



THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 7 • JULY 2017



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Welcome Home — The Return of the Men of A Co.,
5th Bn. of the 19th Special Forces Group

Chapter 78 Members at the SFA Annual International
Conference in Fayetteville, N.C., June 12-17

Special Forces Iranian Mission
Revisited 42 Years Later

SOAR XLI 41st Anniversary



SENTINEL

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COVER: SFA Special Forces 65th Anniversary coin design.



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From the Editor



Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

Chapter 78 members who attended the 65th Anniversary of Special Forces at the International Conference in Fayetteville, NC, "had a blast" to quote chapter member **Terry Cagnolatti**. From the photographs and emails I received from members, all enjoyed celebrating this 65th Anniversary of the "Green Berets," re-connecting with old team members, touring Fort Bragg, Camp Mackall and attending the banquet.

Terry Cagnolatti in this issue of the Sentinel tells his story about re-connecting with two SF team members, Larry and Toby, and their mission to Iran. As these three previous members of 5th SFG(A) ODA's sat around the SF hospitality room at the conference, Chapter 78 members including **John S. Meyer** had joined the group in conversation. Listening to the story, Meyer knew he was hearing of another unknown historic piece of SF history.

Like Chapter 78 member **Chris Martin**, who served on 10th SFG(A) ODA 235 which deployed to Lebanon in July of 1983, these stories need to be told so that our history is recorded, not just forgotten as if these important missions of their time did not exist. Chris' exciting story was told in the Sentinel's May 2013 edition, Volume 4, Issue 5. Continuing this tradition of recording the stories of SF working around the world in past decades, the *Sentinel* is looking for SFA members who want to relate these non-combat deployments to our readers. Just contact the editor.

I want to thank Debra Holm our *Sentinel's* graphic designer and associate editor who has continued to help upgrade and modernize Chapter 78's publication. With her monthly participation in the preparation of each edition of the Sentinel we have now been awarded for four consecutive years, "best monthly newsletter" by the Special Forces Association. Thank you Debra! ♦

Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor



Attendees toured Camp Mackall at the recent SFA International Convention.



Bruce Long
President SFA 78

Hello to all Chapter 78 members and to those who wish they were.

Boy, what an exciting week! For those who don't already know, June 12-17 was the SFA Annual International Conference in Fayetteville N.C. This event is only hosted in the FT Bragg area every five years.

So, there I was standing in the American Airlines ticket counter line and as I approached with a BIG smile on my face, I handed the this very attractive ticket counter clerk my boarding pass and in the next breath informed her I was declaring a handgun in my luggage. This beautiful young lady said, "no problem" may I see some identification? And then it hit me, I had left all of my I.D. on my desk at home. You can just imagine the feeling that came over me. I quietly said thank you and told her I would be right back.

Luckily I was able to leave LAX without drawing any attention to myself, get back to my car and drive all the way back to Corona, which is more than an hour's drive, resulting in me missing my flight to N.C. I was able to re-book another flight the next day, which only cost me \$500!!!

I finally arrived at the DoubleTree Hotel on Tuesday (a day late), got checked in and proceeded to the junior suite that I would be sharing with **Tilt Meyer**. I unpacked and secured my Sig Sauer 380 in the hotel room safe. I then went directly to the hospitality room, and had a very sweet southern belle fix me a FREE double scotch and water. Life is now good. I then visited the vendor's room where I made several purchases not only for myself but for Chapter members who specifically asked me to pick up certain items. I really wanted to get this out of the way because your money has a way of disappearing really fast.

I did the afternoon tour of Camp Mackall on only two hours of sleep, and really, if you were here five years ago, nothing has changed other than they have more two story buildings that are now air conditioned. Which brings up another subject — unless you are acclimatized, the humidity will get you down really quick. It was important to keep hydrated if you were outside for very long. Sweating in the shade, what memories... more on that later on.

On Wednesday morning after a good night's sleep, I attended the morning pistol shoot all excited to enter into a competitive shooting match with my new SIG 380 only to find out the minimum caliber. Oh well, adjust and drive on. I ended up shooting with a GLOCK 19. We were given a holster, magazine holster and two magazines. It was a very challenging event that required dexterity and changing magazines after six shots. This portion of the shooting event was in the open, and it got hot very quick. Again, drinking lots of water.

Later that day we all celebrated the Army's birthday. This was followed by Wade Isimoto's presentation on Operation Eagle Claw.

It was a great detailed presentation on our attempt in 1980 to rescue the U.S. Embassy employee's in Tehran.

