Hotel 2/5 Vietnam Veterans Newsletter

March 1, 2025 Volume 25, Issue 2



Columbus, Ohio

H 2/5 COLUMBUS REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

Attention all Hotel 2/5 reunion members, friends, guests, and families:

Our Columbus Reunion registration is now open. There are two steps to getting completely registered for this year's reunion. Please register now!

Step 1: Individual Registration — Each person must individually register by filling out our registration form located on our website. Go to: REGISTER HERE or go to https://hotel25vv.com/reunion-registration-columbus to complete the form for each person in your family attending the reunion. The fee this year is $150.00 per person. Please send Joe Sonderman your fee in the form of a check or a money order.

Step 2: Hotel Reservation — Please register at our hotel so you will have a great place to stay. Register by going to our website. HOTEL REGISTER HERE or go to https://hotel25vv.com/hotel-registration-columbus to use your credit card to register for your hotel room.

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Our next reunion will be in Columbus, Ohio.

Oct 8 - 11, 2025

BACK THEN AND NOW

We would like to continue to have this section in our newsletter. However, we need your participation in giving us your information about when you severed in what capacity, what you did for a living, and what you are doing now.

Please submit your name to:

Stephanie Casey at stephcasey2018@gmail.com to provide your Back Then and Now job responsibilities. We need your input for this section of our newsletter.

Tom Keene was a 1st Lieutenant as a platoon leader of Hotel 2/5 in 1968 and fought in Hue City, Operation Houston, and Operation Baxter Garden in Vietnam. Tom went on serving as an officer in the Marine Corps for 29 years before retiring. He was a software analyst before retiring from civilian life to become a world traveler. He and his wife Judy have visited all 9 continents including Antarctica this past year. We aren't positive, but rumor has it that they are on the passenger list for the first Americans to travel to Mars in 2027.

Dale Pappas was in 1st squad, 1st platoon, and charged the beach in Chu Lai in Vietnam in 1966. He walked point and became the Hotel Company radio operator for Lt James Kirschke seeing combat almost daily in some of the fiercest fighting of 1966 in Operation Tuscaloosa. After returning from Vietnam, he went to college, and retired from the Marine Corps after 33 years as a Lt Colonel. As a civilian, he was in law enforcement and retired as a Detective in the Reno, NV Sherriff's Department. Retired, from both military and civilian life, he works daily in his woodshop teaching other vets a trade in woodworking.

THE INSIDE STORY - L. TYLER'S FIRST FIVE DAYS IN VIETNAM

The commercial airplane had just landed in Okinawa. A Marine enters the opened doors and announces on the PA system, "everyone can off board the plane now. However, this plane is continuing to Da Nang and anyone who remains on board can have their stay in Country in Vietnam shortened by 30 days". That sounded great to me, so I was one of 14 other guys to remain onboard the aircraft. I only saw Okinawa from the airplane window. Similar to how I first experienced Hawaii. We were not allowed to deplane while it was being refueled. It was another 10-hour flight to Da Nang.

I landed in Da Nang on January 18th, 1969 in the late afternoon. I was shocked when I got off the airplane to see a Vietnamese woman squatting with her pants down, taking a crap on the dirt next to the runway. I wasn't accustomed to seeing that. We were trucked over to the 1st MARINE Division's motor pool waiting to catch a helicopter ride to An Hoa. My name didn't get called so I stayed there for the night and caught my first helicopter ride, a CH-46, with 24 other green grunts the next late morning and flew from Da Nang to An Hoa.

When I arrived in An Hoa on January 19th, 1969, having been assigned to Hotel 2/5, I still had stitches in my mouth from having my wisdom teeth pulled, State Side at Camp Pendleton, CA, six days earlier. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get on a helo with the rest of the new recruits and fly out to my new unit yet because of the stitches. I had orders to report to the dentist in An Hoa the same day. It was the first time I'd been to a dentist where they didn't have running water. They placed a rubber diaphragm in my mouth, inspected all my teeth, took the rubber mask out of my mouth and then pulled my stitches out. I walked back to the Hotel 2/5 compound and got three days of light duty.

