



THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 10 • OCTOBER 2017



President's Page

SFA Chapter 78 September 2017 Meeting

The Forgotten Warriors: Update on the Montagnards

McKeague Takes Over DPAA Amid Praise
and a Note of Somber Realism

Book Review: *HUE 1968: A Turning Point of the
American War in Vietnam* by Mark Bowden

First Special Service Force 71st Reunion



SENTINEL

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IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Page.....	1
SFA Chapter 78 September 2017 Meeting	2
The Forgotten Warriors: Update on the Montagnards	4
McKeague Takes Over DPAA Amid Praise and a Note of Sombre Realism	5
Book Review: <i>HUE 1968: A Turning Point of the American War in Vietnam</i> by Mark Bowden	6
First Special Service Force 71st Reunion	8

COVER: SGM Billy Waugh and first Chapter 78 President Rick Aaron. SGM Waugh will be presenting at the Chapter meeting scheduled for October 21. Photo by Lonny Holmes



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Funding for the SFA Chapter 78 Sentinel is provided by

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The Sentinel is published monthly by Special Forces Association Chapter 78, Southern California. The views, opinions and articles printed in this issue do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Army or the United States Special Operations Command the Special Forces Association or Special Forces Association Chapter 78. Please address any comments to the editor, "Sentinel" to dhgraphics@earthlink.net.

From the Editor



Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

**46th Special Forces Company
Thailand 1969 to 1970
A- 4616
SGT Gary Michael Rose**

Returning to Thailand in the spring of 1969 after serving a tour with the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at A-251 Plei Djereng and II Corps Mike Force, 4th Battalion in Kontum, I was asked the usual question by the 46th SF Company CSM; what do you want for an assignment? Since I had been on missions with the Thai SF, Thai National Police and the Border Police I replied "how about a job with the Police."

Well I was lucky since they were forming a new team to work with the Thai National Police Departments Medical Division to start a medic training program like the U.S. Army 91A at Fort Sam. Great, I got the assignment. SGT Gary "Mike" Rose an SF 91B4S was pulled from a team in the north east of Thailand and became one of the teams brightest medics. Thus A-4616 was formed and sent to the Thai Border Police base on the peninsula in Hua Hin at their Jump School.

Mike and I shared a Thai house for a month while we got the team of six SF Medics up and rolling. After several weeks in Hua Hin we were told to get our uniform (TW's) ready since we had been asked to participate in an honor guard for the King and Queen's visit to their palace in town. Standing at Attention along the road leading into the Palace, the King's Rolls Royce stops in front of the SF Honor Guard. We thought the Queen then spoke to Mike directly, but we were never sure. A buffet luncheon was later served.

Hua Hin did not have enough class room training facilities so A-4616 was transferred to Bangkok and we established our office at a USOM building for the writing of the entire medic training program. Mike Rose was assigned a number of lessons to develop to include a forty hour block on human anatomy and physiology. This turned out to be some of the best medical writing I have seen in my career (I still have all the lesson plans for the eight week course).

After developing the curricula we relocated our offices to a police building adjacent to the Thai Police Hospital which had a lab for anatomy instruction, offices and class rooms. A-4616 taught the first medic course to the Thai Police Officers who would become the cadre after we left. Mike gave all forty hours of anatomy and physiology lectures and more to class1 thru a Thai interpreter and he was considered one of our best instructors.

At the end of the course for the Thai Police Cadre in the spring of 1970 Mike Rose got orders for Vietnam. The Thai Police staff, A-16, members of the USOM and the Thai cadre gave him a fare-

Continued on page 10

The President's Page | October 2017



Bruce Long
President SFA 78

This month's Chapter meeting was held at Artemis Defense Institute (ADI) located in the city of Lake Forest. Check out their website www.artemisdefenseinstitute.com

We all enjoyed a light breakfast before our Chapter meeting.

Call to order for our September 2017 Chapter meeting was at 1015 hrs.

Our pledge of allegiance was given by **SFC**

Tony Pirone, A Company ODA 9514.

The invocation was given by **Richard Simonian**.

Richard gave the Treasurer's report and after expenditures we have a balance of \$2,252 and change. Richard made a large contribution.

Chapter minutes from our August meeting were distributed by **Gary Macnamara**. Reading of the minutes was waived.

Range Day Update: We are now hoping to have a Range Day in November at the Prado Dam shooting Range. Richard and Gary will be trying to set it up. More to follow as this develops.

