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ANGRY SKIPPER ASSOCIATION, INC. (ASA)®

# Walking Point

The newsletter for D Co. 2/8 Vietnam 1965—1972

## HEROES OF THE VIETNAM GENERATION

by James Webb,

The American Enterprise, September 2000

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The rapidly disappearing cohort of Americans that endured the Great Depression and then fought World War II is receiving quite a send-off from the leading lights of the so-called '60s generation. Tom Brokaw has published two oral histories of "The Greatest Generation" that feature ordinary people doing their duty and suggest that such conduct was historically unique.

Chris Matthews of "Hardball" is fond of writing columns praising the Navy service of his father while castigating his own baby boomer generation for its alleged softness and lack of struggle. William Bennett gave a startlingly condescending speech at the Naval Academy a few years ago comparing the heroism of the "D-Day Generation" to the drugs-and-sex nihilism of the "Woodstock Generation." And Steven Spielberg, in promoting his film Saving Private Ryan, was careful to justify his portrayals of soldiers in action based on the supposedly unique nature of World War II.

An irony is at work here. Lest we forget, the World War II generation now being lionized also brought us the Vietnam War, a conflict which today's most conspicuous voices by and large opposed, and in which few of them served. The "best and brightest" of the Vietnam age group once made headlines by castigating their parents for bringing about the war in which they would not fight, which has become the war they refuse to remember.

Pundits back then invented a term for this animus: the "generation gap." Long, plaintive articles and even books were written examining its manifestations. Campus leaders, who claimed precocious wisdom through the magical process of reading a few controversial books, urged fellow baby boomers not to trust anyone over 30. Their elders who had survived the Depression and fought the largest war in history were looked down upon as shallow, materialistic, and out of touch.

Those of us who grew up on the other side of the picket line from that era's counter-culture can't help but feel a little leery of this sudden gush of appreciation for our elders from the leading lights of the old counter-culture. Then and now, the national conversation has proceeded from the dubious assumption that those who came of age during Vietnam are a unified generation in the same sense as their parents were, and thus are capable of being spoken for through these fickle elites.

In truth, the "Vietnam generation" is a misnomer. Those who came of age during that war are permanently divided by different reactions to a whole range of counter-cultural agendas, and nothing divides them more deeply than the personal ramifications of the war itself. The sizable portion of the Vietnam age group who declined to support the counter-cultural agenda, and especially the men and women who opted to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, are quite different from their peers who for decades have claimed to speak for them.

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### Angry Skipper Association, Inc.® Board of Governors

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## HEROES OF THE VIETNAM GENERATION *continued from page 1*

In fact, they are much like the World War II generation itself. For them, Woodstock was a side show, college protestors were spoiled brats who would have benefited from having to work a few jobs in order to pay their tuition, and Vietnam represented not an intellectual exercise in draft avoidance or protest marches but a battlefield that was just as brutal as those their fathers faced in World War II and Korea.

Few who served during Vietnam ever complained of a generation gap. The men who fought World War II were their heroes and role models. They honored their fathers' service by emulating it, and largely agreed with their fathers' wisdom in attempting to stop Communism's reach in Southeast Asia. The most accurate poll of their attitudes (Harris, 1980) showed that 91 percent were glad they'd served their country, 74 percent enjoyed their time in the service, and 89 percent agreed with the statement that "our troops were asked to fight in a war which our political leaders in Washington would not let them win." And most importantly, the castigation they received upon returning home was not from the World War II generation, but from the very elites in their age group who supposedly spoke for them.

Nine million men served in the military during the Vietnam war, three million of whom went to the Vietnam theater. Contrary to popular mythology, two-thirds of these were volunteers, and 73 percent of those who died were volunteers. While some attention has been paid recently to the plight of our prisoners of war, most of whom were pilots, there has been little recognition of how brutal the war was for those who fought it on the ground. Dropped onto the enemy's terrain 12,000 miles away from home, America's citizen-soldiers performed with a tenacity and quality that may never be truly understood. Those who believe the war was fought incompetently on a tactical level should consider Hanoi's recent admission that 1.4 million of its soldiers died on the battlefield, compared to 58,000 total U.S. dead. Those who believe that it was a "dirty little war" where the bombs did all the work might contemplate that it was the most costly war the U.S. Marine Corps has ever fought—five times as many dead as World War I, three times as many dead as in Korea, and more total killed and wounded than in all of World War II.

