

# Swift Current

The official quarterly publication of the Swift Boat Sailors Association, Inc. Questions or suggestions: [editor@swiftboats.org](mailto:editor@swiftboats.org)

**Second  
Quarter 2005**

## President's Corner-

from Tom Forrest, President of SBSA

Greetings, shipmates.

*United States Navy / U.S. Coast Guard Memorial & Small Boat Display.*

After 6 years of fund raising, leadership changes, and very dedicated work by the official all volunteer work party (all boat crew and combat veterans) our legacy to our shipmates and those young men who follow in our footsteps is officially open. Every Veteran of Task Forces 115, 116 and 117 can stand proud. I have no doubt that our crews lost in our battle with the dragon were there with us in spirit. I heard from a vet who is from the area that a lone seagull flew about the site until dedication was completed.

The program opened with 6 Bells.

United States Navy Corpsmen from Balboa Naval Hospital paraded the Colors.

The National Anthem was sung by Victoria Robertson, Miss San Diego.

Honored Guest included: Lt. Thomas R. Norris, MOH; Michael Edwin Thornton, MOH; Major Drew Dix, MOH; Sybil Stockdale wife of Vice Admiral Stockdale (MOH); GMG3 and Mrs. David R. Larsen, NC; Mr. & Mrs. Kiet Nguyen, VNN (United States Navy Cross).

This Memorial is dedicated to the 2,564 Navy and Coast Guard men who died in support of Naval Operations in the Vietnam War from 1960 to 1975.

The members of the Swift Boat Sailors Association extend our sincere thanks to the Working Party for their dedication and focus over the past 6 years. We also recognize all the wives who gave up their time & family gatherings to see this project come to fruition.

*St. Louis, 2005 Swift Boat Sailors Reunion*

For the members who were unable to attend, the reunion was a great success! St. Louis is a great town to visit, there was lots to do, and our premier Mid-western reunion was a truly memorable occasion.

The Guest Speaker at our Saturday banquet was Dr. James Reckner PHD, Texas Tech University, The Vietnam Archives. He spoke of the importance of getting as much material into the official history as possible so we - the guys who were there - have a hand in writing the history of the period. (Cont'd. page 2)

## New Directors & Officers-

At the business meeting in St. Louis new directors were elected by the membership. In accordance with the association's By-Laws, the new directors appointed officers to carry out the day-to-day operations of the association. Directors' terms are four years and are typically staggered to avoid having all directors up for election at the same time. Officers serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors for indefinite terms.

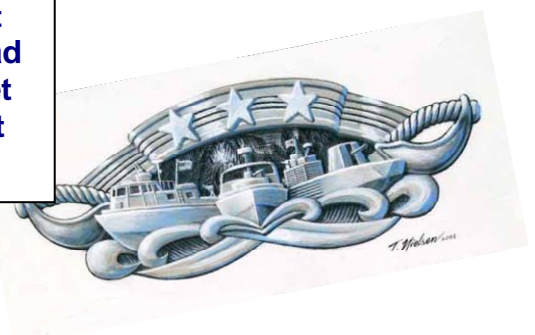
<u>Director/Officer</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Term</u>
Bob Ankenbauer	Director/Asst. VP	2005 - 2009
Gary Blinn*	Director/Asst. VP	2005 - 2009
Tuck Brant	Director/Chairman	2003 - 2007
Jim Deal	Director/Asst. VP & Webmaster	2005 - 2009
Gene Hart	Secretary/Treasurer	<i>Indefinite</i>
Raul Herrera	Director/VP	2005 - 2009
Tom Forrest	Director/President	2003 - 2007
Joe Ponder	Director/Asst. VP	2003 - 2007
Jim Schneider	Director/Asst. VP	2005 - 2009
Larry Wasikowski	Director/Asst. VP	2003 - 2007

**\*Note:** Shortly after the reunion, Gary Blinn had to resign his director position due to personal considerations.

## SBSA Reunion 2007-

The association's 2007 reunion will be held in **SAN DIEGO!** Details will be forthcoming as available. If you live in the San Diego area and want to have a hand in setting up the reunion, contact any Director/Officer by email to [ghart@unf.edu](mailto:ghart@unf.edu) and your message will be forwarded to the correct person for action.

**Know what  
this is? Read  
inside to get  
the straight  
skinny...**



## **Brown Water/Vietnam Veterans Honored** **Friday, June 03, 2005**

By JO3 Cynthia Smith - Fleet Public Affairs Center, Pacific

SAN DIEGO - A monument dedicated to Navy and Coast Guard veterans who fought and died supporting brown water and other naval operations in Vietnam was unveiled, May 21, at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado.

