

VINH LONG OUTLAWS NEWSLETTER

VINH LONG OUTLAWS ASSOCIATION
(VLOA)

July - September 3rd Quarter 2009

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ation/ Renewal Form

NASHVILLE! Here come the Outlaws!

Well, the major decisions have been made and the plans are just about complete. We will hold our Outlaws Roundup 2010 at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee; a great place with great venues inside and outside the hotel. As usual, our Roundup will be for five days and four nights, beginning with arrival Thursday afternoon September 30th and ending on Monday morning October 4th. Nashville has many great tours and venues for those with varied interest to partake of during the free time provided on our schedule.

The schedule includes an arrival dinner in the Opryland Hotel on Thursday, tour of the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum with lunch on Friday, business meeting Saturday morning, attend the Grande Ole Opry Saturday night, nondenominational services Sunday morning, and farewell dinner in the Opryland Hotel Sunday night. There will be plenty of time for touring and sighting on-you-own on Saturday and Sunday, just visiting with friends, resting, or renewing old friendships with Outlaw comrades.

You will receive notification in the mail of the final schedule and registration form for your use. Our October-December 2009 newsletter will also contain the final schedule and registration form. Additionally, we will put the Nashville Roundup information and registration form on our VLOA website under the Reunion Tab. Now, we need your help. We have generally had 100 to 120 attendees at our Roundups. We need your help in convincing your VLOA friends who have not attended recent reunions to join us in Nashville. Let's make this reunion the best attended one ever. I know those who come will enjoy it!

In Memoriam

Olen D. (Ole) Thornton
March 27, 1935 - July 5, 2009

(Submitted by Tom Anderson)

Olen Thornton, one of the original members of the Vinh Long Outlaws Association, died July 5, 2009, after a year-long battle with cancer. His wife Mary, his two sons Paul and Dave, along with Dave's wife Teena and their children Rachel and Teresa, were at his side.

Olen served as both a "slick" platoon leader and as Operations Officer with the Vinh Long Outlaws, during 1964-65. He served 28 years in the US Army, retiring as a Colonel. After his retirement, he was employed for 16 years as Executive Director of the Manufacturers Standardization Society. He grew up in Ozark County, Missouri, graduated from Missouri State University and earned a Masters degree in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma.

Olen was a soldier by profession and a gentleman by nature. He was a quiet man, and a friend to everyone who knew him. He grew up as a country boy, schooled in the virtues of old-fashioned American patriotism and passionately held his conservative values close to his heart. He was a devoted husband, a doting and prideful father and a role model for his children and grandchildren. Above all else, he was a man of God. He personified the principles of his religion and projected his relationship with his God into every aspect of his life.

Olen performed for the Outlaw reunions both at Branson in 2000 and Pigeon Forge in 2006, singing and playing his guitar, mandolin, harmonica and banjo. Illness kept Olen from attending the 2008 Outlaw reunion in Hershey, PA, but, as he did for the Pigeon Forge reunion, he planned and coordinated the Silent Auction which is always a major feature of our reunions.

A funeral Mass of Remembrance was held at St. Michaels Catholic church in Annandale, VA on July 10th. He was laid to rest with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery on Tuesday, September 22, 2009.

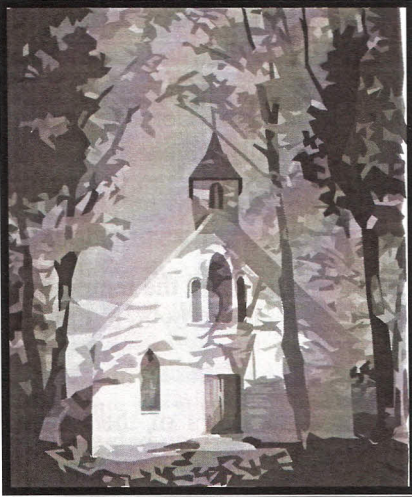
Rest in eternal peace and love, our wonderful Outlaw friend.



