



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Chapter 1061



Volume 9 Number 1

Chartered April 2012

January, 2022

Within the chapter, we have some that need our prayers: They are as follows: Rusty Davis, Ern Grover, Bill Henry, Holly Watts, and Bob Knight. Bobbi Counts and Sharon Morris have lost loved ones. Remember the tornado victims in KY. Prayers, cards and calls are always welcome for all .

57 members and guests attended

Meeting called to order by President Jerry O'Hara.

The minutes were presented by Tom Snook and the financial report was presented by Sonny Clutteur (current balance is \$21,360.82) - approved by the membership.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Fundraising: This month's Chapter auctions brought in \$175.00. Several veteran hats, collected by Bennie Swindoll, are available. The monthly challenges are also helping us stay afloat. and will continue in Tom Counts' memory. Thanks to the members.

Committee Reports were suspended for this month.

OLD BUSINESS

Massanutten Technical School sent a thank you note for the \$447 sent to help the Afghan refugees with clothes and hygiene items. Suitcases and other items are still needed and can be taken to the MTC.

The Breakfast for Veterans is held at Brookdale every 1st Thursday of the month. Please call Maggie at 540-574-2982 to RSVP.

POLITICS

The Chapter received \$1000 from the State VVA to help defray our costs for the National Convention.

The Chapter received a letter from the Kentucky State VVA Council requesting help with the cleanup and rebuilding of areas hit by tornados last week. The Chapter voted to send \$900 and a hat passing raised an additional \$365 for Kentucky relief of our brothers and sisters.

Several bills affecting veterans have been signed by the President. Tom and Jerry have copies for those interested. At the National Convention the Secretary of the VA stated that there will be a review of the benefits currently being received by veterans. This may lead to a reduction in some benefits for veterans. This appears to be motivated by Vice President Kamala Harris' belief that veterans are parasites on the nation.

NEW BUSINESS

Sonny Clutteur read a letter from the Community Foundation donating a \$500 scholarship in honor of Destry Thomas. With the passing of Tom Counts there is an opening for a Fundraising chairmanship. At the last Board meeting Sonny Clutteur agreed to fill in for Tom Counts as Treasurer until the next elections (April, 2022).

All Officer and Board positions are open for the next election. Anyone wishing to serve in any position can give their name to Sonny Clutteur, Sam Balsler or Roger Nelson, Officers and Board members will be expected to serve and aid the Chapter.

Jerry thanked the Honor Guard for their participation in Joe Acker's and Tom Count's funerals. Fred Rhodes did a great

job in getting members to attend. Seventeen Color Guard members were at Tom Counts' memorial. A big thank you was given to Rusty Davis who overcame his own illness to be there and play Taps. (The Board has voted to purchase a \$578 bugle for use if Rusty is not available.) Michael and Jeannie Crawford performed the Native American crossing over ceremony.

The Pigeon Forge trip is tentatively scheduled for April 26 through May 1, coinciding with the Veteran Line Haul Reunion. More information in the future.

CHAPTER BULLETIN BOARD

Sam and Linda Balsler thanked the Chapter for cards and calls when they had Covid.

Wooden nickels have been ordered for the Chapter and should be in soon.

The next Chapter meeting will be at the Wood Grill on January 15, 2022 with breakfast at 9 a.m. and meeting at 10 a.m. Remember to tip our servers.

January Birthdays: Lavonne Bailey, Debi Clutteur, and Welford Davis.

January Anniversaries: Bill & Cindy Ludholtz

The Chapter was able to host some of our Afghan allies whom we have been able to assist. A young man named Hussein talked about his involvement with Special Forces before our untimely departures.



Our friends and their sponsors



Hussein shares what it was like.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021-2023

