



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

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President Biden Presents the MOH to Col Paris Davis

18D Training Today &
A Visit to Charlie Mike's Pub

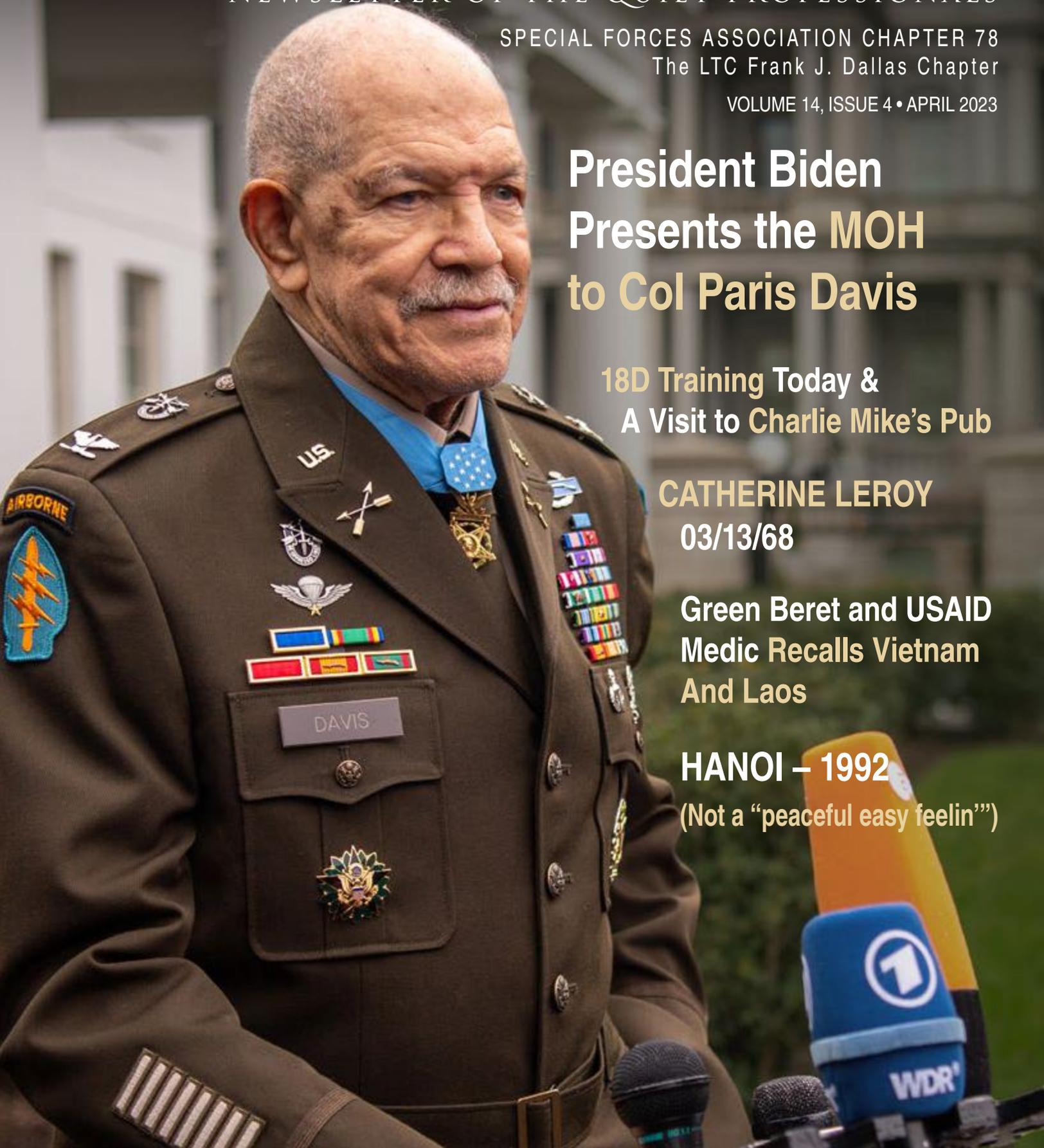
CATHERINE LEROY

03/13/68

Green Beret and USAID
Medic Recalls Vietnam
And Laos

HANOI – 1992

(Not a “peaceful easy feelin”)



From the Editor



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: Retired U.S. Army Col. Paris D. Davis addresses the media just after receiving the Medal of Honor at the White House, March 3, 2023. (U.S. Army photo by Bernardo Fuller)



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How Miller
Sentinel Editor

We start this issue with the man on the cover, COL (Ret.) Paris D. Davis. His exploits as a young Green Beret Captain have finally been recognized. His recommendation paperwork was “lost” — twice! A very emotional ceremony, covered by David Vergun of DOD News.

My trip to Fort Bragg was a busy one. Besides attending a barbecue and graduation ceremony for the newest Green Berets and touring the JFKSW Museum, Lew Chapman and I were very privileged to get the VIP treatment at JSOMTC. We saw how today’s Special Ops Medics are trained and the new technologies they get to use.

That was followed by another treat at “The” SF bar, called Charlie Mike’s Pub. We went to see how two JSOCMTTC trainers do Wednesday night mentoring sessions for students. It turned out to be an introduction to a fantastic pub “family” as well.

The Ground Kisser relates Thanh Boyer’s journey from a relatively carefree life, through the tribulations of a communist takeover of her country and a dangerous exodus as a 12-year-old, ending up struggling to get her family to finally join her here in the U.S. It is a touching story, eloquently told in first person.

We can all relate to an extremely well written and heartfelt story. Denis Chericone draws you in, telling about war reporter Catherine Leroy’s visit to his Khe Sanh SF camp. Much later, after her career was over, she ended up living here in Southern California.

Chapter member Tom Turney, a strong Montagnard advocate, had supported the Vietnam Fund for years. When the fund director retired, he reached out and found Viet Dreams, a very worthy charity to support: <http://vietdreams.org/donate>.

A story that ties the medical and hill people themes together is that of Green Beret Medic Steve Schofield, told by Marc Yablonka. After serving so many years with the Hmong in his USAID Medic role in Laos, Steve continues to be involved with the Hmong community in Wisconsin, and he wrote *Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, CIA, and the Hmong*, published in 2019.

Then Marc entertains us with a story about his 1992 trip to Hanoi. It was not the modern city it is today, and not as open to outside visitors, especially American.

The wait is over! I attended an amazing play called *Last Out* in Santa Barbara in January of 2020. I was so impressed I wrote my first article for the *Sentinel* about it. As it turns out, it was their last pre-COVID performance. Read about their new performance schedule, starting in May in San Diego. *Last Out* stars Scott Mann, who will also be this year’s keynote speaker at SFACON 2023.

Be sure to check out the great lineup of SFACON 2023 speakers and activities starting on page 20, and be aware that there actually is not much time left to make attendance arrangements. The convention is just before the Indy 500.

We end with pictures of our members at the February chapter meeting.

Enjoy ❖

How Miller
Sentinel Editor

From the President | April 2023



Gregory Horton
President SFA Ch. 78

Another month has passed and it was an interesting one at that! One of our members, Jim Cragg (A-4748), is the President of the Pacific Palisades American Legion Post 283 (<https://www.alpost283.com/>) and is continually putting on events to help Veterans, Law Enforcement, and First Responders. One of his main projects is to put on range days for his targeted audience and he asked some of us to help on the shooting courses. Well, to put it mildly, it has been a few years since I was a Range Safety Officer and Rangemaster so

I knew I had to get some refresher training. Fortunately, we have a wonderful source of training here in SoCal. I immediately called the California Rifle and Pistol Association (<https://crpa.org/>) and enrolled in their Range Safety Officer Course. They provided an excellent 8-hour course that got me up to speed.

The next step was to take a first aid refresher course. Well, I was in luck again, because Post 283 was putting on a Tactical Emergency Casualty Care for Law Enforcement Officers course. The Instructor was Jason Ames and his company is Swift Tactical (www.swifttactical.net). He is a retired LASO deputy with over 13 years of EMS experience and it sure showed. This was one of the best classes I have attended. Outstanding presentation supported by graphic videos and slides. Actual products (tourniquets, pressure bandages, wound packing gauze, chest seals, etc.) were available and used by each student. A very interesting training technique was, at random times, a cartoon shooter would come on with shots fired. Bottom line here is that you would have to put a TQ on yourself, your partner, both, or in other configurations. One of the main reasons I wanted to take this course was to update my wound packing techniques and I was very happy with this block of instruction. As an additional bonus, I took my daughter to the course (she works LAPD) and the course is POST certified and she got 8 hours of continuing training credit. I highly recommend this class.

The planning is underway for the Range Day at Oaktree Range and as soon as further information is available, I will put it out to the Chapter. Depending on how big the event is, we may need some volunteers to help. More to come

Our last future event is the USMC Paul Ehline Memorial Ride and Shoot to raise funds and awareness for service-related cancers. This event will be held on Saturday, May 13, 2023 from 0800 to 1530. If all goes well, we will have a booth at the Lytle Creek Firing Line (<https://www.lytlecreekrange.com/>) with Jim Cragg's Company, Special Operations Technologies (<https://sotectactical.com/>), and Tom Kasza with the 1208 Foundation (<https://www.1208foundation.org>), and maybe Nimo and with a couple of his staff from the Afghan Commando Community. I will put out more information out on this event as I get it.

