



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2021

Happy New Year!

**Chapter 78 Celebrates Christmas
The COVID-19 Christmas Party**

SOG — Dedicated Airlift Support

“ZIP ZAP....YOU'RE A DEAD VC”

The CIA's Dear Little DEAR Pistol in Vietnam and ????



SENTINEL

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2021

From the Editor



How Miller
Sentinel Editor

Our SFA Chapter 78 monthly magazine, (the) *Sentinel* owes its award winning success to a large cast of characters. It began with Volume 1, Issue 1 in January of 2010, with John Joyce as the editor for two years, then Lonny Holmes for the next eight years, and Jim Morris last year. Though they all did prodigious amounts of labors of love, and kept improving the quality, they will be the first to admit that it takes a lot more people to succeed.

There were the recurring Chapter contributors such as Kenn Miller, Mike Keele, Gary Macnamara, Tilt Meyer, Tom Turney, the Chapter presidents, and others. Authors have allowed us to reprint some of their work, or have written articles specifically for us. There were chapter photographers. And last, but not least there was our amazing graphic artist, Debra Holm, who puts it all together. And, we are pleased to recognize the tremendous contributions of Richard Simonian, without whose support not much of this would be happening.

When Jim Morris announced he was losing his sanity and moving away from sunny Southern California for the wilds of Oklahoma, or thereabouts, to be with family, I, the lowly photographer, was asked to take over as editor. After I got over the shock, I realized that there might be some things that I could contribute, and now, several weeks later, I am beginning to get excited. So let me introduce myself.

I was a Special Forces Medical Aidman. My MOS was 91B4S94 (the 94 was for Vietnamese Language). Nowadays that would be an 18D, or just a delta. I only had six months left on my three year enlistment when I finally got deployed to the 5th group after having volunteered for Vietnam almost a year prior, during my training to be "S" qualified. My assignment was to A325 Duc Hue, an "A" camp on the Cambodian border adjacent to the "Parrots Beak", roughly WNW from Saigon. We could see across the border 7 "clicks" away from our guard tower. We were in the middle of a free fire zone, mainly tasked with border surveillance, so there were no villages around to do sick call in. We had two companies of Vietnamese and one company of Cambodian CIDG and their dependents. So sick call was in camp.

About once every two weeks each team member would go on a 3 to 4 day patrol with another team member, one or two LLDB (Vietnamese Special Forces), and a light company of CIDG in various parts of our AO. Most operations ran into contact with the enemy, as it was a heavy infiltration route. I will have to keep you in suspense right now about the "interesting" times we had and my 6 month extension to complete about a year at the camp.

I am looking forward to bringing articles about various special operations units from as far back as the American revolution, along with other ideas I have, including writing an article for the May issue about the Cambodian invasion, in which I participated. Most of all I am looking forward to continued support from chapter members. We would all like to hear your stories. ♦

How Miller, *Sentinel* Editor

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FRONT COVER: U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan watch the Afghanistan countryside from the tail of an aircraft after delivering bundles containing care packages, Christmas stockings and mail to soldiers stationed at a remote base in eastern Afghanistan Dec. 24, 2013. (U.S. Army photo by Thomas Cieslak)



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| | |
|--|---|
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From the President | January 2021



Don Gonneville
Chapter 78 Vice-President

We all know that things do not always go as planned, but good preparation will usually carry the day. Our **Chapter President Bruce Long** spent many long hours planning the program for a great Christmas party, despite the restrictions placed on us by COVID-19. What he did not expect was to be admitted to the hospital three days before the party with a stomach ailment that will require surgery. His planning was so thorough and well-organized that, by following his agenda, we were able to execute the plan flawlessly. Bruce's wife Geri brought the awards, the programs, and the door prizes, and his son-in-law Dan brought two fantastic auction items, brand-new ARs manufactured and donated by Juggernaut Industries. Manager Scott Jones and his staff of the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club provided us with a great venue and an outstanding dinner. It was a fantastic event. We're just sorry that Bruce was not there to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

Our guest speaker, **SGM (Ret) Kevin Harry**, president of the Special Forces Association, traveled from Fort Bragg to give us an overview of what the Association is planning as we move into the 21st century. Through the use of expert committees and by taking advantage of new and emerging technology, the Association intends to reach out to all our potential members to ensure that the benefits of membership are readily available to all past and present Special Forces soldiers, and that we are all made to feel welcomed and appreciated within this very special fraternity. We appreciate Kevin's visit, and look

forward to working closely with him and his staff for the benefit of our worldwide membership.

In that vein, we would like to encourage greater participation in our monthly meetings and special events. For most of us, our time served in Special Forces units was an extraordinary period in our lives, and chapter events give us the opportunity to support one another, and to enjoy the fellowship of our peers. We're fortunate to welcome many new members of A/5/19th SFG at our meetings, bringing us new insights into current SF operations.

Many of you are avoiding gatherings such as these, due to the dangers of COVID-19. However, as the risks decrease over time, please make it a point to join us at our monthly meetings at the Fiddlers Green, Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos. In the meantime, we check everyone's temperature on arriving, mask wearing is encouraged, and there is sufficient room for social distancing.

President Bruce Long's surgery is scheduled for Friday, 12/18. He will remain hospitalized for about one week, and complete recovery will probably take a couple of months. Our prayers are with Bruce and his family, and we wish him a speedy recovery.

In Bruce's absence, I'll do my best to help keep everything running smoothly. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. ❖

De Oppresso Liber
Don Gonneville
Vice President, SFA Chapter 78



Geri Long, wife of Chapter President Bruce Long with Nancy Miller at the Chapter Christmas Party on December 5th. (Photo courtesy How Miller)

January Chapter Meeting January 9, 2021

Planning to attend our next Chapter meeting? If so please e-mail **VP Don Gonneville** at: don@gonneville.com, no later than Thursday January 7th, midnight. We need an exact headcount.

TIME: Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830

LOCATION: The Pub at Fiddlers Green

ADDRESS: [4745 Yorktown Ave Bldg 19](#)
[Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5176](#)
(Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos)

SOG

Dedicated Airlift Support



John Gargus

Studies and Observations Group, SOG, was established early in 1964 as a top secret unconventional joint task force to conduct clandestine operations against North Vietnam. Its mission to conduct a program of harassment, diversion, political pressure, capture of prisoners, physical destruction, acquisition of intelligence, and to generate unfavorable propaganda was well in step with our strategic limited war thinking of that day. We were pre-

pared to assist nations that were resisting communist aggression, believing that by helping them in their defense and nation building we could win their hearts and minds and promote the evolution of democracy. We also believed that by conducting covert activities we could discourage their ongoing aggression against South Vietnam. Everyone was aware of our dedicated support for the South, however, only the active SOG participants knew about their individual roles in their compartmentalized top secret organization.

