



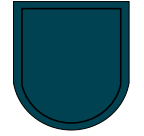
# THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 12 • DECEMBER 2019



Master Sgt. Matthew Williams Awarded the MOH  
The Forgotten Warriors — Update on the Montagnards  
Abandoned Allies: Lessons Not Learned  
The Tale of Rmah Ktang  
The Son Tay Raid: A Raider Remembers



# SENTINEL

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 12 • DECEMBER 2019

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**COVER:** Frank Snepp, Former CIA Strategy Analyst and Author was the main speaker at the November Chapter meeting. Read about his presentation on page 12. Photo by Lonny Holmes



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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.

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

## From the Editor



Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor

### FINAL EDITORS COLUMN

Members of the United States Intelligence Community have told me many times that if its not written, it didn't happen. This must be one of the reasons that a huge majority of the documents of MACV-SOG in the Viet Nam War were destroyed; plausible denial. When I began as Editor of the *Sentinel* eight years ago my goal was to print stories from Green Berets who fought, trained and led soldiers in our conflict. Then I expanded this goal to include all those who supported and helped us in our contribution to carry our orders to defend the United States of America and the countries we supported.

I thank Richard Simonian for letting me "run with the ball" for these eight years without a word of direction or hesitation in developing the *Sentinel*. I also thank Debra Holm who designed the *Sentinel* and did all the layouts which made these 96 issues look professional. The result was two fold: individual stories are not forgotten and numerous national awards for SF Chapter 78.\*

\*The first two years of the *Sentinel* were edited by John Joyce and I contributed to those 24 issues.

Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor



Above, Lonny drinking rice wine.



At left, Lonny in Viet Nam at SF Camp Plei Djereng in the spring of 1968 with the Montagnard Soldiers.



# The President's Page | November 2019



John Stryker Meyer  
President SFA 78

## Chapter Members,

As 2019 draws to a close ending this Board of Directors term in office, I want to thank the men who have served Chapter 78 over the last two years. Without their support our chapter wouldn't be the wonderful source of camaraderie and comradeship between us.

**Don Deatherage** is wrapping up six years of service to the chapter as vice president. **Brad Welker** has served most of two

years in office driving in from Las Vegas once a month, or riding with fellow Vegas vagabonds **John Joyce** or **Lonny Holmes**.

**Gary Macnamara** has set record times for turning around meeting minutes while teaching military history at Fullerton. What can I say about Chapter Treasurer/Chaplain/Patron Saint **Richard Simonian**? He's a chapter plank holder and is our only **SF Original**. Not many chapters have an SF Original in their membership ranks. Besides having to bring Chapter member **Kenn Miller** to all of our meetings, Chapter Sgt. at Arms **Mark Miller** has been always been there to help the board with any mission assigned to him. Chapter member and fellow MACV-SOG comrade-in-arms **Ed Barrett** has continued working with the five ROTC Program coordinators our chapter works with during the years. Of course, I owe a tip of the beret to our editor of the award-winning *Sentinel*, **Lonny Holmes**, chapter web page manager **Terry Cagnolatti**, and, last – but certainly not least, our chapter Special Deputy Assistant to the Treasurer **Mike Keele**. And, I have to mention chapter member **John Joyce**, the Rembrandt of Challenge Coin crafters, who has supported the chapter financially and with his beautiful coins, which we sold and earned money for the chapter.

Working with this unique team has been a joy for me personally and is why I'll keep my membership in Chapter 78 no matter where my wife Anna and I move. Thank you gentlemen.

I also thank **Bruce Long** for stepping up to serve another tour of duty as president, joining **Richard, Gary**, as elected officers. They will be joined by newly elected Vice Presidents **Don Gonnevill** and **Susan Weeks**. **Mark, Ed, Terry** and **Mike** will continue their duties and will be joined by new *Sentinel* Editor **Jim Morris**.

On another serious note, one of the issues that all of our chapter presidents have kept before us is the POW/MIAs from the Vietnam War. Today, as I write this — one month before Christmas, there are 1,587 MIAs in Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War, including Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. In the year ahead, I will be working with our new *Sentinel* Editor Jim Morris to do some follow-up pieces on what is happening in SEA today. One of my major concerns is that the Department of POW/MIA Accounting Agency as an institution is putting more emphasis on the number game by including WW II and Korean War remains. The last announced recovery from SEA by DPAA was on July 29! I'm not

strong on math, but that's NO recovery of US remains in four months, or none mentioned by DPAA.

The National League of POW/MIA Families has been the most determined advocate that seeks the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The League, and the SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee, stress that as the highest priority. Remember, in Laos alone there are 50 Green Berets who died in the eight-year secret war, along with more than 120 fearless Army, Marine Corps and Air Force aviators who died supporting SOG operators and are among those 1,586 missing Americans.

Please go to the league's website and support it. The link is: [www.pow-miafamilies.org](http://www.pow-miafamilies.org).

Last, but not least, on November 23rd, I was graced with a new title: Granddad. My daughter Alaina delivered our first grandchild, at a hospital in LA. My wife and Alaina's fiancée Johnny were with her throughout most of the process while I and the rest of the family waited outside. Avery weighed in at 7.3 pounds, stretching out to 21 inches. The miracle of newborn life still astounds me.

Planning to attend our December 14 meeting at Treasurer/Chaplain Richard Simonian's office, please e-mail VP Don Deatherage at: [drdeathca@gmail.com](mailto:drdeathca@gmail.com), no later than Thursday December 12, midnight. The address for office, which is our team room, is: [326 W. Katella Ave., Suite 4L, Orange, CA 92867](http://www.326W.com). When you pull into the driveway off of Katella, drive all the way to the back. The building that's perpendicular to the road at the end is Richard's office. The door on the left is our team room.

John Stryker Meyer  
President, SFA Chapter 78



Chapter member John Joyce celebrating his birthday in November in Las Vegas at the Chapter 51 weekly meeting at the 50s Diner.

Happy birthday John!

# President Trump Awards the Medal of Honor to Master Sgt. Matthew Williams on October 31, 2019

## OFFICIAL CITATION

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, March 3, 1863, has awarded in the name of Congress the Medal of Honor to Sergeant Matthew O. Williams, United States Army.

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty:

Sergeant Matthew O. Williams distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty on April 6, 2008, while serving as a Weapons Sergeant, Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 3336, Special Operations Task Force-33, in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

Sergeant Williams was part of an assault element inserted by helicopter into a location in Afghanistan. As the assault element was moving up a mountain toward its objective, it was engaged by intense enemy machine gun, sniper, and rocket-propelled grenade fire. The lead portion of the assault element, which included the ground commander, sustained several casualties and became pinned down on the sheer mountainside. Sergeant Williams, upon hearing that the lead element had sustained casualties and was in danger of being overrun, braved intense enemy fire to lead a counter-attack across a valley of ice-covered boulders and a fast-moving, ice cold, and waist-deep river. Under withering fire, Sergeant Williams and his local national commandos fought up the terraced mountainside to the besieged element.

Arriving at the lead element's position, Sergeant Williams arrayed his Afghan commandos to provide suppressive fire, which kept the insurgent fighters from overrunning the position. When the Team Sergeant was wounded, Sergeant Williams braved enemy fire once again to provide buddy-aid and to move the Team Sergeant down the sheer mountainside to the casualty collection point. Sergeant Williams then fought and climbed his way back up the mountainside to help defend the lead assault element that still had several serious casualties in need of evacuation. Sergeant Williams directed suppressive fire and exposed himself to enemy fire in order to reestablish the team's critical satellite radio communications. He then assisted with moving the wounded down the near-vertical mountainside to the casualty collection point.

Noting that the collection point was about to be overrun by enemy fighters, Sergeant Williams led the Afghan commandos in a coun-



Then-Sgt. Matthew Williams with Staff Sgt. Ronald Shurer II assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), sit outside a small village in Eastern Afghanistan in May 2008. (Photo Courtesy of U.S. Army Master Sgt. Matthew Williams)

ter-attack that lasted for several hours. When helicopters arrived to evacuate the wounded, Sergeant Williams again exposed himself to enemy fire, carrying and loading casualties onto the helicopters while continuing to direct commando firepower to suppress numerous insurgent positions.

His actions enabled the patrol to evacuate wounded and dead comrades without further casualties. Sergeant Williams' complete disregard for his own safety and his concern for the safety of his teammates ensured the survival of four critically wounded soldiers and prevented the lead element of the assault force from being overrun by the enemy. Sergeant Williams' actions are in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, Special Operations Command Central, and the United States Army. ❖





- ❶ Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams with the original team members of Operational Detachment Alpha 3336 including Medal of Honor Recipient Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II at the Pentagon.
- ❷ Master Sgt. Matthew Williams and family members at the White House.
- ❸ Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams and Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II pose together after the Medal of Honor Ceremony. Both received the Medal of Honor for actions with the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 3336, Special Operations Task Force-33, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan on April 6, 2008.
- ❹ Medal of Honor recipients Staff Sgt. David G. Bellavia, Master Sgt. Matthew Williams and Captain Florent A. Groberg.
- ❺ Master Sgt. Matthew Williams addresses the audience at his induction to the Hall of Heroes.
- ❻ Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy, Master Sgt. Matthew Williams and his wife Kate, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, and Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. James C. McConville.  
(All U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Keisha Brown)

# THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



## Updates on the Montagnards



Michael D. Bengé

### Abandoned Allies: Lessons Not Learned

By Michael D. Bengé

The enemy of my enemy is my friend is an ancient proverb which suggests that two opposing parties can or should work together against a common enemy. The earliest known expression of this concept is found in a Sanskrit treatise on statecraft the *Arthashastra*, which dates to around the 4th century BC.