Olen in Viet Nam



An Army Captain presenting the colors to Mary at Gravesite



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

"The Back Pew"

From our VLOA Chaplain: John Doyle

OK, lets be honest. Just what is it that you expected out of life? To get rich? Maybe famous? How about being rich and famous? Maybe when we were teenagers, you do remember the teenage years don't you, we might have dreams of being famous, rich, or both. But now that the clock has made more revolutions than the earth, reality has set in, and we no longer dream our teenage dreams.

As the years take their toll on mind and body, we are more likely to want to "live the good life", which may be defined as, nothing more than good health, enough money to live comfortably, and peace in our neighborhood, our country, and the world. (good luck on that last one)

History records in great detail the cost of the quest for peace, usually through violence. We know the cost of seeking peace through violence. We know through first hand experience that this is not the way to peace. So how do we "find peace?"

To find peace, we must be at peace within our self. Once we are at peace, we must share our peace with others. One way of doing this is to be a peacemaker. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. 5:9). If each of us were to start spreading peace by "mending fences" within our own life, then peace may spread.

The starting point for this fence mending should, make that must, begin with our relationship with God. Why not take a moment right now, let God know that you seek His forgiveness for the wrongs we have committed, and we want to mend the fences of our broken relationship with Him.

Veterans' and Retirees' Legislative Update

House Rule (HR) 82, Army Combat Action Badge: Expands retroactive eligibility of the Army Combat Action Badge to include members of the Army who participated in combat during which they personally engaged, or were personally engaged by the enemy at any time on or after December 7, 1941. Introduced by Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite, R-Fla. Referred to Armed Services Committee.

Senate Action (S) 157, IRS Minimum Distribution Rule: Amends the IRS Code of 1986 to expand the temporary waiver of required minimum distribution rules for certain retirement plans and accounts. Introduced by Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine. Referred to Finance Committee.

HR 303, Service Connected Disability and Compensation: Permits additional retired members of the armed forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the VA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation; eliminates the phase-in period under current law with respect to such concurrent receipt. Introduced by rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla. Referred to Armed Services Committee.

HR 333, Service Connected Disability and Compensation: Permits retired members who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation; eliminates the phase-in period for concurrent receipt; extends eligibility for concurrent receipt to Chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service. Introduced by Rep Jim Marshall, D-Ga. Referred to Armed Services Committee.

HR 593, Service Connected Disability and Compensation: Expands the authorized concurrent receipt of disability severance pay from the Defense Department compensation for the same disability under any law administered by the VA to cover all veterans who have a combat-related disability. Introduced by Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash. Referred to Armed Services Committee.

HR 1203, Health Insurance Premiums: Amends the IRS Code of 1986 to allow federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplement premiums. Introduced by Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md. Referred to Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

S 491, Health Insurance Premiums: Amends the IRS Code of 1986 to allow federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums. Introduced by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va. Referred to Finance Committee.

S 546, Service Connected Disability and Compensation: Permits certain retired members who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the VA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service of Combat-Related Special Compensation. Introduced by Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev. Referred to Armed Services Committee.

HR 775, Survivor Benefits: Repeals the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan to offset the recipient of veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation. Introduced by Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Texas. Referred to Armed Services Committee.

S 535, Survivor Benefits: Repeals the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan to offset the recipient of veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation. Introduced by Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla. Referred to Armed Services Committee.

175th Outlaws Present Original Painting to Army Aviation Museum

Submitted by Frank Estes

On August 10, 2009, five former members of the Outlaws met at the Army Aviation Museum, Fort Rucker, Alabama to present the original painting of the Outlaws and Mavericks in a "hot" landing zone in the Republic of Vietnam. This painting was commissioned by the Outlaws of the 175th, with renowned combat artist Joe Kline rendering the painting. The painting was a dream of MWO (Ret) Jim Spiers who spearheaded the effort, and negotiated it through numerous iterations of drawings before the final layout was decided on. Initial funding for the artwork was underwritten by many 175th Outlaws and Mavericks, again with Jim Spiers spearheading the effort.



