



# SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 5 • MAY 2021



## Cambodian Incursion, 1970

### ST Idaho — Still MIA 53 Years Later

### Jim Morris; Rockin' And Rollin' With the Montagnards





# SENTINEL

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 5 • MAY 2021

## From the Editor



How Miller  
Sentinel Editor

This issue is special to me because I get to tell about one of the signature accomplishments of my A-Team between September '69 and August '70. It grew from a simple telling of my experience as a participant to an investigation of all SF participation in the Cambodian Invasion authorized by President Nixon. Huge thanks to all those that helped me put together this two-part series. Hopefully you will find this informative. Special thanks to our unofficial SF historian Steve Sherman.

He found for me just what I needed with regard to the CIDG participation. As you will see in my book review, I also gained a lot of perspective from the novel *NILO Ha Tien* by Larry Serra and the book *Secret Green Beret Commandos In Cambodia: A Memorial History of MACVSOG's Command and Control Detachment South (CCS) And Its Air Partners, Republic of Vietnam, 1967-1972* by LTC Fred S. Lindsey, Ret.

It's also special since John Stryker Meyer gets a chance to share a story demonstrating the incredible risk the SOG warriors endured and his personal loss. These men did brave things with the knowledge that their stories might not ever be heard, even if they were able to survive the ordeal. Clearly those that did not come home are remembered with the greatest respect by those who did.

Marc Yablonka shares a story from his book *Vietnam Bao Chi: Warriors of Word and Film* on (mostly military) combat reporters in Vietnam. This chapter is about our own Jim Morris. Kenn Miller and Mike Keele both author informative book reviews — I know their articles make me want to get the book, which I have done before. Kenn wrote a wonderful review of *Vietnam Bao Chi* a couple of years ago and I recommend both the review from the [June 2019 issue of the Sentinel](#) as well as the book *Vietnam Bao Chi* itself. I recently read the book and very much enjoyed it.

Marc did a good job of giving us a flavor of Jim the man and some of his many exploits. As you will see, he and Jim are not afraid to broach touchy subjects either. Jim is not only a Chapter 78 member, he is also the previous editor of the *Sentinel*.

It's good to see Bruce almost back in the saddle and I am optimistic about the good things coming up for Chapter 78, the *Sentinel* and my mentor. ❖

How Miller  
Sentinel Editor



[VIETNAM BAO CHI:](#)  
[Warriors of Word and Film](#)  
By Marc Phillip Yablonka  
Casemate Publishers,  
291 pages

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**FRONT COVER:** *Who reads the Sentinel?* War reporter and SFA National Lifetime Honorary member Alex Quade reunites with former team members of a legendary 7SFG ODA, at the Airborne & Spec Ops Museum in Fayetteville, NC, to honor those KIA on an op in Afghanistan they were all on. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



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# From the Vice President | May 2021



Don Gonneville  
Chapter 78 Vice-President

We've all been impacted in one way or another by COVID-19. Depending on the source, we may be seeing the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. Let's just hope it's not a train coming from the other direction. Our Chapter President, Bruce Long, underwent a four-month ordeal with serious health issues, much of that time spent in the hospital. Fortunately, Bruce is on the mend and was able to attend our last meeting. It looks as though he will be able to resume his tenure as Chapter President by the time our next meeting rolls around, and for that we are very grateful.

Moving forward, our Chapter has many projects ongoing, all of which are designed to reach out to all active and potential members. The goal is to create an environment of mutual support and fellowship, and to overcome the isolation that many may be experiencing as a result of events over the past year.

By contacting as many members as possible, we hope to encourage attendance at our meetings and to assess their needs in order to determine ways in which these needs may be met within our Chapter.

One of the ways of encouraging greater attendance at meetings is to incorporate interesting speakers into the agenda. We are confident that we can attract the kind of speakers that our audience can truly appreciate. In that vein, war reporter Alex Quade will be bringing along a very special guest speaker to May 8th's chapter

meeting — her CIA friend who's worked with Special Forces down-range since 9/11. He has a brand-new best selling book out. You don't want to miss this very special speaker.

We hope to see all of you there. ♦

De Oppresso Liber  
Don Gonneville  
Vice President, SFA Chapter 78

## May Chapter Meeting May 8, 2021 SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

If you plan to attend this meeting please e-mail **VP Don Gonneville** at [don@gonneville.com](mailto:don@gonneville.com), no later than Thursday May 6th, 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)



Alex brings these extremely Quiet Professionals out of the shadows, in the Pineland area, to share their amazing story of VALOR, heroism & sacrifice. Stay tuned! (\*Alex will be at the 08 MAY meeting, bringing a special speaker. His photo in Afghanistan, to the right.)





# ST Idaho – Still MIA 53 Years Later



John S. Meyer

By John Stryker Meyer

Glen Oliver Lane and the fate of his small SOG reconnaissance team still haunt me to this day.

We never met. Our paths crossed only momentarily 53 years ago.

On May 20, 1968, myself and two to other young, green Green Berets entered year four of the top secret war that was fought during the Vietnam War across the fence in Laos,

Cambodia and N. Vietnam. It was fought for eight years, under the aegis of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group, or simply SOG.

The three of us had completed our in-country training in Nha Trang, South Vietnam. We received our top secret SOG briefing in Da Nang – which included signing government documents vowing not to discuss, write about or photograph any aspect of SOG's mission for 20 years. We were told that if we violated that agreement, we would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and that we were to tell no one, parents, girl friends, lovers or friends about SOG.

On the morning of May 20 the South Vietnamese Air Force's 219th Special Operations Squadron flew us north from Da Nang to FOB 1 in Phu Bai, located 10 miles south of Hue. The three of us exited the H-34 Sikorsky helicopter as a recon team — code named ST Idaho — boarded the nine-cylinder war bird and headed west into one of the deadliest SOG target areas: the A Shau Valley.

Because the helicopter crew chief told us to hurriedly exit the chopper, we didn't pay much attention to the six men from ST Idaho who boarded it and headed west toward Laos and the A Shau Valley. Since 1965, three Green Beret A Camps were driven from that valley by communist North Vietnam Army troops because it was a vital artery where enemy soldiers and supplies from the north flowed into South Vietnam.

