



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 11 • NOVEMBER 2022



SFACON 2022 AAR Edition

A Tribute to Bruce Long

A DEFECTOR IN PLACE:

The Strange and Terrible
Saga of a Green Beret
Sandinista – Part Two

DENTCAP

Dental Civic Action Projects
An SF Dentist in Thailand



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US ARMY SPECIAL
OPS COMMAND



US ARMY
JFK SWCS



1ST SF COMMAND



1ST SF GROUP



3RD SF GROUP



5TH SF GROUP



7TH SF GROUP



10TH SF GROUP



19TH SF GROUP



20TH SF GROUP



8TH SF GROUP



11TH SF GROUP



12TH SF GROUP

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FRONT COVER: Chapter 78's Richard Simonian, wearing his St. Philip Neri Award. He received the award at the SFA National Convention at Colorado Springs, CO. Story on page 2. (Photo by Alex Quade)



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From the Editor



How Miller
Sentinel Editor

We begin this issue with the man on the cover, Richard Simonian. As a Chapter 78 member, treasurer, and former chaplain, Richard has truly helped in many ways this Chapter to grow, thrive, and achieve its purpose. At SFACON 2022 he played a couple of roles, one as recipient of the prestigious St. Phillip Neri Award. Alex Quade wrote of her interview with Richard after the convention, letting him describe how excited he was to receive the well-deserved award, and how his SF experience served him through his entire life.

His other role was in a roundtable discussion, as one of the four remaining "Originals" from the first years of Special Forces. Alex goes on to describe that event, as well as cover the many activities at SFACON 2022, in "What It Was All About." Reading it made me wish I could have attended.

Then we have a couple of pages of Chapter 78 enjoying the convention, put together by our graphic designer, Debra Holm, with just a few of the photos taken by Jim Duffy, John Stryker Meyer, and Greg Horton.

In "Remembering Our Sacrifices" by Alex Quade, she shows how much of the SF family she is by poignantly describing the speech by Gold Star Wife Norma Donlon, the gratitude shown in the dinner keynote speech, and interviewing other members of Gold Star Families. They are the ultimate examples of the sacrifices made by the families of our regiment.

"Dentcap" is a result of another "Letter to the Editor." We had another member, Bob Reed, write about his PSYOP operation in the Lop Buri area of 1970 Thailand with 46th SF company. He will also be the guest speaker at our January Chapter meeting.

And the wait is over! We have Part 2 of Greg Walker's story about Green Beret, David Baez, and his fateful operation with the Sandanistas. Greg has done us a great service by bringing attention to the very significant role SF played in Central and South America in stopping the surge of Communism. I've had comments by numerous members who were totally unaware of those SF exploits Greg authoritatively and interestingly describes.

We close, appropriately with Debra Holm's eloquent tribute to Bruce Long, another of the great builders of Chapter 78, our Chapter meeting photos, and a friendly reminder regarding the postcard enclosures included with the latest DROP. ♦

How Miller
Sentinel Editor

From the President | November 2022



Gregory Horton
President SFA Ch. 78

This was a month to remember, both for its highs and lows.

Everyone was aware that our Past President, SGM Bruce Long had terminal cancer. On September 14th, Bruce went to meet his Lord and Savior. Bruce was a kind and generous person who loved his family and Chapter 78 and he gave his all to both. I was the lucky guy to pick up the mantle of the Presidency and become the beneficiary of Bruce's kind and sage advice.

He had picked up a tremendous knowledge of what it takes to harness all the moving parts that make up a vibrant chapter and develop one of the best outfits in the SFA. As my mentor, he was able to smooth out the first few rocky months and set me on a very productive path, and for that I will be forever grateful to Bruce.

The services for Bruce were held at the beautiful Riverside National Cemetery on October 14th. The ceremony was officiated by Chaplain Randy McConnell and was replete with an Honor Guard and a beautiful rendition of "Amazing Grace" by Cliff Armas from the Los Angeles Police Emerald Society Pipes and Drums and a Chapter member.

After the ceremony, a Celebration of Life for Bruce was held by Geri Long and the family, where we were able to toast the awesome life of SGM Bruce Long. Good food, libations, camaraderie, and good stories were a wonderful panacea to ease the sting of Bruce's loss. Farewell my friend, you will be missed.

The high of the month was the Special Forces Convention put on by The Colorado Springs Chapter 4-24. It was a fantastic event. There were over 600 participants, including five Medal of Honor recipients

who put on outstanding symposiums describing their actions on their fateful day. We celebrated 70 years of service to our nation, including a Gold Star luncheon to honor the families of Our Fallen.

One of the highlights of the Convention for me was the Symposium of the legendary SF Originals from the 1952-53 activation because one of the attendees was our very own Richard Simonian. These legends all participated in a round table discussion of their careers and what it was like to be an Original.

And for icing on the cake, Richard was honored by the SFA with the award of the St. Philip Neri Medal. This was a well-deserved award for someone who devotes considerable time, effort, and money to veterans and their causes including our Afghan community. Congratulations Richard!

And mark your calendar for our Christmas Party at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club on December 10th. More information to follow.

OUR NEXT CHAPTER MEETING Saturday, November 19th, 2022

TIME: Breakfast 0800 — Meeting 0830

LOCATION: The Pub at Fiddler's Green

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

Greg Horton SGM (Ret)
President
SFA Chapter 78

About the Saint Philip Neri Award

The St. Philip Neri Award Program was established by the United States Army Special Forces Command in 2002. St. Philip Neri was selected as the Patron Saint of Special Forces because he embodied the traits of the ideal Special Forces soldier, selfless, superb teacher, and inspirational leader.

Why is Saint Philip Neri the patron saint of US Special Forces?

St. Philip Neri was an Italian saint, and is best known as the founder of the secular order 'The Congregation of the Oratory (or the Orations)'. He was an important figure in the Counter-Reformation. Philip worked with the poor in Rome, and had many followers in this area of work. Philip helped to revive Catholicism during the spread of Protestantism. St. Philip Neri truly knew how to carry out the Corporal Works of Mercy.

Richard is the true epitome of the "Silent Professional" that all of us strive to be. He has helped literally thousands of Veterans and refugees since leaving the Army in the 50s. Santiago Communities is made up of 1,500 plus affordable residence communities in California, Arizona, Washington, and Nevada, and has helped hundreds of veterans with housing and a chance to get on their feet. And, in addition to spending a small fortune getting the Afghan Commandos and Interpreters safely out of the danger zone, he has created two communities, in Mojave and Ridgecrest, California, where he has helped the members move in and get situated. And all the time he has been helping others, he has never said a thing about his work and, as I said, he is the true Quiet Professional.



He Wore the Medal ALL THE WAY HOME

By Alex Quade

War Reporter & Honorary SFA Natl. Lifetime Member

The look on Richard Simonian's face — SF Original, Chapter 78 Treasurer, former Chapter 78 Chaplain, and newly minted St. Philip Neri Award recipient — was like a kid's face in a candy shop. This reporter chased him down — briefly blocking him as he was rushed away to his private jet after the SFACON 2022 Banquet — and finagled a photo to capture *the moment*. (The usual looks of annoyance at this reporter by some, was well worth it.) Richard Simonian beamed as though on a sugar high.

He had, after all, delivered an impromptu acceptance speech in which he not only thanked SFACON 2022 organizers, his Chapter 78 colleagues, and the Brotherhood — but also managed to expound upon — *The Value of SF Training on His Career; Unconventional Warfare in Business Practice; and Unconventional Warfare in Business Isn't For Everyone*.

"I wore the medal all the way home," he would tell me during our follow-up interview later.

Meanwhile, I reached out to two Green Berets who know him well, **former Chapter 78 President John "Tilt" Meyer**, and **current Chapter 78 President Greg Horton** — who, along with **SFA National President Kevin Harry** — delivered a terrific introduction.

"During the SFA banquet when Richard received his award, they failed to mention how he has helped fellow Green Berets over the last few decades, in addition to helping the SFA," John Meyer said.

"Hey, I wasn't supposed to do the intro because I thought Tilt was going to do it. I didn't have any prepared notes and just shot from the hip," Greg Horton said.

"Richard Simonian has been an inspiration to me and many other Green Berets over the years through his 'Quiet Professional' work ethic, his Christian bearings, and leadership qualities. I've had the privilege of working with Richard for more than 10-years through non-profits that helped veterans obtain affordable housing and many other benefits. He's also quietly assisted dozens of Green Berets privately through counseling, work-related advice based on his 60+ years of being a successful businessman," Meyer shared.

Greg Horton seconded that.

"When I first met Richard, like I said — a warm welcoming smile and very pleasant guy. Very low key. But then I was talking to another member and he started telling me about Richard, how he was one of the Original Green Berets, got out and became the CEO of a large



A smiling Richard Simonian, wearing his St. Philip Neri Award, stopped for a photo before leaving the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs, CO, on the evening of September 24, after attending the SFA National Convention where he was presented the award. (Photo by Alex Quade)



Left to right, SFA Chapter 78 President Greg Horton, Richard Simonian, and SFA National President Kevin Harry at the award presentation. (Photo by Jeremy Miller)

network of affordable housing communities, was a major factor in helping Green Berets and other Vets, rescued Afghan Commandos and their families and on and on. But the thing that really struck me was the fact that Richard is the epitome of 'The Quiet Professional'. Not once have I ever heard him brag about or take credit for all of the wonderful things he has done. And this just scratches the surface of what he has done for Special Forces, the Association, and Chapter 78. Richard is truly a man among men," Horton added.

Well said, Gentlemen!

It took a time to work around Richard's always busy schedule, but he kindly agreed to allow me to call him at home, for an official follow-up interview. *I decided to share it, verbatim — so folks might learn a little more, glean a different insight, or just enjoy Richard in his own words:*

Alex Quade: Congrats, Richard! Did you have any clue this St. Philip Neri Award was happening? Because the look on your face was priceless.

Richard Simonian: Actually, no. But I had a hint.

Alex Quade: A little bird perhaps, or because it was listed in the Banquet Program? **Greg Horton**, the current Chapter 78 President, mentioned that former **Chapter 78 President Bruce Long** put this honor in for you, before he passed away.

Richard Simonian: I didn't know what he was doing or anything about it. I did find out later during Greg's introduction, that Bruce had a lot to do with it, but I didn't know that.

(Earlier, I'd asked Greg about the behind-the-scene process of Bruce submitting Richard for the award.

"It was a completely solo project, with no notice other than he [Bruce] was in the process of completing the paperwork by himself. He didn't consult me at all, other than to say he was completing the paperwork by himself," Greg confided.)

Alex Quade: Greg did a very nice introduction of you, and of this award. What does this award mean to you?

Richard Simonian: To tell you the truth, I started working for the chapter 30-years ago, or more, I can't remember. And I worked for this chapter all those years to try to make it the best chapter that I could make it. And I think that I did that. I spent a lot of time and resources for the chapter, and for the SF guys that are in the chapter, to give them something that was way beyond what any other chapter could ever do for those SF guys.

Alex Quade: You've been very focused on that from the moment we met (at the 65th Anniversary of the Originals at 10SFG's HQ, in 2017), and that's a huge legacy.

But let's switch gears for a moment, to the takeaway for the next generation of SF. Because you were standing up there at the podium, and you talked about the skill you learned in Special Forces training — of Unconventional Warfare. That this mentality of "thinking Unconventionally" — you wholeheartedly applied to your business life — and credited to much of your success.

Tell me about this "*Unconventional mindset*" and how it has helped you over the years.

Richard Simonian: Well, first of all, I have to give credit to SF training for what I was

able to get out of it. So, when I was leaving Special Forces, I was put up in headquarters company and an assignment with a fellow named **Floyd Todd**, who was a building designer. I spent a month or two up in headquarters company before I was separated, and sent back to Fort Ord.

Then at a future time, when I wasn't able to figure out what I was going to do for my life of employment, or what kind of industry I wanted to be in, I sought him (Floyd Todd) out. He was at a motel in Van Nuys, California. I got him cleaned up and brought him home. Brought him to live with me and my wife. We started a little business. He taught me how to draw buildings plans, which was the most important thing that could have ever happened.

