter what else happens in my life I will always be a part of one of the greatest groups of men ever assembled.

I look forward to our next reunion and staying in touch with the men of Company F. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Peace be with you -
Jeffrey "Sandy" Sandell



December 9, 1992

Dear David,

I served in Company F in 1967 & 1968. I think it is great you are trying to get our company together after all these year. I would have written sooner, but I just started a new job and have been working a lot of overtime.

I was a team leader my whole tour with Company F., serving in the 2nd Platoon. I was the youngest man in the company at the time. I was also a friend of SP4 Greg Kelly. I don't know where Shelby Stanton got his information about Kelly, but I found it very upsetting because it was not true. What really happened is Kelly saved his team by giving his life. I don't think Stanton really knew what was happening in the bush, or maybe he didn't care?

I was a friend of Jack McDevitt,

who was elected as overall President of the Ranger Association of WWII two weeks before he died. As far as the Ranger thing goes, I think that was WWII stuff. In 1967 the Rangers didn't want any part of us, but in 1969, after a couple of Medal of Honor winners, they thought we were great. I think we were Lurps plain and simple. If we were Rangers, we would have been glorified infantry working at company level. I think the LRSU of today are a copy of us.

I think you should take a vote of the guys we all served with and see if they want to be lurps or Rangers. Just like the Rangers, we were taken out of context. I remember at times when I served they talked about disbanding us. I am more proud being a lurp than I ever could at being a Ranger . . . they were what they were, and we were what we were. I still want to be part of this Company F thing, but it is because of the people I served with and not because of the Ranger heading.

Sincerely-
Jack (Cuddles) Cordle



I would guess that there are one or two of you out there who were tempted to come to the reunion, but, found a reason you couldn't come. When you start thinking about reunions in the future consider:

In May of 1990, I found an announcement about the 75th Ranger Regiment's upcoming reunion in Colorado in June. I had been trying to get in touch with a few close

friends from Viet Nam for a couple of years, but, had not found any of them.

I didn't have time to ask a lot of questions. The person listed as the contact in the announcement was from another Company, so he didn't know any Co F guys. I signed up. For the next three weeks, plans kept changing - I found "business problems" which might prevent my going; "family needs" seemed to be getting severe.

I realized that I was going through a whole bunch of doubts and concerns about meeting you guys - Would those few, very special people I knew in Viet Nam be alive and well? Had they died in Nam after I left, died later, gotten into problems and ended up in jail? Any of these would be devastating to learn. I was only there for a year, what would I have in common with these guys? Would we meet, and then just sit and stare like dumb shits because we had nothing to talk about? That would be worse than the first possibility.

Would I be able to handle meeting you guys? Would I get super emotional and not be able to handle it? (You guys were always like rocks. Nothing ever bothered you. But, me - that's one area where I was different.)

I finally found the courage and went to Colorado. Charles Rose was the only person there from Co F, and I had never met him before. I spent the whole reunion talking to guys I did not know - Charles and men from other LRP/Ranger companies.

The experience was both interesting and enjoyable. For the first time in 21 years I was able to relax and talk to people who understood what I was talking about without going into lengthy discussions. Likewise, when they spoke,

they made sense. - It was amazing how easy it was to communicate. It was even more amazing to be able to mentally relax. Even better, I was in a room of people I could completely trust.

Then came the Columbus Georgia reunion in June of 1992. The rest of those nagging questions would be answered once and for all.

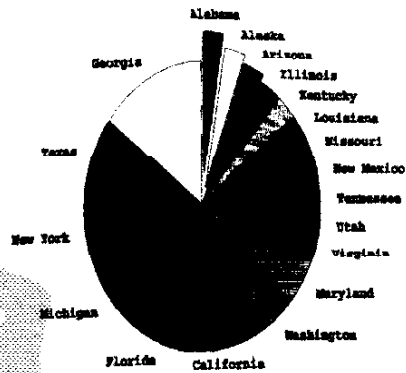
There is no way I can describe to you the pure joy of meeting the guys who came to the reunion. If you remember back to being a kid, and can recall how happy you were at getting that one special toy you had waited for years, you can envision what it was like.

