



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

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SFA Chapter 78 CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS

Congressional Medal of Honor
Society Announces Passing
of Gary B. Beikirch

Three Medals of Honor
Awarded for Combat Actions
in Iraq, Afghanistan

Part Two
**PROJECT DELTA:
IN ACTION**

In Memoriam — John “Jack” N. Tobin

GREEN BERET FOUNDATION
Earns Coveted 4-Star Rating



From the Editor



How Miller
Sentinel Editor

Welcome to 2022. Let's hope it will bring a continuing ascent up from the lows of 2021.

This last quarter has been one of mostly positive highlights for Chapter 78. October's astounding effort was, in cooperation with Las Vegas Chapter 51, to bring forth a convention that will be talked about for some time. That was followed up by an interesting Chapter meeting and then a dazzling Christmas Party — all in about six weeks. The *Sentinel* staff has scrambled to cover it all, as well as to provide you with top notch articles.

Bruce Long and Don Gonneville have finally given up the reigns, with Don serving ably as acting President during Bruce's medical issues. Bruce has served multiple terms at the helm. You can read a tribute to him written by Lonny Holmes in the *April 2021 Sentinel*. He is leaving big shoes to fill. Our new President Greg Horton will undoubtedly work hard to do so, along with Dennis DeRosia, our new VP. The rest of the officers and appointees will mostly continue in place. Look for more coverage in next month's issue.

We have also said 'Goodbye!' to MSG Ken Atkinson, longtime NCOIC of our favorite SF National Guard unit, C/1/19, HQ'd here at JFTB Los Alamitos, where we have our chapter meetings. He is taking on more responsibility in a new challenge in Florida. We are looking forward to meeting Ken's replacement, MSG Chris Paxson at the January 22nd chapter meeting.

Just a few days ago we received the news of the passing of Gary Beikirch, a Medal of Honor recipient, and a Dog Lab classmate of mine. The Medal of Honor is only presented to those who persevered through extraordinary personal danger to protect the lives of others. Gary was presented his in 1973 by President Nixon. Gary followed that up with a life of effective service to others. He will be missed. His seven-minute YouTube interview last year, "Dear Young Americans," shows the type of individual he was: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pclVQyWeBVE>

President Biden recently presented Medals of Honor for three more amazing soldiers. Read the citations for SFC Alwyn C. Cashe, a platoon leader in the 3rd ID, SFC Christopher A. Celiz, a Ranger, and (then) 1SG Earl D. Plumlee, a Green Beret. Only Earl was there in person, the other two were awarded posthumously.

In this issue we bring you a story from the field (the Central Highlands of Vietnam) of the much heralded Project Delta and a Mike Force in 1968. "Delta" was a lot like MACV-SOG and was set up to do similar activities in-country to what "SOG" was doing in Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam. Jim Morris, a participant, later wrote several memorable books about SF and other combat activities. This, from his book *Fighting Men*, should definitely keep your attention.

We reported a while ago that the Green Beret Foundation received official recognition from SFA as being a trusted nonprofit which serves the SF community. Now we would like to report that they have again received from the respected charity watchdog, Charity Navigator, their highest rating (4 star) for their efficient use of funds donated, appropriateness, and transparency.

Lastly, we are sad to report the recent passing of former SFA President Jack Tobin. We have included info about his life and career. He too will be missed. ❖

How Miller, *Sentinel* Editor

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FRONT COVER: The Congressional Medal of Honor is the nation's highest military award for bravery. (Ken Scar/U.S. Army Cadet Command)


Please visit us at specialforces78.com and sfa78cup.com

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-  12TH SF GROUP

From the President | January 2022



Gregory Horton
President SFA Ch. 78

What a great way to end the year! Beautiful surroundings, fantastic food, and incredible friends. **SGM Bruce Long** and the Chapter staff put together a flawless evening and the Christmas party was a tremendous success. Kudos to our host **Richard Simonian**, as well as the entire staff at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club for a fantastic evening.

Bruce called for the Posting of the Colors by the Honor Guard from Sonora High School JROTC based out of the City of La Habra.

LTC Hans Hunt was the escort (also a Chapter member) and should be proud of these young men and women because they sure looked sharp and did a fantastic job.

With that done, Bruce introduced the Guests of Honor that included: guest speaker Alec Bierbauer (with wife Charlene), **Kevin Harry** National President of the Special Forces Association (with guests Lindy Krickbaum, Emily, and Geree Harry), and the soldiers from C/1/19th SFGA. After the Toast, we had a fantastic dinner followed by our guest speaker Alec Bierbauer.

Mr. Bierbauer represents the “Can Do” attitude that makes America great. His group was tasked with an almost impossible job, but drove on in spite of the bureaucracy and their roadblocks, hence the name *Never Mind, We'll Do It Ourselves* for his book. His riveting speech reminded me of the old adage, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” Mr. Bierbauer’s group never sat back and took no for an answer, but continued to strive to complete a revolution in drone warfare. And they succeeded.

Bruce then went on to the awards presentation. **MSG Ken Atkinson** received the prestigious Order of Saint Maurice. Ken has been a solid supporter of the Chapter and is a tremendous representative of C/1/19th SF. He will be missed as he leaves for his new assignment.

Bruce then presented plaques for the following awards:

1. Chapter Member of the Year — **How Miller**
2. VP **Don Gonneville** for dedicated service.
3. Secretary **Gary Macnamara**
4. **Debra Holm** — Chapter Webmaster, Sentinel Art Director/Designer
5. Sonoma High School — **Hans Hunt LTC (Ret)**

Steve Lieberman of Artemis Defense Institute then swore in **Dennis DeRosia** as Vice President and me as the President of Chapter 78. The celebration closed with music from our DJ, James Griffey, and dancing.

Before I close, I would like to give a brief introduction of myself:

I started my military career, standing on the yellow footprints at MCRD, San Diego in 1970. I was an 0311 – Rifleman and my final assignment was Bravo 1/7, 1st MarDiv. Because of a “Reduction In Force” I was discharged in 1972.

