



THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 5 • MAY 2018



IN HONOR OF THE MEMBERS OF THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES



CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL



My Mike Force Montagnards

Joint SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee
Delegation to Southeast Asia

A Flying Tiger Recounts His Service in WWII and Beyond

The Office of the Strategic Services Awarded the
Congressional Gold Medal: Three OSS Officers
Who Became Green Beret Leaders

MACV-SOG One Zero School: Part III



SENTINEL

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MISSION STATEMENT: The Sentinel will provide interesting and meaningful information relative to the Special Forces experience — today, yesterday and tomorrow. Articles will be published that were written by knowledgeable authors who will provide objective and accurate accounts of real world experiences.

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From the Editor



Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

The Travis Mills MACV-SOG One Zero School story concludes with Part III in this issue of the Sentinel. This final part of the story describes the training and first secret field recon into Laos as part of the real life exercise of those Green Beret's who upon completion of their dangerous mission will return to operational status at an F.O.B. As alluded to by the author in his final paragraphs, these future leaders learned enough to become effective in recon operations and

provided them with survival skills in the face of determined NVA forces. Printed for the first time in the *Sentinel* the One Zero School story took a long time in its development and we thank Travis Mills for his persistence despite the pestering by the editor for the untold story of an unknown school to the vast majority of U.S. Forces.

Another note on the career of Travis Mills is that following his discharge from the army he was preparing to further his education at a major university when Major (R) Clyde Sincere contacted him regarding a series of jobs as a contractor... but that's another story(s).

Terry Cagnolatti has undertaken the job of totally updating the Chapter website www.specialforces78.com. About fifteen years ago Terry guided the design of our first website and then updated it frequently. Eight years back he worked with Grid 35 in a total overhaul and guided the development and design of the Chapter's "Shooters Cup" website which followed the military and police teams who competed in this very tactically advanced competition for three years. Since Terry cannot attend every Chapter meeting he is working closely with Chapter Vice President Brad Welker to keep him posted.

One of the aspects of updating our SF website is to develop an index or table of contents for the archived *Sentinels*. Not only would it be effective to locate any one of the past 100 issues but also to rapidly find the feature stories. Our *Sentinel* has generated a vast readership interest in non Chapter members and many of these individuals and institutions are looking into those archived stories. Let's help those readers find what they are seeking.❖

Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor



LTC Frank Dallas (photo submitted by
Chapter member Robert Crebbs)



John Stryker Meyer
President SFA 78

By the time the May edition of the *Sentinel* lands in your sweaty hands, we will have the first four months of 2018 behind us. Tax day is behind us. Easter is behind us and we continue to march forward.

A tip of the beret to Chapter Chaplain/Treasurer **Richard Simonian** for running the recon mission that led to our inaugural meeting at the Embassy Suites for our April 14 meeting. The food was good, the coffee hot, the OJ cold and the quietude was a welcome contrast to the noisy meeting rooms of the past. Thank you SSG Simonian.

Also further tips to Chapter member **Tony Pirone** for an informative update on today's SF world after spending time training at Ft. Bragg.

Last, but not least, our second speaker Mike Taylor deserves a double tip for his thorough presentation and for managing to tell us about a couple of MIA stories that hit the hearts of all SOG recon men from CCN. We wish Mike and Laura safe travels to the Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery for the May 11 burial of the remains of Maj. Donald "Butch" Gene Carr. They were recently repatriated by DPAA. Don was one helluva Green Beret who served with distinction wherever he was posted in Vietnam during numerous tours of duty, including running recon at CCS.

With an eye to the future, I want to reiterate another major project where one of our members has stepped forward to update/improve the Chapter 78 website: **Terry Cagnolatti**, who served as Chapter president in earlier days while still working full time at the LA DA's office, contacted me and Vice President **Don Deatherage** to volunteer to assist in this noble project. Over the last month,

I've announced plans to improve it. Don and I received several suggestions from Chapter members for improvements, additions and in some cases deletions from our present site. Don started the ball rolling, Terry was kind enough to volunteer to carry it forward. None of this will happen overnight. But, in our true SF spirit, if you have further suggestions, don't hesitate to contact us.

And, to report back to our members, I've had tremendous support from Chapter officers, **Don Deatherage**, **Brad Welker**, **Gary Macnamara**, **Richard Simonian**, Sgt.-at-Arms **Mark Miller**, past-President **Bruce Long**, Coordinator of the ROTC Recognition Program **Ed Barrett** and Deputy Special Assistant to the Treasurer, **Mike Keele**. Without this teamwork, the progress we've made this year wouldn't have been possible. Oh yeah, and a hearty, vociferous thank you to our fav *Sentinel* Editor **Lonny Holmes** for the hundreds of hours that he pours into producing our award-winning newsletters. Thank you team.

I hope to see you at the next Chapter 78 meeting. Details below:

Time: 8:30 a.m. May 12. Breakfast will be served.

Location: Embassy Suites

3100 East Frontera

(The SE Corner of Hwy 91 & Glassell St.)

The Spanish Moss Room

Anaheim, CA 92807

CRITICAL REMINDER:

Please contact Chapter Vice President Don Deatherage or me to confirm your attendance. We need an accurate headcount for breakfast. ❖

John Stryker Meyer
President, SFA Chapter 78



Major Rocco M. Barnes Special Forces Compound Building Dedication Scheduled at the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Center

Building 58 will be dedicated as the Major Rocco M. Barnes Special Forces Compound in a ceremony on May 18th, 2018, at 1100 hours at the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Center, located in the city of Los Alamitos, California.

Additionally, a monument which is currently under construction will be located at the main entrance.

Major Rocco M. Barnes, a member of the Army National Guard/Special Forces, served his country for 31 years. Major Barnes was the first Army Major in history to command a Marine unit. He volunteered for four hazardous tours of duty — two in Iraq and two in Afghanistan. Major Barnes was killed on June 4, 2009 during his last tour in Afghanistan.

Major Barnes' awards and decorations include the Bronze Star (3rd Award), Meritorious Service Medal, Army Achievement Medal (2nd Award), National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, Iraq Campaign Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal (with 'M' Device), NCO Professional Development Ribbon (3rd Award), Army Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Components Overseas Training Ribbon, California Medal of Merit, Special Forces Tab, Parachute Badge and Air Assault Badge.

THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



Updates on the Montagnards



Foreground: Lt. Paul Longgrear after Medevac from Lang Vei. Rear right: Montagnard Mike Force Company Commander being carried



Col (R) Paul Longgrear

My Mike Force Montagnards

By Col. (Retired) Paul Longgrear

The Huey helicopter was hovering about 5 feet off the ground. It remained in that position only long enough for the crew to kick off some ammunition and food and for me to jump to the ground. I was met by a bunch of oriental looking soldiers and one shirtless Caucasian gathering the supplies that had been off loaded from the Huey. It was about 1000 hours in early October 1967 and the weather was already hot and muggy.

I had just joined 12th Company of the I Corp Mobile Strike Force (Mike Force), 5th Special Forces Group as a platoon leader. The company commander, Captain McCullah, and another platoon leader, Smitty, were the current leadership and they were both Australians, part of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Army_Training_Team_Vietnam). All of the other soldiers in the Company were Montagnards — primarily members of the Hre tribe.

Captain McCullah gave the following briefing over a warm can of beer which was included in the supplies I accompanied on the Huey. "We encountered an NVA company sized force yesterday and lost two SF platoon leaders to wounds. I am going to give you 3rd platoon. Their current strength is 28 troops present for duty." He continued, "We are about 1500 meters from Laos 30 klicks from North Vietnam. Our AO (Area of Operation) is a free fire zone with no friendlies. Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out!" He added, "about 8 klicks to the East there are a thousand US Marines, but they don't come over here so don't worry about them." I learned our mission was to conduct Long Range Patrols for the Special Forces A Camp named for the nearest village — Lang Vei. The Lang Vei A Camp was in the process of being rebuilt from the last time it was overrun and destroyed and they needed our help.