Alex Quade: You and I have talked about this "*Unconventional mindset*" over the years — that you have tried to surround yourself with people who think unconventionally — the translation of doing what it takes, to get the job done. Complete the mission, get it done.

Richard Simonian: Right.

Alex Quade: Because you talked a little bit about that "*Unconventional thinking*," while you were standing up there at the podium. How important is that, in business success — as well as the importance of mentoring others?

Richard Simonian: The first job I got offered when I was working in the small business with Floyd Todd as a building designer, and I was selling those plans to builders. One day, the builder showed up and offered me a job. Well, I'd never had a job before. So, I took that job and I went to work for them. And in 6-months, I was able to learn all the talking skills — the lingo of the construction business — until the day that he found out that I didn't know what I was talking about, and fired me. But I took the skills that I learned from there, and I was able to get a very, very, very good job in the same industry at the highest caliber.



In 2017, at the 65th Anniversary of the Originals, a week long series of events held at the 10th Group Headquarters in Ft. Carson, CO. Right to left, Alex Quade, Richard Simonian, Lonny Holmes, former Chapter 78 President 2010-2013, Rick Estes SOA President, John Meyer, former Chapter 78 President 2018-2019, an unidentified Veteran, Doris Chandler, 10SFG Executive Assistant (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)

Now *that* is what you call Unconventional Warfare — when you take something that you don't know anything about, and then you make it into something that conquers the entire situation. That's part of the unconventional part of what I did, from that point on. And, and there are more, more to that, unconventionally — hiring people that didn't know their skills, and I was able to teach them those skills, in order to replicate myself. When I had people coming to work who couldn't understand that, all they could think about was going forward and they didn't know what was going on behind them. That was part of those skills that I'm talking about. And I use that, from that day forward, clear up until today, where I still use it today.

Alex Quade: Terrific, because you've also mentored a lot of people...

Richard Simonian: I tried to do that. And sometimes I'm not able to make them understand what Unconventional Warfare is. And I have to let them go. It's only those people that know how to do those kinds of things, that can be successful in the business world. Especially in the world where you're having to buy land, you're having to get the cities and counties to go along with you. All those things that have to be done by various agencies. So, all those things count — and I get people to understand that. And once they understand it, they know

what to do, and if they have questions, they always can come to me. I've had people that work for me that were Airborne-trained — and were not able to conquer the concept of unconventional thinking.

Alex Quade: Last two questions... Again, what does this St. Philip Neri Award mean to you — since it's the SF community honoring you — and your commitment to the Brotherhood, and all that you have done — and putting you up as an example for all?

Richard Simonian: Well, first of all, it means a lot. It really does. But more than that, when we were at the convention, and we sat in that room where it was standing room only, with these 4-people that were the only Originals that are left — I was surprised that there was so much interest in that. I just thought it would be something like what happened at the Las Vegas Convention. But this was way more than that. I was really surprised — at the way **Mitch** handled that and the way the audience handled that.

And then afterwards, what really surprised me more than anything else, was the fact that they put us in a room, and you were in there. People were asking me for my autograph. Can you imagine that somebody is asking me for an autograph, which I have never done before in my entire life? So that was absolutely amazing. And again, in the convention



There was a full house for Originals Panel at the SFA Convention. (Photo by Alex Quade)



Original Richard Simonian autographing, with COL Aaron Bank's jump helmet next to him. (Photo by Alex Quade)



Richard Simonian, at right, signs a poster for Alex Quade, at left. (Photo by Zeke Lloyd)



Right to left, Convention Organizer John Kress shakes Richard Simonian's hand after autographs. (Photo by Alex Quade)



St. Philip Neri Award plaque presented to Richard along with the medal. (Photo by Jim Duffy)

(Originals Panel), with the applause that took place after I spoke for a few minutes — was something that I could never imagine. Never happened before, and probably will never happen again to this 90-year-old SF soldier. So yes, it meant a lot, a very lot.

Alex Quade: That really hits home, just how much this entire SFACTION 2022 experience meant to you. Very well said about **LTC (ret) Mitch Utterback** — it wasn't people just popping in and out — everyone attending was genuinely interested, genuinely wanting to hear the stories of all y'all Originals. You've played a big part in the SF legacy and teaching folks for the future.

Richard Simonian: I just want you to know that I wore the medal all the way home.

Alex Quade: I know you did! Because when I chased you down after the Banquet at the front desk, when Tilt was trying to get you to your private jet — and I stopped you to take a photo to capture *that* moment — you had it hanging around your neck, over your polo shirt. I'd noticed you'd changed out of your Banquet suit, and put your St. Neri Award back on — which just made me happy. What did your pilot and crew say — and your wife, when you got home?

Richard Simonian: They were astounded! My wife — I'm sure she's proud of me. But you know what? It was SF, and she's her own woman. She was, I think she was very proud — yeah.

Alex Quade: I know she was. I'm sure your whole family is. You get the last word on all of this.

Richard Simonian: All of those people that were a part of Chapter 78 — **Lonny Holmes** and **John Joyce** — are the ones also that made it what it was — not just me. I provided whatever I could and financially, to make them do it. And **Debra** with the *Sentinel*.



St. Philip Neri Award presentation at the Banquet. (Photo by Alex Quade)



Standing ovation for Richard Simonian's award. (Photo by Alex Quade)

And, **Bruce Long**. You know, I sat with him for 45-minutes, a day before he decided to die at 3:00pm. And I didn't know then, that he had anything at all to do with this Award. So, I give him a lot a lot of credit for nominating me, or whatever process they go through. So yeah, it was very good.

Alex Quade: Nicely put. You're correct regarding **Ms. Debra Holm**, and how far the *Sentinel* has come since 2017. She's been absolutely on the ball from the get-go. Same with your different editors. It's been "Teamwork," as I always like to say. You done good, Richard. So, congratulations again, on your St. Philip Neri Award!

Richard Simonian: Thank you. Thank you. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Award-winning War Reporter and Filmmaker Alex Quade has written stories focusing on the GWOT Special Forces generation, and next generation of SF for the *Sentinel* since 2017.

For more info or to contact: <http://alexquade.com/>



SFACON 2022 — What It Was All About



Center, Conference Organizer LTC (ret) John Kress cuts ribbon at the opening of SFACON 2022. (Photo courtesy SSG Travis Fontaine)



DMOR and former SFA Executive Director Cliff Newman talks to Alex Quade. (Photo courtesy Zeke Lloyd)

By Alex Quade

War Reporter & Honorary SFA Natl. Lifetime Member

It was about... *honoring our legacy, remembering our sacrifices, and recognizing our heroes.*

SFACON 2022 — just a few miles up the road from 10th SFG “Home of The Originals” — heralded the 70th Anniversary of Special Forces — and everything *that* means.

“This is our Platinum Anniversary, and what better place to do this than in Colorado Springs, home of ‘America’s Mountain,’ Pikes Peak. It was a privilege to celebrate our Regiment’s seven decades of service to the Nation,” **Conference Organizer, LTC (ret) John Kress** said.

It was about... *the Brotherhood.*

“This is the 70th anniversary, which is a long time. It’s just a Brotherhood. Once you have that, done some of the things we’ve done — there’s no rambles in here. There are a lot of guys in here who’ve done some amazing things in Unconventional Warfare and in urban development, and things like that. We go from a combat environment to a humanitarian environment, back and forth — like we change out shoes. That’s what this Brotherhood is based on,” **DMOR and former SFA Executive Director, Cliff Newman** said, **Cliff Newman** said.

It was about... *tribal knowledge*, and getting everyone on the same map sheet.

“As we move forward in life — and the conveyor belt of life kind of keeps going, and dropping off — we’ve lived through what’s called *tribal knowledge*. Tribal knowledge is what hearsay is. You have to pull that together, so that all other people (the vast SF generational tribe), can have a shared experience. And when you form events, such as we did here — you create an ability to share the memories, and relive experiences,” **Conference Organizer COL (ret) Chris Sorenson** said.

“But not everybody likes all the same things. So, we created a variety of opportunities for folks to share their knowledge, experiences, somehow in some areas — to make sense of what happened in one particular time. And it helps them get closure. It’s not that it has to be combat-related. But, (like the conveyor belt — hearing about an operation) *that* makes that *other* operation — make sense of that *other* operation, and on and on,” **Sorenson** added.

It was about... the DOL Symposium — *highlighting SF's strategic, operational, and tactical exploits.*

BG (ret) Joe Stringham spoke of the *Original Mike Force* and *El Salvador*, **COL (ret) Mark Rosengard** covered *Task Force Dagger* in Northern Afghanistan, **LTC (ret) Mark Grdovic** covered *Task Force Viking* in Northern Iraq, and **MSG (ret) Bob Charest** reviewed *Detachment (A) Berlin*. 2-MOH recipients shared their experiences — **MOH recipient SGM Matt Williams** spoke of the battle of *Shok Valley*; **MoH recipient MSG Earl Plumlee** spoke of *Forward Operating Base Ghazni*. And, **BG Gil Ferguson** gave the *1st Special Forces Command Presentation*.

"Everyone wants to be a Commando, until it's time to do Commando stuff," **BG Ferguson** said, which made the packed-house audience laugh. "SF is the premiere Irregular Warfare force," he continued — while many service units partner, from AFSOC to SMU — "They do it to get to the X, we do it as its own goal."

CW5 Bob Davis chimed in — "We have more foreign-born soldiers now, than during the Lodge Act."

BG Gil Ferguson also brought up the 18X-Ray program — "Super successful. We have multiple generations now of X-Ray Team Sergeants."



Center, Conference Organizer COL (ret) Chris Sorenson MCs SFACON 2022 Symposium Series. At right, a SF Vet asks question of BG Joe Stringham, left. (Photo courtesy SSG Travis Fontaine)



COL (ret) Mark Rosengard covers TF Dagger. (Photo courtesy SSG Travis Fontaine)



WWII Vet and SF alumni listen to conference speakers. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



MOH MSG Earl Plumlee shares a funny story during FOB Ghazni speech. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



LTC (ret) Mark Grdovic covers TF Viking. (Photo courtesy SSG Travis Fontaine)



MOH SGM Matt Williams covers Shok Valley. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



BG Gil Ferguson's Command Brief. (Photo courtesy SSG Travis Fontaine)



USASOC CG LTG Jon Braga. (Photo courtesy SSG Travis Fontaine)

It was, of course, about... *The Originals*.

"70 years ago, these men were part of something groundbreaking, and new," **USASOC CG LTG Jon Braga** introduced them.

"Today, the Green Berets are cultural icons. We are on every continent. Our allies know who we are, and what we can do, and our enemies fear us. No matter where we go and what new domains we conquer, the legacy of the Originals is never far from our minds. From Korea to Vietnam, and beyond these early classes of Special Forces soldiers, they set the example for others to follow," **USASOC CG LTG Jon Braga** stated.

LTC (ret) Mitch Utterback deftly moderated the standing-room only Originals panel.

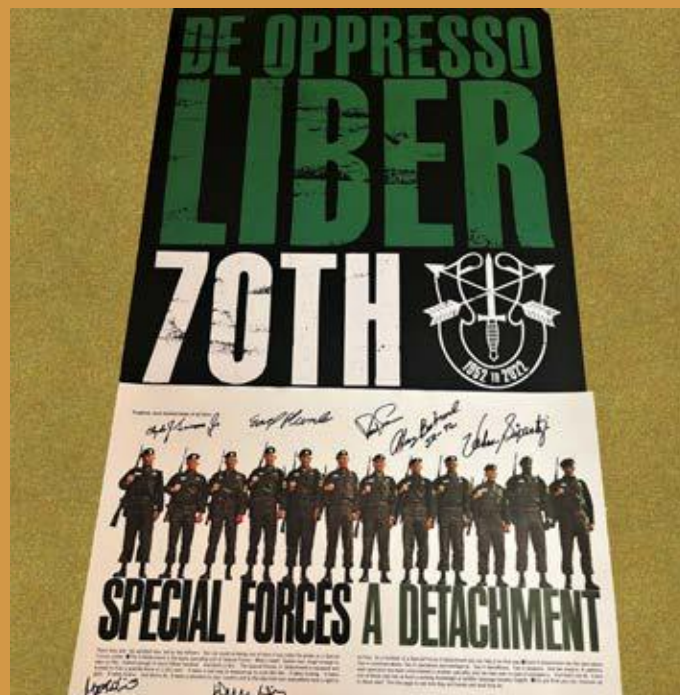
It was... a lot of laughing, and a lot of learning. Afterwards, as The Originals signed autographs, each shared thoughts and advice for the next generation of SF — with this reporter:

"Respect is important. In my mind, today, there is little respect for the last generation, my generation. I think, if this (these stories of the Originals, and more SF history) was taught to the new Special Forces coming up, that it would really help them in the long run," **Original, 1SF (ret) Henry Bertrand** mused.