At that time, the Los Angeles Police Department had an accelerated hiring program for veterans and I applied and began my career in Law Enforcement. I worked patrol and specialized units, including 15 years with the SWAT team eventually becoming an Element Leader and Sniper Coordinator for the team. I was promoted to Sergeant and worked Patrol, the Hype Task Force, and Wilshire CRASH as an OIC. My final assignment was an Assistant Watch Commander for Transit Bus Division which completed my 27 years with the LAPD.

I transitioned to the private sector and became the Operations Manager for a Fortune 500 security company.

Once again, I moved from the private sector and I finished my career in Law Enforcement as a District Attorney Investigator for Orange County, working there for 13 years. While there, my assignments included the Environmental Protection Unit, Felony Panel, the Joint Terrorism Task Force, and finally the AB 109 Unit.

During the early years of my career with LAPD, I found out that there was a Special Forces Army Reserve Unit at Ft. MacArthur and went there and signed on the dotted line as a Triple Volunteer. I completed Basic Airborne School and Special Forces Qualification and ended up on Team 4 in Charlie Company, 12th SFGA. I suffered a severe broken leg during a training jump in Korea and couldn’t jump any more. At that point, Maj Paul Mock (Former Company Commander of C Co) was the Commander of the 306th PSYOP Bn and he recruited me into the world of PSYOP. I eventually transferred to the 15th PSYOP Co in Upland. From there, I went to work at the 306th Psychological Operations Company, Strategic Dissemination, as the 1SG. I eventually became the Staff SGM at the 7th PSYOP Group at Moffet Field where I retired.

I am looking forward to working with this fantastic group and hope to fill those huge jump boots that President Bruce Long wore. I hope to make this a stellar year. ❖

Greg Horton SGM (Ret)
President
SFA Chapter 78

January Chapter Meeting

Please e-mail **VP Dennis DeRosia** at: dderosia@cox.net, no later than Thursday January 20th, midnight. We need an exact headcount.

DATE: January 22, 2022

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)

SFA Chapter 78 Celebrates Christmas



DECEMBER 4, 2021 • BAHIA CORINTHIAN YACHT CLUB • CORONA DEL MAR, CA

Photos by Dennis DeRosia, Rick Carter, How Miller & Debra Holm



SFA Chapter 78 Christmas party attendees were greeted with the site of a [Joint Light Tactical Vehicle \(JLTV\)](#) parked near the entrance of the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club. The vehicle made its appearance courtesy of SF National Guard unit C/1/19, and SFC Tony Pirone, who drove it to the event. The 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was the first National Guard unit in the nation to get the JLTV.



1



2



3

1. Tony Pirone, right, describes to Dan Kinnersly how the JLTV's intelligent independent suspension system enables it to glide over rough terrain "like a Cadillac."

2. Left to right, SFC Tony Pirone, Geri Long, Bruce Long, MSG Ken Atkinson, and Richard Simonian.

3. How Miller appears from the top of the JLTV.

4. Bruce Long's family found the perfect setting for their annual family photo.

5. DJ James Griffey on the look out.



4



5



The table filled with gifts for the event's raffle.



Ken Atkinson's personal field gear.



Chapter President Bruce Long was the evening's MC.



Hans, Allison & Sabrina Hunt, C/MAS Higuchi, C/LTC Morales, C/CPT Collins, C/ILT Kronick



Nadia, Nimo, and Richard Simonian



Jim Duffy, Gary Macnamara and Laurette Rusted proposing toasts.



Dennis DeRosia, Gary Macnamara, Ken Atkinson, Tom Turney



SFA President Kevin Harry



Alex Quade introduced the guest speaker.



