



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



WEBSITE: www.2-1-196th.com

Volume 5

"A Soldier Once... And Always"

January 2015

Commanders Corner: Well, the holidays are over and I hope you all survived New Years Eve parties and New Years day football. I'm ready to start the year and wait out the rest of the winter until it gets warm again. Here we go into our 4th year as an organization. So, naturally, it's time for me to make my annual dues pitch. Dues are still only \$5/yr and effective this year, we have lifetime memberships available for \$50 (the equivalent of 10 years worth of dues). I, for one, hope I get my money's worth out of it. For 2014, we have 101 applied members and only 15 haven't paid their dues. This means a little over 85% of you are taking care of our chapter through dues and donations. Thanks to all of you. If you are unsure of your status; check the site before the end of January. Last year was a great one for the chapter and we were able to meet all our financial obligations and still have some funds left to start out in the black. If you are interested in the financial reports, they are on the web site and updated quarterly. One change I finally got done is renaming the web site. It is now <http://www.2-1-196th.com> (the old one will still work). Our new Facebook page is 2-1-196th; give it a visit. I'm still a fledgling regarding building the facebook page so, any suggestions would be appreciated. I have added a "Video Gallery" to the web site with a couple of experimental items on it. Please give it a try and definitely give me some feedback on it. It could potentially take up a lot of space on the server so I need to know if it is worth pursuing. We have some golf/polo shirts still available from your secy/treasurer, Don Hicks. The shirts are really nice and have the chapter patch on them. Also, single patches are available from Don. Looks like the Americal Reunion will be around the end of October in 2015. Once I get the official notice from the ADVA I'll get it out and on our site.

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

Chuck



Don Sloat to be Added to Americal Memorial: Medal of Honor recipient Donald Sloat's name will be engraved on the Americal Monument at the Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, GA. The unveiling ceremony will be on February 6 at 1:00 p.m. Americal historian Les Hines would be interested in any photos or information you have regarding 2/1 because the person who has been collecting information is ill and Les is taking it over.



DOD Identifies 3 Missing Korean War Service Members: The Defense POW/MIA Office has announced the identification of remains belonging to three Korean War soldiers. Recovered are:

- **Army Pfc. Anthony Massey Jr.**, 23, of Graves County, Ky., was lost in North Korea on Nov. 28, 1950, and later died as a prisoner of war. He was accounted for on Dec. 5, 2014. He was assigned to Company C, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, and will be buried with full military honors on a date and location yet to be determined.
- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Gordon L. Hannah**, of Minnesota, was lost in North Korea on Jan. 28, 1951, and accounted for on Dec. 3, 2014. He was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, and will be buried with full military honors on a date and location yet to be determined.
- **Army Cpl. Donald A. Therkelsen**, 23, of Cook, Ill., was lost in North Korea on July 17, 1953, and accounted for on Dec. 2, 2014. He was assigned to Medical Company, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, and will be buried with full military honors on a date and location yet to be determined.

THIS IS IMPORTANT: Veterans if you have never filed for your compensation and pension benefits, please do it! You served and have earned this benefit. You can receive up to \$8,000 per month tax free. Veterans if you have not up dated your claim in last 10 years, I strongly suggest you do so. Most doctors will tell you that you will progressive get worse over time which means you monthly pension check/percentage will be bigger. VA is working very hard to get you your entitled benefit.

The entire process is a bit frustrating but 18 – 24 months after you have filed an extremely nice tax free check (back to the date you filed) will show up in your direct deposit account. I know of veterans who have gotten check for \$50 to \$100k. You have earned this benefit and deserve to receive it. Please take advantage of this. Contact your local county veterans service office or (VFW Claims Officer) at the VA Hospital.

MIA Korean War Soldier Finally Buried Next to Mom: More than 60 years after Pfc. Anthony La Rossa went missing while serving with the U.S. Army in the Korean War, the Brooklyn native's remains have been buried next to the mother who went to her grave never knowing his fate. "It was very difficult for her. He was only a teenager and would write in his letters home how he was missing his mom's spaghetti. She struggled the rest of her life," said his niece Donna La Rossa following a gravesite service Monday at St. Charles Cemetery on Long Island. About two dozen relatives, along with a modest contingent of veterans from the local American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War posts, attended the service, including an Army honor guard and drill team.

