



# THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78  
NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

THE LTC FRANK J. DALLAS CHAPTER

## VOLUME 7 ISSUE 6

## JUNE 2016



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Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

### MEMORIAL DAY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

A major event on Memorial Day Weekend in Washington, D.C. is *Rolling Thunder* which has evolved into an emotional display of patriotism and respect for all who defend our country. *Rolling Thunder* began in 1988 with about 2500 motorcycles and riders demanding that the U.S. Government account for all

MIAs and POWs. This years 29th patriotic run has grown to a huge event to honor America's soldiers and veterans and was attended by greater than 900,000 riders and spectators from around the world. Truly a global event to honor our veterans.

For the past seven years I have had the privilege to attend Washington's Memorial Day events which has provided the opportunity to meet and speak with veterans from all branches of Americans military as well as a number of foreign servicemen. This year as in the past, I have met a number of our fellow "Green Berets." Our group met Jim Mcilroy a MACV-SOG (FOB II) veteran who served in Kontum, Vietnam, and continues the tradition. He has requested being placed on the Sentinel mailing list.

Gene and Jack Williams, Bob Shaffer and I visited the World War II Memorial then continued our trek to the Viet Nam Memorial and spoke with many visitors both American and foreign. In the process of finding a 'good spot' to view *Rolling Thunder* Bob met and had a long conversation with **Stephanie Ramirez**, a reporter for WUSA Channel 9 News. This led to further conversations with all members of our group and meeting the news photojournalist **April Chunko**. Stephanie and April viewed the *Rolling Thunder Parade* with us. Filmed interviews after tight editing were viewed several times on the television Channel 9 news in Washington, D.C. A written column also contained quotes from a Chapter 78 member. Photographs of this years Memorial Day event will be in the July Sentinel. ♦

Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor



Front row, left to right; Stephanie Ramirez, April Chunko, Bob Shaffer. Back row, Lonny Holmes, Gene Williams and Jack Williams.

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**COVER:** Chapter 78 members at the May 21st Chapter Business Meeting after a "huge breakfast" hosted by member Richard Simonian. Cover photo and photos shown on page 6 all by Lonny Holmes.

## CHAPTER OFFICERS

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# THE PRESIDENTS PAGE



**Bruce Long**  
President SFA 78

## PRESIDENTS COLUMN JUNE 2016

Our May 21, 2016 Breakfast/Business Chapter meeting was conducted at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club, and started with a **GREAT** buffet breakfast at 0830 hrs. The main discussion was what a fantastic time we all had at the annual Chino Air Show. A **BIG Thank You** to Richard Simonian for hosting such a great event. The video from the CSUF ROTC Army Obstacle Course dedication was

reviewed and will be displayed on our Chapter website within the next couple of weeks. Check it out at [www.specialforces78.com](http://www.specialforces78.com).

The Chapter meeting started right on time at 1000 hrs. Our Sgt of Arms Mark Miller lead us in the flag salute and was followed by Richard Simonian who lead us in a morning prayer. The reading of the minutes was waived and Richard gave us the Treasurer's report.

We had a total of nineteen members. A special recognition to Dave Thomas LTC, SF (Ret), Al Roth and Len Fein for attending this month's meeting. Dave has been very sick and spent nearly three months in the hospital. Al and Len very busy with work and family requirements.

Len Fein also brought a special guest to the Chapter meeting, MSG Carlos Ordonez a Team Sergeant assigned to 7th Group located at Eglin Air Force Base in Northwest Florida.

Some of you may or may not know but after fifty years, 7th Group left Ft Bragg in 2011, officially completing their move to Elgin Air Force Base on October 11, 2011. Check out their website [www.eglin.af.mil/units/7specialforcesgroup/](http://www.eglin.af.mil/units/7specialforcesgroup/).

This all leads to a very interesting story. MSG Ordonez' father, Ross Andrews CWO-2, SF (Ret) 7th & 3rd SF Group, served with me, Len Fein, and Al Roth in the late 1970's – early 80's while assigned to Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion 12th SF Group (ABN) before going back on active duty. Over the years I've stayed in close contact with Ross Andrews who is now a GS11 instructor at Camp Mackall, NC.