Over the years the U.S. has formed alliances — marriages of convenience — with numerous nations and groups during conflicts against a common enemy. However, once the threat is deemed contained or there is a hiccup in American foreign policy, allies are often abandoned and fall by the wayside. Such was the case during WWII when the U.S. allied with and assisted the Soviet Union as well as a number of communist resistance groups against Nazi Germany and its allies in Europe. Once Germany was defeated, communism was seen as the great threat to freedom, and the Soviet Union ceased to be our allies.

The disfranchised Montagnards of Vietnam's Central Highlands were recruited by the U.S. Special Forces to fight Vietnamese communists during the Vietnam War. Some 61,000 Montagnards, out of an estimated population of 1,000,000, were used as surrogates for U.S. forces and fought alongside the Special Forces in epic battles. In doing so, they rescued countless Americans, including pilots, crews, and others. More than half of the Montagnards' adult male population was lost fighting with and for Americans. Without their sacrifice, there would be many more names on that somber black granite wall in Washington D.C. — the Vietnam Memorial. We had no ally during the Vietnam War more dependable and steadfast.

Only a handful of Montagnards were able to escape when the communists took over Vietnam in April 1975. Special Assistant to the Ambassador Colonel George Jacobson had promised the Minister

for Montagnard Affairs that he, his staff and other Montagnard leaders and their families and students would be evacuated by the American Embassy, but that promise was never fulfilled. Colonel Jacobson also advised the Minister to tell his people to flee to the jungle and continue to fight a guerrilla war against the communist Vietnamese, saying that the U.S. Government would provide assistance — another lie.

Following Jacobson's advice, tens of thousands of Montagnards fled to the jungles of Vietnam and Cambodia only to die of starvation and disease or be killed in the relentless pursuit by the communist Vietnamese, while awaiting the promised American assistance that never came. In 1986, a group of America's "Abandoned Allies," 212 Montagnard fighters and their families, emerged from the jungles of Cambodia, having fought a guerilla war against the communist Vietnamese for 11 years without the promised U.S. support.\* They sought refuge in Thailand and were resettled North Carolina. In 1992, a second group of 400 Montagnards found in Eastern Cambodia were also resettled in North Carolina after 17 years of continued guerilla warfare against the communists. Both groups, like Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, vowed "... I will fight no more ..."

The population of Montagnards now in North Carolina has grown to an estimated 12,000 people, with a few others scattered around in other states. Some of the increase has been due to U.S. programs such as family reunification and refuge for former reeducation detainees. Another group of Montagnards was granted a special allowance after suffering through communist Vietnam's brutal crackdown on Christians in 2001-02 and escaping to Cambodia.

Unfortunately, persecution continues for those Montagnards soldiers and their extended families who have been unable to escape for they have been prevented from acquiring ID cards and household registration and birth certificates, necessities to enable them to function within the communist society. They have also been denied access to adequate land to grow food to feed their families. International sources report that Montagnards are among the poorest of the poor and suffer the highest rate of malnutrition and infant deaths in Vietnam.



Reportedly, some two-thirds of the Montagnards have now adopted the Protestant Christian faith. The Vietnamese leadership is characterized by extreme paranoia and fear of organized religion, for it is in direct conflict with their political religion: communism. Montagnards wishing to be ordained as pastors must swear allegiance to the communist government and agree to put “the state” before God. Therefore, the Montagnards are forced to worship in outlawed house-churches. Vietnam’s religious police regularly raid the house-churches and arrest Christian worshipers. Those who refuse to recant their religious beliefs lose their small pieces of farmland, are imprisoned, or are “disappeared.” More than 100 Protestant Montagnard pastors are believed to be languishing in prison under deplorable and inhumane conditions, unrecognized by the Department of State as political prisoners.

At least 500 Montagnards have managed to escape the dead-end oppressive poverty, stagnation, and religious persecution in Vietnam and are languishing in Thailand. The true number is unknown, for others are caught up in the underground Thai “slave” market, or are hiding from the Thai police and from Vietnam’s intelligence apparatus in Bangkok. Anyone captured by the latter is surreptitiously taken back to Vietnam to suffer severe consequences. Some 150 of the 500 have been granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bangkok, but so far the U.S. government has shown no interest in giving these former allies a home.

In October, Senators Richard Burr and Thom Tillis of North Carolina introduced in the Senate a “feel good” resolution recognizing the Montagnards for fighting alongside U.S. Armed forces during the Vietnam War and calling on Vietnam to end restrictions on basic human rights. Of course, the Vietnamese communists will ignore this resolution and they have ignored other similar resolutions for years and nothing has changed. Vice President Pence has stated it is “the Administration’s priority to ensure that Christians are not being mistreated, persecuted or treated in any way that’s unfair as they try to make their way into the United States of America.” These words need to be followed up with concrete actions.

As someone who served in Vietnam with the Montagnards, it’s unfair for the U.S. government to refuse to offer these Montagnards, our former allies who languish in Thailand, refuge in the United States. I believe that others who served as I feel the same.

Might I be so brash as to suggest that the two honorable senators and the Vice President do something concrete to find these Montagnards a home, preferably in North Carolina, and leave the empty political rhetoric to the Vietnamese communists. ♦

**\*Editors Note:** Micheal Bengé’s story “Profile of a Successful Montagnard Emigrant — Escaping Viet Nam: H’Yoanh’s Story” in the [March 2019 Sentinel](#) tells the story of a member of this group, H’Yoanh Ksor Buonya. H’yoanh, along with Harriet Hill, went on to write the book [Escaping Viet Nam: H’Yoanh’s Story](#).



Y-Bham Enoul, a French-educated Rhade civil servant, was the president of FULRO (United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races), a movement among the Montagnard peoples of South Vietnam to regain autonomy from the governments of North and South Vietnam.

### About the Author

Michael D. Bengé served in the Marine Corps from 1956 to 1959. In 1963, he joined the International Voluntary Services (a forerunner of the Peace Corps), and served in Vietnam under contract with USAID (United States Agency for International Development), becoming fluent in both Vietnamese and Rhade (the lingua franca of Montagnards in the highlands). In 1965, he joined USAID and while serving as the Senior Civilian Advisor in CORDS at Ban Me Thuot, Darlac Province, Mr. Bengé was captured by the North Vietnamese during the 1968 TET Offensive while attempting to rescue a group of Americans. He was held in numerous camps in South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam. After his release in 1973 during “Operation Homecoming,” while on medical leave, he returned to Vietnam and continued his work with the Ministry of Ethnic Minorities.

During his service in Viet Nam, he was awarded three medals from the Government of South Vietnam — Chương Mỹ Bội Tinh độ 2 hạng (the highest civil servant service medal of the RVN for his work with the Montagnards); Y Tế Bội Tinh (from the Ministry of Health), and Phát Triển Sắc Tộc Bội Tinh (from the Ministry for the Development of Ethnic Minorities) for his work in civil and political affairs, public health, and ethnic minority affairs.

After Mr. Bengé’s release from captivity and return to the U.S., he was also the recipient of the State Department’s highest award for heroism for rescuing 11 Americans before capture and one for valor for actions while a POW, and was awarded the Purple Heart and the POW Medals by the Department of the Army. Mr. Bengé retired from USAID after 44-1/2 years of government service. He is a student of South East Asian politics, and is very active in advocating for human rights, religious freedom, and democracy for the peoples of former Indochina and has written extensively on these and other subjects. Mike is a member of SFA Chapter XI, Springfield, VA.

# The Tale of Rmah Ktang



Bob Shaffer

By Bob Shaffer

Many years ago I considered writing a novel about my Plei Djereng experience, but never finished it. In one of the chapters I described an actual patrol and firefight from the viewpoint of the writer (me) and in the next chapter I recounted the same patrol and firefight from the viewpoint of the montagard company commander,

Rmah Ktang. After that patrol, I did sit around a campfire back in PDJ and listened as the commander told the story to other CIDG and villagers. From that incident I got the idea of the poem.

In that chapter (a non-rhyming poem), I threw in a couple of Jarai words as well as Jarai names to lend a sense of local color and authenticity. “My” (Mee) means American, “Yuan” is the Jarai word for Vietnamese, and all CIDG refer to the VC and NVA as the “Viet Minh.” “Atao” is the local montagard word for gods or spirits.

Now comes Rmah Ktang of the H'drung  
To speak of deeds not yet declared but must  
Be told to all. Ktang, the chief who led  
His men that day against the Viet Minh,  
A foe so full of lust for lands of the  
Jarai. The campfire's glow will cast its light  
And warmth upon the eyes of all who wish  
To know this yarn of blood and brutal war.  
Old village men sit down by fresh-faced boys,  
All eager for the saga to begin.  
Ktang leans forth to see the face of each  
Of those who seek to hear this fearsome tale.

“My brothers first will taste the heavy wine  
Mixed in the earthen jars made firm by fire,  
So that the long ripe rice with water drawn  
From holy springs can help mere men attain  
The realm of the atao. Now take the reeds  
That reach down deep within the jug and drink,  
As smoke from all our pipes and fires floats up



Three Plei Djereng CIDG. Photo courtesy Bob Shaffer.

To touch the darkened sky that shrouds us all.  
Both you who went and you who stayed will hear  
The brave and daring acts of those who faced  
The Viet Minh near Village Pon's slow brook.

“Throughout that morn we searched amid the brush  
To find some trace of Viet Minh at rest.  
At last a sign. A fire, cold from night's  
Dark shade before the dawn. Some broken twigs.  
Enough to give a lead for us to hunt.  
We sift the shadowed ground for clues to show  
A trail left by the silent foe we seek.