PRESIDENT Jerry O'Hara 540 435-3064
jdgold04@yahoo.com

1st VICE PRESIDENT Danny Sanders
540 833-5378 Hdsanders1947@gmail.com

2nd VICE PRESIDENT Daneen Coakley
540 820-6892 dacoakley@gmail.com

SECRETARY Tom Snook 540 246-9628
snook107b@aol.com
Alternate = Sonny Clutteur

TREASURER Sonny Clutteur 540 421-5200
sun4Power@aol.com
Alternate = Rusty Davis

DIRECTOR Kenny Emerson 540 433-1480
samboemerson@gmail.com

DIRECTOR Layton Payne 540 896-9329

DIRECTOR Sonny Clutteur 540 421-5200
sun4Power@aol.com

DIRECTOR Roger Nelson 540 433-9770
rogerlindaattwinlakes@gmail.com

DIRECTOR Don Bailey 540 442-7382
don_and_lavonne@verizon.net

DIRECTOR Tom Pruitt 540-896-9800
bunkyp3@gmail.com

DIRECTOR Norman Fifer 540-289-6265
sgemlover@aol.com

DIRECTOR Sam Balsler 540-896-1307
balsersam@yahoo.com

DIRECTOR Bruce Orebaugh 540 271-3191
bruce052@hotmail.com

DIRECTOR Rusty Davis 540 249-5552

DIRECTOR Paul Clancey 540-560-9902
paul@kathysscuba.com

SGT-AT-ARMS Danny Judy 540 564-1290
precdanny@comcast.net

CHAPLAIN Roger Alger 540-652-8660
ralger1@comcast.net

EDITOR Doc Talbot 540 298-7546
asartalbot@gmail.com
Tom Snook 540 246-9628
snook107b@aol.com

HONORARY DIRECTOR Destry Thomas

STATE DELEGATES:

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small. The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible. The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask to hell?" The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?" The little girl replied, "Then you ask him."

The Army Cobra Pilot

Contributed by Jim Casl

As seen by himself:

An incredibly intelligent, tall, handsome, innovative, and highly trained professional killer, idol to countless females, and Gentleman Adventurer, who wears a star sapphire ring, carries a hair-trigger .45 automatic in a specially designed, hand-made quick draw holster along with his trusty survival knife, who is always on time thanks to his ability to obtain immediate transportation and the reliability of his Rolex watch.

As seen by his wife:

A disreputable member of the family who comes home once a year all bruised up, driving a stolen jeep up to the back door carrying a B-4 bag full of dirty laundry, wearing a stained flight suit, smelling of stale booze and JP-4, wearing a huge watch, a fake ring, and that damn ugly beat-up pistol in that stupid holster, who will three months later go out the front door, thankfully for another year.

As seen by his commander:

A fine specimen of a drunken, brawling, jeep stealing, woman corrupting liar, with a star sapphire ring, fantastically accurate Rolex watch, an unauthorized .45 in a non-regulation shoulder holster, and trusty survival knife.

As seen by Division Headquarters:

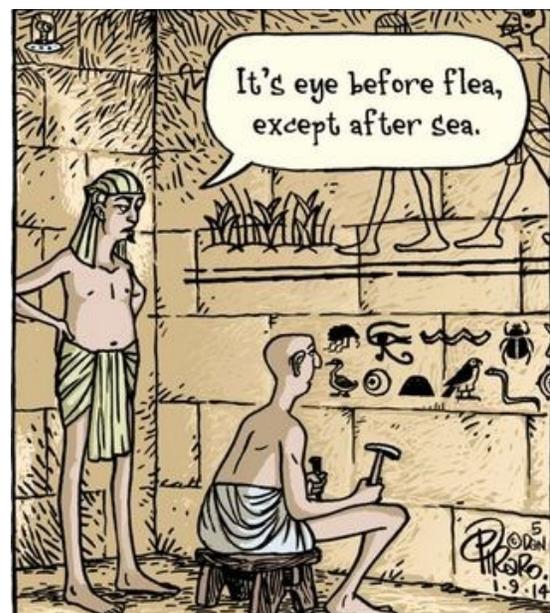
The embodiment of a drunken, brawling, jeep stealing, woman corrupting, lying, zipper-suited Sun God, with a ring, a proscribed 1911A1 .45 in a non-regulation shoulder holster, a Rolex watch, who for some reason carries a survival knife.

As seen by the DoD:

An overpaid, rule-ignoring, over-ranked tax burden, who is unfortunately totally indispensable simply because he has volunteered to go anywhere, and do anything, at any time, only so long as he can booze it up, brawl, steal jeeps, corrupt women, lie, and wear a star sapphire ring, Rolex watch, and carry an obsolete hand gun and a survival knife.

As seen by the enemy:

The implacable inescapable face of death!



THE VETERAN'S VOICE

This is an excerpt from a soon-to-be-published book titled "Red Marker History" by Gary N. Willis. It is about 'Medivac Meadows', an operation in Cambodia by the ARA of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1970.