Initially, the secrecy of SOG was so profound that there were only five top officers in Saigon who were briefed on its mission. They were General Westmoreland, his chief of staff, his (J-2) intelligence officer, the 7th Air Force commander and the commander of the U. S. Naval Forces. Obviously, this number of high officials grew as the war expanded, but SOG's umbilical cord ran directly to the Special Assistant for Counterintelligence and Special Activities (SACSA) in the Pentagon who had direct access to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).¹ All SOG's commanders in Saigon were U. S. Army Colonels who had distinguished themselves in prior special and clandestine operations.

SOG's ambitious operations required dedicated airlift support. This was promptly provided by the First Flight which was later described as the most secret squadron in Vietnam.² It evolved from the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) 1949 support to evacuate Chiang Kai-shek from the mainland of China to Taiwan. It arrived in Nha Trang in 1964 with 5 C-123 aircraft that were specially configured by the Big Safari procurement program to support clandestine operations in Vietnam. These black painted aircraft with added outboard jet engines that increased their airborne performance had no identifying markings. Internally, they had enhanced navigation suitable for low level flying and passive electromagnetic systems for detecting emissions from hostile radars. Their crewmembers did not wear customary flight suits nor identifying military uniforms. They flew in

normal casual street clothes and even with sandals instead of shoes. Even more bizarre was the fact that they were a mixture of Americans, Vietnamese and Taiwanese Chinese. Their daytime flying was conducted by the Air Force crews. This consisted of shuttle airlift for the Green Berets to their in country outposts which had suitable air strips. Nighttime missions were clandestine low level operations over North Vietnam flown by either the Vietnamese, or the Chinese crews. When SOG terminated the employment of Vietnamese crews, the First Flight retained their nonflying ground support personnel which performed warehousing and parachute rigging.

The First Flight could not keep up with the expansion of SOG's operations. From its early 1964 beginning, the top secret chain of command requested additional and more capable C-130, aircraft to cope with the steadily accumulating airlift backlog.³ Once more the Big Safari procurement provided the answer by modifying a fleet of 14 C-130 aircraft for clandestine operations in what became the Stray



First Flight's "Heavy Hook" C-123 — the black UC-123K is the genuine First Flight bird without any markings and several emc antenna receivers that were classified (Photo courtesy John Gargus)



A later model of the UC-123K — they were used by the Ranch Hand defoliation program in Vietnam. Their appearance differed from the First Flight's versions which were all black. (Photo courtesy John Gargus)

Goose program. Four of these aircraft went to Pope AFB for crew training. Four went to Nha Trang in 1966 to share the First Flights well established support facilities there and four more were destined to go to Germany to support European Command's (EUCOM) special operations forces. These aircraft, which soon acquired their present day Combat Talons name, were the most sophisticated transport aircraft of their time. Their most important feature was an integrated navigation system that included a terrain following radar which permitted them to fly at low altitudes where they could avoid early detection by enemy's radar nets. They also possessed an array of up-to-date electromagnetic countermeasure systems that would identify and even passively counter some enemy threats. However, the most distinguishable feature of these Combat Talons was their modification for the Fulton Recovery System, now better known as the STARS (Surface to Air Recovery System). Each aircraft had an unconventional nose drooping radome on top of which was a "V" yoke with a truss for retractable fork arms that also held propeller guard cables that stretched between it to the aircraft's wing tips.⁴ This appearance revealed that it was a very special aircraft. On top of that, the aircraft was painted with very dark green jungle camouflage color and its fuselage bottom as well as the bottoms of wing surfaces had dirty white clouded sky color. This paint had very special stealth characteristics. It contained diatomaceous earth particles that made the painted surfaces feel like they were covered with very fine sand paper comparable to a manicurist's fingernail file. This surface absorbed much of received energy from scanning radars which gave their receivers much smaller aircraft signature.

Combat Talon's security was unprecedented. Our Combat Talons had to be parked in secured areas away from other aircraft assigned to the base and required two armed guards to control access to individuals with special security ID cards. This policy was followed even after Vietnam no matter where or in which country the aircraft had to remain overnight. On such temporary duty assignments (TDYs) the aircraft support personnel included the necessary complement of armed guards. These guards also discouraged curious photographers who came to their close proximity. Photography of the aircraft's systems and instrumentation from the inside was forbidden. Terrain following radar (TFR) and its integration into the navigation systems was classified as Top Secret. Even more guarded was the



Stray Goose MC-130E (I) (Photo courtesy John Gargus)

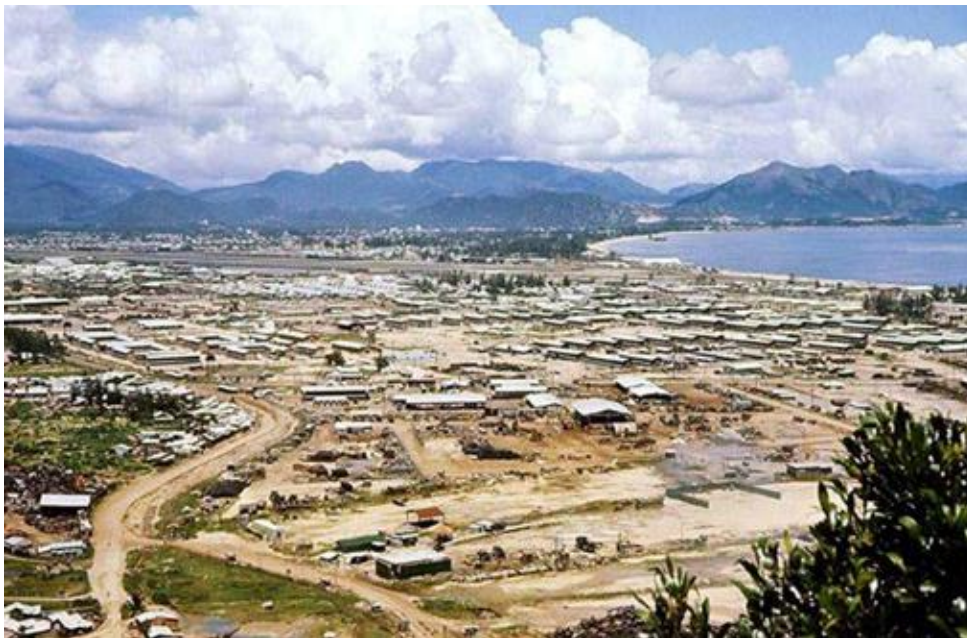
Electromagnetic Countermeasures (ECM) equipment that was located outside of the cockpit behind the aircraft's bulkhead where it was hidden behind a thick curtain to conceal it from anyone except the crew and their ground maintenance technicians.