I learned that my first operation would be to ambush a dirt road, running from Laos. The ambush site was about two kilometers

away from our patrol base. The good news to me was that it was my ambush, it was that night and I would be in charge. Smitty took me over and introduced me to the 3d platoon interpreter. I told him I wanted to meet the Montagnard platoon leader (PL) and platoon sergeant (PS). Afterward I called the platoon together and introduced myself. Then I briefed them on the mission we would be running that night.

We spent a couple of hours training on movement to the objective, getting into position and actions following contact. I told them to clean their weapons, take a nap and eat prior to departure. At 1900 hours we formed up. I asked the Yard PL if the weapons were cleaned, whether everyone had water and a poncho liner and if had they eaten. I spot checked a man in each squad and was pleased. We moved out in single file. It was already pitch black.

As we approached the ambush site we had a chance encounter with an enemy five-man recon team walking down the road. My point element fired at them, but the enemy did not return fire and evaporated into the black jungle. The 4th squad immediately maneuvered to the right and swept the road to the south. The 3rd squad did the same thing on my left. The 2nd squad stayed where they were as if performing the role of a reserve force. The 1st squad ran past me, crossed the road and set up a defensive line. Once things quieted down, we moved up the road away from the river and reset our ambush.

About 0300 I heard voices which grew louder. I put my hand on my interpreter's wrist and he whispered in my ear, "That NVA soldier, said 'where is everybody'" I popped a handheld flare and immediately I think every Yard emptied a full magazine. I figured I had just lost at least half my platoon to friendly fire. At day break we swept the area and found one body with numerous bullet holes. Best of all there were no friendly casualties. Don't ask me how, I don't know. The lesson I learned that night was always keep your troops informed. If they know what the plan is and are trained, chances are they will execute and succeed. This was the beginning of a love affair between me and my Mike Force Yards.

The next day we were air lifted out of Lang Vei. We returned to Danang, the headquarters for the I Corp Mike Force and the location where the families of our Yard strikers lived when they were out on operations. The Yards saw the Danang compound as a place to relax and go native. It was their village away from the jungle villages where they grew up. I saw it as a place for R&R but also a place to train.

I was looking forward to this time to get to know my Yards better and to let them to get to know me better. After months in the field they weren't real excited about training. During our time in Danang, I got pulled to go on a couple of missions to replace casualties in other Mike Force companies, but the Yards got to play while I was gone. But when I was around we continually trained.

It only takes three things to fight and win a battle: move, shoot and communicate. I jumped on the move part and began an effort to teach my Yards to read a map. With my Yard leadership gathered round, I laid my compass on the map and began talking about orienting the map to the terrain. The deeper I got into magnetic north and the earth spinning as it went around the sun the more they looked at me like I had too much rice wine. They couldn't believe I thought the earth was round like a ball, "we would fall off if it was round" they argued. Trying to help them understand gravity just caused them to laugh and roll in the dirt that much more, "we would all be flat on the ground if that was true" they countered.

At that point, I decided we would go to the range and work on marksmanship. At the range I observed that these guys could knock the eye out of a monkey at 100 yards. The M79 grenade launcher guys could put a round in a tree, the BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) guys could cut down a small sapling and the riflemen were excellent shots. They had a perfect grasp on sight picture and sight alignment. I worked hard to convince them that a single shot was better than automatic fire after the initial contact where we wanted to make it sound like we were a larger group. Their eyesight was almost unbelievable. They could hit a target in the jungle that I

couldn't even detect. After all, they had survived for centuries with nothing more than spears, blow darts and bows with arrows.

My next topic was hand and arm signals. They were very attentive and agreeable. When I finished my class, they demonstrated their hand and arm signals and their whistles and sounds copying animals in the jungle. They could move through the jungles like a cat stalking its prey.

While I continued the training, I concluded that they didn't know English, they couldn't read a map but they loved killing the enemy and they were good at it because that's what they were paid to do: after all, they were mercenaries. They received bonuses for kills and weapons captured. My last effort was to convince them that I would put them in situations to allow them to make a lot of money.

I loved my Yards and know that they are fearless and brave when motivated and well led. They proved themselves over and over on numerous Mike Force operations, but none of the training we did prepared us for what lay in front of us when we returned to Lang Vei for the now famous battle which began shortly before midnight on 6 February 1968 in which tanks were used by the NVA in battle for the first time in South Vietnam. More details on the Lang Vei Battle can be found here: <http://langvei.com/>. We lost many US Special Forces soldiers as well as Montagnards at Lang Vei. I will never forget any of them. ❖

SUPPORT THE YARDS

Contribute to The Vietnam Fund

(<http://vietnamemifund.org/donate.html#SFlogo>)

and

Save The Montagnard People (http://www.montagnards.org/donations_to_save_the_montagnards).

Do you have a story about the Yards you worked with in Vietnam. Tell your story – contact Tom Turney (turney@newcap.com) for details.

A Tribute to the Montagnards of the Mike Force



Special Ops: Mike Force Vietnam A Documentary About Special Forces in Vietnam

Be sure to watch this excellent video which is a true tribute to the Montagnards and features a number of SOA members.

It can be viewed on YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0OWVanxcTs>



April Chapter 78 Meeting Presentation: Joint SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee Delegation to Southeast Asia



LTC (R) Michael Taylor making his presentation to Chapter members at the Chapter 78 meeting on April 14, 2018.

LTC (R) Michael Taylor presented an overview to our Chapter on Saturday, April 14, of his recent Joint SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee delegation to Southeast Asia visiting sites in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam where American remains are being recovered. In the Spring 2018 issue of *The DROP*, page 104, from the Special Forces Association is a detailed summary of his trip which I refer our members to read, thus not duplicating or reprinting his story here.

Additional remarks from Michael Taylor:

The Special Operations Association had a POW/MIA Committee for years before I was asked to become its Chairman in 2013. I soon realized that we could simultaneously represent both the SOA and SFA, if the SFA desired us to do so. Cliff Newman, SFA Executive Director, and then-President Jack Tobin agreed. Cliff joined the committee and we have been joint ever since. We currently have seven members. We devote ourselves to (1) attending meetings and conferences with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) and the National League of POW/MIA Families (the League); (2) developing positions and writing letters to Congress, DoD and the Administration; (3) attending DPAA Family Member Updates to connect with and assist SF and Special Ops family members; (4) presenting briefings to SOA, SFA and League meetings; keeping SOA and SFA members aware of developments in the accounting mission via emails and magazine articles, etc. We are greatly assisted by financial support from the SF Charitable Trust. ❖



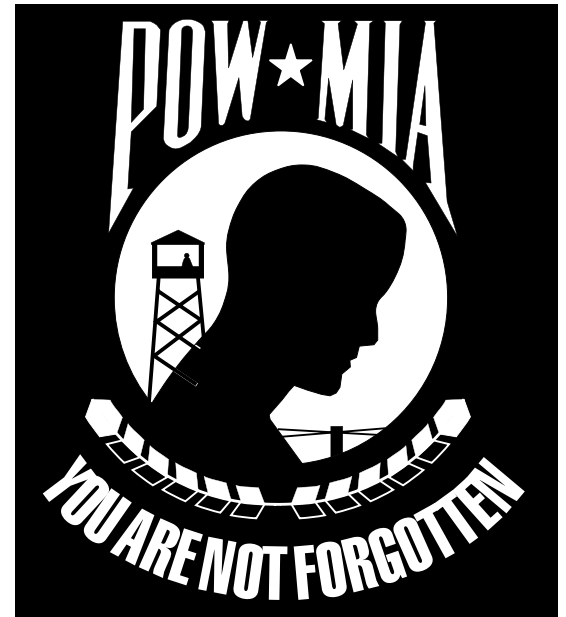
The end of an amazing day! Note the total manpower on this site alone. We should all be proud to be American.



The digging is done by US Team members in shifts. The bucket brigade is local Lao villagers.



The screening crew sifts out all the dirt until only larger rocks and evidence remains.



ABOUT MICHAEL E. TAYLOR

Mike Taylor is Chairman of the Joint Special Operations Association/Special Forces Association POW/MIA Committee. He is also Vice President of the Special Operations Association and Vice President of his Chapter in the Special Forces Association.