In this month, we had a fantastic Chapter meeting on February 18th with our guest speaker Steven Lieberman from Artemis Defense

Institute (<https://www.artemishq.com/>). Steven is one of the foremost 2nd Amendment Attorneys in California and probably the Nation. He gave us updates on all the litigation going on in the mixed-up State of California. There are a couple of cases going forward where gun owners may prevail... Let's keep our fingers crossed.

Steve then covered the absolute necessity of having insurance when you are carrying a concealed weapon or have a weapon in your house. Today with so many officials who are decidedly anti-2nd Amendment and who are ready to prosecute for any incident (except criminals), protecting yourself is an absolute necessity. These anti-gun officials know that if they can take you to court, the legal bills will absolutely break the average man or woman in fees.

There are several types of insurance out there for CCW but I have obtained my coverage from the United States Concealed Carry Association (<https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/>). One of the main reasons I use USCCA is the fact that they have excellent programs for further training and expertise. This is vital if you ever have to go to court and testify, so you can tell the jury that you have the basic qualifications for carrying a concealed weapon, and you also have enhanced your training and expertise. For any cop out there, you know what I mean. But no matter what company you go with, you absolutely should have the proper insurance.

And to close out, I am entering some uncharted territory for me. I am going to assist one of our members to upgrade his Bronze Star with V Device to a Silver Star. I have been told that this will be an involved operation but I have had people step up to help. Two of the individuals, Dick Davis and Don Sexton, are subject matter experts. Dick is the owner of Praetorian Standard, Inc (<https://www.praetorianstandard.com/>) and has been heavily involved in other upgrades and awards. This should be an interesting detail!

Our next Chapter meeting Saturday, April 15, 2023

LOCATION: The Pub at Fiddlers Green
TIME: Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830
LOCATION: The Pub at Fiddlers Green
ADDRESS: 4745 Yorktown Ave Bldg 19
Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5176
(Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos)

Greg Horton SGM (Ret)
President
SFA Chapter 78

Mark your calendar for the following scheduled dates for 2023:
Apr 15 • May 20 • June 17 • July 15 • August 19
September 16 • October 21 • November 18 • December TBA



President Biden Presents the Medal of Honor to Vietnam Veteran Special Forces Soldier Col. Paris D. Davis



President Joseph Biden bestows the Medal of Honor to retired U.S. Army Col. Paris D. Davis during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., March 3, 2023. (U.S. Army photo by Bernardo Fuller)

By David Vergun

DOD News, March 3, 2023 — <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3318663/biden-presents-medal-of-honor-to-special-forces-soldier/>

Army Capt. Paris D. Davis distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty during the Vietnam War.

Davis, now a retired colonel, attended a White House ceremony today where President Joe Biden presented him the Medal of Honor.

His Medal of Honor citation was read during the ceremony.

While serving as commander of Detachment A-321, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, during combat operations in South Vietnam, June 17 to 18, 1965, Davis was an advisor to the 883rd Regional Force Company in the vicinity of Bong Son.

The company was conducting a nighttime raid against a Viet Cong regional headquarters housing a superior enemy force, according to his citation.

While returning from the successful raid, the regional force company was ambushed and sustained several casualties, according to the citation.

“Davis consistently exposed himself to hostile, small-arms fire to rally the inexperienced and disorganized company. He expertly directed both artillery and small-arms fire, enabling other elements of the company to reach his position. Although wounded in the leg, he aided in the evacuation of other wounded men in his unit, but refused medical evacuation himself,” the citation states.



COL (Ret.) Paris D. Davis, at left, shakes hand with President Biden. (Official White House (Photo by Adam Schultz))



At left, COL (Ret.) Vahan Sipantzi with COL (Ret.) Paris D. Davis, at right, after the ceremony. Sipantzi's son was an A-Team leader under Paris Davis. (Photo courtesy Vahan Sipantzi)

Following the arrival of air support, Davis directed artillery fire within 30 meters of his own position in an attempt to halt the enemy's advance, according to the citation.

"Then with complete disregard for his own life, he braved intense enemy fire to cross an open field to rescue his seriously wounded and immobilized team sergeant," states the citation.

While carrying the sergeant up the hill to a position of relative safety, Davis was again wounded by enemy fire. Despite two painful wounds, Davis again refused medical evacuation, remained with the troops, fought bravely and provided pivotal leadership and inspiration to the regional force company, as it repelled several Viet Cong assaults on their position over a period of several hours, according to the citation.

When friendly reinforcements finally arrived, Davis again refused medical evacuation until he had recovered an advisor under his command who had been wounded during the initial ambush and was presumed dead, the citation states.

Davis directed the helicopter extraction of his wounded colleague not leaving the battlefield himself until all friendly forces were recovered or medically evacuated, per the citation.

"You're looking at courage in the flesh," Biden said during the ceremony.

Davis volunteered to serve a country that in many places still refused to serve people who looked like him, Biden said, noting that Davis is an African American.



Left to right, Medal of Honor recipients CSM Matthew Williams, LTC William Swenson, and MSG Earl Plumlee attended the White House ceremony. (Photo courtesy Vahan Sipantzi)



COL (Ret.) Paris Davis and his family, along with other participants, stand for the National anthem at the Medal of Honor Hall of Heroes Induction Ceremony at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., March 6, 2023. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jack Sanders)

"Right away, it was clear that Paris was a born warrior. He became an Army Ranger. Then, he jumped at the chance to join the Green Berets, becoming one of the nation's first Black Special Forces officers," Biden said.

At the time Davis returned from Vietnam, the country was still battling segregation, Biden noted.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the United States' first fully integrated armed forces, Biden mentioned. "Davis will still stand alongside the nation's pioneering heroes."

The president noted that Davis served for 25 years in the Army, earned a Ph.D. and founded the Metro Herald newspaper in Alexandria, Virginia, which reported on community news and civil rights issues.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and past Medal of Honor recipients attended the ceremony. ❖

Note: Read "How Green Beret Paris Davis' Teammates Fought the Pentagon for His Medal of Honor" at <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/special-forces-paris-davis-medal-of-honor/> to learn about the loyal veterans who persisted in their nine-year effort to get Davis' nomination package approved. Visit <http://moh.atc.nga.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/index.html#/> to view Savage Game Design's "Paris Davis Interactive Medal of Honor Narrative," which was included in the package submitted to the DoD. Savage Game Design is the creator of *S.O.G. Prairie Fire*, a premium DLC made for ArMA 3's Creator DLC.

18D Training Today

By How Miller

Imagine, if you will, how excited I was to be invited to tour the Joint Special Operations Medical Training Center (JSOMTC) on my trip to Fort Bragg. Training has evolved tremendously since I became a 91B4S Special Forces Medical Aidman in 1968. Their mission is to merely produce the finest medics in the world.

Thanks to fellow Chapter 78 member, Dennis DeRosia, having invited two head trainers, Mike Jones and Pat Buckles, to join his 91B vs 18D presentation at SFACON 2021 in Las Vegas, they were happy to return the favor and continue the process of highlighting what is on offer for today's top candidates. My former teammate at A325 Duc Hue in Vietnam, Lew Chapman, and I were treated like extra special VIPs. We helped return the favor with a presentation of what it was like to be a 91B (medic) and 05B (commo man) on an A team at a fun working lunch in their lecture hall.

Nowadays this is an integrated SOF training, including providing SOCOM Medics to be Ranger Medics, SOAR Flight Medics, Civil Affairs Med SGTs, and other USASOC Medics, while some will continue on to be 18D Special Forces Medical Sergeants, or Naval Special Operations Independent Duty Corpsmen.

All students go first through the 9-month 68W1 course. That begins with National Registry EMT basic and ends with National Registry Paramedic civilian certification. The civilian certifications are a big improvement for transition back to civilian life after the service. As a 91B in those early days our qualifications were considered more of a state secret, resulting in no civilian authority recognizing our training and accomplishments. That caused many disappointments when trying to build on our experiences when "back in the world". The 68W1 course culminates in testing for civilian certification in (ACLS) Advanced Cardiac Life Support and (ATP)



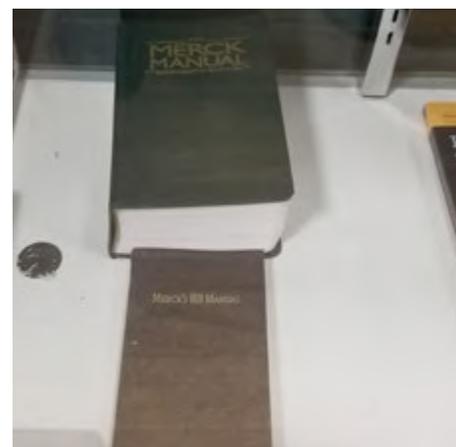
Left to right, How Miller, Mike Jones and Lew Chapman (Photo courtesy How Miller)



At left, a student practices on starting an IV, and above one of the sophisticated manikins used for intubation training. (How Miller)

Advanced Tactical Paramedic, which is a good intro to any medical facility. JSOMTC lays claim to the highest pass rate of any school in the country. In order to maintain the 68W1 MOS, every two years they return for refresher and updates and re-certification.