At the start of the Stray Goose program, C-130 qualified airmen were chosen based on complex criteria that included the scope of knowledge and performance during their military careers. For example, "flight engineers were required to have a minimum of 4,000 hours experience in the C-130."⁵ All were surprised by the secrecy and the lack of information about their future missions in Vietnam. Those of us who volunteered for the Stray Goose program were told by the Air Force personnel office that we would learn all we needed to know from our instructors at Pope AFB. Once at Pope, we learned that none of our instructors had prior experience with the aircraft in Vietnam. They were trained at Lockheed Air Service in Ontario, California by technicians who performed aircraft modifications and who were proficient only in training us with the new aircraft systems that included the STARS and a tactic to deliver leaflets from high altitudes. They simply did not know anything about the missions we would perform once in Vietnam. The first six crews that deployed with Combat Talons to Vietnam were being reassigned to Ramstein AFB in Germany which was receiving its complement of four aircraft. The word we had was that we did not yet have a need to know about our aircraft's missions in Vietnam. However, we concluded from our training that we would be flying in a hostile environment, conducting psychological operations with leaflet drops and rescuing downed crewmembers with the STARS.

In 1967 each class at Pope AFB trained two eleven member crews. Our class had crew numbers S-05 and S-06. This told us that we were the 11th and 12th of the crews that had been trained for Vietnam. Assignments to a crew were made on the first day of training and remained fixed even after deployment to Vietnam. Each crew had three pilots and two navigators that were required by the terrain following radar system. The sixth officer crewmember was the Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO). Two of the five enlisted crewmembers were flight engineers (required by STARS), two loadmasters and one radio operator. Everyone had a specific task to perform during pick-ups of people from the ground.

Our training at Pope AFB also taught us not to fraternize with other airmen who were naturally curious about our special aircraft and our secret nighttime flying. This was even more important once we arrived in Vietnam after we were finally briefed on our new unit's mission. Tight Combat Talon security restricted our interaction with other Air Force units and friends whom we knew from prior assignments. All were curious about our unusual aircraft and we were discouraged from fraternization with them because we could not speak about our mission. Only our enlisted crewmembers and maintenance personnel were quartered on base where they lived in self improved well-furnished air conditioned quarters. Officers lived in a contracted hotel down town where they had their own club and bar for feeding and entertainment. All First Flight personnel also lived off the base in a big well protected and isolated French built villa on the beach.

Our incorporation into the 14th Air Commando Wing (ACW) in October 1967 is an example of some ridiculous security hurdles. Prior to



Nha Trang — Special Forces Camp McDermott and the Air Base. (Photo courtesy John Gargus)

that date, both the First Flight and our Stray Goose detachment belonged to the 314 Tactical Airlift Wing based at Ching Chuan Kang (CCK) Air Base in Taiwan. It was logical to have us transferred into the special operations wing at Nha Trang that was already hosting us and employed about a dozen aging aircraft types that were modified for special operations missions. At the time of the transfer to the 14th ACW, our Stray Goose detachment was renamed as the 15th Air Commando Squadron. This transfer did not change our mission at all. We remained the SOG's airlift asset along with the First Flight. We also remained outside of General Westmoreland's command that managed the war in Vietnam. Our immediate boss was Colonel John K. Singlaub who expressed his chain of command as follows: "I reported directly to the SACSA in the Pentagon, but always kept General Westmoreland well briefed on our past operations and future plans. The General had veto authority, but approval for operations came from Washington. We were also required to inform the Commander in Chief, U.S. Forces in the Pacific, (CINCPAC)...⁶

The 14th ACW Commander at that time was Col. John M. Patton. He was kept out of the chain of command between us and Colo-

nel Singlaub. He was not briefed in on the SOG missions of the C-123 and C-130 units he had just acquired because he had no "need to know". He required an escort to enter our guarded aircraft and he definitely did not have the need to know what kind of electronic countermeasures we had behind the curtain inside of our aircraft. When he showed up unannounced and unescorted to check out the First Flight's living quarters on the beach, the Nung guards (Vietnamese of Chinese origins) would not let him pass through the gate. He had to wait until a member of the first Flight came out to escort him in. We also had Nung guards at our hotel, however, he would always come in invited and accompanied by our commander. It was awkward and unusual to have a wing commander who was not fully involved in the wartime operation of

his subordinate units because he did not have the need to know. I spoke with Colonel Patton about this anomaly 45 years later. He was still very upset over the fact that the first officer who came to the gate had no idea who he was and another one had to come to vouch for him.⁷

¹Plaster, John L. *SOG; The Secret War of the American Commandos in Vietnam*, 23.

²Moore, Bernard II. *Tip of the Spear*, "Vietnam's Most Secret Squadron", 36-37.

³Thigpen Jerry L. *The Praetorian STARship – The Untold Story of the Combat Talon*, 15.

⁴Bill Grimes, *The History of Big Safari*, "Stray Goose" and "Combat Talon", 255-275.

⁵Michael E. Haas, *Apollo's Warriors: United States Special Operations during the Cold War*, 295.

⁶John K. Singlaub with Malcolm McConnell, *Hazardous Duty*, 294.

⁷Phone conversation with author on June 14, 2013.

About the Author

John Gargus was born in Czechoslovakia from where he escaped at the age of fifteen when the Communists pulled the country behind the Iron Curtain. He was commissioned through AFROTC in 1956 and made the USAF his career. He served in the Military Airlift Command as a navigator, then as an instructor in AFROTC. He went to Vietnam as a member of Special Operations and served in that field of operations for seven years in various units at home and in Europe. He participated in the air operations planning for the Son Tay POW rescue and then flew as the lead navigator of one of the MC-130s that led the raiders to Son Tay, [for which he was awarded the Silver Star](#). His non-flying assignments included Deputy Base Command at Zaragoza Air Base in Spain and at

Hurlburt Field in Florida and a tour as Assistant Commandant of the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. He retired as a full Colonel in 1983 after serving as the Chief of USAF's Mission to Colombia. He has been married to Anita since 1958. The Garguses have one son and three daughters.

He is the author of [The Son Tay Raid: American POWs in Vietnam Were Not Forgotten](#), [Combat Talons in Vietnam : Recovering a Covert Special Ops Crew](#), and is a past contributor to the Sentinel ([November 2016](#), [December 2016](#), [January 2019](#) and [April 2019](#)).