Mike was commissioned in the US Army as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry in 1966 when he graduated from the University of Mississippi. After commanding infantry units in Germany during the Cold War, he joined US Army Special Forces in 1968. He initially served in a Mike Force Company, where he commanded A205, 5th Battalion, II Corps Mike Force, then was assigned to MACV-SOG where he ran on a Recon Team across the border and then flew "Covey" for RT's out of NKP in Thailand. For the remainder of his 25-year Army career, he served as a Special Forces Officer and a Middle East Foreign Area Officer. Mike was decorated for valor in both the Vietnam War and Desert Shield/Desert Storm before retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1991. He was one of the original officers selected when Special Forces was established as an Army branch for officers.

After retirement from the Army, Mike served as a Department of the Army civil servant in charge of antiterrorism and security programs in Saudi Arabia. When he left the civil service, he was awarded the Department of Defense Antiterrorism Lifetime Achievement Award.

Mike holds a BA in Political Science, an MA in Middle East Area Studies, an MS in Civil Government and is a graduate of the US Army War College.

A Flying Tiger Recounts His Service in WWII and Beyond



Lt. Hayward receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross



David Hayward, at right standing in back, with Tony Mersep, George Searci, Wilbur Pritt and one other member of his flight crew.



Kenn Miller

By Kenn Miller

Scott Williams, a Vietnam veteran and President of The Freedom Committee of Orange County, an organization that sponsors appearances and talks by veterans at schools and other community institutions, came to Chapter 78's February meeting. Mr. Williams was kind enough to arrange for the *Sentinel* to interview Mr. David K. Hayward of Huntington Beach, California. Before meeting him I knew that Mr. Hayward was in his 90s, but the man I met was very fit and very well spoken, with an amazingly acute memory. His birthday, he said, was 12 May, 1922, which means he will be 96 or very close to it when this edition of the *Sentinel* comes out. I am not exaggerating when I say he seems to be 30 years younger.

Mr. Hayward grew up and went to school in Pasadena, and like millions of young American men of his generation, when war came he was eager to do his patriotic duty. He found his duty in the Army Air Force. After training at Bowling Field, outside Washington D.C., he was a lieutenant and a B-25 pilot, and was soon on his way to the China/Burma/India Theater of War ("CBI") — first to India, and then to a base in Yangkai, Yunnan Province, China, forty miles north of the Flying Tigers' base in Kunming, where many of the fighters that escorted the bombers were stationed.

Lieutenant Hayward's first mission was to bomb a Japanese runway, where he counted 21 Japanese planes waiting there to be destroyed. At one point on this mission he looked over and saw a Japanese Oscar (the Japanese Army's version of the more widely known Mitsubishi Zero) close by, and he still remembers the shock of seeing it, even though the Japanese plane did not attack. On subsequent missions, David K. Hayward bombed



Mr Hayward in his bomber jacket and 22nd Bomber Squadron, 341st Bomber Group (Medium) reunion cap standing in front of a picture of him and his late wife.

Japanese runways and other facilities in China, Burma, and even into Vietnam. Before rotating back to the United States, he was awarded the Distinguished Fly Cross.

On return to post-war civilian life, Mr. Hayworth used the G.I. Bill to earn a degree in mechanical engineering from California Institute of Technology, and later also earned a master's degree in petroleum engineering from USC. Mr. Hayward raised a family, served on the California State Lands Commission, and continued to serve his community and his country in various ways. And he still continues this good work by speaking about patriotism and community service to student assemblies, classroom presentations, and other such gatherings. Like most combat veterans, Mr. Hayward is enormously proud of his service, and considers himself honored to be a veteran. ❖



Two original aircrew's "blood chit," one with Republic of China flag, one with US flag.

A YOUNG MAN IN THE WILD BLUE YONDER

THOUGHTS OF A B-25 PILOT IN WORLD WAR II



DAVID K. HAYWARD

Mr. David K. Hayward is also an author. His book, *A Young Man In The Wild Blue Yonder: Thoughts Of A B-25 Pilot In World War II* is available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1493030000).

Amazon's description of Mr Hayward's book:

David Hayward, a pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps, takes the reader through his adventures and challenges as a young man serving his country in World War II. Would he "wash out" of flying school? Would he survive the dangers and fears of flying 53 combat missions as pilot of a B-25 medium bomber in the China-Burma-India Theater of operations? You will experience the thrill of his solo flight, the frightening day when a Japanese fighter plane flew alongside, an awesome flight over the highest mountains of Tibet, searching for an enemy transmitter luring friendly cargo planes off course, attacking enemy supply lines in Burma and along the east coast of China, and the sorrow of losing close friends. David Hayward tells of serving at Air Force Headquarters in Washington, DC, transporting VIPs on their inspection tours, and as courier to Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall. The reader will join Hayward in developing a veterans association and gathering at annual reunions, and making six return trips to China to relive the pleasant and the sorrowful. This story is illustrated with 119 images and conveys the thoughts and concerns of David Hayward through his most unusual experience.



The Office of the Strategic Services Awarded the Congressional Gold Medal: Three OSS Officers Who Became Green Beret Leaders



By Lonny Holmes

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was presented with the Congressional Gold Medal at the Emancipation Hall at the United States Capitol on Wednesday, March 21, 2018. Over twenty of the surviving members of the OSS attended the event seventy-three years after the end of World War II.

Lonny Holmes

The Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) is presented to “persons” who have performed an achievement that has an impact on American history and requires an Act of Congress with sponsorship of two-thirds of membership the House of Representatives and the Senate before the representative legislative committees will consider the award. Thus, the OSS garnered the required tremendous support from Congress having proved its value during its short tenure in World War II.

With this presentation of the CGM to the OSS and the previous award to First Special Service Force on February 3, 2015 (see the *Sentinel*, Volume 6, issue 3, March 2015) the entire lineage of the Special Forces has been recognized by Congress for their outstanding contribution to the defense of America. Both these historical units are the direct predecessor's of today's Green Berets.

The Office of the Strategic Services and the First Special Service Force (a joint American and Canadian force) were created at the beginning of the Second World War to fill our nations needs, yet both were very different and contributed immensely to the war effort. The OSS was created for the gathering of strategic intelligence as well as small operational units (the Jedburghs) supporting guerrilla warfare in occupied areas of the European and Asian fronts. The First Special Service Force also known as the Devil's Brigade was designed as a small regimental sized elite fighting unit which proved its worth in many tough battles.

Today's Green Berets can also thank the OSS for part of their origin and development of three leaders who became outstanding special operations officers, two of which continued to lead through the Vietnam War and 1970s. One of these leaders is a founding father of today's Special Forces, Colonel Aaron Bank. Major General Jack K. Singlaub and Colonel Sulley de Fontaine also served in



Aurelio Flores and Colonel Sully H. de Fontaine with the program issued at the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony in honor of the OSS held March 21, 2018 in Washington D.C.

the OSS developing their special operations skills in behind the lines combat which proved to be valuable through the next two decades of American conflicts.

Colonel Aaron Bank served in the OSS in the Special Operations Division where he led the Jedburgh Team Packard parachuting into occupied France in 1944. Following the capitulation of Germany he was transferred to the OSS operations in Kunming, China. Colonel Bank, then a Major then completed several operations in Laos and Vietnam where he had discussions with Ho Chi Minh. In 1952 he was called to form today's Special Forces, the 77th SFGA, which was later divided into the 7th SFGA and the 10th SFGA which he led to Bad Tolz, Germany as the commanding officer.



Sixteen of the reported over twenty OSS members in attendance at the Washington, D.C. ceremony where they were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. SOA member Sully de Fontaine is up on the last row on the far left side. (photo courtesy Clyde Sincere and John Vislosky)

Major General Jack K. Singlaub started his career in the OSS where he lead Jedburgh Team James, parachuting into German occupied France in 1944. During the Chinese Communist Revolution after World War II General Singlaub led the CIA Operations in Manchuria. In the Korean War General Singlaub led covert operations against the North Koreans and Chinese. The Vietnam War required a significant need for special operations and he was appointed Chief of SOG. Later in the 1970s he became Chief of Staff for all U.S. Forces in Korea.