A short discussion was held on our guest speaker Billy Waugh SGM, SF (Ret) for our October Chapter meeting. Billy will be attending the SOAR reunion prior to driving to CA. Arrangements will be made for his billeting while in CA.

SOD (North) will be conducting a Change of Command on October 24th (Tuesday) between 1100 – 1200 hrs. on Anderson DZ after an Airborne Operation. The DZ is located at Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base. **COL Wise** will be re-assigned to the J-3 National Guard HQ in Sacramento until his retirement in May 2018. LTC Karl Johnson (Promotable) will assume Command. Karl has also been the Commander of A Company.

As of this date, myself, **James Light**, **Gary Macnamara**, **Jim Duffy** and **John (Tilt) Meyer** will attend. Blazers, Regimental ties, dark slacks and Berets will be the Chapter's attire. Weather and A/C availability dictate this event. More to follow.

As previously mentioned, effective January, 2018 the Chapter will start meeting on the 2nd Saturday of the month. Therefore, January 13th 2018 will be the first Chapter meeting of the year under your new President **John (Tilt) Meyer**.

Fund raising: The Chapter will receive a briefing in October from **Don Deatherage** on how to obtain a permit to sell raffle tickets. It's the Chapter's hope that we can sell raffle tickets over a period of time so that we may collect more money for our Chapter.

Zack King of JTACTICAL will be donating an AR for this fund raiser and will have the rifle on display during our upcoming Christmas

party on December 16th. Also hoping to have some custom knives by JTACTICAL for purchase.

Memorial Fund: The Chapter unanimously agreed to set up a fund to be used for purchasing of flowers when a Chapter member or spouse passes. Again, this is strictly for Chapter members and spouses only.

We then collected over \$400 that will go towards the Memorial Fund. A separate line item will be listed on the treasurer's report.

In case of some of you don't know, the Chapter is a 501C-19. Any donations to the Chapter are tax deductible. If requested, I would be glad to send you the letter from SF National and the IRS. All you have to do is ask.

On September 15th a POW / MIA Recognition Day was held at Vandenberg AFB, **Tilt Meyer** (President-elect 2018) attended and spoke at this event.

James Light gave an excellent presentation on the First Special Service Force (FSSF) Reunion which also included photos. This reunion was held in Sacramento. Next year it will be in Canada.

The Chapter meeting adjourned at approximately 12 Noon. Lunch was provided Panera Bread. We then fired ADI's target simulator, followed by the 300 tactical simulator which included Hogan's Alley. ❖

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

Next Chapter Meeting

LOCATION: Marie Callender's Restaurant & Bakery

ADDRESS: [307 E. Katella Ave., Orange, CA 92867](http://www.katella.com)

(on the North side of Katella and across the street from Richard's office)

DATE: October 21, 2017.

0830 hrs. Breakfast / Meeting

1000 hrs. Chapter Meeting

SFA Chapter 78

September 2017 Meeting



Mike Keele

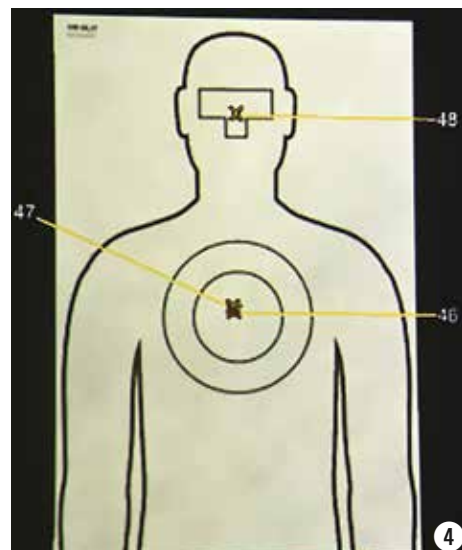
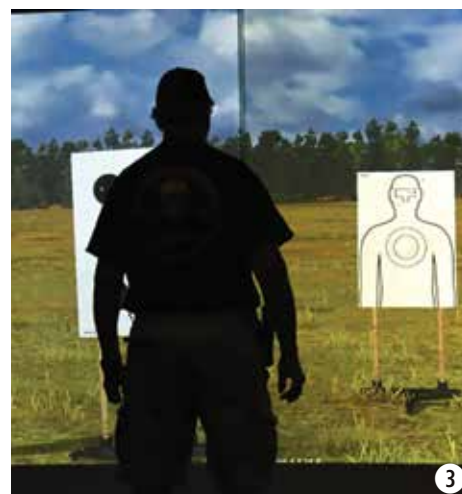
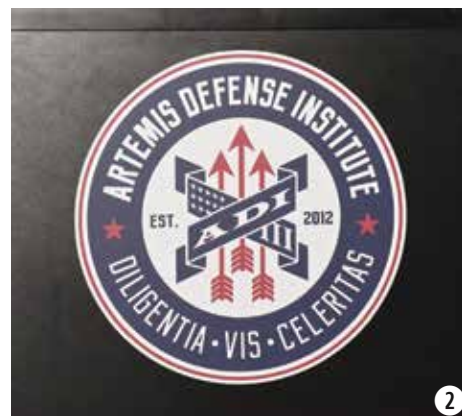
By Mike Keele