Above the brush in trees that block the sun  
An owl awakes, its daytime sleep disturbed  
By secret moves beneath the leaf-filled branch.  
It scolds, upset at those who spoil its rest  
And make it look for safer limbs to perch.  
But wait. With silent wings the bird comes on,  
It flies toward us, and so away from those  
Who cause its fear. Our men are still. The owl  
Has passed. We tilt our heads to hear if now  
Some other noise might guide our hunting ears.  
I signal Brih, a steady man who knows  
These woods. Without a word he moves ahead,  
His rifle grip held firm within his hands.  
His sharp dark eyes catch sight of moving fronds  
Beyond his front. He stops. There is no breeze  
Within this place to cause these leaves to move.  
All stop. The insects cease their constant hum  
As when they know a thunderstorm will burst.  
Even the My noncom now can know the air is wrong.  
The Viet Minh discharge their rifles first  
But cannot see our men down in the brush  
Below the rise on which they sit. We shoot  
Until the air is rich with smell so sharp  
Our eyes run tears. We watch as Ksor Hoang,  
A loyal man, the people's friend, now leads  
A squad to flank the foe upon the hill.  
He scrambles up, discovers lore that shows  
The Viet Minh's designs. We pass this prize  
To Yuan hands and turn our sights back toward



The knoll. The Viet Minh turn tail and leave  
Their post. We follow them with speed but then  
We stop. The cold Yuan says not to chase.  
'Our goal is village Pon, not far.' We wait."

And here Ktang stands up and jabs his pipe  
Into the blackened sky to make his point  
That now the courage of his men will be  
Revealed. With faces flush from cloudy wine,  
His listeners lean to hear the rolling words.

"My loyal men now turn their feet around  
And leave the heavy growth behind them to  
Enter the yellow grass beyond the stream.  
The grass so tall my troops must close the file  
Or lose their guide, away from all their friends.  
Unseen on left or right, the other files  
In slow advance move through the sun-dried waste.  
They know the Viet Minh, unheard, are close.  
We stop to test the air, to check the ground.  
All switch their rifles' safeties off. We poise,  
Prepared to disgorge death by fire and din  
Against a foe that still evades the fight.  
Unknown the man who fires first amid  
The sere-edged grass and stunted trees in brush  
That hides the shapes of black-clad Viet Minh.

"So now the duel begins. Ksor Myong,  
Renowned by all for skill to track along  
The forest cliffs. The barking deer goes down  
When quick Myong shoots true his crossbow shafts.  
But now his metal slugs, unseen, smash through  
The wooden screens. Along the line his friends  
Unloose their rapid fire. Rmah Pyep,  
Rahlan Kahan, wild yells from both young men  
Who see the foe dart through the shaded glen  
And send forth bursts of shot to bring him down.  
Just like a grove of dry bamboo, when caught  
By piercing tongues of wind-pushed fire, begins  
To pop and split each stalk, to splinter and  
Explode amid the heat, our rifle shots  
Crack through this shattered land. Uncounted rounds

Rip past the gray-barked trees, clip twisted vines,  
And slice through fetid air for morbid chores.  
Ejected shells from every weapon's port  
Throw back at once the sun's impartial glare.  
The rifles' roar now drowns the My's commands.  
And then - last shots. Our fury spent, we must  
Reload. We cannot wait, the Viet Minh  
Might flee the field. I raise the cry, 'Who comes  
With me?' The brave T'Buan, the strong H'drung,  
Two clans within the tribe Jarai, rise up  
To charge the hated foes who now fall back  
Before our troops. We sweep the land to search  
For guns or booty dropped by wounded men.  
One Viet Minh is dead. Already black,  
His blood soaks in the sun-parched ground. Brief time  
Ago he was a mother's joy, but now  
He's food just fit for insects' eggs and dogs.  
We leave him there. The rest are gone, afraid  
To fight our mighty host. We reach Plei Pon  
And near that place we find the guns and gear  
The Viet Minh had stored for future use.  
With these they planned to sack our homes and camp,  
To drive us from these lands our fathers knew.  
But now their stuff is gone, destroyed in smoke  
And fire. We won the fight. We keep our homes."

His listeners shout, "Ktang, we want to hear  
Again this tale of war and heroes true,  
Where silent stalks found hidden foes in dark  
redoubts. We'll pour more water in the jar  
To mix with moldy rice and herbs uncooked  
To brace ourselves against the evening's chill."  
Ktang rejects this call to speak anew.  
"The stars have turned so now the night is late.  
My brothers must be ready for the dawn  
When all the camp will rise to start the day."  
With that Rmah Ktang has told his tale.  
He heads for home to bed his waiting wife.

The End ❖



At far left, Montagnards in field. Photo by Icemanwcs is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

At right, A102 combat op team, three Montagnard Strikers at the front of the group, with, left to right, a Montagnard radio operator, Cpt John Cleckner, SSG Cashion, and an unidentified LT. Photo courtesy John E. Cleckner Sr.

# Special Forces and the Vietnam Fund Help the Montagnards in Vietnam

By Jane Coyle  
Founder of the Vietnam Fund

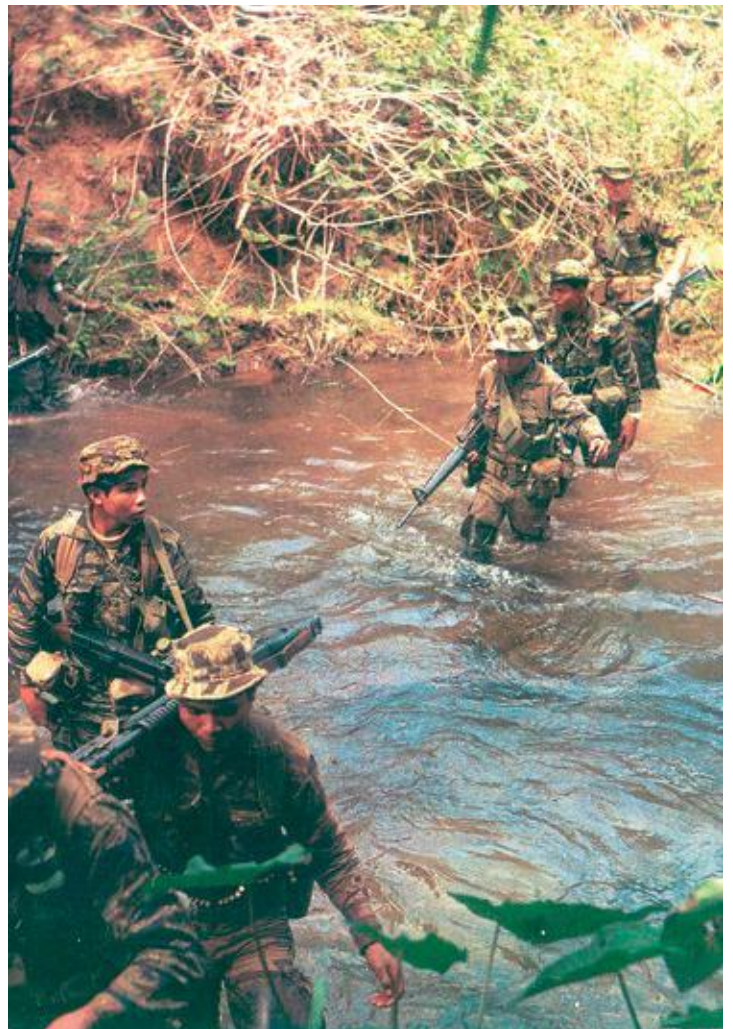
The Vietnam Fund for Education, Music & Infrastructure, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) humanitarian organization dedicated to improving the lives of poor children in Vietnam (particularly Montagnard Children) through the support of education, school water filtration systems and libraries, food programs, school infrastructure and traditional music and musicians.

In 2016, I was contacted by a former Special Forces soldier who had recently returned from a trip to Vietnam. He had not been back to Vietnam since the war and was deeply moved by the poverty and brutal conditions of the Montagnards he witnessed and wanted to help them. I collaborated with this soldier, Tom Turney, and he enlisted the help of some of his friends from II Corp Mike Force, Dave Moley and Sam Wheeler, and together, they began an effort to raise money for The Vietnam Fund by contacting other former Special Forces soldiers.

Because US Army Special Forces worked very closely with the Montagnards for a decade of war beginning in the early 1960's, many wished to express their gratitude and appreciation for the support and friendship shown by their former comrades in arms. Because of the generosity of many Special Forces soldiers, the Vietnam Fund has been able to support those with whom they served as well as their families, their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren by helping to improve their lives.

I'm deeply grateful to be able to report that as a result of the contributions from these Special Forces veterans and their friends, accomplishments completed by the Vietnam Fund have included:

- Adding ten new water filtration systems to some of the poorest schools in the Highlands bringing the total number of systems we have installed to 26, reaching more than 10,000 primarily Montagnard children with clean water each day.
- Increasing the number of school libraries (first ever in the area) from seven to ten reaching approximately 5,000 children with hundreds of books, computers, printers, projectors/screens, school supplies and furniture.



Captain David Moley commanding a II Corps Company of Mike Force Montagnards crossing a stream in the 1960s. Photo courtesy Tom Turney.

- Building an outdoor reading garden with landscaping and benches centered on a large, colorful mosaic map of Vietnam.
- Installing privacy fencing around a bathhouse also built by us, complete with sinks and flush toilets.
- Purchasing and installing two extra-large, colorful outdoor awnings for school courtyards.
- Installing two new school wells and repairing two older wells.
- Installing a large electronic safety gate ensuring the safety of children from the busy traffic directly outside their school.
- Supporting three Montagnard families with funds to start tree farms with several thousand young trees each.
- Purchasing two healthy cows for another Montagnard family.
- Helping support the building of three new homes for Montagnard families.
- Recently, we began our "Hand-Washing with Soap" project in collaboration with a clinic in a remote area of the Highlands. Together, we are working to reach all 5,000 people in our targeted Montagnard community with soap and both verbal





A member of Plei Djereng CIDG recon platoon with his baby daughter.  
Photo courtesy Bob Shaffer

and written education, on the importance of hand-washing for children. We are supplying 1,000 bars of anti-bacterial soap per month to the clinic and will continue to do so for a period of at least 12 months. It's been proven that the simple act of washing hands with soap diminishes disease in children around the world up to 60%!

