



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



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"A Soldier Once... And Always"

December 2015

Commanders Corner: I hope all of you enjoyed your Thanksgiving and are preparing for the upcoming Christmas holidays. This is the time of year when I start getting annual updates on what various friends and their families have done throughout the past year; so, I thought I'd share my 2015 with you. First of all, my wonderful wife, Sam, was elected as the "Woman of the Year" for the group of women "most likely to find their way back after being dropped off 500 miles from home". This is the 2nd year in a row for her and damned if she didn't find her way home again this year. Way to go, Sam! There's always next year. She also won the annual 200 yard "swimming through the swamp with concrete blocks tied to your ankles" award. She's a trooper! All of my nieces and nephews activities were just about the same as last year: Marriages, divorces, whining, successes and, of course, some failures along the line. The biggest successes were my little nieces, Faith, Hope, and Charity. The all 3 manages to landed jobs as ballet dancers at a local "Gentlemen's Club" and provide me with free passes. The biggest success was my nephew, Mortimer, who was "Zabu, the Swamp Boy" at the State Fair, which got me free rides at the "Midway" and cotton candy for life. He is now on tour with the "Carnies" and, I think, is in Mahanoy City, PA this week. Personally, I had a great 2015 and had several accomplishments. I won the "most consecutive weeks falling off a bar stool" at my local pub and placed 2nd in the "most repeated stories told" contest. I hear the national champ was from somewhere in Michigan and was a member of our 2/1 chapter but, I can't recall his name. The award I am still most proud of, as some of you may recall from my first annual letter in 1946, was the "spit up and poop contest" at the tender age of 2. That one took some effort and I owe a lot of thanks to my mom for providing my diet of spam, oatmeal and beans every day for a year. Well, enough about the family and 2015 for now. I do want to commend one of our members, Jerry Hughes, for all of his work is helping to establish the new "Veterans Memorial Garden" in Key West. Jerry sent me some pictures of it and it looks beautiful. If you ever get the chance to go there, make sure you visit the memorial and look up Jerry at VFW Post 3911. The folks there were wonderful to me and my friend from Norway when we last visited Jerry. I hope all of you enjoy your Christmas and the upcoming year. I have to close now and go get on my bar stool at the pub to start practicing for the 2016 contest.

Chuck

Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!



Two Korean War & One Vietnam MIAs Identified: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has identified the remains of six soldiers who had been missing in action since the Korean War and one soldier from WW II. Returned home are:

- Army Cpl. Martin A. King, was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, when he was declared missing in action while fighting in North Korea on Nov. 2, 1950.
- Army Cpl. Robert V. Witt, 20, of Los Angeles, was assigned to 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, when he was captured while fighting in North Korea on Dec. 2, 1950. He reportedly died in a North Korean prisoner of war camp on Jan. 31, 1951.
- Army Staff Sgt. Kenneth L. Cunningham, 21, of Ellery, Ill. On Oct. 3, 1969, then Private 1st Class Cunningham was an observer in an OV-1C Mohawk aircraft on a surveillance mission over the tri-border area of Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam. Contact was lost and the aircraft was found two days later on top of a 7,000 foot peak in a mountain range north of Kontum. He was assigned to the 225th Aviation Company, 223rd Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade.

Arizona Governor Wants to Use Guard Troops for Border Security: Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey wants the Arizona legislature to approve "tens of millions of dollars" in new funding for a border security force made up of state police, a move intended to address border smuggling even as immigration and terrorism worries emerge as potent 2016 political issues. The Republican governor said his new plan to target smuggling along the Arizona border will focus on adding staffing, technology, air assets and highway patrol coverage. He also wants to boost spending on prosecutors, help county jails pay for holding added prisoners and temporarily use Arizona National Guard troops. The troops, equipment and added staffing will be used by a newly formed Arizona Department of Public Safety unit called the Border Strike Force. Since he created it in September, the unit has seized more than \$2.2 million in cash, multiple firearms, nearly 4,000 pounds of marijuana, 73 pounds of meth, and 19 pounds of heroin - "more (heroin) than the entire amount seized in all of 2014," by state police, Ducey said. Ducey highlighted the new efforts after testifying at a field hearing of the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee at the state Capitol. Arizona Sens. John McCain and Jeff Flake attended the meeting chaired by Sen. Senator Ron Johnson, R-Wisconsin.

World War II Facts: Following a massive naval bombardment, 35,000 United States and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands. 21 troops were killed in the assault on the island. It could have been worse if there had actually been any Japanese on the island.



