# Hotel 2/5 Vietnam Veterans Newsletter

March 1, 2024
Volume 24, Issue 2







## SEATTLE IN SEPTEMBER

We will be staying at the beautiful Radisson Seattle Airport hotel, September 18th-22nd, near the SeaTac Airport. For those using the airport, great news; our hotel provides free complimentary shuttle service between the airport and the hotel.
We have some very fun events planned for this reunion. We will be offsite, away from our hotel, our first night in town, Wednesday evening. We will be traveling back into time, visiting Tun Tavern for lots of food, fun, Meet & Greet, entertainment, and more.

On Thursday, we will have many all-star speakers talking to us. Friday, we will all be participating in a very moving Memorial Service for our KIAS and recently deceased family members. Also, on Friday, we will be touring and exploring the hundreds of airplanes in "The Museum of Flight". For Saturday morning, we are still working on another special event to be announced later. We will all enjoy our guest speaker at the formal banquet dinner Saturday night at our hotel. We have even scheduled some downtime so you can go out and visit the beautiful city of Seattle on your own.

## MARINELAND

Marines are soldiers. All soldiers are not Marines. We are Marines! In Vietnam, this difference was highlighted by the five military districts. South Vietnam consisted of forty-seven provinces. The five northernmost provinces (the ones closest to North Vietnam) were designated as Military District One or I Corps (Eye Corps). This area was also known as "Marineland." Here, in this deadly region, fifty-three percent of all the American battle deaths in the Vietnam War occurred. The other forty-two provinces accounted for forty-seven percent of the killed-in-action numbers.

Hotel Company of 2/5 spent all of its time in Vietnam in "Eye Corps." Most of that dangerous experience took place in Quang Nam Province. Quang Tri Province, which ran along the DMZ, was manned mostly by the Third Marine Division. The battles of Quang Tri were on the evening news almost exclusively if Marine activity was being broadcast that night. If Army battles were the talk of the day, then places farther South were in the news, places like the I Drang Valley, Dak To or Pleiku.

In Quang Tri Province, virtually all the fighting was of the conventional type because of its proximity to North Vietnam. Farther South, in Quang Nam, the fighting was more of a mixture between conventional and guerrilla. The foe was the same, the tactics, a little different.

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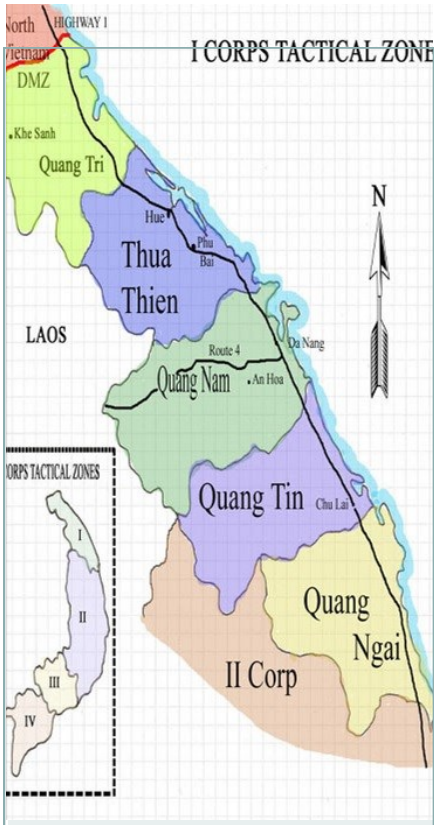
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**Seattle Reunion 2024**

**September 18th—22nd**






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The outcome for both provinces was very high casualties. Because Quang Tri was in the news a lot more, many of us probably thought that it had incurred the most battle deaths, having about eight thousand killed in combat. However, that unpleasant record was reserved for Quang Nam Province. Here, eighty-five hundred American servicemen were killed in action. The totals for both provinces include many Army troops. The 101st Airborne and 1st Air Cavalry come to mind. They were sent to reinforce us because of the constant, heavy combat in our region. Together, these two places of constant death amounted to one third of all the Americans killed in Vietnam. If we add Thua Thien Province, where the Battle of Hue took place, then the number of dead goes even higher. Thua Thien was in I Corps, also. There was also Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces which finished out the five in "Eye Corps."