Guest speaker, Alec Bierbauer



Aaron Anderson & Lonny Holmes



Emily Harry, Gereee Harry, Lindy Krickbaum & Kevin Harry



John Vredenburg & Jim Duffy



Geri & Bruce Long



Aaron & Alexandra Anderson



Steven & Sandy Lieberman



Sharlene & Alec Bierbauer



Greg & Paulette Horton



Tony Pirone, Laurette Rusted & Ken Atkinson



Pedro Solis



Cory Peterson



Sal & Joan Sanders, Gary Macnamara



Dennis & Glo DeRosia, Tom Turney & Jill Boivin



Don Gonneville, Piper Martinez, Nancy Gonneville



Lonny & Nilda Holmes



Mike & Christine Jameson



Yanira Rojo & John Vredenburg



Norberto Villegas & Lizbeth Rios



Patrick Kinsey



Jill & Chase Elliott



Dale & Tina Long



Dan & Heather Kinnersley



Aaron & Kathie Brandenburg



Suzanne & Jim Lockhart



Debra & Darrell Holm



Mel & James McLanahan



Rick Carter



Gus & Patty Populus



Mike & Cora Keele



Brian & Dawn Opp



Regina & Jerry Romiti



Jack & Vicky Blau

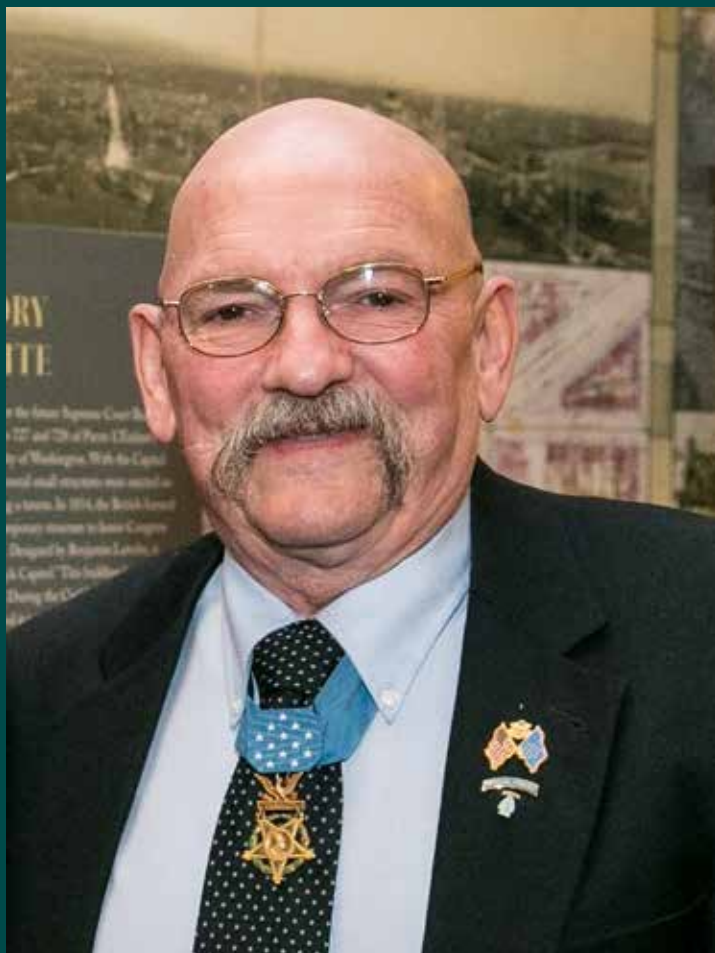


How & Nancy Miller



Glo & Dennis DeRosia, Nancy & How Miller, and Pedro Solis & Laurette Rusted on the dance floor.





Congressional Medal of Honor Society Announces Passing of Gary B. Beikirch

POSTED IN: PRESS RELEASES | DECEMBER 26, 2021

<https://www.cmoHS.org/news-events/press-releases/congressional-medal-of-honor-society-announces-passing-of-gary-b-beikirch/>

Mount Pleasant, S.C.— The Congressional Medal of Honor Society regrettably announces that Gary B. Beikirch, Medal of Honor recipient, passed away Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021, in Rochester, New York, at the age of 74.

Sgt. Beikirch was the medical aidman for Detachment B-24, Company B, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, U.S. Army, at a remote Special Forces camp on the border of Laos in Vietnam's Kontum Province when the enemy attacked on April 1, 1970. The camp was upheld by 12 Green Berets and a force consisting of local Montagnards. During the intense firefight that ensued, Beikirch repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire and mortars to treat the injured and dying and carry them back to shelter, ignoring his own wounds. Pairs of Montagnard troops helped him reach the wounded when it became too difficult to move under his own command. He continued aiding others until he collapsed and was immediately medevacked from the area.

For all the lives he saved on that day, Beikirch was presented the Medal of Honor by President Richard M. Nixon on Oct. 15, 1973, in a White House ceremony.

Beikirch was born in Rochester, New York, on Aug. 29, 1947. He began college after high school but quit "to broaden [his] experiences" with the Green Berets, as he put it once. He was placed in the Airborne Infantry. Eventually, he made it to the Army's elite Special Forces school.

Following his discharge from Army service in 1971, Beikirch returned to college. He received ordination from White Mountain Seminary (Lancaster, New Hampshire); a bachelor's degree in Sociology-Psychology from the University of New Hampshire (Durham, New Hampshire); and a master's in Education in Counseling from the State University of New York, Brockport. He used this education as a veterans' counselor and worked as a guidance counselor for middle schoolers in the Rochester, New York, region.

He is survived by his wife, Loreen, three children, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Burial arrangements are pending currently.

There are 66 recipients alive today. ❖



Biden Awards Three Medals of Honor for Combat Actions in Iraq, Afghanistan

On 16 December, 2021, President Biden presented Medals of Honor to three U.S. Army soldiers, 3rd ID Platoon Sgt SFC Alwyn C. Cashe, Special Forces SSG (at time of action) Earl D. Plumlee, and Ranger SFC Christopher A. Celiz. Only MSG Plumlee was present in person, the other two awards were posthumous. The citations for their awards are here, in order of the action dates. Each of these men epitomize how we all hoped we would act in their situation.

Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn C. Cashe



Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn C. Cashe distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while engaging with the enemy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on Oct. 17, 2005.

Cashe was conducting a night-time mounted patrol when the Bradley Fighting Vehicle he was in charge of was attacked by enemy small-arms fire. An improvised explosive device disabled the vehicle, causing it to become engulfed in flames.

After exiting the vehicle, Cashe began to extract the trapped driver from the vehicle. After opening the hatch, Cashe and a fellow Soldier pulled the driver out, extinguished the flames on him and moved him to a position of relative safety. While doing so, Cashe's fuel-soaked uniform ignited, causing severe burns to his body, but he continued toward the rear of the vehicle to help other Soldiers who were trapped in the troop compartment.

At this time, the enemy noted Cashe's movements and began to direct fire on his position. When another element of the company engaged the enemy, Cashe seized the opportunity by moving into the open troop door and aiding four of his Soldiers to escape from the burning vehicle. Afterwards, he noticed two other Soldiers had not been accounted for, and he reentered the burning vehicle to retrieve them. Despite the severe second- and third-degree burns covering the majority of his body, Cashe persevered through the pain to encourage his fellow Soldiers and ensured they received needed medical care.

When the medical evacuation helicopters arrived, he selflessly refused to board until all of the other wounded Soldiers were evacuated first. Cashe died from wounds sustained in this action on Nov. 8, 2008, at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. His heroic actions, at the cost of his life, saved the lives of his teammates.

Throughout the entire engagement, Cashe repeatedly placed himself in extreme danger to protect his team and to defeat the enemy. Cashe's

extraordinary heroism and selflessness beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army. ❖

To learn more about Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn C. Cashe visit:
https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/cashe/?from_hp=spotlight

Master Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee



Then-Staff Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while engaging with the enemy in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, on Aug. 28, 2013.

Plumlee served as a weapons sergeant assigned to Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Forward Operating Base Ghazni when the complex was attacked. Plumlee

instantly responded to a massive explosion that caused a 60-foot breach in the base's perimeter wall. Ten insurgents wearing Afghan National Army uniforms and suicide vests poured through the breach.

Plumlee and five other special operations Soldiers, intent on defending the base, mounted two vehicles and raced toward the detonation site. Plumlee's driver purposefully maneuvered the vehicle into enemy fire to shield three dismounted teammates, two of whom were injured, placing the vehicle under effective enemy fire from the front and right side.