Convicted Spy Pollard Released from US Custody, Government Says: Convicted spy Jonathan Pollard has been released from prison, a U.S. government official and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said recently, culminating an extraordinary espionage case that occasionally complicated American-Israeli relations over nearly 30 years. "The people of Israel welcome the release of Jonathan A. Pollard," Netanyahu said in a statement. "As someone who raised Jonathan's case for years with successive American presidents, I had long hoped this day would come," he said. Pollard's release from a federal prison in Butner, North Carolina came nearly 30 years to the day after his arrest for providing large amounts of classified U.S. government information to Israel. Ed Ross, a spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, said that "as of this morning, Jonathan Pollard is no longer in BOP custody." Attorneys for Pollard did not immediately respond to messages seeking confirmation of the 61-year-old's newfound freedom. Pollard had been granted parole this summer from a life sentence imposed in 1987. His lawyers have said that they have secured a job and housing for him in the New York area, without elaborating. The terms of his parole require him to remain in the United States for at least five years, though supporters -- including Netanyahu and some members of Congress -- are seeking permission for him to move to Israel immediately.

Cold War-Era Spy Ronald Pelton Freed from US Custody: A former National Security Agency employee convicted of selling defense and communication secrets he gained during his career to the Soviet Union has been released from U.S. custody 30 years after his arrest. The sentence for Cold War-era spy Ronald Pelton, 74, ended on Tuesday. He had been placed on home confinement several months ago to serve out the final stretch of his sentence and was released recently from the custody of the Bureau of Prisons, agency spokesman Ed Ross said. Pelton, a former NSA intelligence communications specialist, was arrested in November 1985 on charges of selling information to the Soviets about signals intelligence between 1980 and 1985 for \$35,000 plus expenses. Prosecutors have said a Soviet KGB agent who defected and later returned to Moscow tipped investigators to Pelton. Among the secrets Pelton gave up was information about Operation Ivy Bells, an effort by the NSA and the Navy to tap Soviet communications cables that were laid under the ocean.

Terrorist Attack a Wakeup Call to America: VFW National Commander John Biedrzycki said the VFW stands with America's first ally as it mourns in the wake of a vicious and cowardly attack, but that "the attack on Paris should also serve as a wakeup call that our own homeland is vulnerable to attack from radical Muslim extremists who are hell-bent on destroying us and our entire way of life," he said. The Chief called America vulnerable because it has porous borders, a broken immigration system, and elected and appointed officials who refuse to recognize this enemy as a threat to national security, despite their having the great tactical advantage of choosing when and where to attack. He also said America is vulnerable because Congress still refuses to eliminate sequestration, which takes a meat cleaver to the budgets of national defense, intelligence and homeland security. Biedrzycki said America has been caught sleeping twice, on Dec. 7, 1941, and on Sept. 11, 2001. "There must not be a third time," he said, "and that's why the VFW will do what we must to force Washington to wake up and destroy this enemy before they strike our homeland. There is no higher nor more immediate national priority."

Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.