Flight hours: More than 6100 hours (381 Combat flying hours in Southeast Asia and 105 flying hours with the Colombian Air Force).

Book Review

Pilgrim Days: A Lifetime of Soldiering from Vietnam to the SAS by Alastair MacKenzie



Kenn Miller

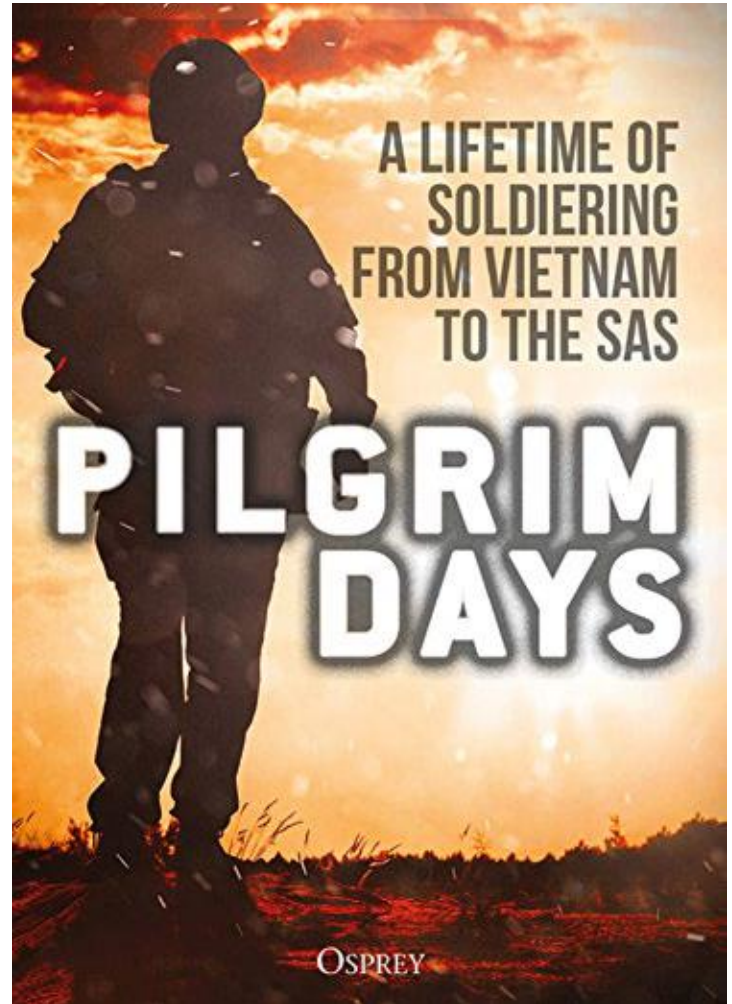
Reviewed by Kenn Miller

It is easy to have a good first opinion of a military book when the author declares right off that, “My father was a warrior, I was a warrior, and my son is a warrior — this is my story.” And in the case of Alastair MacKenzie, his story includes many stories, all of them interesting, and all of them well told.

MacKenzie's first taste of combat was as a New Zealand Army Airborne infantry officer in Vietnam in 1970-71. Too often we have a tendency to forget the part that America's allies had played in our wars. When Alastair MacKenzie was a young New Zealand Army officer leading an elite light infantry platoon in Vietnam, the total population of New Zealand, both islands, was fewer than three million citizens. Considering the nation's population, New Zealand's 37 KIA and 187 WIA is a heavy sacrifice. Mr. MacKenzie is not shy about bragging that “Kiwi” soldiers were very rarely REMFs, and that most New Zealand soldiers and airmen were front line soldiers and airmen. Mr. MacKenzie doesn't exactly say so, but it is easy to see that he's taking a New Zealander's pride in gently mocking the fat and slothful rear echelon armies of the Americans and the Australians. That's my reading of what he meant, not what he outright wrote.

Mister MacKenzie's stories and comments and memories have the weight of experience, age, ego, and good sense. But the New Zealand Army apparently didn't have the wide scope he could find in the British military, and so, in 1973 he went back home “Old Blighty,” and managed to get himself commissioned into 3rd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment. After his time with 3 Para, it was on to Wales and the 22 Special Air Service. And after a few years with 22 SAS, it was back to the Paras — 1st Battalion, the Parachute Regiment. And after that, he served as an officer in the South African Defence Force's Parabats. Then it was contract work with KMS, a SAS connected private military company based in London. And then it was back to the New Zealand Army. And then it was the Sultan of Oman's Special Forces, and then something close to civilian retirement with Royal Ordnance, Reliance Security, AMA Associate Limited, and the Territorial Army (the UK version of the army reserve), especially the Special Air Service. (Including the famously nicknamed 21 SAS, the “Artist Rifles” — the only badass unit I know of with an even more intimidating nickname would be Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.)

Finally, Alastair MacKenzie retired back to New Zealand after an amazing career in various units of various armies in various military



[Pilgrim Days: A Lifetime of Soldiering from Vietnam to the SAS](#)

by Alastair MacKenzie

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1st edition (March 21, 2019)

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224 pages

clashes — the worst of which seems to have been in Northern Ireland where the hatred, violence, danger, and terrorism was right there at home in the UK.

“Pilgrim” as a Special Air Service term comes from an early 1900s stage play by James Elroy Flecker.

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go

Always a little further: it may be

Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow

Across that angry or that glimmering sea...❖

“ZIP ZAP.... YOU'RE A DEAD VC”

The CIA's Dear Little DEAR Pistol in Vietnam and ????

By J. David Truby

Robert Bruce got it wrong, Chris Eger got it wrong, Ian Hogg got it wrong and so did Gary Paul Johnson, Jack Krcma, Dick Meadows, Keith Melton, John Minnery, T.C. Smith, Don Walsh and yours Truly... until Jonathan Liu of the CIA's office of Public Affairs kindly told me the truth about the mysterious CIA Deer Gun, as it has been known since 1962.

“This weapon is actually known as the CIA DENied ARea pistol, hence DEAR Pistol as its official name. It was designed for distribution to our Special Forces and foreign fighters operating behind enemy lines,” Mr Lui informed me, sharing data from the Agency's own files, including a CIA photograph of their original production DEAR Pistol.

And, it all began with the fabled OSS Liberator.

The World War II Liberator was a small, nifty, behind-the-scenes gun. It wasn't meant for the battlefield, though, it was meant for sneaky behind enemy lines as an ally friendly OSS killer. About twenty years later and half way around the world, its successor, the CIA's Deer Gun, as it has been incorrectly known for over 55 years, hoped to continue that legacy, yet inadvertently created a puzzling reputation of its own.