Chapter 78's September meeting deviated from the norm when we pulled up stakes and headed south to Artemis Defense Institute for some practical handgun training. Jim Duffy, Artemis habitué and pistolero extraordinaire devised the shooting schedule and took into account each individual's previous experience at Artemis. This way, the guys with experience could move ahead, taking aim at new, more intricate scenarios.

In order to further evaluate everybody, the instructor staff started by lining up one and all for a little refresher on weapon handling and environmental awareness. Once we had been evaluated, there was a mad dash to the various shooting stations. Most exciting and fun, is the 300 degree stage which puts the shooter on an elevated stage surrounded with video screens covering all but 60 degrees of a full circle. There, the shooters are confronted with a variety of tactical situations—in this case, those confronting police officers in “Hogan’s Alley.” The entire group watches each shooter, who goes thru the “alley,” facing a variety of potential threats, not to mention the occasional innocent bystander. A good razzing followed the execution of each hapless innocent who was gunned down by an apprehensive but eager shooter. The instructor makes a critique of each shooter’s performance. While the video is being replayed, the computer shows where each shot hit, in order. Everybody made mistakes and we all learned from each others misdeeds.

Back at the “One Hundred” range, instructors gave individual training to everyone who needed it, and some very helpful hints to all. Dave Thomas, who may have been new to the Artemis range, was certainly no novice, but he first shot with that group. Most scenarios on fixed targets called for two shots per. Dave may well have earned the moniker “double tap” for his rapid, tight groups. If it hits the fan, Dave, I want you on my “six.”

Everybody who participated was happy with the experience, and a plan is in the works to make our next range visit at the Prado Dam range in November. Be sure to look for updates posted by our president, “Dead Eye” Bruce. ♦



- 1 LTC Jim Duffy on 300 degree rapid fire target virtual reality target system.
- 2 Artemis Defense Institute – the location of Chapter 78's September meeting.
- 3 Mike Keele, “ready on the firing line.”
- 4 LTC Dave Thomas's target for rapid firing; double tap and head shot. The arrows point to the perfect hits.



5



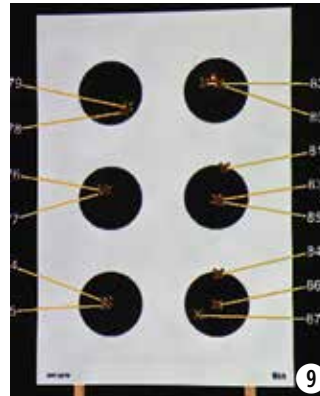
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13

- 5 Note his shirt! SFC James Light attended the FSSF reunion and gave the FSSF presentation at the meeting.
- 6 Richard Simonian and Brig. General Ron Flynn
- 7 Brig. General Ron Flynn's cap
- 8 John "Tilt" Stryker Meyer working as always, totally around the 'clock.'
- 9 Target demonstrating "Rapid Fire Hits"
- 10 Don Gonnerville
- 11 LTC Jim Duffy's cap
- 12 Jim Duffy, Bruce Long, Mike Keele and Richard Simonian getting pre-shooting briefing.
- 13 Chapter 78 President Bruce Long
- 14 Not all "serious business".



14

THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



Updates on the Montagnards



Tom Turney

By Tom Turney

With this issue of The Sentinel we are initiating a new section in which we will be updating our readers with news and stories about the *Montagnards – the Forgotten Warriors*.

It is well known that the Montagnards were instrumental in working with Special Forces during the Vietnam War. Generally referred to as the “Yards” (short for Montagnards, a French term meaning mountain people), they

worked with SF throughout the Central Highlands in numerous A Camps in a program known as the Civilian Irregular Defense Group

(CIDG). Montagnards also worked with Special Forces in programs including SOG, Mike Force and other Greek alphabet programs.