A Christmas Gift to Remember

John Shoemaker

It's that time of year ... Christmas away from home. It was called Hawk Hill, a firebase halfway between 23rd Infantry Division Headquarters at Chu Lai and the old city of Da Nang, South Vietnam. A bump of a hill, it was home to a battalion of infantry, several batteries of artillery and other units, including dozens of helicopters. One of their many important missions was the constant re-supply to field units engaging the enemy in I Corps from the South China Sea to Laos. The Hueys flew in and out all day and night in a never ending procession...making the signature "whop-whop" sound. No one ever forgets it as you will strain to hear when the Medivac is coming or the Hueys are coming to rescue you from harm's way. More foreboding is when they crank up the Hueys knowing they are taking you back out to a hot landing zone or LZ to chase the enemy. Over the prior six months, I was on 27 of those combat assaults by helicopter. Now, as a Company Commander at Hawk Hill for the 2/1st Battalion in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade my mission was to ensure the safety of all personnel by guarding the firebase, circled with concertina and defensive bunkers. It was a rugged Army base with fearsome 155mm howitzers, firing at all times. There were dozens of bunkers dug deep and covered in sand bags 3 and 4 levels deep to protect against the routine call of "incoming!" when alarms wailed as enemy rockets came smashing haphazardly into the firebase. In a few of the bunkers, the soldiers would erect a symbolic Christmas tree which may only be a foot or two high with crude decorations and even a strand of lights. This was considered luxury compared to those in the "bush" sleeping in foxholes or on the ground while leeches silently crawled on them. Late in December, word came down from Brigade that we were selected for quite an honor. Since we had finished several months of bitter combat, suffering casualties but killing hundreds of the enemy, we learned that we will be transported north to Da Nang to see the incredibly popular "Bob Hope Show". What looked like a very dismal Christmas now had us really pumped up. Over a hundred of us loaded up for the hour plus trip up Highway One to Da Nang. My worries came back about how to protect against a potential enemy attack, but I would soon learn all would be quiet. In an open theater filled with thousands of troops, for several hours we watched and yelled and laughed as Bob Hope did his magic with his troupe of courageous performers. The atmosphere was electric. For a brief moment in time, all was well. Everything seemed right with the world. We wanted to forget the reality of it. Right then, the world was at peace and life was full of fun again. When we got back to Hawk Hill, the Battalion commander ordered a turkey dinner for us. They really tried hard to make it exceptional under the circumstances -- and it was. Later, back in my bunker and on my crudely constructed bunk bed, I immediately grabbed pen and paper to write my wife and parents. It really doesn't seem so long ago that we had no cell phones, Internet, landlines, or Skype on laptops -- just pen and paper. Drifting off to sleep, I listened to a few Christmas songs on my battery powered, cassette recorder. Then it happened, "Bang!" You could feel the concussion of the explosion as it dropped dirt and dust on me from the roof of the bunker. I can still hear the sound of the projectile screaming on its way to its target. It was back to reality. I would try to sleep anyway with a bandana over my face. My celebration was over, but the Christmas memory lingers. Standing in the cold admiring my home in Natick, I smiled knowing I would sleep in a beautiful, warm bed tonight. I reminded myself of the incredible gift I received when I left Da Nang on my flight home after a solid year of combat; that is, I had survived. Now that is something to celebrate at every Christmas. I will also remember those who were not so gifted.

Obama Signs Defense Bill Despite Guantanamo Provisions: President Barack Obama signed a \$607 billion defense policy bill despite his opposition to restrictions in the legislation that ban him from moving Guantanamo Bay detainees to the United States and making good on a long unfulfilled campaign promise. Obama has opposed provisions preventing detainee transfers since Congress first attached the measures to spending bills in an attempt block Obama's plans. The dispute has taken on added intensity this year because the White House has launched a final push to close to the prison before Obama leaves office. In a statement, Obama said the bill "includes vital benefits for military personnel and their families, authorities to facilitate ongoing operations around the globe, and important reforms to the military retirement system" as well as other measures. He added, however, that he is "deeply disappointed that the Congress has again failed to take productive action toward closing the detention facility at Guantanamo." Keeping the prison open, Obama said, "is not consistent with our interests as a Nation and undermines our standing in the world." The White House and the Pentagon are preparing to send to Congress a plan outlining more precisely how it would shutter the prison and where in the U.S. might transfer detainees. The proposal, however, was not expected to overcome sizable opposition among Republicans and some Democrats. That's put the defense policy bill at the center of the debate over whether Obama would move some detainees from the detention center in Cuba to U.S. facilities without congressional approval. Some legal experts and Obama administration allies argue the restrictions are unconstitutional and are urging Obama to move the detainees and close the prison despite the provisions. The White House has said it is focused on working with Congress, but has not ruled out other options. "As I have said repeatedly, the executive branch must have the flexibility, with regard to the detainees who remain at Guantanamo, to determine when and where to prosecute them, based on the facts and circumstances of each case and our national security interests, and when and where to transfer them consistent with our national security and our humane treatment policy," Obama said in the statement. But after Obama signed the bill, House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said his approval "reaffirms longstanding prohibitions on the transfer of Guantanamo Bay detainees to the United States."

Obama Vows Continued Gitmo Closure Push Despite Fresh Delay: President Obama vowed to work "meticulously" with Congress to try to close the Guantanamo Bay and said he saw no reason for the Paris attacks to derail his long-planned push to make good on an unfulfilled campaign promise. Speaking to reporters at an economic summit, Obama suggested he still intended to submit a plan to Congress outlining a strategy to close Guantanamo, without a time frame. The White House had hoped to send the plan to Congress, but the process is stalled over concern about cost estimates, officials said. "We are going to go through meticulously with Congress what our options are," Obama after a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The comments were aimed at critics who've held up the attacks in Paris that killed 129 as fresh evidence that the U.S. cannot risk transferring the detainees either to other countries or a U.S. facility. The detention center currently holds 107 people, a number that has been inching downward as part of the administration's plan to shrink the population as much as possible before transferring a cohort to a facility in the U.S. Obama said he expected the population could fall below 100 by early next year.