Had I been more observant, I would have seen the team leader, code-named One-Zero, Glen Oliver Lane; his assistant team leader, code-named One-One; Robert Duval Owen, and four tough, fearless South Vietnamese indigenous troops climb aboard the chopper through its only passenger door on the right side of the helicopter.

Since there was so much enemy activity in the A Shau Valley and down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, ST Idaho's mission was to find out what the enemy was up to and if any more future attacks were being planned — such as the Tet Offensive earlier in the year, where communist forces struck in surprise attacks across South Vietnam during the national holiday of Tet.

Shortly after I entered FOB 1, I met Staff Sgt. Robert J. "Spider" Parks, whom I first encountered while going through Special Forces Training Group in 1967. Spider explained that he had been a member of ST Idaho, but was recently promoted to being a team leader of another recon team at FOB 1, hence he was nervous about the safety and well being of his old team, which he had run several missions with prior to Lane determining that Spider was ready to lead another team.

The South Vietnamese aircrews — code-named Kingbees — returned to FOB 1 and reported that ST Idaho had been inserted into the target area without incident and that they had received a "Team OK" from the radio operator on the team.

## Concern for ST Idaho

However, during the afternoon, Spider became concerned when he learned that ST Idaho had failed to make a commo check with the Forward Air Controllers — code named Coveys — who flew over the target area twice during daylight hours.

By nightfall, all attention was on the fate of ST Idaho. Spider and several other spike team members were very concerned because there had been no commo from the team since the initial "Team OK." Covey — the code name for SOG forward air controllers, hadn't been able to raise anyone all day. Covey flew an extra mission that night, but to no avail. The airborne command aircraft that flew over Southeast Asia 24 hours a day was also unable to raise ST Idaho during the night.

By early morning, the mood in camp was grave. Spider said ST Oregon had been selected to run a Bright Light mission into the Whiskey Five target to investigate what had happened to ST Idaho. Mike Tucker and George Sternberg were the veteran recon members of ST Oregon. Tucker was a no-nonsense One-Zero who had many missions under his belt. Sternberg had run several missions from FOB 3 at Khe Sanh during the highly publicized siege of the Marine base in early 1968.

Together on ST Oregon, both Tucker and Sternberg respected each other's prowess in the field so much that they rotated One-Zero duty with strong results. They were among the first to photograph NVA bulldozer trails cutting swaths through the triple canopy jungle to expand the Ho Chi Minh Trail Complex. They photographed NVA tanks, including one shot where the NVA star was visible, prior to the NVA hitting and overrunning the Lang Vei A Camp west of Khe Sanh earlier in the year.



ST Idaho at FOB 1 in early 1968 in Phu Bai, S. Vietnam. SFC Glen Oliver Lane is the second American kneeling from the left. The team is in front of a Sikorsky H-34 helicopter, which was flown by South Vietnamese pilots from the S. Vietnamese Air Force's 219th Special Operations Squadron. (Photo courtesy John Stryker Meyer)

On one mission they had captured an NVA POW and were flying back to FOB 1 in a Kingbee when one of the team members discovered that the POW was a woman. Sternberg and the team member holding the POW were so startled that they loosened their grip momentarily. The woman bolted from the H-34 and jumped to her death.

For the Bright Light, former Idaho team member and fearless medic Stephen Perry was added to their team. Tucker opted to take one Vietnamese team member from ST Idaho, Ha, on the mission. Ha was highly respected by the veteran SF men. He was fearless in the field, but more importantly, he could provide insight into ST Idaho tactics.

Spider explained that a Bright Light team went in armed to the teeth, carrying only weapons, ammunition, hand grenades, bandages, body bags and maybe one canteen of water. No food. Bright Lights were the most dangerous of all missions, designed to go in to find and recover downed pilots, lost or injured SF team members or to bring back the bodies of SF troops or fliers killed in action.

On most Bright Light missions, there were plenty of NVA waiting. Tucker and Sternberg rounded out their Bright Light team with the best indigenous team members from ST Oregon. Spider was designated to fly in the "chase" Kingbee, which was a chopper that had a medic or extra SF personnel on board. If the lead Kingbee went down, the chase ship was designated to rescue them.

### ST Oregon Inserted

ST Oregon was inserted on the same Landing Zone where ST Idaho had been inserted two days earlier, in hopes of finding clues as to what happened to it, knowing full well that a lack of ammo from a team in the field usually meant it was in deep trouble, deep in enemy-held territory, with no immediate relief from conventional ground forces, artillery or tank support.

ST Oregon was on the ground a short while before it encountered numerous NVA troops, some armed with American weapons, firing Colt CAR-15s and throwing M-26 hand grenades. The team retreated into a huge bomb crater as the NVA closed in on them,

close enough to throw hand grenades into the crater. Fortunately, A-1 Skyraiders arrived and began making gun runs so close to the team's perimeter in the bomb crater, that the men of ST Oregon could count the bolts in the single-engine propeller war plane as exploding rounds from it killed NVA soldiers charging the team. The rounds were so close to the team that they covered the team members with dirt, wood chips, stones and leaves.

During the intense firefight, one Vietnamese team member was killed, all of the Americans — Sternberg, Tucker and Perry — were wounded from shrapnel and/or bullet wounds. One hand grenade literally tore Sternberg's jungle boot off of his foot. The indigenous soldier, Ha, suffered 94 separate wounds, while Perry was the most seriously injured American on that Bright Light mission. They were rescued by two heroic Kingbee crews who pulled out the heavily wounded team. Upon extraction, an AK-47 round tore through the thin wall of the H-34 and struck a battery Sternberg was carrying in his vest. The impact of that round lifted Sternberg out of his seat, slammed him to the floor amid the hydraulic fluids that were leaking inside the helicopter, breaking two ribs. The URC-10 battery was a life saver for Sternberg.