Another interesting note, MSG Ordonez and SFC Pugh both served together with the 3rd ID, and attended the Q course together. SFC Pugh is currently assigned to A/5/19 and is an active member of this Chapter.

MSG Ordonez was presented with a SFA Chapter 78 Coin.

## A Company, 5th Battalion 19th Special Forces SITREP

Alpha Company will be deploying to the following countries over the next few months: Jordan, Greece, Albania, and Croatia.

Upon returning, Alpha Company will begin pre-mission training (PMT) with "Boots On the Ground" in Afghanistan mid-November with a return date of mid-May 2017.

A parachute jump is scheduled for June 28th at Los Alamitos in the morning – that's on a Tuesday.

As previously discussed at Chapter meetings, we want to make sure that the wives and girlfriends whose husbands and boyfriends who have been deployed are in attendance at the Chapter Christmas party on December 17th. I will be meeting with the rear detachment to make sure this happens.

Here is some good historical information about Vietnam: <http://www.cc.gatech.edu/fac/Thomas.Pilsch/Vietnam.html>

Remember, June we are dark – no Chapter meeting due to the SFA Convention in Jacksonville, FL from June 12-19.

As usual, please feel free to contact me. ❖

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

## NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

### JULY 16, 2016

at the

## Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club

1601 Bayside Drive  
Corona Del Mar, CA 92625

**Business / Breakfast Meeting at 0830 hrs.**  
**General meeting at 1000 hrs**



# OPERATION TAILWIND REUNION

Tennessee Museum of Aviation, Sevierville, TN • April 30, 2016



Brad Welker

By Brad Welker

Recently, author, journalist, warrior and Chapter 78 member John S. (Tilt) Meyer was invited to attend the annual reunion of those who conducted and supported Operation Tailwind in September 1970. Arguably one of the most successful Special Operations missions conducted in Viet Nam, Operation Tailwind was a combined operation with Special Forces soldiers on the ground

supported by Air Force and Marine aviation assets.

The extraordinary nature of the operation was such that it was the deepest penetration into Laos by U.S. military forces during the entire Viet Nam war. The conditions faced by the forces involved harkens memories of other famous raids such as Grierson's cavalry raid during the Civil War and Merrill's Marauders during World War II; American forces were deployed behind enemy lines to disrupt and divert enemy forces.

Operation Tailwind was designed to divert NVA and Pathet Lao forces away from a CIA operation further west in Laos that was under extreme pressure. The operational plan involved inserting a SOG Hatchet force some 60 kilometers west of the Vietnamese border outside the operational capabilities of US Army helicopter assets. The only helicopters with sufficient range were those of the Marine Corps, CH-53 Sea Stallions out of Da Nang. Tactical air support was to be primarily provided by the Air Force through the use of A1 Skyraiders, which were later augmented by AC130 gunships and tactical jet fighters.

With the approval of both the US Ambassador and General Abrams, Commanding General of all U.S. Forces in Viet Nam, SOG was given the green light to conduct the operation. A Hatchet Force company consisting of 16 Special Forces soldiers and 130 highly trained Montagnards was chosen as the ground force. Marine lift helicopters escorted by Marine Cobra gunships were to insert and extract the force. Air Force aircraft were to supply both Forward Air Controllers and Tactical Air support.



SFA Chap. 78 member John Stryker "Tilt" Meyer moderates a panel on Saturday April 30 on one of the most successful SOG missions during the eight-year secret war fought in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War: Operation Tailwind. Meyer, a SOG veteran, led the discussion on the four-day operation where 16 Green Berets earned 32 Purple Hearts and more than half of the 120 indigenous troops were wounded, all of whom were cared for by SF Medic Gary Mike Rose and the Montagnard medic-in-training Koch.

From left are Operation Tailwind participants: SPAD A-1 pilot Tom Stump, Green Beret Gene McCarley, the captain in charge of Operation Tailwind ground forces on the Hatchet Force, and Air Force Lt. Col. Mel Swanson, the commanding officer of the SPADs that flew in support of Operation Tailwind in September 1970, Meyer SF Bernie Bright and an Air Force Covey pilot. Photo by Brad Welker

The reunion was held in Sevierville, Tennessee at the Tennessee Air Museum on 30 April. The night before an informal dinner was held at a local pizza parlor. A casual observer would have seen approximately forty elderly men and their wives enjoying dinner. The reality was that these men had worked together under the most trying circumstances in a totally hostile environment to conduct a dangerous mission that is largely forgotten.

