



THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

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From Alabama to Laos and Back:
Gordon Denniston at Chapter 78 May Meeting

More Than a Book Review: *COWBOY: The Interpreter
Who Became a Soldier, a Warlord, and One More
Casualty of Our War in Vietnam* by Daniel Ford

Skyraider Reunion and Tailwind Redux, 2018

ROTC Award Ceremonies at UCLA and Cal State Fullerton



IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Page	1
From Alabama to Laos and Back:	2
More Than a Book Review: <i>COWBOY: The Interpreter Who Became a Soldier, a Warlord, and One More Casualty of Our War in Vietnam</i> by Daniel Ford	4
Skyraider Reunion and Tailwind Redux, 2018	6
Cops Corner	9
SFA Chapter 78 Presents Awards to ROTC Cadets at UCLA and Cal State Fullerton	11
Letters to the Editor	12
SFA Chapter 78 May 2018 Meeting	14

COVER: Left, Gordon Denniston, former gun ship pilot, presenter at the May 2018 SFA Chapter 78 meeting (photo by Lonny Holmes); above right, the 119th Assault Helicopter Company – 3rd Platoon's "Crocodile" Patch; bottom right, Vietnam 1967 from left to right Pete Markisich, Lyman "Don" Gaude, Randy Bender, and Gordon Denniston (photo courtesy Gordon Denniston).



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From the Editor



Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

Memorial Day Remembered



Brad, Terry and I at a Luncheon for Veterans at the South Point Casino in Las Vegas on Memorial Day. Juliette and Nilda also attended and celebrated Memorial Day

MIA/KIA Bracelet of **legendary** Green Beret **SFC Jerry Shriver** belonging to Brad Welker who met SFC Shriver in Vietnam. Note: SFC Shriver is MIA on a MACV-SOG Recon Mission and presumed dead after all these years.



Gene Williams at the Vietnam Wall on this Memorial Day this year to honor our MACV-SOG Veteran's lost in the Vietnam War and his father who as Lt. was KIA on at D-DAY + 10, was a pathfinder in the 508th who led the invasion in the early morning hours onto the drop zones of the battlefields of Normandy.

The President's Page | June 2018



John Stryker Meyer
President SFA 78

As I pen this note, it's Memorial Day 2018. My wife and I viewed President Trump's stirring address at the Tomb of the Unknown with a commitment to the MIA/POW mission. Personally, I've reflected deeply on the Green Berets lost during the Vietnam War and current conflicts while noting that more than 1.2 million Americans have died to keep our country free since the Revolutionary War. I turn to gifted SF writer Jack Tobin for Memorial Day remembrances:

"...Each has his own story, some came to America to find freedom, some born here wanted to ensure that we remained free, some fought to 'free the oppressed', but like their brothers at Valley Forge, the Alamo, the A Shau, Afghanistan and Iraq, they fought and died for an idea, an idea that men are free, and that they were willing to sacrifice all to preserve that idea.

On Memorial Day we often hear 'Lest We Forget', we who were with them can never forget, for they are with us every day, we can hear their laugh, see their face, every time we pick up a weapon we can hear them beside us, we remember their jokes, the good times, the one liners of gallows humor only men who have shared the experience can appreciate. They were the men of our youth, we trained, drank, ate and fought beside them to the end, and every one of them took a piece of us when they left, whether it be on the battlefield, or as now in the autumn of our lives, decades later.

Today we celebrate them, for I refuse to mourn these brave men, and on those days when warriors gather, their stories will be told and retold, and once again we will be young, if only briefly, and only in our minds, and they will be with us, and will be freshly remembered, and shall never truly die, for as Socrates said, 'No man is truly dead until he is no longer remembered.' Today we also honor the 'invisible names' not on the wall, those that came home, served on, and finally have gone to join their long gone comrades.

To all of them, it seems that as we age your memories grow clearer, and late at night and in the small hours of the morning, we can hear you, we can nearly see you, see you as you were so many years ago, and one night as you march by in our dreams on your way to that 'Last and Final Formation' we will fall in and once again, God willing, march beside you."

See you at the next Chap. 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 Brad Welker or me to confirm your attendance. We need an accurate headcount. ❖

John Stryker Meyer
President, SFA Chapter 78



President Donald J. Trump places a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., May 28, 2018. Photo by Army Sgt. James K. McCann



The Special Forces Compound Dedication Ceremony honoring Major Rocco M. Barnes of the California Army National Guard was held on Friday May 18, 2018 at 1100 hours on the Los Alamitos Joint Training Base, CA. Colonel Michael J. Wise Detachment Commander gave a riveting presentation. Five members of SFA Chapter 78 attended including President John S. Meyer, Mark Miller, Gary Macnamara, Robert Crebbs, and Bruce Long. There were about thirty other individuals in attendance including Mrs. Grace Barnes-Flo, the mother of Major Barnes (pictured at far left). Units supporting the ceremony were the Special Operations Detachment-North, Special Operations Support Detachment, the California State Military Reserve, 315th Engineers Vertical Construction Company and the Los Alamitos Joint Force Training Base Department of Public Works.