Because there was confusion after the second Kingbee left the LZ with the remainder of ST Oregon, a third Kingbee, the chase helicopter with Spider Parks in it, landed near the bomb crater. Parks ran out to the bomb crater, saw no living team members and returned to the Kingbee while under heavy enemy gunfire. As it lifted off the ground the relentless heavy communist gunfire killed the South Vietnamese door gunner sitting next to Spider.

### Two Bright Light KIAs

The final count: For ST Oregon, one KIA, every American and indigenous troop were wounded. One Kingbee door gunner KIA. Dozens of NVA were killed.

Hopes to find clues as to the whereabouts of ST Idaho, were dashed.

Tucker and Sternberg told S-2 debriefers that they had found what appeared to be a trail in the grass that went away from the LZ, which ST Idaho may have used. That was the only possible clue they found.

Getting hit with M-26 grenade fragments and CAR-15 gunfire meant ST Idaho had either been wiped out or captured.

Because enemy activity in that target remained highly visible, and due to the extreme casualties that ST Oregon took in its valiant attempt to find ST Idaho, no further efforts were made to find the lost team.

Thus the question hung heavy in the air and in the minds of every recon man at FOB 1: What happened to ST Idaho?

Lane was an experienced, highly regarded One-Zero. He had served in Korea, saw heavy combat there and since taking over ST Idaho had run several successful missions before the ill-fated May 20th mission.

On a personal level, at that time, I was haunted by this question: If a veteran Green Beret with the experience of Lane on a veteran recon team, an experienced Green Beret Owen are wiped out along with four tough, fearless Vietnamese team members, what will happen to a recon rookie like me?

The war waited for no one.

Spider became the new One-Zero for ST Idaho, Don Wolken became the One-One and I became the One-Two radio operator while Nguyen Van Sau became the Vietnamese team leader, Zero-One. Sau was fearless, had three years experience and was a simple farmer who hated communism and had seen first hand the tyranny of it.

### ST Idaho Rebuilt

After going through an intense training regimen, which included pulling local night ambushes and patrols, ST Idaho ran its first mission east of the A Shau Valley, teaming with another FOB 1 recon team for an area reconnaissance. In between the monsoon season and heavy rains, ST Idaho inserted Air Force sensors in the A Shau Valley and outside the old Khe Sanh compound.

By October, Wolken was the One-Zero. On October 6, 1968, we inserted into a target area named E-4, with a secondary mission of looking for an NVA POW camp. Because Lane and the old ST Idaho were still fresh on our minds, the secondary became our primary mission in our minds. If there was any chance that we could find that camp, we wanted to do so.

However, the NVA had other plans. On October 7, after we found a small knoll of high ground, the communist forces hit us with wave attacks and attempts to get inside our defensive perimeter. At one point, as I attempted to make radio contact with any aircraft in the area, NVA soldiers began stacking up the bodies of dead NVA soldiers we had killed on the hill's embankment, in an effort to build a cadaver wall they could climb and to gain a height advantage over ST Idaho so they could shoot down toward us. A Kingbee pulled us out of E-4 at last light. When they did, I was down to my last magazine of ammo, my last hand grenade and the radio battery was getting low. That Kingbee had 48 bullet holes in it.

Back in camp, we told Spider that we tried to find the NVA POW camp, but got cut short with the deadly firefight that lasted more than four hours.

The three of us again toasted Glen Lane, Robert Owen and the fearless indigenous troops who we assumed died that day in the A Shau Valley. None of those men would have surrendered to the brutal communists.

### Among 50 MIAs

Thus today, the fate of Lane and Owen haunt me and other SOG soldiers as the federal government addresses the compelling issue of bringing home the remains of 1,584 (as of April 4, 2021) American listed as missing in action across Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War.

Lane and Owen are among approximately 50 Green Berets who remain listed as missing in action or killed in action, but their bodies haven't been returned from the secret war in Laos, Cambodia and N. Vietnam. In addition there are approximately 80 aviators from the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps who died in support of those Green Berets on the ground across the fence behind enemy lines. Many of those missing have siblings and family members who have died without knowing of the heroic service those men performed



SFC. Glen O. Lane  
(Photo courtesy John Stryker Meyer)



SFC Robert D. Owen  
(Photo courtesy John Stryker Meyer)

during the deadly secret war in Southeast Asia – which turned out to have the highest casualty rate of the war.

A few years ago, DoD formed the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) that consolidated three previous federal operations: the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), and the Air Force's Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Vietnam veterans have publicly stressed their hope that through the reorganization DPAA's efforts to find and return Vietnam veterans' remains from Southeast Asia would not be deemphasized.

Sadly, in my opinion, in regards to this sacred mission in Southeast Asia, DPAA leadership has failed those of us who have lost comrades-in-arms and the families of those lost and never recovered Americans. The upper DPAA leadership gives public lip service to this mission while gutting the interior management of DPAA's management structure to obtain higher body counts from WWII/Korean War sites.

On a very personal level, myself, Spider Parks and every member of ST/RT Idaho, hope that the remains of Lane and Owen would be found and returned to the United States for proper burial and closure. And, we are joined by the families of all POW/MIAs whose remains have not been located, identified and returned to the U.S. for proper recognition and burial. ❖

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Stryker Meyer is an author and U.S. Army Special Forces combat veteran who served two tours of duty running recon with the Studies and Observations Group, also known as MACV-SOG. Meyer has authored three books: *Across The Fence: The Secret War in Vietnam — Expanded Edition*, and *On The Ground: The Secret War in Vietnam*, that he co-authored with fellow SOG recon Green Beret John Peters. Both are available as audiobooks and e-books on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). His third book, *SOG Chronicles Volume One*, is available as paperback and as an e-book on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com). He also has appeared in eight [Jocko Podcasts](https://www.jockopodcasts.com) beginning with [Jocko Podcast #180](https://www.jockopodcasts.com/podcast/180), available on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) or can listened to on most major podcast platforms.



# Book Review

## NILO Ha Tien by HL Serra

By How Miller

*NILO Ha Tien* is a delightful historical novel. It takes you into a real world situation and adds a little for dramatic interest. Our hero is a NILO (Naval Intelligence Liaison Officer) at the far southwestern corner of Vietnam, very close to the Cambodian border.