Having worked in the Central Highlands doing humanitarian work for more than 20 years, I am thankful for the heartfelt offer of assistance from former Special Forces soldiers. Together we have positively and profoundly impacted the lives of thousands of the families of our Montagnard allies through the generations. ❖



Montagnard village 1969 Photo courtesy Bob Shaffer.



Montagnard girls doing a ceremonial dance at Plei Djereng. Photo courtesy Bob Shaffer.

Anyone wishing to support the Vietnam Fund can make tax-deductible donations by sending a check payable to The Vietnam Fund to PO Box 1351, Woodland, CA 95776



# An Evolution: The Making of the *Sentinel*

By Debra Holm

*Sentinel* Graphic Designer and Associate Editor

When I first met with Lonny Holmes and Richard Simonian to discuss working with them to produce the *Sentinel* it was a basic eight page newsletter covering the activities of Chapter 78. I could not have guessed at the direction this project would take in the years to come.

In 2012 the first article covering historical subject matter appeared in the [September issue](#) — Lonny's article "The Last Days of Special Forces in Vietnam."

In 2013 the [May issue](#) contained Chris Martin's story "Lebanon 1983: A Special Forces Mission" and [September's issue](#) featured the photo essay "Nha Trang Mike Force."

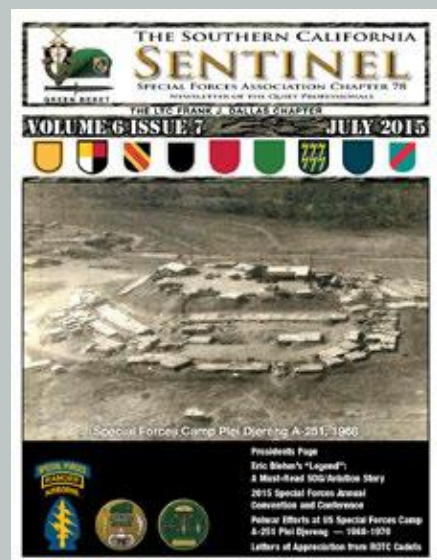
Historical content in 2014: the [July issue](#) included Jack Williams' first of many articles for the *Sentinel* "The Vietnam Randall" and, reprinted with permission from the Orange County Register, "A Christmas Bond Formed on a Fiery Overseas Hill." The [September issue](#) contained SGM John Martin's "The 46th Special Forces Company" (the first in a two part series). The [October issue's](#) cover story was Chris Martin's "Meeting POTUS."

Beginning in 2015 every issue of the *Sentinel* has included historical content. I can not imagine the amount of time and effort it took to gather all of the articles and associated photos the issues have contained over the years.

In addition, the *Sentinel* also has contained reporting about the Chapter's activities related to their relationships with active duty members (A Co., 5th Bn. of the 19th Special Forces Group) and their support of military education in local ROTC programs.

Prior to working on the *Sentinel*, my exposure to the military was minimal and my knowledge of the history of U.S. involvement in past wars and conflicts was very basic. My time working on the *Sentinel* has been educational to say the least. The articles and especially the book reviews have inspired me to read and learn more. I have a new appreciation of the sacrifices made by the men and women of our military and renewed recognition of the freedoms we enjoy in this country.

On this page and the next are just some of the stories presented in the pages of the *Sentinel*. There have been many more excellent articles. To read more be sure to visit the archive at [specialforces78.com](http://specialforces78.com). ❖



## JULY 2015

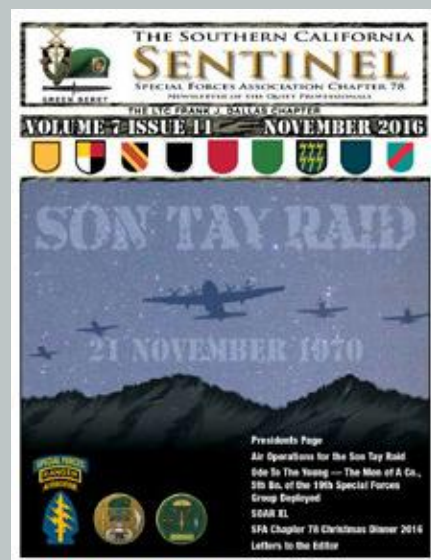
John Meyer's review of Eric Blehm's *Legend*, about Medal of Honor recipient Green Beret Roy Benavidez, inspired me to read this book. Roy's daughter Yvette Benavidez Garcia and Eric Blehm later appeared together as guest speakers at the February 2019 Chapter meeting.

Bob Shaffer wrote "Polwar Efforts at US Special Forces Camp A-251 Plei Djereng — 1968-70" The was the first of many contributions to the *Sentinel*, including this current edition.



## DECEMBER 2015

Gene Williams' chance encounter with a man, SGM James O. Schmidt, a holder of a 3 CIB, on an airliner led to a search and the story that appeared in this issue. This story recounts how a young Schmidt was inspired by a movie to join the army and enlist to become a paratrooper at the age of 14 during WWII and the career that followed. It is accompanied by many photos and pictures of artifacts that relate to the SGM Schmidt's story.



## NOVEMBER 2016

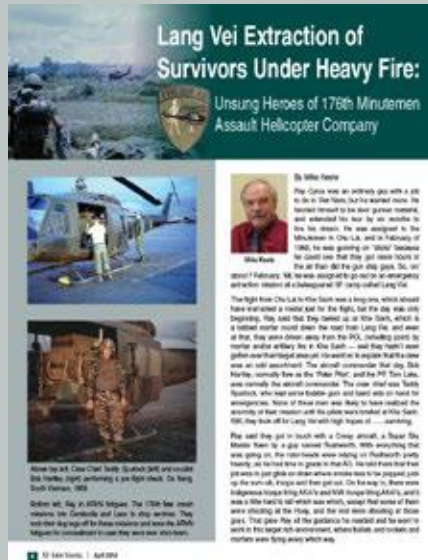
"Air Operations for the Son Tay Raid" by Col. John Gargus, was the first article the *Sentinel* printed about the attempt to rescue American prisoners of war. There have been several others from different points of view printed over the years — this issue contains Terry Buckler's account of his participation in the mission.





## NOVEMBER 2017

Chapter member Tom Turney wrote the first article for the "The Forgotten Warriors: Updates on the Montagnards." I had learned how the Montagnards fought alongside the Green Beret's during the war in Vietnam. This regular column would fill in many of the blanks in my knowledge and inform me of their plight after the war.



## APRIL 2018

Before working on this issue I had attended the Chapter meeting where Battle of Lang Vei survivor SF Col. Paul Longgrear gave a gut wrenching account of his experience. In this issue Mike Keele interviews one of the men of the 176th Minutemen Assault Helicopter Company who risked their lives for them to pick up survivors of the battle.



## APRIL 2018

Travis Mills wrote a series of three stories for the *Sentinel*. Part 1 ([March 2018](#)) was his account of the assault on FOB 4 where he was wounded. Part 2 describes the development of the MACV-SOG One-Zero School and Part 3 ([May 2018](#)) tell the story of its implementation.



## JULY 2018

Cliff Newman, SFA Executive Director, returned to Laos for the fourth time to locate the remains of four aviators and two CCN recon men from RT Intruder who died in helicopter crash during and extraction in 1971. I have learned that there are 1,588 Southeast Asia MIA and that due to the conditions of the soil it is a race against time to recover remains and provide families closure.



## AUGUST 2018

To mark the 50th anniversary of the attack on FOB 4, I Corps, this issue was dedicated in honor of the 17 Green Beret's killed in action that day. John Meyer recounts the horror and heroism that unfolded the morning of August 23, 1968 with excerpts from his book *On The Ground – The Secret War in Vietnam*, co-authored with John E. Peters – a survivor of that attack.



## JANUARY 2019

Two stories in this issue were favorites — first, in "Coming to America" Col. John Gargus tells the story of how at the age of 15 he escaped from Czechoslovakia after it had been seized by the Communists. The second story is Fred Horne's "Part One: In-Country Cherry before SF" which recounts his arrival in Vietnam on his 18th birthday just out of 82nd Airborne and bound or the 101st.

# Frank Snepp, Former CIA Strategy Analyst and Author



Kenn Miller

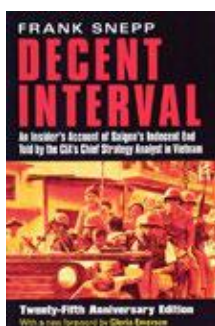
By Kenn Miller

At our recent monthly meetings Chapter 78 has played host to a rather amazingly interesting series of guest speakers. On Saturday, November 8, the guest speaker was Frank Snepp, former CIA strategy analyst in Saigon, and author of *Decent Interval*, probably the most authoritative book about American intelligence in the Vietnam War, and about the last days of the RVN government and the fall of Saigon.

Mr. Snepp is an excellent speaker and he seemed very much at home in a room full of aging Special Forces veterans with whom he had a lot in common. I think all of us learned a lot from his talk. Perhaps the most important conclusion lesson to be learned by Mr. Snepp's talk — and by America's experience in the Vietnam War — is that the enemy did not win victory by outfighting the Republic of Vietnam and America and the other allies on the battlefield, but by out-infiltrating and out-spying them. I don't think there was a Vietnam veteran in the room who found that surprising. We knew it was bad, but Frank Snepp told us how much worse it was than we knew. ❖



Frank Snepp, the "High Priest" of the CIA.