There are many facets to the training, including many medical subjects, hands-on training, and what we used to call OJT at several civilian hospitals. Experiences at the hospitals can vary from ambulance runs and Emergency Room duty to delivering babies and open heart surgery, depending on what is available when they are working in their assigned areas. There is a heavy emphasis on Trauma care.



Still available to order, the A Team Medic Bible, the Merk Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy (How Miller)

A lot of the training is now done online, allowing for students to study and self-test at their own schedule. 100 percent correct answers are required to pass on to the next section (Each block requires a 75% GPA to pass onto the next iteration with an academic review board if you fall under the passing GPA), with reviews available to fill in any info that was missed or misunderstood. The pace of the material is intense, requiring focused attention and good scheduling skills, but this method actually allows for less travel and more studying. The instructors also make themselves available by cellphone or email for an unbelievable amount of time.

Our tour started in a very busy training area. Endotracheal intubations and starting IVs were being practiced when we visited one of the activity areas. The intubations were practiced on sophisticated manikins that showed exposed lungs and stomachs.

If one missed the trachea, the stomach would start to fill with air and expose the error. This was done in cooperation with one's partner. Then the assistant became the intubator. When under fire, this is not an option, so cricothyroidotomies are becoming the go-to choice in combat if an airway can't be cleared and maintained otherwise. I recall carrying a ballpoint pen in one of my pockets in case I needed to use the empty barrel to keep an airway open. I'm sure they have better ways now.

Starting the IVs was done in a different manner. One partner would actually start the IV on the other, under supervision, and then roles would be reversed and the patient would become the medic. You can imagine that method leads to a lot of care being taken not to hurt the partner in the hopes that he or she will also be that careful. I recall we used that method for lots of procedures, including nasal intubation.

Intraosseous fluid replacement is another innovation that saves many lives. Instead of a medic trying different vein locations to start an IV, which could ultimately prove too difficult to accomplish in the field, some injured soldiers can only be saved by injecting fluids or even blood directly into a bone. The device has a series of spikes along the circumference of the roughly quarter-sized circle, which are only for stability, so it will grab and hold on. In the center is a stiff, large-gauge needle through which the product is delivered.

The force needed to penetrate the bone is provided by the spring-loaded injector. There are a few bones that make for the most feasible sites. The two most preferred are the flat tibial surface along the shin and the sternum. If the soldier is in bad enough shape to need this, it most likely will not seem to hurt as much as it will when being removed. Quite often, the best location will be the sternum because it is easy to reach and provides a stable target.

If you were lucky enough to be selected to be an 18D (Special Forces Medical Sergeant), or an SOIDC (Special Operations Independent Duty Corpsman), another 3 months of Surgical, Dental, Disease and other subjects are in store for you, and could result in you receiving a BS degree. There is even a pathway to earning Physician Assistant credentials later on.

I'm a little murky on the field experiences of an NSOIDC, but I know that an SF medic on an A-team, now an ODA, is as good as it gets. You're the closest thing to a doctor that many indigenous people will ever see. You can have a lot of responsibility, but you also have comprehensive training to prepare you. You also get all the free ammo you can carry.



Intraosseous injector head, affectionately called the "Fast One." (How Miller)



A room in the surgical unit. (How Miller)



How Miller tries out a sonogram machine. (Lew Chapman)



Today's typical lab equipment for blood analysis. Centrifuge not shown. (How Miller)



The Hall of Heroes which honors SOF Medics that have died in combat.(How Miller)

The Surgical section was on a cycle break, but we got to tour the facility and see a couple of the surgical rooms and equipment. The portable sonogram that they use to guide their regional blocks reduces anesthetic use by about 80 percent. There were a few students practicing regional blocks on each other and using the sonogram. When they were done, we got to play with the portable ultrasound as well.

Regional blocks are a recent addition to potentially lifesaving tools. Besides giving a “local” anesthetic further up the nerves for some surgeries, by knowing the right locations and techniques, a whole area can be numbed, eliminating the need for general anesthesia sometimes. On the battlefield, sometimes a wound can be so painful as to incapacitate a soldier. In some cases, a regional block can numb the pain and allow the soldier to help get himself off the battlefield, freeing up others for a more vigorous defense.

When we walked into the lab, which was not being used at the time, I said “Where’s the Lab?”

The only familiar things in sight were workbenches, a microscope and a bunch of cabinets. Apparently they still use reagents and centrifuges, but they were packed away, except for those in the ventilation hood. What they use now are a lot of electronic devices that do an incredible amount of analysis of blood samples, for example. They are compact enough to be useful in an ODA lab. These devices are constantly adding capabilities and they are expecting another significant upgrade soon.

In the hallway were numerous display cases showing the supplies that are typically available for use by the SF Medic. There is everything from syringes and swabs to autoclaves, sophisticated splints, and full kits and packs. I was searching for and delighted to find that the A team bible, the Merk Manual of diagnoses was available. The one we used was the eleventh edition, and a lot of that same information is in the current version.

We spent some time looking at the Hall of Heroes, SOF Medics that died in combat. A strong message of how serious the job is.

Later we met with Mike Jones, trainer Mike Jackson, and a group of trainees at Charlie Mike’s Pub. But that’s another story. ❖



A student wears a SOCM t-shirt while in class. (How Miller)

A Visit to Charlie Mike's PUB

By How Miller

Charlie Mike is phonetic for “CM,” which in army lingo is Continue Mission. Lew Chapman served as a Commo man at my A Camp and left a little before I became a Medic there. After spending the better part of the day touring the JSOCM training center and giving our fun lunchtime presentation on what it was like back in the day when we were called 91Bs and 05Bs, it seemed only fitting we should CM at Charlie Mike's Pub a little outside of Fort Bragg. We were joined by Mike Jones who had been our host for the tour and presentation.

It was a happy coincidence that, while planning my trip to Fort Bragg, I noticed a link on SOF.NEWS that brought me to an article published by CoffeeorDie.com. It mentioned that a couple of instructors from JSOCM were mentoring willing students on Wednesday nights at this pub. So, while talking with Mike Jones, he enthusiastically agreed to introduce us to them.

The excellent article by Jenna Biter was very good and you can read it at <https://coffeordie.com/special-forces-medical/>. It made me want to see the process myself, and Lew agreed. Mike Jones met us there and introduced us to Mike Jackson. His partner, Rick Hines, had been pulled away for another engagement.

Mike and Rick have some topics to highlight at each evening get-together. They are designed to cover what can be the difference between success and failure. The mentoring can range from challenges in the training process to how to fit in with a new team or how a difficult combat medical situation was handled. It has been described as no B***S***. Just telling it how it is, or was.

This night, it turned out, Lew and I were the topic. We didn't have any visual aids, other than a few *Sentinels*, but sitting face to face around a big table, drinking beers, invited both jovial and meaningful dialogue. We were again treated royally, reprising some of our lunch lecture and fielding many questions about situations we ran into and how we handled them.

It was a great bunch of guys, all going the extra mile to succeed at the school and their chosen profession — Special Operations Combat Medic. There were both Navy and Army personnel there, including an NSOIC candidate, Green Beret candidates, and others. Their attitudes made it obvious that they felt they were getting something good out of coming there on Wednesday nights.

The ambiance probably has something to do with that as well. The side of the bar we gathered in had some large tables that had SOF logos “lacquered” into the tabletops. It was hard to find a piece of wall, or even ceiling, that was not covered with SOF — mostly SF displays. There were pictures of units, of missions, famous Green Berets, and even one of John Wayne. There is a display case filled with different berets and models of aircraft hanging from above. Many of the pictures have signatures. Each item could start a long conversation about the past, and frequently did. People were anxious to point out different favorite pictures.

But all of those are merely window-dressing for the center of the displays. There is a large section populated by pictures of each Green Beret that has fallen since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. That was the opening salvo on the decades-long Global War on Terror (GWOT). America's response was headed by





Left to right, Mike Jackson, Lew Chapman, and a patron pointing out a picture he is enthusiastic about. (How Miller)



Left to right, How Miller, Tracy Guthrie, and Lew Chapman. (How Miller)



Special Forces, starting with the Horse Soldiers of ODA 595, and their sister team ODA 555. Other ODAs were soon to follow, and with the help of lots of others were able to lead the Afghans to victory over the Taliban. Special Operations Forces, mainly Green Berets, were front and center of much of the action. There were many who served multiple tours, some served many tours. That is hard on a soldier and his family. It is difficult to say if that contributed to extra casualties, but it definitely increased the odds.

Their portraits are brought down on the anniversary of their deaths, and that evening, memorials are given. These were Green Berets who, according to a previous owner of the pub, Bob Hash, "If they knew they were going to end up on this wall, they would do what they did anyway." These were men who willingly risked their lives to accomplish the mission. As you might imagine, those are very emotional moments. Ben Hines of *Military Times* made a video about Charlie Mike's which includes a memorial ceremony and an interview of Bob Hash, which you can watch on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWUHMTXi3sE>.

The heart of the pub, and all it entails, is the current owner Tracy Guthrie. Born to Green Beret James Hinkle while he was serving in Bad Tolz, Germany, she has been a part of SF ever since. She even ended up marrying Green Beret Arlo Guthrie.