Significantly, these sacrifices were being made at a time the United States was deeply divided over our effort in Vietnam. The baby-boom generation had cracked apart along class lines as America's young men were making difficult, life-or-death choices about serving. The better academic institutions became focal points for vitriolic protest against the war, with few of their graduates going into the military. Harvard College, which had lost 691 alumni in World War II, lost a total of 12 men in Vietnam from the classes of 1962 through 1972 combined. Those classes at Princeton lost six, at MIT two. The media turned ever-more hostile. And frequently the reward for a young man's having gone through the trauma of combat was to be greeted by his peers with studied indifference or outright hostility.

What is a hero? My heroes are the young men who faced the issues of war and possible death, and then weighed those concerns against obligations to their country. Citizen-soldiers who interrupted their personal and professional lives at their most formative stage, in the timeless phrase of the Confederate Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, "not for fame or reward, not for place or for rank, but in simple obedience to duty, as they understood it." Who suffered loneliness, disease, and wounds with an often contagious élan. And who deserve a far better place in history than that now offered them by the so-called spokesmen of our so-called generation.

Mr. Brokaw, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Spielberg, meet my Marines. *Continued on next page.*

### **New Members since the Jan, 2012 Newsletter:**

Louw-Shiang Liu, Recon/Weapons 65-66

Mike Mileski, 67

Randyl Kline, Skull, 72

Brian Finn, MAJ (Ret), XO 67

### **Deceased Member/s:** (Date of Death)

Larry Cate, Wild Cat, 70-71

Gerald McKinley, Range, 70-71

Art Soper, Range 68 (8Apr12)

Marvin Miller, Cat 70-71 (4Dec05)

### **Membership count:**

**Active Members: 666**

**Members Online: 262**



## HEROES OF THE VIETNAM GENERATION *continued from page 2*

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1969 was an odd year to be in Vietnam. Second only to 1968 in terms of American casualties, it was the year made famous by Hamburger Hill, as well as the gut-wrenching Life cover story showing the pictures of 242 Americans who had been killed in one average week of fighting. Back home, it was the year of Woodstock, and of numerous anti-war rallies that culminated in the Moratorium march on Washington. The My Lai massacre hit the papers and was seized upon by the anti-war movement as the emblematic moment of the war. Lyndon Johnson left Washington in utter humiliation. Richard Nixon entered the scene, destined for an even worse fate.

In the An Hoa Basin southwest of DaNang, the Fifth Marine Regiment was in its third year of continuous combat operations. Combat is an unpredictable and inexact environment, but we were well-led. As a rifle platoon and company commander, I served under a succession of three regimental commanders who had cut their teeth in World War II, and four different battalion commanders, three of whom had seen combat in Korea. The company commanders were typically captains on their second combat tour in Vietnam, or young first lieutenants like myself who were given companies after many months of "bush time" as platoon commanders in the Basin's tough and unforgiving environs.

The Basin was one of the most heavily contested areas in Vietnam, its torn, cratered earth offering every sort of wartime possibility. In the mountains just to the west, not far from the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the North Vietnamese Army operated an infantry division from an area called Base Area 112. In the valleys of the Basin, main-force Viet Cong battalions whose ranks were 80 percent North Vietnamese Army regulars moved against the Americans every day. Local Viet Cong units sniped and harassed. Ridge lines and paddy dikes were laced with sophisticated booby traps of every size, from a hand grenade to a 250-pound bomb. The villages sat in the rice paddies and tree lines like individual fortresses, criss-crossed with trenches and spider holes, their homes sporting bunkers capable of surviving direct hits from large-caliber artillery shells. The Viet Cong infrastructure was intricate and permeating. Except for the old and the very young, villagers who did not side with the Communists had either been killed or driven out to the government-controlled enclaves near DaNang.

In the rifle companies we spent the endless months patrolling ridge lines and villages and mountains, far away from any notion of tents, barbed wire, hot food, or electricity. Luxuries were limited to what would fit inside one's pack, which after a few "humps" usually boiled down to letter-writing material, towel, soap, toothbrush, poncho liner, and a small transistor radio.

