



# THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

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**Warnings Ignored Result in  
Most SF KIAs in SF history**

**Veterans Spotlight**

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**SFA Chapter 78 April 2015 Meeting**





Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Don Engebretsen (A1-E pilot in RVN) recently sent me the following passage from former Marine Michael Norman's memoir "These Good Men." It is presented here in honor of Memorial Day. ♦

### "THESE GOOD MEN"

By MICHAEL NORMAN

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted their best, men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped raw, right down to their humanity.

"I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another.

"I cannot say where we are headed. Ours are not perfect friendships; those are the province of legend and myth. A few of my comrades drift far from me now, sending back only occasional word. I know that one day even these could fall to silence. Some of the men will stay close, a couple, perhaps, always at hand.

"As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades ...such good men"



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COVER PHOTO: Chapter 78 Members. Photo courtesy of Lonny Holmes.

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# THE PRESIDENTS PAGE



**Bruce Long**  
President SFA 78

## PRESIDENTS COLUMN MAY 2015

Our April business meeting was held at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club in the patio area, dock side. They even had heat lamps already going when I got there at 0800 hrs.

**Lonny Holmes** drove all the way from Las Vegas to attend.

Our main discussion was about our "Special Forces Recognition/ Law Enforcement/Fire Department Night" tentatively scheduled for Sept 19, 2015. We all agreed that if A/5/19 can't support it we will need to go back to the drawing board. I had also spoken with A Company's SGM Eylicio who said he would be in attendance and hopefully give us a status report on their support.

Our Chapter meeting began at 1010 hrs with the introduction of guests and speakers. Laura Dietz, founder and trustee of *Iwo Jima Monument West*, and Steve Spriggs, past President of the American Legion Post 291, both gave updates and status.

American Legion Post 291 will hold elections on May 12 from 1530 –1930 hrs. If you are a member of this Post you need to vote. **Val Santos** who is an honorary member of our Chapter is running for Post Commander. Let's vote and support Val Santos.

**Mike Keele** distributed the spring issue of the Veterans Affordable Housing Program's AVAG News. It should be noted that Mike was also the featured veteran of this newsletter.

**Gary MacNamara, Mike Keele** and **Tilt Meyer, Kenn Miller** along with **Lee Martin** where given the ROTC Certificates, Chapter 78 coins and Medals for the upcoming presentations. CSU of Fullerton's ROTC Cadet Chong will also receive a check for \$200.00.

During the meeting **SGM Eylicio** addressed the membership and an open discussion was conducted. At this time it was felt that due to the constraints placed on the SF community and A Company as a whole, we could NOT have a recognition night on Sept 19th. However, further discussion determined that we may be able to conduct some sort of function on the Base (Los Alamitos) during the unit's active duty weekend. A date has not yet been determined, but Oct of this year is still very possible. I will be meeting with the Command on May 2nd to try a lock in a firm date.

Our next Chapter meeting will be held at the Artemis Defense Institute located in the city of Lake Forest. Each individual will pay his own way at a cost of \$52.00. The Chapter will pay for the cost

of lunch, to be provided by Subway. Business meeting will start at 0830 hrs.

Artemis is also certified by the Bureau State Investigative Services (BSIS) to conduct CCW Certification and contracts with numerous local law enforcement agencies. For more information, and location check out their website. [www.artemisdefenseinstitute.com](http://www.artemisdefenseinstitute.com). ♦

**Bruce D Long**  
President  
SGM, SF (Ret)  
SFA Chapter 78



**Henry Valentino "Val" Santo, Navy Corpsman**  
who aided MACV-SOG wounded



**SGM Eylicio of A Company 19th SFG(A) speaking on SF Topics**





# WARNINGS IGNORED RESULT IN MOST SF KIAs IN SF HISTORY



By John Stryker "Tilt" Meyer  
A [sofrep.com](http://sofrep.com) Exclusive  
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SOFREP continues its Spec Ops history reflections, including insights into once-secret operations. One such secret operation was conducted for eight years during the Vietnam War, hidden from the press, the public, and the politicians. The secret war was conducted under the aegis of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group, MACV-SOG, or simply SOG. The Green Berets, their indigenous troops, the Navy SEALs, and aviators from the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps who died fighting in it were sworn to secrecy about SOG and its operations.