The next morning, my third day in Vietnam, I was assigned to burn the shitters each morning. That was fun! After hauling my first steel barrel of crud out of the outhouse (it takes two guys to lift them) then adding the kerosene, and lighting the thing on fire to burn the human waste, the Sargent in charge asked me why I was here in An Hoa and not out with my unit. I showed him my three-day light duty pass and he began cussing me out. I was supposed to stay in the tent hut or near, or on my bunk, not be out on a work assignment. So, that one barrel of crap was my only experience in the Marine Corps of burning and cleaning the shitters.

On January 23th, I was assigned to get on a helicopter, a Chinook CH-46, to fly out to a mountaintop to join Hotel 2/5 on Operation Taylor Common. I was assigned to the 2nd platoon. Just before I got on the helo, I was given a big sack of mail in a huge red mail bag to take out to the troops. The bag was heavy with mail and packages.



See the full article on our website at: https://hotel25vv.com/my-first-five-days-in-vietnam

Continued in next newsletter - Larry Tyler

FIRST LIEUTENANT THOMAS A. KEENE, RETIRED





BRONZE STAR BY DATE OF ACTION:

20 February to 19 July 1968

CITATION:

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Bronze Star to First Lieutenant Thomas A Keene United States Marine Corps, for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

"For meritorious service in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam while serving with the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division from 20 February to 19 July 1968. During the period, Fist Lieutenant KEENE performed his duties in an exemplary manner. Initially serving as a Platoon Commander with Company H, his aggressive leadership and skillful employment of supporting arms was instrumental in the success of numerous combat patrols conducted in hostel territory. While participating in Operations Hue City, Houston, and Baxter Gardens, he repeatedly disregarded his own safety to deploy his men and direct their fire. On one occasion, when his commanding officer was wounded during an assault against enemy positions., First Lieutenant KEENE unhesitatingly took chare of the company and effectively continued the attack throughout the remainder of the operation. Reassigned on 7 May as Assistant Operations Officer, he continued to distinguish himself by his comprehensive knowledge of subordinate units and provided accurate information which the commanding officer used as a basis for tactical decisions. First Lieutenant KEENE's superior leadership, professionalism, and steadfast devotion to duty throughout contributed significantly to the accomplishment of his unit's mission and were in the keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service."

First Lieutenant KEENE is authorized to wear the combat "V".

FOR THE PRESIDENT, H. W. BUSE, JR. LIEUTENANT GENERAL, U.S. MARINE CORPS COMMANDING GENERAL, FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC

THOMAS KEENE

At the Seattle 2024 reunion, Tom was awarded our *"US Marine Corps War Memorial Statue Trophy"* for outstanding service with Hotel 2/5.

Tom and his wife Judy have attended most of our H 2/5 reunions over many years.

Tom's continued service in the Marine Corps earned him the rank of Lt. Colonel. He has earned over 15 medals including the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct while serving as Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff and Service Support Operations Officer during Desert Shield and Desert Storm from August 1990 to March 1991. Other medals include Bronze Star, Navy Commendation Medal, Air Medal, and the Navy Achievement Medal.

In civilian life, Tom was a Lead Operations Analyst – MTWS for 12 years. He assisted and advised software engineers during development of simulation software used by the military (Primarily US Marines) to train their battle staff, for combat operations. Test software enhancement and changes and wrote and organized documentation and training materials.

Most persons don't know that Tom played college football, ran cross-country, and track. He also helped coach high school football and Little League Baseball.

DID YOU KNOW?

Post-traumatic stress disorder, called PTSD, is a condition that impacts people who have experienced trauma, such as combat.

For veterans, PTSD is one of the most common mental health conditions, with an estimated 11 to 20 percent of service members who participated in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom diagnosed with PTSD in that given year. Vietnam veterans estimated at even higher percentages for PTSD.



NEVER-ENDING TOUR

This month, March, Vietnam Veteran's Day will be honored. This newsletter is trying to pay homage to it in relation to PTSD.

Our paths to and from war are very different. The first one is much shorter than the latter. The latter one never ends. Never! It lingers on, long past the time of the actual events. Where does it linger? Mostly in our minds, which is where we live, or so that is one theory of chronic thinkers. The other place where war lingers is in our hearts. That is a strange place, indeed, for such unpleasant trauma to dwell. Here in our hearts, usually, memories spill over into our everyday activities as we go about our mundane daily routines. Either way, we cannot afford to give much time to a traumatic past. Why would we want to do that anyway? Well, we do not, ordinarily. But these remembrances won't let us rest.