We moved through the boiling heat with 60 pounds of weapons and gear, causing a typical Marine to drop 20 percent of his body weight while in the bush. When we stopped we dug chest-deep fighting holes and slit trenches for toilets. We slept on the ground under makeshift poncho hootches, and when it rained we usually took our hootches down because wet ponchos shined under illumination flares, making great targets. Sleep itself was fitful, never more than an hour or two at a stretch for months at a time as we mixed daytime patrolling with night-time ambushes, listening posts, foxhole duty, and radio watches. Ringworm, hookworm, malaria, and dysentery were common, as was trench foot when the monsoons came. Respite was rotating back to the mud-filled regimental combat base at An Hoa for four or five days, where rocket and mortar attacks were frequent and our troops manned defensive bunkers at night.

Which makes it kind of hard to get excited about tales of Woodstock, or camping at the Vineyard during summer break.

We had been told while in training that Marine officers in the rifle companies had an 85 percent probability of being killed or wounded, and the experience of "Dying Delta," as our company was known, bore that out. Of the officers in the bush when I arrived, our company commander was wounded, the weapons platoon commander was wounded, the first platoon commander was killed, the second platoon commander was wounded twice, and I, commanding the third platoon, was wounded twice. The enlisted troops in the rifle platoons fared no better. Two of my original three squad leaders were killed, the third shot in the stomach. My platoon sergeant was severely wounded, as was my right guide. By the time I left my platoon I had gone through six radio operators, five of them casualties.

These figures were hardly unique; in fact, they were typical. Many other units—for instance, those who fought the hill battles around Khe Sanh, or were with the famed Walking Dead of the Ninth Marine Regiment, or were in the battle for Hue City or at Dai Do—had it far worse. *Continued on next page.*

When I remember those days and the very young men who spent them with me, I am continually amazed, for these were mostly recent civilians barely out of high school, called up from the cities and the farms to do their year in Hell and then return. Visions haunt me every day, not of the nightmares of war but of the steady consistency with which my Marines faced their responsibilities, and of how uncomplaining most of them were in the face of constant danger. The salty, battle-hardened 20-year-olds teaching green 19-year-olds the intricate lessons of that hostile battlefield. The unerring skill of the young squad leaders as we moved through unfamiliar villages and weed-choked trails in the black of night. The quick certainty with which they moved when coming under enemy fire. Their sudden tenderness when a fellow Marine was wounded and needed help. Their willingness to risk their lives to save other Marines in peril. To this day it stuns me that their own countrymen have so completely missed the story of their service, lost in the bitter confusion of the war itself.

Like every military unit throughout history we had occasional laggards, cowards, and complainers. But in the aggregate these Marines were the finest people I have ever been around. It has been my privilege to keep up with many of them over the years since we all came home. One finds in them very little bitterness about the war in which they fought. The most common regret, almost to a man, is that they were not able to do more—for each other and for the people they came to help.

It would be redundant to say that I would trust my life to these men. Because I already have, in more ways than I can ever recount. I am alive today because of their quiet, unaffected heroism. Such valor epitomizes the conduct of Americans at war from the first days of our existence. That the boomer elites can canonize this sort of conduct in our fathers' generation while ignoring it in our own is more than simple oversight. It is a conscious, continuing travesty.

**Former Secretary of the Navy James Webb was awarded the Navy Cross, Silver Star, and Bronze Star medals for heroism as a Marine in Vietnam. His novels include The Emperor's General and Fields of Fire.**



### **1st Cavalry Division patches for our hats**

It was difficult to find subdued OD 1st Cavalry patches for our jungle hats this year. We reached out to our OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) friends to ask where do they get their patches. This is what LTC Robert Rodriguez, Commander of the 2/8th Cavalry wrote:



*“Gentlemen, It is our honor. We are getting them sent to you within a week. You warriors deserve this. We are proud of you and humbled to be associated with your ranks. Honor and Courage!!”* Then, LTC Rodriguez wrote: *“Sir: Patches on their way. We have gathered over 130 from Soldiers across the battalion. Some on their first deployment, some on their fourth and fifth to include some of the ugly days during the surge in Iraq. All are happy to donate to this cause. Please let me know when they get there. Stallion 6”* Needless to say, our hats were special this year!! Also, members took home a patch from the 2-8th CAV now serving. Honor and Courage!