Using his body to shield the driver from enemy fire, Plumlee exited the vehicle while simultaneously drawing his pistol and engaging an insurgent 15 meters to the vehicle's right. Without cover and with complete disregard for his safety, he advanced toward the enemy force, engaging multiple insurgents with only his pistol. Upon reaching cover, he killed two insurgents. Plumlee left cover and continued

to advance alone. Moving forward, he engaged several combatants at close range. Under intense enemy fire, Plumlee temporarily withdrew to cover, where he joined another Soldier.

Plumlee, ignoring his injuries, quickly regained his bearings and reengaged the enemy. Intense enemy fire once again forced the two Soldiers to temporarily withdraw. Undeterred and resolute, Plumlee joined a small group of American and coalition forces moving from cover to counterattack the infiltrators. As the coalition forces advanced, Plumlee engaged an insurgent to his front-left.

Plumlee then ran to a wounded Soldier, carried him to safety, and rendered first aid. Afterwards, he organized three coalition members in a defensive stance as he methodically cleared the area, remained in a security posture and continued to scan for any remaining threats.

Throughout the entire engagement, Plumlee repeatedly placed himself in extreme danger to protect his team and the base, and to defeat the enemy. Plumlee's extraordinary heroism and selflessness beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army. ❖

To learn more about Master Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee visit:

<https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/plumlee/>



Upper left, then-1st Lt. James "Jimmy" Ryan, left, poses with Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe during their deployment to Forward Operating Base McKenzie in Samarra, Iraq. (Courtesy photo provided by Maj. James Ryan (Ret.). Upper right, the Celiz family poses for a photo at Airborne School, Fort Benning, GA in 2013. (Photo courtesy of Katie Celiz) Below, Then-Staff Sgt. Earl Plumlee, poses for a photo during pre-deployment training, 2013, Yakima, WA (Photo Credit: U.S. Army)

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while engaging with the enemy in Paktia Province, Afghanistan, on July 12, 2018.

As the leader of a special operations unit comprised of partnered forces and members of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Celiz led an operation to clear an area of enemy forces and thereby disrupt future attacks against the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Shortly after his team reached their initial objective, a large enemy force attacked. The enemy placed effective fire on him and his team, preventing them from maneuvering to a counterattack. Realizing the danger to his team and the operation, Celiz voluntarily exposed himself to intense enemy machine-gun and small-arms fire.

Under fire, he retrieved and employed a heavy weapon system, thereby allowing U.S. and partnered forces to regain the initiative, maneuver to a secure location, and begin treating a critically wounded partnered force member.

As the medical evacuation helicopter arrived, it was immediately engaged by accurate and sustained enemy fire. Knowing how critical

it was to quickly load the wounded partner, Celiz willingly exposed himself again to heavy enemy fire so he could take charge to direct and lead the evacuation. As the casualty was moved from a position of cover, Celiz made a conscious effort to ensure his body acted as a physical shield to protect his team, the injured partner and the crew of the aircraft from enemy fire. After the wounded partner was loaded, Celiz's team returned to cover, but he remained with the aircraft, returning a high volume of fire and constantly repositioning himself to act as a physical shield to the aircraft and its crew.

With his final reposition, Celiz placed himself directly between the cockpit and the enemy, ensuring the aircraft was able to depart. Upon the helicopter's liftoff, Celiz was hit by enemy fire. Fully aware of his injury, but understanding the peril to the aircraft, Celiz motioned to the pilots to depart rather than remain to load him. His selfless actions saved the life of the evacuated partnered force member and almost certainly prevented further casualties among other members of his team and the aircrew. Celiz died as a result of his injuries. His extraordinary heroism and selflessness beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

Throughout the entire engagement, Celiz significantly changed the course of the battle by repeatedly placing himself in extreme danger to protect his team and defeat the enemy. ❖

To learn more about Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz visit:

<https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/celiz/>

Part Two



PROJECT DELTA: IN ACTION



Jim Morris

By Jim Morris
Excerpted from *Fighting Men*
Dell Books, 1993, pages 74-86

PART ONE: *In the December 2021 Sentinel, Jim Morris introduced Project Delta, Special Forces Detachment B-52, one of the most highly decorated units in the Vietnam War.*

A RECONNAISSANCE MISSION

Just looking at them you could tell they were good.

Doc Betterton — Staff Sergeant Dale C. Betterton, a tall, skinny guy with a quiet manner, in glasses — stood on the platform in the briefing room at the Project Delta Forward Operational Base just outside Phu Bai. “We’ll go in here,” he tapped the map with his pointer, “and check out these areas. Primary mission is to locate enemy installations and personnel.”

Taking all this in were five other team members — Betterton was the team leader. The other two Americans, Sergeant First Class Alberto Ortiz, Jr., who outranked Betterton, but was a new man on the Project and would not be given command of a team until he had a few patrols under his belt, and Sergeant John D. Anthony, watched the briefing.

The Vietnamese contingent consisted of First Lieutenant Ton That Hai, patrol leader, and Sergeants Nguyen Van Khan and Hoang Van Lieu.

They all listened with the same air of intense calm.

After listening to the brief-back in English, Lieutenant Hai repeated the information in Vietnamese.

In the rear of the room Major Chuck Allen, a massive crew-cut man, built like a pro football lineman, which he had been, leaned forward in his chair, one hand propped on his knee and the other under his chin. He did not appear to listen so much as to inhale the information, evaluating and storing it in a mind that tracked and controlled every detail of Delta.

Beside him his counterpart, Major Phan Van Huan, leaned back, his manner detached.

The chopper skimmed over the treetops, sun slowly extinguished by the mountains, throwing long shadows across the streambeds and valleys below.

What is this now? Doc thought. Seventeen, maybe eighteen times in a year and a half. Every time, I’m still scared. That’s good! A scared man is a careful man, and a careful man will live a long time. If I’m ever not afraid I’ll go into some other line of work.