Medivac Meadows¹

The Vietnamese 6th Airborne Infantry Battalion moved with the 1st Brigade from Song Be during early May, reinforcing the three battalions already engaged in the Fishhook. The battalion headquartered at Fire Support Base (FSB) Oklahoma while its troopers maneuvered in the region. FSB Oklahoma was about ten miles inside Cambodia off Highway 7 on the eastern edge of the Memot Rubber Plantation. ²The fire base was the operational home of a Vietnamese Artillery Battalion of 105 mm howitzers and the long range 8-inch howitzers of A Battery of the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, the "Proud Americans."

On 23 May, a task force of the 61st and 63rd Companies of the 6th Battalion encountered NVA troops during a ground sweep about eight miles southeast of FSB Oklahoma. After a brief fight, the NVA withdrew to the west side of a clearing oriented southeast to northwest, and the Airborne retired to the east. The battalion senior advisor, Red Hat Captain Jesse Myers overhead in a command-and-control helicopter called for artillery fire from FSB Oklahoma and asked Red Marker Control to divert some airstrikes to the enemy's possible routes of withdrawal.

The artillery fire mission required extra caution. Only eighty meters separated the NVA on the west side of the clearing from the Airborne troopers on the east side. The standard safe distance from an 8-inch round with its 200 pounds of explosive was 100 meters for unsheltered personnel. A miscalculation could prove fatal. The howitzers' alignment, elevation, and propellant charge had to be just right. The fire control center made its calculations and then double checked them. Then A Battery Commander, Captain Lee Hayden, double checked the "double check" by hand. ³Myers watched the first shots land on target and gave the okay to fire for effect.

A Red Marker FAC arrived on scene and orbited to the east awaiting a set of fighters scrambled from Bien Hoa. Myers briefed the FAC and shut down the artillery when the fighters arrived. They bombed and napalmed the western tree line as darkness fell. The Airborne dug in for the night. Overnight, FSB Oklahoma stood ready if needed, but only sporadic small arms fire came from the opposite side of the clearing.

At dawn on the 24th, the NVA attacked in strength. The Airborne drove them back while suffering several killed and eight wounded seriously. Myers again called on the artillery at FSB Oklahoma and requested Red Markers direct some airstrikes on the NVA positions. Red Marker 16, Lieutenant Blair, already in the air, diverted to the site to control immediate airstrikes. After the two Airborne companies secured the area, the Red Hats on the ground, Staff Sergeants Louis Clason and Michael Philhower, requested Medevac. Myers relayed the request to Brigade HQ and asked for gunship cover. The request went out to the 1st Air Cavalry's Medevac and Blue Max gunships units at about 1100 hours. ⁴

A Medevac helicopter piloted by "The Wild Deuce" (official call sign Medevac 2), First Lieutenant Stephen F. Modica, and a pair of Cobra gunships, Precise Sword 12 and 12A, received the requests for the evacuation mission. Modica was en route from Phuoc Vinh to Katum when he got the call. Red Hat Sergeant First Class Louis Richard Rocco, happened to be on board hitching a ride to Katum. Rocco, a qualified medic and advisor to the Airborne's Medical Battalion, sometimes volunteered to fly on Medevac flights. When Rocco heard Medevac 2 was headed to pick up wounded paratroopers, he asked to stay on board and help. Modica landed at Katum, offloaded some supplies, and picked up a steel chest protector for Rocco. The Wild Deuce departed Katum toward the task force location, rendezvousing along the way with the Blue Max gunships, Precise Sword 12 and 12A. Meanwhile, another Red Marker relieved Blair, who returned to Quan Loi for fuel. Myers again shut down the artillery while the Red Marker FAC directed more bombs into the western tree line. In the early afternoon as the airstrike finished, the trio of helicopters neared the clearing. Myers briefed them on the situation and suggested a run in from the south. Precise Sword 12 deployed low to protect the Medevac, and Precise Sword 12 A remained as high bird to cover them both.