It is also well known, particularly among SF veterans, that when the US pulled out of Vietnam the Montagnards were left to endure tremendous hardships under a hostile government. A few escaped and made it to the US, but most remained in Vietnam, suffering under the Vietnamese government’s actions of reprisal and confiscation. Save the Montagnard People (STMP) (<http://www.montagnards.org/>), has done a great job helping Montagnards gain admission to the US, as well as aiding their assimilation into life in the US. However, the majority of the Montagnards who worked with SF or their families still remain in Vietnam.

Beginning in 2016, some SF veterans began helping raise money for an organization known as The Vietnam Fund for Education, Music, and Infrastructure Inc. (www.vietnamemifund.org). The Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam (AATTV) veterans also supported the work of the Vietnam Fund, which focuses on building infrastructure and educational resources for the Montagnard communities of the Central Highlands.

We urge all SF Veterans and SFA Chapters to support the efforts of both STMP and The Vietnam Fund and hope you look forward to future news and stories about the Montagnards. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or comments on how we might improve this section.

Learn more about the Montagnards and what has happened to them here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwMbp9OkDOI&t=5s> ❖



ABOVE: Nha Trang Mike Force and Battle Flag and streamers, Vietnam.

RIGHT: Captain David Moley commanding a II Corps Company of Mike Force Montagnards crossing a stream in the 1960s.



McKeague Takes Over DPAA Amid Praise and a Note of Somber Realism



John Stryker Meyer

By John Stryker Meyer

With few exceptions, the DoD announcement on Labor Day of retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Kelly K. McKeague as director of the Department of POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has been met mostly with praise. McKeague was finally appointed 16 months after the first director resigned in June 2016. During that hiatus, there has been derision and uncertainty in the ranks of DPAA.

A former employee said that McKeague's appointment was "met with universal praise by the worker bees in DPAA," he said, requesting anonymity.

"There's been a leadership vacuum during the last 16 months. I left DPAA because of the senior leadership issues. For example, the teams on the ground in Southeast Asia want a continued drive and effort toward searching for American remains, but budget cuts and a repeated, secretive effort to run up big numbers at the expense of Vietnam War recovery issues continues....there are many who hope Director McKeague will pursue that goal."

The September 5 National League of POW/MIA Families Update echoed his concerns and praise of the McKeague selection:

"The League was optimistic that Secretary of Defense Mattis would select a person with experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission, someone who had earned the trust and respect of affected families and veterans, as well as foreign officials whose willingness to authorize necessary cooperation is critical to success.

We wish Kelly McKeague the very best as he assumes responsibility to truly lead DPAA in accomplishing accounting objectives we share. He brings to DPAA the integrity and respect necessary to regain credibility and overcome three fractious years during which leadership failures destroyed agency morale and confidence of the families and our nation's veterans."

And, that update detailed some of the serious repercussions of budget constraints. Due to budget constraints, field operations in Vietnam and Cambodia were dramatically reduced during FY17; however, Lao operations were not as adversely impacted. As is obvious, DPAA did not have the funding required to "increase the pace and scope of operations," as Vietnam has repeatedly urged.

"Despite deep-seated, continuing internal dysfunction, DPAA field teams had been steadily implementing recoveries since becoming fully operational in January, 2016." After receiving assurances that "funding was secured, though at a lower level, but adequate to sustain operations until April 28th of this year, the reduction in field operations was a serious blow to (the) confidence in DPAA's com-



MG Kelly K. McKeague

mitment to pursue Vietnam War accounting as a continuing priority. Due to inadequate funding, the damage became increasingly clear."

Leadership from the Joint Special Operations Association/Special Forces Association POW/MIA Committee echoed similar praise at McKeague's appointment while sharing the Nation League of POW/MIA Families' concern about budgetary cuts impacting recovery operations in Southeast Asia.

A long-time observer of the POW/MIA mission had one cautionary note:

"While everyone is applauding the appointment of Mr. McKeague, everyone should be cognizant of the fact that there are key, upper management personnel who have told Vietnam veterans that they're committed to the Southeast Asia mission while talking out of the other side of their mouth that Vietnam War remains will take a back seat to WWII and Korean War emphases. They're bureaucrats and all have to pray for Mr. McKeague's success not only in the field, but within the bureaucratic snakepits of Washington (D.C.)."