More than 700 people attended the unveiling of the 66 feet-long and 8 feet-tall monument, which displayed 26 panels listing the names, ranks, hometowns, units and dates of death of all the veterans who took part in brown water operations in Vietnam from 1960 to 1975. Also recognized and honored were the 38,218 Army; 2,586 Air Force; and the 14,840 Marines who died in the service of their country in the Vietnam War.

"We all served with honor," said Kenneth McGhee, a retired Navy captain who is president of the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument Fund. "This monument is a way to honor the past and will also serve as a link for those who will visit the site in the future." The memorial includes three small boats from the brown water Navy era: the Patrol Boat River; Patrol Craft Fast and Command Communications Boat, which all point towards the curved concrete wall memorial.



A U.S. Navy color guard presents arms in preparation for a 21-gun salute during the dedication of a Vietnam Memorial Monument on board Naval Amphibious Base Coronado in San Diego. The ceremony was held to honor Navy and Coast Guard personnel who lost their lives during the Vietnam War. *Official U.S. Navy photo by PH2 Prince Albert Hughes III*

Commander, Navy Region Southwest authorized the memorial in June 1999 and since then, veterans from three organizations, The Swift Boat Sailors Association; the Gamewardens of Vietnam; and the Mobile Riverine Force Association have worked to restore the boats. The Memorial Wall, as it exists today, was funded, excavated, formed and poured using private donations and the labor of the veterans.

Rear Adm. Joseph Maguire, commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command and guest speaker during the dedication, thanked the veterans for their service to their country. "Today is a small opportunity for me to pay back the veterans who risked their lives and served honorably in Vietnam," Maguire said.

For retired Electronics Technician 1st Class Tom Beck, who served in Vietnam with Boat Support Unit 1, the monument is a great testament to the sacrifices many great servicemen made during Vietnam.

"This will not only honor all those who died bravely in Vietnam, it will also show future generation the sacrifices made by those brave individuals."

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### **President's Corner - Cont'd.**

#### *Highlights of the SBSA business meeting:*

- Two New Directors were elected to the Board, Gary Blinn and Bob Ankenbauer.
- Swift Current Editor was appointed, David Wallace
- Goals for the next two years were presented by Tom Forrest and were approved:
- To acquire an M60 machine gun for PCF-104 (standard equipment).
- To install a Swift Boat Sailors Association plaque at the Navy Memorial, Washington.
- To establish the "Life Raft Fund" which will be funded by raffles and a percentage of ships store earnings.
- Update on the new Brown Water Navy Combatant Crew Insignia.

#### *Awards:*

Ronald "Porky" Reinhart received the "Trawler Killer Award". Porky is the only Swift Boat crew-member who was engaged in combat and killed two North Vietnamese Trawlers. He is still waiting for a Silver Star we were told would be awarded during our training in Coronado for a single trawler kill. Terry Boone was awarded the "Admiral Elmo Zumwalt Award" for his dedication to our lost crewmen in locating their families, speaking with them personally of their son's service

to their country and obtaining photos to be placed aboard PCF-104. We now have a photo of each of each shipmate "still on patrol" aboard PCF-104.

Jim Deal was awarded the "Ralph Singleton Patriot Award" for the many hours and expertise Jim has donated in managing the SBSA WEB site and the My Family Site.

#### *Raffle Drawings*

The Grand Prize, a Precision Built Model of a PCF, went to Herb Blume. Second prize, a original wooden PCF Wheel donated by Commodore William Holden, was won by Carl Hanker. The Miniature Dream Model, donated by James Steffes, was won by Gene Hart. \$4905.00 raised on these raffles will benefit the new Life Raft Fund.

Special appreciation goes to Joe Ponder for his leadership and determination in ensuring a successful reunion. While in severe pain from his war wounds, Joe spent countless hours with hotel staff, tour managers, and our contract reunion service to ensure there were no loose ends. Joe was hospitalized after the reunion to repair some damage to his leg. We wish him a speedy and full recovery!

Special recognition also goes to Ken and Anita Briggs assisted by Bud Kittle for their management of the Ships Store through the entire reunion. Steve Vogt, a new and local member, oversaw the replenishment of the Hospitality Suite.

***Dedication of the VUMMF - United States Navy / U.S. Coast Guard Memorial & Small Boat Display***



*These are the guys who worked in the rain, the sun, the cold and the heat to make it all happen - SALUTE!*



*Carl Harker and his wife, Delores , alongside the 104, standing between the two photo portfolios of John Branca, they had constructed as a tribute to John.*

- For more information about the VUMMF go to <http://vummf.org/>
- For hundreds of pictures go to <http://www.myfamily.com> - you'll need to sign on first. Contact Jim Deal [JamesD8860@AOL.COM](mailto:JamesD8860@AOL.COM) for help getting signed up.