Not only were we able to talk to each other, three or four days was way too short. (Ask Bill Evans how much sleep he got.) Twenty three years had been put a way as if they had taken only a day, friendships had remained as strong as they ever were. (Ask Gary Lemonds, Jeff Sandell, Joe Gentile, Bob DeYoung, etc.) I guess the best thing I can tell you is if you had any doubts or are having doubts about whether or not you would enjoy a reunion, please call or write some of the guys who made this last year's reunion. Read Dave Regenthal's description in the September '92 newsletter - he had trouble describing it too. Yet, his experience was similar to mine.

To the rest of you guys who made the reunion and had a few doubts about attending it (does this ring a bell Ray Armstrong?) there are some people out there who have not shown up at a reunion because of the doubts. They need a little help and encouragement. Let them know how great it is to see each other. We need them to join the party.

Bill Markwick

I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO NOTE WHERE THE COMPANY F RANGER REUNION ATTENDEES ORIGINATED FROM. HERE IS THE BREAKDOWN AND LIST:



- ALABAMA MELVIN RHODES
- ALASKA COLIN K HALL
- ARIZONA JOSEPH LITTLE
- CALIFORNIA LARRY PUTMAN
- FLORIDA RAYMOND ARMSTRONG
- GEORGIA ROBERT C DEYOUNG
- ILLINOIS BRUCE D CRAFT
- KENTUCKY JOSEPH MAULTSBY
- LOUISIANA JOSEPH B SNIVELEY
- MISSOURI THOMAS G CAHILL
- NEW MEXICO RONALD E HART
- TENNESSEE EMMETT W HILTIBRAND
- UTAH GARY L LEMONDS
- VIRGINIA MICHAEL G TURNER
- MARYLAND FRANCIS L JARVIS
- WASHINGTON DONALD PURDY
- FLORIDA PHILLIP J DAVIS
- CALIFORNIA JOSEPH I CASSILLY
- NEW YORK JEFFERY SANDELL
- MISSOURI KENNETH HARDY
- NEW MEXICO TIMOTHY C WALSH
- NEW YORK NICKOLAS J DEMONGEOT
- TENNESSEE WILLIAM G EVANS
- TEXAS CHARLES ROSE
- VIRGINIA THOMAS M FINNIE
- WASHINGTON JOSEPH B GENTILE, JR
- ALABAMA WILLIAM MRKVICKA
- ALASKA RONALD A ZELLNER
- ARIZONA RICHARD A EWALD
- ILLINOIS WILLIAM R HART
- KENTUCKY DAVID R REGENTHAL
- LOUISIANA JOSEPH STEVENS
- MISSOURI MICHAEL MARTENS
- NEW MEXICO RONALD H HARRISON

December 20, 1992

Dear Dave-

Well, it's been a little hard for me to come up with a good story for the newsletter. You see, I spent the last 25 years in the Army. I did not get out and face the civilian world until very recently. So, my story has to do with how it felt to stay in the Army and the changes we, the soldiers, faced.

We had a lot of changes that really affected the soldiers, especially those of us that "stuck it out." Immediately following Vietnam most of us were assigned to the 82nd Abn Div because we were Airborne qualified. It was a hard time for a lot of us, we were now NCO's and a lot of the young SGT's had no real training as to how to be an NCO. For a number of us it was a growing experience. I actually took the easy way out. I reenlisted for Drill Sergeant School and was reassigned to the Training Center at Fort Bragg. It was my way of escaping the 82nd Airborne Division, the new, short, haircuts, and the tradition that was growing in the 82nd of being called the "Jumping Junkies." We went through a very rough period. NCO's lost a lot of "power" and prestige. We actually caused it ourselves. As I said earlier, we had no training in how to be an NCO. A lot of the SGT's from Vietnam were actually nothing more than teenagers with stripes sewn on their sleeves. In Nam they did a man's job, and it was a damn fine job too! But, it's not the same, leading troops in combat is not the same as leading them in peacetime.

I went to Europe, and over there in the early 70's drugs were rampant. But we began to see some changes. By the time I left in '75 our platoon received an award for being drug free . . . What that meant was

that no one in the platoon had been arrested on drug charges over the preceding 30 days. Not a lot, but it was a start.