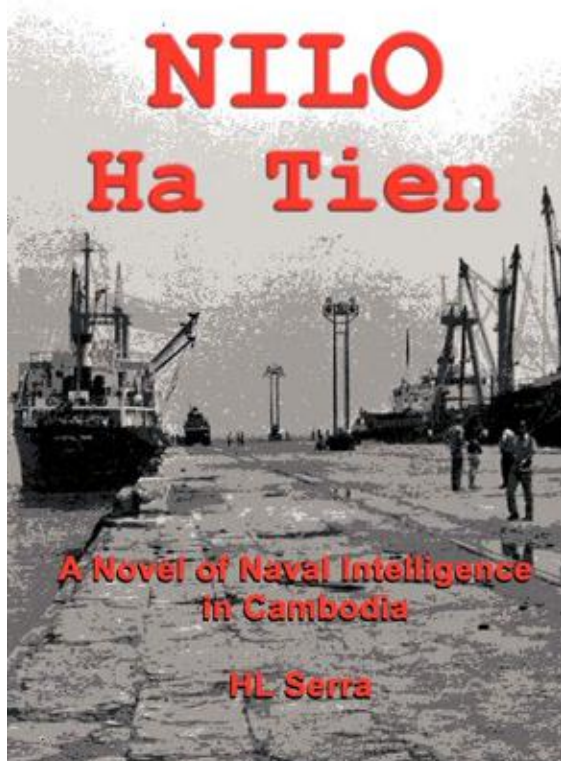
The hero, told in the first person, actually asked for this risky assignment and pulled some strings to make it happen. It tells the story of the U.S. Navy and South Vietnamese Navy activities before and during the 1970 Cambodia Incursion.

The reader is brought into situations as diverse as riveting overnight anti-infiltration action on a canal near the border that was very active with weapons smuggling by the VC and NVA, to conspiring with Cambodian commanders to supply their troops and fight off the North Vietnamese, and a rescue of ethnic Vietnamese from hostile Cambodian elements.

You will see some of the thinking of the young, bold and successful U.S. Navy Admiral Elmo Zumwalt and gain a better understanding of events before and during the Cambodian Invasion.

Obviously this fits nicely into our coverage in this issue of activities around the Mekong Delta during the incursion.

Larry went on to become a lawyer, a law professor in San Diego, a lecturer at the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, D.C. and — oh by the way— he was the real NILO at Ha Tien during the Cambodian Invasion. ♦



*NILO Ha Tien* By HL (Larry) Serra  
AuthorHouse, 400 pages



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- Golf Tournament



# Cambodian Incursion, 1970 — Part One



How Miller

By How Miller

Photos courtesy How Miller

During the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese needed ways to arm and supply both their own soldiers as well as aid the Viet Cong in the south. They had a very active smuggling operation going by sea, in river drop-offs, all the way to the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville.

Much effort was expended to reduce that by the U.S. and South Vietnamese (RVN) navies,

resulting in an estimated 90% reduction of this. That made the North more dependent on land resupply. They found it most profitable to ignore the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia, to the immediate west of the two Vietnams.

Neither country had formidable armies, and the North Vietnamese Army (called NVA by us) had battle hardened cadres, so in 1958, only 4 years after defeating the French, the north started infiltrating men on foot down an already established set of trails. This grew to a supply effort using mainly bicycle and foot traffic. Much of this “Ho Chi Minh Trail” was covered by vegetation and was over rugged terrain. By 1970, despite the best efforts of SOG and the U.S. Air Force, the amount of materials flowing down the now “paved” roads were prodigious. They had built up supply lines and storage depots and also used those bases as refuge for cross border attacks into South Vietnam.

Laos was declared neutral by a peace treaty in 1961. The U.S. largely withdrew our operatives (CIA and SF) as per the agreement, but the North Vietnamese stayed in place and continued to increase its presence and activities. The Lao government was powerless and/or unwilling to stop them.

In Cambodia Norodom Sihanouk, then titled Prince, did not have sufficient forces to resist the North’s occupation of the eastern edge of his country. His “neutral” country tolerated this and he cooperated with Russia, China and North Vietnam. In return, the NVA would respect and not bother Cambodian citizenry. The longer this went on, however, the more intrusive the communists became. The Cambodian armed forces were no match for the overwhelming numbers of battle hardened troops the North Vietnamese had positioned and active in eastern Cambodia.

The North also had the “Sihanouk Trail”, multiple routes to deliver supplies that had been shipped to Sihanoukville on the southwest corner of Cambodia, moving goods east and northeast either to the sanctuaries or through the Mekong delta directly into Vietnam in the Saigon area. On March 18, 1970, while Prince Sihanouk was out of the country for medical treatments, the National Assembly deposed him and appointed Prime Minister Lon Nol as provisional head of state. This came on the heels of an ultimatum by Lon Nol, on 12 March for all Vietnamese communists to vacate Cambodia within 72 hours.

Unintimidated, the NVA began attacking and taking control of several Cambodian provinces and approached to within 15 miles of Phnom Penh. They also began to arm the communist Cambodian insurgents, the Khmer Rouge, which they had previously refrained from doing.

The U.S. was not sure if Lon Nol was going to be friendly to the west, and the U.S. in particular. One of the early overtures by the Cambodians to the U.S. was a visit by a navy ship to the U.S. Navy in Ha Tien, as is nicely described in the novel *NILO Ha Tien*.

This led initially to our navy providing over 2000 rifles and other arms to the Cambodians to help them repel the NVA, and later to the evacuation of 35,000 ethnic Vietnamese, who were being driven out of the country, many of them by being murdered by the Cambodian Army. That was a joint effort of U.S. and South Vietnamese navies, with the help of the Cambodians.

President Nixon had campaigned in 1968 with a promise to get us “out of the war, with honor.” He built on an already established program of Vietnamization, which was gradually turning the fighting over to the Vietnamese. He greatly accelerated the process along with constant drawdowns of American troops.