When the missing (MIAs) are added to the casualty totals for Vietnam, nearly sixty thousand Americans died in "Our War." Of that total, approximately ten thousand died in non-hostile action (accidents, disease, misadventure), leaving about fifty thousand killed-in-action. Let's go back to the numbers for Quang Nam Province (our area) once more. We had eighty-five hundred killed there. If every one of the other forty-six provinces had lost what we lost in Quang Nam, almost four hundred thousand U.S. troops would have been killed in Vietnam. Thank goodness this is not the case! Nor is this information meant to diminish the sacrifices in other areas in Vietnam or by other units. But this gives some clarification to the previous statements, "Marines are soldiers" but "all soldiers are not Marines." (Our Navy Corpsmen are Marines! Some of the best!)

We can make numbers "say anything." We can talk about "what ifs" all day and never say much of any import. However, numbers are not to be dismissed. When we talk of Vietnam casualties, we use the number sixty thousand instead of fifty thousand because every one of them died serving our country. Each one was a soul, an entity, the likes of which will never grace this world again. It's important to us, and for us, the men of Hotel Company 2/5, to remember them as well as our own special place in this war. Our special place was the "worst of the worst." The numbers verify that truth. It's also true that every soldier, sailor, airman and marine and every unit from all the branches should be proud of their own, personal contribution. As someone once said, "Serving one's country is not just a duty. It is also a privilege!" The years that Hotel Company 2/5 spent in Vietnam were 1966, 67, 68, 69, 70, and 71. They are listed individually here because we were individuals there. Yes, we were part of a group (and still are) and the sacrifices that we and so many other Americans made so long ago and so far away: were about the worth and eternal value of each and every human being.

### BACK THEN AND NOW

**Cpl Dan Smith** also known as "Black Hawk", was radio operator for 1st platoon in '68/69. Fought in the Battle of Hue and Operation Meade River. Dan is retired and lives in Michigan with his wife, Brenda, where he enjoys wood crafting.

**LCpl Randy Neff** with H 2/5 in late '68—'69 as a TACP radio man. He worked in the plumbing and electrical business for most of his life. Randy now lives in the Seattle area with his wife, Donna.

**LCpl Larry Tyler** served as point man and radio operator, 2nd platoon, in the Arizona Territory in 1969. After working 15 years with Lockheed, CEO of his technology consultant corporation, and college professor, he retired. Larry currently manages our website and helps plans our reunions. He lives in Southern California with his wife, Rita.

# FEATURED MARINE

## GEORGE RONALD CHRISTMAS





***NAVY CROSS BY DATE OF ACTION:***
***February 5, 1968***

*CITATION:*

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to Captain George R. Christmas (MCSN: 0-85447), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism while serving as the Commanding Officer of Company H, Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, FIRST Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam.

On the afternoon of 5 February 1968 during Operation HUE CITY, Company H was attacking a complex of buildings known to be an enemy strong point consisting of mutually supporting bunkers, fighting holes, and trench lines. During the ensuing fire fight, two platoons seized the corner building of a city block, but intense hostile small-arms, automatic weapons, and B-40 rocket fire temporarily halted the advance. Realizing the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need to sustain the momentum of the attack, Captain Christmas, undaunted by the heavy volume of enemy fire, completely disregarded his own safety as he moved across thirty-five meters of open area to join the lead element and assess the situation.

Returning across the fire-swept area, he rejoined the remaining platoon, issued an attack order, and then ran seventy meters across open terrain, ignoring automatic weapons fire, hand grenades, and satchel charges striking around him to reach a tank he had requested. Braving enemy fire and two B-40 rockets that hit the tank, he fearlessly stood atop the vehicle to direct accurate fire against the hostile positions until the intensity of enemy fire diminished. Immediately realizing the tactical advantage, he jumped from the tank, and directed his company in an aggressive assault on the hostile positions, personally leading his men in room-to-room fighting until the building complex was secured.

In a large measure due to his bold initiative and courageous actions, he provided the impetus which inspired his men to aggressive action and enabled them to successfully accomplish the mission. By his dynamic leadership, unfaltering determination, and selfless devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, Captain Christmas upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

CAPT RON CHRISTMAS

He transferred to South Vietnam in July 1967, where he served successively as Commanding Officer, Service Company, Headquarters Battalion, and Commanding Officer, Company H, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, FMF.