I spent a "short time" in the states, made the E-7 list, and then went to Korea. Over there the NCO's were beginning to regain some of their lost prestige, but the officers still held a lot of the power that rightly belonged to the NCO's. In the late 70's I was away from the troops on a staff job in Hawaii. My only contact with them would be when I had a work detail assigned to me or when I worked with the Color Guard that I trained. Here I still saw troops telling their SGT's, "I am not coming to work tomorrow" instead of asking for the day off, and the SGT would shrug his shoulders and let it pass. He did not care if his men showed up for work or not. Well, when I saw this I began to believe that I was seeing the NCO Corps start to do a backslide.

I left Hawaii and went back on Drill SGT status at Fort Benning. I was the Company Senior Drill Sergeant for two different companies. As the Senior, I was responsible for all troop training. Finally I began to see the NCO power and prestige that we all heard about when we first joined the Army.

The next 9 years were kind of uneventful. Although, I finally reached the pinnacle of being an NCO, I became a First Sgt. This is the highest position that an NCO can hold and still remain in contact with his men. Eight of those 9 years were spent as a First Sgt, and I enjoyed every minute of it. When I was in Desert Storm one of my soldiers asked, "Top, when are you quitting, when are you going to retire?" My answer was that I would quit when it quit being fun. Well, it never actually quit being fun but the Army decided that it was time for me to begin a new

career . . . which I have, and I enjoy very much.

Well Dave, I have bent your ear long enough. It has been hard to choke this out for the short time that I have to spend at home but, here, is my story. I know it's Army oriented and if this is not what you would like to use I will understand. But you must understand, I am Army through and through. As I told you in my card, I remain, "the House Mouse."



RANGER REGIMENT NEWS

For those of you that don't already know it, we have a national organization . . . it's the 75TH RANGER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION. Dues are \$20 a year and may be mailed along with unit orders or a copy of your DD214 to: TREASURER, 75th RGR REGT ASSN.

RD 3, 8 HUNTLEY CIRCLE
SALISBURY, MD 21801

The Association is the driving force behind all that benefits us . . . they have organized all the reunions, 88, 90, 92, and the upcoming return to Fort Benning in '94. There is a slick newsletter that comes out every quarter. Join soon!

MEMORIAL FOUNDATION
P.O. BOX 5948
ATTN: RALPH PUCKETT
COLUMBUS, GA 31906-0948

You would already know about this if you were a member of the Association. If you are interested and move quickly, you can purchase one of the 2456 bricks for the walkway to the Ranger Memorial at Fort Benning. The cost is \$240. You are eligible to buy based upon your having served in a LRP/LRRP/or RANGER Company. The brick(s) will have 3 lines, the first being "RANGER." The second can be your name or a Ranger you wish to memorialize, followed by your/their unit designator on the third line.

75th Ranger Regiment

The 75th Ranger Regiment is linked directly and historically to the thirteen Ranger Companies of the 75th that were active in Vietnam from February 1, 1969 until August 15, 1972. The longest sustained combat history for any American Ranger unit in more than three hundred years of United States Army Ranger history. The 75th Infantry Regiment was activated on Okinawa during 1954 and traced its lineage to the 475th Infantry Regiment, thence to the 5307th Composite Provisional Unit, popularly known as Merrill's Marauders.

Historically, Company I, (Ranger) 75th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division and Company G, (Ranger) 75th Infantry 23rd Infantry Division (Americal) produced the first two US Army Rangers to be awarded the Medal of Honor as members of and while serving in a combat Ranger company. Specialist Four Robert D. Law was awarded the first Medal of Honor with I/75 while on a long range patrol in Tinh Phoc Province, RVN. He was from Texas. Staff Sergeant Robert J. Pruden was awarded the second Medal of Honor while on a reconnaissance mission in Quang Ni Province, RVN. He was from Minnesota. In addition to the two Medal of Honor recipients above, Staff Sergeant Lazlo Rabel was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving with the 74th Infantry Detachment (LRP), a predecessor to Company N, (Ranger) 75th Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade while on a long range patrol in Binh Dinh Province, RVN. He was from Pennsylvania.