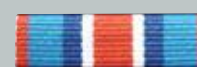
Frank Snepp is the author of *Decent Interval*, which led to a landmark First Amendment national security Supreme Court decision and *Irreparable Harm*, which recounts his battle with the CIA during that case for free speech.

## About Frank Snepp

Frank Snepp graduated from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and was recruited into the CIA in 1968. He was assigned to Vietnam where we spent the six years as a senior interrogator, a counter intelligence operative and chief strategy analyst for VC/NVA activities in South Vietnam. He worked closely with embassy officials, including two ambassadors, and received the Intelligence Medal of Merit for his work. He was one of the last Americans to leave Vietnam in 1975 and witnessed first-hand how poorly the exfiltration of the Americans and their allies was handled.

He later wrote *Decent Interval* describing this disastrous exfiltration which led to a landmark First Amendment national security decision by the Supreme Court, an experience he describes in his second book, *Irreparable Harm*. He has worked as an investigative journalist and been on the leading edge of reporting on many stories including the Iran Contra Affair, Seal Team 6, environmental issues, and elder abuse.

He has won every major broadcast award for his work including the Peabody (the highest award for broadcast journalism) and an Emmy. He has worked for a variety of broadcast networks and publications and has provided content and commentary for hundreds of documentaries on national security and the Vietnam War. He has not slowed down at all and is currently working on two books: one about lessons learned from Vietnam which he is co-authoring with Ret. Colonel Henry Shockley, an Army Intelligence Officer he worked with in Vietnam, and another about the highest ranking NVA officer captured during the war — a prisoner he successfully interrogated.



### Intelligence Medal of Merit

For the performance of especially meritorious service or for an act or achievement conspicuously above normal duties.





❶ Chapter President John Meyer presenting a Chapter coin to guest speaker Frank Snapp.

❷ Frank Snapp and Chapter member Tom Turney

❸ Chapter member John Joyce making his presentation about plans for SFACON 2021.

❹ In the foreground, Chapter member Jim Duffy and Chapter Treasurer/Chaplain Richard Simonian.

❺ Chapter member James Carter

❻ Chapter members Brad Welker and John Joyce

❼ Enjoying breakfast before the meeting, Chapter members Kenn Miller, Mark Miller and James Light.

❽ *Sentinel* Graphic Designer and Associate Editor Debra Holm was presented with an award of recognition for eight years of service by Editor Lonny Holmes and Publisher Richard Simonian.

❾ Frank Snapp answering questions after the meeting.

❿ Tom Turney introducing the guest speaker.

⓫ Chapter members Mark Miller, Kenn Miller and Ed Barrett

# The Son Tay Raid: A Raider Remembers



By Terry Buckler

The Son Tay Raid on a prison camp in North Vietnam ranks as one of the riskiest missions in Spec Ops history. I was one of the fifty-six Green Berets that participated in the ground assault of the Son Tay POW camp located twenty-three miles west of Hanoi the capital of North Vietnam. Since the birth of this great nation men have given their all for the freedom of others. The American military has and will always lead the call knowing the risk to free our POWs and other nations. The men on this mission freely volunteered to lay down their lives to free fellow warriors being held as POWs.

The Son Tay Raid became the first joint military operation in American history under the direct control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Son Tay Raid had several first and has been ranked as one of the top seven most daring raids in military history.

The reason for the raid was to rescue between 60 or 70 POWs many had been held from three to six years. The DOD knew there were over 300 plus POWs being held in terrible conditions, tortured and deprived of medical care and food. These men were living in hell and the families of the POWs needed to know that their country cared. The POWs deserved to be rescued for the sacrifice they had made for this country. The decision to try was worth the risk. Everyone involved in this mission felt it was our duty to try.

## Redwine Landing at Son Tay

It was the night of November 20-21, 1970, at Udorn Royal Thailand Air Base in Northern Thailand. It was a night that 56 US Army Special Forces warriors (Green Berets) would never forget as they boarded two USAF HH-53s and one HH-3 for a mission deep into enemy territory to rescue Americans held by the North Vietnamese. For the next three hours I had the opportunity to review the past twenty years of my life. One of my childhood buddies was getting married tonight back in Clark, Missouri. But here I was halfway around the world with fifty-five other Green Berets doing what we are trained to do.

We had been flying in the draft of Cherry One a C-130E(I). Never before had such a flight formation of a C130 and helicopters ever flown like this. The C130 was flying five knots above her stall speed. From the ground we looked like geese flying in formation. The men flying Cherry One were doing an unbelievable job of getting us to our destination. We had flown for the last three hours with no radio contact and with no lights. We had the best Air Force

pilots possible! As we snaked along the hills and valleys just above the treetops of the most highly defended air space of North Viet Nam, it was as if Cherry One was leading us through the Valley of Death. Bull Simons told us that if there was a security breach there was no E&E plan other than backup to the bend in the river. Son Tay was located in the bend of the Song Con River. Our E&E plan was to make them pay for every inch of land to get to us. As I looked out the window of our chopper it looked as if you could reach out touch the trees. The quarter moon was just what the doctor ordered. There wasn't a cloud in the sky and the moon was bright enough for our pilots to see the terrain of the land, but not bright enough to give us away as we glided along.

All the men in the Redwine element except for myself had experienced combat multiple times. Of the fifty-six raiders three others were also cherries that had no combat experience. They were Keith Medenski, Marshall Thomas and Patrick St. Clair. As I looked around the inside of our chopper the other Redwine raiders all looked relaxed. Several of them had their eyes closed they were either sleeping or praying. Others were talking with one another and laughing. We had rehearsed our mission over a one hundred and seventy times each of us knew our job and what we had to do. Before we left the Bull told us we had a fifty-fifty chance of not making it back. It's hard to get those words out of your mind when your twenty years old, but each one of us knew the risk and could have backed out. As far as backing out was concerned it was too late for that now as we approached Son Tay.

Cherry One started her climb over the compound. As she gained altitude the men onboard our mother ship's next job was to drop four MK-6 parachute flares over the camp. These flares turn the black of night into light of day for the raiders. Dan Turner turned to me and gave me a wink and said "Kid are you ready for this? It's the real thing." I believe he saw the fear in my face and was trying to keep me calm. My heart was pounding like it was going to come out of my chest — this is what we had trained for the past three months. The one hundred plus rehearsals were about to be tested as our chopper was starting our landing on North Vietnamese ground. I stood up and did a couple squats to get the blood flowing





in my legs after sitting most of the three hours. I adjusted my head set so I only had one ear covered and the other ear uncovered so I could hear Dan. I checked my CAR 15 to make sure it was set for rock and roll, slapped one of my 30 rounds clips in and loaded a shell in the barrel. Just to make sure it was seated I pulled eject to confirm I had a round in the barrel. The last thing I wanted was to have my weapon go click with my first shot when I stepped on the enemy's territory. I felt my web gear to confirm I had my grenades and all my ammo was secured in my ammo pouches. My PRC25 radio was squared away on my back. I had over seventy pounds of weight, but with the adrenaline pumping through my body I moved as if I didn't have any extra weight. As we had rehearsed each raider was making the same checks to their equipment and each warrior was preparing to do what we had come here for and that was bring our POWs home. We all did our mental checks and said our prayers now it is time to do our job!

That's when I hear chatter in my headset. Col Sydnor, the ground force commander for the raid is speaking and then RTO SFC Howell's voice came through my headset, "Alternate Plan Greenleaf — I repeat Alternate Plan Greenleaf. Do you copy?" This was the first of the bad news I would hear that night, but I did not expect to hear what came through my headset. I had heard it before, but it was during training. I could not believe what I heard, I spoke into my radio mike "SAY AGAIN" As an RTO man if you aren't sure what you've heard you come back with "Say Again." It was stated again from SFC Howell "Alternate Plan Greenleaf over Alternate Plan Greenleaf over." I said back in my hand mike "Copy Alternate Plan Greenleaf. Roger." I thought to myself "Holy crap this can't be real." I turned to Captain Dan Turner Commander of the Redwine Security element and told him we are going to Alternate Plan Greenleaf. Dan gave me that "oh shit" look and calmly said pass it on to the others in the Redwine element.

"Alternate plan Greenleaf" meant one thing to all of us on the Redwine chopper. We knew we had twenty-two men less and they had more fire power. Greenleaf either had mechanical problems or it had been shot down. Either way we all knew what the mission was and with or without Greenleaf we stuck to the mission.



A U.S. Air Force Sikorsky HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter similar to the ones used on the evening of November 20-21, 1970. Ken Hackman, USAF - USAF photo 020926-O-9999G-010 [1]



HH-3E "Jolly Green" identical to the helicopter carrying the Blueboy assault group during the raid.





Redwine Security Group prior to leaving for Vietnam — Terry Buckler is in the top row, third from the right.



The Redwine Command Element. Standing, left to right: Capt. Daniel D. Turner, Sgt. 1C Charles A. Masten, Sgt. 1C Ronnie Strahan, Sgt. Terry L. Buckler, Lt. Col. Joseph R Cataldo. Capt. James W. McClam is front of the group. Note the chain saw and the axe in Cataldo's hand. According to John Gargus' book *The Son Tay Raid: American POW's in Vietnam Were Not Forgotten*, they were to be used to cut down telephone poles.

So how did a farm boy from central Missouri, the youngest of the raiders with no combat experience, end up on one of the most daring raids in special ops history?