"From my generation, to the current generation, to the future generation — technology. I'm amazed at what the current people have, and I can only imagine what the future will have. There were so many things during my time, I wish I would have had. Also, they gotta be in shape. They gotta swim, they gotta run, they gotta be willing to adapt to changing conditions," **Original, MAJ (ret) Clyde Sincere** offered.

"Look at the Cadre — if they can make it, you can too. Your motto should be, the only way out — is for them to carry you out," **Original, COL (ret) Vahan Sipantzi** directed.

"I have no idea what I would suggest to them. I was very, very fortunate to get through my portion. I learned never to give up. Fight and keep fighting until you die. Yeah," **former SSG and Original, Richard Simonian** decided.



Posters that greeted attendees at the Welcome door to SFACON 2022 Symposium & Speaker Panels. Lower poster is autographed by SF Originals and SF MOH. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



SF Original 1SG (ret) Henry Bertrand answers Alex Quade's questions after the Originals Panel. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Right to left, SF Original Vahan Sipantzi answers Alex Quade's questions as he signs her poster before the Originals Panel. (Photo courtesy Zeke Lloyd)



Left to right, SF Originals Panel — Henry Bertrand, Richard Simonian, Vahan Sipantzi, and Clyde Sincere. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Vietnam Gold Star Widow Norma Donlon (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Left to right, LTC (ret) Mitch Utterback shakes COL (ret) Roger Donlon's hand. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Left to right, MOH recipients, Earl Plumlee, Matt Williams, Roger Donlon, Drew Dix. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Above, right to left, MOH MSG Earl Plumlee and SGM Matt Williams witness swearing-in ceremony of future Soldiers, after GORUCK, SFACON 2022. Below, MOH SGM Matt Williams with GORUCK participants. (Photos courtesy of SSG Travis Fontaine)

It was about... *the Gold Star Families.*

An invitation-only Gold Star Luncheon paid tribute to 7-Families of our Fallen. **Vietnam Gold Star Widow, Ms. Norma Donlon — wife of MOH recipient COL (ret) Roger Donlon** — delivered a personal and poignant speech, which resonated with everyone privileged to hear it.

It was about... *the SF Medal of Honor recipients.*

“Col Donlon — You and your fellow medal winners have provided the Regiment with a legacy of valor that has inspired generations of Green Berets — and will continue to do so in the future,” **former USASOC CG, LTG (ret) Ken Tovo** said.

COL (ret) Roger Donlon, MAJ (ret) Drew Dix, SGM Matt Williams and **MSG Earl Plumlee** talked with attendees at a Medal of Honor bbq picnic and ceremony at the *Flying W Ranch*. Earlier, two of the recipients, **SGM Matt Williams** and **MSG Earl Plumlee** — also helped 10SFG and 19SFG Green Berets with a “*Future of the Regiment*” event (like a mini-selection course) — and a GORUCK with local teens.

“Looking back on my career — my biggest regret is that you can’t do this job forever. There is nothing more rewarding than the time I have spent on ODA’s,” **SF MOH Recipient MSG Earl Plumlee** shared with me.

SFACON 2022 was also about... a variety of other events — from a tour of the 10SFG compound, to dancing at Boot Barn Hall at Bourbon Brothers — from a SFMC ride, to a clay shoot.



At left, left to right, LTG (ret) Darsie Rogers catches up with Alex Quade, who was embedded with his ODAs Iraq 2008, when he was 10SFG and CJSOTF CDR. (Photo courtesy Zeke Lloyd)



Below, left to right, DMOR CSM (ret) Joe Lopez smiles as former Ch. 78 President Ramon Rodriguez hugs Alex Quade. COL Joe Lopez, Jr. watches. (Photo courtesy Zeke Lloyd)



The 70th Anniversary Regimental Banquet with keynote speaker LTG Ken Tovo. The Banquet was the concluding event at the SFACON 2022 (Photo courtesy 10SFG PAO)

It was about... *bringing the SF community together, as Family.*

"There's none better than this. And once you're in — you're in. And the beret says more about you than anything you can say about yourself," **former Ch. 78 and former SOA President, John "Tilt" Meyer** said.

Ultimately, SFACON 2022 was about... *remembering where we've come from, and where we're going.*

"Some of the Regiment's most significant contributions come well before combat; the quiet work that Green Berets do daily. The kind of work that every Green Beret in this room has participated in, no

matter when they served," **LTG (ret) Ken Tovo** summed up at the SFACON 2022 Banquet.

"Every Green Beret can be rightly proud of their contribution to the Regiment's legacy; for helping to build an incredibly solid foundation for today and the future," **Tovo** concluded.

Then it was about... SFA Ch. 4-24 handing over the convention mantle to SFA Ch. 500 in Indianapolis.

Start your engines, Gentlemen. SFACON 2023 will be here before you know it — coinciding with the Indy-500. *Vrrrrroooooooooommm... Vrrrrroooooooooommm...!* ♦



Alex Quade checks on SF Original MAJ Clyde Sincere, sitting alone in corner after Banquet. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

War reporter and documentary filmmaker Alex Quade started her career at the White House during the Persian Gulf War. She's worked in television covering global conflicts and hostile environments for CNN, FOX, CBS, HLN, APTN and CNNI out of Frankfurt and Berlin, Germany, New York and Atlanta. She's produced videos and reports for The New York Times; front page stories for The Washington Times, Military Times, and Small Wars Journal; and magazine cover features for National Guard, Communicator, and Dangerous Assignments. She's the recipient of more than two dozen journalism awards. Among them: two national Edward R. Murrow Awards, the national Defense Media Award for her career covering special operations, an International Aerospace Media Award, group Emmy, Peabody and Columbia du-Pont Awards, and the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's Excellence in Journalism Award "for her courageous reporting and honest news coverage". For more info or to contact: <http://alexquade.com/>

Reporter Alex Quade extends gratitude to everyone she quoted, and requested photos from. Special thanks: Zeke Lloyd, SSG Travis Fontaine, 10SFG PAO, Linda Repass, COL Joe Lopez Jr., Norma Donlon, Jeremy Miller.



Former USASOC and 10SFG CG, LG (ret) Ken Tovo speaks at Banquet. (Photo courtesy 10SFG PAO)



Left to right, Linda Repass, former 10SFG and USASFC 1st Lady, and her friend Shawna before the Banquet. (Photo courtesy Linda Repass)



Left to right, Roger and Norma Donlon, Cristin Bartter of Gary Sinise Foundation, and Mike Kampsnyder, USMC (ret). (Photo courtesy Norma Donlon)



SF Original COL Vahan Sipantzi offers his "Prayer for SF Convention" at the Banquet. The powerful invocation evoked a positive response from attendees. (Photo courtesy 10SFG PAO)

Prayer for SF Convention

Our Father and our God, what a world we live in today. Every man for himself — for what he can get, not what he can give. You created us to serve others, not to be served.

So, we thank you for the example of your Son Jesus Christ, who modeled servanthood by laying down His life for each one of us.

We thank you for caring about us enough to stay involved in our lives, even knowing what we're really like behind our facade.

We thank you too for our Gold Star families. We thank them for the sacrifices they have made of sons, daughters, wives, mothers, husbands and fathers. We pray that they will find hope and healing and comfort in You, the Great Physician and the Prince of Peace.

We pray for our troops who are still deployed to now forgotten places like Syria, Somalia, Central and South America, the Philippines and Nigeria.

We pray for the survival of Special Forces as the glory days of OIF and OEF are things of the past, and now Special Forces is in search of a new mission

We pray for the Afghans who served with Special Forces and were left behind in the debacle of abandonment who are now being hunted down and killed.

We pray for real leadership that puts troops and winning wars ahead of career advancement and the woke agenda taking place today.

God have mercy on our nation and may we never give up hope nor forget that inspite of our efforts to deny, forget, or replace You, You are still in charge and our only real hope.

We pray this in Jesus' Name, AMEN



SFA Chapter 78 at SFACON 2022



SFACON 2022 was held at the Antler Hotel, in Colorado Springs, CO. (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



Banners greeted SFACON attendees (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



The Hospitality Room included the Green Beret Marketplace (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



The High Dollar Raffle poster and a couple of the items that could be won. (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



Robert "Bob" Brown, SOF founder, had a table in the GB Marketplace. (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



The men's room — when we knew we were definitely not in Southern California anymore. (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



John Stryker Meyer and Richard Simonian posed for a photo with Jeff Falkel's Bald Eagle, *Magissuwa*. (Photo by Jeff Falkel, courtesy John Stryker Meyer)



John Stryker Meyer, at far right, with SF Originals, left to right, Henry Bertrand, Richard Simonian, Vahan Sipantzi, and Clyde Sincere. (Photo courtesy John Stryker Meyer)



While the rain was lovely, it caused the Medal of Honor Picnic to be moved, at least partially, indoors. Above right, Jim Duffy, at far right, poses for a photo with the MOH recipients Drew Dix, Matt Williams, Roger Donlon, and Earl Plumlee. (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



At center, Chapter member Aaron Brandenburg and his wife Kathie at the Originals Panel. Chapter member Rob Pugh, can be seen directly behind Aaron preparing to take a photo. (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)

Chapter 78 members enjoy the wonderful meal at the SFACON 2022 70th Anniversary Regimental Banquet. Standing left to right, Jim Cragg and David Gibbs. Seated left to right, John Stryker Meyer, John's brother David Meyer, Greg Horton, and Jim Duffy. (Photo courtesy Greg Horton)

The MOH Picnic also included The Flying "W" Country Western Band, shown above on stage. According to Jim, they were very talented. Their performance included relevant background videos related to the song being sung, e.g. the song "Rawhide" played with Clint Eastwood's *Rawhide* movie. (Photo courtesy Jim Duffy)



At left and below, SFACON attendees had an opportunity to take a tour of the "Originals" 10th SFG(A) Complex at Fort Carson. There was lot to see, and these images are just a few of the many that Jim Duffy took during his time there.



Remembering Our Sacrifices

By Alex Quade

War Reporter & Honorary SFA Natl. Lifetime Member

(Author's disclosure: this reporter gave MOH Gold Star Memorial pins and keychains, given to her by her friend, WW2 MOH recipient, Chaplain Woody Williams — RIP — to each of the Gold Star Family Members she had the honor of spending time with at SFACON 2022.)

The professionally delivered keynote address hid a secret. Few knew that speaker **Norma Donlon**, and her husband SF MOH recipient **COL (ret) Roger Donlon**, lost their beloved son just 3-days prior. Justin Donlon had served in the Kansas Army National Guard.

Ms. Norma — a Soldier's widow, Soldier's wife, and Soldier's mother — spoke at SFACON 2022's Gold Star luncheon.

"My first husband, *1LT John W. Irving, Jr.* is one of the names on the (Vietnam Memorial) wall. He was a U.S. Army Ranger KIA in an operation airlifting Vietnamese Rangers to the front. We had been married just a year when he volunteered for Shotgun duty on board a Huey helicopter. He was killed one week before he was to come home. At age 22, I became a Gold Star Wife," Ms. Norma began.

Then, she shared stories with the Gold Star Families and VIPs.