Conversion of the Long Range Patrol Companies of the 20th, 50th, 51st, 58th, 71st, 74th, 78th, and 79th Infantry Detachment, and Company D, 151st Infantry Long Range Patrol of the Indiana National Guard, to Ranger Companies of the 75th Infantry began on 1 February 1969. Only Company D, 151st retained their unit identity and did not become a 75th Ranger Company, however they did become a Ranger company and continued their mission in Vietnam. Companies C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, and P (Ranger) Infantry conducted Ranger missions and operations for three years and seven months, every day of the year while in Vietnam. Like the original units from whence their lineage as Neo-Marauders was drawn, 75th Rangers came from the Infantry, Artillery, Engineers, Signal, Medical, Military Police, Food Service, Parachute Riggers and other Army units. They were joined by former adversaries, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army soldiers who became, "Kit Carson Scouts", and fought alongside the Rangers against their former units and comrades.

Unlike Ranger units of other eras in the 20th Century who trained in the United States or other friendly nations overseas, LRP and Rangers in Vietnam were activated, trained and fought in the same geographical areas in Vietnam. A high speed approach to training. Training was a combat mission for volunteers. Volunteers were assigned, not accepted in various Ranger

Companies, until after a series of patrols, the volunteer had passed the acid test of a Ranger, Combat, and was accepted by his peers. Following peer acceptance the volunteer was allowed to wear the red, white and black scroll shoulder sleeve insignia bearing his Ranger Company identity. All Long Range Patrol Companies and 75th Ranger Companies were authorized Parachute pay.

Modus Operandi for patrol insertion varied, however, the helicopter was the primary means for insertion and exfiltration of enemy rear areas. Other methods included foot, wheeled, tracked vehicles, airboats, Navy Swift Boats and stay behind missions where Rangers remained in place as a larger tactical unit withdrew. False insertions by helicopter was a means of security from ever present enemy trail watchers. General missions consisted of locating enemy bases and lines of communications. Special missions included wiretap, prisoner snatch, Platoon and Company size raid missions and Bomb Damage Assessments (BDA) following B-52 Arc-Light missions.

Staffed principally by graduates of the US Army Ranger School, Paratroopers and Special Forces trained men, the bulk of the Ranger volunteers came from soldiers who had no chance to attend the schools, but carried the fight to the enemy. These Rangers remained with their units through some of the most difficult patrolling action(s) in Army history and frequently fought much larger enemy forces when compromised on their reconnaissance missions. Rangers from M/75 were known to patrol in two (2) man reconnaissance teams, however the six (6) man Ranger team was standard and a twelve (12) man heavy team was used for combat patrols in most instances.

Rangers remaining on active duty following Vietnam became instructors at the Army Ranger School, HALO and HAHO Schools, SCUBA School, and were Mountain Climbing Instructors at the Army Cold Weather School, Alaska. Some became tabbed Rangers, by attending Ranger School after having served from one (1) to five (5) years in a Long Range Patrol or Ranger Company in Vietnam. The Vietnam Rangers of the 75th Infantry were awarded the title Neo Marauders by the Secretary of the Army, Stanley Resor, during 1969 for having lived up to the standards set by the original Marauders during World War II.

Army Chief of Staff Creighton Abrams who observed the 75th Ranger operations in Vietnam as Commander of all US Forces there selected the 75th Rangers as the role model for the first US Army Ranger units formed during peacetime, in the history of the United States Army. On 31 January, 1974 the 1st Battalion (Ranger) 75th Infantry was formed followed by the 2nd Ranger Battalion on 1 October 1974. Both of these highly trained and equipped Battalions made the combat parachute assault on the Island of Grenada during Operation Urgent Fury on 25 October 1984. The combat jump was performed to

rescue American students there and restore democracy. Using their bodies as shields, the Rangers led the students to safety during evacuation while Cuban Communists shot at them. Earlier, Company C, 1st Battalion was involved in DESERT ONE, the attempt by the DELTA FORCE to extract the Americans held hostage by the Shiite Moslem fanatics in Iran.