The pub was opened in 2006 by Michelle Curtis in memory of her dad, who was also a Green Beret in Bad Tolz, calling it Charlie Mike.

Tracy has an infectious smile and a caring attitude. When the opportunity came along for her to buy the bar and keep this legacy alive, she was heartbroken feeling that she would not be able to buy it. Eventually she succeeded anyway, and she goes above and beyond to care for her SF Family. A bar is a place that brings out the stories of people who have had their psyches wounded. In this day and age, she is careful to look out for people that might be reaching the end of their ropes, and she has found and helped some.

She does this while skillfully catering to the other half of her customers who are not related to SF at her corner neighborhood bar. After many of the mentoring group had meandered out, Lew and I went up to meet Tracy. She was all smiles and told us about herself and the bar and the wonderful crew she has. If I lived near Fayetteville, I'm sure it is a place where I would like to spend some time. She sent me a letter she prizes, by Jimmie Hallis, the Curator of the U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, NC (see "Continue the Mission" on page 7).

[Charlie Mike's Pub](#) has entertainment, including Karaoke, and great food, with a Thai theme, and is a short drive outside the base down Riley Road at [195 Starpoint Dr, Fayetteville, NC](https://www.google.com/maps/place/195+Starpoint+Dr,+Fayetteville,+NC). ❖

Continue the Mission

On 26 February 2020, I visited Charlie Mike's Pub with Mrs. Tracy Guthrie to review the décor and ambiance of the establishment. To use such words, in such a place, does not remotely come close to describing the pictures, prints, unit crests, insignia, and signage that adorns the walls and ceiling. To the average outsider, some may view it as a shrine to the fallen, or even war. It is more than words can describe. And for those that do so, they are failed students of history, and more importantly, less American than they know.

The lineage of special operations dates to World War II and continues through the Global War on Terrorism. It will continue through future conflicts and special operations will be there. One cannot deny one's own history, especially in the Special Forces community. What is hung on the walls of Charlie Mike's Pub is a reflection of action, and dedication. What happens at Charlie Mike's are the stories of those actions. It is told by the Soldiers, Veterans, and family members that patron the pub. It is relived in pictures, berets and patches. Each Soldier tells the next generation of war fighters that walk through the door why each piece is important, who was where, and when.

What resides at Charlie Mike's Pub is community and family. Charlie Mike's is a family that sustains the heritage, values, dedication to duty, and the honor of sacrifice to the special operations community of the United States Army. These men and women who achieve the pinnacle of Special Forces' training have a bond and brotherhood most will only read about, or maybe hear at Charlie Mike's.

The Soldiers striving to complete qualification today will be the patrons of tomorrow at Charlie Mike's. Their pictures and signs from far off lands will eventually find their place on the walls. The family members of these men and women, who fall in combat defending our country from harm, will come to the pub to hear the stories, relive the memories, and develop bonds of friendship, just as the people who are there do now. There will be people who will continue these traditions, and keep the memories alive through welcome home receptions, promotions, retirements, and funeral receptions, all at Charlie Mike's Pub. It is a place to celebrate and mourn with brothers in arms.

When the Green Beret Club closed on Fort Bragg, some thought it was the end of that special place warriors could go. It was a place called home for many, even though no one really lived there. It reopened at Charlie Mike's Pub, because these men and women will not let brotherhood, tradition, honor and sacrifice die. Even when those men and women leave Fort Bragg to serve in different special operations units in places throughout the world, they always return home to Fort Bragg. They return to Charlie Mike's to see old friends in the pub, and on the walls. These warriors, their families, and friends will Continue the Mission. Charlie Mike.

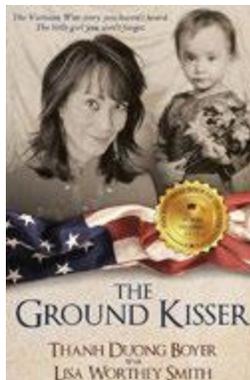
Jimmie Hallis

Curator

U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum
Fayetteville, NC

Book Review

The Ground Kisser by Thanh Duong Boyer with Lisa Worthey Smith



[The Ground Kisser](#)

By Thanh Duong Boyer
with Lisa Worthey Smith
Kerysso Press
(April 25, 2019)
227 pages

By How Miller

As what we call the Vietnam War ends, Thanh's family faces desperate choices. Should they all stay under the brutal and irrational rule of the communists, or could one or more of them escape and start life anew in a freer country.

Thanh tells how she, as a twelve-year-old, was chosen to be the one to leave, in the hopes of bringing the rest of the family to freedom later. Her escape by boat to Australia was blocked by pirates, who ended up leaving them for dead because a storm was coming. Finally drifting to Indonesia, they were brought ashore to an island filled with other refugees. Immensely glad they had survived,

they nevertheless had to persevere through the further tribulations of trying to be accepted somewhere for immigration.

From the first chapter, describing an explosion from an incoming round hitting very close to the school she was attending, you can tell that her description is so personal and detail filled that you can imagine being there. She adds to that the reactions of her family to the trials and tribulations endured throughout the whole process.

It is a tale of someone who grew up in a proud, enterprising family, who enjoyed the fruits of their labors and the freedoms available in South Vietnam. Her family's plight followed the (mis)fortunes of her country as a result of the communist insurgency from the north. As their freedoms were gradually replaced by constantly growing fear, living through the capture of their country and the invasion of Cambodia to end Pol Pot's murderous reign, they searched for ways to escape.

As their desperation grew, they were forced to choose the least bad option. Thanh held the hopes of her family in her twelve-year-old person. Fortunately, she inherited or learned many skills that helped her, including her faith, which she eventually came to embrace and encourage in others. She married a religious man, and they support each other's faith.

First, she had to grow to become a confident woman here in the U.S., so she would finally be in a position to try to get her family here as well. With the help of her wonderful sponsors and her community, she was finally in a position to do that. She also describes many of the challenges that remained and how she endeavored to overcome them.

Ground Kisser is a message about Vietnam, emigration, hopes, hardships and a deep appreciation for the life filled with freedoms we enjoy here, told with kindness and humility. It is a delightful read. ❖

CATHERINE LEROY

03/13/68



By Denis Chericone

She just appeared. The four of us were playing poker on one of the stretchers in a corner of the bunker when I had gotten up to get some more smokes from my field jacket. As I walked towards my stash, I looked up, and there she was, held framed within the rough two-by-four molding of the entryway. She was simply standing there with a big smile on her face, a face full of mischief and grace. There was a glow to her, and I immediately thought I was imagining things. I kind of sleepwalked towards her with my arm outstretched so I could touch her and prove to myself she wasn't a ghost. Then she spoke, with an accent straight out of a French movie, "Allo, my name is Catherine, and I am here to get your stories and take your pictures."

When the others heard her voice, they were quickly by my side, all of us gaping in blazing stupefaction. Her smile was like a warm spring day with a cool breeze spreading itself over, in, and around every living thing, especially us. When we finally recovered enough to speak, we welcomed her with all the cordiality we were able to muster. She knew she was delivering a very special moment for all of us, and she was gracious and very indulgent of our stumbling attempts to make her feel welcome. She fielded our barrage of questions, you know, "Where did you come from?" "How did you get here?" "Can we run away together?" the usual stuff, with the warm patience and aplomb of a woman dealing with a hopelessly smitten suitor alone with his inamorata for the first time. We made her as comfortable as possible, and it helped that she was dressed in the same manner as we were — baggy and stained fatigues, flak vest, and helmet, which, when she removed it, allowed her subdued long golden hair to come tumbling down around her shoulders. Yeah, definitely from the gods. She was inquisitive, and we tried to fill her in without breaking any top-secret restrictions concerning our duties. Of course, by that time we only had one duty: stay alive.

We were definitely under the hammer when she showed up. It was sometime in early March, and the siege was roaring along at top speed, heading for destruction, ours. The NVA owned us by that time and were so plentiful around our base that whenever our guys wandered more than a few hundred meters past our wire, they usually didn't come back. She must have known what

we were doing up there because after all, she was a *journaliste*, but she had the good grace not to henpeck the point as it was obvious that we were grounded and grimly holding on to our lives.

We couldn't offer her much, just some water; but one of the guys apologized for not having a bottle of wine for her. She liked that.

Gods, she was so very beautiful, especially beautiful to us in that particular moment, and in her elegantly chivalrous way, she made us feel that everything was going to be okay.

When I began thinking on the whole experience after she left, I realized that the power of the gods was finite, that when certain events were set in motion there wasn't much they could do about it, and that she was a reminder from them to let us know they were keeping an eye on things and, however unlikely it appeared, they still cared about our welfare. I know now that true gods are able to soothe and console their charges when the cosmos has decided that someone or some group is to be beset by extreme misfortune (yes, the cosmos always does have the last word). It became apparent to me at Khe Sanh, and I'll believe forever that she came to us bearing the power of awed revelation, which slapped us around enough to help our sense of hope and light become a possibility.