Air Force Ends RIF Program for 2015: The U.S. Air Force has announced that there is no longer a need to conduct involuntary force management programs for fiscal year 2015 since fiscal year 2014 goals were achieved. However, targeted fiscal year 2015 voluntary programs will be offered to help properly shape the force. Voluntary programs will include waivers of some active-duty service commitments (ADSC), reductions of required time in grade for retirements, and reductions from 10 to eight years of commissioned service for retirements, allowing prior enlisted officers to retire with eight years of commissioned time versus 10.

Army Corrects Retirement Inequity: About 160 Army officers pegged to be forced out of the service with reduced benefits will now be allowed to remain on active duty or retire with full benefits after an Army review found numerous officers were unfairly targeted. "Under the criteria for officer separations, these soldiers should not have been considered," Secretary of the Army John McHugh said in a statement issued Thursday. "This is an issue of fundamental fairness, and today we have taken appropriate action." As the Army works to reduce its overall end strength and officer corps, it conducted a review of 19,000 potential candidates for separation and early retirement boards. However, during that review only an officer's commissioned service was taken into account, which put troops with enlisted service at a disadvantage. As a result, 44 officers with prior enlisted service were selected for early retirement even though they did not meet the minimum commissioned service threshold, the Army said. Those separations have been voided and the officers now have the option of remaining in the Army until they have completed the necessary years of service to retire as an officer.

Prescription Tracking: VA recently implemented a new tool that allows veterans to track the delivery of their VA prescriptions through My HealtheVet. This tool grants veterans the opportunity to track their medication refills online, 24/7, without having to rely on calls to their VA medical facility for status updates. VA reports that more than 4,000 veterans currently use the prescription tracker every day.

Two C-17 Squadrons Will be Inactivated in 2016: One of four C-17 squadrons, representing about 400 Air Force jobs, recently announced, will be inactivated at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in summer 2016. The inactivation of the 10th Airlift Squadron, which includes eight planes, is part of a larger Air Force reduction in the 2015 federal budget. The 17th Airlift Squadron in Charleston, South Carolina, will be inactivated summer 2015. The 10th Airlift Squadron has assisted missions from Afghanistan to Antarctica. Most recently, the crew supported operations in West Africa to combat the Ebola epidemic. The squadron is also known as the "Pathfinders" has a long legacy and heritage. The aircraft will go in hibernation until such time as the Air Force stands that unit back up. The 16 C-17 Globemaster III aircraft from the 10th and 17th Airlift Squadrons will be assigned to backup inventory.

BROTHER SPEEDER
LET'S REHEARSE
ALL TOGETHER
GOOD MORNING, NURSE
Burma Shave

Vol 2, No. 8 Da Nang, Vietnam May 12, 1972

2/1 Ambush NVA: PHU BAI – Sharp eyes and ears netted a 2/1 ambush two NVA killed in action here recently, and two AK-47 rifles and an 82mm mortar baseplate captured. The action began where Company A, 2nd Battalion 1st Infantry was moved into the dinner roll-shaped green hills west of Phu Bai. The battalion had been moved into the area to provide added security for the Americans at Phu Bai during the NVA invasion in Quang Tri Province. The second night in the bush the 2nd squad 1st platoon, led by Sgt. Charles A. Rivers, 24, Brunswick, Ga., moved into ambush position at 1845. They set up claymores and trip flares in a small hollow with a placid pool crossed by a wandering stream and a footpath. The first contact came at 2000 when three communist soldiers activated a trip flare in front of the position. A sharp firefight ensued, and the enemy soldiers evaded the area. The night's action wasn't over though.

At mid-nite and again at 0300 small units of NVA clashed with the squad. "They came down the trail making lots of noise, talking and jiving" Rivers said. "They put their baseplates down to get water, and then we tripped a claymore. A half hour firefight ensued. Rivers said, "they spoke English pretty good. When we popped the claymore one of them said "What was that? and another one hollered 'Let's get the hell out of here'". There were no U.S. casualties, but SP4 John C. Barahak, 21, Joliet, Il., got half a dozen AK rounds through his ruck, and one through his helmet, "Man I'm sure glad I wasn't wearing that at the time" he said fingering the jagged hole. Early morning recon revealed one NVA body laying in pool in front of the ambush position. The weapons and other baseplate were found nearby. First light saw a "charlie-charlie" bird fro m2/1 on the scene to check out the results. As the bird was leaving, Capt. Mike Murphy, Bn S-2, spotted another NVA hiding in the stream not 50 feet from the squad. He marked the position and more troops from the platoon moved in, seriously wounding the NVA, who was dusted off to Phu Bai in the charlie-charlie and later died. The action is believed to have decimated a mortar squad which was attempting to shell the U.S. installations at Phu Bai. It was summed up pretty well by one soldier who-observed "Yep, we pretty well ruined their whole day.

