

Swift Current

The official publication of the
Swift Boat Sailors Association

I Quarter 2008

Comments & suggestions to-
editor@swiftboats.org

The bi-annual SBSA business meeting was well-attended at the San Diego reunion held in May 2007



President's Corner

Shipmates,

Where have the last seven months gone? Yup, seven months have gone by already since Team San Diego treated many of us to a grand SBSA Reunion.

Virgil Erwin and crew out did themselves every inch of the way. Team San Diego was thorough in every planning aspect. The end result was a memorable smooth running event that only a dedicated team effort and commitment could produce. "BRAVO ZULU", gentlemen.

If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to visit the SBSA web site. Bob Shirley made it possible, for those that could not attend the reunion, to enjoy the gathering via a fabulous pictorial essay on our web site.

Our Friday trip to the Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, was spectacular thanks to the exceptional coordinating efforts of Bob Brown and the extensive work his group of dedicated VUMMF members provided. In addition to the 471 reunion guests, base personnel and media took the attendance past 500. Our hats off to you Bob, job well done! For the benefit of those members that were not able to attend, our web site contains the memorial tributes honoring our brothers still on patrol - <http://swiftboats.org/reunion/2007/nab/nab.html>, pictures and much more.

I was personally moved by the presence of numerous South Vietnamese Navy Swift Boat Sailors - Van Truong, Toi Dang, Viet Truong and Tay Nguyen, who flew in from Adelaide, South Australia to attend the

reunion. Van Truong was Bill Franke's SVN liaison aboard PCF-56. They were recognized during the service and thanked for their sacrifice.

Following the service, we were treated to rides in Glorietta Bay aboard Sea Ark Combatant Craft, by Inshore Boat Unit 17 crewmen who are part of Naval Coastal Warfare Group One. Our thanks to Command Master Chief Michael Kari and his IBU 17 team. Appreciation is also extended to Captain Gaiani, Base CO, for accommodating our organization's visit to the base.

The Officers and Directors extend their appreciation to all of the members who displayed commitment to the organization by placing their name on the Board Director slate. At Saturday's General Meeting and via membership vote, Virgil Erwin and Dave Wallace were added to the SBSA Board. The remaining Directors are: Robert Brant, who remains as Board Chairman, Bob Ankenbauer, Jim Deal, Gene Hart, Raul Herrera, Joe Ponder, and Jim Schneider. Following the meeting, the new Board convened and by vote, elected Gene Hart as Secretary / Treasurer, Virgil Erwin as Vice-president, and I as President. Our thanks go out to Larry Wasikowski and Ed Bergin for their dedication and contribution to the association as Board Directors.

Later that evening, we were treated once again to the lively Master of Ceremony charm that only Dan "Megaphone Bravo" Daly can deliver. The 421 banquet guests were privileged to hear a memorable keynote address by Admiral Harold W. Gehman, Jr. (OinC, PCF-27, Chu Lai). We appreciate both of these gentlemen's commitment to the SBSA and thank them for their support. One of my personal highs of the reunion was the recognition at the banquet of 65 Swift Boat veteran brothers who were attending their first SBSA Reunion.

We now look to the summer of 2009. Although the membership voted to have our next reunion in Charleston, Director Joe Ponder and his Reunion City Search Committee exhausted all possible angles and determined that Charleston hotel / banquet accommodations proved to be cost-prohibitive. As a result, the tip of the hat went to Jacksonville, Florida. Gene Hart is our 2009 Reunion Chairman. He and Terry McManuels have already started negotiations with the hotel that will host our reunion. I'm happy to report that the reunion will be held in mid-June, exact dates are pending. We're hoping that this move will make it possible for SBSA members that are in the education system to attend. Reunion updates will be posted in the SBSA web site and in the MyFamily web site News section as they become available.

Since our gathering in May, five of our brothers have embarked on their Last Patrol. We Remember... Billy P. Carwile, Jerry E. Cline, Grover L. Handley, Larry A. Lail, and Bob Shirley. Our condolences to the families of these brave Swift Boat sailors.

The long awaited delivery of PCF-93 to Rob Rhodes has finally been completed, so report Ken and Carrie Bolen of Miniature Dream Models, Inc. Rob won the Swift Boat raffle at our 2003 Reunion in Norfolk. Through a travesty of errors and irresponsible actions by the modeler, the delivery of Rob's PCF was never completed as promised. We were determined to make things right and Miniature Dream Models, Inc. made it happen. At last contact, Ken Bolen indicated that the glass case would be shipped next.