Colonel Sulley de Fontaine was born in Belgium and at the age of 16 during World War II was trained by the English Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Special Air Service (SAS) and became a member of the OSS. He parachuted into German occupied France where he led shot-down pilots to safety. In 1957 he completed American Special Forces Qualification. During the early years of his storied career he was involved in operations with the 10th Special Forces Group (A) in Europe, North Africa (Algeria) and the Congo. With the beginning of the Vietnam War Colonel de Fontaine led an 5th SFG A-Team in 1963. Returning to Vietnam in 1965 he became a B-Team Commander in the Delta. He was then assigned to MACV-SOG. Following the Vietnam War he continued his exemplary military career. Colonel Sulley de Fontaine attended the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony in Washington, D.C. ❖



The front and back cover of the program issued at the Washington D.C. ceremony displaying the gold medal designed by the United States Mint and Department of Treasury which was presented at the March 21, 2018 ceremony.

COPS CORNER



Brad Welker

By Brad Welker

The California Criminal Justice system has recently been radically changed by an Assembly Bill, and two Propositions. Assembly Bill 109 passed in 2011 and signed into law by Governor Brown was the first phase of the effort. Proposition 47 (Safe Neighborhood and Schools Act) and Proposition 57 (The Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act) were the final stages.

Assembly Bill 109 resulted in reducing the population of California Prisons by transferring approximately 45,000 convicted felons to local county jails, most which were already overcrowded with convicted misdemeanants and those awaiting trials.

Proposition 47, which was approved by over 60% of the voters in 2014, reduced many crimes from felonies to misdemeanors: among them were possession of many narcotics and theft offenses from a level of \$400 loss to that of \$950 before it would be charged as a felony.

Proposition 57, approved in 2014 by 65% of the voters, approved the early release of 30,000 convicted felons from State Prisons. I urge anyone to research the pros and cons of these three events to make their own determination as to their relative success.

Shoplifting has always been a major threat to any retail business. In the past anyone convicted of petty theft could be charged with a felony upon a subsequent arrest. You now must steal has at least \$950, instead of the previous level at \$400 to be charged as a felony. Anyone stealing less than that figure gets charged with a misdemeanor. The threat of arrest and punishment for shoplift-

ing has thus been greatly reduced, particularly now that local jails are overcrowded with felons. Very few misdemeanor violations are punished with any time in jail. It seems logical that to conclude shoplifting has accordingly increased.

A retailer incurring more losses due to increased theft will still need to make a profit. Losses must be covered in some fashion therefore, they would need to increase prices for honest consumers to cover their shortages.

Many drug rehabilitation providers are reporting that there are fewer enrollments in treatment programs as arrested narcotic offenders are not facing felony charges. In the past many arrestees entered diversion programs to avoid felony convictions.

The population of State Prisons has been reduced by sending thousands of inmates to local jails. As a result, facilities intended for short time sentences are compelled to house prisoners for up to four years. The only way to accommodate the increased population is to reduce the sentences of misdemeanor prisoners or outright release them. Now many of those convicted face only a small portion of their sentenced time. Recently a man sentenced to 180 days for driving under the influence was released after one day in custody.

Recently a Los Angeles Police Department Captain sued the Department alleging that reports were significantly lowered to falsely report a lower level of criminal data. If in fact, there was a reduction in crime after the three major renovations it is a remarkable achievement.

Statistics are often manipulated by both sides of the political spectrum, so it is difficult to reach the truth. If you research articles written about the effect of AB 019, and Propositions 47 and 57 you will see that there is a vast difference between the statistics reported by the proponents on either side.

If you believe that the process of redesigning the Criminal Justice System has been effective you must believe the following;

Reducing sentences reduces crimes

Releasing thousands of State Prisoners reduces crimes

Reducing felonies to misdemeanors reduces crimes

Reducing the threat of incarceration reduces crimes

The cost of housing prisoners is of major concern to local governments. The costs incurred by local counties and municipalities as result of these changes are not yet clearly defined. The hidden costs to citizens is difficult to determine — for example are retail costs higher due increased shoplifting? Please take the time to research both sides of the issue. ♦

Be sure to check out next months' *Cops Corner* which will feature a story from Terry Cagnolatti, a retired Senior Investigator for the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office.

Cops Corner will continue to carry stories related to or about law enforcement. Anyone interested in publishing a story about their experiences is encouraged to contact Chapter 78 Vice President Brad Welker at wbwelker@gmail.com.



Maj. (R) Jim Morris

By Major (Retired) Jim Morris

This is the most horrendous combat story I have ever read. Just to put that in context I have read about 1500 of them, in the course of editing around 200 and writing seven. I have heard but not read two that rival it, either on the phone or leaning on a bar. I mention that to point out that those two were both SOG stories as well.

Most of this book is taken up by a description of Operation Tailwind, undertaken 100 km. deep into Laos, about four times further than SOG had ever gone before, intended to draw pressure off a CIA operation deeper into Laos. The force was a company size Hatchet Force from Command and Control Central in Kontum, about 120 Montagnards and 16 Americans, commanded by Captain Gene McCarley, a seasoned SOG veteran. Tailwind succeeded in that, siphoning about two regiments off that op and refocusing them into an attempt to destroy Tailwind, forcing Tailwind into a four-day running gunfight. Before it was over the 16 Americans accumulated 33 Purple Hearts. Gary Mike Rose, the medic, was wounded twice the first day, effectively converting his CAR-15 into a cane, so he could continue to walk on a boot held together with green tape.

On the second day the company took a large NVA logistics center, with a big cache of documents, plans, maps, everything needed to make an intelligence analyst's heart go pitter-patter. And a lot of money. While they were in the headquarters a phone rang. One of McCarley's NCOs picked it up and said, "Fifth Special Forces Group. How may we help you?" The reply, if there was one, is not reported in this book. But a lot of harmless fun may be had imagining the reaction on the other end.

About thirty wounded were evacuated on the second day. Being the only American medic Rose refused to go with them. In 2017 he received the Medal of Honor for his actions on Tailwind.

Air strikes to take the pressure off were danger close. McCarley, who has a gift for picturesque speech, said one SPAD flew so close he could tell whether the pilot had shaved or not. He didn't say whether he had, possibly to spare the embarrassment of being giggled for five-o'clock shadow. The exfil on the fourth day was an action movie last minute save. A huge weather front was closing in. If they hadn't gotten out then they wouldn't get out. On the first LZ mountains were too high and well populated for the Marine CH53Ds to get in. Relocation to the second LZ was not a casual stroll. And that LZ was no secure location either. Boarding was a hand to hand rear guard action.

McCarley was the last man on the last chopper. It took off with one engine and barely made it over a granite cliff face when the second engine cut out. Going down the pilot found a river with a beach and autorotated in.

No one had ever made an autorotation landing in a CH53D, much less an overloaded one in combat. They landed so hard that McCarley said, "All my teeth were instantly turned to sand." The aircraft was empty before the rotors stopped. Still pondering the loss of his teeth McCarley looked up and saw First Sergeant Morris Adair standing in the river, smiling. No one knows how he got there. Even he doesn't know. One second he was in a crashing helicopter and the next he was standing in a river with a nerve damaged neck. It's still damaged.

But they got out, due to extraordinary leadership and amazing luck. The rest of the book is devoted to ancillary subjects, the search for SOG men still missing, not just this op, but all of them, a somewhat restrained retelling of the reunion of the Hatchet Force and the aircrews who saved them, and saved them, and saved them, and saved them. I imagine the gathering was woollier than Tilt's description.

One of the most interesting chapters is a tribute to Ben Baker, "Q" to Special Forces' James Bonds. He invented Asian LRRP rations, exploding NVA ammo to be left in caches, the SOG knife, and much, much more.

And then the insane and infuriating last act. In 1996 CNN broadcast a completely false description of Tailwind. In the CNN story the purpose of the operation was to take down a village in Laos housing American deserters from Vietnam, by having the Air Force drop sarin gas on them, killing many innocent civilians in the process.

Why this story ever aired is the mystery. There is no aspect of it that rings true to anybody who knows anything at all about Vietnam, the military, the NVA, chemical warfare. There is no aspect of it that makes sense. The story was a cruel rebuke of soldiers who have served their country as well as anyone ever has from 1776 to now. It was in the end a huge embarrassment to CNN and also to TIME, which picked the story up. It pretty much terminated the career of every journalist associated with it, and one can only say, "Well, good." But the suits kept their jobs, and even the retraction was weaselworded. They didn't say the story was false, just that it couldn't be substantiated.