*From the SBSA sponsored mail reflector-*

Mark Bell wrote:

I apologize for not hanging around after the dedication, but I had a heavy heart...and needed to walk away....

*[RESPONSE]* I had the same reaction. About 300 meters behind where the ceremonies took place is a grove of trees fronting San Diego bay. In the distance, you could see the ships down at 32nd street. There were a few people there, perhaps half a dozen. Among them were a family of three, a young man with his wife and 2 year old daughter. The man had a tiny dachshund on a leash. I remarked something to the effect of don't let him (the dog) tow you away. After a moment, he closed the small distance between us and asked. "Were you in Vietnam?" An affirmative response produced a surprising remark from him, to the effect of, "Thank you, sir. We (he meant today's military) owe you a large debt and we are grateful." I was thunderstruck. I don't think anyone ever thanked me. I asked if he were a Marine. "No," he said, "Army. Home on leave from Iraq." It emerged that he was stationed in Mozul. He thanked me again. And again said that their successes were made possible by the sacrifices we made. All I could do was wish him well and that we, the old sailors, were grateful for his sacrifices and sense of duty.

I had almost come to believe America no longer produced such men. It was a very powerful post script to the dedication.

Stew Harris  
CG-16



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

May 18, 2005

I send greetings to those gathered for the dedication of the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument in Coronado, California.

Throughout our Nation's history, loyal citizens have willingly assumed the duty of military life and built a great tradition of honor and patriotism. America's veterans exemplify the great decency and unselfish courage that make our country strong. As we work to advance the cause of freedom and defeat terrorism, these proud citizens continue to inspire new generations of Americans.

I salute your members and all those who provide support and services to improve the lives of our veterans. Your dedicated efforts help us show our gratitude to these American heroes and their families.

Laura and I send our best wishes on this special occasion. May God bless you, and may God bless America.

*Other people were paying attention as well!*

## VUMMF RECEIVES \$50,000 GRANT

During the dedication service of the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument that was held aboard the U.S. Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, California, on Saturday, May 21, 2005, the Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann Foundation, Inc., represented by it's Treasurer, Joe Ponder, presented a \$50,000. check to Ken McGhee, President, of the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument.

During Joe Ponder's presentation of the Hoffmann grant to the VUMMF, he said he considered it a great honor and privilege to be attending the memorial's dedication service and to be representing the Hoffmann Foundation. Also as part of Ponder's presentation he read from a letter addressed to Ken McGhee from Larry Thurlow, President of the Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann Foundation. The letter read: "Dear Mr. McGhee, the Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann Foundation is pleased to award a \$50,000 grant to the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument Fund. The Foundation is proud to help support this fine Memorial that honors not only the United States Naval personnel who gave their lives in the service of their country, but also those veterans still living.

The Foundation is also very pleased that this wonderful memorial will serve as an educational venue, demonstrating to all who come here what the United States Navy's role, in part, was in Vietnam.

The Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann Foundation wishes you success and smooth sailing in the years to come. Very sincerely yours, Larry Thurlow, President."

Ken McGhee accepted the Hoffmann Foundation's grant from Joe Ponder. He thanked the Hoffmann Foundation for their very generous gift and informed everyone in attendance at the dedication service, that the Hoffmann Foundation's grant would go a long way towards future maintenance and improvements to the VUMM.

*The Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann Foundation, chartered in the state of Virginia, was organized for and shall be operated exclusively for charitable purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The purposes for which the Corporation were formed are to assist American servicemen and servicewomen, both past and currently serving, and their families, with financial, medical and other special needs, to assist in the maintenance of naval memorials, and to engage in other charitable activities.*

## UDALL BILL PROVIDES FREE POSTAGE PRIVILEGES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

WASHINGTON- U.S. Representative Tom Udall, D-N.M., is supporting an effort that he says will boost the morale of men and women in uniform serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Letters and care packages from home go a long way towards lifting the spirits of the men and women serving overseas," Udall said. "Many military families tell me that it becoming too expensive for them to send regular care packages to their loved ones overseas. This legislation will remove a sometimes cost-prohibitive barrier and allow our soldiers to stay in touch with their loved ones easier."

The bill, HR 923, would provide free mailing privileges for personal correspondence and parcels sent by family members from within the United States to members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The letters must be from a family member, originate from an area served by a United States Post Office and be addressed to a soldier serving in either Iraq or Afghanistan, or to a soldier who has been injured while serving in these regions.

Under the legislation, any piece of mail sent to someone serving in Iraq or Afghanistan must be mailed using the most economical means available.

An appropriation will be provided to the Postal Service each year in an amount they determine will equal the expenses incurred by providing air transportation for mail sent to members of the Armed Forces of the United States free of postage.

A member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs Since 1999, Udall is assigned to the Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs.