In February of 1968, Captain Ron Christmas was the Company Commander of Hotel Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines when 2/5 was tasked with clearing the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) forces that had occupied the city of Hue in the Thura Thien-Hue Province of South Vietnam during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Captain Christmas and the Marines and Sailors of Hotel Company would distinguish themselves mightily during this city fight which none had been trained for, prior to moving to Hue.

The Battle of Hue City was a difficult lesson in urban operations for U.S. forces during the Vietnam War. It lasted 26 days and cost more than 200 American lives, making it the longest and deadliest major engagement of the Tet Offensive. Captain Ron Christmas fought in that battle as a 28-year-old and was seriously wounded and evacuated to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital and was awarded the Navy Cross and Purple Heart for his valor in the fight.

We Marines of Hotel 2/5 would go anywhere with Capt. Christmas and fight under his leadership anytime. As a great company CO, he would look after his troops, and care deeply about us and our welfare. When he said, “move”, we moved forward!

## IT'S AN OFFICAL HOLIDAY MARCH 29TH

Did you know that Vietnam Veterans are now recognized with an official holiday? President Barak Obama signed a proclamation in 2012 observing March 29th as Vietnam Veterans Day and President Donald Trump made it official with the "Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017." It was then that the Act was signed into law by President Trump and officially established as ***National Vietnam Veterans Day***. President Trump spoke to a group of veterans at a hotel in Da-Nang telling them, "One of my great honors is to represent the people standing right behind me -- great, great warriors and veterans of the Vietnam War. To each of you with me today, you are the heroes who fulfilled your duty to our nation. And each of you, under the most difficult conditions, did what you had to do, and you did it well." Thanking you all on this Vietnam Veterans Day.

*Submitted by Stephanie Casey*




## MARINE VS. LIZARD

"During my time in the field there were some funny things that happened.

In January of 1969 we had transitioned from the rice paddies of operation Meade River to the mountains of Taylor Common. Shortly after Christmas Third platoon was sent up a trail to scout the area for the next day's company movement. In late afternoon our point man came face to face with an NVA who bailed off the trail over the side of the steep hill. We were in a great position. We overlooked several concealed huts and about ten NVA were running around the position. After a short firefight we forced the NVA detachment to disappear across a stream. We advanced into the position. We found no bodies but several blood trails. (We found three bodies several days later). While awaiting further orders we discovered a very large weapons and ammunition cache. Thousands of rounds of ammo, rockets, grenades, and mortar rounds.

It was late in the day. Our platoon leader, Al Bresser, assessed the situation and immediately checked our ammunition supply. After the firefight we had very little. We were told that the company would relieve us the next morning. It was a very tense night since we realized if the NVA wished to retake the position we would have minimal ammo.

The next morning the rest of the company moved to our position. They were tasked with moving the large weapons cache up to the LZ that was created. We were exempt from this since we had discovered the cache. About six of us decided to take advantage of the break and take a swim. This was one of the most beautiful spots we had been to since our time in the field. There was a nice sized pool with a little water fall and we stripped off and jumped in. It was awesome.

Now the scene is set. Half a dozen naked Marines, swimming and enjoying the water. Enter a huge Asian Water lizard. This thing was massive. It had to be at least four feet long. I never saw our guys move so fast. I attempted to walk on the water. A**** and elbows getting out of the water to the bank. I seem to remember a few squeals. At any rate after our surprise and immediately exiting the pond we sheepishly got dressed and left the lizard in possession of the pond. So much for tough Marines."

*Submitted by Joe Sonderman*

## AIRLINE TICKETS CHEAPEST NOW




Please buy your airline tickets to Seattle 2024 Reunion now. The cheapest tickets are now during the month of March.

## *The Inside Story ~ "Listen Up You Jarheads!"*

If you're a civilian, the word "jarhead" may conjure up the gory image of a person's noggin encapsulated in a cylindrical glass container. But if you're a U.S. Marine, you know the term as a loving moniker. What you might not realize, however, is where that nickname originated.

The phrase "jarheads" is also a slang phrase used by sailors when referring to Marines. The term first appeared as early as World War II and referred to Marines' appearance wearing their dress blue uniforms. The high collar on the uniform and the Marines' head popping out of the top resembled a Mason Jar. Since World War II, the term has been applied more widely to Marine Corps recruits with their "squared head" appearance because of the close-cropped haircuts. Some Marines refer to the "high and tight" haircut as a "Jarhead cut."