"A father came up to me asking, 'Is your first husband buried at ANC?' 'No,' I answered. 'Being so young my heart wanted to spend the rest of my life at his grave and be able to visit every day.' So, I had him buried near where I lived and worked, each day I took my lunch to the cemetery.' 'Yes,' he said, 'I understand that, my son has been gone for six years and I have coffee with him every morning,'" Ms. Norma shared.

She spoke of a mother, whose son was KIA in Iraq. His German wife moved back to Germany with their 2-year-old son. The double loss of her son and grandson was unbearable.

"I suggested she might want to register with Ancestry.com and write her son's story, in case her grandson reached out to her someday. When her grandson turned 17, he sent an email from Germany and they are now connected a world apart," Ms. Norma relayed.

The question Gold Star Families ask her the most is — "How do you get over it?" Her answer is always the same — "You never get over it but you can get through it. Each person, each family does so in their own good time. It took me three-and-a-half years, but I did finally move on."

Ms. Norma's speech resonated with the Gold Star Families.



Left to right, Norma and first husband John Irving, in December 1964, on their first wedding anniversary. He left for Vietnam six weeks later. (Photo courtesy Norma Donlon)

It resonated with... **Ms. Karen Newman** — now the wife of Green Beret **SFC (ret) Cliff Newman** (DMOR, former Executive Director SFA and Special Ops Association).

"Her brother Dale (*SSG Dale Dehnke*, 5SFG) was KIA on a recon mission at CCN on 18 May 1971, his 23rd birthday. I knew him there, but he was killed after I left (Da Krong Valley, Thua Thin Province, Vietnam). Karen and I met at a SOAR over 20-years ago. Her family never knew the circumstances of his death until then," Cliff told me.

It resonated with... **Ms. Betty Stewart** — now the wife of Green Beret LTC (ret) Lee Stewart. Her first husband *1LT John Penman* (B-Co, 2nd BN, 35th IN, 4th ID), was KIA MAR 1970, in Binh Dinh Province, Vietnam.

It resonated with... **Ms. Cleo Allgood**, whose son *COL Brian Allgood* (HHC, 30th MED BDE, V Corps) was KIA JAN 2007, in Diyala Province, Iraq.

And, it especially resonated with... Ms. Victoria Nevins, whose 19SFG son *SFC Liam Nevins* (B-Co, 5th BN) was KIA, SEP 2013, in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. Liam's aunt, **Ms. Susan Vandertie**, also found comfort in Ms. Norma's speech — ***because this special tribute lunch fell on the anniversary of Liam's death.***

Ms. Linda Repass, former 10SFG, USASFC, and SOCEUR First Lady — and founder of the *COL Maggie Raye Awards*, which honor



SSG Dale Dehnke KIA 1971.
(Photo courtesy James Butler)



1LT John Penman, KIA 1970.
(Photo courtesy the Vietnam Memorial Fund)



COL Brian Allgood, KIA 2007
(Photo courtesy USMA)



SFC Liam Nevins, KIA Sep 2013
(Photo courtesy DoD)

the service and sacrifice of SF Spouses — said, Ms. Norma has lived up to God's purpose. (Ms. Norma received a *Maggie Raye Award* in 2018.)

"She has found her voice, and has made a difference for other Gold Star Families, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes. When we go through adversities it is important to see the Why in them, and let them make us better and not bitter. Norma has certainly done that, and for the Gold Star Father we sat with, I know it helped him too," Ms. Linda stated.

That Gold Star Father — **Joseph Cribben**, lost his 10SFG son *SFC Stephen Cribben* (D-Co, 2nd BN, KIA NOV 2017) in Logar Province, in Afghanistan.

"He, like Norma, is also making a difference too," Ms. Linda added.

Making a difference... was something 1st SFC DCG, **BG Gil Ferguson** also highlighted during the conference.

"The impact of your actions, your concern, your benevolence is most keenly felt at the level of the Gold Star families, the folks who've paid the ultimate price. We (he and his wife, Ms. Renee) spent last night sitting with **Sarah Lindsay** — Gold Star of 10th Group— her husband Will (*SFC Will*

Lindsay, A-Co, 2nd BN) was killed in March 2019 (in Kunduz, Afghanistan) when I was Group Commander. The things the entire community has done, are remarkable. The freedom of your generosity — you've given her, and people like her, is tremendous and I truly appreciate that," BG Ferguson said.

USASOC CG, **LTG Jon Braga** also thanked the Families of our fallen heroes.

"We thank you for sharing this historic anniversary with us and renew our commitment to never forget for your selflessness and sacrifice, for your loved ones and their service to this nation. Any other Gold Star Family out there. We will never forget," **LTG Braga** stated.

Before the banquet... Conference Organizer **LTC (ret) John Kress** noticed that the gentleman printing official photographs with the Bald Eagle — wore a KIA memorial bracelet. He asked about it. **Jeff Falkel** shared the story of his Green Beret son, *SSG Chris Falkel* (1st BN, 3SFG) who was KIA AUG 2005, in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. **LTC Kress** "did a solid" — impromptu mentioning the Falkels during the banquet, after the Bald Eagle's appearance with 19SFG's Color Guard.



SFC Stephen Cribben, KIA Nov 2017
(Photo courtesy DoD)



SFC Will Lindsay, KIA March, 2019
(Photo courtesy DoD)



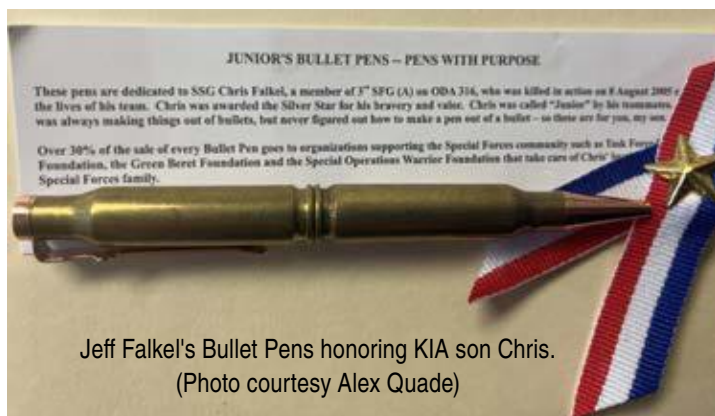
Left to right, Linda Repass, 4-24 former VP Joe Coale, and Linda's friend Shawna. Joe escorted the Donlons and delivered the Benediction at Banquet. (Photo courtesy Linda Repass)



Jeff Falkel, wearing Gold Star bracelet, holds Bald Eagle.
(Photo courtesy Jeff Falkel)



SSG Chris Falkel, KIA August 2005. With his father Jeff at SF graduation. (Photo courtesy Jeff Falkel)



Alex Quade caught Norma Donlon looking sad at the Flying W and went to hug her and talked with her about her son Justin. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Left to right, Norma Donlon consoles Flor and Rosemary Berumen after her speech. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



The Donlon family, baby son Justin is in Norma's lap. (Photo courtesy Norma Donlon from Alex Quade Films)

During the banquet... former USASOC CG, **LTG (ret) Ken Tovo's** key-note picked up from Gold Star widow **Norma Donlon's** speech earlier.

"As most of you know, a career as a Green Beret is a lifestyle, not a job. It asks as much sacrifice of the family as it does for the Soldier. Each Green Beret's service is marked by holidays missed and an absence from key life milestones with their families. While all Green Berets and their families give up so much, this sacrifice is manifested most clearly in those who have borne unspeakable loss," LTG Tovo said.

"We honor your incredible sacrifice. Your loved one's sacrifice and your loss is also an integral part of the 70-year legacy of the SF Regiment," Tovo added.

After the banquet... I asked Gold Star Father and longtime friend **Jeff Falkel** about the SF community and his son Chris.

"It is a family — it has remained a place for hugs. It always does my heart good for people to remember Chris and what he did. Why he received the Silver Star. Sixteen little kids have a Dad because of what Chris did — and eight kids wouldn't have been born," he told me.

In return, I shared with him something Gold Star speaker Norma Donlon's MOH husband COL Roger Donlon explained to me years ago, about this SF community — "The loss of a warrior teammate is felt for a lifetime. The feelings of loss, pain, grief and yes... even guilt are real! One must find a way to deal with all these emotions," he'd said.

Mr. Falkel deals with some of his emotions over the loss of his son, by making bullet pens out of 7.62 shell casings to honor Chris and his story — which this reporter's shared across America.

Then, he printed out the official photo of the Bald Eagle *Magissuwa*, with Gold Star speaker **Norma Donlon's** MOH husband, Roger. *Magissuwa*, an Indigenous Peoples' name, means "bright spirit."

Two days after **Ms. Norma** and **COL Roger Donlon** returned home from SFACON 2022, they dealt with the funeral visitation, and burial mass. Then, laid their proud Army Soldier son *Justin Luis Donlon* to rest. This Special Forces family's "bright spirit" was 47 years old. ❖



Left, Justin Luis Donlon; at right Justin Donlon (right) and brother (left) Derek Donlon (Photo courtesy Norma Donlon from Alex Quade Films)



Norma Donlon was awarded after her speech. Left to right, Norma Donlon, BG H.B. Gilliam, and CSM Chuck Sekelsky (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



After Norma's speech. Right to left, John Hughes talks to Roger Donlon, Norma Donlon speaks with Flor and Rosemary Berumen. Behind Roger, COL Vahan Sipantzi talks to Gold Star Father Joe Cribben. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Left to right, Alex Quade quietly gives Roger Donlon a mini Bible after son Justin's death. Flying W Ranch. (Photo courtesy COL Joe Lopez, Jr.)



Left to right, Alex Quade quietly checks in and hugs Norma Donlon after son Justin's death. Roger Donlon observes. Photo taken at the SFA Convention Medal of Honor Picnic held at the Flying W Ranch. (Photo courtesy COL Joe Lopez, Jr.)



Norma Donlon signs poster for Alex's film about Roger Donlon. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)



Left to right, Roger Donlon, Alex Quade, Norma Donlon. Alex sees the Donlons off at the conclusion of the convention. (Photo courtesy Alex Quade)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

War Reporter Alex Quade's newlywed husband was blown up in Sarajevo. She helped evacuate him from the war zone and became his caregiver. Alex credits the polytrauma experience with making her a more empathetic reporter, who tries to answer the questions of our troops, and their families. In her *CNN Presents* groundbreaking documentary "*Wounded Warriors*" ([CNN's Alex Quade Wounded Warrior Special – YouTube](#)) — Alex opened the doors for all future media coverage, with every branch of service, of wounded warriors. She obtained access to every echelon of care downrange — from point-of-injury, to back on the Home front. Among the accolades: an Armed Services "*Angel of the Battlefield Award*," Intl. Medical & Health Media "*Freddie Award*," CINE Golden Eagles, Frontpage Award, Headliner Award, etc. However, it meant more to Alex when the *President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors* Co-Chairs — Hon. Bob Dole, and Hon. Donna Shalala, the former Secretary of Health and Human Services — called her into the Senator's office to ask to use copies of her film to help educate caregivers and Administration decision-makers. Quade's Hollywood film "*Danger Close*" ([Danger Close Official Trailer 1 \(2017\) — Documentary – YouTube](#)) follows 10SFG ODA-072 (with whom she was embedded 2007 and 2008) when SSG Rob Pirelli was KIA, Diyala Province, Iraq — and the journey to provide closure and healing for his Gold Star Family and SF teammates. For more info or to contact Alex: <http://alexquade.com/>

DENTCAP

Dental Civic Action Projects

An SF Dentist in Thailand

By Capt. Robert (Bob) Reed D.D.S.