## Angry Skipper Association, Inc.® Treasurers Report

Angry Skipper Association, Inc.®  
 Profit & Loss (unaudited)  
 January 1 through July 10, 2012

Angry Skipper Association, Inc.®  
 Balance Sheet (unaudited)  
 July 10, 2011

### Ordinary Income & Expense

Income	
Banquet/s	\$ 5,895.00
Donations	3,195.00
Membership Dues	1,600.00
Registration Fees	2,480.00
Tours	4,274.00
Shirts, Hats, Patches	<u>3,305.00</u>
Total Income	\$ 20,749.00

### Expenses

Banquet—Saturday Event	6,110.31
Door Prize & Misc.	150.00
ASA Website	00.00
Corporate	1.61
Flowers/Funeral	340.46
Insurance	344.00
Member Assistance	00.00
Merchant Account	967.04
Photographer	100.00
Postage & Delivery	374.39
Printing & Reproduction	450.00
Professional Services—Reunion	3,142.00
Tours (Transportation)	2,227.25
Shirts, Hats & Patches	<u>2,985.16</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 17,192.22

Net Income (Loss) **\$ 3,556.78**

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets:

Checking	\$ 3,899.92
Deposits	400.00
Accounts Receivable	<u>00.00</u>

**TOTAL ASSETS \$ 4,299.92**

### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

#### Liabilities

#### Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	<u>00.00</u>
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**TOTAL LIABILITIES \$ 00.00**

#### Equity

Opening Bal Equity	3,316.97
Retained Earnings	( 2,573.83)
Net Income	<u>3,556.78</u>

Total Equity \$ 4,299.92

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY \$ 4,299.92**

### Minutes of the Business Meeting held 23Jun12 Denver Marriott Tech Center, Denver, Colorado

- Members approved minutes from last year;
- Members approved the Treasurer's report;
- Discussion—Members Roster is available to members who request it; Doug Hilts had the Honor Roll re-made and updated;
- Membership voted to have caps for next year with the Rocking Horse; White, Tan or Black, in order of preference;
- Board of Directors re-elected for another 5 years;
- Members voted for Myrtle Beach, SC for 2014—May 14th thru 18th;
- Tom Vollmar gave an overview of our San Diego reunion for 2013;
- Membership voted to change the time for our Business Meeting from 8am to 3pm on Saturday.
- Members vote to adjourn the Business meeting.

### From the President...

Another very successful ASA reunion is in the books! We again want to thank John and Pat Bourdelais for a great job done hosting our gathering. Just to high lite a few things from this year; The number of first timers was amazing! Let's try and get at least that many more next year! The camaraderie in the hospitality room was tremendous. Johnny Varnes' presence was felt with a photo displayed. There were pictures and videos shared and enjoyed by many. The women met for the first time in a very informal gathering...it was a last minute request to help those who are in the midst of the process of filing VA claims. It was decided that next year they will have a planned meeting. The bus tours were great. Fort Carson didn't look like that 40 years ago! The trip to the Coors Brewery was popular, with 87 people taking that tour.

Cav patches were available from current soldiers in Iraq. Let's remember those soldiers who signed them and keep them in our prayers, as well as Frank Guidara and Alvin Seals, who for health reasons were unable to attend.

It was our pleasure to share video of our recent trip to Viet Nam....for those of you who served in 70-71, My family and I went back to the site of the April 20th firefight. Flowers were laid and a prayer service was held by my family and me. I can finally say I can feel some peace.

I have heard it said that a general observation was that there seemed to be less talk of the war, and more of the getting help and availability of VA benefits. This is a great accomplishment for us, this is what we are all about....Veterans helping veterans!! Consider getting a copy of the roster from Robin Woo, look up your comrades and invite them to join us.

We are already looking forward to gathering next year in San Diego, Jan and Tom Vollmar will be our hosts. Please mark your calendar and join us there.