(Left to Right) Harry Khachadourian, Bill Callender, Steven Smith, Jim Spiers, and Frank Estes.

Those attending the ceremony reflected in the above photo were Col (Ret) Bill Callender (Maverick Lead) from Mobile, AL; CWO Jim Spiers (Maverick pilot, 1968-69) from Brooklet, GA; SP/4 Steven Smith (Outlaw Gunner, 1969) from Tampa, FL; SP/6 Harry Khachadourian (Roadrunner Technical Inspector 1971-72) from Lilburn, GA; and Col (Ret) Frank Estes (former Maverick 31 and Maverick Lead) from Ozark, AL. Col Bill Callender made the presentation to Steve Maxham, the Army Aviation Museum Curator who said "This is an awesome painting that will add significantly to our depiction of Vietnam era combat aviation operations. It will hang in a prominent place in our art gallery."

The painting and its attendant history placard now hang in a prominent place in the art gallery on the second floor of the Army Aviation Museum.

Signed, limited editions of the painting are being made available to former members of the Outlaws by contacting Joe Kline at klinejd569@aol.com or www.joekline.com, or Jim Spiers at MaverickFive@aol.com



Col Bill Callender presenting painting and unit history to Steve Maxham, Army Aviation Museum Curator.



MWO (Ret) Jim Spiers with Painting

Prayer List Help

HELP! The Prayer List on the website Chaplain's Page is in need of member input.

The Prayer List is the tool: I might add the only tool, that we have to share prayer needs with the entire Outlaw group. It is a tool, that when used, lets us know of situations that many of us would like to pray about. However, we cannot have specific prayer for a specific need or situation if we do not know about it.

In the past, I have asked, via the website, for people to keep me informed about member or family prayer needs. This would mostly be prayer for people with medical situations. However many of our members would also pray for such situations as job loss, children, travel, and any other need that might require our prayers. I'll be frank with you. I can not maintain the prayer list if I am not informed about needs. This is where I hope you will jump in. If you have information that should be put on the prayer list, there are a couple of ways to get it on. First and best way is to send me an email with all the information at Maverick36@tampabay.rr.com. Or, you could call me at 352-342-2390. (This should only be used if you do not have internet access).

I cannot over emphasize the need for everyone to get involved. God has given us the privilege of prayer. But prayer can only be made with knowledge of needs.

Thank you and God Bless.

John E. Doyle, Chaplain, VLOA

KARTOONS By Koonce



New VLOA Website Now in Operation

Submitted by Frank Estes

Check out our newly made-over website at www.vinhlongoutlaws.com. It has a lot of new, updated, and re-arranged information, including unit histories for the original Outlaws all the way up to the Outlaws in Iraq, B Troop 1st Battalion 158th Aviation Regiment.

We are still making changes and adding new things. Our plans include: correct Maverick logo colors; add a history note on VLOA formation at a mini-Branson reunion; update membership listings; add Hershey Reunion photos; add 175th photos; add article on 175th donation of Outlaws/Mavericks painting to Army Aviation Museum; add description of unit awards; and resize photos for ease of download on dialup internet connections.

If you have any suggestions, please provide them to me at estesf@charter.net. If you plan to provide electronic or digital photos, please ensure they are in 72 dpi or I will have to put them into the Photoshop Program, convert them to 72 dpi and save in .jpg format before putting them on the website. This is somewhat a laborious process, so your help would be appreciated.

Vinh Long Outlaws > Home - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.vinhlongoutlaws.com/

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Join the Vinh Long Outlaws Association

The Vinh Long Outlaws Association was formed from personnel previously assigned to aviation units with lineage to the original and all succeeding Outlaws, Mavericks, and Roadrunners that deployed to and operated out of Vinh Long, Vietnam, and to a more recent unit that bore the same Outlaw call sign and fought in Iraq.