### **Want To Get Better Known?**

If you would like your name listed in the SBSA member directory please mail the following statement to:

Gene Hart, Secretary/Treasurer SBSA  
3941 Laurelwood Drive  
Jacksonville, FL 32257-8926

I your name authorize the Swift Boat Sailors Association, Inc. to release my name and address to other Swifties to aid in communication between former shipmates, the formation of committees and to enhance the general camaraderie of the Association.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: This must be on paper and mailed or hand-delivered to Gene - **NO EMAIL ALLOWED!**

*You just knew this had to be coming sooner of later.... reportedly available online!*



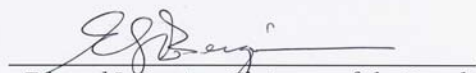
**PCF Sparklers!**

## **Swift Boat Sailors Association** ~ Salutes ~

**Ronald M. "Porky" Rinehart**  
*Two Trawler Killer*

*We Commend and Salute You for Being the ONLY Swift Boat Sailor to Have Been Involved in the Capture of Two Enemy Trawlers During the Vietnam War. On July 15, 1967, While Serving Aboard PCF-79, You Assisted in the Capture of Skunk Alpha at Cap Batangan, Quang Ngai Province. On March 1, 1968, as Mount 52 Gunner on PCF-20, You Trigger Fired an 81mm White Phosphorous Mortar Round into the Trawler's Pilot House, Forcing the Enemy Ship to Run Aground. Your Contribution to Operation Market Time is in Keeping With the Highest Traditions of the United States Navy.*

  
Thomas G. Forrest - President

  
Edward J. Bergin - Chairman of the Board

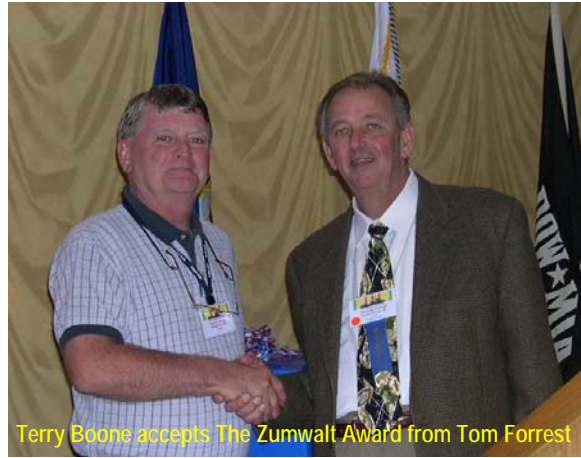
May 28, 2005

St. Louis, Missouri

# REUNION 2005 - St. Louis!



Jim Deal accepts The Singleton Award from Tom Forrest



Terry Boone accepts The Zumwalt Award from Tom Forrest



Yvette Rinehart and daughter Jenny accept the "Two Trawler Killer" award on behalf of Porky, who was unable to attend.



Neil Beck models the reunion "T"



The crowd gathers before Saturday evening's banquet



The HOSPITALITY SUITE!

*Military Unions To Remember*, our reunion planning service, reports that there were 57 first-time SBSA reunion attendees at the St. Louis reunion!

## The Life Raft Fund

*(Subject to Adjustment & Application of Common Sense!)*

**Purpose-** Early on, the association was unable to provide any assistance to seriously ill shipmates to attend our reunions. Today, due to the generosity of our membership and a fairly stable sales record at our Ship's Store, consideration is again being given to establishing some means to fund or partially fund this project.

**Funding-** The fund will receive profits from a percentage of ships store sales and an annual raffle.

**Candidates-** The board of directors will develop a screening process. The main concern is that there is no abuse of the fund. Seriously ill shipmates who are able to travel but require financial assistance to make the reunion will apply to the BOD. Documentation will be required. Room, waived registration fees, and meals would be among the items considered to be made available to the veteran. *All information regarding the member will be kept confidential.*

**NOTE:** The Life Raft Fund is a work in progress. Stay tuned for developments!

## **MINI-REUNIONS SCHEDULED - - -**

**Greensboro, NC** Your presence is respectfully requested at a mini-reunion in Greensboro, NC, at the home of Burke and Lynn Salsi on Saturday, September 3, 2005. All Swifties/vets, family, and friends are invited. We will begin on Saturday morning at approximately 10 a.m. and visit until .... Food and drinks will be provided and a small donation of \$10.00 is asked but not required unless the numbers get beyond reason. If there is interest, we will be glad to get together the night before at the home or at another place. Please contact Burke or Lynn at [bsalsi@triad.rr.com](mailto:bsalsi@triad.rr.com) or 336 547-9315. As an aside, Greensboro has an international airport and we'll be delighted to have you picked up at the airport. As this was held in 2004, you may ask anyone who attended that a great time was had by all.