I am a Special Forces dentist. Started with the 7th Group in 1970 and volunteered to be assigned to the 46th Special Forces Company Airborne in Thailand. The 46th Company was training border guards, Thai Special Forces, and was heavily involved with the CIA training Thai, Lao, and Cambodian mercenaries in project 404,

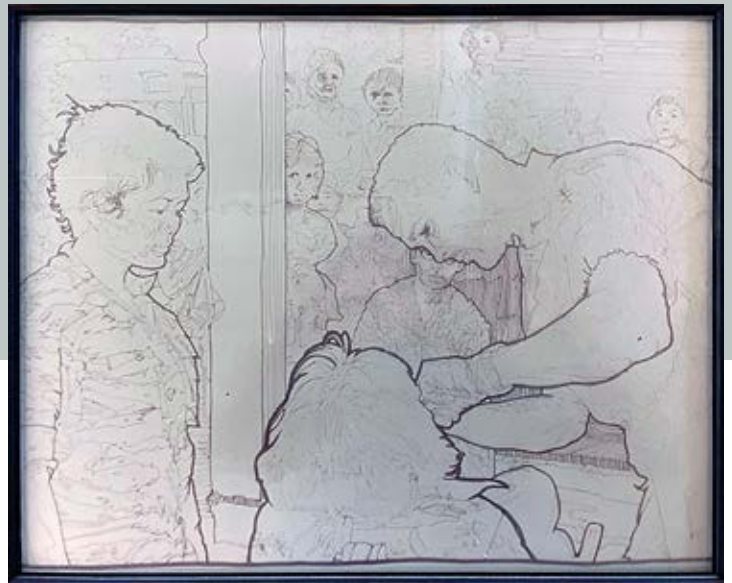
I arrived in Thailand in June of 1970. I landed at Don Mueang Airport, was given the address and told to go to the SF safe house in Bangkok, as some of the Army units were absconding with new personnel depending on their needs — and, as we know, everyone needs a good dentist.

I was driven to our base in Lop Buri some 100 Kilometers north of Bangkok. I settled in, welcomed by our company physician and the rest of the C Team. Our clinic had a Thai dentist, educated in the United Kingdom plus two dental nurses. The Thai dentist was taking care of dental issues before I arrived and doing a great job. The clinic had two medical nurses, a chief nurse and the big boss, the E-8 in charge. Unfortunately, I cannot remember his name.

While getting oriented, I spent some time with the S-2 officer after hours and asked about insurgent activities in Thailand. He suggested I visit MACTHAI in Bangkok and do some research on my own. I did just that and learned from classified documents that the Communist Thai in the north east were going to villages, assassinating the village chiefs and anyone else in authority in the village, sending some young villagers to either North Vietnam or China for indoctrination, and then having these indoctrinated youth take over running the village. I also learned that our A team in Nam Pung Dam in the north east had to move their drop zone because they were getting sniper fire on training jumps.

I felt that a dental civic action program might work in Thailand and wanted to find out what would be required to set one up. Advantages with dental civic action is once you visit the village, you don't have to return because extractions solve the problem. I also knew the 46th had a civilian contractor building schools near the villages, which gave us the opportunity to visit a village school, lecture the children and perform emergency treatment on the students and afterward anyone else that needed treatment; and there was a lot of that.

I had our clinic sergeant help me get in touch with the Thai Army Hospital in Lop Buri and arrange a meeting with the hospital dentist, a Thai LTC, Col. Vivat. Fortunately for me his English was excellent. I told him what I wanted to do, and he thought it was a great idea and would help any way he could.



Students at village schools would attend a lecture about dental care after which they received a tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush. (Photo courtesy Bob Reed)

I then visited the Colgate East Asia headquarters in Bangkok and was told they would give me all the toothpaste and toothbrushes I needed. Just send a truck down, and they would load it up. When we ran out, go back for more. Based on this, I felt we could lecture to the students, give each a tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush after our morning dental lecture. We would then examine each student, perform any emergency treatment needed in the morning, and treat any villagers in the afternoon.

After getting our needed supplies, I elected to do the first dentcap on my own. With help from our Thai staff, we found a local village, told them what we wanted to do, got our PR cameraman and my dental staff, and out we went. My dental staff did the lecture with me standing in front of a big wooden sign I had painted the picture of a tooth on. I am talking, staff is translating and wind blew the sign on my head. Everyone laughed, I was embarrassed, but the day went well. So we planned on doing a dentcap every Wednesday, and I did just that until I came home.



Photo of the 22 January 1971 issue *Suphai Sentinel*, a periodical of U.S. Army Thailand Army Support, which provided support for the 46th SF Co. mission.



A map of Thailand — the military base in Lop Buri is about 93 miles northeast of Bangkok.

The dentcaps were so successful we had villages contacting the Thai hospital, asking if their village could be next. When a village was selected, the bamboo telegraph must have worked pretty well because we had people walking for days just to get there for treatment. The villages were so grateful for our visits that they prepared for a huge lunch for all of us with hot soft drinks because where we were there was no electricity. The food was great. I never became ill, and those Wednesdays were the highlight of my week, and really my tour.

My boss, LTC Paul Combs loved what I was doing because, as noted above, the 46th was doing a lot of highly classified training. When media, politicians or other military visited Lop Buri he could talk about the dentcap and not have to deal with what we were really doing and who we were doing it with.

When I left Thailand, I met the dentist who replaced me, but, as far as I know, he did not continue what I started. My friend, Col. Vivat gave me a big going away party, with a gift of a large wooden pointer

with .50 cal brass on one end and the bullet, still in the brass, on the other end. I treasure that thing.

In summary, we had put together a successful dentcap program working very smoothly. I tried to keep it simple so it could continue throughout the province run by the Thai Army dentist and the Company dentist. I envisioned this dentcap could be run anywhere in Thailand by the Government, the wheel had already been invented. I don't think the idea was pursued after I left, but I don't know for sure.

With the help of Bob West (bobwestvideo.com) I've made a video which ties all this together really well. The Army visited the 46th, went with me on the dentcap and filmed the whole thing. Originally called "20 minutes of 1971 Thailand," you can now view this footage on Chapter 78's YouTube channel, courtesy of Bob West, at <https://youtu.be/OrxZn2-0kz0>. ❖

A Defector in Place: The Strange and Terrible Saga of a Green Beret Sandinista – Part Two

How Not to Raise a Revolutionary Army

By Greg Walker (ret)

Prologue: How not to raise a revolutionary army

In August 1980, [Green Beret David Arturo Baez](#) was honorably discharged from the United States Army for compassionate hardship reasons. His carefully constructed ruse of having to return to Nicaragua to help his aging grandparents on their small coffee *finca* had fooled his command at the 3/7th Special Forces Group (A) in Panama, as well as the United States Army.

In fact, the government led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) had nationalized Nicaragua's coffee industry beginning in 1980. The FSLN purchased and sold all the country's coffee, using the hard currency earned on the international market to finance its revolutionary war against the U.S.-backed Contra movement, supported by and from Honduras.

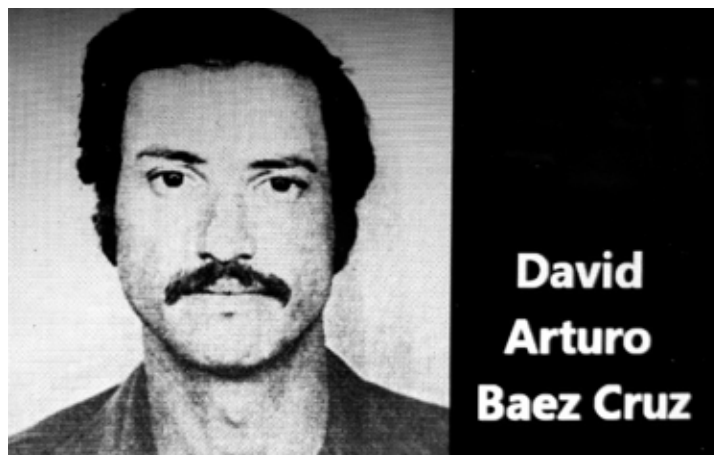
Part Two – Once a Green Beret, always a Green Beret

In 1981, while conducting a clandestine intelligence gathering mission in Managua, retired Lt. Col. Bill Chadwick, a Special Forces officer; and Lt. Col. John Lent, encountered now-Lt. David Baez in the uniform of a Sandinista officer. Recognizing each other from 3/7th, the trio had a brief conversation, then went their separate ways. Previously, Baez floated another story around the battalion that he was forced to return to Nicaragua by its new government, and in order to protect his family, would have to join the Sandinista Popular Army (EPS). So the chance encounter between the three men was friendly.

The bond between Special Forces soldiers holding fast as Baez could easily and to his benefit betrayed the two officers.

Chadwick recalled that the two American officers swiftly reported their encounter to the U.S. Southern Command J2 and its counter-intelligence team. David Baez was now officially on the radar screen and a known enemy threat.

Assigned to the Combat Readiness Directorate, Baez's first assignment was to train an EPS special unit of paratroopers. This he did with enthusiasm. The assignment was also seen as a means of monitoring the former American Special Forces soldier. "Trust but verify" was an important maxim for the Sandinistas. After training the paratrooper unit, Baez turned his expertise and the information he'd gathered as an AST in El Salvador toward the early formation and training of the EPS Irregular Warfare battalions (IWB). These battalions meant specifically to conduct counter-guerrilla warfare



Now a major in the Sandinista Popular Army, David Arturo Baez Cruz agreed to accompany Dr. Reyes Mata and the FAP on its mission to wage guerrilla war on the government of Honduras. Baez Cruz would serve as Mata's bodyguard, described by deserters from the FAP as "always being near him" during the march. (YouTube)

against the Contras. Strangely enough, the IWBs closely resembled the new Immediate Reaction battalions of the 3/7th mobile training teams in El Salvador in 1980–1981.

A born-again Sandinista

By 1982, Baez established himself as a born-again Sandinista. Promoted to the rank of captain, he volunteered for combat duty and was assigned to the "Pedro Altamirano" battalion of the EPS, then based at Montelimar. According to his brother, Eduardo Baez, Capt. Baez "would travel daily from El Crucero where we lived" to Montelimar to work. When his battalion deployed to the rugged Kilambé region of northern Nicaragua, Baez was an invaluable asset on the ground.

After many months of combat duty, he was assigned to a special troop three-man mobile team that specialized in detecting and tracking Contra infiltrations along the no man's land corridor between Honduras and Nicaragua. The mobile team relied on jeeps to transport the team and its sophisticated Soviet-supplied radio intercept equipment to accomplish its missions.

Then, in April and May of 1983, Baez visited his brother and shared his next assignment. In his August 2001 interview with Roberto Fonseca of *La Prensa*, Eduardo recalled that sad moment. "He had volunteered to leave with a Honduran guerrilla column. He did not know if he would return or not. He asked me to take care of the children...you know, that kind of personal stuff." Captain Baez, perhaps recalling the grief and pain that his family endured when his father disappeared in 1954, made a contingency plan should something similar happen to him.

“He also recommended,” said Eduardo, “that if [we] heard any news about the capture or [death] of a guerrilla in Honduras, under the pseudonym Adolfo [their father’s first name], that I would know it would be him.” Baez told his brother he wrote a farewell letter to his youngest son, just three months old, “We had a few drinks, we cried, we said goodbye and he left,” recalled Eduardo in 2001.

The Honduran guerrillas would be wearing Contra-style uniforms for their infiltration and carrying American-made weapons to include M16 rifles, M79 grenade launchers, M60 light machine guns, and 1911 .45 caliber pistols. Each fighter had a nom de guerre, or “guerrilla name,” for security reasons. Baez, like the others, would go in sterile—without any incriminating forms of official identification. He was used to playing this role from his training and experiences at both 10th Special Forces Group (A) and later as an AST in Panama.

If Baez were captured or killed and identified as a former Green Beret and now Sandinista officer, there would be diplomatic hell to pay with both the U.S. and Honduras.”

His presence as both an assigned bodyguard for a high-ranking official [Dr. José Reyes Mata] and an EPS combat adviser to the column was a carefully considered risk for the Sandinistas. If he were captured or killed in Honduras and identified as a Sandinista officer, especially as a former Green Beret and now Sandinista officer, there would be diplomatic hell to pay with both the U.S. and Honduras.

At the same time the column began its infiltration, Daniel Ortega, coordinator of the Governing Board of Nicaragua, proposed a six-point peace plan to end the Contra war. Ortega was playing with fire.