FROM ALABAMA TO LAOS AND BACK



Mike Keele

By Mike Keele

The Chapter 78 faithful were entertained at our May meeting by Gordon Denniston, a former gun ship pilot who fired mini guns and rockets at the NVA and shot film of them in combat during his tour with the 119th Helicopter Company in 1966-67. His most rewarding missions were undertaken in operations supporting SOG at FOB-2 in Kon Tum, where he flew many missions into both Cambodia and Laos.

Perhaps Mr. Denniston's (he was a Warrant Officer) most memorable mission occurred on a day when the weather was crud and he had already fired all the mini gun ammo, but still had fourteen rockets left. The guys on the ground were surrounded and desperate. Gordon couldn't see them for the clouds and mist, but from up on top, he saw a hole in the murk drifting towards the team's location, which would give him a chance to dive through the murk and, if properly lined up, fire his rockets, miss the good guys and do beau coup damage to the NVA. The end result was a body

count of ninety-four enemy dead for just fourteen rockets. Once again, the whirling birds made the difference.

On Gordon's second tour, he had the distinction of being the personal pilot for Lt. Gen. Richard Stillwell, commander of the XXIV Corps, spanning all of I Corps in the North, and commanding three divisions of troops. Gordon said his daily routine was to fly to the General's heli pad, shut down the engine and wait for the General and his staff to appear. One morning an O-6 Colonel ordered Denniston to move his aircraft to another location within sight of the landing pad. In due time the General showed up and boarded the aircraft, but made no comment about the explanation as to why he had been inconvenienced. Several weeks later, the General arrived with his entourage, which included the Colonel who had chased Gordon off the General's favorite landing pad.

So off they went, and the General wanted to be taken to a location in the A Shau Valley, to inspect an outpost. When Gordon learned that he was to land there, on the side of a mountain, he advised the General that the density altitude was too high to safely take off with that heavy load the Huey was carrying. Gen. Stillwell



Going out on a mission. Photos courtesy Gordon Denniston



nonchalantly told him to land anyway. When it was time to take off, Gordon reminded the General that the aircraft was overloaded and he couldn't take off. The General turned to the Colonel and said "you, get off." It is claimed that it took the Colonel several days to get a ride out of Indian country. Payback is a

For those who would like to have heard more of Gordon Denniston's tales of war, you'll just have to show up the next time we have him talk :-). ❖

Photos: above left: Lt. Gen. Richard Stillwell; top right: Laos river road crossing; center right: Mini gun head on; bottom right: Special Force Camp Dak To. All photos courtesy Gordon Denniston



If you missed Gordon Denniston's presentation at the Chapter 78 May meeting or would like to hear more about the 119th Helicopter Company, he has an excellent video with amazing footage available for viewing on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNIQ1sjEBc0>.

THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



Updates on the Montagnards



Walt Swain leads a patrol from Buon Beng. Cowboy is at the head of the column.



Maj. (R) Jim Morris

More Than a Book Review: *COWBOY: The Interpreter Who Became a Soldier, a Warlord, and One More Casualty of Our War in Vietnam* by Daniel Ford

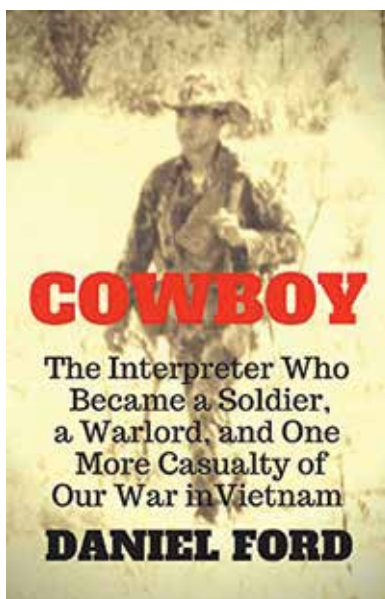
By Major (Retired) Jim Morris

This was supposed to be a review, but there's no way — you can't review a book in which you are a character, nor a book about an old friend, nor a book BY an old friend, albeit an internet buddy rather than a physical one.

A little background — in June of 1964 Dan Ford, an ex-GI journalist, somehow got himself attached to the Special Forces team at Buon Beng, about four kilometers north of Cheo Reo. The team was commanded by Captain Charley Judge and his XO was Captain Walt Swain. I didn't know Judge, but Swain was one of my best friends. I had been XO of the team before theirs, in the days when we were doing six-month TDY deployments.

Dan wrote a book about that deployment, called *Incident at Muc Wa*, and it was a pretty successful book in that it was made into a movie starring Burt Lancaster, *Go Tell the Spartans*. To my mind it is the best Vietnam movie, certainly the best early one. But when I saw it I didn't realize that it was based on my camp, that the character who seemed so much like my friend Philippe Drouin was actually based on him, and that the character Burt Lancaster played was based on my old "B" team commander, Rick Buck.

What threw me off was that the team was a MAAG team, and the characters were Vietnamese, not Montagnard. I don't think Dan knew, when he wrote the book, that "A" teams frequently split up in two camps, and not wanting a bunch of extra characters who did not serve the plot he made up a whole fictional "Ranger" unit with x, y, and z teams. And trying to explain who the Montagnards were to a civilian audience was more than any movie studio wanted to take on at the time.



COWBOY: The Interpreter Who Became a Soldier, a Warlord, and One More Casualty of Our War in Vietnam

By Daniel Ford

Warbird Books

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Published 04/18/2018

160 pages

To buy a copy visit
www.danfordbooks.com
for information.