When Lon Nol took power Nixon seized the opportunity to enter Cambodia and destroy the supplies that were in the sanctuaries and kill as many of the enemy as possible, giving the south more time to raise their fighting prowess before our projected exit from South Vietnam. And though much materiel was destroyed or removed, the NVA either figured it out, or were tipped off ahead of time and took the best weapons and ammo with them and largely avoided contact with the Vietnamese and American forces. Instead they moved their men and weapons further inland and north to put more pressure on the Cambodian Army.

My A-camp, A325 Duc Hue was positioned near the Cambodian border, a few kilometers east of the Parrot’s Beak, to interfere with the robust smuggling efforts. A326 Tra Cu was to our east on the Vam Co Dong River, collocated with a brown water navy base of the same name. Their missions were similar, with the Navy providing riverine patrolling and SOF insertions.

For you Google Earth aficionados, Duc Hue was an old French star shaped fort at [10°56'06"N 106°12'16"E](#) and Tra Cu was at [10°54'01"N 106°18'55"E](#), a triangular shaped area at the conjunction of the Vam Co Dong river and a canal. Both can still be discerned on Google Earth. Both of our camps were to the west of Saigon.

At Duc Hue we had one company of Cambodian, and two companies of Vietnamese CIDG, with dependents and various civilian workers — nurses, cook, laundry, interpreters, nurses, and an old tailor/barber who would trim all our tiger striped hat brims and cut our hair. My right hand man, civilian nurse Kim Phuoc, was Cambodian born and spoke Cambodian, Vietnamese and English. He was excited about Lon Nol ascending to power.



Several times per month we would get mortared. Some of it was probably target practice for VC training classes, conducted across the border near Ba Thu, identifiable on the map now only as being near Chan Trea. We had a well-constructed camp, double layered rooves, protected by dirt filled 55 gallon drums and sandbags. So we usually suffered few injuries from the many mortars. But, most patrols would run into some kind of contact. We also had a small detachment of ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) artillery, which consisted of two 155mm howitzers and crews.

The Incursion occurred in stages. Starting in mid-March the ARVN made incursions across the Cambodian border of a temporary nature. Then, near the end of April, the ARVN began their incursion in earnest, including a pincer movement from the north into the Angel's Wing, and from the south into the Parrots Beak area and sweeping west towards Phnom Penh. The American heavy infantry divisions and the ARVN forces drove into Cambodia more substantially, starting about the first of May. This occurred along many sections of the Vietnam-Cambodia border. Most northerly was the U.S. 4th infantry Division west of Pleiku, almost to the Laotian border, and the most southerly was the ARVN crossing near Ha Tien at the southwest corner of Vietnam on the Gulf of Thailand. The locations were dictated by known or suspected munition storage areas and, though the NVA took their best weapons with them (according to almost everyone on the ground), what was captured was estimated to have been about 9 months' worth of weapons, ammunition, and materials to support the war in the south.

There was also a lot of activity by Special Forces camps and SOG (mostly CCS). When we were alerted to our coming operation, we learned that the ARVN with some Americans had just swept through the Angel's Wing and the Parrots Beak in the previous days. What we did not know for sure was that the ARVN were sweeping west toward the Phnom Penh area to help save Cambodia from falling to the North Vietnamese. Our combined CIDG operation, comprised of CIDG troops from A325 Duc Hue and our sister A-camp to our east, A326 Tra Cu, began immediately following the ARVN leaving our area.

We inserted in different groupings by Hueys. When my grouping arrived, within about two minutes I was being hailed to take care of a wounded CIDG. He had stepped on a land mine, blowing off most of each of his legs a little below the knees. Fortunately, the CIDG medics had already done an excellent job, applying tourniquets and bandages there. His whole front was also sprayed with



A325 Duc Hue from north aerial 69-70



A326 Tra Cu

shrapnel and he could not see. I cleaned him up a little more and called for a medivac. I was told none were available because of all the casualties the American units were suffering. A Special Forces Colonel had arrived and was assessing the progress on the ground. I don't remember his name, but I had met him before at the A camp. I explained the situation to him and asked if he could take the CIDG with him back to an appropriate medical facility. To his credit, he only thought about it for a couple of seconds before agreeing. I gave the soldier a syrette of morphine and attached the spent cartridge to his collar so that other medical personnel would know he had gotten a dose. We loaded him on the chopper and shortly thereafter the colonel left. I did not know if the man was going to survive until about 3 months later when I was in Nha Trang out-processing for DEROS. When I walked into the medical facilities at the suggestion of one of the sergeants there, I was greeted with a loud "Bac Si!" from several beds away. He had survived and was happy about it. It was one of the best feelings I have ever had.





Map showing Ho Chi Minh Trail, Sihanouk Trail and major air bases used by FACs. (U.S. Air Force)

The objective of our operation was to secure the area and search for hidden weapons bunkers. While securing the area we encountered numerous “stay behind” enemy troops. This developed into a two to three day engagement. We were able to get fire support from the ARVN 155's located at Duc Hue and also from a U.S. Cobra helicopter gunship. I remember the Cobra coming in almost directly above us so closely that, had it been daylight, I would have been able to see the pilot's face as he passed by. At that point our part of the formation was lined up in a ditch for the remainder of the mostly sleepless night.

The next day we had a line formation to attack a “tree” line from which we had been receiving significant fire the previous night and were now receiving sporadic AK47 or machine gun fire. After using the AN/PRC 25 on my back, Captain Shannon, C.O. of A326 Tra Cu, said that the CIDG were not moving, despite orders. So Joe Tylus, our junior radioman who did not speak any Vietnamese, stood up, waved for others to follow him, ran forward about 20 yards and flopped to a prone position on the dry rice patty. I started yelling, with my best beginner level Vietnamese, for half the troops to advance and then cover while the other half advanced. They all



Ba Thu, Cambodia — Cambodian CIDG prepares safety fuse to destroy munitions cache.



Ba Thu, Cambodia — another munitions cache detonated, May or June 1970

looked around as though they did not know what I was saying, but they eventually started moving, along with the rest of us. From that point on, their training kicked in and we assaulted and cleared the objective, losing one KIA. Over the course of the two to three day encounter we suffered 8 friendly KIA and numerous wounded, keeping me busy with both infantry and medical tasks.