Dr. José Reyes Mata, whose nom de guerre for the Armed Forces of the People (FAP) campaign would be *Comandante Pablo Mendoza*, reminded himself of this situation when he wrote about it in his war diary after capture. “Our movement is extremely politically compromising. And we will not disappoint those who have placed their trust in us.”

“Those” included not only Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua but Fidel Castro in Cuba. Castro provided a year’s training for the new guerrilla army in 1982 at the Cuban Army’s Special Troops training base at Pinar del Rio, located just 90 minutes from Havana’s Jose Marti Airport.

By now, the 96-person column—brought back from Cuba in ones and twos—was assembled in a safe compound outside of Managua. Security conditions were strict. No leaving the compound, no female



Dr. José María Reyes Mata, also known as “*Comandante Pablo Mendoza*,” possessed a long history of Marxist guerrilla actions: with Che Guevara in Bolivia; again in Nicaragua with the Sandinistas; and later with the PRTC in El Salvador. He was a convicted terrorist in Honduras, imprisoned for kidnapping, and released in 1982. (El Mundo).

visitors, no contact with families, and no money. Individuals who deserted were captured and immediately put into a Sandinista prison. Reyes Mata didn’t see this red flag for what it was: the unhappiness and dissatisfaction of some people who didn’t “volunteer” to be guerrillas in his revolution but rather press-ganged into the movement with promises of civilian occupation training in either Managua or Havana.

Reyes Mata’s recruiting efforts occurred in Honduras’ Olancho province by local Revolutionary Party of the Central American Workers (PRTC) Honduran agents, as well as “guerrilla priests,” many of these Jesuits. In a 1984 Miami Herald story (“Deserters Say Foreigners Fight for the Sandinistas”, Guy Gugliotta), Arnulfo Montoya Madariaga, then 35, described his recruitment in 1981. A *campesino* with a plot of land and seven children, he was recruited by “a French priest at his farm outside Danlí in southern Honduras.”

By September 21, 1983, 23 FAP combatants deserted, were captured, or turned themselves in to Honduran forces. The first desertion took place within two weeks of the FAP July crossing the Coco River in platoon-size elements. By the end of August, deserters provided the Hondurans and Americans with detailed descriptions regarding the platoons, personnel, leadership, weapons, communications, and the logistical support for the column. “Disgruntled employees” and empty stomachs marked the beginning of the end for Baez & Company.

Honduras is “peaceful and friendly”

The FAP was combat-ready. The column’s members were broken down into smaller groups of combatants and farmed out to the IWB of the EPS for another six months of fight training the Contras. On January 11, 1983, FAP commanders “LaPorta” and “Marcos” gave detailed reports about ambushing “an entire enemy company, which in its confused flight, left behind weapons, supplies, and a large quantity of rations.” The FAP continued working alongside the EPS until final preparations began for their infiltration into Honduras in mid-July.

“Before leaving, I explained to everyone that our movement must not be noticed by the enemy, and that secrecy, precaution, silence, and initiative would be our principal weapons...based on the information obtained from the enemy which I checked, they were waiting for us, to liquidate us and the daring plan for a march, flanked by enemy [Contra] camps. Everything seemed uncertain.” – from the captured war diary of Dr. José Reyes Mata (Comandante Pablo Mendoza), July 15, 1983.

In Honduras, there was little concern about such an incursion. Although the September 1982 assault on the San Pedro Sula’s Chamber of Commerce building was Cinchonero Popular Liberation Movement was dramatic—100 hostages taken, including three senior officials of the Honduran government—it ended after eight days, with no guerrilla demands granted.

The hostage takers were flown to Cuba on a Panamanian air force cargo plane. Catholic clergy were involved in the negotiations. The UPI reported, “The official said San Pedro Sula Bishop Jaime Brufau and Papal Nuncio Andrea Cordero Lanza, the chief negotiators throughout the takeover, were to accompany the guerrillas on their flight to Cuba.”



David Arturo Baez Cruz (standing, center) relied on his extensive training and experience on the Special Forces Airborne Instructor team (ODA-5) at Fort Sherman, Panama, to train the first Sandinista airborne Special Troop. Baez Cruz would later become instrumental in training the first EPS Irregular Warfare Battalions, whose mission was counter insurgency against the Contras. (Juan Tamayo)

The U.S. government and its Department of Defense (DOD) devoted their attention, efforts, and resources toward emerging wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The illegal Contra campaign required careful planning and sleight of hand by the Joint Chief of Staff and CIA. The unexpected success of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)—already operating in battalion size units that were destroying El Salvador's unprepared army—had Washington concerned the country would fall to the Marxists by 1983.

Meanwhile Honduras was painted by glowing U.S. embassy reports as “peaceful and friendly.”

For Reyes Mata, it was imperative for the Honduran PRTC/FAP units to have boots on the ground as soon as possible. The incursion was in the planning and training stages for nearly two years. A great deal of money was invested in it by Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union. In El Salvador, the FMLN, paired with its faction of the PRTC army, was close to victory. Nicaragua's FSLN victory, with its PRTC division contributions, had only taken four years from start to finish.

In 1980, the PRTC in Guatemala struggled to establish itself against an exceptionally no-holds barred counter-insurgency campaign spearheaded by the Guatemalan Army and its intelligence services. If the PRTC/FAP could establish itself in Honduras and begin a successful phase one insurgency against the government, it could count on cross-border logistical support from its sister organizations as well as the PRTC force in Costa Rica. This, in turn, would unite the diverse anti-government factions inside Honduras itself to support the PRTC/FAP.

All that remained necessary was to establish a liberated zone, beginning with the Olancho province, and a strong internal network elsewhere in the country.

“I believe,” Reyes Mata wrote in his war diary while on the march, “...the entire Entre Rios mountain range should be considered in the future as a military stronghold for us, given the native and ‘nica’ enemy concentration, and the facility it offers for carrying out guerrilla tactical movements...the jungle is so dense it would be possible to conceal within it military forces consisting of over two thousand combatants.”

Plus, as a revolutionary, Reyes Mata was now a *viejo*, or “old one.” At 39, with many hard campaigns behind him and several recent years of sitting behind a desk in Cuba and Nicaragua, he needed to get back in the saddle for one last chance at success in his native Honduras. Suffering from ulcers and admitting in his diary he wasn't in the best physical condition for the campaign, the addition of newly promoted *Comandante* David Baez by the Sandinista leadership as “the old man's bodyguard” wasn't lost on him.

Padre Guadalupe, the chaplain-warfighter

“The march was programmed through topographical [illegible] or mountainous roadbeds, which would require quintupling the physical effort, and climbing up and down slopes that were very nearly vertical, on muddy terrain, and almost always under rainfall...Mario, an example of heroic campaigns, could not carry his rifle over his shoulder, and I was totally out of training.” – Dr. Reyes Mata, *Guerrilla War Diary*, Olancho Province

Padre James Francis “Guadalupe” “Mario” Carney, a World War II combat veteran, renounced his U.S. citizenship as a Jesuit priest in Honduras. He became a naturalized Honduran citizen, but had citizenship stripped from him in 1979. After a brief stay in the U.S., he resided in Nicaragua where he became deeply involved with the PRTC-Honduras as well as the Sandinista FSLN. (Radio Progreso)

“Mario,” later identified as Padre Guadalupe, was James Francis Carney, an American. Carney served as an Army combat engineer and then military policeman in the European theatre during World War II. After the war he became an ordained priest and was a missionary to then British Honduras from 1955 to 1958.

In 1961, he joined the Jesuit Order, which sent him to Honduras. Carney, who adopted the first name Guadalupe, spent 18 years in Honduras and was beloved by the Hondurans he lived with and cared for. He renounced his American citizenship and became a naturalized Honduran during this time, but in 1979 the Honduran government stripped his citizenship and exiled him.

Carney embraced liberation theology, and his trajectory toward its roots in Marxism made him undesirable. He wrote his autobiography, *To Be a Revolutionary*, in Nicaragua, where he was welcomed by the new Sandinista government. In it, he offered “...being a Christian demands being a revolutionary and a socialist, and to be a revolu-



Padre James Francis “Guadalupe” “Mario” Carney, a World War II combat veteran, renounced his U.S. citizenship as a Jesuit priest in Honduras. He became a naturalized Honduran citizen, but had citizenship stripped from him in 1979. After a brief stay in the U.S., he resided in Nicaragua where he became deeply involved with the PRTC-Honduras as well as the Sandinista FSLN. (Radio Progreso)

tionary and socialist one has to use the Marxist-Leninist science of analysis and transformation of the world, then a Christian needs to understand Marxism.”

Prior to relocating in Nicaragua, Carney returned to the United States, specifically St. Louis, where he participated in an eight-day retreat at Jesuit Hall on the St. Louis University campus. There, he shared his dream of becoming a chaplain for Honduran revolutionaries. “I want to help a poor army,” he told his spiritual adviser.

He obtained a valid U.S. passport again and returned to Nicaragua as his being a priest, under U.S. law, overrode his renouncing his U.S. citizenship. He traveled to Cuba to train as a guerrilla. It was during this time he encountered Mata and the PRTC of Honduras, agreeing to join the new FAP.

“It still took me a couple of years to clarify my ideas about a Christian and his or her place in armed revolution.”

However, this time Carney embraced the role of chaplain-warfighter, as he would be armed. He wrote “After having sworn during World War II that I would never kill a person...it still took me a couple of years to clarify my ideas about a Christian and his or her place in armed revolution. During 1975, with its violent repression, my ideas on the Christian use of arms became clearer. I was gradually and *finally* [italics mine] acknowledging to myself the truth that love sometimes demands fighting back.”

However, when Carney picked up his FAP-issued M16 rifle and pistol, he gave up chaplain protections, as outlined by the Geneva Convention (GC) II of 1949 and the Additional Protocol I in 1977, which address what chaplains are to be afforded on the field of battle or in captivity (as opposed to “ministers of religion,” a different category altogether). Honduras became a signatory to the GC 1-IV in 1965. It affirmed its commitment to Protocols I and II in 1995, and to Protocol III in 2006.

Prior to joining the FAP, Carney shared with his Jesuit order what his intentions were. He was asked to resign but allowed to keep the

title of Father. Once with the FAP, he carried his weapons, a bible, his liturgical vestment, and his chalice.

Carney was assigned to the FAP’s 3rd Platoon, responsible to establish the Central Front which would conduct combat operations in the vicinity of Tegucigalpa, Choluteca, and Danlí. *Sub-Comandante* “Fidel” commanded the platoon. He was also a medical doctor and the FAP’s radio operator. The platoon’s political officer was Capt. Vela, also known as Juan Ramon. Carney was a combatant in the platoon’s 3rd Squad under 1st Lt. Jackson Morales. Carney would be initially identified by both his taken name—Padre Guadalupe—and his war name—“Mario”.

In a highly classified report, obtained by the U.S. Defense attaché in Honduras from the Honduran military, the FAP’s Table of Organization and Equipment was revealed by name and in detail. The information was gathered over the course of the month from 17 FAP deserters/prisoners, willingly provided to Honduran G-2 Intelligence and verified by their U.S. counterparts in-country. “Mario” is described as “*Possible* [emphasis mine] priest. Name is either Fausto Milla or Guadalupe and is thought to be 60-65 years old.”

Apparently, none of the 17 guerrillas in custody at that time were truly sure if “Mario” was a priest...or a combatant.

[Note: Father Milla, a Honduran, was also a liberation theology priest. He witnessed the U.S.-backed 1954 coup in Guatemala as well as some of the early massacres by the Salvadoran Army in 1980. Accused in Honduras of hiding weapons for guerrilla factions, and of being a guerrilla himself, the padre was taken into custody by Battalion 316, which interrogated him using torture for a week. He was unceremoniously dumped in the street by his captors upon release. Fausto Milla is an icon to revolutionary and resistance movements in Central America—so much so that in 2011, he and his assistant were again forced to flee Honduras in lieu of yet another coup d’état that resulted in renewed death threats against him.]