**Gig Harbor, WA** Bill and Jan Rogers are planning their fourth annual Swift Boat reunion for Saturday, July 30th at their home in Gig Harbor, Washington. This event attracted over seventy people last year from all over the country. The picturesque town of Gig Harbor is located on Puget Sound just west of Tacoma, Washington and is a great place for a summer vacation. For more information contact Bill at [billrogers@harboret.com](mailto:billrogers@harboret.com) or call him at 253-858-3080.



**Get your MINI-REUNION advertised! Send a write-up and small picture to - [editor@swiftboats.org](mailto:editor@swiftboats.org)**

## **New Members**

Richard E. Crawford Columbia, TN	Charles C. White III Antioch, CA
Kenneth N. Sinz Hartville, OH	Steven T. Anderson Ypsilanti, MI
Dennis L. Goodman Mansfield, TX	Steven V. Cappiello Key Largo, FL
Virgil Erwin San Diego, CA	Warren R. Angus Patton, PA
M. Lee Miller Nokesville, VA	Jaime M. Garcia San Diego, CA
Thomas K. Brown Seattle, WA	Gary L. Carpenter 29 Palms, CA
Randall E. Middleton Normal, IL	Alan Cataneo Staten Island, NY
Edward J. & Mary Chimera Parkland, FL	

NOTE: these are new members from before the reunion!

## **Notices of Deaths of Shipmates**

*...received a letter today [March 3, 2005] from the wife of Peter D. Luhrs informing...of her husband's passing September 5, 2004.*

## Lost Members

We have lost touch with the following members. If you know where they are or how to contact them, please notify Gene Hart at [ghart@lynx.unf.edu](mailto:ghart@lynx.unf.edu)

Eric L. Sedlacek  
1349 N Palm Ave.  
Fresno, CA 93728

Danny D. Pearcy  
P O Box 128  
Bedford, IN 47421

Michael T. Alogna  
16 Francis Street #2  
Waltham, MA 02451

George C. Priebe, Jr.  
618 Smith Ave  
Lake Bluff, IL 60044

James R. Hoffman  
2829 Clairville Rd  
Oshkosh, WI 54904

Steve Yetter  
PO Box 67094  
Scotts Valley, CA 95067

John Paul Jones  
P O Box 254  
Silver City, NM 88062

Paul Alexander  
171 Downing St  
Bastrop, TX 78602

Thomas R. Scott  
5743 Vista Linda Ln  
Boca Raton, FL 33433

James C. Smith  
103 Fullard Dr  
Sneads Ferrey, NC 28460

Thomas L. Young  
4052 W. 6515 South  
West Jordan, UT 84084

## Reflections on the Memorial

by Bernard Wolff

The previous weeks have been eventful. The Swift Boat Sailors Association Reunion was successfully completed in St Louis. The dedication of our Memorial was held at the Coronado Amphibious Base to honor those of our small group who paid the ultimate sacrifice, and to unveil the carefully restored patrol craft upon which we served.

These two events come at an important time in our history, in the wake of an unfortunately divisive year in 2004. The Reunion and the opening of the Memorial remind us of the higher bonds that we share from our service together so long ago.

The Memorial brings up a question that has been on my mind since I arrived in Vietnam in 1967. I'm sure it has been on your mind as well:

What was it that we were fighting and willing to die for?

I recall this question being brought up during a lunch given by a professor at the school where I was pursuing an MBA after returning from Vietnam and Swift Duty. The kindly old professor had invited me, a middle aged Haitian who was employed by the Central Bank of Haiti, and a "fresh out of college" fellow student.

After first completing a polite discussion about banking in Haiti, the professor turned his attention to the young student as I waited silently for my turn. The young student quickly turned to Vietnam and the evil nature of our involvement. This was the fashionable behavior for students at the time. The professor expressed his distressed assent, but also his ignorance over what was going on. The Haitian, in his soft French accent, commented "Why are you there? What are you fighting for? My countrymen don't understand".

Eventually, all eyes turned to me. Everyone drew back when I quietly announced that I had recently served in Vietnam, and that I supported the War. As we all remember, it was hard to express what we had done, what it meant to us, what we had seen and not seen (in rebuttal to campus talk and negative TV news reporting), and why we were there. Instead, I tried to describe the nature of the people we fought, the people we protected, the triumphs and tragedies we all experienced, and what would surely follow if we suddenly left. I did not paint the picture as convincingly as I had hoped.

In the years since, I've found myself in similar situations, particularly during my international business travels. Folks in the Far East, Australia/New Zealand, and Latin America normally are supportive toward Americans and what we did in Vietnam. In other countries, people have been less supportive or hostile. I recall one bitter old man sitting across from me in the lobby of my hotel in Delhi ridiculing me over the stupidity of our country to spend our money and send our men half way around the world to fight for a "poor country that will never amount to anything".