Pentagon Could Make Combat Action Badge Retroactive to World War II: Congress has ordered the Defense Department to consider a proposal to retroactively award the Combat Action Badge to soldiers who engaged in actual combat dating back to Dec. 7, 1941. Though legislation extending award eligibility back to World War II failed to make it into the final version of the 2015 Defense bill, lawmakers told the Pentagon that "the retroactive award of the Army Combat Action Badge" should be considered in its ongoing review of DoD awards programs. The Combat Action Badge, authorized for soldiers in combat who are not eligible for the Combat Infantryman Badge or Combat Medical Badge, was established in 2005 to recognize that many troops – regardless of their specialty – were coming under fire and engaging the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bergdahl Investigation Review Concluded, Decision Pending: The case of Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who disappeared from his Afghanistan base in 2009 and was returned to the U.S. earlier this year, is now in the hands of a General Courts Martial Convening Authority. It is now up to Gen. Mark Milley, commander of U.S. Forces Command, to decide whether no further action is to be taken, or if Bergdahl faces charges in courts martial, the Pentagon said in a statement on recently. "The Army cannot discuss or disclose the findings of the investigation while disciplinary decisions are pending before commanders," Maj. James Brindle said.

Amid Confusion, DoD Names New Mission 'Operation Freedom's Sentinel': The new U.S. military mission in Afghanistan has begun and will be called Operation Freedom's Sentinel -- once some initial confusion about the apostrophe was cleared up. In statements Sunday, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and President Obama noted that Operation Enduring Freedom combat mission in Afghanistan had come to an end and the new training and advisory mission would be called Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Following on the announcement, Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, tweeted that the "new mission in Afghanistan to be called Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Focused on train, advise & assist, as well as counter-terrorism." However, a spokesman for Army Gen. John F. Campbell, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, initially said later that the name was "Operation Freedom Sentinel" without the apostrophe. A few hours later, the spokesman said he was mistaken and the apostrophe was back in. It was "Freedom's Sentinel." That still left the problem of distinguishing between the Pentagon name Operation Freedom's Sentinel and the NATO term Operation Resolute Support. In the transition ceremony in Kabul on Sunday, at which the green-and-white flag of the International Security Assistance Force was furled, Campbell unfurled what he called the "Resolute Support colors."

U.S. NATO Mark End of Mission in Afghanistan: The United States and NATO formally ended their war in Afghanistan on Sunday with a ceremony at their military headquarters in Kabul as the insurgency they fought for 13 years remains as ferocious and deadly as at any time since the 2001 invasion that unseated the Taliban regime following the Sept. 11 attacks. The symbolic ceremony marked the end of the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force, which will transition to a supporting role with 13,500 soldiers, most of them American, starting Jan. 1. Gen. John Campbell, commander of ISAF, rolled up and sheathed the green and white ISAF flag and unfurled the flag of the new international mission, called Resolute Support. "Resolute Support will serve as the bedrock of an enduring partnership" between NATO and Afghanistan, Campbell told an audience of Afghan and international military officers and officials, as well as diplomats and journalists. He paid tribute to the international and Afghan troops who have died fighting the insurgency, saying: "The road before us remains challenging but we will triumph." From Jan. 1, the new mission will provide training and support for Afghanistan's military, with the U.S. accounting for almost 11,000 members of the residual force.

1,000 Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Headed to Iraq: Paratroopers from the Army's famed 82nd Airborne Division will deploy to Iraq early next year to help the Iraqi security forces take on the Islamic State. The soldiers from the 82nd's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, based at Fort Bragg, N.C., will begin to deploy in January to train, advise and assist the ISF, Pentagon press secretary Rear Adm. John Kirby told reporters. Their mission is part of the coalition effort to build up the Iraqi army and Kurdish peshmerga so that they can recapture territory from Islamic State militants. The paratroopers are preparing for a nine-month deployment, according to a spokeswoman for the 82nd Airborne. Approximately 300 troops from other Army, Air Force and Marine Corps units will also deploy to provide "enabler" support in areas such as counterintelligence, logistics, and signals, Kirby said. Last month, President Barack Obama authorized an additional 1,500 troops to deploy to Iraq to participate in the train, advise and assist mission. The deployment of elements of the 82nd Airborne is part of that initiative.