In his first public statement, McKeague said recently:

"I know the importance of the agency's mission and I look forward to working with DPAA's team of dedicated professionals. I am humbled and blessed to serve on behalf of the families whose loved ones served our country. The fulfillment of this agency's solemn obligation is my honor to endeavor." ♦

NOTE: Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman of the National League of POW/MIA Families, attended the Chapter 2016 Christmas party as our guest AND was granted honorary membership into SFA/ SOA AND received the SOA's President Award for her 40+ years of service/dedication to bringing home US missing in SEA.



Kenn Miller

By Kenn Miller

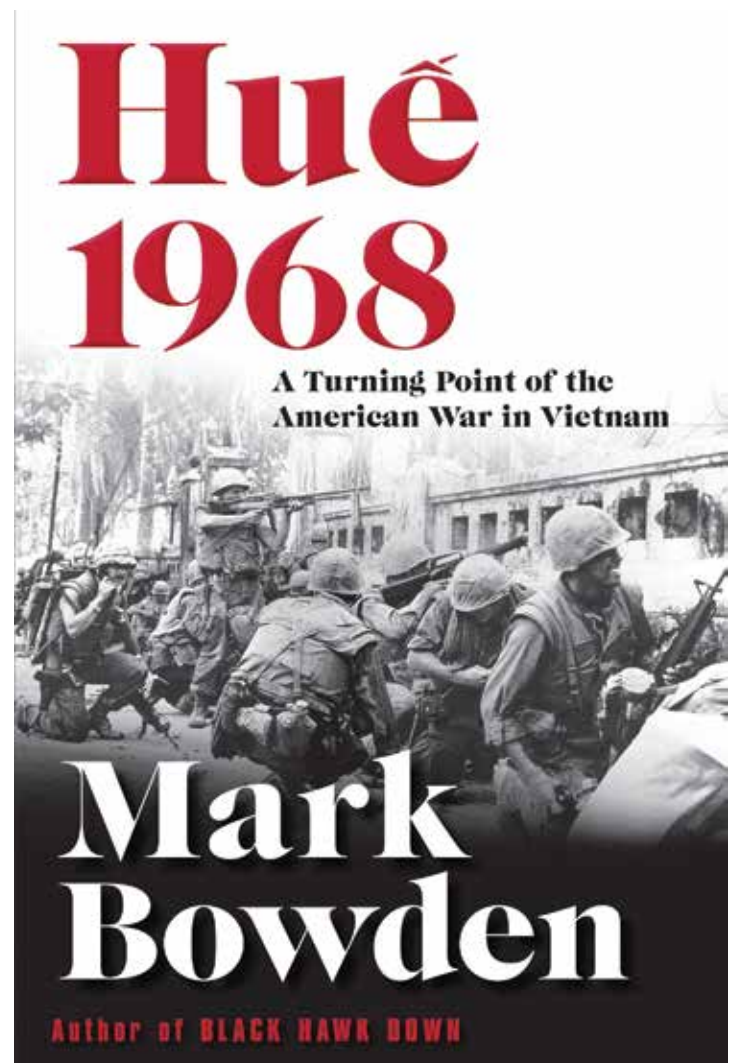
To review the book of an author against whom you have a personal dislike might sound like fun, but it instead it is an onerous task. Shortly after his *Black Hawk Down* hit the bestsellers list, the powers that be in the Army Ranger veterans community invited Mark Bowden to be the banquet speaker at a Ranger Rendezvous in Columbus, Georgia. In front of an audience that included

at least a hundred Vietnam War veterans, Bowden opened his speech by telling us that he came of age during the Vietnam War, and quite naturally despised that US military, and then quickly went on to say that the American soldiers he interviewed for his book were not the scum that he'd expected based on the Vietnam War military. There was a moment of deep shocked silence in that vast Columbus Iron Works banquet hall. No one said anything, but we did look at each other as if for assurance that our ears weren't deceiving us. The young Mogadishu Ranger veterans scattered among the tables in the hall looked embarrassed and then hastened to assure us that Bowden couldn't have meant what he'd just said. No one got rowdy and rude. We just listened, still somewhat stunned, to Bowden's easily forgettable speech. Later, back at the hotel hospitality suite, some of the Mogadishu Rangers gathered three or four of the Vietnam veterans who had written some of the war memoirs that Bowden had early in his book mentioned that the men of Task Force Ranger passed around in the hanger in which they were quartered. They took us to the hospitality room next door where Bowden was holding forth to a small admiring crew of field grade officers. On the way from one hospitality room to the other we were told that Bowden would be delighted to meet us. But when we were introduced to Bowden, he just looked at us, and with a sneer said, "That's nice," and then turned his back on us and went back to regaling the overly impressed brass hats. Having been one of those authors, I now find myself in a hard place when it comes to fairly reviewing Bowden's new Vietnam War book. I admit to a dislike for Mark Bowden, but I will try to be fair to his book.