We all search for ways to co-exist with this relentless apparition. He follows closely in our footsteps. On some days, he steps right into our shoes and absorbs our soul, and we become one, at least for a little while. The results are not kind. There is no respite from this ghost, at least, not on our terms. He comes and goes as he pleases. He gives no warnings (although, there are triggers). But we usually realize them too late if we recognize them at all. Our traveling companion is a crafty being. He is as tricky as he is cruel!

So, on this long, never-ending journey after war's end, we have plenty of time to savor our past experiences in the 'land of lost souls.' We may spend a lifetime trying to find it (our soul), to regain it, to reclaim it, from the unknown and misunderstood powers and forces which took it from us so long ago. J.R.R. Tolkien (himself a combat veteran), who wrote "Lord of the Rings," proclaimed, "Not all those who wander are lost." And we are not lost, either. We are searchers. We know what we are looking for, but we may not always know where to find the answer. If we live in our minds, we may think it is there. If we live in our hearts, then that is where we look. Is there an answer, a solution, to our dilemma? That is up to each one of us to decide or discover. Hopefully, if we have not already, that's part of this journey which we will all conclude at some point before we are gone.



Life is not a movie, but, often, in the movies, the cavalry appears before all is lost. So, today, we will think of PTSD as a movie. Strange concept, indeed! Here, the cavalry might just be a book, a song or a poem or a combination of several. Many times, its writers, like J.R.R. Tolkien, or poets (known and unknown) who give us solace and direction, to find what we seek. Many Vietnam Veterans have turned to writing songs, stories and poems to give them comfort and peace. Other veterans have benefited from these creations, as well. Today, the newsletter is going to ask a well-known poet/singer for his contribution to this subject (PTSD). While we are using 'strange concepts,' here is another one. The following passage is from the song, "Mr. Tambourine Man" by Bob Dylan. Often, Mr. Dylan is associated with the anti-Vietnam movement of the Sixties. However, he never performed at any anti-war demonstration. When he and his band went on a world tour in 1966, members of his band went to Vietnam to visit the troops. While on this world tour (in France), Mr. Dylan had a huge American flag as the backdrop for his performance!

Continued on Page 5

NEVER-ENDING TOUR — Continued

If Mr. Dylan ever experienced PTSD, it is not known. He was involved in a serious motorcycle accident once (but this was after this song was composed). Regardless, Bob Dylan 'seems to get it'! He was not ever in the military, but today, he is in the calvary!

"And take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind

Down the foggy ruins of time, far past the frozen leaves

The haunted, frightened trees, out to the windy beach

Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow

Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free

Silhouetted by the sea, circled by the circus sands

With all memory and fate driven deep beneath the waves

Let me forget about today until tomorrow."

Bob Dylan from, "Mr. Tambourine Man"

Mr. Dylan is going on tour again soon. He calls his tour 'never-ending,' which is how ours seemed when in Vietnam. He is eighty-three now. That is more encouragement from him, to us, that we still have things to do and with each other's help, we can and will do them! Have a meaningful Vietnam Veteran's Day on March 29th. Control/Click here to enjoy the song.

- Dennis Casey



Vietnam Veterans Day, observed annually on March 29th in the United States, is a day dedicated to honoring the service, sacrifice, and bravery of veterans who served during the Vietnam War. This date holds special significance because it marks the day in 1973 when the last U.S. combat troops withdrew from Vietnam, effectively ending direct American military involvement in the conflict, as per the Paris Peace Accords signed earlier that year. Additionally, on March 29, 1973, the last American prisoners of war (POWs) were released from captivity in North Vietnam, and the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was officially disbanded.

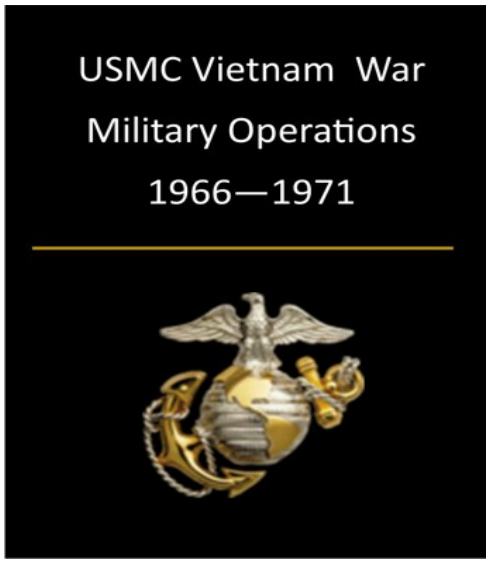
The day serves as a tribute to the approximately 2.7 million Americans who served in Vietnam, including the over 58,000 who lost their lives and the more than 300,000 who were wounded. It's a time to recognize not only their courage but also the challenges many faced upon returning home, such as a lack of public appreciation at the time, health issues related to Agent Orange exposure, and the emotional toll of the war.