Being who she was, she wanted to see our fortifications out front of our main trench. We were happy to oblige. Anything for our little angel. She also wanted to speak with the guys manning those posi-



A group shot of my Spike team at FOB 3. Henry King is the other American crouching in the front of the group. (Photo by Robert Shippen, courtesy Denis Chericone)

tions and wanted to know about the listening post duty and what, if anything, had happened to those manning that position. We didn't have to prepare her much for the trip out to the main trench. She was willing, able, and ready. Only Flag and myself took her out as too many people in one place usually brought their mortars down on us and much too many people in one place tugged out the rockets, which always, yeah, always made us start talking to any gods, past, present, future, big, little, or underwhelming, who might in some even miniscule way preserve us from the chaos and tumult of the random death waiting for any opportunity to pounce. In artillery barrages, a small, almost invisible advantage or liability will change the course of lives, alter the future, and reduce the past to ash. If we hadn't believed that in the beginning, we were zealously true believers by this time.

The intensity of the barrages that day was extreme, much thicker than usual, and we traveled carrying the assets we'd learned from months under the gun. You know, ear towards their cannons, light and dainty steps, no talking, that kind of stuff, while we gave ourselves over to the electrical currents of fear, charging our burning sensitivity to whatever might harm us.

When we reached the main trench, her impact on the guys who came out to see what was going on was like a lightning storm. Smiles abounded. We congregated in one of our sandbagged machine gun positions. Men who'd been bombed into depression suddenly saw the sun, realizing that there was somebody like her somewhere who was thinking about them. It became an impromptu party in the middle of a filth-filled, rat-infested mud hole, a very happy sort of festive celebration for all concerned. She automatically became our confessor. The men began confiding their fears, cheers, hopes, and dreams to her, and she handled every fucking bit of it with gentle grace and a smiling repose. We weren't even aware of the thickening explosions, and gladly, I have to hand it to her, surrender to her; she was definitely what every doctor and clergy person in the history of the planet from every society, way of life, and culture would recommend for any hopeless situation. She spent an hour or two, I can't remember exactly, making my (including me) forlorn comrades feel their humanity again. It was a moment almost as ecstatic as the moment when we all knew the siege was over.



Me and my thirteen year old Brou Montagnard sanitation helper. (Photo by Robert Shippen, courtesy Denis Chericone)

The barrage bent into a vicious and unforgiving bloodflood. It wanted us — bad. Barrages had a way of becoming personal, like their entire effort was all just for you. Barrages possessed a very mercurial temperament and personality. If you could guess their intentions, you could squeeze through the seams, walk away with your life. They either focused on you or they didn't. Maybe it was the case that day. Maybe the artillery rounds sensed what was happening in our trench works, that there was some happiness being spread around by this beautiful apparition sent by the gods. We got ready to make our break for the access trench leading back to the med bunker whenever a space in the explosions appeared. Then there was a span of a few heart beats so we dashed. I led, Catherine followed close behind, and Flag was close behind her. As we were about to make our turn into the access trench a one-five-two round hit the turn's corner and splashed forward. Thankfully, we hadn't gotten that far yet, just an almost, and if we'd been closer to suffer the full effect, we would have been jelly; but it did send us reeling, knocking our socks up around our necks. I flew sideways into an oozing trench wall and landed right on Catherine's legs. Flag got off the best — just groggyfied. When the smoke inside and out cleared, I felt her trying to get up. I teetered to my hands and knees to see that she was a mess, fatigues smoking, shredded, and her face full of tiny punctures bleeding from forehead to chin. Flag got on his feet, wobbling. We both began yelling, "No, no, no, no, no!" trying to put the fire out on her shirt.

As I patted her down she tried getting up and then quickly fell down again. I saw thin rivulets of blood tracing a rough net over her face, and as Flag ripped open a dressing, I examined her for any other wounds. She'd been lucky, just her face. My urge to weep got caught in my throat as she found my hand and squeezed it tightly. "Am I blind? I cannot see," she whispered to me in a hoarsely broken voice. You try not to hesitate in moments like this because it's their life at stake. "You're gonna be all right. A little blood in your eyes." and then she came back with, "Ah, my face then." Getting her up, we finally managed to struggle her to the med bunker without further trouble, and we all became deeply involved with making certain that she was well taken care of. I remember her saying something in French to no one in particular, so I asked her what she'd said. She smiled at me warmly as if I was a puppy, "This will take care of my vanity." Of course, young as I was, I didn't get it, but I did file it away because it was the last thing I expected to hear. About an hour later, a supply chopper carried her off, never to be seen again as a half-dozen guys watched the helo carrying her disappear into the clouds.

We had all fallen in love with her, our angel from the gods, our brilliantly incandescent wake up call reminding us of all those things we'd left behind, all those aspects of our lives that in the siege held no purpose and had become only wispy bits of memory lost in the blasts. I could tell I wasn't the only one seriously haunted by what had happened to her. I found it strange for awhile that no one ever mentioned her again; she had been so vital; but if I knew anything I knew she would never, never-ever be forgotten. ❖

THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



An Update on Helping the Montagnards in Vietnam



Tom Turney

By Tom Turney

For those SF veterans who served in Vietnam, working with those familiar with the local territory, largely Montagnards, was a significant part of our mission. Whether deployed to an A Camp where an SF team would recruit, train and operate with these troops; with an organization like Mobile Strike Force (Mike Force) units that responded to emergencies; with MACV SOG; or other Greek alphabet units, the importance of working with these

indigenous soldiers cannot be understated. Close bonds between these troops and their SF counterparts were formed as a result of working together. When the US withdrew from Vietnam, many of those who remained were captured and put into re-education camps or killed. Their families were uprooted and their ancestral lands were confiscated. All of us who worked with these soldiers felt we had abandoned them. A small contingent of these Forgotten Warriors were able to successfully relocate to the US, but most were left behind.

The similarities with the US withdrawal from Afghanistan are scary. Today, SF veterans who worked with their indigenous counterparts who were left behind, are working to help them escape — see <https://www.1208foundation.org/>. Unfortunately, like during the Vietnam era, only a small contingent will actually successfully be relocated to the

US. For those who remain life is very difficult and dangerous. In the words of Henry Kissinger, “To be an enemy of America can be dangerous, but to be a friend is fatal.” A sad state of affairs!!!

When I returned to Vietnam in 2016, I was able to visit several former A Camp locations and visit with former CIDG soldiers. I heard their stories of what had happened to them after the US withdrawal. I was so impacted by these stories, that upon my return, I found a non-profit organization called The Vietnam Fund that was working to help the indigenous population in the area. Along with some former Mike Force compatriots, as well as Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) counterparts, we began an effort to raise money from within the SF community to support the Montagnards still in Vietnam. The Vietnam Fund was run by Jane Coyle who spent over 30 years traveling to Vietnam to help the Montagnards and our efforts supported projects such as installing fresh water systems and providing educational materials for students. A tip of the beret to Jane who recently retired.

When Jane told me she was retiring and closing The Vietnam Fund, I began searching for another organization that was doing similar work in Vietnam, and through an introduction from Jane, I met the founders of Viet Dreams (<https://vietdreams.org/>).

Viet Dreams has been working in Vietnam for over a decade providing disadvantaged children with better educational opportunities and a more healthy, sustainable way of living. Some of their projects include collaborating with Operation Smiles providing cleft palate surgeries, dental missions, eye cataract surgeries, donating medical supplies, workshops, and providing access to clean drinking water, which help reduce water-borne illness among children. They also collaborate with local networks and other non-profit organizations such as Hope for Tomorrow, ICAN, Friends of Vinh Son, Fund for Vietnam, Children of Vietnam and Because Vietnam in order to successfully create an environment where every child is safe, self-sufficient, and able to pursue their education.



If anyone wishes to continue to support the Montagnards in Vietnam, I would urge you to join me in supporting Viet Dreams here:

<http://vietdreams.org/donate> ❖





GREEN BERET AND USAID MEDIC RECALLS VIETNAM AND LAOS

By Marc Yablonka

If you mention the name Steve Schofield to the scores of Hmong hilltribes in Wisconsin who were lucky enough to have gotten out of Laos before it fell to the Communist Pathet Lao forces in May 1975, no doubt you'll encounter many who call him friend. But Schofield's time in Indochina did not begin in Laos, where he worked with USAID [United States Agency for International Development] as a medic. He was also a Green Beret who served in Vietnam.

"I was a replacement from Okinawa for a junior medic who had been wounded," he said.

Schofield was assigned to Military Assistance Command, Vietnam [MACV]/Studies and Observations Group [SOG] Command and Control North [CCN] Marble Mountain from April to July 1968. He had several MOSs, but the one which tasked him with the most difficult training was 18D, Medic.

"Medics receive the most intensive training and are taught basic animal health, dental care, treatment of tropical disease, nursing care, surgery, to include amputation, and, of course, treatment of battlefield trauma. The team medic was responsible for the healthcare of his team and the indigenous troops that the Special Forces team trained and led," Schofield said.

One can imagine what he experienced as a Green Beret medic. One firefight in particular stands out for him.

"The most serious firefight occurred on a mission five miles inside Laos along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. I was wounded, another American Special Forces soldier was KIA. About 15 indigenous troops were KIA, and 20 more were wounded. Another SF on a medical evacuation chopper was listed MIA when it was shot down directly in front of me," he remembered.

Schofield's time in Vietnam was coming to a close, but his time as a Green Beret was not quite over yet.