Like it or not (and I damn sure don't like it) the Communist infiltration of around ten thousand troops into Hue, the former capital and cultural center of Vietnam, during the night of January 31st, 1968, the first day of Tet, the Lunar New Year holiday, while a cease fire was supposedly in place and most of the RVN soldiers were on leave, was a brilliant troop movement that may be worthy of even an opposing soldier's respect, no matter how terrible the aftermath of that infiltration. And the aftermath was very terrible—very terrible for all involved—NVA and VC, ARVN, US Marines, 1st Cavalry Division, and Vietnamese, American, French, and even German civilians. The once beautiful city of Hue was turned

to rubble and thousands of people lost their lives. But for days after the Communist infiltration and the fighting began, the world's media was focused on what was happening in Saigon and elsewhere in South Vietnam. It would be days before Washington and Saigon realized that the biggest battle and the prime Communist objective was Hue.

In his first chapter Bowden introduces us to the girls of a local VC squad from an area outside the city. It is clear that the reader is expected to somewhat identify with these girls, who apparently had their own reasons to fight for the Communists—and it isn't as hard to do as it sounds. Bowden is a gifted writer with a eye for details, and throughout his book he does try to humanize the Communists as well as he does the Americans. The Vietnam War has been over for a long time and the government that was our enemy then is now, at least to some extent, an American ally, and former soldiers who had done their best to kill each other then ought to be able to look back with some objectivity and realize that in some ways the Americans and Vietnamese fighting in Hue had more in common with each other—at that place and time—than



they did with anyone else in the world. To read *Hue* and get the most out of it, a reader is well advised to look at the individual people Bowden introduces as people caught in a mad situation beyond their control, instead of seeing them as representatives of this side or that side. Save those judgments for the politicians and the higher military brass. I suspect that many veterans will toss this book aside at that first chapter, but my advice would be to drive on, take the people introduced as people, and get a wider understanding of the battle—and perhaps the war itself.

There is not enough space in this review for a full description of the fighting, and Bowden does at least a serviceable, though not perfect, job at that. None of the forces fighting in Hue was trained and experienced in urban combat or prepared for the volume and ferocity of the fighting. Combatants on all sides had to improvise and experiment, and this was deadly and almost unimaginably arduous work. The civilians had at least as difficult a job just surviving and taking care of homes and loved ones—and many of them did not succeed. There is no final accurate tally of casualties in the battle of Hue, and there never will be. For almost a month, human life—life of any kind—was never secure.

Mark Bowden is an excellent journalist and interviewer, and for a civilian with no personal military experience he handles the terms and nomenclature and basics of military life and of combat better in this book than he did in *Black Hawk Down*. Just as this reviewer (me) is prejudiced against Bowden, Bowden also has his prejudices. It was commonplace during the war for the international media to believe everything coming out of Hanoi and nothing coming from South Vietnamese sources. Writing almost a half century after the Battle of Hue, Bowden is not as bad in this regard as many reporters were in that time. But like the international (and American) media during the war, Bowden seems to have contempt for the South Vietnamese government that—bad as it may have been in some ways—was still objectively orders of magnitude better than the North Vietnamese government. To neglect or downright ignore the ARVN when writing about any of the battles in which ARVN does a splendid job is an old journalistic demeanor that still continues to some degree in this book. ARVN couldn't possibly be completely ignored in any account of the Battle of Hue, but Bowden gives them less attention than they deserve. The ARVN unit most deeply involved in the Battle of Hue was, naturally, Hue's own 1st ARVN Division—which was widely and accurately considered one of the finest division size units in the war. Bowden seems to be very impressed with 1st ARVN's famous special operations company, the Hac Bao (Black Panther)—but Hac Bao was a truly exceptional unit by any standards and played a large and valorous part in the battle. Bowden's disdain for the ARVN distort his overall view of the battle, and this influences his judgement. On page 400 Bowden refers to "the undeniable inadequacy of the ARVN," and in the next sentence writes about how "bravely" the ARVN fought to maintain their position on Mang Ca and the "great cost" of ARVN's recovery of the Hue Citadel, where the outnumbering Communist forces were dug in and well prepared. Maybe by "inadequacy of the ARVN" he was referring to inadequate numbers of men, ammunition, and other crucial combat logistics. But I sus-

pect that it was a slur on the valiant 1st ARVN Division. A friend and neighbor of mine who was an ANGLICO Marine attached to 1st Battle 5th Marines that fought alongside 1st ARVN to take back the Citadel is bitter at what he considers an inaccurate and condescending account of the 1/5 Marines and 1st ARVN fight to clear the Citadel of enemy. This retired Marine NCO feels that Bowden casts undeserved aspersion on the 1/5 battalion commander. Bowden's account of the 1st Cav's role in the battle is limited, but he seems to have a little disdain for their predicament—it is as if he believes that extraordinary courage and tactical flexibility ought to overcome the enemy easily, despite the enemy having almost all the advantages.