### Why Selected

It wasn't until after I left the Army that I asked Dan Turner a Captain at the time of the Raid, why he selected me. The following is his response:

"During training I had noticed you and your gung ho attitude. You responded positively to any and all tasking, didn't give any bullshit excuses and got things done without a lot of supervision. You were in great physical shape if I needed you to carry my butt out. Plus, there was that intangible thing, the stuff that you can't really define. When I looked in your eyes I knew I wanted you as my RTO. There was just something about the way you carried yourself that told me you were way beyond the experience level of an average 20-year-old. The only approval I needed was Col. Bud Sydnor and he approved without any questions."

Dan was a mustanger and I had a lot of respect for him and I learned a lot from him. I was his RTO and one day he motioned for me to come to his location which was about six feet from where I was. He extended his arm and said to me, "you see where my hand is?" I said "yes sir." He then told me "I want you that close to me or I am going to shoot you." I believed Dan would have shot me, so I was right on his butt after that conversation.

### Most Memorable Moment

Landing at Pope AFB back at Fayetteville, NC was very happy time for not only the Raiders, but for all the people there to meet their love ones and friends. The most memorable moment for me was not landing at Son Tay or landing back at Udorn. The landing at Pope was it for me. I will never forget what I witnessed that day. I was single and a couple of my buddies came to pick me up. But when I saw the men unloading from the airplane and I saw their wives and children running out to meet their husbands and dads it hit me. These warriors had sacrificed their lives to rescue fellow warriors. The Bull told us we



had a fifty-fifty chance of not coming home and if there was a security breach there was no way we could be rescued.

There is a verse in the bible that says “No greater love does one man have than to lay down his life for another.” The men on the Son Tay Raid had done that. They didn’t do it for money, for medals or for fame. They did it for the same reason every warrior before and after Son Tay has done it. They did it for Honor, Country, God and because our POWs deserved to know that they were not forgotten! As a nation we are blessed to have the same caliber of men and women serving today. Our military has people willing to lay down their lives every day so we can live in a free country. It was my honor to serve with some of the best warriors our country has.

### After the Army

After my ETS in the Army I went to college and upon graduation I went to work for Ross Perot’s company EDS. In 1989 I started my own software business. I married a very sweet lady and we have two wonderful children. Our son is Director of Parks in Texas he married a very wonderful lady and they had our first granddaughter. Our daughter followed my steps but better. She is a graduate of ROTC and was in Chemical and did a tour in Afghanistan and is now Deputy Sheriff in the Kansas City area. Her husband commissioned after ROTC and did his tour of Afghanistan. He is a fireman in the Kansas City area, and they had our second granddaughter. ❖



Raiders at the Son Tay 44th Reunion which was held in Kansas City, MO in October 2014.



Terry Buckler's personalized license plate.

# Remembering Sully Hubert de Fontaine

(27 February 1927 – 22 April 2019)



Maj. (R) Clyde Sincere

By Major (R) Clyde Sincere  
President Emeritus of the Special  
Operations Association

Delivered on October 24, 2019 at the  
XLIII SOAR Banquet in Las Vegas, NV.

## Prologue:

Mrs. Angelique de Fontaine, Mrs. Marian Bargewell,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Comrades-in-Arms.

I am honored that the SOA Board saw fit to ask that I provide a Eulogy on a quiet, humble, but extremely competent Special Forces soldier – Sully H. de Fontaine. I thought I knew Sully, but when I commenced my research of his life, I was totally amazed at what this man had accomplished in his 92 years. His story is rather unbelievable. As many of you may remember, Germany occupied Belgium, and France early in WWII. Sully, born in Brussels, Belgium to French parents was but 16 years of age in 1943 when he decided to evade and escape to England, where he proceeded to join the British SOE (Special Operations Executive), and worked in concert with our own OSS, (Office of Strategic Services). By the age of 17, as a young Corporal, Sully jumped into occupied France with the specific mission of aiding in the recovery of downed airmen.

Before I dwell on perhaps his greatest accomplishment to humanity, but at the same time, not wishing to diminish any of his accomplishments, there were so many, let me enumerate for you a few of his successes/assignments, for a better choice of words:

1. 1943 May '45: Parachute and Commando training, two combat jumps, multiple missions – France, Holland, Belgium, and Spain.
2. Following WWII, Sully attended French, Belgium, and British Military Schools, as well as earning a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Philosophy.
3. In October '52 Sully emigrated to the United States, and, in March '54 he enlisted in the U.S. Army.
4. In May '55: following attendance at OCS Fort Benning, Georgia, Sully is commissioned – Second Lieutenant, Infantry.
5. Sully applies for Special Forces, and following the SF Officers Course, was assigned to the 77th SFGp. at Fort Bragg.
6. In January '58 Sully was assigned to the 10th SFGp. Bad Tolz, Germany. During this tour of duty Sully is promoted to Captain, and receives a RA Commission in the Military Police Corps.

Above left, Sully H. de Fontaine; center, Sully's personal Challenge Coin which includes references to his many roles and accomplishments during his military career; below, Sully de Fontaine with 10th SFG(A) A-Team 0215 Commander Captain Evan McGhee at Ft. Carson, CO in June, 2017.





Sully H. de Fontaine, center in black vest accompanied by his wife Angelique and his faithful canine companion Sidney, with members of SFA Chapter 51 in Las Vegas in August, 2018.



Richard Simonian and Clyde Sincere, both original Green Beret's, with Sully de Fontaine, at an event in June, 2017 celebrating the formation of the 10th Special Forces Group in 1952.

7. In early 1962 Sully was deployed to Algeria, serving as an Observer with French Paratroopers.
8. In August '62 through February '63: Following his attendance at the MP Officer Advanced Course, Fort Gordon, Georgia, Sully is assigned to HQ DA – Duty: Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA) – Vietnam.
9. In May '64, Sully in concert with a group of 68 Active Duty Officers and NCO's, many who recently returned from Vietnam met at Fort Bragg, N.C., and formed the Special Forces Decade Club. The original idea was presented to the then 5th SFGp. Commander, Colonel Roye, by the then Captain Sully de Fontaine. Ironically, both had served together in the OSS. Colonel Roye approved of the plan, and forwarded it to XVIII Airborne Corps, who approved. As the mission, and legend of SF grew, so did the Association. In 1971, incorporated as a 501(c)(19) Veteran's Fraternal Organization. The Decade Club became the Decade Association, and in 1976, the SFA. Sully's SFA # was a high "7". Not too shabby, right?
10. Between February '63 – December '65: Sully is assigned to the 5th SFGp., Vietnam — initially as an ODA Commander, and subsequently as a Major with HQ MACVSOG.
11. February '66 – June '73: Sully served in various assignments within his Military Police commission.
12. In June '73 Sully was assigned to JCRC Thailand, Control Team "B" until his Retirement on 30 June 1975.
13. '86-'87: Recalled Active Duty by Assistant Secretary of Defense for Duty w/CIA. Retired – Colonel.
14. 20 August 2009 – Inducted as a Distinguished Member of the Special Forces Regiment.
15. 21 March 2018: Sully was in attendance at the US Capitol, and recognized as a survivor of the OSS/SOE during the ceremony awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the OSS. All OSS attendees received a "replica" of the Congressional Gold Medal, and as was Sully's nature, he donated his to the SOA.

I believe everyone would agree with me that Sully in all of his assignments exemplified the Special Forces Credo, and truly reflected the fact that he was a "Quiet Professional".

#### **Sully at his best:**

I will now relate the one specific rescue mission, CODE NAME: ROBERT SEVEN, that culminated in the rescue of 239 American and foreign missionaries, doctors, and nurses from rural areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo which was experiencing rampant lawlessness. Sully, accompanied by two fellow SF soldiers, Capt. Albert "Jake" Clement, and Sp5 Stefan Mazak, and supported by one French-speaking USAF Radioman performed under heroic conditions, commencing on 12 July 1960 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a highly classified sensitive task assigned to the 10th SFGp. by HQ USAREUR. The four wearing civilian clothing, carrying suitcases to "fit" their French-Canadian medical cover arrived at the Belgium-guarded Ndjili Airport just outside of Leopoldville. Despite the country-wide chaos, the Congolese International airport was still relatively calm, much like the "eye of a hurricane" recalled retired Colonel Sully de Fontaine.

To avoid newspaper correspondents anticipating US support, the Belgium military had the American aircraft park on the far side of the airport. Sully, explained to the Belgium Commando Major OIC that his mission was to coordinate light aircraft, and helicopter rescues of American and Foreign Missionaries, Doctors, and Nurses stranded in remote rural villages. Ironically, the OIC had been a fellow Military Academy Cadet, and recognized Sully. He assured Sully that their medical cover story would be respected.

The four Americans Code Names were ROBERT ONE through FOUR respectively. 1st Lt. de Fontaine, ROBERT ONE, was carried on the Embassy books as an USAF 1ST Lt. in the Air Attache's Office, and would liaison with the Ambassador on a daily basis. SSGT Cournoyer, ROBERT FOUR, the USAF Radioman established his Radio Base Station in a spare room at the US Embassy, and would be connected to Heidelberg, Bad Tolz, and the Brazzaville Airport in French Equatorial Africa, in view of the fact

that the military helicopters, and light aircraft supporting the mission would be diverted to due to the uncertain conditions obtaining in, and around Ndjili Airport. Ambassador Timberlake agreed to all of 1st Lt. de Fontaine's recommendation, and stationed a US Consul at Brazzaville airport to assist with the refugees that ROBERT would rescue. A French Canadian "medical cover" was acceptable to the U.S. Emissary. Air support consisted of two (2) H-19 Choctaw Helicopters, one H-21B "Flying Banana Helicopter, and six light fixed-wing aircraft, (two DeHaviland U1-A Otter's, and four L-20 Beaver's. Once all assets were assembled at Brazzaville, ROBERT ONE briefed everyone that the rescue mission would commence on 14 July. Between 14 and 26 July, utilizing eight Army aircraft, and one USAF helicopter, 239 personnel were rescued, and evacuated with another 51 personnel airlifted on larger US and Belgium aircraft. The 10th SFGp's role ended officially on 26 July, although Ambassador Timberlake requested Colonel Paulick to allow 1st Lt. de Fontaine to remain for 30 more days to capitalize on his government contacts. For his role in this mission 1st Lt. de Fontaine was awarded the Legion of Merit (LOM) by HQ DA, and Capt. Clement and Sp5 Mazak each received the Army Commendation Medal by Seventh US Army, USAREUR.