Vietnam Veterans Day was officially recognized at a federal level when President Barack Obama signed the Vietnam Veterans Day Proclamation on March 29, 2012, designating it a day of commemoration. In 2017, the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act was signed into law by President Donald Trump, further solidifying March 29 as a day to honor these veterans by encouraging the display of the U.S. flag.

Events on this day often include ceremonies at memorials like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., wreath-laying ceremonies, veteran gatherings, and community tributes. It's also a moment to reflect on the war's legacy, which spanned from 1955 to 1975 (though U.S. involvement peaked between 1965 and 1973), and to ensure that the contributions of Vietnam veterans are properly acknowledged today.

- Contributed by Stephanie Casey

Our Vietnam Military Operations



The Vietnam War was a conflict that pitted communist North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam against South Vietnam and its main ally, the United States which lasted from 1954 to 1975. It resulted in the deaths of as many as 2,000,000 civilians, about 1,100,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters, and between 200,000 and 250,000 South Vietnamese soldiers. All told, some 3.4 million troops from all branches of the U.S. armed services spent time on duty in Southeast Asia. By 1969, while I was in Vietnam, more than 550,00 U.S. Military personnel were stationed in Vietnam.

Over 58,300 members of the U.S. armed forces went missing or were killed. More than 304,000 were also wounded during the war. Over 23,000 Vietnam Veterans are classified as 100% disabled either from wounds suffered in the war or life threating diseases from Agent Orange exposure.

Over 1,300 military operations took place with United States involvement. There were historical battles, combat operations, bombing missions, US Navy aircraft and naval ship warfare, US Air Force air operations, and Marine Corps attack sorties, rescue, troupe movement, and supply missions.

US combat and combat support operations were conducted in Vietnam. Direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict increased steadily from advisory in 1962 to full blown war tactics through 1969 when the U.S. began scaling down its troops in favor of Vietnamization through improving the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. Combat operations in later years in the Vietnam War, 1970 – 1975, were tailored to assist supporting the South Vietnam's ARVN, U.S. troop protection, and withdrawing from the war.

Military operations are a concept and application of military science that involves planning the operations for the projected maneuvering forces' provisions, services, training, and administrative functions—to allow them to commence, insert, then egress from combat. The operations staff plays a major role in the projection of military forces in any wide spectrum of conflict; terrestrial, aerial, or naval warfare needed to achieve operational objectives in a theater of war.

The general staff of military operations deals with the planning, process, collection, and analyzing of information. Its major function is responsible in the allocating of resources and determining time requirements. It is combined with other military staff sections to achieve its primary principles in employment of military forces and materiel to meet specific missions. In 1969, these planners were located in DaNang at the 1st Marine Division Headquarters, and in An Hoa at the 5th Marine Regiment level.

The operations staff have distinct cyclic process features that are essential for military operations to progress:

- Conception through identification of specific goals or objectives
- Intelligence gathering and analysis to identify enemy capability to resist
- Planning of military force and its use
- Administration of mobilization, equipping, training and staging of forces
- Commencement of the operation, and achieving of initial tactical mission objectives
- Defeating the larger enemy forces in their operational depth
- Ending the operation whether the strategic goals have been achieved or not

Beginning **in our next newsletter, we will begin to write about some of the combat operations we in H 2/5 were involved in. Please email me and tell me about your participation in each of your operations so I can include your memories within this new section of the newsletter.** We will be providing information from many operations in this list in this section of our newsletter, looking at their purpose, operation, and results.