Please also check out the honor role, it was found to have an error. We want it to be accurate and to honor all of our fallen brothers. If you know of corrections to be made please contact Me at [hiltsdm@yahoo.com](mailto:hiltsdm@yahoo.com) as soon as possible so that correction an additions can be made.

Your brother in arms,  
Doug Hilts

The Denver reunion was a success! Vets helping vets. Instant brotherhood when meeting each other for the first time in over 40 years. Nice! John Bourdelais and his wife, Pat, did an outstanding job hosting us. Thank you Paul Cowan for introducing our former Battalion Commander, COL Tom Blagg. Thank you COL Blagg for speaking to us at our banquet. Thanks to all the women who watched over Stacey and made sure she had a bathroom and meal break. Everyone pitching in and helped each other. Thanks to [Jim Wagner](#) and Greg Amaral for administering our Hospitality suite during our entire visit to Denver. Thanks for the impressive amount of cash that flowed into the "tip jar" on the Hospitality suite bar. Our liquor and beer stash remained very well stocked, ending with a small surplus. I witnessed a higher energy emanating out of our membership

to use the roster and contact others they served with so as to attend the next reunion together. Our mission! I've witnessed lots of healing at this reunion. I was impressed by how many 1st time attendee's we had this year. Very nice. I'm already receiving commitments from members who missed Denver and a promise to meet us in San Diego next year. Thank you all for making the trip. Now, you have a year to plan for San Diego; June 19-23rd, 2013! **By Robin Woo, Secretary**



Delta Company, 2nd BN, 8th Cavalry (Airborne) 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile): 1965-1972

Reunion Group Photo –Denver, Colorado, 2012



These group photographs are posted at  
[http://angryskipperassociation.org/Reunion\\_Denver\\_2012/angry\\_skipper\\_association\\_denver.htm](http://angryskipperassociation.org/Reunion_Denver_2012/angry_skipper_association_denver.htm) for download.

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*"Remember the bad times once,  
Remember the good times forever"*

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[www.angryskipperassociation.org](http://www.angryskipperassociation.org)

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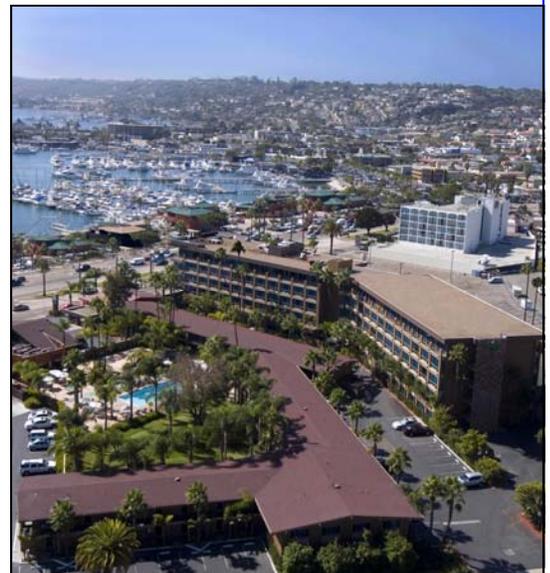
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**Holiday Inn San Diego Bayside**  
**4875 North Harbor Drive, San Diego, CA 92106**  
**June 19 to June 23, 2013**

Just minutes from area attractions and the San Diego Airport, our hotel on San Diego Bay is perfect for business or leisure travelers. Always accommodating, the **Holiday Inn® San Diego Bayside** hotel promises a quality experience.

With Sea World, the Zoo, Seaport Village and Old Town, the Gas lamp Quarter and downtown less than 10 minutes away, our centrally located hotel allows San Diego guests the perfect opportunity to stay and play. San Diego hotel guests are also close to popular sporting events like Red Bull Air Races and Rock & Roll Marathon, as well as the home of the Chargers and Padres.

Guests of this hotel in San Diego are near Liberty Station, San Diego Convention Center and businesses including Northrop Grumman, SPAWAR and Lockheed Martin. We offer event space for 10-200, a Business Center and a complimentary airport/train station shuttle. Whether you're here on vacation, business or planning a San Diego Cruise, our hotel's accommodations are sure to please. Guests can enjoy amenities that include a Fitness Center, pool, whirlpool, a 9-hole putting course and more.



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