Over time Dan reviewed *War Story* on Amazon and I learned *Incident at Muc Wa* was set in my old stomping grounds. And my old friend Philippe Drouin, aka Y Kdrowin Mlo, aka "The Cowboy," made such an impression on him that now he has written a book about him. Or at least used him as a focal point for a book about the CIDG program in the Highlands that fills a big gap in knowledge, or maybe two or three big gaps, even for people who served there.

The first third of the book is about Buon Enao and Dave Nuttle who put together the Strike Force there for the CIA. Even today I hesitate to use that acronym. I want to say "the Agency", or "those guys". Oh, well. But it's no secret now.

All I knew about those Buon Enao days was anecdotal, from talking to guys who had come back from there. This book has a balanced and comprehensive description. The first commander there from Okinawa, where I was stationed, was Ron Shackleton. I had found Ron Shackleton's Oklahoma State University class ring on the floor of the East China Sea. What are the odds? But I digress. If you served in Vietnam in Special Forces the history of



Left to right. Philippe Drouin, Ken (not Kenn) Miller, and Nay Phin, who became Ken's adopted son, and commanded one of our companies. The patch on his pocket is our team patch, which became sort of our Medal of Honor for the Strike Force. The triangles over the pocket designate the company by color. Cowboy's is white, for the staff. Phin's is blue for 2d Company.

Buon Enao will be interesting to you, and I don't think it exists anywhere else.

The middle third of the book is about Cowboy, and Buon Beng, and Dan and Walt Swain, and Judge's team. I have no objectivity there at all. I was constantly comparing his description of the Highlands with my own, his description of stuff that happened, like Cowboy's bringing my CO, Crews McCulloch, the plans for the Montagnard Revolt of 1964, Crews taking it to Saigon, and not being believed, until the Revolt. There's a good description of a long patrol he went on, one which ran directly counter to the concept of operations our team had developed. He doesn't say that, because he probably did not know it, but it certainly tainted my perception of that patrol.

But the book accurately describes Cowboy, his sense of style, his charisma, and the fact that he was the most famous Cong Killer in the Highlands at the time. I'm not objective about the guy. As it says in my book and this one, I loved him like a brother. Every major success I had, organizing the best intel net in II CTZ, the ambush that brought down an advanced party for the NVA invasion of that year and the next, and from then on, none of that would have happened without our relationship. My contribution to the formation of that great intel net was to shout, "Hey, Phil! Go hire some spies." My contribution to the ambush of that advanced party was to lie through my teeth to a collaborating district chief as to where

we were going. Cowboy couldn't have got away with that, but I could. I got a Bronze Star for that ambush, for which he hired the agent who steered us to the right trail, organized the ambush party, and probably triggerred the ambush. I think he got a \$25.00 bonus.

See, none of that's in the book, so this isn't a review. It's sort of a hybrid of review and reminiscence.

I have one correction to make. Apparently Dan did not meet Kpa Doh, who was senior interpreter at Buon Beng. He must not have been there at the time, maybe off on FULRO business. So, he confuses him with Little Cowboy, another younger interpreter, who styled himself after Philippe, but didn't have the chops. On page 95 there's a pic with Kpa Doh in the middle, listed as an unidentified FULRO activist. Kpa Doh became a great FULRO commander, and Cambodian Army major. Not enough credit is also given to Nay Luette, who was a better operator than Cowboy, though without the charisma.

Something else that I wish was in the book, but isn't, is what happened to Walt Swain, which is the saddest Vietnam story I know. Dan mentions finding his name on the Wall, but doesn't know how it got there. Walt went home a bit early from that TDY tour, because his wife, Hilda, developed tubercular meningitis. He had to leave to take care of her daughter, his adopted daughter, Susie. Hilda was a bit older than Walt, and her first husband had been killed in the Korean War. Walt left Oki, diverted from the Infantry Officer's Career Course with a "compassionate transfer" to the 5th of the 7th Cav at Ft. Carson, to be near Hilda, who was in Fitzsimons General Hospital in Aurora CO.

He'd only been there a few months when the 5th of the 7th was gyroed to Vietnam. He was killed in Bong Son, commanding a company, when he should have been at Benning, drawing up plans to defend the Fulda Gap from the Red Menace.

I later heard that Hilda remarried, another soldier. But I also heard he was a colonel, so this one was probably not killed in combat.

The last third of the book is what happened to Cowboy, and to the Montagnards and the Highlands after the fall of Saigon. It's not a pretty story, but it's one all of us should know.

Dan has done a pretty wonderful job with this book. It's full of stuff you probably don't know about the life you lived. ❖

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.



Skyraider Reunion and Tailwind Redux, 2018

Above photo: A-1E in VNAF markings with dummy ordinance



Major John "Doc" Padgett

We could hear them before we saw them. That low but increasing rumble, unique to the Skyraider, or "Spads". Then they broke the horizon, two of them, flying in tight formation. They circled quickly around and then came in low, engines roaring.

Major John Padgett

A memory from the Prairie Fire area of operations? A scene from a Mike Force fight? It could have been either or both, or from many battles during the Second Indochina War, but this time everyone was smiling and no ordinance was dropped. It was the 2018 Skyraider reunion, dubbed "Tailwind Day Redux Plus" by the organizers. This was a get-together of Vietnam era Skyraider pilots and armorers and their families, some of the Studies and Operations Group (SOG) veterans of Operation Tailwind and recon teams, and a couple of survivors from the Battle of Lang Vei.