You're getting old when you don't care where your spouse goes, just as long as you don't have to go along.

More Than 1,000 Attend Funeral for Veteran with No Known Family: More than 1,000 people gathered in a church outside Indianapolis to honor the life of a veteran with no known living family members, the Greenfield Daily Reporter reported. Former Marine Cpl. Billy Aldridge, 80, had been living for over 10 years at an Indianapolis nursing home before he died last month. Aldridge enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1956, served as a supply man for almost four years, and spent two of those years in Okinawa, Japan. When Aldridge passed away, the nursing home turned his body over to Legacy Cremation and Funeral Service, whose staff decided to plan a proper -- and public -- sendoff for a brave veteran. Aldridge was memorialized with a standing-room only service at the Lawrence United Methodist Church in Lawrence, Ind. Hundreds lined the walls of the facility and its vestibule after all the seats were filled. Paul Adams, a member of the Greenfield Veterans Honor Guard, a group of former servicemen who attend over 50 veteran funerals annually, told the paper that despite the fact they do not personally know each veteran they memorialize, each funeral is very emotional for all of them. Funeral service organizers called Aldridge "the unclaimed veteran" in their public invitation. Reviewing Aldridge's enlistment paperwork in the hopes of learning more about him, Brig. Gen. Stewart Goodwin learned that after the former Marine was honorably discharged, he moved to Indiana to care for his mother. After his mother died in 1997, he lived alone until moving into the nursing home in 2004. At the service, the Rev. Ron May said no matter how little was known about the man they were honoring, "In [enlisting], he said 'I will not live for myself alone. I will live, I will serve for others'."

VA May Not Issue Veteran ID Cards Until 2017: The new veteran identification card to be issued by the Veterans Affairs Department will not be available before 2017. The wallet-sized proof of veteran status is intended to be a substitute for a paper document given to all veterans upon discharge. The ID requirement was signed into law by President Obama on July 20 and intended to be effective 60 days later, according to a House Veterans Affairs Committee staff member who agreed to speak with Military.com on background. "VA has missed that deadline and will not provide a definite implementation date for the when the program will be up and running," the staffer said. "The committee has been pushing VA on implementation but the department seems to be punting it to the next administration ... VA currently estimates the program will be implemented in 2017." He said VA has told House lawmakers is that the rule-making process -- including drafting the procedures, getting public comment and approval from the Office of Management and Budget -- is expected to take a year or longer. VA did not respond to Military.com's request for confirmation on the projected 2017 start date, though said in a previous email that the process is "a much larger undertaking than it appears on the surface once you get into the actual logistics." The veteran ID is intended as a way for veterans to prove they served in the military without having to carry around and present a DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. The ID card law passed both the House and Senate by wide margins. One of the leading veterans' service organizations criticized the legislation as unnecessary since many states already include veteran status on driver's licenses. VFW also criticized the move for adding yet another requirement on the VA, which continues to struggle with curbing its backlog of disability compensation claims, appeals of denied claims and wait-times for veterans seeking health care.

AROUND THE CURVE LICKETY-SPLIT
BEAUTIFUL CAR WASN'T IT?
Burma Shave

Congress Investigating Alleged Centcom Intelligence Manipulation: A congressional task force is being created to investigate whether U.S. Central Command, headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, manipulated intelligence. The chairmen of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the House Armed Services Committee and the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee "are creating a task force to investigate allegations of intel manipulation at Centcom," said Jack Langer, spokesman for select committee Chairman U.S. Rep. Devin Nunes, a Republican from California. Centcom received the request from Congress for information on intelligence assessments and, in coordination with the Department of Defense, "has responded accordingly," said Air Force Col. Pat Ryder, a Centcom spokesman. Ryder said that he cannot comment on the information provided because of an ongoing investigation into allegations that Centcom altered intelligence reports to provide a rosier picture of the fight against the so-called Islamic State jihadi group. "Gen. Austin and Central Command are taking these allegations very seriously," Ryder said in an email. In September, the Defense Department Office of Inspector General announced it had opened an investigation to address allegations about the processing of intelligence information by Centcom's Intelligence Directorate. The investigation will address factors including any possible falsification, distortion, delay, suppression, or improper modification of intelligence information. Bridget Serchak, spokeswoman for the inspector general, said in a statement in September. The congressional investigation was first reported by Foreign Policy, which said lawmakers are probing whether senior U.S. military officers skewed intelligence reports about Afghanistan. The magazine said it was likely investigators will come to Tampa. Ryder, the Centcom spokesman, said the command would "welcome the DoD IG's independent oversight on this matter ... We hold ourselves to the highest standards." Army Gen. Lloyd Austin III, Centcom's commander, "counts on the more than 1,200 exceptional intelligence professionals who support CENTCOM's mission to provide him and the command with unvarnished intelligence and key insights into the myriad issues we face every day," Ryder said. The intelligence community, he said, routinely provides a wide range of subjective assessments on the current security environment. "These products and the analysis that they present are absolutely vital to our efforts, particularly given the incredibly complex nature of the conflict. of the multi-front fights that are ongoing now in Iraq and Syria."