To meet worldwide contingency missions, training for the 75th Rangers is being conducted in the jungle, arctic and deserts continuously. On February 3, 1986 Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh, Jr., redesignated the 75th Infantry Ranger Regiment as the 75th Ranger Regiment. On 17 April 1986 Marsh presided over the transfer of colors and lineage back to the Rangers. During World War II and Korea, Company and Battalion Commanders or specially trained sergeants controlled fires for tactical units. Rangers in grades E-4 to E-6 controlled fires from the USS New Jersey's 16 inch guns, a two thousand pound projectile, in addition to helicopter gunship, piston engine and high performance aircraft while operating, frequently, far beyond conventional artillery while infiltrating enemy base camps, capturing prisoners, or conducting other covert operations.

The 3rd Battalion and 75th Regimental Headquarters were activated on 3 October 1984 and are co-located at Fort Benning, Georgia. The 1st Battalion is located at Hunter Army Airfield, Savannah, Georgia. The Ranger 2nd Battalion is located at Fort Lewis, Washington. The Ranger Regiment maintains an alert force that can move to anywhere in the world, at all times. While conducting tactical training during December 1989, the 75th Ranger Regiment was alerted for a Regimental raid mission by parachute, to seize Omar Torrios International Airport and Tocumen Military Airfield in the Republic of Panama and neutralize the 2nd Rifle Company of the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF). The 1st Ranger Battalion reinforced by Company C, 3rd Battalion drew that mission. The 2nd and 3rd Ranger Battalions parachuted onto the airfield at Rio Hato, Panama to neutralize the 6th and 7th PDF Rifle Companies and seize the beach house of Panamanian Dictator Manuel Noriega. Company C, 3rd Ranger Battalion captured the Commandancia after unsuccessful attempts by a battalion of conventional infantry, HOOAH! The Regimental parachute assault was conducted at 0100 hours, 20 December 1989 during an operation dubbed "JUST CAUSE". Rangers had 39 WIA and 5 KIA during the operation. They captured 810 prisoners and more than 16,000 weapons including cases of grenades. Many of the same leaders who served in Vietnam as Rangers, jumped into Grenada, Panama or both.

This document was prepared by Robert F. Gilbert, Company L 75th INFANTRY (RANGER), one of the four founders of the Regimental Association and President from 1986 to 1988 and 1990 to 1992.

October 6, 1992

Dear David-

I received your newsletter today and was completely surprised to receive it, thank you. Yes, I'm an Airborne Ranger. Served in Tay Ninh & Cu Chi from 11- 69 till 1-70. I would be very interested to stay in touch with any and all members from the Rangers. It was tough but I'm proud of it. I do not wear it on my sleeve either.

I have enclosed \$10.00 to offset the cost of producing the newsletter. Please keep sending it. I will contribute an article soon, too. Also, please send your newsletter to Dennis Montgomery, address enclosed.

I would be interested in hearing from anyone associated with us during my tour there. Will you be publishing a list of everyone available to contact? Again, thanks much and good job.

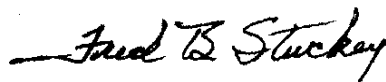


October 13, 1992

Hi Dave-

Just thought I'd drop a line and let you know how much I enjoyed the Newsletter. I've talked with a bunch of the guys on the phone and have written to a few more. It's really funny - It seems as if the conversations picked up where they left off years ago. It's almost as if we had been together last week. Guess friends made in combat are truly lasting friends.

Well, better get out of here for now. Keep up the good work on the Newsletter.



Dave-

This is to say hello and let you know a few things you might need to use in the Newsletter . . .

Cu Chi base camp was built in 1966 on an area known to the Vietnamese as Dong Zu, meaning paratrooper's field. p126 Tunnels of Cu Chi.

"Tropic Lightning" was a nickname earned by the 25th for the speed with which they relieved the Marines at Guadalcanal, which later became official. p130 Tunnels of Cu Chi.

"Green Berets at War by Stanton lists 81 MIA's unaccounted for. 57 of those were in Recon units, or others doing recon. Another one was lost on an aerial recon so, if you say 57 or 58, three quarters of them were lost doing recon. Makes me wonder if the hazards were the reason we ended up with the task & also maybe it was, "let Mikie do it" (the infantry). Anyway, I wanted to point out how far our pants were down and how far our fannies were hang'n out.