It was different for each of us. Some volunteered for the challenge and adventure, others to promote a Navy career, others through a sense of duty to our Country.

For me, my original motivations incorporated all of those given above. I had volunteered for Swift duty to experience the challenge of a combat command, I was considering a Navy career, and I felt an obligation to follow in the footsteps of my ancestors who had fought for our country for the past 300 years.

As our time in country lengthened, however, the original motivations became blurred. The wisdom of Washington often was questionable: I often felt that those calling the shots in Washington in 1967 and 1968 placed a higher value on the enemy's life than they did on mine, thus strengthening the enemy's resolve. While I felt we were making progress in Vietnam, particularly in the popular support among average Vietnamese due to the exposure of the communists' true nature during the Tet Offensive of 1968, I was troubled by the quality of the Vietnamese officer corps and our government's policy of not doing anything to improve this in fear of being "offensive". I felt that national survival, freedom, security, and future hope were higher priorities than "democracy" during times of national emergency.

As these perceptions grew, I was affected by the unanticipated events we all encountered. To name a few:



Le Van Nam in An Thoi, the slightly rotund Vietnamese interpreter who would stand on the bow of the boat as we churned mud to get as close to the beach as possible, in hopes of attracting fire. His logic as explained to us was straightforward: "If VC no shoot, we no shoot back & kill. If we no kill VC, then VC win and send my sons to war in Cambodia."

Di, the North Vietnamese born Petty Officer who was in the Vietnamese Navy crew I trained in AnThoi in early 1968. Di had grown up in Hanoi, the son of a bureaucrat in the French

Colonial Government. After the communists took over, his father, mother, and eldest brother were executed. Di, who was sixteen years old at the time, gathered his younger brothers & sisters and fled to South Vietnam. He joined the Vietnamese Navy to fight the communists, and vowed to continue until they won or he was killed. Di was one of the finest fighting men I encountered in Vietnam. I imagine he has joined his father, mother, and elder brother by now.



The two boys we picked up one cold, stormy night as they frantically paddled their swamped sampan toward our PCF north of Song Ong Doc in Area 9D. They described how their mother and their elder brother were murdered by a VC "Recruiting Team" that had entered their village. They vowed to grow up & join the Army to fight the VC.

Ong Tu Hat, the memorable old chief of Hon Heo Island, just off the coast of Ha Tien on the Cambodian border, who would paddle out in his sampan filled with Bier LaRue, fruit, and other things we might enjoy and welcome us to his Island. He often brought his cute young daughter, or more likely his granddaughter, "Nan" to bow & smile at us. I'll never forget the dinner I had at his home one night as my crew wisely remained anchored offshore on PCF 52. (See picture on previous page)

The Vietnamese Navy interpreter, and his strikingly beautiful, vibrant young daughter, who rode with us from Da Nang up toward Hue in hopes of finding his Grandfather's remains in one of the mass graves left by the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive. We learned that they had been successful when, by coincidence, they rode with us back into DaNang. His daughter had changed during the short interval: the smiles & laughter were gone, her eyes remained cast downward, her view of her future life obviously a matter of concern, she had aged from the unspeakable sights she must have endured.

These events were not philosophical or abstract. Eventually, my mindset was clear: My mission was to protect the common, innocent Vietnamese who, unlike their leaders, did not have a ticket to Paris in their back pocket should their country fall into the hands of the enemy. A darker passion was to exact revenge upon the communists for what I had seen. It reached a point toward the end of my tour when I realized that "it was time to go home", because I feared that the objectivity of my judgment was being undermined, and a tragedy could result.

In recent years, I've recommended to Vietnam Vets that they ask middle aged Vietnamese to describe what happened to them when their country fell. The story is usually the same, hesitantly described. You realize that the common Vietnamese were ignored by the media and our government during the war and our disengagement. However, it makes clear that what we fought for, and many of us died or bear wounds for, was honorable and correct.

Recently, during an overseas business trip, I was once again asked in a mocking manner why the USA sends their youth and spends a fortune to fight in wars such as Vietnam and Iraq to save poor people who in their entire lives will not make as much as some of us do in a good month.

My proud response was, and is, "It's the reason why the United States of America is the greatest country in the world."



Left- Bernard in 1968 Right- Betty Ann, Bernard and "friends"

*Here's the latest on the efforts of veterans of Task Forces 115, 116, 117, and 194 (SEALORDS) to obtain authorization to wear the SWCC Pin...*

Editor's note- the below exchange is excerpted from a series of emails between the officers of all three Brown-Water veterans' groups, the Bureau of Naval Personnel, and CNO.