"After returning to Okinawa from Vietnam, I did one more training mission in the Philippines. I accepted the offer from USAID, was discharged, and returned to Chicago for six months, awaiting (another) top secret security clearance," he recalled.

Schofield was Laos bound in September 1969.

"I went on to Vientiane for four days, and then to Sam Thong (LS [Lima Site]-20) where I was based for six months. Sam Thong fell in March 1970, and I was then based at Ban Xon until Laos fell in May 1975," he said.



Steve Schofield in his Class A Army uniform. (Photo courtesy Steve Schofield)



Steve Schofield in Vietnam. (Photo courtesy Steve Schofield)



Steve Schofield just before he retired in 1995. (Photo courtesy Steve Schofield)

Schofield's average days as a USAID medic were arduous, long, and above all, dangerous.

"My every-day responsibilities," he said, "were to train, deploy, and supply USAID, military and Royal Lao government medics."

But that's not where his duties ended.

"My top-secret duty was to provide search and rescue for downed US and allied air crews. The medics were stationed in remote villages all over Military Region II, which was only accessible by air," Schofield said.

Most of the time, Schofield was flown from site to site by CASI (Continental Air Services, Inc.), occasionally Air America, and towards the end of the war, Arizona Air, which flew Bell Jet Ranger helicopters. No matter which airline flew him, his admiration and appreciation for the pilots remains very high.

"All the pilots were outstanding. We could not have accomplished our missions without them," he said.

Schofield's admiration for several of the major personages of the secret war in Laos remains high as well. Pop Buell was one of them.

Steuben County Indiana farmer, Edgar "Pop" Buell was a humanitarian aid worker, becoming an agricultural adviser for the IVS (International Voluntary Services) organization in Laos after his wife passed away in 1958.

"Pop and my wife and I became great friends. I was his medic and we stayed in touch until his death. I would always visit with him when I was in Bangkok, on business after Laos. He was one of the great Americans I met in Laos," said Schofield, who worked with Buell at both Sam Thong and Bon Xon.

He also interacted with Royal Lao Army Maj. Gen. Vang Pao.

“Of course, I met Major General Vang Pao. I wrote about our first meeting in my book *Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, CIA, and the Hmong*, he said.

“[CIA operative] Anthony Poshepny [aka Tony Poe] was a good friend,” Schofield said.

“Tony was a straight shooter with no pretensions or illusions about what we were doing in Laos: Killing communists!” he wrote.

Another legend among the Hmong in Laos during the secret war was Catholic priest, Father Lucien Bouchard, or “Father B,” as he is still affectionately known by the Hmong and Americans who worked with him.

“I would send USAID air craft to pick up Father B. I worked with him to provide medicines for the Leper villages. We became great friends and he spent his last night in Laos at my house. He would always visit us when on home leave from Indonesia,” Schofield recalled.

Schofield also reflected on the effectiveness of the Hmong who fought in the SGUs [Special Guerilla Units].

“The Hmong soldiers were very good, considering their youth, minimal training, and the fact that they were up against hardcore North Vietnamese Army soldiers,” said Schofield. “The airmen were fantastic aviators who got right down in the trees with the NVA.”

Schofield’s admiration for the Hmong soldiers and pilots extends to the Hmong people as a whole.

“The Hmong for the most part are strong, honest, hard-working, extremely loyal Americans who are a credit to the US,” he feels.

Schofield’s connection to the Hmong did not cease when he left Laos in 1975 at war’s end.

“I have many Hmong friends and often attend their ceremonies, new year celebrations, weddings and funerals,” he said.

His deep connection to Hmong people even led in 2006 to the erecting of a memorial in the sleepy town of Sheboygan, Wisconsin — a town which boasts 6,000 Hmong inhabitants — [The Lao, Hmong American Veterans Memorial](#).

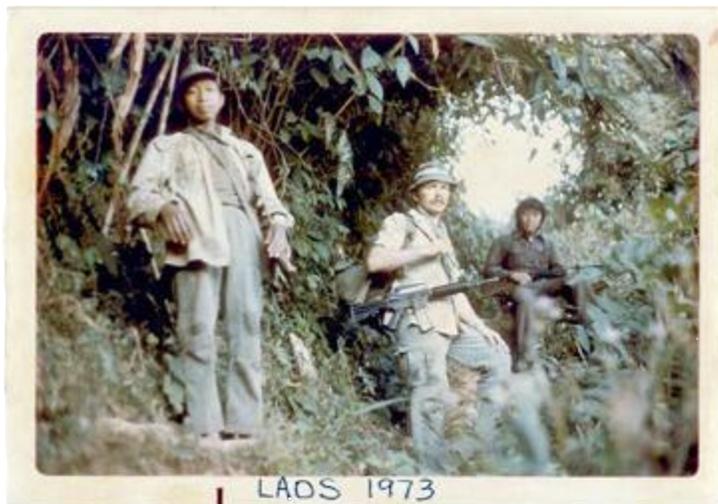
“I first broached the subject to a group of Hmong veterans a few years before the Memorial was completed. I suggested that it be similar to the Vietnam Memorial because there were no official records of those KIA in Laos,” Schofield remembered.

He felt they should start gathering the names of those lost before all their relatives were gone.

“I made a video to educate the US population about the sacrifices of the Hmong, raised money, got support from US veterans’ groups, assembled the names of the US casualties in Laos, and even worked on the construction of the Memorial.” Schofield said.

Steve Schofield memorialized the Hmong and his time in Laos in his book [Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, CIA, and the Hmong](#).

“I wrote the book to let my friends and relatives know about my role in Laos, tell the story of the Hmong in America, and, at the urging of SF friends who said we needed to record our history,” he says.



Steve Schofield with military guide (left) and Ly Chay, Chief Medic (right). (Photo by Father Lucien Bouchard. Courtesy Steve Schofield)



Steve Schofield (left front) next to General Vang Pao at nurse’s wedding in Bon Xon. (Photo courtesy Steve Schofield)



Steve Schofield with General Vang Pao in 2000. (Photo courtesy Steve Schofield)

In the book he minces no words as he reflects back on 1975, when Laos fell to the Pathet Lao.

“To this day I am ashamed of what the US government did to the hill tribes of Laos. They were abandoned to the genocide of the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army, I am especially ashamed of the abandonment of the Hmong, who fought on the side of the US and paid a very high price for their loyalty,” he wrote. ❖

HANOI – 1992

(NOT A “PEACEFUL EASY FEELIN”)



Transportation by motorcycles, bikes, and cyclos, Hanoi 1992 (Photo by Marc Yablonka)

By Marc Yablonka

I can still feel every pothole jerking my aching back in the rocky road that led from the Gia Lam Airport, where I was picked up by a group of professors, and taken to my hotel room on the outskirts of Hanoi in 1992. And how can I forget a hotel with the name “Army Guest House”? One of two hotels where visiting journalists, academics, NGOs, and the like were housed in Hanoi in those days.

Once they had deposited me in my room on the “3th” floor (I knew it was the “3th” because that’s what the sign right outside my door told me it was!), I set about exploring Hanoi, once the seat of a government against whom all my Vietnam veteran friends back home in California had fought. To borrow very loosely from the lyrics of one of my favorite Eagles’ songs, it was not a very “Peaceful Easy Feelin” to be in North Vietnam even though the war had been over for 17 years.

The Hanoi whose streets I walked was not the Hanoi that I’m told exists today. To say it was impoverished would be an understatement. Nothing like the still thriving city of Saigon (referred to as Ho Chi Minh City then as now except for by Saigonese) I had visited and reported from only two years before.

English professors I would meet the next day at the Hanoi University for Teachers of Foreign Languages, where I’d come to lecture on American English through a program at the University of Wisconsin, confided in me when in private that their salaries amounted to the equivalent of a meager US\$12 a month.

When I arrived at the university the next morning, for the first day of what would be a three week stay still vivid in my memory, I was shown the library. A library with books that appeared undusted since NVA tanks crashed through the gates of the Presidential Palace in downtown Saigon on April 30th, 1975. A day revered by northerners and despised by South Vietnamese Việt Kiều (Overseas Vietnamese).

When asked if there was a book I’d like to see, to be polite, I asked for a book about General Vo Nguyen Giap, mastermind of the battles at Dien Bien Phu against the French and the 1968 Tet Offensive, against us. A dusty copy of his biography was produced, but my two years



Army Guest House, Hanoi, 1992
(Photo by Marc Yablonka)



Downtown Hanoi 1992 (Photo by Marc Yablonka)



A family on a motorcycle, Hanoi (Photo by Marc Yablonka)



Kids on a school bus, Hanoi, 1992 (Photo by Marc Yablonka)

of Vietnamese language studies at UCLA were too rudimentary for me to even attempt to read it. I thanked the professor who handed it to me, apologized for my inability, and handed it back to him.

From there, I was taken on a tour of the rest of the university. A university that reminded me of photos I'd seen of bombed out Berlin after World War II. There was no glass in the windows — probably by design, either because of Vietnam's heat, or the previous threat of American bombs — and the paint was crawling up the walls. This was to be the place of my voluntary employ for the next three weeks.

My "lectures" if you could call them that, were punctuated by meetings with my fellow English professors. One meeting in particular is indelible in my mind some 31 years later.