Today's SOFREP exclusive report stems from an August 23, 1968 NVA/VC sapper attack on a SOG compound in Da Nang, FOB (Forward Operating Base) 4. Seventeen Green Berets were killed during that attack – the single, greatest toll of Green Berets killed in Special Forces history.

The communist forces planned the Aug. 23 attack for more than a year. When they attacked FOB 4, they did so shortly after midnight at a time when the compound's base population swelled with more than 100 Green Berets who were appearing before a promotion board. Additionally, the monthly SOG staff meeting of all six FOB commanders and S-2/S-3 personnel was held Aug. 22, 1968. Last, but not least, the SOG Command and Control staff who were stationed near the Da Nang Air Base were moved into FOB 4 and operated out of the headquarters office.

By August 1968, SOG's secret war had been going on for four years.

Unknown to SOG brass was just how deeply the communist forces in Vietnam had infiltrated SOG and its bases, including FOB 4, which was located south of Da Nang, nestled between Highway 1 on the west, the South China Sea on the east, Marble Mountain (which was a series of five mountains in various sizes) to the south – which seemed to have popped out of mother earth along the eastern sands. A POW prison, a Special Forces C Team Camp and other military branches were located to the north.

Also unknown to SOG brass at the time, SOFREP has recently learned that three separate "Flash" or "ZULU" messages were received by TTY (secure Teletype) at the FOB 4 Communications Center from the CIA between Aug. 19, 1968 and Aug. 22, 1968.

All three printed, teletype messages contained only two words, according to two of the three Green Beret commo men who received

and read those messages — Bill Barclay of Florida and Gene Pugh of Texas:

"ATTACK IMMINENT."

All three messages, according to Barclay, Pugh and other Green Beret survivors of that night in hell, were completely ignored by two key officers.

"I'll never forget it as long as I live," Pugh said in a recent interview with SOFREP. "The night of Monday (Aug. 19), we received a Flash message from Saigon alerting us that a ground attack on our location was imminent within the next 24 hours. I remember rushing over to Colonel Jack Warren's (FOB 4 base commander) room and waking him with the news. A few minutes later he arrived at the TOC (Tactical Operations Center). For some reason or another I couldn't help but notice that they didn't put any urgency to the notice and I don't recall the camp going on alert."

Why was no action taken that night?

"There was a major in the Comm Center who told us [at that time] why he wasn't worried about any attack," said Barclay.

"He told us that the CIA had been wrong before and then he dismissed the Flash message on the following basis:

"One: He said the village south of Marble Mountain was friendly toward U.S. troops. Naught. He was dead wrong about the village. It was loaded with VC sympathizers, VC and NVA sappers.

"Two: He said there was no way that a large enemy element could get past the Marine Corps 3rd Amtrac Unit (south of FOB 4 and Marble Mountain and east of the hostile village) without fighting them before they'd get to FOB 4. He was really wrong about that, failing to acknowledge the stealth of enemy sappers.

"And three, he joked, the local VC didn't have a navy. However, on the night of the attack, the sappers used various indigenous watercraft to head north on the South China Sea to not only attack FOB 4, but to launch an attack on the POW camp north of our base, in an effort to spring more enemy troops to join the battle."

## A Second Message: "Attack Imminent"

On Tuesday Aug. 20, 1968, "we received another Zulu or Flash message from the CIA of an imminent attack on our compound" said Pugh. "I was speaking to Master Sergeant Danny West when the message was given to me to process. Danny took the second message to Col. Warren. Again the time was about 2230 hours (10:30 p.m.). I don't recall Col. Warren coming to the TOC. West returned and went back to his desk. No words were spoken."



Barclay added, “Colonel Warren trusted his men. In this case, he trusted that major, a major who in my opinion was woefully ignorant of VC/NVA capabilities and tactics. He didn’t respect them at a level that the men who ran recon did ... Sadly, I was just a lowly E-3, he was a major.”