Sitting in the left door of the helicopter, he followed the hills and valleys on his map. The wind whipped his tiger-striped trouser legs and floppy hat, hanging down his back on a homemade cord of parachute suspension line. A CAR-15 was slung over his shoulder by a triangular olive-drab bandage tied to the front sight and collapsible stock, which he would convert to a neckerchief when they reached the ground.

The seemingly endless maze of pockets on his tiger suit were jammed with notebooks, signaling devices, cigarettes, matches, and maps, all neatly folded into plastic bags. In his patrol harness were more signaling devices, a camera, and the ammunition he hoped not to use. On his back was a groundsheet, fourteen days’ chow (long-range reconnaissance patrol rations, LRRPs) and some miscellaneous fruit cans.

The others were similarly equipped, plus two radios: one held by the Americans and one by the Vietnamese. Each was on a different frequency — to send the same data simultaneously to both the American and Vietnamese headquarters.

The ship started down, and he looked below into the dark space in the trees that was their landing zone. The chopper eased in and he was grateful again for the skill of the 281st Aviation Company, Delta’s own.

Trees rose on all sides; rotor blades snipping leaves around the edges, the chopper inched its way down in the hole. Master Sergeant Norman Doney, the reconnaissance section leader, a handsome, soft-spoken, self-contained man who would stay with the helicopter, rolled two ladders out the door. Doc swung over the side.

His weight swung his feet straight out in front, he being the bottom man on the rope ladder. His heavy gear dragged as Doc started working his way down, all his weight on his arms. Finally, his feet were below the ladder and he hung by the bottom run, eight feet above a bomb crater. He let go. Ortiz dropped beside him from the other ladder and they skipped sideways to get out of each other’s way.

At a dead run they headed for the encircling jungle. Fifty meters into the slapping, snagging brush they stopped. Doc gulped air down fast to silence his panting.

Behind them the chopper sped away. The team lay listening under the brush and palms, fingers digging into wet leaves and dirt while the dampness slowly permeated their fatigues.

When Betterton gave the signal to rise, they slowly crouched and stepped off single file into the jungle, walking with their toes touching the ground first.

They made no more noise than wind sighing in the treetops. Tiger suits and camouflage greasepaint blended them into their surroundings. If one of them sat perfectly still in full view beside the trail, a man might walk by in broad daylight and never see him.

They moved forward fifty meters, stopped, listened, and moved on again. Using the last dregs of daylight the team scanned for a thicket. Spotting a likely place, they glided back on their trail and sank to the earth in firing positions. No one came, so they crept into the thicket and slipped out of their packs.

Turning on the radio, Betterton whispered, “Voyager, this is Lobo, over.”

In the handset a voice crackled back, “This Voyager, go.”

Doc gave their positions in the same hoarse whisper and reported no contacts or sightings, while Hai did the same in Vietnamese. Then they wrapped up in their plastic groundsheets and fell asleep, each man touching at least one other. They still wore their pistol belts and harnesses. If they had to run they could manage without their packs, but not without water, ammo, and other gear on the harness.

With a rock gouging his shoulder blade and his hips digging into the ground, Doc slept fitfully. At 0330 the growl of heavy equipment and trucks snatched him from sleep. The enemy was building a road! Doc scribbled in his notebook.

At 0430 the patrol was up, creeping through the underbrush. Avoiding ridgelines and streambeds, they moved through the jungle on the slopes. Frequently they heard padding footsteps on the trails above, or the tonal ululations of Vietnamese conversation in the creeks below. There was no attempt at concealment on the enemy’s part; he owned the territory and felt no need to hide from anything but airplanes. Again Doc scribbled, and spoke into the handset.

In the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) bunker Chuck Allen and Captain Bill Larabee, his operations officer, who looked like the social chairman of an especially bellicose Sigma chi chapter, sat side by side at a big desk, plotting reports from their recon teams in the field. At a similar desk ten feet away Major Huan and Captain Ton That Luan did the same.

Seated across from Allen and Larabee, Captain Richard Dundee, heavy and dark-complexioned, passed intelligence reports and summaries to major U.S. commands, while Lieutenant Truong Hoang Phi cranked out the same information to the Vietnamese Special Forces High Command.

No one on the patrol spoke a word except into the handset; they had worked so long together that no words were necessary, and silence was the rule. On the third day Hai gestured toward the trail above and made a grabbing motion with his hands. Doc, knowing he meant to try to capture a prisoner, nodded and they crept toward the path to wait.

Three North Vietnamese army regulars, all armed with AK-47’s, came down the trail. They heard others chattering down the trail. No way. Betterton opened fire from five meters, and their “prisoners” shuddered backward as the slugs hit them, and they fell with blossoms of their own blood splattered across their midsections. The team broke off, one after the other, and dashed over the ridge and down the other side.

The next day Anthony almost walked headlong into another NVA soldier. They were both startled, but the kid was still staring wide-eyed when Anthony cut him down. They decided it was time to pull out. Betterton and Hai looked for LZs on their maps.

Allen saw it first. From his command-and-control ship, flying high over the operational area, he picked out the bright blue-white flash of a signaling mirror and spoke into his radio. Gunships, easy to spot by their red tail markings, assumed a clockwise orbit over the LZ, either firing at targets of opportunity or just keeping Charlie’s head down. The air was filled with the whooosh-CRACK of rockets and the gruff belch of miniguns.

Flying above, monitoring all conversation between his ship, the gunships, the TOC and the recon team on the ground, Allen could see it all like a Parker Bros. game. At his command the first recovery ship hopped over a ridge-line and jockeyed down into the hole.

Doc Betterton put the mirror back into his ammo pouch. The others fanned out in firing positions around him. The incoming recovery ship hovered a hundred feet over them in the trees. Although Doc couldn’t see Doney in the ship, he knew who it was.

Three sandbags dragged the heavy, six-foot looped straps of the McGuire rig, escape for three men, down through the trees. Doc waved Ortiz and the two Vietnamese sergeants in, and they grabbed the straps, whipping and writhing in the rotor wash. Each of them sat in one loop and hooked his right wrist in a cuff that slid down tight to prevent falling from the rig, even if wounded, on the way out.