The Tailwind raid, conducted by Green Berets and indigenous troops from the Special Operations Augmentation/Command and Control Central (SOA/CCC) unit of SOG, was the deepest raid into Laos ever conducted. With an objective of cutting the Ho Chi Minh Trail for 24 hours to assist a CIA military operation against Communist forces further south, the mission instead lasted for four days. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) was continually reinforced, and brought everything from small arms to anti-aircraft artillery to bear against the commandos. While the aggressive tactics, skill and warrior ethic resulted in most of the SOG men retuning to base, another reason for their survival was the close air support provided by the pilots of the A-1 Skyraiders. Coming in on the deck, dropping fragmentation bombs, cluster bomb units and napalm, often taking out the branches of trees, these pilots kept the raiders from being overrun time and again. So it is easy to understand the bonds of mutual respect and admiration that exist between the Tailwind survivors and the pilots.

The reunion began with pilots and SOG guys introducing themselves, and men from the Skyraider unit, termed Operating Location Alpha Alpha (OLAA) reuniting. The war stories began

soon thereafter. There are three Skyraider aircraft still flying in the US, and we at the reunion were privileged to have two of them in attendance. Tail number 665, named "LT America" is based at the Tennessee Museum of Aviation in Sevierville, where the reunion was held. A1-E #132683 was flown in to augment the reunion, as "LT America" went up to greet and fly back with the A1-E. The Colorado-based Skyraider is painted in Vietnamese Air Force colors and armed with dummy ordinance, and brought back many memories for the SOG and OLAA guys watching it taxi in. The Tennessee based 665 was actually used to support (keep alive) SOG troops on missions in Laos.

Pilots Don Dineen and Win Deporter spoke of how the 6th Special Operations Squadron was organized and staffed. The squadron was to close in 1969, and the planes moved to Thailand, but they were then moved back to Pleiku, South Vietnam. Win related how wrecked aircraft were collected in a junk yard at the south end of the runway. "Nothing like coming in for a landing and seeing all those wrecked airplanes."

A SOG man and a pilot who provided him very close air support met for the first time at the reunion. Don Dineen related how a recon team leader (One-Zero) and his team were running from a superior NVA force as the One Zero was throwing smoke over his shoulder. "Bomb my smoke!" the One Zero was shouting into the radio. Don was unsure, as he had 500 lbs. bombs in his racks and didn't want to drop them close to the team and take out the team as well as the NVA. He dropped bombs close to, but not on top of, the smoke. "It was close enough", replied George "The Troll" Sternberg. "It was me."

Don Dineen also had some bad luck with his airplanes. He related how on one low run he came in through heavy smoke from detonated white phosphorous bombs. He hadn't seen the tree on the other side of the smoke and ran into it. Through a minor miracle he didn't crash and made it back to base. But the airplane was wrecked and never flew again. On another occasion, one of his brakes locked and he could not keep from veering into another A-1 as they were landing. That made three airplanes he destroyed, causing Win Deporter to remark: "Two more and you're an ace!"

One of the most interesting stories wasn't exactly a war story, but concerned how four A-1s were rescued from destruction and disrepair by Roger Youngblood and others at the direction of BG Harry "Heinie" Aderholt of Air Commando fame, commander of USMACTHAI at the time. Skyraiders had been flown to Thailand by escaping South Vietnamese pilots, bringing out themselves and their families during the last days of the Republic, when the NVA was invading and overrunning the US ally.

The scene at Trat air base, where most of the aircraft from South Vietnam were landing, was what Roger described as a "wild west show". Aircraft would land, often without tower guidance, dislodge their passengers, and then be shoved off to the side of the runway. As a result, several of the magnificent Skyraiders were abandoned in a field next to the runway, some of them soaked in the monsoon rains and up to their landing gear in mud. Roger and his happy band managed to steal, er....relocate four of the airplanes to Utapao Air Base and turn them over to the Thai Air Force before they were ordered to stand down.

As they were preparing to take off for the second A-1 rescue flight from Trat, a staff car rolled up and a USAF colonel got out and demanded to know when the pilots had last checked out on an

A-1. Having rescued two aircraft the previous day, they truthfully answered "Yesterday". The colonel just sniffed and got back in his car and drove away. The pilots didn't mention that prior to the day before, it had been four years since they had touched an A-1. When they had spoken to BG Aderholt about their concerns of not flying the A-1 for so long, his response was "You have ridden a bicycle, haven't you? Flying an A-1 is the same thing! Now get those damned planes out of there!"

The adventure continued, as the A-1s were shipped to a nearby river port from Utapao, loaded on barges (there was a humorous story about how the river had to be lowered in order to get the barges successfully under a bridge), and then back to the US on a.....wait for it....Russian trawler. As a result of the improbable and unconventional operation four A-1s were saved and tail number 665 and #132683 were there at the reunion

The reunion's second day was the turn of the SOG guys to relate their stories of some of their missions, and that many (most) of us owed our lives, and those of our children and grandchildren, to those planes, pilots and armorers. John "Tilt" Meyer gave a brief history of SOG, as well as recalling some of the missions he and his team ran in the Prairie Fire and Daniel Boone (Laos and



Left to right, Don Dineen, SPAD Pilot who flew a sortie for Lynne Black 10/5/68, Tony Herrell ST Louisiana, John "Tilt" Meyer, ST Idaho 1-0, John "Doc" Padgett, CCC medic and Tailwind survivor.