#### Postscript:

These accomplishments by these truly "quiet professionals" went unheralded for almost sixty years.

Sub-quoting from an article in Veritas by Charles H. Briscoe, Command Historian and Editor of the USASOC History Office, that due to the rapid deterioration occurring in the DRC, U.S. Ambassador, Clare H. "Tim" Timberlake requested assistance from the US European Command in France, and USAREUR, the Army service component of USEUCOM sent a classified teletypewriter exchange to the 10th SFGp Colonel Michael "Iron Mike" Paulick alerting him to expect a CONFIDENTIAL "eyes only" concerning the Congo Crisis.

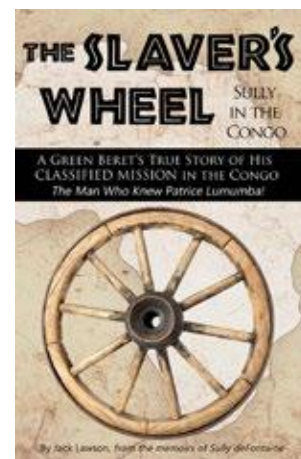
It was serendipitous that a Frenchman born in Belgium was assigned to the 10th SFGp. 1st Lt. Sully H. de Fontaine had just presented a Congo presentation to a class of University of Maryland students taught by Major Charles M. Simpson III, the "C" Company Commander. As a newly promoted, seventeen-year old British Corporal, Fontaine had parachuted twice behind enemy lines in France for the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Using a French Resistance escape "rat line" he led a downed Allied aircrew to safety in Spain, and an American aircrew to U.S. Forces in France. The older dual-citizen American SF Lieutenant who spoke Flemish and French better than English was the obvious choice to lead a clandestine rescue mission. Fontaine chose Sp5 Stefan Mazak, a WWII French Underground veteran, and Lodge Act soldier from Czechoslovakia, and Captain Albert Valentine "Jake"

Clement, a WWII (Pacific), and Korean War veteran, to join him on this highly sensitive mission because they were the most fluent French speakers. (Here is an example/ ironic twist/similarity that many here this evening will recognize). In early SF, it was not uncommon to place the most experienced soldier in charge, regardless of rank. If someone could not work under that arrangement, the Commander, in this instance, Colonel Paulick simply



Clyde Sincere displays a copy of *The Slaver's Wheel: Sully in the Congo* during his speech in honor of Sully de Fontaine at the XLII Soar banquet in Las Vegas, NV on October 24, 2019.

*The Slaver's Wheel: Sully in the Congo* (cover shown at right) is available for purchase at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



removed them from the mission. Clement had no problem working for Fontaine. Firmly in charge of the mission, 1st Lt. Fontaine would report only to Ambassador Timberlake. (Where else, but SF would a 1st Lt. report only to an Ambassador – unreal). He was given "full license to make it happen".

I would urge everyone to secure a copy of *The Slaver's Wheel* by Jack Lawson via AMAZON. The author, in concert with Sully, places you in Sully's role as you read page by page until the mission is over.

Additionally, a very close friend, and fellow Military Police Officer confidant for over fifty six plus years, LTC (Ret) Vito W. Paladino, Sr. was so convinced that Sully had to be remembered long after he departed this side of the grass, that commencing in 2010, almost ten years before Sully actually passed away, he established "The Colonel Sully H. de Fontaine Award", (SOE, OSS, SAS and SOG). This annual \$1,500 scholarship was established in honor of Colonel Sully H. de Fontaine's lifetime of service to the country. Eligibility — Students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree with the intent of becoming employed within the U.S. Intelligence Community. Not too shabby.

Sully was interred at Arlington National Cemetery last week, on Tuesday, 15 October. Attending the interment, in addition to the de Fontaine family and close friends, were members of Chapter XI, SFA, SOA members, and members of the OSS Society, all of which Sully was an integral entity. ♦



## About the Clyde J. Sincere, Jr.

Clyde J. Sincere, Jr. enlisted U.S. Army in August 1950 from Wisconsin. He received a Direct Commission, Infantry Branch, USAR, 28 September 1958. He retired from Active Duty as a U.S. Army Field Grade Officer on 1 October 1971 having served 21 plus years of continuous active service.

A majority of his military service assignments were U.S. Army Airborne.

### INFANTRY AND SPECIAL FORCES UNITS:

"M" Company, 511th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 11th Abn. Div.; Service Company, 508th Airborne Regimental Combat Team; "C" Company, 2d Airborne Battle Group, 503d Airborne Infantry; Multiple Tours, 10th SFGp.(Abn), Fort Bragg and Badtolz, Germany; 77th SFGp (Abn), Fort Bragg; 1st SFGp (Abn), Okinawa; Multiple Tours, 5th SFGp (Abn), Vietnam; Special Forces Detachment (Abn), Europe, Badtolz, Germany U.S. Army Infantry School: (1951 & 1962–1964); Airborne Department: Instructor and XO, Pathfinder Committee; ROTC Instructor Assignment: Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey (1957–1959).

### VIETNAM ASSIGNMENTS:

Commanding Officer, U.S. Army Special Forces Detachment A-234, An Lac, II Corps Tactical Zone, 1966.

Commanding Officer, U.S. Army Special Forces Detachment B-20, Pleiku, (II Corps MIKE FORCE), 1966–1967.

U.S. Army Special Forces, Special Operations Augmentation, C&C, MACVSOG/OP35. 1968–1969.

1. XO, FOB-1, Phu-Bai, I Corps Tactical Zone.
2. CO, FOB-3, Mai-Loc, I Corps Tactical Zone.
3. Operations Officer and subsequently XO:  
Command and Control Central, (CCC) Kontum, II CTZ.

### MAJOR/SIGNIFICANT AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

Distinguished Service Cross; Bronze Star Medal w/Oak Leaf Cluster; Meritorious Service Medal; Air Medal w/Oak Leaf Cluster; Purple Heart w/Oak Leaf Cluster; Combat Infantryman's Badge; Master Parachutist Badge; Pathfinder Badge; Chinese Parachutist Badge; Vietnamese Parachutist Badge; Thai Army Special Forces Parachutist Badge; Special Forces Tab

### CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT:

Clyde Sincere worked with the Vinnell Corporation from 1975–1996. He worked on the Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program, in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 1975–1979) as XO, Training Directorate. He worked as Manager, Director Support Office, SANGMP in Alhambra, California and Fairfax, Virginia from 1979–1996.

**CURRENT STATUS:** Retired.

# Medal of Honor Recipients Gather for Annual Conference in Tampa Bay

The 2019 Medal of Honor Convention, the largest gathering of Medal of Honor recipients since the 1970s, was staged this year in the Tampa Bay, Florida area on October 22-27. Forty-six of the seventy living medal honorees were in attendance.

The week was a whirlwind of activities including visits to local schools by the Medal of Honor recipients, a welcome concert, a Tampa Bay Lightning game, a visit to the JC Newman Cigar Factory and dinner at the iconic Columbia restaurant and a public book signing, wrapping up with a sold-out star-studded gala which included remarks by Gary Sinise and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. ❖



At the MOH annual convention in Tampa, Chapter 29 member and Horse Soldier Mark Nutsch (A-595) is on MOH Vietnam recipient Roger Donlon's right. Photo courtesy John Meyer.

# Chapter 78 Member Spotlight:

## Richard Simonian



Richard Simonian pictured above, in the top today and yesterday in photos showing him at Flint Kaserne, Bad Tolz in 1953 and in a parachute drop while in training there. The bottom photo shows an aerial view of the facility.



John Stryker Meyer

By John Stryker Meyer

SFA Chapter 78 plank holder Richard Simonian will tell anyone his three years of service to our country as an Original Green Beret took him from the streets of Boyle Heights in South Los Angeles to being a highly successful, God-fearing, self-made businessman.

"No doubt," said the 87-year-old Chapter 78 treasurer/chaplain. "I was a juvenile delinquent, I was thrown out of high school after causing an explosion in chemistry class and I spent a little time in juvenile hall, to be honest." He joined the Army in 1952, and while going through basic training heard about this new secret group being formed. "They told us promotions came a little quicker, which meant a little more money, so I volunteered." He completed basic training, advanced infantry training and airborne training Ft. Benning, GA, graduating January 16, 1953, before reporting to Ft. Bragg, N.C. "I had a 1948 Ford Club Coupe that I drove up to Ft. Bragg, that was a fun drive in those days."

He reported to The Psychological Warfare School that oversaw the Special Forces Training Program. This was the early days of Special Forces and Richard enjoyed the camaraderie between young recruits like himself. He most enjoyed demolitions training. "We learned how to blow up everything with different sorts of explosive devices....as a young man, I was now being paid to destroy stuff." And he learned about customized booby traps. "I'll never forget learning how to set a charge in a toilet, you know one of those old toilets, where the water container was high above the toilet and you pulled a chain that led up to it, to flush the toilet.... so, when it was rigged to explode, when a targeted individual sitting on the toilet pulled the chain, pow! It'd explode. That was the fun part of our training."