The 62nd Aviation Company Outlaws was formed on 6 August 1964 from assets assigned to the 11th Air Assault Division (Airmobile) at Fort Benning, Georgia, and was truly the vanguard of the huge U.S. military buildup in Southeast Asia. After arriving at Vinh Long in September 1964, the Outlaws and its armed platoon Mavericks immediately conducted 30 days of in-country training prior to release for full combat operations through the IV Corps Tactical Zone, essentially responding to request throughout the Vietnam's Delta Region. The 150th Transportation Detachment Roadrunners provided aircraft maintenance and technical supply support. The 28th Signal Detachment provided maintenance on communications equipment, and the 25th Infantry Division attached infantrymen to the Outlaws/Mavericks/Roadrunners as doorgunners. In December 1964, the 62nd was redesignated as A Company

What's New

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31 Feb 2009

host posted on January 31, 2009 21:50

click here - The Quartermaster Store Is Closed Until Further Notice - click here QM Items will be made available at the next VLOA ROUNDUP.

Actions: [E-mail](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Kick it!](#) | [DZone it!](#) | [del.icio.us](#)

Done Internet 100%

Tucsonian Protects Nuns

Bergquist Up Thar

By SAMUEL JAMESON
Chicago Tribune Service
VIAM LONG, Viet Nam, — Sister Mary of Our Lady, a frown on her face but a twinkle in her eye, looked up as the leacaps tilted and the rotor of a helicopter chattering over the old French mansion.

"It, Bergquist must be a nun," she said.

Sister Mary, one of the two Irish nuns who came here seven years ago to establish a home for wayward girls, was referring to Lt. Robert Bergquist, 26, of Tucson, Ariz., one of

the American armed helicopter pilots stationed at the airstrip nearby.

"He always does that—over at 4 in the morning," the white-robed nun said. "It's his way of letting us know they're watching out for us."

Before the Americans built the airstrip last year, the sisters of the Good Shepherd and their 150 wards were subjected to constant barrages of propaganda shouted into their compound on the outskirts of Viam Long over Communist loud speakers. Viet Cong guerrillas also shot occasional loud

speakers. Viet Cong guerrillas also shot occasional bursts of harassing fire into the walls of the convent.

But the Americans changed all that. Now, the Communists have gone back into the countryside and the nuns have become entrepreneurs. An assembly-line laundry and an embroidery shop were set up to care for the Americans — and provide some needed capital to supplement funds the sisters receive from the Saigon Government.

Construction is under way on a new building which will contain a dining room, a home for mothers of illegitimate children and their babies, and a dormitory for 350 children.

Up to now the nuns have concentrated on educating and vocational training of wayward girls in their towns. When the new building is completed in about three months, however, they plan to start taking in war orphans.

"Every profession passes through our hands here—prostitutes, pickpockets, gangsters," Sister Mary said. "It's our job to learn what they have learned and teach them a trade."

The embroidery sales to the Americans at the airstrip and at the military advisers' headquarters downtown give the convent enough money to buy cloth for classroom use. Tailoring and needlework are two of the few good jobs open to women in Viet Nam.

Although peace has descended upon the convent, neither the nuns nor the girls can get away from the war. Nearly every girl at the convent has been orphaned by the war in one way or another. One, whose parents are still living, found her father at home by himself, clinging to his native land in spite of the Viet Cong who had moved into the area, kidnaped her brother, and frightened her mother away.

U of A Graduate

Lt. Bergquist is the son of Mrs. E.L. Bergquist of 4022 E. Cooper. He entered the army in 1961.

A graduate of Tucson High School, Lt. Bergquist won the Distinguished Flying Cross and four Oak Leaf clusters while on helicopter duty on Viet Nam since last September.

The University of Arizona graduate won citations for "outstanding service in aerial support of ground troops", according to the Department of the Army.

This article appeared in the Tucson American newspaper on August 11, 1965.
Thanks to Becky Bergquist Quinn for providing the article.