Parked Spads at the Tennessee Air Museum Bac-Si P.

Cambodia) areas of operations. Tilt related the story of Operation Tailwind, with John “Doc” Padgett recalling the shoot-down of his CH-53 helicopter during the operation. What was supposed to be a rescue and MEDEVAC operation itself needed rescuing. The story of Tailwind has been told at length elsewhere, including the incredible saga of Gary Michael Rose, the CCC medic who received the Medal of Honor from President Trump last October for his selfless heroism on the operation.

COL (Ret) Paul Longgrear told of his experiences at the battle of Lang Vei, which will be remembered as the only Special Forces camp that was overrun by the NVA with the use of tanks. Paul’s presentation was riveting, and he related the event with details and even a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor. Skyraiders came to the assistance of the camp, but the odds were too great. Especially moving for me was how, when wounded and laying on the ground during the battle, Paul felt everything stop for a moment and felt a sensation that he described as “warm and syrupy” that he recognized as love. Love. During a fight for survival while an SF camp was being overrun. It was the love of God that he felt, and it never

left him. Having survived, he has dedicated himself to spreading that love, becoming ordained, and now ministers to inmates at prisons near where he lives.

Also present and taking part in the Lang Vei brief was Ray Cyrus, who was the crew chief whose Huey picked up Paul and other survivors. A gaggle of civilians had decided they needed to be evacuated from Lang Vei too, Ray recalled, and after Paul got the rest of the wounded aboard, he convinced them otherwise at gun-point. Ray recollected one persistent civilian fellow who hung on to a skid until Ray applied his boot, causing the short term passenger to land on the roof of a hooch. The pilot later informed Ray that the Huey probably couldn’t have cleared the ground obstacles with the civilian’s extra weight.

The reunion ended with an open bar featuring some of Tennessee’s finest bourbons, as well as single malt scotches and other less distinguished spirits, followed by a bar-b-q catered by a local restaurant. The war stories went on into the night in the shadow of an historic CH 34 helicopter, complete with bullet holes, which actually flew in Vietnam, the type which supported SOG missions, referred to as a “King Bee”. Perhaps some of the SOG men present were transported by that very aircraft.

Thanks for organizing this significant reunion go to A-1 pilot Don Engebretsen and his wife Linda. Thanks also to Rhonda Melton and the staff of the Tennessee Museum of Aviation for letting us have the run of the place and hosting the dinners at the museum’s hanger alongside dozens of historic aircraft. We actually didn’t break anything.

Suggestions for further reading: *SOG Chronicles, Volume 1* by John S. Meyer, featuring Operation Tailwind. *Route 9 Problem*, stories of the Battle of Lang Vei by participants as told to Dave Stockwell. *A Broken Silence in Viet Nam* by Ray Cyrus, featuring recollections of Lang Vei and other stories. *USAF and VNAF A-1 Skyraider Units of the Vietnam War* by Byron E. Hukee. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Padgett was a Special Forces Medic and was assigned to Vietnam in April 1967 where he served on several A-teams, then on the II Corps Mobile Strike Force in Qui Nhon. In July of 1969 he rotated to Thailand serving on an A-team at Nong Takoo with the 46 SF Company. Returning to Vietnam in July 1970 where he was medical supervisor for SOA/CCC (MACV-SOG) in Kontum and then helped train and lead C and D Companies Exploitation Force.

Recalled to active duty in 2003 Major Padgett served as public health team chief for the 490th Civil Affairs Bn in Baghdad, Iraq. He retired after seven years active duty and 33 years reserves. John’s awards include the Bronze Star w/V, five OLCs, ARCOM w/V three OLCs, Air Medal w/V, the Combat Medical Badge, the Military Order of Medical Merit, and the El Salvador Combat Star.

Following Vietnam John completed physician assistant training at the University of Washington. He holds a doctorate in Health Science and is the Emeritus Founding Professor, Touro University Nevada. Currently John is the Vice President, Refugee Relief International, Inc.

COPS CORNER



Terry Cagnolatti

By Terry Cagnolatti

As a young child growing up during the early 1950s in Los Angeles, I watched my mother's oldest brother and her first cousin stop by my house in their Los Angeles Police Department uniforms. I wanted to be just like them, and that's when my interest in law enforcement as a career began.

The first step on my journey to law enforcement began when I entered the US Army in 1973 and served as a Green Beret. After separating from the Army, I moved back to California, where I bought a home and raised a family. I took a few part-time jobs and finished college at California State University, Los Angeles earning a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology.

I then enrolled in a master's program at a local state college which I never completed as I applied for the Los Angeles County Probation Department for the position of a Probation Officer. It took me one year on the job before I realized that this was not for me. I then applied with the Los Angeles County Marshals Office and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. I passed the tests for both agencies, and I decided to go with the Marshals Office. I was sent to the Rio Hondo Police Academy in Whittier, California. I worked various assignments in my eleven years with the Marshals Department. While working there, I took a temporary job with the Transit Police, during the 1984 Olympics providing security for the passengers traveling to the different venues. After the Olympics, I was hired as a permanent part-time with the Transit Police working weekends.