Hopefully the story of what really happened will help redress that. ❖



The Social Loner:

Life After Special Forces, An Introduction



Jeff Bosley

By Jeff Bosley
Honorably Discharged Army
Special Forces Green Beret

I've always been a walking dichotomy of a human. I'm a loner who often can't do crowds. Ironically my current profession requires absurdly extensive crowd interaction. As an 18D (Special Forces Medical Sergeant) I relished the loner study time necessary to survive medical school. At

the same time, I was great at the ODA (basic building block of Special Forces operational teams) camaraderie and lifestyle.

Prior to playing in Hollywood, after my Green Beret career, I was a firefighter. Not exactly a career thriving on solitude. The community we served was constantly around us. Bedside manner was a huge requisite in every shift. Crowds and social interaction a necessity.

Growing up I was kind of a social loner. Never part of a single group. I wasn't a jock, a nerd or anything in between. I suppose I was a chameleon, but I likely couldn't have ever truly labeled what I was in a society built on categorizations and labels.

I feel I have a unique perspective on the military and life after the military. I am what you could call a hybrid Vet. I didn't join immediately out of high school; I lived a pretty substantial life prior to enlisting in the Army and joining SF (Special Forces). You see, I enlisted at nearly 30 years old. At that age my neural circuitry responsible for "executive functions" had virtually completely formed and matured. It was done learning. My wiring was pretty set. I wasn't as impressionable as I was in high school. I can't imagine going into SF at any younger age. Yes, my body would have been less damaged, but the rigors of my path within the military were better traveled with wisdom rather than an immature mind in an uninjured body.

This dualistic nature has provided me with a large-spanning empathy. I "get" the high school graduate who spent the majority of his developing years as an infantryman. I can converse with the college educated military officer. I can hang with some of the most unique and elite operators the military has to offer. I can blend with Hollywood elite. I can transition from calm and poised dialogue to crass and crude hysterics at the flip of a switch. It truly makes it hard to know who I am and where I belong.

For the longest time, I just constantly assumed I wasn't a deep person, per se. I figured I connected and related to so many people on so many levels that I must just not allow connection beyond the superficial and simplistic. Quantity over quality, as it were.

It wasn't until recently when I began to re-interact with local and national Green Beret organizations that I realized what "it" was. I

spent the second and third decade of my years developing, first, my life as a civilian. Then I continued through my 30s as a Green Beret. Then I went back to being a civilian, but a civilian who was a Green Beret. It was a surreal social experiment covering pretty much the most extremes of the social spectrum.

Now...despite that wide spanning social confusion, what is the ONE thing that is a constant understanding? What is the ONE thing that is a common denominator?

Being a Vet.

It doesn't matter if I'm swearing and joking with another Green Beret, counseling an infantryman I've never met who is contemplating life-ending options or I'm laughing with a fellow firefighter who served as a cook in the Marines. We instantly bond. Some more than others, but that common ground, that shared experience cannot be explained, trivialized or substituted. I hate the cliché, but in regards to serving it is absolutely true, regarding ANY topic that breaches into the Veteran/Service member experience: If you didn't serve, you won't get it. It's not a judgment on a pedestal from on high. It is a bond, an absolute understanding, that has zero comparable substitute.

This doesn't mean we are all mindless and in constant agreement. That is the farthest from the truth. It is my experience that fellow Vets tolerate the extremes of opinions better than the Vet/civilian combinations I've witnessed. I can specifically recall the actions of a fellow Green Beret who partook in an activity (all good and legal; nebulous for protection of anonymity) that I vehemently detested.

However, simply because we were of the same ilk, it forced me to calmly evaluate his good intentions. I have been able to support him and his intentions, just not the action specifically. It's all good. It's old school simple.

As we progress and digress as a culture and society, the bonding of like-minded individuals is getting more and more diluted daily. Whether the latest topic on this phenomenon is Junger's *Tribe* or some other study showing that social media has ironically made us less social...the camaraderie of serving one's country defies the trend of modern, solo-living, cave-dwelling, silent, individuals. This trend is strong and pulls at me daily. However, one of the very few things that maintains and sustains my sense of tribal belonging: talking with another Green Beret, if only for a few minutes. That bond cannot be replaced, broken or sold. It is earned and it is forever. ❖

About the Author

Jeff Bosley served as an 18D Army Special Forces Green Beret. After his honorable discharge he went on to serve as a Firefighter for the Colorado Springs Fire Department in Colorado where he received the Medal of Valor. Jeff now lives in Venice, CA and is a full-time working actor who can be seen on television and in film. He still works with many Green Beret and Veteran Organizations as a supporter and spokesperson.



MACV-SOG

One Zero School

Part III in the Series: Class One Implementation



Travis Mills

By Travis Mills

That first cycle was a definite “work in progress”. As with all startups, there were things we had not anticipated and we had to do some fast adjustments, but all in all things went pretty well. The students were quite impressed with the instructor’s (1-0’s & 1-1’s) knowledge and experience and the sharing of their on the ground experiences. It was literally War Stories 101! The student’s enthusiasm was high and often at the

end of a session, the students didn’t want to take a break. They were tremendously eager to soak up every ounce of knowledge. We were off to a great start.

About the third day, there was a big commotion at the front gate. It seems that COL Cavanaugh (Chief SOG), and COL Johnson (Chief, OP 35), and some of the staff had come to check on their special project. Obviously their presence caused a great deal of anxiety and scurrying around in the entire camp. They came to the class in session and stood in the back of the classroom. I reported to them and explained what was going on in the class. Both of them wanted to address the class, so I signaled the instructor to “hold up”. I introduced COL Cavanaugh, he made a brief talk about the importance of the SOG mission and this school was the first of its kind and their (the students) missions were tremendously important and the intelligence they gathered went through SOG Hq. straight to the Pentagon and White House. He thanked them for volunteering to be an integral part of SOG. I then introduced COL Johnson. While COL Cavanaugh was the epitome of a polished commander, COL Johnson had the personality of charging bull elephant! He went straight to the point — this is the most difficult assignment you will ever have and we (SOG Hq.) are going to push you to the limit. If you have any trepidation about being in this unit, get out now. You are of the lineage of the Jedburgh Teams of WWII and we will expect and demand nothing less from you. Take heed of these instructors, they have been on the ground and looked death in the face. If you chose to stay — I salute you and Good Luck!

With that, they exited the classroom. It was quiet! The students were in awe, the two top officers of SOG had just taken the time to come to this camp and address them personally. I motioned the instructor to continue the class and followed the VIP’s outside. This

particular class had been about commo and we only had 3 radios for the 20+ students. Both COL Johnson and COL Cavanaugh questioned me about that. I explained we had made our requests but this is what we were given. (From being an S-4 in the 7th Group, I knew to document requests and keep the paperwork. I retrieved it along with the terse note from SOG 4 about “make do with what you get”). They took the paperwork and in a few minutes were on their way back to Pasteur Street in Saigon. We continued the scheduled training and I was hoping I would still be a 1LT tomorrow morning. This all happened between 1000 – 1200 hrs. We continued with the scheduled training for the rest of the day. Even though the students had been very enthusiastic before, they were really charged up the rest of the day.

Just as we were ending the training for the day, there was another big commotion at the front gate. One of guards came to find me and said I need to come to the gate immediately. I went to the gate and there were two 2 half-ton trucks. The SGT in charge said he needed to talk to 1LT Mills. He told me he could not go back to Saigon until he had a signed receipt from me saying I had received this shipment. To my amazement it was everything I had listed in my original equipment request, plus a few things that COL Cavanaugh and COL Johnson thought we might need. Apparently they did not go back to Pasteur Street, but went straight to SOG 4 at Ton San Nhut and emphasized to them Chief SOG’s priority of the 1-0 School. Everything on that request was to be delivered TODAY! No exceptions! Also included was a copy of a letter from Chief SOG with an endorsement from Chief OP 35 to all FOB Commanders of the priority of the 1-0 School. It was great that we had such an endorsement from Chief SOG, but on the other side was now we have to REALLY PRODUCE!