Veterans I know who have read *Hue* consider Bowden more than a bit too enamored of the NVA and VC. I see what they mean. His use of the Vietnamese language derogatory term for ARVN soldiers, *nguy*, in a quoting context is one thing, but his use of it in his own references to ARVN seems to mark him as some sort of NVA wannabe. And his rather too short and passing references to the Communist authorities' literally atrocious campaign of murder against the civilian population strikes me as downright irresponsible. Before reading the book I wondered if Bowden would mention the West German dentists and spouse and Vietnamese colleagues from Hue University's newly modernizing dental school who were taken up one river and down another to be executed and tossed into an open mass grave. I was a member of the recon team that later found the bodies two months later, and I was the one who counted the heads in the pit. Bowden's account of those murders were in one sentence, and he undercounted the victims. That is probably a fault of his sources, but just out of petty meanness I hold it against him.

I may be alone on this, but I consider the enemy's experiences, motivation, and personal stories are among the strengths of the book, as uncomfortable as they may be to read. Soldier to soldier, those who fought on either side have good reason to say that they were up against formidable foes. But the Communist commanders and political officers and vindictive snitches responsible for the executions and mass killings get off way too easy. If anything, these atrocities go far to show how unworthy for power the Communists were.

Due to its historical subject, *Hue* is not a pleasant read. But despite its faults, I believe it is very much worth reading. But remembering how offensive Bowden was at that Ranger Rendezvous many years back, I have to suggest that those who will read Bowden's *Hue* not to buy it but to borrow it from the library instead.

There is one more annoying tic that bothered me from time to time, and that is Bowden's use of "Westy" when referring to General Westmoreland, as if he and the general were golfing buddies. It is a small thing, but I was looking for nits to pick, and that's one of them I found all too damn often. ♦

FIRST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE 71st REUNION



Cliff Armas

By Cliff Armas
Edited by Lonny Holmes for the Sentinel

The First Special Service Force (FSSF) held its 71st reunion at the Holiday Inn in Sacramento, CA from August 9th thru the 12th which was attended by six original members of this special force who served in the units WWII battles. SFA Chapter 78 was represented by Chapter members SFC (R) Cliff Armas and SFC James Light.

Cliff and James presented SFA C-78 Chapter Challenge Coins to all six original FSSF members, Fred Conrod, Jr., 3rd Company, 1st Regiment, Howard Dobbs, 6th Company, 1st Regiment, Eugene Gutierrez, Service Company, Cy Mermelstein, 3rd Company, 1st Regiment, Norman Sieger, 4th Company, 3rd Regiment, and Jim Summersides, 4th Company, 1st Regiment.

Because of their advanced age, most well over 90 years, few could attend. The years are also taking a toll on this group of "Military Heros" similar to the fate of the Doolittle Raiders. Since the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal in 2015 their has been a significant reduction of their original surviving members.

Major General Robert T. Frederick's daughter, Ann Frederick Hicks, attended representing the general's family and was a major participant in the reunions events.

Many members of the Canadian Armed Forces Parachute units also attended in uniform paying their respects to the FSSF. The U.S.A. was also represented by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Demolino, a member of our Special Forces, the son of an original member of the FSSF.

The Pipes and Drums of the Black Devils, a dedicated pipe band of the FSSF, performed at the reunion. Formed in September 2013 the band is based in Helena, Montana.

The First Special Service Force Tartan was created in 2010 for the FSSF. The tartan represents the legacy of the only WWII Special Forces unit formed by two countries. The red, white, and blue in the tartan stands for the United States Flag and the flag colors of the Canadian Union Jack. When the Canadian contingent arrived by train from Canada in 1942 to begin training at Helena they marched from the train depot being led by a piper and carrying the Union Jack. The red also represents the crimson of the Spearhead shoulder patch of the FSSF. The black in the tartan represents the "Black Devils." The gold is for the Crossed Arrows worn by the Force and to signify the color of all the medals they received. The



Ann Frederick Hicks, daughter of Major General Robert T. Frederick, and James Light



Original members of the FSSF are seated in the first row for a group photo at the FSSF 71st Reunion on August 9, 2017 in Sacramento, CA



CWO 4 Delmolino from the U.S. 7th Special Forces Group, a son of an original member of the First Special Service Force

tartan is officially registered with the Scottish Tartan Authority, ITI No 11160. The Band wears the V-42 knife as part of their uniform.