On the night of Aug. 22, because he was new to FOB 4 and still adjusting to the daily routines of camp and the Comm Center, Barclay arrived two hours before his midnight shift began.

“I received the third, and what would be the last Flash warning message, at 22:30 hours,” said Barclay. “I’ll never forget it.

“Again, it was a CIA Flash/Zulu message, the highest priority message there was at that time and again it had only two words:

“Attack Imminent!”

At that moment in time, Barclay had been at the FOB 4 base and working in the Comm Center for only a few days, but he remembered the major’s earlier reactions to the first two Flash messages.

“I had only been in camp a few days, and I was a lowly PFC (Private First Class), but common sense told me this warning could be serious, so I took the original copy and carried it directly to Colonel Warren. I didn’t want to take any chances.”

Barclay walked through the white sand from the Comm Center directly to the officers’ billets and knocked on Warren’s door.

When Warren answered the door, “I apologized for disturbing him,” said Barclay, “but felt the urgency of this message wasn’t appreciated by the major.”

Barclay handed the message to Warren, explaining its urgency.

“Much to my utter and complete dismay, the colonel looked at me and said, ‘Not to worry. Major ---- has this handled.’ I was stunned and simply walked back to Comm Center.”

Barclay returned to handling routine commo messages while a tired and physically drained Pugh returned to the Transit Barracks, where he was sleeping in a corner room at the time, awaiting an assignment to a recon team.

Little did Barclay and Pugh realize that as they moved across FOB 4, NVA/VC sappers had commandeered the mess hall used for the indigenous personnel. The enemy sappers were reviewing final plans for their attack.

### Why Talk Now?

For more than 44 years, Barclay and Pugh kept the knowledge of those three messages to themselves, especially after no word surfaced about them in the Comm Center and in the months after the attack.

“Frankly, I kept the secret locked away in my mind for a long time,” Barclay told SOFREP, “because I thought I was the only one beside that major, Col. Warren and West who knew about them.”

“I was on the same boat Bill,” Pugh said. “Col. Warren and West are dead today. I don’t know if that major is alive or not. I was just happy to survive that night in hell. On the other hand, if he’s still alive, I know a few men who are still very bitter about his critically wrong assessment of our tactical situation at FOB 4.”

Barclay added, “The other reason I didn’t say anything to anyone about that message was I had lost contact with everyone I had served with in SOG. So there was nobody to collaborate with about the existence of those messages. And, someone in the TOC had to have destroyed those messages after the attack. I never saw them again and no one ever mentioned them after that night.”

In 2013, long-time SOG memorabilia collector and SOG Recon Team historian Jason Hardy suggested to Pugh and Barclay that they talk to each other about those Flash messages.

“It wasn’t until Jason linked Gene and I up at SOAR (the Special Operations Association’s (annual) Reunion in Las Vegas) two years ago that both of us repeated what the messages said together and in unison in front of Jason.”

It was a surreal moment for the two SOG recon men who have known each other since 1968.

When approached by SOFREP, both agreed to share their unique stories.



Marble Mountains near Da Nang, Vietnam taken January, 1992. Photo by Bernard Gagnon



During SOG's eight-year history, there were four SOG commanders based in Saigon who carried the understated title "Chief SOG." At the beginning of August, Chief SOG Col. Jack Singlaub turned over command Col Stephen Cavanaugh.

Singlaub's spec ops career was impressive: He served with the original Office of Strategic Services. He parachuted behind enemy lines during World War II, serving with the French resistance. He fought in spec ops during the Korean War and was a highly respected SOG commander during his two-year tour of duty.

Interviewed by SOFREP, Singlaub said he was heading to a new assignment on Aug. 23, and never heard any reports about the CIA Flash messages sent to FOB 4.

Cavanaugh was a highly respected officer who served with the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment that became the 11th Airborne Division assigned to the Pacific Theatre during WWII. The 11th saw severe combat and high casualties in Leyte and in the Philippines where Cavanaugh survived two combat jumps and received more than one Purple Heart.