It should also be noted that it was because of this mission that Special Operations Command was officially formed in April 1987 and is known as USSCCOM. For any of history buffs, try reading *Broken Stiletto: Command and Control of the Joint Task Force During Operation Eagle Claw at Desert One*.

The President's meeting was held on Friday morning at 0800 with SFA President Gary Koenitzer officiating. As of now all Chapters are covered under a limited General Liability Policy, with exclusions. Additional details can be found on the SFA web site.

The main topic was the flooding that occurred that nearly put SFA out of business. A Powerpoint presentation presented showed just how devastating the hurricane was. SFA HQ is 90% up and running again. Thanks to the Green Beret Association.

A short presentation was given by Chapter Six who will be hosting the 2018 SFA International Conference in El Paso, Texas.

We now have a total of eighty-six Chapter around the world, with a total membership of 10,500 members.

I also handed out our June 2017 *Sentinel* to all of the Chapter presidents who were present.

The next big event was the picnic at Paradise Acres. They started it off with a three person sky diving team. Pretty cool, to include an American Flag attached to the final jumper. The BBQ food was delicious. I then spent some time with ODA 3116 who had volunteered to put on the static display, which also included the latest version of the Hummer made by General Dynamics. This vehicle is equipped with a Mark 48 (AKA mini gun) in the turret, and has two side mounted M240's.

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John S. Meyer, Mike Rose and two ODA 3116 SF at the annual SFA picnic held at Paradise Acres located in Hope Mills, NC.

Welcome Home

The Return of the Men of A Co., 5th Bn. of the 19th Special Forces Group



Mike Keele

By Mike Keele

May 24th, 2017 marked the return home of A Company, 5th Bn., 19th Special Forces Group from a 7 month tour in Afghanistan. It was an event that will long be remembered. A disciplined crowd had gathered at Los Alamitos; COL Mike Wise moving through the throng, saying hello to old friends from his days as Commander of A Company, wives with tiny babies, excited children running

about, parents, military brass and well-wishers, even the airfield fire department. Chapter 78 had a twelve man crew on hand, excited at the prospect of staging a welcome home that would far outshine anything our generation received back in the day. A prayer was said and we formed up at President Bruce Long's command, tearful — overjoyed at being able to join in the celebration.

With no fanfare, the Southwest Air 727 glided to a silent touchdown, echoed by a growing cheer from the crowd. The fire department had two hook-and-ladder rigs flanking the taxiway, and shot a welcoming stream of water over the approaching plane. It rolled to a stop in front of the crowd, and one full enlistment passed before the stairs could be adjusted for the height for the door. Finally, a few men emerged in their BDU's, followed by more and more, until

a solid stream of men were coming down the jetway to the cheers and excited exclamations of their loved ones.

Within minutes, the men had retrieved their gear and made their way to a point where a few anxious wives could contain themselves no longer and rushed out to embrace their husbands. With practiced ease, the men formed up in ranks and were called to attention. COL Wise spoke briefly and directed the Company Commander, Major Otenti to dismiss the men. SGM Hank Eylicio got everyone pointed in the right direction amid hugs from family members as kids jumped up and down in the background.

The happy mob made its way towards Building 58 and a modern version of our old GP Medium mess tent, where a buffet lunch had been catered by Ch. 78 and co-hosted by VFW Post 3699 in the Imperial Valley, which boasts of having Hank Eylicio as an active member.

This event was not intended to be a drawn-out affair, but an opportunity to let these men know that just as we were there for them before they left, we are there for them now and will continue to be in the future. The bar-b-que was excellent — as evidenced by how fast it disappeared, and the men and their families made their way to the parking lot. Special acknowledgement goes to President Bruce Long who worked long and hard to make this event a success. As always, our Chapter Treasurer, Richard Simonian played a crucial part in the success of this event. ❖



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1 A Company's plane as it landed at Los Alamitos Airfield

2 Members of SF Chapter 78 awaiting A Company

3 A Company and Chapter members in formation.

4 SGM Hank Eylicio, wife Lena and family

Chapter 78 Members at the SFA Annual International Conference in Fayetteville, N.C., June 12-17



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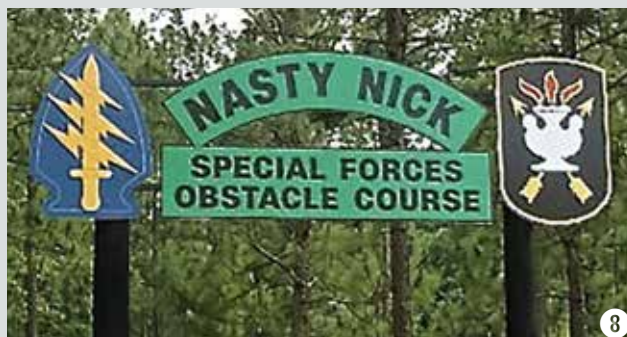
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1 LTC(R) Jim Duffy and Tom Redfern