Mr Harris,  
This email answers your last questions addressed to Major General Nash. Answers to your questions are provided below. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.  
Respectfully,  
CAPT Walt Pullar  
Questions (in black) and answers (in blue):

1) In General Nash's letter he refers to a "Navy-approved commemorative insignia". Can you help explain the word "commemorative"?

*- The "commemorative" nature of the insignia discussed in General Nash's letter reflects the willingness of the Navy to approve the design of a device that honors the collective service, achievements and place in naval history that sailors who served on small boats in Task Forces 115, 116, 117 and 194 earned during the Vietnam conflict.*



*- This commemorative insignia will not be governed by Navy Uniform Regulations and will not be a warfare insignia (such as the Enlisted Surface Warfare Insignia) or a qualification insignia (such as the First Class Diver Insignia). Other than acknowledging it's purpose as being to honor the "Brown Water Navy" veterans assigned to the aforementioned Vietnam era task forces, the Navy will not stipulate qualifying criteria such as specific duty assignments, service lengths, time periods (other than the 1965-1971 timeframe) or participation in campaigns that need to be met by personnel wishing to display or wear the insignia. The insignia, once in existence, is envisioned to be a device that Navy veterans who served on small boats in one or more of the aforementioned task forces may choose to acquire at their discretion.*

2) Will this newly designed insignia be entered into the annals of our rich Naval history as an "official" combat award insignia sanctioned by the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations?

*- The Navy has no insignia categorized as "combat award insignia." Involvement in ground or maritime combat by Navy*

and Marine Corps personnel is recognized by authorization to wear the Combat Action Ribbon.

- As previously indicated, the insignia indicated in General Nash's letter is intended to commemorate and recognize the collective service of all small boat sailors who served in Vietnam, in Task Forces 115, 116, 117 and 194, during the period 1965 to 1971. The insignia would be "official" in the sense that it's design had been approved by the Navy as compared to some other device individuals might wear or display, the design of which did not have Navy approval.  
- With respect to the insignia being "...entered into the annals of...rich Naval history..." Navy concurrence with the design would allow representations of the device to be worn, portrayed on websites, in future written material, on veterans organization correspondence, on documentation submitted to the Naval Historical Center, etc. with full acknowledgement that the device has U.S. Navy approval.

3) Will the insignia be officially authorized to be placed on an upgraded DD Form 215?

- No. The commemorative nature of the insignia will not qualify it to be listed in that section of DD Form 214 that reflects "DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED" or on an updated DD Form 215.

4) Will the awardee be authorized to officially wear the insignia on his active duty military uniform and/or civilian attire?

- Veterans with prior service on small boats supporting Task Forces 115, 116, 117 and 194 in Vietnam during the period 1965-1971 will be free to wear the insignia on civilian attire. The device will not be a warfare or qualification insignia intended to be worn by active duty personnel in uniform and will not be referenced in Navy Uniform Regulations.

5) After a quality insignia is created is the Department of Defense, or in this case, the Department of the Navy, going to manufacture and distribute this insignia to qualified active duty and veteran personnel as it does with all other insignia?

- No. Neither the Department of Defense (DOD) nor the Department of the Navy (DON) manufacture or budget for the manufacture of insignia, nor does either Department distribute insignia to qualified active duty (or veteran) personnel. (For information, in the case of naval insignia, once a device is certified and design specifications established, those specifications are released to the commercial sector. Interested businesses [such as Vanguard] provide bids to the Naval Exchange, which leads to devices being fabricated and made available for purchase by individual naval personnel. In some cases individual commands may choose to present a warfare or qualification insignia to individuals who complete training such as Flight School, a diver training course, etc. But, in these cases purchase of those devices is the responsibility of the distributing commands.)

- As indicated in General Nash's letter, the Navy has offered to review and approve an insignia designed and submitted by one or more organizations that represent "Brown Water Navy" veterans. The actual design process, manufacturing and purchasing of those insignia will be the responsibility of the involved veterans' organizations.

**Latest word on the Commemorative Pin-** The officers and directors of all three organizations have agreed on a design (see above) and are diligently working on sourcing it so it will soon be available to all members. As with almost all Navy "uniform" items, it will be available in silver and gold. Watch for further word on the official SBSA website:

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

## Getting in touch... Staying in touch...

**By snailmail-**

Swift Boat Sailors Association  
3941 Laurelwood Drive  
Jacksonville, Florida 32257-8926

**By telephone-**

(904) 880-6412  
This is Gene Hart's residence - use judiciously and - absolutely no harassing calls

**By the web-**

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

The website contains links to the Ship's Store and many other sites of interest.