The United States Marine Corps' culture is unique in that it helps Marines develop a very thick skin. Several terms were meant as insults to Marines, but the Corps and its members embraced them. Three such words are "gyrenes," "jarheads," and "grunts." Their times of origin and usage differ somewhat, but each has the same role in the Marine Corps culture. They have become a source of pride for all Marines.

### *2/5 Marines in Australia*

As of this writing, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines are deployed to IVO Darwin, Australia, MRF-D 24. They serve as a forward postured, partnered, and combat credible MAGTF in order to facilitate rapid response to crisis and contingencies, increase combined warfighting capability, and strengthen shared alliances and partnerships. U.S. Marines with Marine Rotational Force – Darwin 24, participate in various exercises and training events throughout the annual, six-month rotation.

*Semper Fi*

Larry Tyler

## *Ann Drez Artwork and Design*
### *Whimsical Door Hangers, Yard Stakes, Ornaments and more*

Owning your own business can be tough. Long hours. Call-ins. Tax time. There are benefits, though, like making your own schedule-just ask Ann Drez, who was recently seen sailing away with her husband, Kevin, after a long week of working Mardis Gras. Ann and Kevin, the daughter-in-law and son of Capt. Ronald J. Drez live in New Orleans, Louisiana and run Ann's business, Ann Drez Artwork and Design.

Ann has been in business for several years and her specialty is handmade outdoor decorations for every style and occasion, but she also makes ornaments, towels, and more.

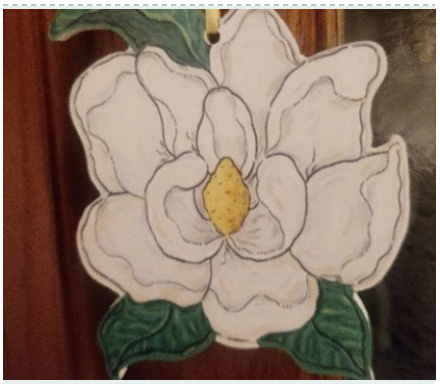
I spent some time in New Orleans several years ago. Let me tell you something about the people of New Orleans-these people *care* about their outdoor presentation. I mean they *really care*.

They have wrought-iron furniture, paired with hydrangeas, azaleas, and banana plants (and here is where Ann comes in) and they have the coolest artwork on their doors!

Whatever the season, the people of New Orleans are ready, and their porches are ready, too! I will never forget the beauty of the city and my refreshing strolls along the sidewalks there.

If you are in the New Orleans area (or anywhere else for that matter) and would like to make sure your porch is ready, then contact Ann Drez today at: Ann Drez Artwork and Design on Facebook or drezartworkanddesign.etsy.com.

*Submitted by: Stephanie Casey*





## 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

# WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

We are excited to become part of the Hotel 2/5 newsletter team. Jay Peterson and his daughter, Carlie, began it some years ago. We will try our best to carry it on in a manner worthy of his favorable consideration. We are honored and committed to continuing this tradition which he began. Many of us decided to begin attending these reunions because of Jay's inspiration and fellowship. Thank You Jay!

The Casey Family

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## A "Thank you" from the South Vietnamese

It was a beautiful day last October, in Jeffersontown, Kentucky when hundreds gathered at Veterans Memorial Park, for the unveiling of the Tri An monument. Louisville businessman and Vietnamese immigrant Yung Nguyen began organizing support for this project almost 20 years ago. The memorial cost $2.3 million dollars to construct and has eight concrete columns, each one representing an allied nation that helped fight against the communists. "Tri An" means "deep gratitude" in the Vietnamese language.

A sizable portion of America turned its back on our soldiers during the Vietnam war-questioning their reasons for being there, when that reason should have been clear considering they fought alongside soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam. The South Vietnamese wanted to be free. Period. "We want those stories to be told to future generations," Nguyen said his goal was to "thank the men and women that fought for our freedom in our country."

Read more here: https://www.courier-journal.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2023/10/10/tri-an-monument-dedication-ceremony-held-at-veterans-memorial-park/71128776