Eventually we stopped being harassed by the enemy and settled down for almost two months of securing the territory and searching for and finding rice, weapons, ammo, mines and explosives. What could not be returned to the base, due again to insufficient aircraft being available, we blew in-place. The CIDG diligently searched using probing rods and found most items concealed in paddy dikes or under trap doors, both inside and outside of hooches.

There were no civilians around, so there were no CAP's/civilian sick calls. What does a medic do in the field when there are few medical problems? Try to be sure the best sanitation is being observed, do some sick calls for the troops, even at one point give some scheduled vaccinations. Then one used the skills he has been most thoroughly cross-trained to do by his Engineer teammate, Jeff Hilton, and





Maj Denom B32, Dai Huy (CPT) Hai , Duc Hue C.O. LLDB

blow stuff up. The most useless materials to us were the anti-tank and anti-personnel mines and the explosives that were there in abundance. We wanted to destroy them in place to deny the use of it to the enemy.

What is referred to as “TNT” in the after action reports was actually cubes about 9 or 10 inches in height, wrapped in neatly folded, thick wax paper appearing packages. The explosive was a very light tan color and a damp clay consistency. They were stacked up to ten high in these underground storage chambers.

So first we removed the recoilless rifles and their rounds. These were still cosmolined and marked with Chinese characters. The rifles were mostly Chinese versions of the Russian semi-automatic SKS, sometimes called CKCs, which were typically loaded with 10 rounds of 7.62mm x 39mm rounds, the same that the AK47 uses. It was similar in appearance to our M14 rifle and M60 machine gun ammo. These rifles were far inferior to the AK47s, which is why they were left behind. One could use it if that was all that was available, but by that point AK47s were nearly ubiquitous. They had been coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail from the north, and the Sihanouk trail from the southwest in great abundance, at this point by the truckload.

Some of these SKSs ended up being good trading material for our rear area troops, and I even got an export license and took one back home with me. They were also handy in that they each had a fold-down star configuration bayonet (as opposed to a blade shape, as the Russian and Eastern European versions had). Also there were machine guns, RPG launchers, and mortars — all with the appropriate ammo — and booby traps and even a lot of shovels.

I took one of the CIDG with me who had some experience with explosives and we proceeded to blow up some of these caches. I let him do the honors of igniting the safety fuses after we rigged the C4, det cord, and blasting caps together.

It was very satisfying, since the VC and NVA had been able to cross back over the border to their safe havens after mortaring the hell out of our camp on so many occasions. In addition we knew the destruction of their supplies would help keep the enemy from killing as many of our indigenous and allied friends, as well as Americans.



Left to right How Miller Duc Hue, CPT Shannon Tra Cu



How Miller in Cambodia, after a swim, posing with M79 and CIDG.

At some point during a quiet time, I was approached by a group of 6 or 8 CIDG who stood in front of me in a semicircle. They were all quiet, as though they were about to do something solemn. One of them handed me something and explained that they themselves had dug it up and they wanted me to have it. It turned out to be something of intrinsic as well as sentimental value. It was a Foo Dog that is placed beside the entryway to a house. They often come in a pair, one Foo Dog is holding down a pup under a paw. The other, which is what they gave me, is holding down a globe. At the time I was only thinking of the honor they were bestowing upon me. I rather awkwardly thanked them as best I could in Vietnamese and they all smiled and left. Much later I discovered that the black hard surface was a protective coating and the Foo Dog was actually made of bronze and was, of course, one of my most prized possessions.

Meanwhile, lots of others were taking part — from the ARVN, U.S. Infantry and Airforce, and the U.S. and Vietnamese Navy and SF A camps in the south, to SOG, the ARVN, U.S. and Vietnamese air forces, and U.S. infantry and many Special Forces A camps in and around the northern part of Cambodia.

This issue contains part one of two. Covered here are some of the ground and water activities from the Angels Wing south. Next month we will cover to the north — to include ARVN, U.S. infantry, SOG and Special Forces A-camp participation. Stay tuned for the June Sentinel for some notable and atypical activities by CCS, and more. ♦

# JIM MORRIS; ROCKIN' AND ROLLIN' WITH THE MONTAGNARDS



Jim Morris in Cambodia, 1973 (Photo by Al Rockoff, courtesy Jim Morris)

By Marc Phillip Yablonka

(Excerpted from the book *Vietnam Bao Chi: Warriors of Word and Film*)

In his years of soldiering, Major Jim Morris, 1st and 5th Special Forces Groups, perhaps the best-known soldier/writer of the Green Beret experience in Vietnam, was only a PIO for four months for the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and six months as PIO in the 1st Group on Okinawa. Nonetheless, those 10 months were an important time in his Army career.

"All the rest of my time in Vietnam I was an XO or CO of an 'A' Detachment or an S5 staff officer. Most of the photos we shot on a team were either of us with our arms over each other's shoulders or of dead guys. Somewhere in my kit, though, I have a photo of me taking pix during the Tet Offensive with one hand, and my rifle in the other. Once I got my story, I put the camera away and settled in to fight for the rest of the night," he said.

"You also have to realize that everybody who worked for me was a better photographer than I was or am. I'm a writer who was put in a position where I had to take pictures."

Indeed, Morris is best known for his words. But along with his stories, his photos made print while he was soldiering on in Vietnam.

"For one thing I was editor of a monthly 16-page magazine. Whenever I went out I shot a lot of stuff. I lost the best of it though, when I went out with Project Delta [the precursor to the famed Delta Force]. We went in to take photos of some Russian trucks in the A Shau valley that the Air Force had kindly disabled. My pix were of Delta on an operation, but the S2, who also went in, forgot to take the lens cap off his camera, so Delta confiscated all my footage."

While in Vietnam, he edited *The Green Beret*, the magazine of the 5th SFG, until he was wounded, an occurrence that happened to him four times while in Vietnam and garnered him four Purple Hearts. Before that, for six months he wrote most of the stories and edited *The Liberator*, the monthly magazine of the 1st SFG on Okinawa. "I also had stories in *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, *Esquire* and the *Saturday Evening Post* during that period, although the latter two were published during a break in service between 1965 and '67," he said. "I was S3 of a reserve 'B' detachment during that period though."