VA in Healthcare Hiring Spree, but Can it Keep Jobs Filled? The Puget Sound VA is pushing to hire more doctors, therapists and other employees to cope with a growing patient load that has strained staff and contributed to frustrating health-care delays for military veterans. That effort is starting to show some success. As of November, the overall vacancy rate for nurses, a key hospital position, was 6 percent, compared to nearly 16 percent back in June. Many other open positions in other fields also are drawing strong interest. "We see record higher numbers of applicants applying for all of our jobs," said Julie Wilkerson, director of human resources at the Puget Sound VA Health Care System. But the VA's challenges extend beyond recruiting and hiring; administrators also must retain these employees once they're on the payroll. Nationally, the VA loses up to 32 percent of all new hires within the first five years of employment, and more than 20 percent of doctors and nurses drop out within their first two years on the job, according to a VA strategic plan document released earlier this year. Last year, 10 primary care physicians at the American Lake VA in Lakewood departed, worsening a backlog in care and leading the VA to postpone patient appointments. Low job satisfaction and morale may be one factor driving turnover. VA Puget Sound has scored poorly on job satisfaction, satisfaction with the organization and nurse turnover compared to other VA networks, according to quarterly internal reviews. Though VA officials cite retirements as a major cause of turnover, some former medical staff say the demands of the job can take a big toll.

VA Nominees Confirmed: Before the United States Senate ended its business for the year, it confirmed two nominees for executive positions at VA -- Leigh A. Bradley as General Counsel and Helen Tierney as Chief Financial Officer. Bradley served as VA's General Counsel from 1998 to 2001. Since then, she has served in numerous public service appointments including her current post as Director, DoD Standard of Conduct Office. Bradley served on active duty as an Air Force judge advocate from 1982 to 1986. Helen Tierney currently serves as VA's Acting Chief Financial Officer and is responsible for managing VA's over \$160 billion budget. Tierney joined VA in March, 2011, as Executive Director for Operations in the Office of Management. Prior to joining VA, Tierney served in several public service positions at the Department of Homeland Security and the United States Army. She is the daughter of a WWII veteran and the wife of an Army veteran.

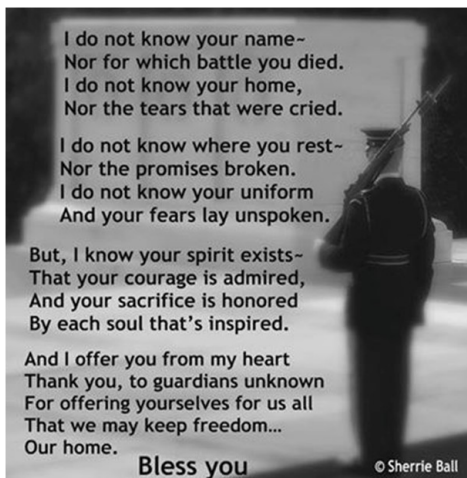
Family of Murdered Marine Suing Military Over Alleged Cover-Up: The family of murdered Marine Greg Buckley just wants answers. Three days before he was scheduled to come home, in 2012, Lance Cpl. Buckley was killed in Afghanistan, in the one place he was supposed to be safe. He wasn't killed in a firefight on a battlefield, or by a roadside bomb while on patrol. The 21-year-old was working out with fellow Marines at the base gym when an Afghan teenager walked in carrying an AK-47 -- and emptied the clip, killing Buckley and two others. Buckley's family, stonewalled in their search for answers, has since resorted to filing a rare lawsuit against the Marine Corps and Department of Defense. They're not seeking a financial settlement -- they say all they want is information about how their son died in the insider attack. The family's lawsuit accuses the department of hiding details surrounding Buckley's death. His says supervisors ignored warnings and allowed an unsavory Afghan police chief named Sarwar Jan to live on the base. Jan allegedly was involved in selling drugs, uniforms and weapons to the Taliban and brought young so-called "tea boys" on post to serve as sex slaves. It was one of those alleged "tea boys" who opened fire on the Marines that day in 2012.