The weather forecast for following day was bleak, a heavy thunderstorm was expected that would prevent one of the anticipated highlights of the reunion, the flight of the restored A1 Skyraider housed at the museum.

Fittingly the sun broke through the clouds and allowed the aircraft to fly. A Skyraider is one of the largest single engine propeller driven aircraft ever developed and operation in WWII. Large, ugly and beautiful simultaneously, one never forgets the sight and sounds of this beast. A1 pilots flew low, slow and carried enormous amount of ordinance. Numerous downed pilots and SOG teams owe their survival to the bravery of A1 pilots who provided pinpoint close air support during Search and Rescue operations. Such aircraft were widely respected for their ability to fly through heavy volumes of anti-aircraft fire.

The mixed group of veterans from three different services, many of whom were well over seventy years old lined up to watch the aircraft taxi for takeoff. One could not help to notice that the sight and sound of the aircraft made many of them stand straighter as they proudly watched the awe inspiring flight.

The pilot made several low level passes over the crowd emulating the level with which they flew in combat. Tilt related a story that during a SOG recon mission wherein he had called air support in danger so close that he could clearly see the cigar dangling from the mouth of the pilot as the plane flew at low level delivering its ordinance accurately.

The group went into a meeting room and gathered to review the mission under the lens of video cameras recording the event in perpetuity. Tilt served as moderator and briefly opened the session by describing the mission's intent. The ground commander, USSF Captain Gene McCarley related the mission from his perspective. Everyone of the 16 SF soldiers were wounded, amassing a total of 32 Purple Hearts, fortunately no Americans were killed. He attributed the survival of the wounded to the heroic efforts of SF Medic Mike Rose, who despite being severely wounded himself tirelessly cared for them. (Rose was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for the action, Tailwind veterans have successfully lobbied for the award to be elevated to a Medal of Honor, which has been approved and will be awarded in the near future). Mike was unable to attend due to illness, but was universally praised as one of the bravest of the brave.

Captain McCarley indicated that much of the success of the ground mission was due to the fact that they continually moved, preventing the NVA from massing sufficient forces to pin them down. He made it a point that the air support proved by Air Force

## A ROSTER OF HEROES: The Green Berets of Operation Tailwind

Captain Eugene C. McCarley

First Sergeant Morris Adair

Sergeant Gary Michael Rose

1st Lieutenant Pete Landon

1st Lieutenant Robert Van Buskirk

Sergeant First Class Bernard Bright

Sergeant First Class Jim Brevelle

Staff Sergeant Donald Boudreau

Sergeant Michael Hagen

Specialist Five Jim Lucas

Sergeant First Class Denver Minton

Sergeant Manuel Orozco

Staff Sergeant Keith Planchich

Staff Sergeant William Scherer

Specialist Five Craig Schmidt

Sergeant Dave Young



Operation Tailwind Participants, Operating Location Alpha Alpha Reunion, April 20, 2016. Left to Right: Bill Beardall USMC Pilot, Larry Smith USAF Pilot, Barry Pencek USMC Pilot, Joe Driscoll USMC Pilot, Bernie Bright Army SOG Platoon Leader, Craig Schmidt Army SOG Squad Leader, Tom Stump USAF Pilot, Gene Mc Carley Army SOG Commander, Don Persky USMC Pilot, Mel Swanson USAF Commander, Mark McKenzie USMC Pilot Don Feld USAF Pilot, Levy Rentz USAF Pilot, Chuck Kasbeer USAF Pilot

and Marine aviators under relentless enemy fire was a crucial factor mission's success. Large amounts of NVA weapons and logistical supplies were destroyed and a significant amount of classified documents were recovered.

Pilots from the Air Force and Marines spoke next and related their experiences. Due to the extreme depth of the penetration Marine pilots were operating near the limit of their helicopters range. One CH-53 was shot down with nine USSF and USAF members on board, a second CH53 successfully pulled all of them out by dangling a rope ladder from the ramp. All nine attached themselves and were lifted to safety.