We continued the cycle, again with some adjustments as we went along due to it being the first time through. With the strong endorsement from SOG Hq. I took the chance and went to Saigon to make one more request. That was for helicopter support for McGuire Rig training. I requested and was allowed to speak to both COL Cavanaugh and COL Johnson and pleaded my case about the importance of McGuire rig training and getting helicopter support for a few hours. I went through my story to emphasize the importance of the training. Both of them commented they had read the AAR and had not realized that had been me. Both agreed that McGuire rig training was important and an integral part of the training. I told them I knew we (SOG) had an H-34 at Ton San Nhut to ferry VIP’s, etc., and the crew spent most of their time in the day room playing cards. I only wanted 4 hours per cycle. They both agreed and said they would make it happen, and they did. During the 2nd week we had McGuire rig training, teaching the students how to rig the ropes in the floor of the helicopter, and each one got to call in the chopper and ride the rigs out of a hole in the trees.

The rest of the cycle went off without any major incidents. The students continued to be enthusiastic and eager to learn. At the end of the second week, a Blackbird C-123 picked us up at daylight and took us to FOB 2. We arrived at mid-morning and the teams (4 teams of 5 students and an instructor) immediately went to OP

Center for mission briefing and launched in mid-afternoon. FOB 2 OP Center knew we were coming and had planned our targets accordingly and coordinated the air assets, etc. The teams had been supplied at Long Thanh with ammo, claymores, hand grenades, rations, radios, etc. When they arrived they were ready to go, just as if they were going to a launch site. Even though we did not tell the teams, the targets were not high priority, but they were real targets. Again, as the first time through, it was a learning experience with us (the 1-0 school staff) being in the OP Center/Com Center with the FOB 2 crew. We worked our teams on separate frequencies and separate radios. It was a little chaotic, but by the end of the third day we had developed somewhat of a working model. Later on we would come up with a better solution, but this model worked for the first few cycles. All 4 teams stayed on the ground for area recon for 4 days (insertion day plus 3 – coming out late afternoon of the 4th day). Once the teams were back at FOB 2, we had debriefings with the instructors doing critiques. Afterward we had a “graduation ceremony” which was a short “You done good” speech and the “highly prized” Zippo lighter with the SOG Crest. We then retired to the club where I bought the first round of drinks (on Chief SOG’s chit). The next morning we were at the airfield to catch the Blackbird milk run; the students back to their FOB and we back to Long Thanh to get ready for the next cycle.

When we got back to Long Thanh we were greeted by the new camp OX, MAJ Ponzillo. While we were gone to FOB 2, MAJ Ponzillo had been assigned to the camp. Because Chief SOG had put such a priority on the 1-0 School, the camp commander, MAJ Smathers, had appointed the XO to shepherd to 1-0 School. At first I wasn’t too sure about how this would work out, but soon found that MAJ Ponzillo was a strong supporter of the school. He was an experienced SF officer on his second tour with 5th Group. With his strong support the school staff soon became well integrated into the camp.

The second cycle went well with very few hiccups. MAJ Ponzillo spent a good deal of time monitoring the training and providing assistance. The Long Thanh permanent party personnel were all SF qualified and with coordination from MAJ Ponzillo provided substantial support during the training such as range safety, commo support, training area preparation, medical coverage for live fire exercises, and logistical support. MAJ Ponzillo went with us to FOB 2 for the student missions. He spent a good deal of his time observing the OP Center operations. But he also spent quite a bit of time talking to various 1-0’s about the students from the first cycle. They felt the school was quite helpful. Because the new guys had been heavily exposed to SOG’s operating techniques during the course, it took a lot less time and effort to get them integrated into the team and become productive members of the team. They also offered some suggestions on some subjects and/or classes to add or modified. On the way back to Long Thanh, he and I had a long discussion regarding the training and our operational support of the student teams during the student missions. He felt that we did a credible job, but having both us and the FOB 2 staff in the same small area created a very difficult operating environment. He felt we

needed to work on finding a better solution and that he had a couple of ideas he wanted to explore when we got back to Long Thanh.

When we got back to Long Thanh the whole area was in turmoil. The 9th Div. was moving out of Bear Cat to a new location. The road from Hwy. 15 to Bear Cat was just a dirt road and there were hundreds of vehicles rumbling up and down the road by our camp. The sky looked like early evening with all the red dust in the air, plus everything in the camp was covered with a thick layer of red dust. It was during our zero-week, so we were making adjustments to the training schedule, making ammunition and training aid requests, range schedules, etc. Also we were integrating new instructors into the staff. Initially, the 1-0’s and 1-1’s were told they would be on loan to the 1-0 School for “a couple of cycles” then come back to the FOB. As soon as the second cycle was finished, they were on the horn to their FOB’s asking about replacements. So shortly after arriving back at Long Thanh, we started receiving new instructors. Because of COL Cavanaugh’s letter to the FOB’s about the priority of the 1-0 School, we got quality replacements, but there was still the process of getting them integrated into the system.

About the second day we got a visit from MAJ Eiland from SOG Hq. He came out to check on the school from time to time and give a report back to COL Cavanaugh and COL Johnson. He had been over to Bear Cat to see what was left at the PX before it was cleaned out. He asked me if we had a rough terrain fork lift and a 5-ton flatbed truck. He told me to get them, with several tie down straps and 4 guys and meet him at the front gate. We met him at the front gate (he had changed into standard fatigues with a baseball cap and MAJ oak leaves) and followed him to the west gate of Bear Cat. He stopped at the gate and spent a few minutes talking to the gate guards. After a couple of minutes, his jeep went through the gate and the guards waved us through (the fork lift and the truck). We went to an area a couple hundred yards inside the camp. There sat a UH1D helicopter body with the tail boom cut off just behind the engine exhaust outlet. The 9th Div. had used it to train new troops on heliborne assaults. We loaded it on the truck, tied it down and headed for the gate. MAJ Eiland had told them we were from 555 Transport Bn. in Long Binh and were here to transport the helicopter training aid to the new location. When we got to the gate we were not sure it would fit through the gate, so the gate guards helped guide us through (only had about 1 ft. clearance on each side) and gave us a friendly wave as we drove off. When we got to camp we took it to the motor pool area, off loaded it and covered it with tarps, etc. MAJ Eiland said he had seen it when he was at the PX and thought it would be a great training aid for demonstrating how to rig the ropes on the floor for McGuire rig and/or rope extraction. We let it “cool off” for a week or so, then I went to the helicopter maintenance support company at the airfield with 3 cases of San Miguel and got them put in a new floor, D-rings, seats, paint etc. It was a really nice and effective training aid. I don’t think the 9th Div. ever figured out what happened to it. I don’t think they ever considered someone would “steal” a helicopter!

Also during that zero-week and the first two weeks of the next cycle, MAJ Ponzillo was quite busy with the commo section and his

plan to improve our support capability while at FOB 2 during the student missions. Their plan was to build a mobile communication/OP Center. They took a standard quarter-ton trailer and built a plywood hooch on it. They filled it with radios, map boards, work space, etc. Basically it was a miniature op/com center. It had FM radios for comms with the teams, coveys, etc. It had UHF & VHF radios for aircraft comms, and an AM long range radio so we could talk directly back to Long Thanh. It also had a 16 ft. extendable antenna so we could talk to the teams. It was pulled by a standard three-quarter-ton truck and in the truck bed was a primary and back-up generator. When hooked to the three-quarter-ton truck, the whole thing would easily fit into a Blackbird C-123 or C-130. It was a great piece of equipment. When we got to the launch site, (later we did launch from sites other than FOB 2), all we had to do was plug into the camp power grid or use our generators if we needed to and we were up and running within 30 minutes of arriving. The Long Thanh comms chief had secured our own operating frequencies, so we didn't have to worry about interfering with the host camps operating frequencies or interrupting their OP Center. The comms chief always sent one of his staff to take care of any comms equipment issues that might arise. I or one of the instructors not taking a team to the field took shifts to maintain continuous monitoring of the teams as long as they were in the field. Again, it was a great piece of equipment that gave us a great deal of autonomy as well as not being an unnecessary burden to the host camp. Also it was a strong confirmation of the support of the permanent party staff of Long Thanh to the success of the 1-0 School.