The chopper struggled to go straight up without dragging the men through the trees. This was the period of maximum danger — maximum exposure of the helicopter and maximum exposure for the men. They cleared the trees and were gone.

The next ship edged into position and the straps came down again. Doc, the heaviest of the three, jumped into the middle seat as the others settled next to him. The chopper eased upward and they rose through the trees, branches slapping at their faces and hands.

Then they were clear of the treetops and the ropes streamed to the rear as the chopper surged forward, heading for a safe spot to land and take the men inside. No matter how many times he did it, Doc never got completely used to whipping through the air at the end of a rope, at a thousand feet.

WITH THE MIKE FORCE

The day after Betterton’s team came out, the Mike Force went in. Betterton, Dundee the Delta Intelligence officer, and I went along as well, Doc because he knew the ground, and Dundee to personally collect intelligence. The rest of us were there to see that he lived to get it. The 281st had knocked out an entire NVA truck convoy two weeks before, and Chuck wanted Dundee to photograph their bumper markings to identify the unit.

The rangers had been in right after to perform the same mission, but hadn’t been able to do it. The NVA were so thick in that area that when one of them came upon the Rangers and didn’t see the American’s with them he assumed they were another NVA unit. He walked up to one of them and asked in Vietnamese, “What outfit are you guys with?”

“You’ll have to ask the lieutenant,” the Ranger replied.

The NVA, now starting to feel a little nervous, stepped up to the ARVN Ranger Thieu Uy, and asked, “Uh, Comrade Lieutenant, what —”

“Ninety-first Airborne Ranger Battalion,” the lieutenant replied, and stitched him right up the middle with his M16. This was a costly gesture, since one of their missions was to capture a prisoner, and now their mission was blown. So they came out and we went in.

Doc Betterton led the Mike Force over the ground his recon had covered. The Mike Force wore helmets, but Doc wore his recon boonie hat; the Mike Force stepped right out—you can’t move a hundred guys in total silence — and Doc was used to moving around out here on tiptoe; the Mike Force moved on the trails, and recon never moves on trails. He didn’t look very happy.

Our first contact was so light it was scarcely worth reporting. We were taking a break when an NVA came up the main trail and was surprised to see a stocky blond American, SP-5 Sammy Coutts, leaning against a tree.

A month before in downtown Nha Trang, on the first day of the Tet Offensive, I’d seen Coutts dash into the middle of a street under heavy fire to drag a young Vietnamese girl to safety. That had been my first acquaintance with this company, but I’d been around them some since, though not in combat. The 7th MSF company were mainly Cham, a coastal fishing people, Muslims.

The Charlie who had spotted Coutts scurried away and came back with his buddies a few minutes later. By that time we were moving again and Coutts was down the trail. They hit the tail of the column. The 4th platoon opened up, and there followed one of those brief, inconclusive firefights in which neither side gives or takes much of anything.

The terrain was rough and densely wooded, but not as much as most of the Highlands. These were big hills, not mountains, and the woods no worse than many in Georgia. It was beautiful country.

A little later, during the lunch break, a Mike Force perimeter guard challenged a rustling noise in the bushes. The challenge was answered by a burst of AK-47 fire, killing the guard.



More than 50 members of Project Delta proudly display their unit colors at the memorial stone dedicated in their honor, placed in the Memorial Plaza at the USASOC headquarters on Oct. 28, 2008. (Photo credit: U.S. Army)

Sergeant First Class Ross Potter, a darkly handsome karate black belt, was in command of the Mike Force Company. He led the company off the trail and uphill quickly, tripping over commo wire on the ground — commo wire? — through the woods to a place where the trees were fairly sparse. A HU-1D helicopter from the 281st came in to winch the body out. The clearing wasn’t as wide as the rotor disc of the aircraft.

The pilot inched his chopper down through the trees, straight in until a limb got in his way, backed or slipped sideways around it, down three feet, over two, down four, over three. Finally they lowered their winch and picked up the small poncho-wrapped body, still tied to a one-pole litter. Then they inched that chopped back out again the same way.

We reported the commo wire on our first scheduled contact the next morning. Chuck, or somebody in Saigon, decided we needed to tap it, and, since Delta wasn’t equipped for that, a team from Command and Control FOB 1 at Phu Bai was choppered in. The C & C teams had a mission similar to Delta’s, except they generally performed it in Laos or North Vietnam. They had a horrendous casualty rate, rumored to be two hundred percent a year, compared to Delta’s fifty.

They barreled out of a 281st slick, and looked at us with raccoon eyes. The Americans with them were hard boys, but nothing special for Special Forces. But their indigence were fascinating. The Vietnamese leader was an ARVN warrant officer, very calm and competent. The rest of the team were crazy people; the Americans were on a one-year tour, but this was the Viets’ life. One had sunken cheeks and fierce eyes; he wore a ring in his ear, an all-black bush hat, blocked like Clint Eastwood’s, and black gloves which he constantly smoothed back. Another looked like Dopey of the Seven Dwarfs, except that he was badly pockmarked and giggled constantly. The last looked like a Zombie, and his eyes were windows to a dead zone.

They didn’t pick up anything useful off the wire, and seemed to think the job was a joke—a Lennie Bruce joke, but a joke. They were with us for the rest of the mission, and their attitude seemed to be . . . well, hey, everybody’s got to be someplace.

That night we heard the same trucks grinding uphill that the recon team had heard earlier. The following morning we checked the road; there were few signs that any activity had taken place the night before. Charlie did a good job covering his tracks.

After two firefights the day before the company stuck to the hillsides, going over the ridgelines only when they had to maintain the patrol’s route. After a full day’s march with no contact and no sightings, when it was about time to hang it up for the day, we stumbled across a couple of cases of twenty-three-millimeter ammunition, the kind that goes with a very large Russian anti-aircraft machine-gun. The ammo looked as though it was being carried across a stream when Charles dropped it during an air strike. The ammo lay on the trail a few feet of the creek bottom. The crates had been broken and a few rounds removed.

Dundee took pictures of the cache. Then the company headed down a small bank and into a creek. There was a quick chatter of gunfire and the point went down. Cordite smoke poured out of the creek bottom as the Cham returned fire. It was a platoon, probably back for more ammo. The Cham took out six Charlies.