I'd like us or the parent association to adopt a ring design. For economy both gold and silver, or maybe rhodium to allow everyone to afford it?

The mission I described in my last letter to you is the one listed on p139, Rangers at War, with inaccuracies. Forget Lacey's mission, it was bunk-same page. A guy named Noga knows more than anyone else. Mrkvicka sent me the pages about the 25th, and here's my mission unfolding before my eyes . . .

Dave, if you can use any of these tidbits, go for it, if not, no sweat - enjoyed your letter. You brought up a good point about the '94 Reunion being held in Columbus (Georgia) and how the voting excluded a lot of people.

We need to pursue a write in vote to the Ranger Association, or vote tabulation through each company. These people have been excluded long enough! Your Bud,



October 5, 1992

Dear David-

Great job on the "Newsletter." I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I (& my family) did. This info is a few days late coming out of our Jewish holidays. Had to put things on hold for a few days. Plus, just got out of the hospital from surgery, but all is A-OK now. Again, thanks for a great newsletter.

Always a friend.

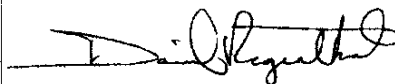


January 1, 1993

Hi Guys!

Happy New Year! This newsletter was to have been out in December but got to the printer late, sorry. Had a lot more I wanted to say in this issue but I ran out of room . . . I am reading, at the suggestion of Charlie Rose, "the Tunnels of Cu Chi." So far it is pretty interesting historically .

'93 ushers in a new year of opportunity. '92 went out with the good of the Reunion and the bad of "Hurricane Andrew" . . . ask Bruce Craft. Let's make 1993 the Ranger Year of "Community & Peace."



The last time I saw the Company Area was in April 1970. I was in the rear of a LOH flying out of Cu Chi. I had strapped a purple smoke grenade to the skid and pulled the pin as we flew over the repelling tower. I don't know who was on the ground, but they waved back to me. Mr Wilson was flying the LOH and was finishing up his tour at D Troop 3/4 Cav. We buzzed a truck convoy and low-leveled across some rice paddies, right at some whiskey bravos (water buffaloes). As my final parting act I dropped CS gas on some ARVN's standing around a duce and a half . . . my final effort at Vietnamization of the war.

Wilson let me off at an abandoned heli-pad and I walked to the Replacement Center. I had promised, if the question about an unauthorized landing arose that the LOH was from a 1st Cav unit out of Tay Ninh.

Vietnam seemed like a dream. I was on a Freedom Bird headed for Travis AFB. I didn't seem like a year had gone by the wayside. So much had happened. I still smelled the lush aroma of jungle, but I was freezing on this damn airliner. When I got off the plane in California I wanted to kiss the ground. I made it, I really made it back! I had played their silly game and made it home. It was going to be easy, all down hill from now on out. After a couple of letters I lost contact with the people I knew in Company F.

Five years past and I watched the NVA tanks roll up the steps of the Presidential Palace. It was over, Saigon was now "Uncle Ho's Town." The people here in the U.S. seemed to be glad it was over. Being a Vietnam Vet (which wasn't something you bragged about at the time), I was proud of my Company F and all of it's Rangers. The students I was going to college with would never know what we had to go through, and I was glad of that. But they would never know the bond that happens to people in war. I had begun college in day classes but ended up in night school. This is were I met most of the Vietnam Vets in college. I've still not met or heard from anybody from Company F.

Thirteen years have passed and I'm hunting Elk in Ovando, Montana (pop. 35). Actually I was chasing them, never fired a shot. It was great, no TV, radio, or newspapers.

When I came out of the woods Grenada was plastered all over the news. Airborne Rangers had jumped in and rescued the students. I was glad to see it go so well. I was very proud of those Rangers. The public seemed to be proud too. The anti-military tide was turning. By 1989 the Rangers had done it again in Panama.