Toward the end of zero-week I rode into Saigon with the weekly courier to SOG Hq. I asked to speak with COL Johnson to give him an update on the school progress. All was going well, so I decided to make a pitch about me being released and going back to FOB 4 and getting back on a team. COL Johnson listened and in a calm voice said, "You know LT. I know I'm getting old and my memory isn't as good as it used to be, but (and then his voice went to about 5,000 decibels) I DON'T REMEMBER ASKING YOU WHAT THE HELL YOU WANTED TO DO! THE LAST TIME I READ THE ARMY MANUAL, LT'S DON'T TELL COL'S WHAT THEY WANT TO DO. COL'S TELL LT'S WHAT THE HELL THEY WILL DO! DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, OR DO I NEED TO EXPLAIN IT FURTHER?" I managed a "Yes Sir!" Then he followed with "Now get your ass back out to Long Thanh and run that school. I will decide if and when you will be released. Dismissed!" With that I gave a sharp salute, about face and moved out smartly. Once out of his office in the general office area, all the staff was giving me a sly smile and the "welcome to the club" look. I had to wait for a while for the courier to finish his business, so I was just hanging out in the office area when one of the staff told me COL Johnson wanted me back in his office. I nervously reported back to his office. Surprisingly, he was quite calm and cordial. He motioned for me to sit down and started talking in a "fatherly" tone. He said, "I understand your feelings, I was a young LT. once and know you want to be back in the game. But unfortunately everybody can't be the quarterback or the star running back; somebody has to block. If I had my way, I would be commanding a Brigade out there kicking ass and taking names.

But someone above me assigned me to this staff job for this tour. As a professional soldier, my job is to be the best damned staff officer I can be and support my commander. As much as you may not like it, it's your time to be a blocker. Your job now is to make the 1-0 School the best school in this country. Furthermore, you and the instructor staff have the responsibility to give these students the skills that will give them at least a chance of surviving their tour." He stood up, reached out and shook my hand and said "Now, go on back to the camp and be the best damned blocker you can be." I saluted, said "Thank You, Sir – I will do my very best."

During the two-and-half-hour trip back to camp my mind was running at 500 MPH. I kept rehashing what COL Johnson had said about someone has to block, and that we (the 1-0 School staff) had the responsibility to give these students the best training possible so they could have at least a 50/50 chance. I thought back about when I first went to RT Python and wound up being thrown into the breach with little to no RT training or experience. I did have the experience of being in-country for a few months and the experience of some Hachet Force missions plus sitting in on some of 1-0 sessions in the club. The students we were getting were predominately on their first tour and new in-country. The FOB's were being pushed hard to keep teams on the ground and the teams were running missions back to back. These students were most likely going to be on their first mission within a week of getting back to the FOB. The more I thought about it, the more I understood COL Johnson's statement that it was our responsibility and duty to give these guys our absolute best effort. Also running through my mind was the "why me" question. I firmly believe everyone who survives a close brush with death occasionally has those thoughts of "how and why did I survive when others didn't?" Every so often since the August 23rd incident, I would ponder the inevitable question: "Why was I chosen to survive and what is my purpose?" Not only the Aug. 23rd incident, but the hanging upside down from a helicopter at 2,000 ft. Another situation was after I returned from the hospital ship to FOB 4, I was working in S-3 with MAJ Toomey and had I not been picked to go to Long Thanh, in all probability I would have been with him on that helicopter that got blown out of the sky. The obvious question running through my mind was "Is this where I'm supposed to be?" I have good management and organization skills, along with good instructor skills. By utilizing those skills I, and the other instructors, can have a significant impact on all the FOB's, and make the biggest contribution to the success of the overall operation by running this school to the best of our ability. By the time we got back to the camp, I knew this was where I was supposed to be and had a new and total commitment to make this the best damned school in Vietnam. I slept well that night.

A couple of days later the students for 3rd cycle arrived. With renewed enthusiasm, the entire staff really stepped up to the challenge. The cycle went very well and we went to FOB 2 with our new mobile com/op center. It performed very well. The teams did very well also. A couple of the teams made some contact. They all came through it with no injuries and had a much higher level of confidence. Their biggest excitement was, "these IA Drills really

work". They were thoroughly impressed that everyone knew exactly what to do and their immediate and coordinated reaction totally overwhelmed the enemy unit which immediately broke contact and ran. We had the traditional "graduation ceremony" and everyone caught the Blackbird milk run back to their FOB. Because we had the mobile com/op center we had a dedicated Blackbird C-123 to get back to Long Thanh. During the flight back, the entire instructor and support staff talked excitedly about the team's performance. To a man they were impressed that we (all of us) had really made a significant impact on these students and their ability to become a productive team member.

When we arrived back at camp we learned that while we were gone MAJ Smathers had rotated and MAJ Ponzillo was now the camp commander. Although he didn't spend as much time with the 1-0 School as before he was still a very strong supporter of the school and felt it was a significant part of the camp's overall mission. The instructor staff had an elevated attitude and were looking forward to the next cycle. They now felt they were making a major contribution to the overall mission of SOG and not necessarily being punished or banished by being on loan to the school. The school was also gaining creditability from the FOB's by providing quality graduates that could integrate into the teams relatively quickly. The 4th cycle went very well with hardly any hiccups. Again, we went to FOB 2 for the team missions with our mobile com/op center. We had five teams for mission in the 4th cycle and they all did very well.

When we got back from the 4th cycle, MAJ Ponzillo told me we had a change for the next cycle. SOG was going to be augmented by some TDY personnel from the 1st Group in Okinawa. There would be 28 students and the majority of them were SOG veterans from previous tours. Even though they were mostly veterans SOG HQ wanted them to have a 1 week refresher course before going to the FOB's. They were scheduled to arrive in 4 days. I was able to exchange telexes with CPT Wareing, the OIC for Snake Bite 1. He advised us of the subject areas that needed to be included in the refresher, so we set about redesigning the course for the 1 week schedule. They arrived right on time aboard a Blackbird C-130. Even though they were veterans of multiple tours and to 5th Group and SOG, they were enthusiastic students. After a really good week of training we put them on a Blackbird to be distributed throughout the FOB's.

After Snake Bite 1 departed we had about 10 days before the next cycle. I took the opportunity to go back to FOB 4. When originally sent to Long Thanh, MAJ Toomey said this school was going to run 2 or 3 cycles to get the FOB's back up to strength and I would be back to FOB 4. Since I was only going to be there for a short while, I left most of my personal gear at FOB 4. After my infamous conversation with COL Johnson and later with MAJ Ponzillo, I had very little hope of ever getting back to FOB 4, so I thought I should go back to collect my personal stuff plus all my personnel records were still at FOB 4. One of the instructors, SFC James (Jim) Hetrick was from there as well and went with me to take care of some personnel matters. Once there, I spoke with LTC Isler, CCN commander (while I was at Long Thanh, OP 35 had

reorganized the FOB's into CCN, CCC, and CCS) and explained that I had hoped to get back to FOB 4. Basically I got the 2nd verse of the "Somebody has to block" speech. He said we were doing a good job at the school and all the FOB commanders had told COL Johnson they felt the school should continue because we're still losing people and still need quality replacements. He further told me that since I only had a few months before my DROS, that if I did come back to the FOB, he wouldn't assign me to a team. He said as an experienced CPT, you would make a much more valuable contribution to me somewhere other than being a 1-0. I thanked him for his frankness and told him I would continue to give it my best effort in the 1-0 School. After that I went to the club to visit with some old friends, visited with some school graduates who were now active team members, gathered up my stuff and SFC Hetrick and I caught a ride to Da Nang airfield to hitch a ride with Air America back to Long Thanh.

Back in Long Thanh, I told MAJ Ponzillo about my conversation with LTC Isler. He told me he had spoken with COL Johnson and requested that I remain at Long Thanh to which he agreed. So I was going to remain at Long Thanh until my DROS. We received word from SOG Hq. that FOB 2 had a scheduling conflict with our next team missions and we would be doing the missions in the A/O of the Australian SAS 3rd Squadron in Nui Dat (just NE of Vung Tau). I spent the next week coordinating with the Operations Section of the SAS for air support, artillery support, etc., etc. The training cycle went well and the 4 teams were inserted in the A/O without incident. All went well during the 3 day missions, until just before the scheduled extraction. Unfortunately we experienced 1 KIA and 2 WIA in this cycle.