The DEAR Pistol was conceived as an updated version of the Liberator Pistol, a gun built for our OSS by General Motor's Guide Lamp Division during WWII. Some twenty years later, developed for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the Vietnam conflict, the DEAR Pistol was a very simple, single shot 9mm gun designed to sneakily bring better weapons to the U.S.'s South Vietnamese special forces allies fighting against their invasive local Viet Cong and the invading North Vietnamese soldiers. It was designed to be purely one on one deadly.

“The idea was to supply this glorified zip gun to our local friendlies via our Special Forces who weren't afraid to carry the war close and personal to the enemy,” the late U.S. Army Major Dick Meadows, a true Special Forces icon, explained. “They'd get close, take him down with the Deer Gun, then strip him of everything usable, including his AK47 and spare ammo and any material useful for intel purposes.”



(Artwork by Snappy Cappy)

The weapon was planned between operational CIA officers and the military. Discussing the project with several gun designers in the late 1950s, the goal was for the gun to be a modern version of the FP-45 Liberator, which had been discharged (an on purpose pun) after WWII. Considering the OSS transformation into the CIA, there were a number of experienced operatives working quiet missions in Southeast Asia.

By 1962, covert special ops were already underway in Southeast Asia. According to Maj Meadows, “Deep down at Langley, someone must've recalled those long-lost Liberators and their previously discussed updated counterparts, the Deer Gun. It was time to get them operational.

“For some insane reason, much WWII materiel was destroyed in 1946-47. Liberator pistols were torched, melted and crushed into postwar scrap. Very few survived, and there was no inventory when President Kennedy decided to support low profile, low intensity counter-guerrilla warfare in Vietnam,” Maj Meadows explained.

The CIA called on the Chief Engineer for American Machine & Foundry (AM & F) special Firearms division, the late Russell J. Moure, a very experienced ordnance veteran who was a principal developer of the mini-gun, who also worked with and for Firearms International and Interarms. They told him to create an effective successor to the Liberator, as they had discussed several years earlier. When the CIA and special ops military personnel met with Moure in 1962, discussions centered on an idea to create a lighter, smaller, simpler and far cheaper, Liberator-type pistol.

Major Meadows explained, “The CIA wanted a simplistic design that was operationally sound, as well as quick and economical to manufacture. The purpose was to supply the pistol to indigenous guerrillas and our irregular forces behind enemy lines. Yes, it was an assassination gun, and it was to be part of what became known as Operation Phoenix.”



CIA DEAR Gun (Courtesy of Robert Bruce)



DEAR Gun designer Russell J. Moure (Courtesy of Russell Moure)

The CIA chose AM & F because it was a company totally well known for recreational products and had only a small, very secretive ordinance section. As author Chris Eger wrote, "Allen Dulles' people wanted someone far off the firearms radar, such as AM & F."

One of Moure's engineering colleagues at AM & F, who asked that his name not be used here, added, "Russ (Moure) spent 10,000 words explaining to some government guys what was basically a crude, ugly, but damn decent \$4 zip gun for our covert military and their Third World allies to kill one of the bad guys each time, usually a behind the lines recon op. Then, to take that guy's weapon, probably an AK for his own use. That was the entire program for this weapon."

The tiny 9mm pistol with a case aluminum receiver, a screw-out-to-load two inch barrel, was made largely of plastic, steel and aluminum parts and would cost the U.S. approximately \$3.95 apiece. The DEAR Pistol was made to be small, efficient, cheap and untraceable.

The DEAR pistol fired well. The trigger release was relatively mild and the recoil from the 9mm ammo was also relatively mild. But, according to the guys who fired the pistol and told me about it, the muzzle blast was quite severe given its size. Accuracy was generally not a problem given its assigned target range assignment.

So, how did this mysterious pistol get its name out wrong? U.S. Army Sgt Gary Paul Johnston suggested Deer Gun was an Agency codename with a sardonic big game hunting reference. American suppressor designer Don Walsh thought the Deer Gun was named after a WWII OSS operation in Burma, "The Deer Mission". Turns out, they were wrong, as we have just learned.

The late Vaclav "Jack" Krcma, an ordinance expert, WWII combat vet and spook, CIA contract agent, Interarms field icon, and close friend of Moure, marveled at the design of the DEAR Pistol. He had

seen some of Moure's initial actual design work. Krcma stated it was the lightest and smallest 9mm issue pistol ever developed, as well as being "of splendid design and robust construction."

I knew Jack well and we discussed the pistol often. He and I both called it the Deer Gun. My guess is that the CIA, in its infinite judgment of mysterious ways and means, just let people refer to it as the Deer Gun....until now. And, thank you, Mr Lui for finally correcting that.