2 Major General Sontag, Commander Special Warfare Center and LTC (R) Jim Duffy

3 Terry Cagnolatti at the James "Nick" Rowe Special Operations Training Facility, dedicated to late U.S. Army Special Forces COL James "Nick" Rowe

4 John S. Meyer, Colonel Jack Tobin, Terry Cagnolatti and Bruce Long

5 The Sentinel is recognized for the 5th time! Bruce Long accepts Chapter 78's award for SFA Best Monthly Newsletter.

6 Major (R) John Padgett and wife

7 Tom Redfern and wife

8 The entrance to the Army Special Forces "Nasty Nick" obstacle course at Camp Mackall

9 LTC(R) Jim Duffy and SGM Billy Waugh



9



SPECIAL FORCES IRANIAN MISSION

Revisited 42 Years Later



❶ Top row left to right: SSG Toby Todd, unknown American, CPT Siem, unknown American, MSG Kalognomas; bottom row left to right: Senior Demolition's SFC Thomas (MACV-SOG in Vietnam) in front of Todd and two unknown Iranian SF soldiers

❷ Left to right, SGT Raza Ali, SGT Terry Cagnolatti, SGT Rahman, and SFC Zapata



Terry Cagnolatti

By Terry Cagnolatti

Attending this years International Special Forces Convention held in Fayetteville, NC was truly a blast! The highlight of this trip for the 65th Anniversary of Special Forces was connecting with two old SF buddies, Larry Wroten, whom I had met again at the 2010 SF Convention, and Toby Todd, whom I had not seen in over forty years. We were all in

Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in the mid 1970's. Wroten was on ODA 564 and Todd and I were on ODA 563. I also had the opportunity to meet other SF Association members, Past President Jack Tobin and John Padgett. Of course SF Chapter members John S. Meyer, Tom Redfern, Bruce Long and I spent time together attending SF functions.

One evening while sitting in the conference hospitality room with old team and Chapter 78 members having a drink or two; ok we were not counting, the subject of Iran came up for discussion. Larry, Toby and I had deployed to Iran in 1975 for a joint training mission with the Iranian "Niruye Vizheh," Farsi for Iran's Special Forces. Getting the conversation started there were two things Larry and I recalled being told prior to deployment "do not under any circumstances bring your Green Beret and do bring lots of toilet paper." We wondered about the toilet paper and just followed orders.

Team mission training for both ODA 563 and 564 began with a trip to the Marine Base at Twenty Nine Palms in Southern California for "Desert Training." Following about two weeks in this arid environment doing what SF does, patrolling, shooting, communications, and simulated combat problems we returned to Fort Bragg for a short stay. We thought our team missions were to be "for deployment to Lebanon" for joint training with the local military. Again, loading team equipment into a C-130 aircraft along with parachutes, both teams flew to the mountainous region of Utah, east of Salt Lake City. Chuting' up late in the flight we jumped into our training area using an old airfield for our DZ. During this phase of



- ❶ Terry's Iranian Jump Certificate — a rare one indeed.
- ❷ Terry traded a U.S. Marine K-Bar knife for the Iran SF Crest, shown on page 4, and this Iran SF Beret. The Iran SF Beret has the name of the Iran SF soldier on the liner written in Farsi.
- ❸ Terry Cagnolatti and Toby Todd (SF Commo) who were on ODA 563 in Iran together in the mid 1970's. Toby was also in MACV-SOG in Viet Nam.
- ❹ Larry Wroten, at left, was on ODA 564 and Terry Cagnolatti, on ODA 563 in Iran in the mid 1970's where they became good friends.

pre-deployment, mountain and high altitude training was stressed. Conditioning began to get tougher.

Completing mission training in August 1975, headquarters notified us our deployment was to Iran; we had speculated and heard rumors that it would be Lebanon. This would be a Joint Training Mission consisting of two American Special Forces ODA's with the Iranian Special Forces.

Later in August 1975, ODA's 563 and 564 plus support personnel left from Pope Air Force Base and had a brief stop at Andrews. Crossing the Atlantic Ocean "the plane flew so low that I could see white caps while sitting in the cockpit with the pilots." I also recall that I never

took off my life vest while the senior SF —old Vietnam Vets— used their vests as pillows or cushions while they slept or played cards. Go figure; they had been there and done that! I did appreciate the Air Force's lunch boxes which were provided. Re-fueling in Spain we took a route over the Mediterranean Sea near the North African coast.