HOTEL 2/5 VIETNAM OPERATIONS

From April 1966 through May 1971, Hotel 2/5 was involved with 33 combat operations. They are listed below:

YEAR	DATES	OPERATION NAME	LOCATION
1966	Aug 6 – 21	Operation Colorado/Operation Lien Ket	Que Son Valley, Quảng Nam and Quảng Tín Provinces
1966	Sep 4 – 15	Operation El Paso	Quảng Tín Province
1966	Sep 28 – 29	Operation Monterey	Quảng Tín Province
1966	Sep 30 – Oct 2	Operation Monterey II	Quảng Tín Province
1966	Nov 29 – Dec 7	Operation Mississippi	Quảng Nam Province
1966	Jan 24 – 28	Operation Tuscaloosa	24 km (15 mi) southwest of Da Nang, Quảng Nam Province
1966-67	Aug 3 – Jan 31 1967	Operation Prairie	DMZ
1967	Feb 1 – 9	Operation Independence	Quảng Nam Province
1967	Feb 11 – 22	Operation Stone	Quảng Nam Province
1967	Feb 25 – 28	Operation Lanoke	Quảng Nam Province
1967	Apr 7 – 10	Operation Dixie	Quảng Nam Province
1967	May 25 – Jun 5	Operation Union II	north of Tam Kỳ, Quảng Nam Province
1967	Jun 13 – 26	Operation Arizona	Quảng Nam Province
1967	Jun 25 – Jul 1	Operation Calhoun	Quảng Nam and Quảng Tín Provinces
1967	Nov 6 – 17	Operation Essex	Quảng Nam Province
1967	Dec 28 – Jan 3 1968	Operation Auburn	on Go Noi Island south of Da Nang
1968	Feb 1 – Mar 2	Operation Hue City	Huế
1968	Apr 19 – 26	Operation Baxter Garden/Lam Son 214	8 km east of Huế
1968	Apr 19 – May 17	Operation Delaware	A Shau Valley, Thừa Thiên Province
1968	Oct 6 – 19	Operation Maui Peak	Quảng Nam Province
1968	Oct 23 – Dec 6	Operation Henderson Hill	north-central Quảng Nam Province
1968	Nov 20 – Dec 9	Operation Meade River/Operation Hung Quang 1/81	south of Da Nang
1968-69	Dec 6 – Mar 9	Operation Taylor Common	An Hoa Basin
1969	Apr 6 – 20	Operation Muskogee Meadows	Quảng Nam Province
1969	Jun 30 – Jul 3	Operation Forsythe Grove	Quảng Nam Province
1969	Jul 20 – Aug 13	Operation Durham Peak	Quảng Nam and Quảng Tín Provinces
1970	May 5 – 9	Operation Cavalier Beach	Transfer of command of I Corps from III MAF to XXIV Corps.
1970	Jul 27 – Aug 24	Operation Lyon Valley	southwest of Da Nang,
1970	Sep 10 – 19	Operation Dubois Square	near Da Nang,
1970	Sep 18 – 21	Operation Catawba Falls	Quảng Nam Province
1970	Oct 2 - 15	Operation Tolare Falls I	Quảng Nam Province
1970	Oct 27	Operation Tolare Falls II	Quảng Nam Province
1971	Feb 3 – Mar 10	Operation Hoang Dieu 103	Quảng Nam Province

Submitted by Larry Tyler

HOTEL 2/5 VIETNAM VETERANS NEWSLETTER

We continue to add new information to our website each month. If you haven't been on the website in a while, take note of the "Recent Posts" section on the righthand column on the frontpage. It has some pretty cool information.

https:\\hotel25vv.com

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FAMILY TIME

This month we are going to be acknowledging the special days of our guys and their amazing ladies. Since this is a new section, we will include those with a date in January and February in this edition, to be sure that everyone who wants to be is included. Congratulations, everyone! Enjoy your special day.

Birthdays

Shirley McCain- January 8th
Larry Tyler- February 24th
Le Jones- February 25th
Judy Keene- February 9th
Susan Noah- March 14th
Ronald Drez- March 2nd
Rita Tyler- March 27th
Paul Kellum- May 10th

Anniversaries

Sonny and Linda Heinonen- February 28th

If you talk to any of these beautiful people, wish them a happy celebration! Anyone who would like to share a special day, please let me know and I will put it in an upcoming newsletter. Just contact me at: stephcasey2018@gmail.com

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Stephanie Casey



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SSGT Paul Kellum, USMC served with Hotel 2/5 1st Marine Division in 1966-67 and participated in six operations while in Vietnam, including Operation Prairie and Operation Tuscaloosa.

Read his story "A Short Walk Back in History" here on our website:

Click Below:

Paul Kellum – A Short Walk Back in History – Hotel 2/5 Combat Marines