Then another group came in from the other side. Hearing a lot of gunfire, they came better prepared.

What with being caught in a crossfire, and darkness coming on fast, we got the hell out of there, not in very good order, no panic, but not exactly a perfect formation either. We just got the fuck out.

The night was dark. We slept clinging to the side of a hill like moss.

Early the next morning the Cham hacked out a landing zone with machetes and evaced their dead and wounded. The company moved cautiously down the trail to check out the ammo boxes again.

Captain Dundee had just gotten the last of his pictures when three more Cong showed up and the firefight was on again. The Cham made short work of them and we moved out.

On the next break Potter said, "I think I'll have to revise my estimate of enemy strength in this area up from one to two companies."

"Yeah," replied Doc Betterton. "Either that or a highly mobile squad."

We moved out again. Only, this time we had picked up a tail. Every time we stopped or started, the familiar signal shot rang out, alerting the entire neighborhood.

When we crossed a little finger of the ridgeline, we ran into a series of large ammo caches. They were dug into cubical pits in the ground, about eight feet on a side, braced with bamboo so they wouldn't cave in. They were well made. Potter had an order passed to the 4th Platoon. As the platoon, advised by Staff Sergeant Ken Roberts, passed the caches, they rigged them with time fuses. Five minutes after the 4th Platoon moved through the first cache blew, destroying a sizable portion of the ammunition and leaving the remainder to cook off. It continued exploding for the rest of the afternoon and long into the evening.

Around the middle of the afternoon the most satisfactory sounds came, as Charlie's backtracking team got into a firefight with their own exploding ammunition.

We came out on the two-lane dirt road that Charles had been building through the dense woods, down in the flats between hills. We wanted to get to an LZ and get out, and that road was the quickest way. It was an eerie feeling to be walking down that road like Stateside troops coming back from an exercise. I hear NVA a few meters back in the wood, chattering. It was normal conversation; they weren't aware of us at all, just hauling wood, making fires, cleaning weapons, smoking pot.

Delta's forward air controller droned overhead, flying cover, a little boom-tail aircraft with fore and aft propellers, the OV1.

Dug into the sides of the hills we walked past were one and two-man foxholes, some dug in an L-shape, probably for crew-served weapons, rockets, and machine guns.

The company came upon the nine Russian trucks the 281st gunships had knocked out the week before. They lay strewn on the road, burned and gutted. Dundee took intelligence photos of the trucks and the bumper markings, and I snapped Dundee for the Group magazine.

We moved down the road again for about half a klick to a good LZ. The Cham set up a perimeter and waited for the choppers. The longer we waited the more NVA came to get in on the act. We were complete surrounded on and around a big bare red-dirt clearing, dotted with four or five B-52 bomb craters. The firefight continued sporadically for about an hour and a half, enemy strength continuing to build as we waited. Air cover was called in to keep the tightening noose of NVA off until slicks from the 281st could get us out.

F-105's made run after run, huge aircraft making that cracking jet roar, dropping five-hundred pound high-drag bombs into the jungle so close that smoking chunks of jagged steel bounced into our holes. Then we heard the familiar sound of approaching helicopters.

When we got back Dundee's photos didn't come out, so Delta confiscated all of mine.

Two days later I went back into the same LZ with a company from the Ranger battalion. We went in in two lifts, and by the time the second came we were surrounded again. We were pinned onto the LZ all night with six choppers down and thirty percent casualties, me among them.

The next day we fought our way to another LZ and got out. That was my last operation; I retired because of wounds. Although I was never on their roster, I am proud that Delta counts me among their alumni. ❖

About the Author

Jim Morris joined 1st SFGA in 1962 for a 30-month tour, which included two TDY trips to Vietnam. After a two year break, he went back on active duty for a PCS tour with 5th SFG (A), six months as the B Co S-5, and then was conscripted to serve as the Group's Public Information Officer (PIO). While with B-52 Project Delta on an operation in the Ashau Valley, he suffered a serious wound while trying to pull a Delta trooper to safety, which resulted in being medically retired.

As a civilian war correspondent he covered various wars in Latin America, the Mideast, and again in Southeast Asia, eventually settling down to writing and editing, primarily but not exclusively about military affairs.

He is the author of many books, including the classic memoir *War Story*. His new book, *The Dreaming Circus* will be released in July 2022 and is available for pre-order — information available at <https://www.innertraditions.com/books/the-dreaming-circus>.

Jim is a member of SFA Chapter 78 and is a former editor of the *Sentinel*.



GREEN BERET
FOUNDATION

GREEN BERET FOUNDATION EARNS COVETED 4-STAR RATING FROM CHARITY NAVIGATOR FOR 2ND CONSECUTIVE YEAR

SAN ANTONIO, TX — The Green Beret Foundation is proud to announce that for the second consecutive year, we have been awarded the honor of a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, the leading charity evaluator in America. 4-stars is the highest rating that Charity Navigator offers, and earning multiple 4-star ratings, as we have now done, is a coveted distinction shared by a rare few. We are proud to say that we remain the only Special Operations nonprofit organization solely dedicated to serving Green Berets that has attained this honor.

Brent Cooper, Green Beret Foundation Executive Director, remarked, “This achievement is so much more than just a rating or graphic we put on our website. It’s a direct representation of our strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency to our donors and supporters. In all areas, we continue to maintain a standard of excellence which is reflected in the recognition by Charity Navigator for a second consecutive year.”

With over 45,000 charities¹ that provide support to the military and veteran communities in our Nation today, donors need to know who they can trust, and Charity Navigator works to evaluate and rate charitable organizations for their financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency. We understand that in uncertain and trying financial times, it takes an exceptional donor to make that sacrifice to give of what they have to continue to support our mission. This is why we at the Green Beret



Foundation strive so diligently to meet and exceed any and all of our donors’ expectations, upholding the highest standards possible of financial transparency and trust. This is our duty and our commitment to each and every donor, and we are grateful to Charity Navigator as a third-party evaluator for awarding us another 4-star rating,

as it confirms, underscores, and reflects this commitment. ❖

¹“U.S. Veterans Organizations by the Numbers.” GuideStar, 2015, [learn.guidestar.org/hubfs/Docs/us-veterans-orgs-by-the-numbers.pdf](https://www.guidestar.org/hubfs/Docs/us-veterans-orgs-by-the-numbers.pdf).