Tea began the meeting, as is the case in all Asian countries. The topic of the meeting, for which I was put on the spot, was how to influence Vietnamese students' writing so that, instead of writing around the point, they learn to write directly to the point, like the professors had heard of American college students. To this day, I cannot remember if I was of any help to them at that meeting.

Another difference I noticed immediately between American college students and their Vietnamese counterparts was the diminutive size of the Vietnamese female students. I wasn't "checking them out," but how could I not notice the physiques of 20-year-old students whose bodies resembled that of 12-year-old American girls?

There were other things I will never forget about that meeting.

First and foremost was its Overlord. A big, fat, insulting Russian bear of a woman, who eyed me with the most suspicious eyes my own eyes had ever met the gaze of. Insulting, not to me, but to the very Vietnamese that her country had sent her to spy on. When breaktime occurred and my new professor friends were speaking in their native tongue, all she could say was, "Oh you Vietnamese with your six-tones! You make me sick!" And all that my new colleagues could do was lower their eyes in silence. God damn that bitch! She made me so mad. I would have loved to put her in her place.

Of course, that would have guaranteed me a one-way ticket out of Vietnam. Much like had happened to another American professor the year before I'd arrived just because she used the *Bangkok Post* in one of her English lessons right in front of her minder.

The Russian bear, done with her insults, the English department meeting resumed. No sooner had it restarted, than the beautiful professor to my left, adorned in her typical Vietnamese áo dài, the alluring, traditional Vietnamese outfit worn by Vietnamese females young and old alike, wrote an English name on a piece of paper and slid it over to me.

She leaned close and whispered, "Do you know her?" "No," I responded equally in a whisper. "Should I?" "She was my friend during the war. She was going to be an actress." "What city is she from?" I asked. "I can look her up and contact her for you when I get home!" "I don't know," she said.

My heart felt so deeply for her when I saw a tear come to her eye and she withdrew from our closeness. What's more, I never saw her again the entire time I was at the university. Was she somehow punished by the Russian bear for her show of emotion and proximity to me? Fired from her job? Disappeared? I will never know. But I think of her often and wish her peace.

Night after night, I would return to my room at the Army Guest House. Mornings were always a pleasure since I was always awakened by a lovely hotel employee, always decked out in her white áo dài. Her name was Quy. She always awakened me in the fluent French she spoke with "Bonjour monsieur Marc!"

One evening, when I'd returned from a dinner with a group of Canadian NGO workers, I entered the lobby only to find Quy talking with her husband, a sociologist, I later learned, who'd come to pick her up from work on his Simson scooter.

The next morning, as I walked through the lobby enroute to the awaiting beat up Russian Volga auto driven by Mr. Anh, who would cart me off to the university, Quy stopped me and asked en Français, "Monsieur Marc, Trouvez-vous que mon mari est beau? (Mr. Marc, Do you think that my husband is handsome?)."

I answered her in English, “Miss Quy, I have no idea. But I can tell you that his wife is absolutely beautiful!” She turned beet red, and in the days ahead, I had the sense that she felt something special for me.

Though I would be in Hanoi for several more days, her feeling toward me was proved when, as I was loading my gear into the back of the Russian Volga, which would carry me back to Gia Lam Airport for the last time, Quy ran out from the lobby just to give me a hug. It was a hug I still remember, and I certainly didn’t see her giving hugs to anyone else when they departed!

Quy was the complete opposite of her co-worker behind the counter, whose name I never even cared to inquire about. She was always decked out in a Vietnamese Army uniform and looked like she could bite the balls off a brass monkey.

She was also very good at listening to my phone calls. I knew she did because whenever she was on the desk and I made a call, or a call came in to my room, I could hear the noise from the hotel lobby.

That noise was often the result of a band of Australians who were in Hanoi tasked with repairing the antiquated telephone lines, which had been so badly obliterated by American bombs during the war.

Their straw boss, Ray, and the guys were a jovial bunch. They were also the most hard-drinking band of brothers I have ever met before or since! It was not uncommon for me to come home from the university to find them all in the lobby, plastered, 333 Beer cans piled high on the coffee table, cigarette butts likewise in the ashtray. Their brand of English was very hard for my American ears to discern whether they were drunk or sober.

“Eh Marc. Have a fair dinkum, mate?” “Huh?” I asked, the first time I heard the expression. “A fair dinkum, mate?” “What?” I said. “A good day, mate! Did ya have a good day?” “Ohhhhh! Yeah, I did. How about you?”

One night the Aussies invited me to come along with them to a dance hall called the Palais. French for palace. Being bored, I obliged. I laughed when I saw all the guys making sure they had their condoms along for the ride in their wallets.

Scoring in a foreign land, especially in the Third World, has never been my intention, so I went along condomless. I did slip a few VND

(Vietnamese Dong currency) into the hands of a dance hall gal for one dance, but that was the extent of my extracurricular activities with a member of the opposite sex that night.

But here is where the night got weird. First a precursor:

Two years before I first ventured to Vietnam in 1990, I attended a lecture on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia given by a Canadian travel agency at the Pacific Asian Museum in Pasadena. The keynote speaker was a Dr. Barbara Cohen, a psychiatrist from Burlingame, California who had sold her practice to become a fulltime tour guide for the travel agency. Dr. Cohen had been a US Army shrink at the 95th Evac Hospital in Da Nang during the war.

So, we’re all sitting around a table at the Palais, and after a couple of warm bottles of 333, the straw boss Ray says, “I’ll be right back. I’m gonna go pick up my girlfriend Susie.”

Ray returns with Susie, an attractive Caucasian brunette, a short while later. Susie sits down and starts talking about Vietnam Airlines. “Isn’t it great,” she exclaims. “Vietnam Airlines flies directly into Phu Bai now!” Then she tells those of us at the table that during the Vietnam War, she served as an Army psychiatrist at the 95th Evac Hospital in Da Nang.

It had been four years, but I recalled the afternoon at the Pacific Asian Museum. “Did you know Doctor Barbara Cohen?” I asked Susie. She deadpans me and says, “I am Doctor Barbara Cohen.” Total silence. I look at Ray. He’s white as a ghost. I made my exit before whatever could have hit the fan did! Luckily, I did not run into Ray again.

I came by the knowledge years later that Dr. Cohen wrote a travel book about Vietnam some years before called *The Vietnam Guidebook*. I’ve never read it, but it’s supposed to be very good.

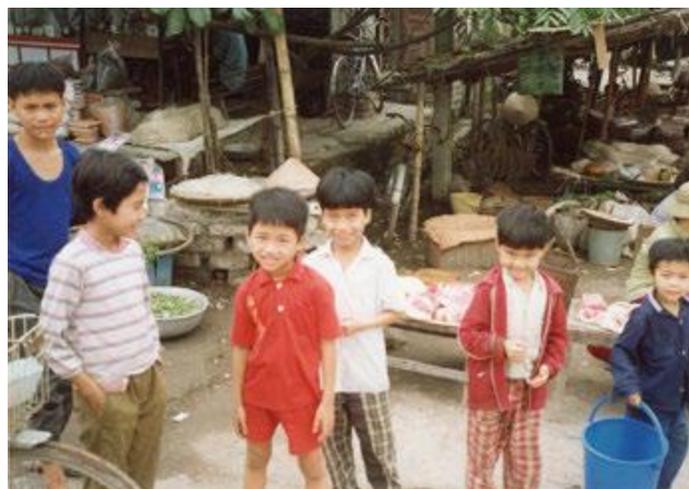
I met other notables in Hanoi. One of whom was Professor Nguyen Ngoc Hung, then the Vice-Director of the English department of the Hanoi Foreign Language College. Hung has since moved up the education ladder among academics in Hanoi.

Over the obligatory tea, Hung, who had been an NVA colonel attached to Quang Tri Province south of the DMZ, lamented the fact that his efforts to establish a Vietnam Memorial for his fellow soldiers who had perished during the war had fallen on deaf ears among the powerful in his hometown.

He also reminisced about North Vietnam’s victory.

“Even when Russia and China had sold us out,” he told me. “We heard voices. Voices from America.”

Hung then led me down the halls of another institution that functioned in an air of destruction. Again, no glass in the windows. The paint crawled up the walls. He took me to an English class, perhaps unannounced. I say so because the beautiful Vietnamese professor, wearing her áo dài, shook at the sight of me.



Kids smiling at this Tay (foreigner), Nam Dinh Province
(Photo by Marc Yablonka)



Professor Nguyen Ngoc Hung, Vice-Director, English Department, Hanoi Foreign Language College (Photo by Marc Yablonka)



Women praying in a Buddhist temple in Hanoi. (Photo by Marc Yablonka)



Limestone mountains of Nam Dinh Prefecture (Photo by Marc Yablonka)

Hung introduced us and left the room. The professor went about her lesson shaking nervously, writing on a blackboard unquestionably dating back to the French era. My heart sank when I saw that she was forced to erase her lessons with a crumpled piece of Kleenex. Not one eraser in sight.

Hung was invited to speak in the US some years after the war as a guest of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War and other activist groups who had passed the hat round to pay for his plane fare. It was at one meeting that he befriended Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic, author of the book *Born on the Fourth of July*, later an Oliver Stone film.