The ground force was evacuated under unusual circumstances, strong NVA forces were closely engaging the Hatchet Forces thus increasing the danger to the lift helicopters. The plan was for the force to don gas masks while three A1's from Thailand would saturate the area with CS gas debilitating the NVA. Unfortunately, the flying conditions were less than optimal due to a heavy cloud cover. The actual pilot of the only A1 to reach the site, (2 A1's had mechanical problem and aborted the mission), related that he miraculously went down through the clouds and came out at the right position to drop the gas. Shortly after the entire ground force including their wounded were successfully airlifted out.

The NVA soldiers who were suffering from the effects of the gas were then rewarded with several drops of napalm delivered by the other USAF aircraft including fast movers and A1s.

Despite many obstacles, Operation Tailwind was an overwhelming success thanks to the combined efforts of brave service members from the Army, Air Force and Marines. Twenty-eight years later CNN published a wholly inaccurate story about the operation. With no factual basis, assertions were made that Sarin gas was used during the mission. Despite the fact that the Peter Arnett's report was utterly false, mission veterans have had to live with the bovine scatology story for all these years.

Coincidentally the owner of CNN was at that time married to a female Hollywood personality infamous for her support of the NVA during the war. An otherwise exceptionally well executed mission has been stained by the yellow journalism of a few so-called journalists.

Tilt did a masterful job of moderating and the reunion ended with a solemn rendition of Taps in recognition of those mission veterans that have passed away. Anyone in attendance whether they were involved in the mission or merely guests left with a deep sense of pride and respect for those were served their country so well. ❖



Douglas A1 Skyraider with open dive brakes.



John Meyer and a Kingbee.



Neal Melton on the A-1 H wing with before he flew it and buzzed the airport with a simulated gun run.



The A-1 parked

# EXCERPTS FROM THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

## AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, DOMINGUEZ HILLS



Gary Macnamara

By Gary L. Macnamara LTC, IN USAR (R)

On May 14, 2016, I had the honor to deliver the Commencement Address to six newly commissioned Lieutenants of California State University, Dominguez Hills, at the Torrance Civic Center. I would like to share with you some of the excerpts from that address.

“Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, honored guests including Mayor Furey, (Mayor of Torrance), LTC Chezem, (Professor of Military Science at the University of California), Major Delawich, (California Army National Guard), First Sergeant (FSG) Beltran, Master Sergeant (MSG) Jones, Sergeant First Class (SFC) Negron and SFC Torres. Thank you for having me here today as your guest speaker. Some of you may be surprised that I would mention Army non-commissioned officers among the honored guests, but I want to express the importance of the non-commissioned officers and their roles in the success of these future Lieutenants. The non-commissioned officers are the ‘back bone’ of the Army

I don’t like to stand behind a podium and I will move directly in front of these Lieutenants so there are no barriers between us and I can communicate my message directly. I want to encourage you to excel and be the best in everything you do. It is possible to bethe best in one event or for one day, but I want you to live your lives every day being the best. Ours is the profession of arms. Become very proficient with the tools of your trade. I wear two medals for excellence in competition. They represent the top 10% of competitors in Army Competition. I will share with you what I told the doctors and nurses from the 349th General Hospital, when I conducted their qualification prior to their deployment for the First Desert Storm War in the early 1990s. ‘There are no rear areas on the modern battlefield. If you are not prepared to defend yourselves and your patients, then you have no business on the modern battlefield.’ During high stress situations one’s fine motor skills are seriously degraded. You will need every bit of proficiency to successfully engage your targets.

Only one percent of the United States is carrying the burden for the other 99 percent. 25% or one in four military age males in the United States cannot qualify for military service because they are obese, have criminal or drug problems or cannot qualify mentally. These six, soon to be commissioned Lieutenants, represent the very best of American leadership.



Gary Macnamara delivering the Commencement Address



LTC Chezem and the six newly commissioned Lieutenants during the Commissioning Ceremony.