His experience with the *Post* was not what a journalist would call a positive one, however.

"It was one of those 'My Turn' columns in which participants get to mouth off. One of the things I said was that we needed to keep

American control over our aid money because too much of it was being stolen, even though we might be accused of 'neo-colonialism.' The editor seized on that and titled the piece 'We Must Colonize Vietnam.' When I saw the proofs I said they had to either change the title or cancel the piece and I'd send them their money back. They agreed to the change, but when it ran, that was the headline."

The experience irked him to say the least, but fortunately he was not out of a job. His expertise as a Green Beret "rocking and rolling with the Montagnards" in the Central Highlands, as he has called the experience, was still very much in demand. However, there was another scenario for which he did feel unemployed. When the Cold War ended, Morris said that, as a soldier who had trained all his life to do what he did, it felt like he was "out of a job." That certainly applied to his long tenure in Vietnam, during his two TDYs (temporary duties) and one PCS (Permanent Change of Station) in and out of Vietnam from Okinawa and Stateside between 1963 and 1968, and as a reporter there in 1973.

"I feel that way now. My old friend, Steve Sherman, was doing a year-by-year history of the war. He asked me to contribute something on Tet '68. During the week I worked on it, I got more and more angry and surly. I've worked for years to get out of that, and there I was, back in it. I doubt if I ever write anything on Vietnam again. It is corrosive to my soul." [Steve Sherman is a Texas-based Vietnam veteran and former Green Beret himself, who has worked for years to chronicle all the Vietnam-related cinema and television programs concerning the war.] With all those years of combat under his belt, it's no wonder that Morris was wounded several times during his soldiering.

"I made it all the way through the first three and a half months into the second [tour] before I was wounded badly enough to be evacuated, and nine and a half months through the PCS tour before I was wounded badly enough to be evacuated again." What was it then that compelled Morris to come back to write about the war in 1973?

"I didn't particularly want to be a journalist. I went back to fight with FULRO [United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races, also known by its French name, Front Unifié de Lutte des Races Opprimées], the Montagnard separatist organization. But when I got there, I found they needed publicity more than they needed another gunslinger, so that's where I directed my efforts," he said.

More than combat advice, Morris felt it was more important that the Montagnards receive international recognition. And without that or any sort of international sponsorship, the revolution the Montagnards



sought would be doomed to failure. “But what I learned came in handy in refugee work ten or twelve years later,” he said.

Morris also filed stories for *Soldier of Fortune* magazine and *Rolling Stone*, through which he obtained his press credentials to report from Vietnam, now as a civilian. “When I went back in 1973, it was to reconnect with FULRO. I got credentials from *Rolling Stone*, but they never published anything I wrote for them. Not political enough for them. What they wanted was a vet to oppose the war, and I was not that guy. My objective in Vietnam was to get the Vietnamese off the Montagnards’ backs. You might say I was fighting in another war in the same country at the same time.” According to Morris, whatever stories *Rolling Stone* didn’t publish, they found a home in *Soldier of Fortune*.

As a civilian reporter, Morris was one of many media people sent to cover the war in Vietnam. For the most part, he got along with them though he did harbor some negative feelings about the job they did and how they did it.

“I got along fine with the correspondents themselves. If I have a bone to pick with anybody, it would be the foreign editor of the *New York Times*. I think every other editor in the American media read the Times on their way to work and tried to cover the same story a little differently. My problems with war correspondents are two: (1) They live and hang out together and form a consensus story about whatever it is they’re covering, and woe to the correspondent who violates that consensus. He will be quickly ostracized. (2) Once the story is set, they never change it. The Vietnamese were lousy soldiers at the start of the war and the press said so. They got better and the press never said so.”

It may very well have been that shortcoming that kept Morris from being too friendly with many of the correspondents with the exception of a few, such as the last CBS bureau chief in Vietnam, Haney Howell, professor emeritus of Winthrop University in South Carolina.

“When I went back to Vietnam, we got on fine. Same in Cambodia. I was just one more weird character in the weirdest group of characters I’ve ever met. Almost all those guys were against the war. I was against pretty much all the parts they were against, but I was for something that was off their radar, to “*De Oppresso Liber*”: to free the Montagnard people from oppression. We were doing a good job of that until we were pulled out.”

Like many of his fellow Green Berets, Morris still thinks about that to this day. “As a soldier I did not want to be part of the first cohort to ever lose a war in the history of the United States. As a journalist I wanted to discover the truth and tell it. Any further elaboration on that would be a book-length manuscript that I do not want to write,” he feels. “I left in 1973. I was sick and broke, and deeply, deeply discouraged.”

Eventually, journalist Jim Morris turned to writing books, but he traces his beginnings as a writer back to when he was a young boy of 12.

“My degree is in journalism (professional writing), which is part of the curriculum at the University of Oklahoma. The only reason that the program is in the J School is because it was thrown out of the English Department when Dr. Walter S. Campbell, who had founded the program, died. He had a Ph.D. in English, but the other instructors, Foster Harris and Dwight V. Swain, were pulp fiction writers, and the English department did not want them. Dr. Copeland, the



Leaving Cheo Reo June 5, 1964 (Photo courtesy Jim Morris)



Jumping the balloon in Thailand with the *Soldier of Fortune* crew, 1982 (Photo courtesy Jim Morris)

chairman of the J School, was a friend of Foster’s and took the program on. Foster was a full professor of journalism and he had one degree, a B.S. in geology,” Morris said.

And the degree Morris earned at the University of Oklahoma ended up having a direct result on his job in the Army.

“I was the only guy in the 1st Special Forces Group with a journalism degree and got shoved into the IO slot. That’s how I became a journalist, and the only reason I was a journalist. I’m a novelist, but my day jobs have always been writing or editing,” he added.