"We met at a vets' center near a beach in California. He came in. We were both tense at first. We began to measure each other up. I thought to myself, 'Here is a man that could be my friend.' Then we shook hands and became friends quickly." I included that part of our conversation for a profile I wrote about Hung for *Pacific Stars and Stripes* upon return home.

I was not the only journalist to profile Hung, however. He was mentioned in CBS-TV's *60 Minutes* news magazine anchor Morley Safer's book *Flashbacks*, about his return to Vietnam for the first time since covering the war for CBS News. Fellow CBS News anchor Charles Kuralt also interviewed Hung for his weekend show *Sunday Morning*.

A fellow resident of the Army Guest House when I was there was Program Director for NHK affiliate Radio Japan, Masako Yuasa. I was fortunate to be able to interview Masako for a piece that ran in the English language daily *Japan Times*.

The then 27-year-old bespectacled announcer was very much aware that relations between Japan and Vietnam depended on the American embargo still in place in 1992. An embargo that she very much opposed.

"I know everything has a reason," she told me over dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Hanoi. "But America has to make concessions. Please don't hurt the Vietnamese people."

There were others, like a well-known about town fellow (name long ago forgotten) from the American mission in Hanoi that would soon blossom into the first US Embassy in Vietnam since our total withdrawal from South Vietnam in April 1975.

Being the only other white face in a restaurant in Hanoi's old city one night, he asked if he could join me. I was glad for the company. He told me that he had learned to speak Vietnamese fluently at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey. I asked him if, being in his position, he'd been followed to the restaurant. "Probably," he said, not bothering to look around the room.

I remember, too, a trip the professors took me on to Nam Dinh Province, about 90 kms. outside of Hanoi. Sitting on the side of a mountain with my colleagues, I looked out at the limestone mountain across the valley and thought of Graham Greene's vivid description of those very same mountains in *The Quiet American*.

When safely home from Hanoi, I had a real "Been there and done that" moment as I sat in the theater watching the film *Indochine*, starring French actress Catherine Deneuve. Right before my eyes were what my professor friends described as the "Inland Ha Long Bay," underwater caves, and the Buddhist temple atop a mountain, which, thanks to them, I had seen in person a couple days before departing Gia Lam Airport.

As a parting gift, my professor friends gave me a wooden Buddha that still sits atop a curio cabinet in my home all these years later. I chuckle when I remember the Vietnamese customs agents examining it for hidden drugs, and I pray that all of them are healthy, safe, and happy as Tết, the Vietnamese New Year, arrives tomorrow. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR — Marc Yablonka is a military journalist and author. His reportage has appeared in the U.S. Military's *Stars and Stripes*, *Army Times*, *Air Force Times*, *American Veteran*, *Vietnam* magazine, *Airways*, *Military Heritage*, *Soldier of Fortune* and many other publications. He is the author of *Distant War: Recollections of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia*, *Tears Across the Mekong*, and *Vietnam Bao Chi: Warriors of Word and Film*.

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

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

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



THE HEROES JOURNEY

FIND YOUR VOICE ★ TELL YOUR STORY



Last Out — on the road again!

The Heroes Journey play *Last Out*, returned to the stage in late November 2022, after a two-year hiatus caused by COVID shutdowns. *Last Out* is an emotional breaching tool for discussions on the chaos of war for military members, the cost of deployment on families, and examination of the moral injuries and re-traumatization of veterans after the botched departure from Afghanistan last fall.

"The play's author and actors wrote on my heart and in my mind, as realistically as humanly possible, what those who serve experience every day, be they at home or deployed. It was easy to see the cast had lived all those moments and were reliving them again on that stage as I watched, as I cried for every man gone to war. It made me want to be able to just reach out and take each of them in my arms, to attempt to comfort each one. But even if I had been there with them, witnessing the pain and agony on their faces weakened my entire body and I do not believe I could have even stood."

With the generous support of the Gary Sinise Foundation, *Last Out* did seven preview shows in Tampa and Washington DC and then premiered at the iconic Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago in January. These nine shows reached over 1500 people. *Last Out* will visit six locations between May and October 2023. Therapeutic storytelling workshops offered at each tour stop brought 37 veterans, military family members, and Gold Star family members into the Heroes Journey family. We hope to see them at one of our two-day workshops soon.

The *Last Out* tour will take to the road again in May. We hope you can join us for a performance at one of these locations:

- ★ **May 5-6** / San Diego, CA / California Center for the Arts, Escondido
- ★ **June 9-10** / Phoenix, AZ / Herberger Theater
- ★ **July 28-29** / Sioux Falls, SD / The Alliance Theater
- ★ **August 25-26** / Franklin, TN / Franklin Theater
- ★ **September 22-23** / Milwaukee, WI / The Cabot Theater
- ★ **October 20-21** / Topeka, KS / Topeka Performing Arts Center

You can find out more about each tour stop and get ticket information at <https://lastoutplay.com>.

Warrior Storytelling Workshops



At a Heroes Journey Warrior Storytelling workshop, participants will find a safe place to share stories with new friends and to learn how to take their trauma and shape it into powerful healing stories. When warriors learn to tell their story, they become more resilient to their struggle. Part of resilience is letting go of the looping tape of past hardship and allowing fresh new perspective in.

Since July 2022, THJ has facilitated eight Warrior Storytelling workshops, reaching 75 veterans, military family members, and Gold Star widows, parents, and children. Many of our participants have truly experienced the gravest cost of war, and have demonstrated unparalleled bravery as they mastered the telling of their stories, many of which recounted the worst day of their lives in detail.

"There was such an understanding and compassion with you and your team...and it makes complete sense because I was telling you parts of my story you all already understood. I can think of only a handful of times I've ever talked about snippets of my story out loud. There is so much I understand, don't understand, and want to understand, and I was unsure how to put all of my thoughts and emotions to work through my own story. But I believe that is exactly the intent [of your workshops]."

Helping our warriors get these hard stories off their chests and into the world is needed now more than ever. Your willingness to share the journey with us means so much; we wouldn't be able to provide these powerful Heroes Journey programs without your generosity and support. We hope to see you soon at one of our *Last Out* tour stops!

For information on The Heroes Journey or to make a donation in support of our mission, please visit our website www.theheroesjourney.org

For additional information or to sponsor a workshop or tour stop, please contact: Kim SeEVERS | kim@theheroesjourney.org | (518) 429-8038



SFACON 2023 — Indianapolis

“HIGH SPEED LOW DRAG”

May 22–26, 2023



SFACON2023 promises to be fast-paced and jam-packed full of fun, learning, and excitement. While honoring our brothers killed in action over the decades.



Indianapolis motor speedway is rolling out the red carpet for this year’s SFAConvention for Green Berets and their families. Plenty of perks and incentives to be a part of this great event!

- Including FREE admission for your whole family
- Qualification & Armed Forces Weekend – May 20-21
- Carb Day May 26th
- Indy 500 May 28th!



SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION

TEAMHOUSE

SF4 LIFE

Attend the SF4 Life committee panels and discussions to learn more about:

- How to use the SFA Teamhouse
- How SF4 Life can address veteran transition issues
- How to build a network using the SFA Teamhouse

Tell your story!

8-10 interview stations for 20-30 minutes will be available to collect everyone’s tales. *Everyone* who comes should participate to the fullest extent possible.

SFACON 2023 Speakers — More to be announced



Scott Mann
Keynote Speaker



Jeff Tiegs



David Maxwell



**BG Lawrence Gilbert
(Gil) Ferguson**



**MOH MSG
Earl Plumlee**



Michael S. Repass,
CEO, MG (Ret., U.S. Army)



**LTG (RET)
David P. Fridovich**



Greg Stube



Mitch Utterback



Alex Quade
War Reporter



Dr. Erik Won
CEO Wave Neuroscience



Jeff Man



Visit sfacon.com
to view the event schedule
and for other information.

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TODAY!



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- Dallara IndyCar Factory
- Indianapolis Monuments & Memorials City Tour
- Indianapolis Motor Speedway Tour
- Indianapolis Museum of Art Galleries
- Motorcycle Ride

SFA Chapter 78 February 2023 Chapter Meeting

Photos by Debra Holm



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1 Guest speaker Steven Lieberman from Artemis Defense Institute. Steven, a 2nd Amendment attorney in California, gave an update on litigation going on in the State of California.

2 New Chapter member Mike Lanterman introduces himself.

3 New member Art Brown, father of an active duty member of SF, shows a photo of his grandson wearing a Green Beret.

4 Erik Berg and Mike Jameson

5 Left to right Richard Simonian, Ham Salley, Kenn Miller, and Jim Morris.

6 Ham Salley and guest, Robert Casillas

7 Bob Crebbs.

8 James Carter and Mark Miller

9 Tom Turney.

10 Kenn Miller

11 Steven Lieberman and Jack Blau

12 Ramon Rodriguez

13 Chapter Secretary Gary Macnamara and Don Gonnevill

14 Don Gonnevill and Art Dolick

15 Chapter President Greg Horton

16 Don Deatherage

17 Gary Macnamara

18 Former teammates Mike Lanterman and Jim Light

19 Don Gonnevill

20 Niamatullah Aslami, AKA Nimo

21 The meeting attendees listen intently to Steven Lieberman's presentation.

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