In October of 1989 I applied for the position of Investigator with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. One of the minimal requirements for each applicant was to have experience as a Law Enforcement Officer under California Penal Code 830.1. Most of

the hires were from the Sheriff's office, Marshals office, the Los Angeles Police Department, along with a variety of Municipal and Federal Agencies. The majority of the applicants had four-year college degrees or above.

I was hired by the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office on January 3, 1990 and shortly thereafter was assigned to the entry level unit, Family Support. The purpose of the unit was to locate and serve arrest warrants on fathers, and yes, some mothers, who were not paying child support leaving the financial burden of their children on the taxpayers. We served warrants throughout the State of California at residences, work places, or even directly to individuals as they walked down the street. I learned quickly that taking someone willingly into a pair of handcuffs is far better than wrestling with them on the ground, plus it is a lot less paperwork.

I was promoted to Senior Investigator and assigned to the Workers' Compensation Fraud Unit where I worked my own cases as an Investigating Officer. I initiated cases from the initial complaint and worked the case all the way to its conclusion. The fraud units provided investigators the opportunity to hone their skills by interviewing victims and witnesses, writing and executing search warrants, along with obtaining arrest warrants for the suspects. While there I was assigned numerous cases, however, a specific one that I worked stands out in my memory. It involved the director of a major police department's Non-Sworn Personnel Workers' Compensation Office. The suspect embezzled an amount of one million dollars with the assistance of a medical doctor and two private investigators. She created false case files with her relatives and friends named as the injured parties. After receiving their checks, which they cashed, the suspect was given the majority percentage of the payouts. The doctor flipped and became an informant for the District attorney, giving us this information. The case was brought to trial where she was convicted along with her co-defendants.

I was then assigned to the Auto Insurance Fraud Unit. My most memorable case there involved a major insurance company, name not to be mentioned, that paid out a total of thirty-three million-dollars on a bad faith lawsuit filed against them. The attorney for the company, who negotiated the settlement, disappeared. The company, thinking something was amiss, came to the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office to have the case investigated. While investigating the case, I was contacted by the FBI and informed that they also were involved in this case. The agent said he was given information by an informant that the victims of the initial accident were sending a portion of their payments to fund a terrorist group in their country.

While assigned to the Fraud Units, the training was ongoing. The investigators were given the opportunity of attending numerous week-long seminars and conferences where instructors were experts in the field of Fraud Crimes.

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.

I was then assigned to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Compton Hard Core Gang Unit, in Compton California. I worked there for a total of five years and joined the California Gang Investigators Association, est. 1977. The association held an annual conference with speakers from around America which I never missed. I was fortunate enough to work with two investigators, as my partners, who transferred from LASD gang division known as Operation Safe Streets — both were very experienced gang deputies. One of the deputies was certified as an expert on gangs by the California State Courts and lectured at the police academy. The unit was responsible not only for Compton, but also the surrounding cities, and two infamous housing projects located just north of Compton in South Los Angeles. Attempting to explain the challenges faced by our gang unit would be nearly impossible. Instead, I would advise one to do a Google search of "Compton, California gangs." Or view one of the movies or television specials produced regarding Compton gangs. An article written by a local Southern California newspaper ranked Compton among one of the most dangerous cities in America. On September 17, 2000, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department replaced the Compton Police Department, which was disbanded amid controversy and alleged corruption after a federal investigation. I subsequently transferred in 2002.



If asked to choose one assignment of the many I worked in the Bureau of Investigation that gave me the most satisfaction, I would have to say it was the Child Abduction Unit where I worked a total of five years. Child abduction usually was a result of a custody battle and is often thought of as a civil matter. However, in the State of California, according to Penal Code 278, it is a criminal matter to be filed at the discretion of the District Attorney's Office as a felony or a misdemeanor. It is a crime that could turn very tragic in a matter of a short time. For example in Orange, California a Commissioner granted full custody to the father of two young girls. The mother requested that the daughters visit with her and her mother over a court recess, which was granted. Distraught, the mother killed both daughters, her mother, then herself.

Locating and returning the minor children to the custodial parent involved traveling not only throughout the State of California, but also America. We did have cases which involved foreign countries, however the process was done using an agreement under the Hague Convention through foreign diplomatic channels.

Once I located the whereabouts of the minor(s) I had to prepare no less than six legal documents which, included a personal affidavit to be signed by a California judge, the deputy district attor-



ney, and myself. These documents were filed and presented to the judges where I traveled. I was expected to testify in open court or in chambers to the validity of the documents. Once the out of state court granted me custody of the minor, I then contacted local law enforcement for assistance in the recovery of the child. I was often required to appear back in court, after the recovery, to testify once again before being granted final custody of the minors. There were times when the abducting parent would also appear. If a felony warrant was issued for the abducting parent, they were taken into custody and extradited to California to stand trial. In the vast majority of these cases the minor(s) were glad to be returned back to California, making my job rewarding. The unit's head deputy district attorney and I periodically conducted a child abduction class at the Los Angeles Police Department's Academy.