Being a Vietnam Vet wasn't so bad now. The "Wall" was up in Washington D.C. and California had erected a memorial to the six thousand Californians that had been killed in Vietnam. I hadn't planned to go to the dedication in Sacramento but, some new found friends said, "Yes you are!" We marched in the parade to the dedication. After the ceremony all of us went to a tent called "Buddy Search." That was the first time I thought I might find somebody from Company F. No such luck, but I did find a guy from Company K of the 4th Division. We talked and when we parted neither of us had found a single name from either company we were in in Vietnam.

I Knew that I wanted to find my Tribe, Company F. I really didn't know where to look, but started looking and looking, and looking. If it hadn't been for my pictures in the scrap book, I would have said it was just a dream. There they were. Salazar, Purdy, Rooney, Buettner, Stevens, Krein, and Camp. I know I was in Viet-Nam with these guys, but I haven't found anybody that was with Company F. I know I was there because I had the pictures. Twenty years and not a soul, not one. I thought that I might never see anybody from Company F, let alone anyone I knew.

The guy I work for, Bob Lynch, was with the 1/8th (ABN) 1st Cav Division, and somebody sent him a copy of "Static Line." Handing it to me he said, "You were Airborne, weren't you?" Well, what to my wandering eyes should appear . . . 75th Ranger Regiment Association, Inc.

Son of a gun, I couldn't believe my eyes!!! That night I wrote a letter to Roy Boatman. Well, it wasn't long before I got my first copy of "Patroling" in the mail. When I got inside, my girlfriend told me a guy named Joe called me from Virginia. "Joe?" I asked. "Joe Stevens" she replied, "He was with you in Vietnam. Holy Cow, That Joe Stevens! Twenty-one years and finally someone I was with in Vietnam!!! I called and we talked for an hour. Damn it was good to hear his voice. It hadn't changed in all these years. Later I found out about the reunion at Fort Benning, GA. We made plans to meet there in June of 1992. I got a call from Bill Evans and Bill Mrkvicka, and wrote to guys trying to put faces with names.

There was a gathering of tribes of June of 1992. My tribe, Company F, was going to be there. Man, was I excited. I made the hotel reservation, bought my airplane ticket, and before I knew it . . . showtime. I flew to Atlanta, drove to Columbus, and checked in to the hotel. A quick look into the bar and lounge and up to the Hospitality Room. Still nobody I knew. Well, Mrkvicka, Stevens, and Evans were signed in, but not to be found.

Down to my room and my brain is going in to warp drive, Scotty! A thousand thoughts are going through my mind. Will you recognize anybody? Sure I will!! Will they recognize you? I shaved my beard and cut off my ponytail didn't I? Should you were your beret? Which one, maroon or black? Then it hit me . . . I was stalling, putting off leaving my room.

This is what I wanted all these years, to see and talk to the guys I was with in Vietnam, right? So what's the problem, Dude? Was it going to bring back the bad memories I really wanted to forget about? Two days before I left Vietnam, my platoon sergeant, SFC Floyd and Mike Thomas were killed in action. Tinney was shot up bad and I never heard what happened to him. I gave my CAR-15 to Mike the day before he was killed. That one really hurt. That was the first time I cried in Vietnam.

"Cold feet" is what they called it, I had been in my hotel room for two hours trying to get past the door of my room. Nervous as a whore in church to put it mildly.

Then a voice came in to my head and said, "You're afraid!" "No I'm not", I shot back. "just exploring my options!" Remembering what it was like to come into an LZ on a helicopter insertion. Feeling the slick flair just before it landed, hover, or whatever they did before you "exited the aircraft." I had that same feeling but nobody to help me get out the door. In the bar were the guys who helped me get through Vietnam. Without them I wouldn't have made it back to the world. I owed them at least a thank you, and all I had to do was to get to the bar. But, I still had to get through the doorway of my room.

That voice in my head said, "Oh well, you can always go back to California. Too bad Team 1-3 couldn't see you now." That did it. I looked away from the mirror, walked to the door and pulled it open. Out the door, to the elevator, and pushed the button. I was on a mission now and there was no stopping me. The door opened and it was packed with . . . yes, Rangers! One asked me when I got in and I started to say years ago. "Couple of hours ago", I replied. He asked if I had signed in? Damn it, I looked at the roster but never signed my name to it. Feeling a bit dumb I said, "No, I forgot."