White House Outlines Improved GI Bill Protections: White House outlined reforms for the Veterans Affairs Department to include enhanced protections for GI Bill education benefits and a renewed push to end veterans' homelessness. President Obama was expected to announce the proposals, which combine new and old initiatives, with most requiring the approval of Congress, on Veterans Day. But he stopped short of citing the specific proposals during a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, saying the U.S. needs to do more to support veterans. "These steps will ensure that veterans have the opportunities and assistance they need to help grow our economy and realize the American Dream," the White House said in a lengthy fact sheet on the proposals. One step the White House was taking on its own was approving a new agreement between the VA and the Federal Trade Commission to stop GI Bill fraud. The commission will be given the authority "to provide enhanced oversight and strengthen enforcement against schools that engage in deceptive or misleading advertising, sales or enrollment practices towards veterans," the White House said. The VA will launch a "new and improved GI Bill Comparison Tool" aimed at giving vets outcome measures on graduation and retention rates at schools they may be considering.

Turkey Shoots Down Russian Warplane: NATO will hold an emergency meeting after Turkey shot down a Russian attack aircraft along the Syrian border that Ankara said had violated its airspace. The meeting of the North Atlantic Council, the alliance's main decision-making body, will be held at Turkey's request, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to make public statements. The council, composed of ambassadors from the United States and NATO's 27 other member countries, will convene at 5 p.m. (1500 GMT). The official said "the aim of this extraordinary NAC meeting is for Turkey to inform allies about the downing of a Russian airplane." On Oct. 5, following two earlier Russian violations of Turkish airspace reported by Turkey, the NAC accused Russia of "irresponsible behavior," and sternly warned Moscow it was courting "extreme danger" by sending its warplanes into the skies of an alliance member country. A spokesman for the rebel group that captured a Russian pilot whose plane was shot down over northwestern Syria says he was dead upon landing. Jahed Ahmad of the 10th Brigade in the Coast tells The Associated Press that the two Russian crew members tried to land in their parachutes in government-held areas after they ejected, but came under fire from members of his group. He adds that rebels shot one of the pilots, who landed dead on the ground. The fate of the second pilot was not immediately known. The group released a video showing gunmen standing around a blond pilot whose face was bruised and appeared dead. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has approved a new government led by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu following the ruling party's victory in Turkey's Nov. 1 election. Erdogan approved a Cabinet list presented by Davutoglu on Tuesday, hours after Turkey shot down a Russian plane it said violated its airspace and ignored repeated warnings.

Technicality Keeps Thousands of Post-9/11 Vets from VA Benefits: Nearly 30,000 post-9/11 combat veterans -- some of whom have been waiting for years -- are still without Department of Veterans Affairs health benefits due to a technicality more than three months after a whistleblower brought the issue to light. VA officials apologized but say they do not have the authority to automatically enroll the veterans, even though they filled out the proper paperwork and are guaranteed at least five years of enhanced care by law. At issue is an optional means test, which the veterans in question did not fill out. The free care they are guaranteed by a 2008 law does not require them to fill out the means test, but without that information, their applications are automatically placed into "pending" status. When VA program specialist Scott Davis first reported the issue in August, 35,000 combat veterans were on the pending list, half of whom had waited five years or more to be enrolled. The VA did not start reaching out to the veterans until Davis publicly reported the problem, and now says there are about 29,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in pending status. Benita Miller, director of the VA's Health Eligibility Center, said the VA had enrolled 9,000 service members since August. (Roughly 3,000 new veterans applied in that time.) Miller said her office is continuing to reach out to veterans by telephone and by mail. The department has apologized for the problem but also said the system is working as designed and that the vets need to specifically opt out of the means test to move forward, to show that they accept the potential of co-pays.

A coin left on a headstone lets the deceased soldier's family know that somebody stopped by to pay their respect. Leaving a penny means you visited. A nickel means that you and the deceased soldier trained at boot camp together. If you served with the soldier, you leave a dime. A quarter is very significant because it means that you were there when that soldier died.