Viet Nam Vet Has Reunited With Dog Tags

The following is from the Galveston, TX Daily News

By Michael A. Smith

Paul Amason is the brother of our own Outlaw Member, David Amason

Published September 20,2009

Paul Amason assumed the e-mail was a scam. The sender offered to return a U. S. Army dog tag Amason lost in Viet Nam.

Amason had been in Viet Nam, all right. He'd been there the hard way, as a machine-gunner and later a rifle squad in the 23rd Infantry, better known as the Americal Division. He'd soldiered in and around the huge U.S. base at Chu Lai in 1967 and 1968.

Still he was suspicious . "I didn't recall losing any dog tags", he said recently from his Dickinson Home.

But that was a good time and a good place to lose things more important and memorable than a dog tag.

"It wasn't one of my big priorities to worry about my dog tags while over there," he said.

So Amason replied to the offer, expecting to get a sales pitch or some other come-on.

What he got was a list of questions.

Where had he been in Viet Nam? Had he ever been to Da Nang? Did he wear his dog tags around his neck or laced into his boots?

Amason answered the questions and a few days later got a Fed-Ex package.

Inside was a dog tag he'd worn in Viet Nam.

"I knew right away it was a dog tag I was issued during basic training," he said.

Every Tag Tells A Story:

Dog tags are the most personal of a soldier's issued gear. He may sleep with his rifle, but it's only his on loan. Sooner or later, Uncle Sam will demand it back.

In hard times, the Army may even salvage and reissue his boots. Socks, skivvies and dog tags are about all he can count as truly his.

And the dog tag is in a class by itself.

Tags are issued in pairs. One on a long chain meant to be worn around the neck, hence the nickname. One on a short chain attached to the long chain, meant to be removed should the need arise.

Made of stainless steel, they are meant to be more durable than the man himself. They can't be shattered or incinerated, won't turn to ashes or dust.

Punched into the steel are: first name, last name, middle initial; a service or Social Security number; blood type; religious preference.

Dog tags exist to speak for the soldier when the soldier can no longer speak for himself.

They Exist To Tell a Story:

The dog tag punched "Amason, Paul G." which returned to its rightful place 41 years missing in action, had more than one story to tell.

Cottage Industry:

The e-mail that started Amason's dog tag on its trip home came from the Joint Prisoners of War, Missing in Action Accounting Command based at Hickman Air Force Base, Oahu, Hawaii. That unit's mission is to search for, recover and identify the remains of Americans gone missing during World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, the Cold War and the first Gulf War.

It's a full time job. The numbers of missing are staggering: World War II, 78,000, although 43,000 of those are beyond the unit's reach, entombed in sunken ships or otherwise lost at sea; Korea, 8,100, a number equal to about half an infantry division; Viet Nam, 1,800.

(Continued on Page 10)

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The tag arrived with a letter telling this story: An American tourist traveling in Viet Nam had bought 500 GI dog tags from a street vendor in Hue, north up the coast from Chu Lai. The tags wound up with the unit at Hickman, which tracked Amason down.

The implications of that story are profound, the questions many, some sinister.

If dog tags speak for the soldier when he can't, what were these trying to say?

The first explanation, from the unit's public affairs office, was this: When the United States pulled out of Viet Nam in 1975, it left everything, including the machined and blanks for making dog tags.

Vietnamese now troll the Internet for information about Viet Nam veterans, make fake dog tags and sell them to unwitting tourists.

It has become a cottage industry.

It's a plausible story, but it begs a question: If most of the dog tags turning up in Viet Nam are fake, how did the accounting command know Amason's was real?

"Not The Case"

It's a plausible story, and also false, said Robert Mann, a forensic anthropologist who now heads the accounting command's forensic academy and who spent years doing field work in an effort to find, identify and bring the missing home.

Left In Country:

More than 7 million Americans served in Viet Nam, Mann said. Each probably left something there. A lot left dog tags.