Morris with Crews McCulloch, his CO on his first Vietnam tour in 1963-4. (Photo courtesy Jim Morris)



Speaking at the Orange Empire MOAA about the book *Vietnam Bao Chi*. (Photo courtesy Jim Morris)

His Vietnam experiences have played a major role in the writing career of Jim Morris.

“*War Story* is my Vietnam memoir, and *Fighting Men* is a book of stories, mostly about guys in Vietnam who were heroes to me. *The Devil's Secret Name* is mostly about the wars I covered for *Soldier of Fortune*, which include some flashbacks to Vietnam. *Above and Beyond* is a novel set in Vietnam. *Silvernail* was about a fictional war in Central America. I was going to set it in Vietnam, but my agent told me that nobody wanted to read about Vietnam when I started it, so I asked myself where was next and set it in Central America. Again, nobody would publish it until we were already hip deep in Central America, so I lost my chance to go down in history as a prophet. My other four novels are science fiction/fantasy. It is highly unlikely that I will write about Vietnam again.”

In addition to writing, Morris has also worked as an editor for many years.

His editing career began as a tech writer for the OU Research Institute, as a grad student there. He had a couple of PR jobs in Oklahoma, studied and taught at the University of Arkansas, and worked for two years for *Soldier of Fortune*. Then he moved to New York in 1983, where he worked as the editor for a military magazine called *Eagle* and the Dell and Berkley publishing companies.

“I was 46 when I went to New York, and burnt out from [writing about] six wars in six months for SOF. But I did some good work in New York. I left in 1990, when the Berlin Wall fell.”

Morris may have left the publishing wing of the writing trade, but his soldiering and those he soldiered on with are never far from him.

“I should like to point out that soldiers neither win nor lose wars. Nations do that. Soldiers either accomplish or fail to accomplish their assigned missions. When you get 100 per cent accomplishment of all missions assigned and lose the war, the place to look is not at the military, but at the civilian leadership.” He quite obviously does not share the same feeling for those who guide nations into wars.

“It's hard to describe the bitterness I feel at America's civilian leadership. You can look at all the literature of the Vietnam War and

nowhere will you find a mission statement for the war as a whole. So, why were we there? The only reason I've found is in the papers of President Lyndon Johnson, who said to Senator Richard Russell of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, that he could see no strategic stake for the U.S. there, but he had to fight it or 'look soft on communism.'”

Morris came to a discovery in reading further into the exchange between Senator Russell and President Johnson.

“What he meant by that was that he did not want our NATO and SEATO allies to see us wimp out on a treaty we had signed. In that sense, for the Americans, Vietnam was not a war but an infomercial. It worked to the extent that we showed our allies we

would expend 59,000 guys and a few nurses on an essentially point-less war. If we'd pushed it further, our allies would not have been reassured, but terrified at how close we'd skirted thermonuclear war. In that sense, we accomplished every goal we had in Vietnam,” said Morris. “Too bad for the Viets.” ♦

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marc Yablonka is a military journalist whose reportage has appeared in the U.S. Military's *Stars and Stripes*, *Army Times*, *Air Force Times*, *American Veteran*, *Vietnam* magazine, *Airways*, *Military Heritage*, *Soldier of Fortune* and many other publications.

Between 2001 and 2008, Marc served as a Public Affairs Officer, CWO-2, with the 40th Infantry Division Support Brigade and Installation Support Group, California State Military Reserve, Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, California. During that time, he wrote articles and took photographs in support of Soldiers who were mobilizing for and demobilizing from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

His work was published in *Soldiers*, official magazine of the United States Army, *Grizzly*, magazine of the California National Guard, the *Blade*, magazine of the 63rd Regional Readiness Command-U.S. Army Reserves, *Hawaii Army Weekly*, and *Army Magazine*, magazine of the Association of the U.S. Army.

Marc's decorations include the California National Guard Medal of Merit, California National Guard Service Ribbon, and California National Guard Commendation Medal w/Oak Leaf. He also served two tours of duty with the Sar El Unit of the Israeli Defense Forces and holds the Master's of Professional Writing degree earned from the University of Southern California.



# Chapter 78

# Range Day

PRADO OLYMPIC SHOOTING PARK

April 15, 2021

Photos by Dennis DeRosia



❶ Front row left to right: Dennis DeRosia, Don Gonneville, Artemis Instructor Ivan, Gary Macnamara, John Turney (brother of Chapter member Tom Turney) and David Stone  
Back Row, left to right: Jim Duffy and Tom Turney.

❷ Target practice

❸ Artemis Instructor Ivan, present to help participants polish their skills, observes Jim Duffy at the hostage target.

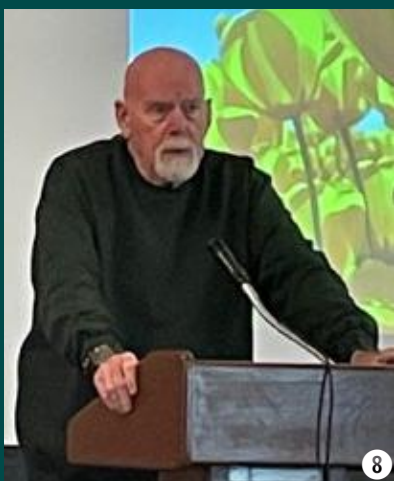
❹ Ivan declares Dennis DeRosia the "King of the Hill" Shoot Out winner.





## SFA Chapter 78 April 2021 Chapter Meeting

Photos by Dennis DeRosia and How Miller



- ❶ Chapter President Bruce Long returns!
- ❷ Geri Long
- ❸ *Sentinel* editor How Miller gives an update .
- ❹ Chapter member Tony Pirone from C Company brings the Chapter up to date with C Company's activities.
- ❺ Chapter member Ham Salley made a presentation that covered his background and his personal account of the Siege of Khe Sanh.
- ❻ Chapter Treasurer Richard Simonian discussed the ongoing assistance the Chapter is providing to build SFA membership.
- ❼ Chapter members Gary Macnamara and Ed Barrett spoke about the ongoing work with the ROTC schools the Chapter supports.
- ❽ Chapter member Jim Duffy spoke to the group about the upcoming Range Day.
- ❾ The attendance of the meeting was probably the highest in months.