Continued on page 13



SFA Chapter 78 Presents Awards to ROTC Cadets at UCLA and Cal State Fullerton



UCLA

The recipient of this year's SFA Chapter 78 award, presented by Chapter 78 member Kenn Miller, was Cadet Darien Reyes, a graduating senior who will be commissioned an armor officer this summer, but who has the intention to become a Special Forces officer after his time in Armor Branch.

The cadets of the "Bruin Battalion" come primarily from UCLA and Cal State Northridge, with a handful from smaller schools, and, as usual, this year's graduating cadets are an extremely impressive bunch of physically fit, academically outstanding, and highly motivated young Americans who are eager to serve our nation.



Cal State Fullerton

Gary Macnamara represented SFA Chapter 78 at the Cal State Fullerton Army ROTC Award Ceremony. He is pictured at far left speaking during the ceremony and at right presenting the award to Cal State Fullerton ROTC Cadet Huey Nguyen.

In a note from Tyler Harper, California State University, Fullerton, Communications:

"On behalf of the Titan Family, we thank you for showing to our award ceremony, presenting and awarding Cadet Nguyen of his award. Thank you."

Letters to the Editor

Great Work on the Congressional Gold Medal Issue

Good Afternoon.

1. Thank You.

2. I have in-hand your great work, featuring the Congressional Gold Medal issue. Wow. This edition is outstanding. I don't know how you do it. Over my many years, visiting many Chapters, I have seen it all, and no other Chapter can compare their Chapter newsletter to yours. Thank you.

Warmest regards,
Clyde Sincere

P.S. I would like to recommend that each of your Sentinel's that deal in any shape or manner with Special Operations, a copy should be placed in our SOA Archives. "YOU DUN GOOD MY FRIEND".

1-0 School Memories

Great copy. I'm going to start coming to you all for Drop input.

Travis Mills article on 1-0 School was especially good. A couple of "war stories" about Long Thanh. I went to 1-0 School there in Nov 69, if I recall. A great indoctrination into what I had volunteered for. Jerry Waring was the OIC and Ron Franklin the NCOIC. Two of the most physical men I have ever met. There are some great Saigon stories about Jerry and Joe Cincotti. I went back to Long Thanh in Jan 71 when we set up a HALO school there. We were off on a spot (which happened often) on a night training jump and Sammy Hernandez landed on the roof of a hooch in the Aviation Unit there. The 1SG came running out, saw Sammy in a black jump suit, fell over with a heart attack. Fortunately he lived. On another training jump Frank Norbury and I put some students out at 12,500 and got the C-130 to take a couple of 180's for more altitude. We got out around 18–20,000 over clouds and were flying around like birds doing hook ups, etc. We broke the clouds around 5,000 smack dab over Bear Cat. We managed to land right at the front gate to the chagrin of the MP's. Then there was the time COL Shungel, Chief Op 35, wanted to make a jump. He was HALO qualified and I was selected to JM him. We had a C-130 to ourselves and I gave him what I thought was a good spot from 12,500. He had a time and opened at 4,000. I went on down a ways, stood up in front of the PIO photographer from SOG HQ, and watched COL Shungel drift off into the woods. He was not happy.

Good old days

Cliff Newman
Executive Director
Special Forces Association

Filling the Gaps In Our Knowledge of SOF

Lonny, great to meet you. I'm one of the historians at SOCOM who's filling gaps in our knowledge of SOF past as well as capture the preserve the present. One of our on-going projects is development of a historical note timeline so the command knows what happened in SOF on a particular day in history. We're including Vietnam era SF, SOG, UDT/SEALs, Air Commandos and other special units events in this project as a means to remember and honor the past. So I'd like to thank you for the great articles in the Sentinel that oftentimes include details we might not find elsewhere: the One-Zero School article in the March issue and the NVA Assault on Lang Vei in February's being just a couple examples. We're also archiving the Sentinel as a reference document for SF.

Thanks again for publishing such a great resource.

Richard Green
Historian
USSOCOM History and Research Office

Great Article on Col. Longgear

Great to read the article on Col Longgear — could you give him my contact info. He helped me pay the 14th company troops on Jan prior to moving out to La Vei. I would like to touch base with him lost all contact with him after the wound that he received. Confirms my reception with the Mike Force company.

Carlos Gutierrez

Appreciation for a Job Well Done

You write and put together the best newsletter that I have ever read. Enjoyed this special OSS edition. Amazing job you do.

Aurelio Flores

Just When You Thought It Couldn't Get Better...

This Newsletter is just incredible. The quality of the articles can't possibly get better, but they do!

The guy who wrote the One-Zero school story.....is he in a Chapter?
Mike Keele

Amazing Collection of History

Lonny,

I just finished reading the last issue of the Sentinel that you sent. It was great. These get better with each issue. This is an amazing collection of history.

Thanks to all those who contributed.

Gordon Denniston

On the 1-0 school, the men who went through that course beginning in 1969 certainly received an excellent education. That school and the recondo school advanced the art of training. When you and I arrived in Nha Trang in very early April 1968 we had to wait a week for a supposed "training course" which turned out to be pretty much of a joke. Of course we di-di'd out of the base, knowing what was coming, and spent that week in a hotel on the beach. As I recall we showed up about 6 hours before the "course" was to start... but that was about it for "training." I was headed to MACV-SOG...you to Plei Djerang. Frankly I as an 05B4S knew squat all about ground reconnaissance. But we were SF...and as usual the response was, "Well, it can't be that hard."