All Hell Broke Loose

The Wild Deuce came in low and fast with Precise Sword 12 to his left. They approached from the south just above the treetops. Modica wanted to give any North Vietnamese gunners only the briefest glimpse of the Medevac helicopter before setting down, loading wounded, and speeding away. Red Hat Clason, advisor to the Vietnamese 63rd Airborne Infantry Company, stepped out in the clearing and watched the green colored smoke spew from the smoke grenade he'd popped to guide The Wild Deuce. Behind the tree line, Philhower, advisor to 61st Company commander Captain Nhiem, manned the FM radio. Everyone heard the distinctive whup-whup-whup of the Huey's blades well before it entered the clearing. Lieutenant Hwang, commander of the 63rd had stretcher bearers waiting in the tree line with seriously wounded troopers. Hwang and Clason waited tensely, hoping they could load the men without any trouble. Modica brought the ship into the clearing, lined up on Clason, and expertly flared for touchdown.

Just then, all hell broke loose. AK-47 and .51 caliber machine gun fire ripped into the cabin from the southwestern tree line. The Cobra gunships responded immediately. They returned fire with 2.75-inch high explosive and flechette rockets and 40 mm grenade launchers, hoping to suppress the enemy fire long enough for Medevac 2 to get the wounded on board and get to safety

1 The description of the following event is based on a number of sources, which contained sometimes conflicting detail: magazine article by then

Captain Stephen F. Modica, "U.S. Army Aviation Digest," June 1975; letter written by Red Hat Major Jesse W. Myers in response to that article;

emails among various surviving participants including Jerry Granberg and Ralph Jones (artillerymen) and Patrick Martin (Medevac crew chief),

Major (R) Jesse Myers; Cobra pilots George Alexander and Paul Garrity, and other sources as individually footnoted. 2 Grid Coordinates XU425098, per the History of the "Proud Americans" at https://proudamericans.homestead.com/VIETNAM_1963-1971-1.pdf

3 Emails July 2021, former Lieutenant Jerry Granberg, second in command, A Battery, 2nd of the 32nd Field Artillery.

4 Medevac Platoon, 15th Medical Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Division, and Aerial Rocket Artillery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

The Medevac's door gunners opened up with their M-60 machine guns. Rocco fired his M-16 out the left door into the trees. Modica felt two enemy slugs glance off his "chicken plate" steel chest protector. At the same time, a third round shattered his left knee. The Medevac pancaked into the clearing. Copilot Lieutenant Leroy (Lee) G. Caurbarreaux swiveled his head to give Modica some shit for such a bad landing before realizing Steve was hit. Lee immediately grabbed the controls. "I've got the ship!" he shouted over the intercom. As he pulled pitch and poured on full power, Caurbarreaux jabbed the UHF key, shouting now to the two Cobra gunships, "Precise Swords One Two and One Two Alpha, we are outta here! Cover us!" Sergeant Clason hot-footed it out of the clearing as Medevac 2 spooled up and climbed toward safety. But safety was a long way off. Coming in hot and low approaching the clearing made the bird harder to hit. Liftoff was a different matter. The UH-1H helicopter took time to get back up to speed and out of the clearing. The NVA gunners got a clear view of the slow-moving Huey and unleashed everything they had. The entire western tree line lit up. From the left seat, Modica saw the RPM going way past normal maximum and knew they were in trouble. He switched to Guard channel and broadcast, "The Wild Deuce is going down! XU5101! MAYDAY! MAYDAY! XU5101!"⁵

At about 50 feet in the air, gunfire and aerodynamic stress ripped the tail boom from the ship. The Huey spun out of control, crashing to the ground on its right side. Smoke billowed from the chopper as the fuel tanks burst into flame. In his C&C chopper, Myers watched in horror as the Medevac seemed to land, then shot almost straight up and fell to the ground on its side thrashing briefly like a wounded insect. He thought at first it had fallen on Clason. In fact, Clason was not hurt, unlike the Medevac crew. Sergeant Gary L. Taylor, right side door gunner, died on impact, crushed by the aircraft. Medic SP5 Terry T. Burdette was badly burned and suffered multiple fractures. Crew chief and left door gunner, Sergeant Patrick Martin, was thrown clear and knocked unconscious. Rocco was also thrown clear, breaking a wrist and hip. Modica's leg was shattered, and Caurbarreaux had multiple cuts and bruises. Precise Sword 12 immediately came to a hover in front of the burning wreck. First Lieutenant George Alexander swiveled the minigun under the Cobra's chin, spraying the tree line. Warrant Officer Brian Russ, piloting from the back seat, rotated the gunship left and right releasing salvo after salvo of high explosive rockets into the enemy position. Their ship sustained 29 hits including several that destroyed the cockpit canopy. One round blew the mic off Russ's helmet, but the airmen held their position.