**By email-**

To the SBSA-

[president@swiftboats.org](mailto:president@swiftboats.org)

To the Swift Current-

[editor@swiftboats.org](mailto:editor@swiftboats.org)

Fax 770-395-9487

Tel. 770-395-9547

To the Membership Chairman-

Terry Boone

[Mtboone@AOL.COM](mailto:Mtboone@AOL.COM)

To the Ship's Store-

Ken Briggs

[kenneth.briggs2@verizon.net](mailto:kenneth.briggs2@verizon.net)

## Department of the Navy Announces the Death of Retired Vice Adm. James B. Stockdale

Special release from the Department of the Navy  
WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Retired Vice Adm. James B. Stockdale, Medal of Honor recipient, former Viet Nam prisoner of war (POW), Naval aviator and test pilot, academic, and American hero died July 5 at his home in Coronado, Calif. He was 81 years old and had been battling Alzheimer's disease.

Born Dec. 23, 1923 in Abingdon, Ill., and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1947, he is best remembered for his extraordinary leadership as the senior naval officer held in captivity during the Vietnam War. As commanding officer of Carrier Air Group 16 flying from the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany (CV 34), he was shot down while leading a mission Sept. 9, 1965.

During his seven-and-one-half-year imprisonment, he was tortured numerous times, forced to wear vise-like heavy leg irons for two years and spent four years in solitary confinement. While imprisoned, he organized the prisoner culture in defiance of regulations forbidding prisoner communication and improvised a cohesive set of rules governing prisoner behavior. Codified in the acronym, BACK U.S. (Unity over Self), these rules gave prisoners a sense of hope, which many credited with giving them the strength to endure their ordeal.

Upon his release in 1973, Stockdale's extraordinary heroism became widely known and he was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1976. A portion of his citation reads: "Stockdale...deliberately inflicted a near mortal wound to his person in order to convince his captors of his willingness to give up his life rather than capitulate. He was subsequently discovered and revived by the North Vietnamese who, convinced of his indomitable spirit, abated their employment of excessive harassment and torture of all Prisoners of War."

"Vice Adm. Jim Stockdale's legendary leadership and heroic service to the cause of freedom has been an

inspiration to our Nation," said Secretary of the Navy Gordon England. "His courage and life stand as timeless examples of the power of faith and the strength of the human spirit. Our thoughts are with his devoted family. America and our Navy are eternally grateful and will always remember him."

Upon his retirement from naval service, the Secretary of the Navy established the Vice Admiral Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership presented annually in both Pacific and Atlantic Fleets. Stockdale held 26 combat awards including two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Distinguished Service Medals, two Purple Hearts and four Silver Star Medals. He is a

member of the Navy's Carrier Hall of Fame, The National Aviation Hall of Fame and an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. He held 11 honorary Doctoral Degrees.

"Our Navy is saddened by the loss of Vice Adm. James B. Stockdale, a giant among heroes and a patriarch of ethical leadership," said Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark. "Adm. Stockdale challenged the human limits of moral courage, physical endurance and intellectual bravery, emerging victorious as a legendary beacon for all to follow. Our thoughts and prayers are with Sybil, his devoted partner in love and life, and the rest of the Stockdale family."

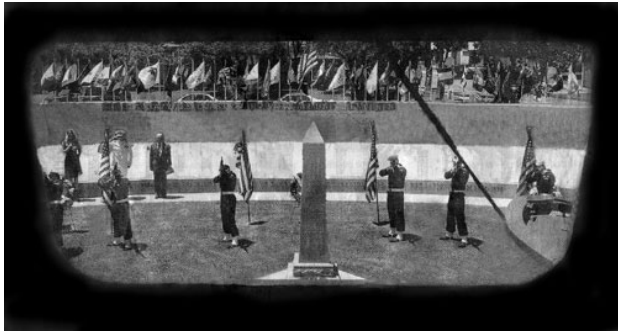
Stockdale will be honored at a memorial service on board USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) in his hometown of Coronado, Calif. The service will take place July 16. He will

be buried with full honors at the U.S. Naval Academy July 23. He is survived by his beloved wife Sybil of Coronado, Calif., and his four sons: James of Beaver, Pa.; Sidney of Albuquerque, N.M.; Stanford of Denver, Colo.; Taylor of Claremont, Calif.; and eight grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions should be made to:  
U.S. Naval Academy Foundation, 291 Wood Rd., Beach Hall, Annapolis, Md., 21402, telephone: (410) 295-4116.  
Monmouth College Fund, 700 E. Broadway, Monmouth, Ill., 61462, telephone: (309) 457-2316/17

Vice Adm. James B. Stockdale's biography and additional photos are located on the following web site:  
[www.admiralstockdale.com](http://www.admiralstockdale.com)





***Swift Boat Sailors Association Inc.***

*21128 Hunt Club Drive*

*Harper Woods, Michigan 48225-1717*