Landing at an Iranian airbase outside of Tehran we were then escorted to a military compound which was heavily guarded. Inside the secure building we were briefed and met our Iranian SF (Niruye Vizheh) counter parts and I was introduced to SGT Raza Ali, who I would spend the mission working with. I was trained in both SF weapons and demolitions. No photo's were allowed inside the secure buildings or on the base.

At this time the Shah of Iran was sending members of Niruye Vizheh to Oman in support for fighting their Marxist Rebels.

Continued on page 6

Special Forces Iranian Mission continued

We began training the Iranian SF in the secure compound classrooms, then shortly deployed to the field, the “arid desert” for the remainder of joint training exercises. This of course was standard SF procedures, patrolling, live firing, commo and parachute jumps. We slept in lean-to’s or tents and ate our meals with our counterparts. Occasionally we bought a live goat from villagers and cooked it for team meals. Following our participation in “Airborne Operations” we were awarded the Iranian ‘Jump Wings,’ which in the day we were authorized to wear on our uniforms. A rare decoration today!

Late in the mission we were all authorized some R&R in Tehran, however our movement was closely monitored by the Iranian military, and the “Savak,” the Shah’s secret police. Also during this period the Russians had ‘advisors’ and training personnel in Iran. Members of both teams had to remain on constant alert just to enjoy themselves while following the strict protocol required in Iran.

Larry remembered a story regarding one of our ‘people’ (probably not an ODA member) who was found with a “Green Beret” or attempting to exchange a challenge coin. This person was immediately sent directly back to the U.S.A. and was never seen again!

Following completion of the mission and returning to Fort Bragg, in November 1975, the Fayetteville Observer printed an article titled “U.S. Personnel Serving the Shah of Iran.”* The story essentially stated that the American government had allowed active duty U.S. Military soldiers to become “mercenaries serving the Shah of Iran” in a military assistance program. This newspaper article went on to state that the Iranian government would reimburse Washington for eighty percent (80%) of the pay and allowance for a two hundred (200) man Military Advisory and Assistance Group (MAAG) headed by two generals and an admiral. When asked, a U.S. official acknowledged our presence and went on to say, we were criticized when we supplied and paid for everything like we did in Vietnam, now we have the Shah willing to pay the bill. This increasing involvement in Iran, in a training and advisory capacity, came at the request of the nation’s absolute ruler, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi.

It was great seeing Larry Wroten again and re-connecting with Toby Todd, however some of the ODA-563 members I still remember after all these years are: SFC Alfonso Zapata (Korean and Vietnam Wars), SFC Charles Thomas, SFC James Underwood, SFC Gilbert Turcotte (the Frog), SGT John McCray (medic), and MSG Alex Kalognomos. I spent thirty-seven years in Law Enforcement, the last twenty-five years with the L.A. County District Attorney’s office as an investigator. I have worked in many units and met lots of people, however I must say my short time as a Special Forces Soldier along with the team members I worked with on ODA 563 ranks as the most memorable in my life.

*Fayetteville Observer, Thursday, November 13, 1975. ♦

President’s Page continued

Had a great conversation with Chief Warrant Officer Rusty Cotterman ODA 3116 who wore the Vietnam SOG patch while in Afghanistan. Also present were **Tilt Meyer**, Gary Mike Rose (Pending MOH), CWO Cotterman, and SSG Taylor

The General Membership meeting was held on Saturday at 0900. Our Chapter was again awarded the Best Newsletter for 2016. .

Issues of the June 2017 *Sentinel* were placed on tables for the general memberships reading.

The banquet was held at the Crown Civic Center located in Fayetteville at 1800 and lasted until 2130. The food was delicious but the drinks were expensive.

Our guest speaker was the one and only Billy Waugh SGM, SF (Ret) Billy had all of us laughing, great speaker, unbelievable career. If all goes right, we just might have him our here for a Chapter meeting in October before SOA in Las Vegas. More to follow.

As usual, any questions feel free to contact me.
Blong26774@gmail.com ♦

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

Next Chapter Meeting

LOCATION: RICHARD SIMONIAN’S OFFICE
CONFERENCE ROOM DATE: JULY 15, 2017.

0830 hrs. Breakfast / Meeting

1000 hrs. Chapter Meeting

Address: [326 W. Katella, Bldg. L4, Orange, CA 92867](#)



The Special Operations Association
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SOAR XLI
41th Anniversary
October 16-19, 2017



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