Platoons Across the Coco River

“The march was programmed through topographical [illegible] or “This report provides an update on the HO [Honduras] infiltration... As of 26 August 83, a total of 17 guerrilla deserters from the 96-man guerrilla company called The Armed Forces of the People or F.A.P.—Fuerzas Armadas Del Pueblo—have been taken into custody...Efforts continue to locate the remaining guerrilla force which infiltrated from NU [Nicaragua] into the HO Olancho Department on 19 July 83 to “Make War on the Country.” Further details on the organization and Order of Battle for the guerrilla unit is provided along with an updated list of guerrilla deserters...” — DOD Joint Chiefs of Staff Message Center, August 30, 1983 / DECLASS 1/90, DOD Telegram #09347

On July 15th, Reyes Mata and his platoons moved to their jump-off point on the Nicaraguan side of the border. The weather was miserable. Never-ending rain turned the trails to slick, sticky mud. The men, carrying their weapons and 60-70-pound rucksacks, slipped, fell, and cursed as they struggled up the steep mountainside to make camp. Still, morale was good. “I wanted to inspect the camp’s defense system. This required a great physical effort on my part, because the prolonged sedentary existence had left me out of shape,” Reyes Mata wrote in his diary that evening.

The goal was to have the platoons across by July 19th. Ten days earlier 2nd Lt. “Justo Martinez” led a reconnaissance patrol into Honduras well ahead of the main body. A single boat ferried the men and their equipment across the Coco River. Before the first crossing, Padre Guadalupe Carney formally christened it the Granma in honor of the 60-foot motor launch Fidel Castro used to transport his 82 guerrillas from Mexico to Cuba in 1956.

Reyes Mata planned for measured rations, with a belief the men could purchase food from local farmers or gather sustenance from the jungle. He was wrong.

The heavy rains filled the Coco higher than expected, and nighttime infiltration turned into a harrowing process that wasn't completed until broad daylight of the first day. However, by the 19th three of the four platoons were across without the loss of material or men. The last platoon, responsible for additional rations and equipment, couldn't cross safely until July 21st. Lieutenant Martinez's recon team was 80 kilometers inside Honduras and in radio contact with the main body. Eight days were planned for the platoons to traverse the steep mountains and triple canopy jungle to their first base camp. Reyes Mata planned for just enough rations, with the belief men could purchase food from local farmers along the way or gather extra sustenance from the jungle.

Meanwhile, the FAP had to thread the deadly needle's eye between Honduran Army and Contra patrols. The Contras had a significant presence in the towns of Yamala and Chilamata, well within patrolling distance of the FAP's route. As the FAP consolidated itself in preparation to begin its journey inland, a second Nicaraguan officer from the Intelligence Directorate arrived. Known only as “Gregorio,” he was welcomed to the camp, along with another EPS officer, “Adolfo”—or *Comandante* David Baez. Reyes Mata wasn't privy to “Gregorio's” reason for joining them, but it can be presumed it was to monitor the progress of the FAP and then return to Managua to make a report.

On July 23rd, a Contra who'd stumbled upon the tracks of the column and followed the guerrillas for three hours, was captured and summarily executed.

The eight days of stealthy movement turned into 12. The weather remained miserable and the guerrillas, used to eating every day, soon ran low on food as the misery of the terrain sapped their strength, slowed their pace, and consumed vital energy they couldn't replace. The trail soon became littered with equipment tossed to the side as guerrillas tried to lighten their rucksacks. Reyes Mata was feeling the strain as well as “Mario,” or Padre Guadalupe. At one point, when the march had sped up after being seen by a local, he wrote “...we gave the order to hasten the march toward Point A...Mario gave evidence of his great capacity for sacrifice, and I was able to move better with only my equipment and rifle.”

After arriving at Point A, the main body continued on until arriving at Point B, the pre-determined site of its first base camp. However, upon arriving, Reyes Mata was informed a *campesino* was captured by a stay-behind team charged with watching their back trail. The man was interrogated and then executed.

It had to be done with a knife,” wrote Reyes Mata, “there was no other [option], given the place where we were [being] surrounded by enemies.”

By now, *Comandante* Pablo Mendoza revealed himself to be as cold and remorseless as his mentor, Che Guevara. Anyone who attempted to desert was shot. Anyone deemed a threat or determined to be a traitor received the death penalty. For Reyes Mata, there were no other options. Victory was the only reward.

At Point B they were met by *Comandante* Serapio Romero and selected members from the 2nd platoon who had arrived the day before and secured the site. However, the Lieutenant Martinez' recon team's information proved inaccurate as to its suitability and that night the guerrillas suffered for it. “The comrades were sleeping on the ground in groups, like rats,” wrote Reyes Mata. “And the cold froze us even to the bone.” The next morning, the FAP moved several kilometers north where they discovered “an inviting and excellent site” they named Congolon. It was now July 26th and to celebrate reaching Congolon, the guerrillas ate the last of their rations.

From July 27th until September 15th, when the last of the guerrillas would surrender and/or be captured by the Honduran Special Forces, the FAP subsisted on palm hearts, monkey, turkey, tapier, raw snails, and even the bones of game they managed to kill. There was no arrangement with the EPS to resupply the FAP, even if such a resupply was possible. Reyes Mata put all his faith in being able to buy food in Nueva Palestina from an FAP collaborator in place. It was an estimated 10-day round trip on foot. He sent six guerrillas led by Lieutenant Martinez to the village while the rest of the men foraged in the jungle.

“The group is beginning to deteriorate, and my ulcer is undergoing an ordeal by fire...we have spent only three days without food replacements. Hunger is reflected on the faces...the comrades are chewing everything: leaves, dried fruits, juts (snails), and even pieces of toasted bone. On 30 July, with only four days of lacking food, “Marvin” asked to speak with me...he wanted to return home...Hours after talking with me he deserted his observation post...[we] could not catch him...he crossed the river behind our backs.” – Dr. José Reyes Mata, Guerrilla War Diary, Olancho Province

Death by execution...and starvation

On August 2nd, three more guerrillas deserted, taking all their equipment and weapons. The next day, one more. Reyes Mata suspected a plot against him, an assassin still in camp. He ordered the arrest of “El Paisa,” whose real name was Juan Ortiz. “El Paisa” was suspected of sinister thinking and plans while training in Cuba but there wasn't proof. Now Reyes Mata believed the proof was in the desertions—there was a counter-revolutionary in the group.

“El Paisa” was arrested, tried in military court, and declared guilty. He was executed in front of all those present in camp. For many, the killing was traumatic. They all knew him—trained, lived, and fought with him. If the chiefs could order “El Paisa” killed, anyone was at risk.

Lieutenant Martinez and his group hadn't returned from Nueva Palestina, so the men continued to forage. “Daniel”, another doctor, treated everyone the best he could. Reyes Mata ordered *Comandante* Serapio Romero to take the 2nd Platoon, responsible for opening the Eastern Front in the Sierra Agalta mountains of Catacamas, to leave Congolon and head for Nueva Palestina.

On August 10th, the remaining platoons departed base camp in a forced march. There had yet been any hostile contact with the Honduran Army or Contras, although one patrol was seen, and a paramilitary with an AK-47 stopped and talked with some of the guerrillas. This man, judging the group in their Contra uniforms, determined it was okay.

It took two days to catch up with Romero and the new base camp. Reyes Mata recorded that “Mario” and some of the others who struggled “were responding well.” However, Captain Vela fared poorly. By August 15th, the guerrillas were without meaningful nutrition for 19 days but resumed their march. Reyes Mata believed his ulcer was hemorrhaging badly, but after consulting with physician “Fidel” determined the color of his stool was the result of his consuming calamus, a plant known for its vitamins.

“Mario” was traveling with and attending to Captain Vela. Presumed to be the weakest of them all, Reyes Mata noted in his diary entry that “Mario” had “reached the ravine about 600 meters from [our] camp. No one expected the state of utter exhaustion Vela was now in.” A physician was sent to the ravine, but upon arrival, discovered the starving guerilla lost consciousness. Provided what medications were still available, the man seemed to rally, or as Reyes Mata described it, “a supreme effort of the human body to survive.” But at 11:30 p.m., the captain died.

He'd been among the most popular in the FAP. A writer and thinker, always enthusiastic. As the FAP's political chief he was invaluable from the earliest days in Cuba. He had a simple funeral and burial, where Reyes Mata described to all those present as being paralyzed with grief at his loss.

Operation CONDOR spreads its wings

General Gustavo Alvarez, CinC of the Honduran Armed Forces, said in a recent speech that the military will come down hard on terrorism and that the philosophy of human



Gustavo Adolfo Álvarez Martínez, a graduate of the U.S. Army's Special Forces counter-insurgency course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, approved the placement of U.S. forces in Honduras beginning in 1982. He would also support the Contra War and pushed to see Contra bases established deep inside Nicaragua. Álvarez Martínez declared total war on the Honduran guerrilla column (FAP), destroying it in a classic counter-insurgency campaign that lasted less than two months. (Author collection)

rights was not created to protect terrorists or subversives, nor was it created to protect those who receive training in sabotage and guerrilla operations.” – U.S. DOD Joint Chiefs of Staff Message Center

General Gustavo Adolfo Álvarez Martínez was known throughout Central and South America for saying what he meant and meaning what he said. He'd entered the Honduran Army on April 12, 1958 and attended the National Military Academy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Upon his return to Honduras, after a successful command with the 2nd Infantry Battalion, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in February 1963. Later that year, in October, he was selected to attend the U.S. Army Special Forces Counter-Insurgency school at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Álvarez Martínez' career was meteoric. By 1968, he was a captain and the assistant to the G-3, Honduran Armed Forces General Staff. Later that year, he went to the Infantry Officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. His keen interest in counter insurgency took him back to Fort Bragg in 1969, where he attended the Special Forces Counter-Insurgency Operations course. He made major in 1971 after successfully completing the Command and General Staff course at the Superior War College in Chorrillos, Peru.

His troop commands included the General Francisco Morazán Military Academy, Chief of Operations Armed Forces General Staff, Commander of the 4th Infantry Battalion at La Ceiba, Commander of the 3rd Infantry Battalion at San Pedro Sula, and Chief of the Public Security Forces (FUSEP), during which time he attended the Combined Operations Course at the School of the Americas, Fort Gulick, Panama.

By the time Álvarez Martínez became the Commander-in-Chief of the Honduran Armed Forces in 1982, the general knew his country was in dire straits. He had Fidel Castro's Cuba on one flank, the swiftly growing and powerful Marxist-inspired FMLN in El Salvador on the other flank and to the south, the victorious Sandinistas. Honduras was clearly in the crosshairs as the next country in Central America to be attacked. Guatemala to the north was battling the beginnings of an armed insurgency within its borders.

Operation CONDOR was a joint agreement between the southern cone countries mentioned, the U.S., and by 1982, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. It allowed for a combined and aggressive intelligence-sharing network and highly trained units with permission to conduct cross-border operations that included kidnapping and assassination. CONDOR's goal was the utter dismantling and destruction of the subversive infrastructure regardless of liberation movement acronyms. Fire would be fought with fire.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan met with General Gustavo Álvarez Martínez at the White House in 1982. In 1983, after the destruction of the FAP, Reagan presented General Alvarez with the U.S. Army's Legion of Merit. (United States' White House Archives)





President Reagan's determination to stop communism dead in its tracks in Central America saw U.S. overt, clandestine, and covert aid provided to both El Salvador and Honduras. (United States White House Collection)

But things changed for the better with the election of Ronald Reagan as U.S. President. In short order, the Reagan Administration made it clear it would not be soft on communism anywhere in the world and specifically in Latin America.

The fall of Nicaragua to the Sandinistas—with direct support from Cuba, Vietnam, East Germany, and Russia—put all Central America at risk.

Reagan provided overt, clandestine, and covert support to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Discreet relationships were renewed and deepened with Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, and Brazil—all conducting so-called “dirty wars” against communist-inspired insurgencies in their own countries.