Down to the first floor and across the lobby and there it stood, a set of double doors leading to the lounge. Through the doors I would be in the bar, a perfect Ranger Rendezvous. With nerves of steel and strength of Arnold Schwarzenegger I pushed open the doors . . . this time a full recon of every table and every face. Nobody but nobody I knew was in the bar. Well, back up to the room? No way! Wait, there is a table of four guys and they are looking at me . . . A motley crew for sure. They don't look familiar, but something has me staring back. One guy is looking real hard, ah shit, I don't need a fight. Fly 2,000 miles and end up in a bar room brawl and I didn't even have my CAR-15 with me.

They are really looking me over but I think . . . yes, they are smiling. "Joe?!", I said not much over a whisper, and then a big smile as he said, "Ray!" Contact with friendlies, finally, after so many years. Who were these other guys he was sitting with at the table? Bill Mrkvicka, Joe Gentile, Bill Evans, and Bruce Craft.

Joe hadn't changed a lot. He still had that "Cat that ate the canary grin." Somebody broke out a scrap book and I started looking at the faces. "That's me in '69", said Bill Mrkvicka pointing to a picture. Yes, that's him, I can see it now and I remember him. So long ago. Joe had a picture of me and Bill Evans said, "Now I remember you!" Five minutes later we were talking like we had just finished our tour last week. Finally, after 22 years I was talking to my people, my tribe. People who did what it took to get the job done.

Day one of the Reunion was fantastic. The Company F roster was growing. Guys came with their families, girl friends, and by themselves, and kept coming through the door. Flying, driving, and even hitchhiking from California no less, they came. More and more guys I knew. I was meeting people that were in Company F before me, and those that came after I left. I even saw the last mission Company F ran. I was very glad somebody had the foresight to film that mission. We watched guys "rolling beer" on a block of ice to cool them down at a beach in Vietnam. It looked great. A voice in the back joked, "Didn't you guys ever go to the field?" There was an envious tone to his voice.

When Saturday rolled around we could have fielded a couple of Heavy Teams. The mission we had run became longer on feats and more daring in the telling, and a real good time was had by all. The Army Rangers rolled out the red carpet for us. Demonstrations and a luncheon at Camp Rodgers were great. The food has improved in the Army. There I ran into the craziest Canadian I've ever had the pleasure to meet. Remember people protesting the war and running to Canada to avoid the draft? Well, Don Purdy buys his way out of the Canadian Army so he can enlist in the

U.S. Army. Why? To go to Vietnam, of course! He is a Command Sergeant Major now, training Rangers. They all know him as, "the Purd." The Rangers came out from Fort Benning. We drank and talked with them in the lounge. They wanted to know about us.

They were genuinely proud of what we had done in Vietnam. These guys train hard and many have proven themselves in combat. It was great to get to know them, they are the finest soldiers in the world. They looked tough, but were so polite, "Yes Sir", or "No Sir", when they talked to us. They have an air about themselves of confidence. They know they are good and are waiting until they are needed again. Looking back at the Rangers record after Vietnam, it's pretty clear they have done an outstanding job and carry the torch well. I can't begin to express how proud I am of them.

All too soon it was time to go. Faster than their arrival was the departure of the Reunion Rangers. People had to get back to the real world. Saying goodbye wasn't so hard because now we could stay in touch. The hotel was quiet when I let on Monday afternoon. A new convention was already going on, but very quiet compared to the Rangers. Looked like "Revenge of the Nerds." Everybody had at least a half a dozen pens in the plastic pocket protectors.

I felt a bit sad as I left Columbus, but at least I found my tribe. Perhaps not all of them, but there is always the next reunion. I hope to see you next time. I have one regret though, and would like to apologize. I was so intent on finding guys I knew that I really didn't get to meet all the guys who were in Company F. Next reunion I'll remedy that. I don't think it really matters exactly when you were with Company F, just that you were there. We all went to the same "school" . . . we just graduated at different times. We are all Alumni of Company F. I hope you can make it next time because you might just make someone else's 20+ year wait worthwhile.

Ray Armstrong



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