Congress Again Buys Abrams Tanks the Army Doesn't Want: The new defense spending bill includes \$120 million for tanks that the Army has repeatedly said it doesn't want. For three years, the Army in numerous Congressional hearings has pushed a plan that essentially would have suspended tank building and upgrades in the U.S. for the first time since World War II. The Army suggested that production lines could be kept open through foreign sales. Each time, Congress has pushed back. Last week, Congress won again in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2015. In a statement, Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, said that Congress "recognizes the necessity of the Abrams tank to our national security and authorizes an additional \$120 million for Abrams tank upgrades. This provision keeps the production lines open in Lima, Ohio, and ensures that our skilled, technical workers are protected."

Ex-Phoenix VA Hospital Boss Firing Upheld for Accepting Illegal Gifts: An appeals board has backed the firing of Sharon Helman as director of the VA medical center in Phoenix, Arizona, but not because it connected her to long patient wait-times and manipulated data at the hospital. Instead the appeals board supported the firing because she accepted gifts from contractors. Helman was fired in November, seven months after being placed on administrative leave amid whistleblower allegations that up to 40 veterans died while awaiting an appointment. It was also alleged that she had retaliated against employees who tried to focus attention on problems at the hospital. However, the U.S. Merit System Protection Board, who reviewed her firing, said they found no evidence of that. Chief Administrative Judge Stephen C. Mish said the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board is satisfied with VA evidence that Helman accepted multiple airline and concert tickets. Helman accepted tickets for a Beyonce concert, Chang's Rock & Roll Arizona Marathon, the Mississippi Blues Marathon and an eight-night stay at Disney World from a consultant to a healthcare provider looking to do business with the VA facility, according to evidence. Mish said in his ruling that the VA failed to make its case that Helman was directly responsible for the wait-times scandal that rocked an already troubled agency starting in April, or that she ordered the reassignments of medical staff that previously tried to report problems with the facility.

How I Got into the Infantry:

When I was young I decided to join the service to go to Medical School. At the entrance exam we were asked to rearrange the letters PNEIS and form the name of an important human body part which is most useful when erect. Those who said SPINE are doctors today. The rest of us are Infantry



Afghanistan's Future in Doubt as U.S. Ends Combat Role: Thirteen years of war in Afghanistan have left the American public, U.S. service members and the Afghans themselves at odds on what has been achieved and what must be done to prop up the new Kabul government in the years ahead with Americans no longer in a combat role. The conflicting assessments are playing out against the backdrop of daily attacks that underscore the resiliency of a Taliban insurgency funded largely by the thriving opium trade that the allies failed to stop, according to the office of the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR). Even those with the longest experience in the region hesitate to predict whether President Obama's current plan to keep 9,800 U.S. troops in Afghanistan next year, cut that number in half in 2016, and withdraw completely in 2017, will give the Afghans enough time to go it alone. What it comes down to is whether the U.S. can show the "strategic patience" that has been lacking in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq, said Ryan Crocker, the former ambassador to Iraq and Afghanistan. "Afghanistan is littered with the skeletons of good ideas," said Crocker, who worked with Gen. David Petraeus on the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy that has been shelved by the Obama administration. "What happens next will have a lot to do with us – not militarily but politically," Crocker said at Stimson Center forum this week. "Let the people of the country you're trying to help tell you how they want to be helped." One reason for hope was the advances made by Afghan women, Crocker said.

Tips from the VA concerning Influenza Season: The influenza season is upon us and early experience suggests it appears that it will be a tough year. The virus is causing widespread disease across the US, including North Carolina. In fact, the Durham VA hospital has admitted a number of patients with confirmed influenza infection, including several requiring support in our intensive care units. Furthermore, a number of confirmed cases documented in the Community Living Center. To date, we have no confirmed deaths from influenza. Everyone must do everything necessary to prevent more. Please note the following and take appropriate action.

1. Protect our patients.
2. Identify patients with influenza-like illness, separate them from other patients when possible, and provide surgical masks.
3. If you see a mask, tissue, and hand hygiene station that is out of supplies, please call Infection Control at extension 6028 or 7037 to replenish it. The Infection Control pager number is 0287 or 0278.
4. Take time to get a flu vaccine. Although early data suggest that the majority of cases are being caused by an H3N2 strain of influenza A that is not included in this year's vaccine, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention still recommends an annual flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.
5. Pay special attention to VA messages related to flu in the weeks to come.



Kokomo, IN 2014