Degüello – “No Quarter to be Given”

By August 15th, General Alvarez had mobilized the Honduran Armed Forces to counter the now well-defined incursion of the FAP from Nicaragua. Deserters were voluntarily exchanging critical, detailed information about Reyes Mata, *Comandantes* “Adolfo” and “Gregorio” as well as every member of each platoon. For their cooperation, they were well-treated and their stories of being press-ganged into the FAP, forced to watch executions of their own, and all the while starving in the jungle were given wide coverage by the Honduran media.

The general had learned his lessons at Fort Bragg well.

“Argentina and Chile have agreed to provide military assistance to Honduras...Argentina agreed to provide credit terms [for] forty-five million dollars at seven percent interest [with] the first three years being no payment due. Top priority is off the shelf equipment for counter-insurgency use; and training teams (MTT) skilled in counter-insurgency operations. The first MTT has arrived in-country...Three Chileans met with the Honduran Foreign Military Sales Committee and agreed to assist Honduras in the counter-insurgency field.” – U.S. DOD, Joint Chiefs of Staff Message Center

Operation Patuca River was now well underway. ❖

In the December 2022 Sentinel:

Part Three – Tracking the FAP from Tiger Island...

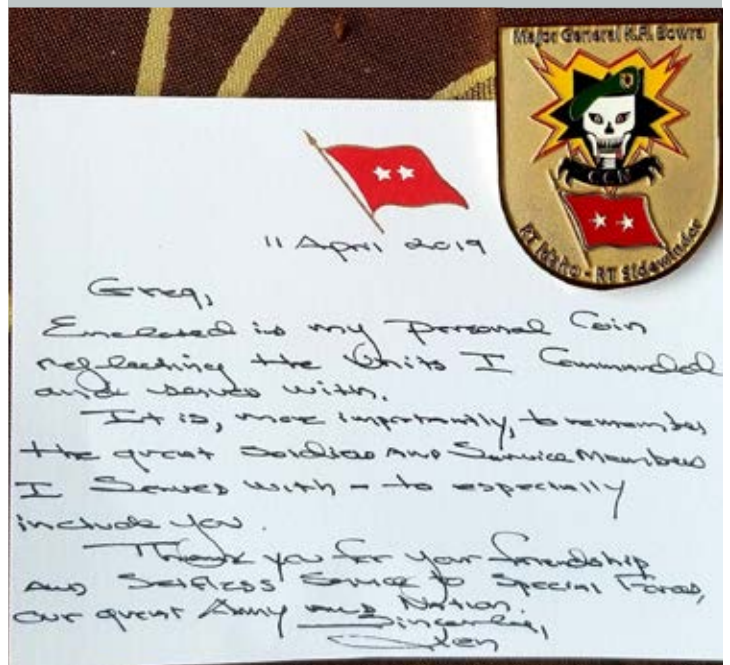
the 2nd Ranger Battalion joins the hunt in Olancho...El Aguacate readies its holding and interrogation cells... Honduran Special Forces and the COBRAs deploy to the jungle...the “Red Empire” makes its presence known... the FAP vows not to retreat even as Daniel Ortega quietly shuts the border down so they cannot return.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg Walker is an honorably retired “Green Beret”. During his military career he served with the 10th, 7th, 12th, and 19th Special Forces Groups (ABN). He held DIMA positions with USASFC, then under the command of Major General (ret) Kenneth Bowra, the 3rd and then the

5th Special Forces Groups (ABN). Greg's awards and decorations include the SF Tab, two awards of the Combat Infantryman Badge, three Meritorious Service Medals, and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (El Salvador / Iraq). Today he lives and writes from his home in Sisters, Oregon, with his service pup, Tommy.



A Tribute

Chapter 78 Celebrates and Honors the Life of SGM (ret.) Bruce Long



On October 14, 2022, Chapter 78 members, along with family and other friends, said goodbye to SGM (ret.) Bruce Dale Long, former three-term Chapter President. Bruce passed away on September 14, at the age of 80, surrounded by family and friends. He had fought a courageous battle with cancer over the past couple of years, offering an example of how one could face life's challenges with a smile and determination.

Bruce's member profile from the [Chapter 78 website](#) tells his story:

"It all began in 1961 when Bruce joined the Army and jumped out of airplanes at Fort Bragg, NC. in 1962. SGM Long served thirty years in the United States Army, both active duty, Reserves and National Guard. SGM Long's active duty assignments include 82nd Airborne division, 173rd Airborne Brigade (LRRP) later to become N Co, 75th Rangers, 46 Co Special Forces Thailand and the United States Civil Affairs Command at Ft Bragg, N.C. during Desert Storm. SGM Long's foreign deployments include Thailand, Korea, Panama, Canada and Okinawa. While serving in the Special Forces Reserves and National Guard his duties included Team Sergeant, Battalion Support First Sergeant, Battalion Operations SGM, Company SGM, and Battalion SGM."

Bruce goes on to list the military schools he attended: 82nd Airborne Raider course, MACV Recondo School, Special Forces 'Q' Course, Operations & Intelligence Course, and the First Sergeant's Academy.

After his honorable discharge in 1969, he joined the Westminster Police Department, where he went on to become a Detective and a member of their SWAT team. During this nearly 10-year period of his life, he completed his Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Criminal Justice at California State University Fullerton and his Master of Arts at Pepperdine University. He also attended the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, VA.

In 1977, he joined the US Army Reserve, serving with the 12th and the 19th Special Forces. He retired in 2001 as a Sergeant Major, with 32 years of dedicated service to the US Army and Special Forces.

Not long after, SGM Bruce Long joined the Special Forces Association. He served as Chapter 12's President from 2006 to 2008. He joined Special Forces Chapter 78 in 2012, eventually serving as Chapter President for two terms.

From the start, he was an active, engaged member of Chapter 78. He became involved in the Chapters efforts to support the Green Beret Foundation, helping to organize and participating in multiple fundraising activities. For example, when the chapter decided to join the major Sporting Arms demonstrations at Raahauge's Shooting Range in Ontario, CA, Bruce manned the Chapter's booth, discussing Special Forces history and our goals with members of the community who participated in the weekends activities.

In his first term as Chapter President, inspired by his tenure as SGM in the local Reserve and National Guard SF units, he was instrumental in the establishment of Chapter 78's relationship with Company C (formerly Company A), 19th Special Forces Group, Airborne.

On the morning of Bruce's funeral, there were so many in attendance that the procession to the site of his memorial service was at least a half mile long. Even his wife, Geri, was astonished to see so many cars. But, in retrospect, it was not surprising. Bruce's generosity and kindness touched many lives.

Returning to Bruce's profile on the Chapter website, he closed his entry with two of his favorite quotes:

"LIFE WITHOUT RISK IS NO LIFE AT ALL"

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who suffered and stripped of their humanity.

I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades...Such good men."

Former Marine Michael Norman from his book, *These Good Men*



SGM Bruce Long and his wife Geri at the 2021 Chapter 78 Christmas Party.



Bruce Long receives a Special Forces Association Guidon made by and given to SFA C-78 from members of A Company, 19th SFG(A). from A Company SGM Hank Eylicio in December 2017.



Geri Long, SFC Boodaghian, Bruce Long, Bonnie and Richard Simonian at the Company A of the 19th Special Forces Parachute Jump at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, 2014.



SGM Beetham, Bruce Long, CPT Trent and Colonel Slagowski at the Chapter 78 – 19th Special Forces Group (A) Dinner in April 2014.



Members of C/1/19th SF presented Bruce Long with a plaque to acknowledge their appreciation of his support over the years.



Bruce out on the range.



Upper left, Chapter 78 members with Bruce's widow, Geri Long; in the lower row, Cliff Armas of the Los Angeles Police Emerald Society and Chapter member plays "Amazing Grace" for the services; the eulogy was read by Chaplain Randy McConnell; at lower right, Bruce's display of his SF memorabilia at his home.



"...we have a very tight bond with A-5-19, that does not come by chance. Bruce and I, and a guy named Alex Larson, and Kris Boodaghian, who is well known, started the SFRE over at 19th group. We decided basically to help them out...And Bruce basically always had this continuing passion to stay connected to SF...Bruce was an extraordinary guy, and he really took care of his guys, he always sacrificed himself for his troops. And I'm a reflection of that as well too."

Len Fein (above left)

"So I knew Bruce for 42 years. He was my team sergeant for, I think, uh, five years when I was with C company, and a very fine leader, he taught me a lot...and he will be sorely missed."

Al Roth (above right)

"...what Bruce did [for Chapter 78] by becoming the president was to put it together, to hold it together, and make good things happen...I just think that this Chapter owes him a whole lot for being what it is today..."

Richard Simonian



"I had a great time with Bruce...when we started doing the Shooter's Cup events, I really didn't know Bruce. He was just another guy. He was so humble...we kind of helped with the organization of the shooting event... And as far as I knew, he was just another grunt...I find out he's a Sergeant Major! So his humility, went a long ways... but no, I'll never forget him."

Mike Keele

(Left to right, Mike Keele, Lee Martin, Bruce Long and Rob Pugh, OC Fairgrounds job fair on Veterans Day, 2015)

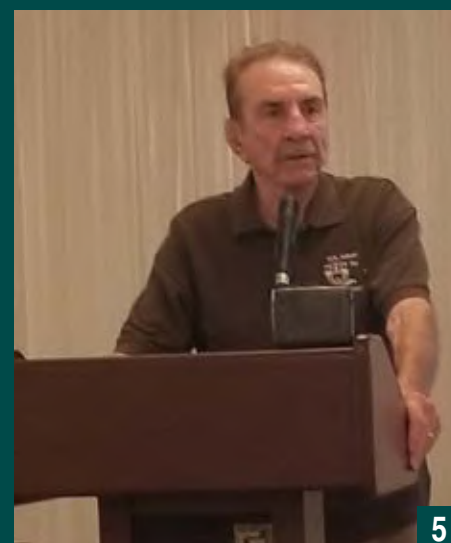
"...with the loss of Bruce...this chapter lost one of the three members of the Chapter that were LRRPs in Vietnam and also the Recondo school...Mark [Miller] and I both felt a special brotherhood with Bruce because we went through this...Bruce...with Mark and some other people, were very active trying to get the Army to pay a little bit more respect to the Ranger Regiment and how it started...without SF there would have been no Ranger Regiment right now... Bruce was a piece of history and I really miss him. I think all of us do."

Kenn Miller

(at left, Kenn Miller with Bruce and Mark Miller at far right)

SFA Chapter 78 October 2022 Chapter Meeting

Photos by Dennis DeRosia and How Miller



1 Chapter member James McLanahan gave an interesting presentation about the QK Program and Iraq.

2 Sentinel Designer Debra Holm and Editor How Miller were presented certificates of appreciation from SFACON 2022's Executive Chairman for their support in promoting the convention.

3 SFA Ch. 1-18 member Don Sexton, shown here catching up with Ramon Rodriguez and Mark Miller, was in town for Bruce Long's funeral.

4 Mike Jameson and Don Deatherage serve themselves breakfast before the start of the meeting

5 Richard Simonian spoke about his experiences at SFACON 2022. He was impressed with the "standing-room only" attendance at the "Originals" panel, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of receiving a standing ovation from a room of 650 people when he received the St. Philip Neri Award. He confirmed that he proudly wore the award all the way home.

Reminder — Take Action with DROP Enclosures

Be sure to check for the two postcard included in the current DROP.

Be sure to cast your vote for the three proposed SFA constitutional amendments. A postcard for voting was included with the last issue of The DROP, or you may also cast your vote electronically through the Teamhouse website (November 1-30, 2022). If voting by mail, the postcard must be postmarked NO LATER THAN 11/30/2022.

Another postcard was included to provide members with an opportunity to opt-out of having their name, address, and email address shared with the Association of the United States Army (AUSA). AUSA and SFA have recently entered into a new partnership, which will allow all active members a complimentary AUSA membership. If you would prefer to opt-out and forfeit AUSA benefits, mark the postcard and return it. Mail in responses must be postmarked NO LATER THAN 11/30/2022. Members can opt-out electronically through the Teamhouse website (November 1-30, 2022).