When SOFREP contacted Cavanaugh, 93, recently about the messages, he said, "I don't recall hearing anything about three CIA Flash warnings prior to the attack at FOB 4. I was new in the command and was just settling in when the attack occurred ...It was one of the darkest days in SF history, that's for sure."

After arriving in Saigon in early August, Cavanaugh visited all of the FOBs, the supply companies, and several major helicopter support commands before going to the Philippines to help his family settle into their new home and to visit businesses that supported SOG operations.

"I was in the Philippines for two days before the attack. When I returned to Vietnam the sergeant major was waiting for me on the tarmac. He told me that Marble Mountain had been hit. That was the first I heard of it," Cavanaugh said.

He flew immediately to Da Nang to be briefed and observe first hand the carnage and damage that the NVA/VC sappers had inflicted on FOB 4.

In his recent interview, Cavanaugh said, "The thing that irritated me the most at that time was the mountain (Marble Mountain) sitting behind the base, to the south. When I heard of the hit, I assumed it was launched from the mountain ...years later we learned about the NVA/VC networks and other implements of war they stored in that mountain."

Before the attack, Col. Warren, who also served in WWII and the Korean War, told Cavanaugh that he had a lot of confidence in the Marines posted south of FOB 4. "That night, the sappers attacked their primary target, FOB 4," he said. "They didn't tangle with the Marines, to the best of my knowledge."

### ST (Spike Team) Rattler

Also unknown to Barclay and Pugh, Spike Team Rattler (SOG recon teams were code-named Spike Teams) was ordered to climb Marble Mountain and to establish an observation and listening post, said

Larry "Gambler" Trimble, the assistant team leader at the time.

"There hadn't been any team on the mountain for some time, so intel must have had some information about something about to happen," Trimble recently told SOFREP. "We were told that snipers may be in the area ...so we set up to observe for any movement by VC or NVA."

ST Rattler had Trimble and Ed Ames, along with seven Nungs. On Wednesday Aug. 21, ST Rattler marched from FOB 4 compound, through the small village to the south of Marble Mountain, then up the mountain which had some very steep areas to climb before reaching small ledge, so steep the team had to use ropes in two locations in order to reach the top.

From the ledge ST Rattler men could look directly upon FOB 4, the China Sea, the Marine amphibious base and two small Marine positions on another smaller mountain.

The following day, Trimble took a four-man patrol around the mountainous area where the team set up its perimeter atop the ledge. They found two different shrines, multiple caves and trails throughout the mountain, but didn't follow any trails inside of the mountain. After four hours, the small team returned to its perimeter.

"We observed no enemy activity nor did we see any indications that any enemy troops had been on the mountain," he said. "Frankly, there was much relief among us that we found no evidence of any enemy presence on the mountain."

The team relaxed for the remainder of the day, checking its perimeter and establishing comms checks with FOB 4 and with a few Marines who were stationed on another, smaller peak on Marble Mountain. The Marines maintained a 106 mm recoilless rifle at one of those slots.

Told by SOFREP about the three CIA Flash messages sent to FOB 4 warning of an imminent attack, a startled Trimble said, "I'm shocked. I'm really shocked. I never heard that before. I can't verbalize as to just how totally shocked I am. Who said that?"

When informed of Barclay and Pugh's SOFREP interviews, Trimble added, "Over all of these years since 1968, nearly 47 years and I never heard that before. I know them and trust them and understand why they didn't say anything about those messages, but I'm still shocked."

"We had daily, routine comms checks with FOB 4. Nobody said anything about an attack being imminent. Had we known that we could have gone up to that mountain loaded for bear, with more ammo, more flares, more claymores and hand grenades. Damn, I'm shocked." ♦

SOFREP correspondent John Stryker Meyer served two tours of duty in SOG with RT [Recon Team] Idaho during both tours. He has written two books on the secret war: *Across The Fence: The Secret War in Vietnam*, *On The Ground: The Secret War in Vietnam*. Visit his website: [www.sogchronicles.com](http://www.sogchronicles.com). *On The Ground* is only available as an e-book at Amazon.com.