In the next cycle FOB 2 still had scheduling conflicts. CPT Wareing (Snake Bite 1), was working as a Liaison Officer with a special project in Dalat and had asked if we could do our team missions in his A/O. SOG said OK and so we went to Dalat for this cycle. All went well with the training cycle and the team missions, however we did have a couple of issues. I was serving as the Covey Rider with the FAC aircraft from the Dalat airfield. Due to extremely heavy forest areas, this group had an SOP that required two aircraft go on all FAC operations. If one aircraft went down it usually broke through the triple canopy, then it closed up behind it and the downed aircraft could not be seen. The second aircraft was to stay on station to mark the spot for the recovery aircraft. On the second day, we were going out to check on the teams and I was riding in the lead aircraft. We were flying O-1's that day. The pilot had taken on about a half load of fuel to top off the tanks before takeoff. We had been out for about an hour and I had taken reports from 2 of the 4 teams. All of a sudden the engine started sputtering and coughing and then just quit. We were at about 2,500 ft. and the O-1 has a good glide ratio, so the pilot had some time to react. He tried to restart – that didn't work, so he switched fuel tank and tried again. After a few tries, it finally started again. It coughed and sputtered a bit, but then began to run smoothly again. When we climbed back up to altitude he called the other ship and said we were going back and to call the operations center to send out a replacement

aircraft. On the way back the pilot and I talked about what might be wrong. He said this aircraft had been very stable over the past several months, and didn't really have any idea what may have happened. Everything went well until we were about 10 miles from the airfield. All of a sudden the engine started sputtering again. The pilot started making adjustments to the fuel mixture and that helped some. About that time we heard the tower give clearance to the replacement aircraft for takeoff. The pilot called the tower and declared an emergency and request clearance to come straight in. They gave the OK and we've got the airfield in sight. By this time the engine is really coughing, smoking, and backfiring. We were about 2 miles out we could see a big storm cloud drifting toward the airfield and at about 1 mile out we ran into the storm. Just as we hit the storm we heard an aircraft emergency beeper going off. The tower called and said they had an emergency we would have to "go around". The pilot told them we couldn't "go around" we probably won't make it to the field so we're coming straight in. The Dalat airfield sits on top of a big hill and has steep drop offs on almost all sides, so if you come in short you hit the side of the hill plus there was an 8 ft. fence around the field. We were about half mile out, it was raining so hard I could barely see the end of the wings when the engine totally quit and all the while the emergency beeper is going off in the headset. The pilot told me to make sure my shoulder straps were tight because we may go into the side of the hill. He squeezed every inch possible — we made it over the edge of the hill, but the tail wheel hung the fence, the front wheels slammed into the ground short of the runway, blew out both tires, but the "spring" of the front gear arms caused the nose to bounce up and we came to rest right side up about 6 ft. short of the runway. It was eerily quiet except for the emergency beeper and the sound of the rain pounding on the wings. In a minute or so the emergency vehicles arrived. We climbed out and just stood there in the rain, then the pilot said, "Any landing you can walk away from is a good one". I whole heartedly agreed! The emergency crew told us the emergency was the replacement aircraft had crashed on takeoff.

The investigation revealed the night before, a new recruit driving the resupply tanker had made an error and filled the Avgas bladder with JP4. The aircraft I was in had taken on about a half load of fuel and the JP4 would float on top of the Avgas. The engine would run fine until it ran out the Avgas. The O-1 has dual wing tanks, so when the pilot switched tanks it engine ran fine again until we ran into the JP4 in the second tank. The replacement aircraft had been an O-2 and had taken on almost a full load of fuel. He had enough Avgas to take off, but hit the JP4 about 30 seconds after he cleared the fence. He tried to do a 180 and come straight back to the field, but he couldn't maintain altitude and went into the side of the hill. Fortunately he didn't have a lot of air speed and was able to do a slight stall and "pancake" the aircraft in the foliage to soften the impact. Both the pilot and my instructor (rider) were unhurt.

The teams still had another day on their missions and we were down to only one FAC aircraft, so we had to have a helicopter be the "spotter" so we could continue to support the teams. All went well. None of the teams made any contact, but found a lot of sites that

showed evidence of recent occupation and hasty evacuation. We extracted all the teams without incident and returned back to Long Thanh. CPT Wareing told us that after we left the Mayor of Dalat got a visit from the local VC Chief. He told the Mayor that Dalat was a beautiful city and it would be a shame if it got damaged by rockets and mortars. Up until recently it had been very peaceful here but if those "intruders" kept coming to disrupt things, things could change drastically. We were never asked to come back to Dalat!

By this time I was getting to within 2 months of DROS. SOG sent 1LT Dan Hall from CCS to replace me as the OIC. 1LT Hall had been a 1-0 for about 5 months and had a good track record. Once he arrived we worked together during the next cycle preparing for the transition. He was a quick study and worked well with all the instructors and camp permanent party. I went with them to FOB 2 for the team missions to introduce him to all the staff there. All went well. We completed the team missions and returned to Long Thanh. I told MAJ Ponzillo that in my opinion 1LT Hall was adequately prepared and qualified to take command of the 1-0 School. Shortly afterward we had an informal change of command ceremony and thus ended my tenure.

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The 1-0 School is one of those enigmas of SOG. Very few people knew, especially the regular Army, it ever existed. Yet for all of those who went through the school and those of us who were part of the cadre, it was a very significant part of their tour. For the personnel who went through the school, there was no certificate, never recorded on their personnel file, or no badge or patch for the uniform. Many of the instructors never had official orders showing they were instructors in the school, they just showed up at Long Thanh with a letter from their FOB saying they would be there on "special duty" for xx weeks. Even though it was a "skunk works" type operation, all the instructors and staff executed their duties in an extremely professional manner. Many of the students told us later that their time in the 1-0 School was the best school they ever attended.

I think all of us (everyone in general) look back on our lives and ask the question, "Did I make a difference?" A few years ago I was visiting my brother (he spent many years in Special Forces also). He lives in the Houston area and is a member of the Houston SFA Chapter 39 and was hosting the Chapter meeting that weekend. As the members were gathering and everyone rehashing stories of long ago, I just happened to say something to the effect, "When I was at the 1-0 School." A fellow that I had not met yet, came over and asked if I was at the 1-0 School. I said, "Yes I was." He said, "Well, I want to shake your hand. You guys saved my life!" He said he was a first tour, new in-country E-5, assigned to CCC and had no clue what he had gotten into. He strongly felt that without 1-0 School he wouldn't have survived the early missions. At the end of the meeting and as everyone was leaving, he came by and said "Thank You" again. That night as I was falling asleep, one of my last thoughts was, "Yes, we did make a difference." I slept well that night. ❖

SFA Chapter 78

April 2018 Meeting



- ❶ Presentation by Mike Taylor, Chairman of the Joint SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee
- ❷ Chapter 78 "Founding Secretary" Bob Crebbs speaking of POW/MIA events from his four year assignment in Thailand following the Vietnam War when he was a federal employee.
- ❸ John S. Meyer presenting a "new" Chapter 20th anniversary T shirt designed by member Dave Thomas. A half-dozen were presented to Chapter members. Thank you Dave.
- ❹ Green Beret MACV-SOG members in attendance at April Chapter 78 meeting — John S. Meyer, Ed Barrett and Mike Taylor
- ❺ Chapter member Don Gonnerville was congratulated on his outstanding story that appeared in the April 2018 *Sentinel* column "The Forgotten Warriors, The Montagnards" on "FULRO at Lac Then (A 236, II Corps, RVN) 1965."
- ❻ Tony Pirone presenting update of SF and possible activation and distribution of California National Guard personnel.
- ❼ John Stryker Meyer SFA Chapter 78 President presenting a long overdue service award to Chapter member Mike Keele.
- ❽ Chapter 78 President John Stryker Meyer presenting a two year service award to Chapter Vice President Don Deatherage.