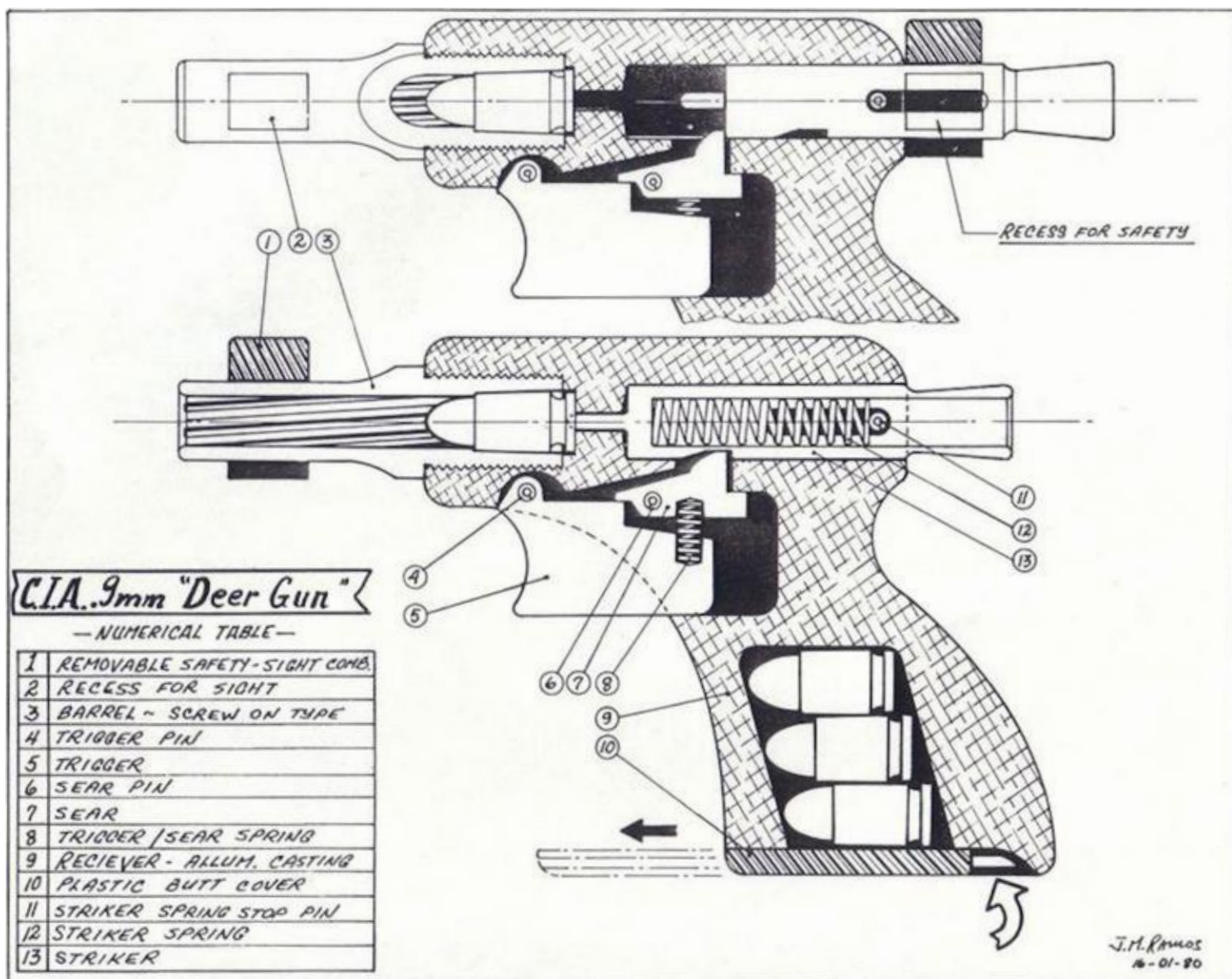
The CIA examined and tested the prototype. Satisfied with Moure's design, they ordered 1000 pistols, issuing AM & F a developmental contract for \$300,000. This price was higher than the originally quoted price of under \$4 per weapon; however, with all developmental special weapons, research, testing and prototype costs had to be recovered. As Jack Krcma noted with alacrity, "In our business, we all know how that works."

The production DEAR Pistol is 4 1/8 inches high, 5 inches long and weighs 12 ounces. The body is one piece cast aluminum, with a blued steel barrel. The raised grip is cross hatched and the three rounds that come with each gun are stored in that hollow area. There is no trigger guard and the sight, as such, is a grooved notch on the receiver top.

To fire the DEAR Pistol, the barrel is unscrewed, a round is loaded and the barrel is screwed back in. The cone-shaped cocking lever is pulled back, the pistol is then aimed and fired.

However, by 1964, it was clear that Southeast Asia was bound for a major war. With that level of war a clear set of guidelines and parameters passes down from the Pentagon flag pole. Their rules of engagement made the DEAR Pistol a low priority.

Diminished significance or not, the first 1000 pistols did make it to active duty in sterile condition. These guns were completely sanitized, meaning there were no serial numbers, no ordinance proofs, no ID



CIA .9mm "Deer Gun" with a numerical table of parts (Artwork by Joe Ramos)

markings, no connection to the U.S. government. They were packed individually into a plain white, very sturdy Styrofoam box accompanied by three rounds of 9mm ammunition which were also sterile. According to author Chris Eger, "the head stamps on the cases of those rounds were marked not with a NATO symbol, but with '9mm 42' to imply that they were possibly WWII vintage bullets of German, Italian or some other origin than American."

The packaging also contained a four-color, cartoon-style, wordless instruction sheet that visually detailed how to operate the weapon and who to shoot with it. The instructions depicted a generic guerilla using a DEAR Pistol to shoot an enemy soldier bearing a Soviet armband, hammer and sickle included. Ironically, that armband is the only identification marking of any kind found on the weapon, its container or the instructions.

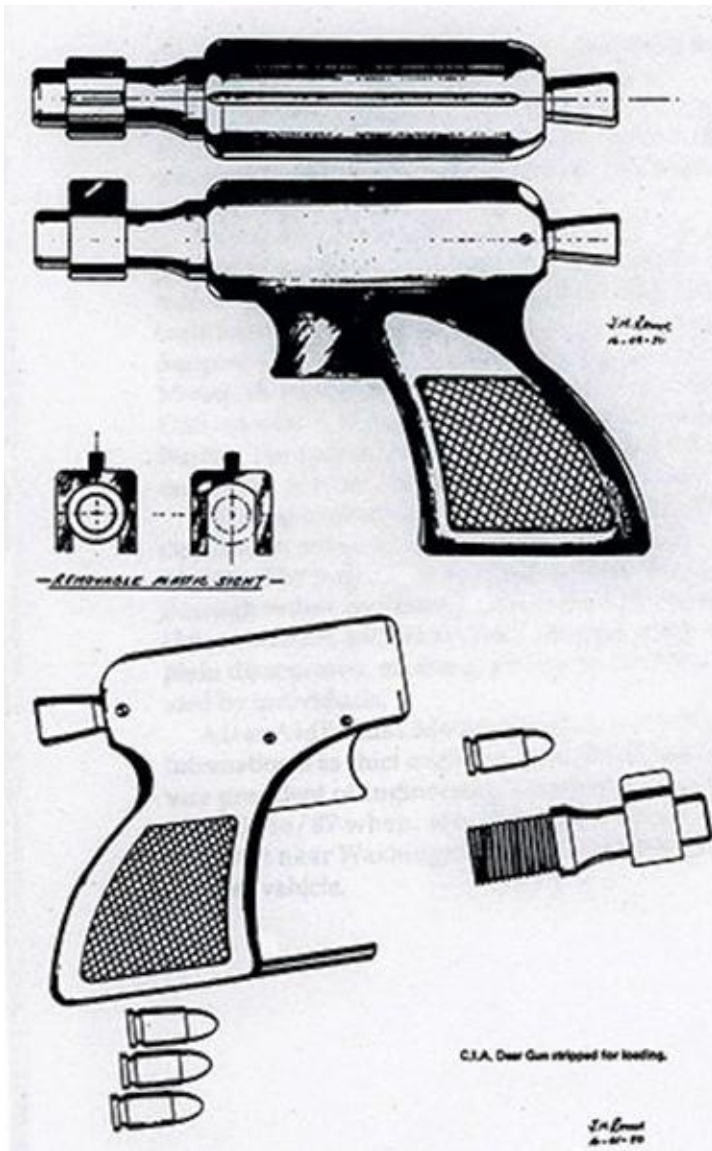
According to Krcma, of the weapons delivered to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), approximately 150 were sent for for-real, actual field testing in Southeast Asia. There are no official records available that any of the DEAR Pistols were used beyond controlled, non-combat testing. However, one U.S. military officer personally

relayed a story to me in which he accompanied a patrol of both U.S. and Vietnamese Special Forces in 1963, during which two DEAR Pistols were carried for what he referred to as "active evaluation."