# VETERAN'S SPOTLIGHT

## Featured Veteran — Lee Martin

As a Green Beret combat medic during the Vietnam War, Lee Martin saw the full spectrum of human suffering ranging from saving lives on the battlefield to delivering babies during sick call at his Special Forces A Camp.

That caring spirit and dedication to those he cared for as a combat medic, whether it was a fellow, wounded Green Beret or a Montagnard tribesman's ill wife or grandfather, is alive and well today in Lee as the executive director of the recently formed American Veterans' Assistance Group – the program designed to work with the more than 600 veterans living within the 40 Veteran Affordable Housing Program communities throughout the five western states.

"I don't look at this as a job," said Lee, who served in various positions of leadership for the Boy Scouts of America over 35 years, "I look at this opportunity as a chance to serve fellow veterans, fellow Americans who have served their country with honor and integrity."

As the executive director, Lee, who received a Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart during his tour of duty in Vietnam, is forming American Veterans' Assistant Groups (AVAG) in each of the 40 Santiago communities, one community at a time.

"The mission is simple, we're bringing together the veterans and their wives and significant others for the camaraderie enjoyed by veterans being around other veterans with the fundamental desire to help other veterans," Lee said.

"Lee brings a can-do spirit to the AVAG mission," said fellow Vietnam War Green Beret and Purple Heart recipient Jim Duffy, who works with Lee and serves on the AVAG Board of Directors. "Lee is doing this the old-fashioned way, going to one community at a time, meeting the veterans, listening to them and working with them," Duffy said.

Lee began his campaign at the two Santiago communities in Orange, before going to Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park, Diamond Bar Estates in Walnut and Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates. Besides that, Lee is networking with other veteran



Lee Martin, today.



Lee Martin, Viet Nam.

organizations and establishing working relationships within the VA, in order to find key staff personnel who can assist AVAG veterans in obtaining their VA benefits or in updating their VA information packets.

In addition, one of the most exciting aspects of Lee's job has been acquiring household goods, home repair materials and free furniture that are available to veterans in the AVAG program.

"Veterans have always helped fellow veterans," Lee said. Through the AVAG program it will give veterans "an opportunity to help themselves, their families and their fellow veterans. In recent weeks, fellow veterans have helped veterans pick up free furniture as well as helping other veterans with home repairs and refurbishing programs that are available at no costs to them."

For example, Army veteran John Finneran, a resident at Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park, needed a motorized lift reclining chair. While working with another non-profit called Patriots and Paws, Lee learned that organization had such a chair. He and a volunteer picked it up from Linda Lee in LaVerne, took it to Finneran's San Bernardino manufactured home and delivered it. When they arrived, Lee found that a new transformer was needed for it. Lee ob-

tained a new transformer, installed it for Finneran and watched the Army veteran successfully use it.

Later that day, at the first "Free Furniture For Veterans" give away, Navy veterans, father and son, Mike and Robert Goens selected and moved several pieces of free furniture to their manufactured home in Sequoia.

"This is outstanding," Mike Goens said after taking a sofa and several other items to his manufactured home. "I needed some new furniture. Receiving free furniture is an unexpected benefit that I wouldn't have were it not for Lee and this program."

AVAG is NOT a government organization. It is a private non-profit 501 C-3 formed to assist veterans and, as Lee would say, "It's to help us make a difference for fellow veterans." ♦



# SFA CHAPTER 78 APRIL 2015 MEETING



1 The Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club, April 2015 meeting site

2 John Joyce and Richard Simonian discussing Chapter 78

3 Gary MacNamara presenting a Chapter 78 Coin to new member Greg Horton, retired SF and former Marine, also a retired member of LAPD and he worked with Gary. Greg also worked as an Orange County District Attorney Investigator after retiring from LAPD

4 Mike Keele

5 Ed Barrett ... "what did you say!"

6 Navy Corpsman "Val" Santo, Richard Simonian and John "Tilt" Meyer

7 Tom Redfern discussing breakfast with Lee Martin as others line up for the Saturday Buffet

8 Kenn Miller, Ed Barrett and Aaron Anderson

9 Lee Martin and Gary MacNamara in foreground. Chris Martin and Aaron Anderson in background

10 Chris Martin