Gene Williams

To the Special Forces Association, Chapter 78,

Thank you for the support in my commitment with the UCLA Army ROTC Program. I will be sure to continue the scholastic excellence and leadership proficiency in keeping with the traditions and ideals of the United States Army Special Forces.

- CDT Daniel Reyes

Cops Corner continued

We were allotted three to four days to complete the recovery which offered us some down time. This gave us the opportunity to enjoy the attractions and eateries the cities had to offer. We often ate at places found on the television show *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*. A few of the many places I visited include Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Lincoln's Home originally built in 1839 in Illinois, the Coors Brewing Facility in Colorado, the Football Hall of Fame in Ohio, the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona, Pikes Place Market and Puget Sound, Washington, South Beach, Florida, and the Grand Ole Opry in Tennessee. I usually purchased a souvenir shot glass for my collection from each city. And, yes, there is a Kalamazoo.

Throughout my years with the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office and other agencies I was provided excellent training. On the top of my list would have to be the course "Flying Armed" which was conducted at the San Diego Sheriff's Academy. I and two other investigators drew one thousand rounds a piece from the armory and completed a week-long course involving the possibility of firing our weapons while in flight. The last day of our training we spent eight hours at a movie lot on a DC-9, donning protective gear and participated in reality-based training using UTM-RBT Paintball ammunition, running through multiple scenarios.

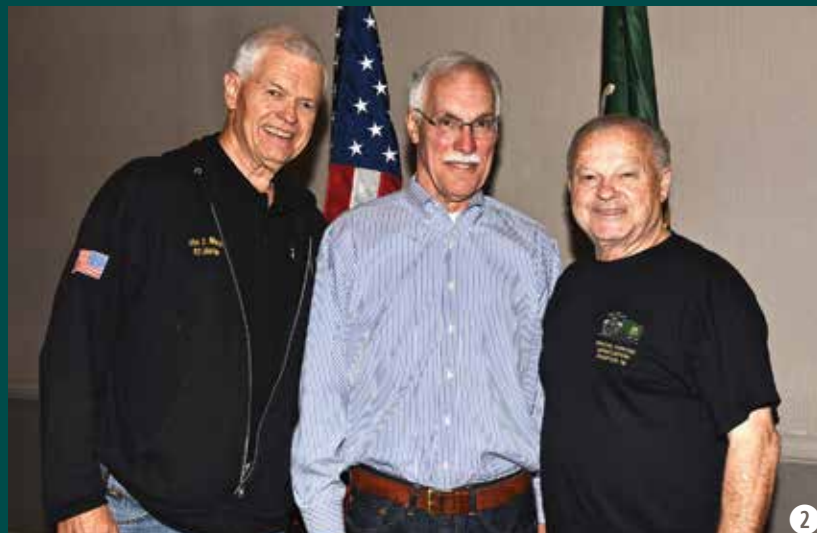
The flying armed training was invaluable because I spent many hours in the air not only in the Child Abduction Unit, but also in other units where I was tasked to transport convicted felons back to California to testify on capital cases, usually a gang homicide. Once I arrived to the out of state prison, with a partner, we would take custody of the prisoner, transport him to the airport, and board

a plane. We were always the first on the plane and the last off. The pilots had sole discretion whether the prisoner was handcuffed or not. Needless to say, all this was done on a need-to-know basis only. The prisoner was then transported back once he testified. If a case involved a material witness not serving time, once located, I appeared in court with the proper documents where the witness was placed in my custody to be transported back to California. However, instead of being booked into county jail under prisoner status, the material witness would be put up in a hotel under watch.

I had many unique experiences while working in law enforcement. However, the most interesting had to be an assignment while at the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office. Other investigators and I were assigned to sit on a wiretap for a period of approximately four weeks. The case involved a professional assassination of two young men in the Los Angeles County area.

My final assignment at the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, was at the Command Center, which is a 24-7 operation. I was assigned to work the after-hours duty. The Command Center was the liaison between judges, police departments and deputy district attorneys regarding all after-hour activities such as search warrants, officer involved shootings where the suspect was killed, and death of a suspect while in police custody or at a jail facility. We also worked with OSHA, deploying a deputy district attorney when an accidental death occurred at a worksite. The Command Center was also responsible for taking reports regarding complaints against district attorney personnel after hours. I retired after completing thirty seven years of service. ♦

SFA Chapter 78 May 2018 Meeting



- ❶ CWO Gordon Denniston, gun ship pilot, in RVN for MACV-SOG and John S. Meyer. Chapter President Meyer presenting a Chapter Coin Number 119 (Gordon's unit).
- ❷ John S. Meyer, 1-0 MACV-SOG, CWO Gordon Denniston, gun ship pilot for MACV-SOG, and Ed Barrett, recon MACV-SOG FOB 2, Kontum, RVN
- ❸ Richard Simonian and Terry Cagnolatti

- ❹ Brad Welker Chapter Vice President and Editor of "Cops Corner."
- ❺ Chapter President John S. Meyer giving very specific instructions to members!
- ❻ Mark Miller, Chapter 78 Sergeant at Arms/Quartermaster
- ❼ Chapter 78 Vice President Brad Welker counting our money with Judge (Colonel (R)) Thad Gembacz watching intently.
- ❽ John Creel and Jim Duffy