Some lost a tag when they lost a foot or a leg.

"Marines especially wore one on their boots thinking the boot might survive for an identification better than having it around the neck," he said. "There was some sense in that."

A lot of troops probably got separated from their dog tags at field aid stations or hospitals after being wounded. Amason said he thought that was how his got lost.

Some probably lost tags jumping over fences or crawling through brush.

"Guys had a lot of sets made while in (the) country," Mann said.

Amason had three sets. That's why he knew the found tag was real.

Religious preference on dog tags typically is something broad like "Protestant" or "Catholic".

But when Amason was being processed into the Army he asked for the words "Assembly of God" to be stamped into his, which is what the found tag said. His later tags were stamped "Protestant".

As well as helping the authenticity of tags, such details tell us something about the experience of combat and how individuals respond to it, Mann said.

"I interviewed a man one time who told me he could tell about when the tag had been made by the religious preference on it," Mann said. "The set he had when he got to Viet Nam said "Methodist." The second set said "Atheist." The last set said "No Preference."

"They Need To Come Home":

Some of the tags turning up years after the war are far more than interesting artifacts, Mann said.

"Some of the guys died over there, and these dog tags are going back to their families," he said.

And sometimes the implications are even more profound.

The Tourist's Story:

Andrew Wietecha went to Southeast Asia as a tourist, not a soldier. He had planned to spend three months traveling and scuba diving. But in Viet Nam, he found a mission. Or maybe it found him. Like a lot of the Americans who preceded Wietecha to that country, he accepted the mission reluctantly, from a sense of duty, and did the best he could.

(Continued on Page 11)

(Continued from Page 10)

One day while strolling around a smallish town called Hoi An, a little south of Chu Lai, Wietecha, 31, saw a few dozen dog tags for sale in a curio shop. He was conflicted.

"I didn't want to promote the trafficking of war material," he said. "But I felt very strongly that they were real and should be repatriated to the U. S. Government."

Wietecha, who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., finally decided that buying the dog tags were the "lesser of two evils."

There were 46 in that first group, including one for "Amason, Paul G." Wietecha said.

Once he made that first buy, he saw dog tags everywhere. He bought all he saw. He bought so many he stopped trying to keep notes.

He bought about 400 in Hue alone, he said.

When it was time to leave Viet Nam, Wietecha had bought 530 dog tags for about \$1,600.00.

He thought he would probably have trouble leaving the country with the tags, so he turned them over to the U.S. Embassy in Ho Chi Minh City, which was once called Saigon.

The Soldier's Story:

Dog tags can tell us who a soldier was but nothing of his story. His dog tag won't tell you that Paul G. Amason is a war hero, for instance. Neither will Amason, it turns out, unless you ask.

He was from Seadrift. He was 19 years old when his boots first touched the soil of South Viet Nam. It was December 1967. He spent a little less than 10 months in the country.

He earned two Bronze Stars with "V" devices – the letter stands for Valor – and two Purple Hearts in that short tour of duty.

He was shot through the hand in an ambush outside a village so small even he can't remember the name. **One Purple Heart.**

"They shot us up pretty good," he said.

He left the safety of a rice paddy dike and returned into the field of fire to save a wounded friend who could not save himself. **One Bronze Star.**

Surrounded with his unit by North Vietnamese Army regulars and Viet Cong in a valley near a place called Tam Ky, he was shot through the shoulder. **One Purple Heart.**

Wounded and bleeding, he led his squad out of that snare to safety. **One Bronze Star.**

The second wound earned Amason a trip back to the states. He left the Army in 1970 with the rank of Sergeant.

He moved to Dickinson in 1977 and has been there since, with his wife, Linda, raising children and working in construction, including 24 years with Brown and Root.

The dog tag brought back memories.

"All bad," Amason, now 61, said laughing.

"No. No not all bad."

NOTE:

We have omitted some of the newspapers report, (due to space) which did not relate to Paul Amason directly.