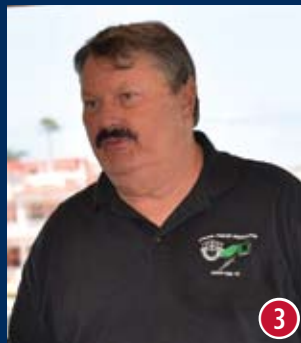
Mothers and fathers you should also be proud of your role in providing the guidance and leadership in forming the values and attitudes of these young men. There are psychological studies that reflect the one’s values and attitudes are formed by the time one is 12 years old. Give yourselves a hand for this accomplishment.

I have been a commissioned officer for over 50 years. The world that I faced in 1965 was quite different form the one you face today. I served during the Vietnam War when the Nation was divided and the Army was ‘broken’ after this conflict. It took the Army leaders almost ten years to fix what was wrong. We had promoted non-commissioned officers who did not have the leadership or experience for their duties. We had racial and drug problems which were resolved.

There are five major threats that our Nation faces today: We have the Soviet Union and the conflict in Eastern Europe. We have an emerging threat from China and her extension of 200 miles for her exclusion zone for mineral wealth. We have a nuclear capable North Korea developing a nuclear delivery system. We have a nuclear capable country of Iran. Lastly we have the threat of ISIS and their control of Middle East countries and their extremism. Ensure that you are physically and mentally prepared to respond to these threats.

# CHAPTER 78 BUSINESS MEETING

May 21, 2016 • Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club, Corona Del Mar, CA



- 1 Chapter 78 President Bruce Long presenting a "Chapter Coin" to 7th SFG(A) Team Sergeant, MSG Carlos Ordonez
- 2 John "Tilt" Stryker Meyer speaking about the MACV-SOG Operation Tailwind Reunion
- 3 Thad Gembacz speaking on Italian Security when on vacation
- 4 Former SF SGT Len Fine, SF LTC (R) Dave Thomas and SF SFC Rob Pugh
- 5 LTC (R) Gary MacNamara, chapter secretary finalizing meeting minutes as chapter members listen to SF Keynote Speaker from 7th SFG(A)

## EXCERPTS FROM THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, DOMINGUEZ HILLS CONTINUED

Each one of you (Lieutenants) was given a pocket copy of the United States' Army Uniform Code of Military Justice. These were provided to you by Chapter 78 of the Special Forces Association, of which I am a member. Keep it with you and use it as your guide. I also encourage each of you to read and understand the Constitution of the United States. You will swear an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States. Read it and understand what it means.

I also encourage you to have the good judgment and courage to uphold American values. Some of you may have heard of SFC Maitland and Captain Quinn, two fine Special Forces soldiers who were deployed to Afghanistan in 2010 to Kunduz Province. A mother came to them and asked for their help. An Afghan police official was sexually abusing her son. This was a common practice in Afghanistan. CPT Quinn and SFC Maitland expressed their concerns to the police official. He ignored their conversation and Quinn and Maitland physically reinforced their message. Upon their return to the United States an Army investigation was launched. CPT Quinn, a 2003 West Point graduate, resigned his commission. SFC Maitland with 12 years service had a bar to re-enlistment placed against him. It was only through the intercession of Congressman Duncan Hunter that this bar to re-enlistment was removed from SFC Maitland and he will be allowed to continue his career. I relate this incident to you that you may recognize that not all cultures have the same values as the United States, but some actions are morally wrong and some may border on crimes against humanity. I hope you will have the courage, judgment and common sense to recognize them and do the right thing.

Much has been said about Officer Efficiency Reports. Do the right thing for the right reasons at the right time. There may some situations where one has to 'Bet your bars.' Choose these situations carefully but don't be afraid to do the right thing to accomplish your mission and always remain true to your Army values.

I wish each of you every success in your Army career. Some of you will report for active duty, others will be commissioned in the Army Reserve or National Guard. Each of you will develop skill sets which are vital to the defense of the Nation. For those in the Reserve Components, it is not a question of if you will be deployed, but only when, how many times and for how long. In the event of mobilization you should be prepared to assume the responsibilities of the two ranks above. During the Vietnam War it was not uncommon for companies to be commanded by Second Lieutenants. In my own experience I was promoted to Captain with only 30 months of service. Be prepared to accept these leadership challenges. Learn your trade and learn it well. Maintain those leadership and skill sets.

Thank you for allowing me to address you. God bless you and God bless the United States of America. Thank you."