"We had run a successful ambush and were returning for extraction with four prisoners, three of whom were wounded. The unwounded man noisily resisted restraint. Because the potential for hostile reaction to us being there was very real, our senior man decided to terminate the recalcitrant prisoner.

"That's when I saw the Deer Gun 'field-tested.' One shot was fired from a range of two feet into the back of the base of the man's head. He lurched forward and fell quite dead. We then effected our extraction with the other, very silent prisoners, all officers."

Thus, by 1964, the DEAR Pistol was officially cleared for field issue. It was listed in the CIA's special weapons inventory and carried stock number 1395-H00-9108. However, since its change in status, little information has been released about this limited issue weapon, because the CIA had denied all requests for any materials regarding the DEAR Pistol, making it an unusually hard to find information.



CIA .9mm "Deer Gun" stripped for loading (Artwork by Joe Ramos)

Likewise, AM & F, totally out of the ordnance business for years, refused to even respond to my repeated requests for any information.

"Over the years, I had seen Deer Guns at one military museum, at a CIA facility and at a few ordnance research facilities," Jack Krma told me in 2005. "But, they must have grown legs and walked off, because they aren't there anymore. Where did they go and I wonder who has them now?"

There is a DEAR Pistol at the CIA Museum and there is also one at the JFK Museum at Ft Bragg. That has been confirmed.

However, there are some stories. A Deer Gun was reportedly confiscated in Mexico in 1970 before it could be used to assassinate a Cuban official. This account is totally unconfirmed. The Deer Gun was mentioned and accurately described in William Caunitz's 1985 novel *ONE POLICE PLAZA*.

Of the original 1000 weapons produced, maybe 10 to 20 remain in circulation, according to well known collector Keith Melton. Eger wrote that one was legally sold at a relatively recent auction for over \$22,000. Another was sold legally by Rock Island Auction in 2011



On 22 May 2020, the NRA Museum got both a rare DEAR Gun and a tool room prototype donated by Thomas Ring, a former Master Armorer. (Photo courtesy of NRA)

for \$25,875. Robert Bruce photographed another one for his 2004 *SMALL ARMS REVIEW* magazine article. Three of his pictures are with this article, the first color photos and the first with a person holding the DEAR Gun.

He told me, "It belonged to a 1st Cav Special Ops vet who was on a recon mission in Vietnam and saw the weapon there. He said he 'acquired' it and was able to get it home. It was confiscated by the Feds, however."

The remainder have either disappeared into collector's quiet and private inventories or ??? The DEAR Pistol may not have been successful in combat, but its reputation continues to be successfully enigmatic to this day. ❖

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. David Truby is currently senior vice president of Great News Communicators.

A U.S. Army veteran, Truby was a combat intelligence NCO, psychological operations instructor, and later served as a civilian consultant and advisor. He was a trainer for the Bay of Pigs operation.

He is co-founder of the Indiana University (IUP) of PA's Journalism/Public Relations Department, was its first chairman and is now a Professor Emeritus He also served as a field investigator for the U S House Select Committee on Assassinations for the JFK assassination.

[Truby has written twelve books and co-authored five others.](#) His reporting, photojournalism and writing have won eleven national awards.

He is a past contributor to the Sentinel ([October 2020](#) and [November 2020](#)).

THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



Updates on the Montagnards



Vietnam Fund *for Education, Music & Infrastructure*



Tom Turney

By Tom Turney

Every Special Forces trooper who served in Vietnam knows how important the Montagnards were to our missions. Whether it was working with SOG Teams, Mike Force Companies or the various A Camps scattered along the borders between Cambodia and Laos and Vietnam, the Montagnards served with honor. Many SF troopers developed personal relationship with Montagnard strikers and when the US pulled out of Vietnam, all

SF personnel felt like we had abandoned those we had worked with, fought with and lived with during the War. It was as if that special bond that develops between men who have fought together was broken.

Many SF troopers worked diligently to try help the Yards get out of Vietnam after the war but only a small portion of those who had worked with SF were able to escape to the US. The vast majority of Yards remained in Vietnam and suffered at the hands of the Vietnamese Communists when they occupied South Vietnam. Many were killed and others ended up in "re-education" camps. Today, they continue to suffer at the hands of the Vietnamese who look at

them as an inferior race. Most have lost tribal lands that had been in their hands for centuries to Vietnamese farmers.

There are a few organizations that have continued to work with the Montagnards in Vietnam. One of those, the Vietnam Fund for Education, Music & Infrastructure (vietnamemifund.org) founded by Jane Coyle over 30 years ago has been working to help the Montagnards primarily in the Central Highlands around Kontum Province. Her work has been focused in two principal areas — creating fresh water systems and education for the Montagnards. She has put fresh water systems in a number of villages and worked to provide educational materials for the schools that teach Montagnard children — the grandchildren of the warriors with whom SF fought. The Vietnam Fund also began a program in 2019 of providing soap to villagers and teaching them the basics of handwashing which has been particularly rewarding during these COVID times. I, along with Dave Moley and Sam Wheeler (B-20 Mike Force) have been working to help Jane raise money for the past few years from our SF buddies and other friends.

Besides the normal adversity under which all of the Montagnards still in Vietnam live, they suffered this past fall with two typhoons (Mojave and Goni) which devastated parts of the Central Highlands. As a result, Jane reached out to see if we could help do some special fundraising to help the Yards during these particularly trying times. As a result we are reaching out to our SF buddies to ask for help for the Yards still in Vietnam.

If you are interested in helping, tax deductible donations can be made at:

<https://www.vietnamemifund.org/special-forces>

or by sending your donation to:

The Vietnam Fund

PO Box 1351, Woodland, CA 95776

Checks should be made out to The Vietnam Fund. Please note on the check that your donation is in support of the Special Forces effort by putting SF on the bottom left hand corner of your check.❖



Every Seat Taken



Mike Keele

By Mike Keele

My wife Cora and I sold our home of thirty years last summer and set up camp in a sleepy little Burg called Canyon Lake. Nestled in the foothills south of San Bernardino and the city of Riverside, California, Canyon Lake became a city a few years ago, after settling into the canyons surrounding the five or so mile long lake fittingly enough called Canyon Lake.