In the final phase of training, Richard was trucked into a remote area of North Carolina where his team had to work with local residents. "For me, a kid from LA, there was some culture shock. I'll never forget going up to one house, looking for work in order to blend in with the local population. The woman answered the door with a double-odd buck shotgun pointing at me, wanting to know who the hell I was." After she determined that he wasn't a revenue, Richard began to blend in while eventually accomplishing the team's mission that was to blow up an "enemy bridge."

When he graduated and was assigned to the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, Richard learned the training never stopped. During those pioneer days, "it wasn't uncommon to have SF men die in training...those early years were rough. For example, we were training with catapult-launched gliders. They had gliders set up with a powerful catapult that launched it. Well, we were in line waiting for



our turn when something went tragically wrong. One of the gliders didn't launch, it shot up the catapult but crashed, killing everyone inside. That ended our training that day."

During one parachute training jump in North Carolina, Richard had a hard landing while executing his parachute landing fall. "I was lying there on the ground, looking up. I watched a soldier exit the plane and become entangled in his risers. He eventually got untangled, but it was too late. That 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne (Division) paratrooper died right there, not far from me. Those kind of things stick with you."

Other training left vivid memories in Richard's mind. Working from Ft. Carson, CO, the young Special Forces soldiers went into the mountains for some "pre-training, where they took us up on these huge boulders that we had to climb, jump over some gaps. If you made a mistake, it could be costly. I remember some guys couldn't cut it. They washed out." Another part of the mountain training was climbing up granite faces of mountain. "That was something else, we had rope tying us together as we climbed and I told my partner, 'don't fuck up, or we'll die right here.' We had to drive those pitons in firmly to ensure that we didn't fall. That was some hairy stuff."

Richard also enjoyed submarine training outside Little Creek, VA, aboard the USS Sea Lion — a WWII submarine that served in the Pacific campaign. "That training was something else. By 1953, it had been rebuilt to transport OSS agents or marines. I'm not sure. I remember climbing out of the sub to perform dingy training. I mean the sub was moving in the waves, the dingy was bouncing around, it was a challenge climbing into it. But, we did it. I remem-

ber rowing ashore, just like in those WWII movies. We did it. We were out there all day." At the end of the training, the SF men swapped their jump wings for the dolphin that submariners were issued. And, the chow was good on the submarine.

By September 1953 the 10<sup>th</sup> SFG had an aggregate strength of 1,700 personnel. Following the intensive individual and team training 782 men were deployed to Germany and established group headquarters at Lengries in Bavaria. Richard was one of those "Original SF" soldiers. Ninety-nine men were deployed to Korea assigned to the 8240<sup>th</sup> Army Unit while the remaining personnel stayed at Ft. Bragg, forming the core of the 77<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group.

Richard was among that "Original SF" contingent that boarded the SS Greeley in Wilmington, NC and was shipped to Germany. "After we got off of the train, we marched into Bad Tolz. I'll never forget it. Every city we went through was still destroyed from the WWII bombings. I was amazed," Richard said. "When we arrived at Bad Tolz gate, we went to the right, where the SF barracks were, and to the left was some conventional division....we all signed papers saying we wouldn't talk about SF, our mission or any aspect of our training. I remember my room, three or four people in it. The mess hall was cool, great food. They had an Olympic-sized pool, where we trained swimming in our fatigues and boots."

The training never stopped. They did E&E training, under the watchful eyes of OSS officers. Mapping, land navigation, language training as each team had a different country. At that time, SF was heavily recruiting men from other countries under the aegis of the Lodge Bill. Richard spoke Armenian.

When Richard was three or four months from the end of his three-year enlistment, now having been promoted to Staff Sergeant, the SF S-1 asked him if he'd like to extend his enlistment 18 months and receive a promotion to Sergeant First Class. "It was there and then that I realized this was a real dangerous place. This was a real dangerous mission and the Cold War was heating up, so I didn't extend." At the end of that tour of duty, Richard caught a plane to the U.S. He separated from the Army at Ft. Ord, CA.

"I left the Army, but, I can honestly say that I've been a successful businessman due to the Special Forces training I received. I learned to think outside of the box, I learned what it meant to never quit, never give up. That unconventional warfare frame of mind served me well over the years and I've been eternally grateful for it," he said. Of course, the core of this man is part of his success in life. Shortly after he turned 87, Richard asked a gentleman in his 50s if he could do deep squats. The answer was no. Richard proceeded to do a dozen deep squats to everyone's amazement. A few days later, Richard completed the deal for a new private jet service that he uses for business trips throughout the western states.

For Richard, it's been a long journey from the streets of Boyle Heights, but he doesn't rest on his laurels. Happily married for decades, Richard reports to work daily, oversees all negotiations on new properties that are part of his business and non-profits that benefit veterans and assist them in obtaining affordable housing. He's the patron saint of Chapter 78 and has been a long-time advocate and supporter of the Christian Business Men's Connection. "I'm going to keep going until the Lord calls me," he said. ♦



Richard Simonian, July 1969



First Generation SF Troopers - 10th SFG(A) alumni together in 2017.



# The Special Forces Association International Conference Awarded to SFA Chapter 51 for 2021



The presentation brochure designed by Chapter 78 member John Joyce.



Richard Simonian flew into Henderson, NV in his personal jet where he was met by Chapter 78 and 51 members.



Lonny Holmes

By Lonny Holmes

The Special Forces Association Board of Directors in October awarded SF Chapter 51 with the international conference for 2021.

Members of SFA Chapter 51 decided to have SFA Chapter 78 Co-Host SFACON 2021 at Las Vegas, Nevada at the Orleans Hotel and Casino on October 22-25, 2021. SFA member John Joyce has been appointed as Director of the International SF

Convention and has started by recruiting chapter members to assist him in the development and organization of SFACON. He began early looking for support and sponsorship and made presentations to both SF Chapters involved and SF Chapter member Richard Simonian (an original member of the Regiment from his service in 10th Group in Bad Tolz in the early 1950's) spoke up as a supporting individual of Chapter 78.

John Joyce put together a professional presentation brochure and Richard Simonian flew to Henderson, Nevada in his personal jet aircraft on October 29, to discuss SFACON 2021. Chapter 51 and 78 members Fred Horne, Brad Welker, John Joyce and Lonny Holmes met with Richard at the Henderson Airport and discussed the development of the future conference. Based on this meeting SF Chapter 78 will donate a significant amount of funds to help underwrite the development and operation of SFACON 2021. ♦



Left to right, John Joyce, Fred Horne, Brad Welker, Richard Simonian and Lonny Holmes



# Long Lost Artwork Returned Decades Later

***From Michael Benge about the artwork pictured on the back cover and on this page:***

"I bought the charcoal drawing off of a lady artist who was selling some of her artwork in the market in Dalat [a city in South Viet Nam] as I recall. She said it was of her sister who had just lost her husband in the war (it was a good story anyway, and I immediately bought it). Unfortunately, her name was also lost in the war resulting from TET after which my house was ransacked, and this picture and four drawings of Montagnards were rescued from a trash can at my house by a couple of CIA friends up-country who I had

helped off and on with some with some of their Nung employees. I was being interviewed on a morning coffee-klatch TV program in Medford, OR when a former CIA guy called in, identified himself, and said he had two of my pictures. He was invited down (a couple of hours away) for the next morning show, presented them to me. Then, about a week or so later, I got another call saying he had two more of my pictures and mailed them to me."

The drawings, shown below in photos from Benge, are framed in the original bamboo. The photo at top left shows a bit more of the frame construction. ❖

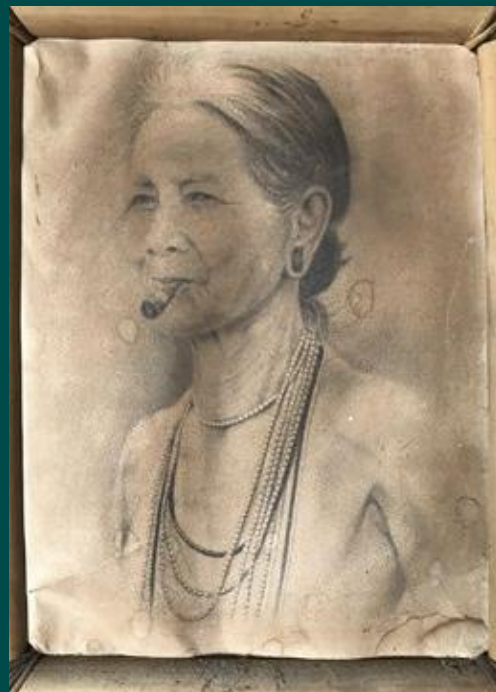
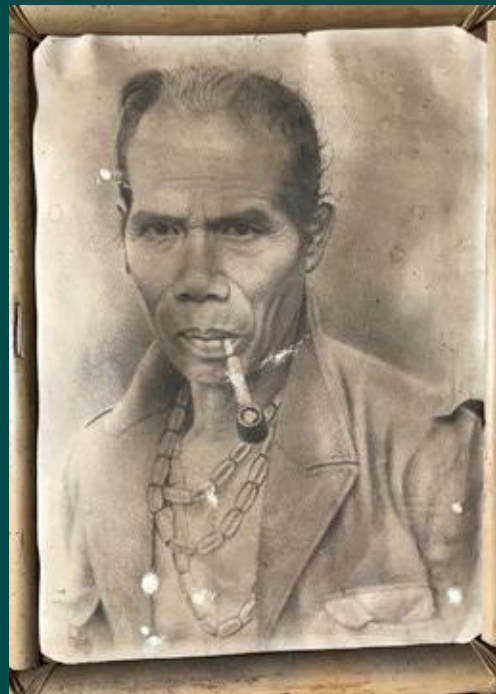




Photo courtesy Micheal Bengé. [Go to page 23](#) to read the story behind this artwork and its return after decades lost.