To learn more visit greenberetfoundation.org



In Memoriam John "Jack" N. Tobin

December 29, 1945 – November 16, 2021
Special Forces (DMOR)

COL John N. "Jack" Tobin was born in 1945 in Norristown, PA. He joined the military in 1967 after graduation from Atlantic Christian College, Wilson, NC. Volunteering for Special Forces, he was first assigned to B/7th Special Forces Group (ABN) (SFG(A)), assigned to A-222 as Communications Supervisor. Volunteering for duty in the Republic of Vietnam with 5th SFG(A), he was assigned to A503 and A-504, B-55, 5th Mobile Strike Force.

Tobin reentered military service in August 1975, after a break in service of five years, assigned to C/3/11th SFG(A), (US Army Reserves) as Communications Supervisor on A-332. He would subsequently serve as XO, A-333 and Detachment Commander for A-335, and A-331. During his last assignment as the Company Operations and Training Officer, he participated in foreign exchange programs. He also developed and implemented a AIRCREW Survival, Escape and Evasion training program for the U.S. 21st Air Force which resulted in the USAF Commendation Medal.

Moving to North Carolina, he transferred to the 35th Engr Bde (NG) where he had the responsibility of assisting in operations and training preparation for National Training Center rotations. Recalled to active duty during OPERATION DESERT STORM/DESERT SHIELD, he was assigned to the FORSCOM Intelligence Center. He would later serve as the J2, J5 and Force Protection Officer for JTF-105 OPERATION FUERTES CAMINOS, in Las Delicias and Macora, Honduras.

Remaining on active duty, in 1996, Tobin returned to a Special Forces billet with US Atlantic Command (USACOM) as Project Officer for their newly instituted anti-terrorism/force protection section. His overall concept, submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the USACOM submittal for the revision of the DoD 2000.12 Antiterrorism/Force

Protection Handbook, was complete enough to be fully integrated into the final documents as well as the JP 3-07 series of publications.

Responsible for developing the follow on methodology that would become DOD's Antiterrorist Vulnerability Assessment Handbook, he then was detailed to teach and execute assessments, traveling throughout the U.S. and OCONUS.

In his next assignment as Director of Instruction – Joint Program for Onward Movement, Ft Benning, Georgia, he instructed all military and civilian personnel on deployment orders for OPERATION JOINT GUARD/ENDEAVOR, Bosnia in AT/FP.

Released from Active duty, but continuing to work with the military, using his skills in program and doctrine development, he worked in various training, SOF and AT/FP assignments.

COL Tobin returned to active duty as Chief of Plans, Directorate of Strategic Plans and Policy (CJ5) in June 2004, assigned to Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. In March of 2005, he assumed the position as Chief of the National Military Liaison Team - CFC- A. This position was held concurrently with his CJ5 position held since 2004. Attached to US Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, his team assisted the Afghan Reconstruction Group advising the various ministries of the Afghanistan Government on internal defense and development strategies.

After retirement in January 2006, he was selected by Benchmark International as their Senior Military Analyst - Special Forces. Providing the SF expertise required in the nuclear powered, ballistic missile submarine project, he also wrote the Handbook which, as was the case before with USACOM AT/FP Handbook, became the published Operational Manual with its guidance incorporated in all appropriate Joint Pubs supportive of the program. Upon completion of the contract, he accepted position first with Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and later the Army Special Operations Concept Integration Center (ARSOIC).

Retiring in 2011 to Mint Hill, North Carolina, he is also active in the Special Forces Association, serving as the president Chapter VI 1996-1997, Special Operations Association, and the Association of Former Intelligence Officers

Military Awards include: Legion of Merit Bronze Star w/OLC; Defense Meritorious Service Medal Meritorious Service Medal w/OLC Joint Service Commendation Medal; Army Commendation Medal w/ device & OLC; Air Force Commendation Medal; Combat Infantry Badge w/Star; Special Forces Tab; Master Parachutist Badge and Vietnamese Parachutist Badge.

COL Tobin is survived by his wife, Betsy, and his daughter, Katy, and son, Michael.

A COL Jack Tobin Scholarship fund has been established. ALL funds raised will go to scholarships administered by Chapter 6 with oversight from Jack's wife and their children. Chapter 6 officers will work with Jack's wife and their children to select and award scholarships annually. Applications, criteria, and the process are in development and will be published in the first quarter of 2022.

To make a donation or to learn more visit [GoFundMe.com](#) and search for "COL Jack Tobin Scholarship Fund." ❖

SFA Chapter 78 2021 Awards and Special Presentations

Photos by Dennis DeRosia, Rick Carter and How Miller



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1. SFA Chapter 78's newly elected President Greg Horton and Vice-President Dennis DeRosia.
2. Steven Lieberman of Artemis Defense Institute swears in the newly elected officers.
3. Greg Horton addresses the group.
4. Gary Macnamara and Richard Simonian will continue to serve as Secretary and Treasurer for the Chapter.
- 5-6. Ken Atkinson receives the Order of St. Maurice.
7. How Miller was recognized as the Member of the Year.
8. Members of C/1/19th SF presented Bruce Long with a plaque to acknowledge their appreciation of his support over the years.
9. Vice President Don Gonnevill presented Bruce with an Award of Outstanding Ser-



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vice in honor of his years of dedicated service as President of the Chapter.

10. Gary Macnamara received an award in appreciation of his dedicated service as Chapter Secretary.

11. Don Gonnevill received an award in appreciation of his dedicated service as Chapter Vice President.

12. Hans Hunt accepted a Special Recognition award on behalf of Sonora High School and their JROTC program.

13. Debra Holm received an award for her outstanding work as SFA 78's webmaster and as the Sentinel art director/designer.