The little town is home to more than ten thousand sun worshipers, ranging in age from octogenarians to toddlers, with a sprinkling of folks mixed in who still have to work for a living. What is conspicuous in their absence, are stores. Old timers reminisce about a bait store at the lake's edge years ago, where likker wasn't sold, but the bait store owner would loan you a bottle, if'n he trusted yuh.

With all this time on their hands, the folks dream up patriotic rallies, Christmas parades and things of the like. On Nine Eleven for instance, they staged a golf cart parade and light show that was featured on the ABC national news, this year. And, just yesterday, on the eve of the govern-neuter shutting down the whole state for the China Flu, the folks staged a golf cart Christmas parade, complete with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and a whole bunch of really joyous elves. And the crowds of onlookers! There were probably more golf carts in driveways and yards, where hundreds, if not thousands of waving onlookers sat, bundled up against the twilight chill.

A half mile long string of more than 150 golf carts, bedecked in flashing, rotating, pulsing and every other kind of holiday lights, lined up a little ways from the city gates, and headed out for the gates at the other end of the city. Almost an hour later, with ma in her kerchief and I in my flight jacket, the caravan had negotiated the three-plus miles, including the one stop sign on the main drag, to a park where everybody disbursed. No rioting, no threats, not even a jolly red-hatted reveler, beaten up.

And so it ended, judging of the best decorated golf cart to be named later, the most likely aspirants parked in the giant boat launch parking lot for revelers to inspect the offerings, looking for inspiration for next year. If all the photos taken of this event could be printed, you'd see more smiles than when Trump won the election. ❖



The COVID-19 Christmas Party

By How Miller

Photos by How Miller, Nancy Miller and Dennis DeRosia

Like many good SF operations, we snuck our SFA Chapter 78 annual Christmas Party in under the wire.

One day before almost all of Southern California was again put under quarantine, we met at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club in Newport Beach sponsored by Yacht Club member (and our treasurer), Richard Simonian. Due to the restrictions that were already in place, the event was held outdoors, partly under tents.

Understandably, attendance was lower than normal. Even our chapter president, Bruce Long, was unable to attend (some lame excuse about being in the hospital). Hopefully he will be fine once he can get past the COVID bed shortage. His wife, Geri, nevertheless saved the day, coming early, bringing the awards and wonderful door prizes that included treats for the women, and leaving late.

So, Chapter Vice President, Don Gonnevill, stepped up and did a marvelous job of emceeing the festivities. We had the JROTC Color Guard from Sonora High School in La Habra, escorted by chapter member LTC (R) Hans Hunt, our guest speaker CSM (R) Kevin Harry, the new president of the Special Forces Association. And we were joined by active duty members of the newly reflagged C/19 Special Forces National Guard, whose members spend a lot of time on international deployments.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Sergeant at Arms, Mark Miller, the invocation was presented by Chapter Chaplain, Richard Simonian, and an "empty chair" POW/MIA presentation was made by member CSM (R), Robert Crebbs.

We also had a DJ, James Griffey, a raffle, and a silent auction for two AR15s generously donated by Juggernaut Tactical.

A top-notch dinner was presented by Scott Jones' team with their usual great service.

Awards were presented, including six new recipients of the Order of Saint Maurice from the Infantry Association: LTC (R) Don Gonnevill, LTC (R) Gary Macnamara, MAJ (R) Hammond Sally, SFC Dennis DeRosia, SSG Thomas W. Turney, SGT James H. Carter, and SGT Howard Miller.

How and Nancy Miller received an award for Members of the Year. And a new sign was presented to C/19 for their headquarters.

Lighting conditions affected some of the pictures, but not the smiles. ❖



- 1 The JROTC Color Guard from Sonora High School prepare to post colors
- 2 Sonora High School's JROTC Color Guard left to right, C/SGM Jone Higuchi, C/LTC Brandon Garcia, C/CPT Gio Garcia, and C/1SG Ethan Collins with Senior Army Instructor Hans Fritz Hunt, Lieutenant Colonel(Retired), U.S. Army and member of Chapter 78
- 3 Guest speaker, CSM (R) Kevin Harry, the new president of the Special Forces Association.



POW/MIA Memorial table



Don Gonneville & Patrick Kinsey



Richard Simonian



Geri Long



Dan & Heather Kinnersley



Kevin Harry & Lindy Krickbaum



Don Gonneville



Nancy Gonneville



Jerry & Regina Romit



Jess & Silvia Hamilton



Robert & Arlene Crebbs



Jim Duffy & David Thomas



Ken Atkinson



Cory Peterson



Doug Way



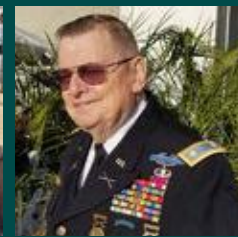
Kris Boodaghian & Kelsey Lockard



Patrick & Myra Kinsey



Tom & Jill Boivin Turney



Gary Macnamara



Morgan Barrett



Jack & Vicki Blau



Left to right, Mark Miller & Hamm Salley



Bree Barrett & Christopher Chavez



Ed & Diane Barrett



Chapter members enjoying dinner.



Scott Jones



Adnan Flores, Itzel Flores, Gaby Flores



Dennis & Glo Derosia



DJ, James Griffey & assistant



Cocktails on the patio



Geri Long (second from left) and others at the head table



Chapter members consoling Geri



- 1 SFA Chapter 78 members in attendance at the Christmas party who have been awarded the National Infantry Association Order of Saint Maurice included, left to right, SSG Thomas W. Turney, LTC (R) Don Gonneville, SGT Howard Miller, SGT Mark Miller, SFC Dennis DeRosia, MAJ (R) Hammond Sally, LTC (R) Gary Macnamara. Present but not pictured, LTC (R) James Duffy, SSG (R) Richard Simonian.
- 2 Chapter 78 Vice President Don Gonneville presenting How and Nancy Miller with the 2020 Members of the Year Award.
- 3 Chapter 78 Vice President Don Gonneville presenting the Order of Saint Maurice award to Gary Macnamara.

- 4 Chapter 78 presented members of newly reflagged C/1/19 SFG with a new sign to replace one they had recently had made, which the reflagging had made obsolete.
- 5 Chapter members and guests listen with interest to the event's guest speaker, CSM (R) Kevin Harry, the new president of the Special Forces Association.
- 6 Chapter Members of the Year Nancy and How Miller.