SFC Cliff Armas was privileged to have played with the Band in honoring the First Special Forces members memorializing the sacrifice these heroic soldiers made.

Historical background:

During World War II a need existed for a commando unit to conduct combat operations behind enemy lines. A joint United States and Canadian Brigade was formed, the First Special Service Force. Organized, trained and led by then LTC Robert Frederick the unit was activated on July 9, 1942 at Fort William Henry Harrison, Helena, Montana. The colonel called for volunteers for the 1800 member force giving preference to individuals with extensive outdoor experience. LTC Frederick participated in the design of a fighting knife made exclusively for "The Force," the V-42 combat knife, a derivative of the Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife.

Much feared for their fighting prowess, the moniker "The Black Devils" was adopted after the discovery of the personal diary of a German officer while conducting a beach head assault at Anzio. This officer was a member of the Herman Goering Division and his diary contained this entry "The Black Devils ("die schwarzen Teufeln") are all around us every time we come into the line. We never hear them come."

The FSSF fought extensively in Italy and suffered huge casualties resulting in the requirement for frequent large numbers of replacements. Due to the change in the war policy requiring large unit tactics the FSSF was disbanded in December 1944.

The FSSF and the OSS are both in the direct lineage of today's Special Forces (Green Berets) which was formed and trained in 1952 by Colonel Aaron Banks of OSS WWII fame.

For information on the FSSF I suggest reading *The First Special Service Force, A Canadian/American Wartime Alliance: The Devil's Brigade*, by Robert D. Burhans, First Edition, 1947, although reprints are currently available. ❖



James Light, Cy Mermelstein, and Cliff Armas



James Light meeting Norman Sieger



Jim Summersides with daughter Sherry



James Light speaks with Fred Conrad, Jr.

From the Editor continued

party and presents. Members of A-16 led by our NCOIC SFC Charles Floyd gave Mike a solid gold (24K) WAR pendent designed after the peace symbol (Where is it now, must be worth a small fortune).

Two years later when I was a neophyte college student in Southern California Mike call's me up and we got together. He asked me to be his best man at his wedding after returning from Vietnam. Ok, no sweat. During rehearsal Mike and I were in his bedroom at his mother's home just north of Los Angeles and I look around and on the night stand adjacent to his bed was an Army folder. Huh, "what's that Mike," I asked. "Oh, just something they gave me in Vietnam," he replied. So I look and would have lost my dentures if I'd had any—it was his DSC from an operation in MACV-SOG. I knew he was in FOB-2 in Kontum but nothing about the operation (Tailwind) or the decoration. He really downplayed the award.

Just like the SF Medic I knew in Thailand, quiet, unassuming and soft spoken. He was, and is, the best and brightest medic I ever served with as a Green Beret. ♦



The original members of the SF Medical Training Task Force, A-4616. Photo was taken by SF Company photographer and printed in official 46th SF Documents. circa spring 1970.

SFC Charles Floyd, SGT Whitesill, SSG Lonny Holmes, Sp/4 Robert Shaw, SSG Michael Stern and SGT Gary Mike Rose. Note we are all holding hands, a pun that did not go unnoticed by HQ.

NOTE: October 23, 2017, President Donald J. Trump will award the Medal of Honor to U.S. Army Captain Gary M. Rose (retired) for conspicuous gallantry during the Vietnam War. Chapter 78 members Lonny Holmes and John Stryker Meyer will be in attendance at the White House ceremony.



Mike Rose at the Thai National Border Department for the graduation of the Thai Police Medical Cadre and his transfer to Vietnam. Mike is in the center holding the trophy. In white shirts from the left, SFC Charles Floyd, Sp/4 Robert Shaw, SGT Whitesill, SSG Lonny Holmes, unknown, SGT Mike Rose, Lawrence Arritola in the suit is the program director and the Senior Advisor for the Thai National Border Police, next is the Thai Medical Director for the TNPD (M.D.). Second from the right is SSG Michael Stern one of our team members. Entrance to our offices are the doors in the background.