Meanwhile, Precise Sword 12A strafed the tree line with rockets, minigun, and 40 mm grenade launcher. Warrant Officer 2 Paul Garrity and his copilot Warrant Officer James Moran took several hits, although the enemy focused most of its attention on the lower gunship. When the Medevac hit the ground, Philhower dropped the radio handset and sprinted toward the clearing, leaving Myers in the dark. Even without radio communication, Myers knew the paratroopers would try to get any survivors out of the downed bird. Lieutenant Hwang immediately sent a skirmish line of 63rd Company troopers forward to provide covering fire while Clason and Philhower approached the wreck. Myers informed FSB Oklahoma about the crisis in the clearing and asked for more artillery fire. The 8-inchers stepped up their fire on the western tree line, keeping the NVA's head down. The enemy did not venture into the clearing. Precise Sword 12 and 12A kept up covering fire as the two Red Hat Staff Sergeants pulled survivors from the wreckage and helped them to the friendly tree line. The gunships coordinated two attempts by other helicopters to pick up the downed crewmen before running out of ammo and low on fuel. Lieutenant Alexander briefed another gunship section that appeared on scene so they could try a third attempt. Precise Swords then flew to Quan Loi and jumped into replacement aircraft and returned to the Meadow. Clason and Philhower were awarded the Silver Star for their actions. Vice President Agnew presented the awards at a ceremony shortly afterwards. Sergeant First Class Rocco was recognized several years later for rescuing survivors from the chopper and administering first aid before he became immobilized from his injuries.⁶ He was awarded the Medal of Honor presented by President Gerald Ford in February 1974. The Medevac pilot and crew also received awards for bravery. Modica received a Silver Star and Caurbarreaux, Taylor (posthumously), Burdette, and Martin each a Distinguished Flying Cross.⁷ Those were not the only awards conferred, for this engagement was far from over.

Jesse Myers knew what needed to happen next. The two Airborne companies had run into a buzz saw. But they had given better than they had gotten in return. They had a good defensive position and overwhelming artillery and air support. The only thing they did not have was mobility. A good tactic would have been to pull back and bring in a B-52 ArcLight mission to pound the enemy. But with the number of wounded and injured, the paratroopers could not easily withdraw. They would not abandon their wounded, and they could not easily move them. They needed to hold their position until after a successful evacuation of casualties.

Failed Rescue Attempts

Modica's Mayday call on Guard attracted numerous helicopters wanting to immediately pick up the wounded crew and Vietnamese troopers. The Medevac Platoon made three attempts that afternoon. The first ship was driven off by intense ground fire. It limped back to Quan Loi where a wounded crewman got medical attention. Some of the enemy ground fire now came from the north and south sides of the clearing. The NVA apparently were attempting to flank the two companies or at least be in position to score more hits on helicopters they knew would be coming. Myers adjusted the artillery to compensate.

Captain Myers advised the second and third helicopters attempting a pickup to approach from the east directly over the Airborne position and land as close to the tree line as possible. However, the pilots of the next two sorties flew the same pattern that failed all day. They came in from the south parallel to the Airborne position, exposing themselves to enemy fire the length of the field. Although the NVA crippled both planes, the pilots successfully landed the damaged craft in a clearing several hundred meters from the firefight. Other helicopters in the area picked up those crews and took them to safety. But the wounded paratroopers and the injured crew of Medevac 2 would spend the night on the ground with no medical care except first aid

5 The grid coordinates Modica screamed into the mike designated a one-kilometer square of territory about five miles inside the Fishhook north of Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam. In an article Modica wrote for the magazine "Army Aviation," he incorrectly stated the coordinates as XU5606, which is right on the border of Cambodia and Vietnam rather than five miles inside. Chalk that up to the "Fog of War" and frailty of human memory. Interestingly, "5606" is the designation of the hydraulic fluid used in the Huey, which might explain why the number came to Modica's mind while writing from memory about five years later. According to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Association, XU507010 is the six digit grid coordinate for the downed Medevac.

6 From the Citation to accompany the Congressional Medal of Honor awarded to Warrant Officer (then Sergeant First Class) Louis Richard Rocco.

7 The Blue Max aircraft commanders, Lt. Alexander and WO2 Garrity were recommended for the Silver Star, but that paperwork was lost. To date, neither has received recognition for their skill and courage.

(To Be Continued)