The PCF model history behind Miniature Dream Models, Inc. is most interesting as well as ironic. It was the late Buddy Berman QM2, PCF-5 that had contacted Ken and Carrie in hopes that they would attend a

small gathering of Swifties. A widow of another Swiftie brought a model of a Coast Guard rescue boat that Ken produced at the time. She suggested that it would be great if Ken could produce a PCF.

Their initial attempt via a Chinese company resulted in an unacceptable quality of workmanship. Ken was about to give up on the idea of producing a PCF model when he recalled a message from Theresa Thu Ha, owner of a very small Catholic model building business in Vietnam. The rest is history. There are seven family members working in the shop. They all have general model building knowledge, however, each person has a specialty area in model building.

Having a PCF-79 model and knowing that it was produced by talented Vietnamese hands, adds a special memorable affection to the piece, as it must now do the same for other Swifties that own a PCF from Miniature Dream Models, Inc.

Swift Boat Sailor veterans proudly marched in this year's Veterans Day parades across America. In Missouri, Stephen Taylor, Steve Vogt, Jerry Files and others marched in the Florissant Valley Veterans Day Parade, while Joe Lavoie, Bill Rogers, Tony Taylor and others made a solid show of Swifties at the Auburn, Washington parade.

The Vietnam Memorial, The Wall, celebrated its 25th Anniversary this past Veterans Day weekend in Washington, D.C. Those of us that attended will long remember this grand event. We were honored to have Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann (CTF 115) and Captain Arthur P. Ismay (first COM Boat Ron One and CTF-115) join us. I was taken by the massive South Vietnamese Veteran participation. The ex-political prisoner contingency held a banner giving thanks to the American Veterans for our effort in assisting them in their fight for

freedom. Along the parade route, a lone bo'sun stepped onto Pennsylvania Avenue and piped Admiral Hoffman on board. At the end of the parade, we placed a memorial wreath at The Wall in honor and in memory of our Swift Boat Honor Crew.

Ray Bruder has put together an outstanding Power Point Show of the D.C. event. I encourage everyone to visit <http://photoshow.comcast.net/watch/WG7PM4PJ> for a great pictorial essay. Our thanks go out to Ray for a fabulous effort.

Virgil Erwin coordinated our organization's effort in sending a Christmas Care Package to a Navy brownwater combat unit currently in harms way overseas. This year the SBSA sent a package of goodies to Riverine Squadron Two in care of Command Master Chief Daniel Adley. In Coronado, the annual placing of Christmas wreaths on the boats and the memorial was carried out by Bob Bolger. His wife, Val, took great pictures and they are posted on the MyFamily web site. The event was also carried on a San Diego TV station.

In response to a request from Rex Rectanus, VADM, USN (Ret.), the SBSA Board of Directors approved a donation to the United States Navy Memorial in conjunction with a wall plaque honoring LCDR John George Graf, Third Coastal Zone Intelligence Officer. His plane was shot down on 15 November 1969, 19 miles southeast of Phu Vinh in the Long Toan Secret Zone. More information on LCDR Graf can be found on the Internet at the Virtual Wall - <http://www.virtualwall.org/dg/GrafJG01a.htm>.

On behalf of the SBSA Officers and Board Directors, Seasons Greetings go out to all of our members. We wish you good health and a prosperous New Year.

Raul Herrera

Veterans, Servicemembers Not In Uniform May Now Salute Flag

8/14/2007 - WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) today praised the passage by unanimous consent of his bill (S.1877) clarifying U.S. law to allow veterans and service personnel not in uniform to salute the flag.

Current law (US Code Title 4, Chapter 1) states that veterans and service members not in uniform should place their hand over their heart without clarifying whether they can or should salute the flag.

"The salute is a form of honor and respect, representing pride in one's military service," Senator Inhofe said. "Veterans and service members continue representing the military services even when not in uniform. "Unfortunately, current U.S. law leaves confusion as to whether veterans and service members out of uniform can or should salute the flag. My legislation will clarify this regulation, allowing veterans and service personnel alike to salute the flag, whether they are in uniform or not."

"I look forward to seeing those who have served saluting proudly at baseball games, parades, and formal events. I believe this is an appropriate way to honor and recognize the 25 million veterans in the United States who have served in the military and remain as role models to others citizens. Those who are currently serving or have served in the military have earned this right, and their recognition will be an inspiration to others."

The Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann Foundation

The Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann Foundation, Inc. is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is a nonprofit charitable 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization registered with the United States IRS.



This Foundation honors Admiral Hoffmann's service as Commander Task Force 115. We're also extremely proud of our Foundation's motto, which is, "Serving Those Who Have Protected Freedom."

The Hoffmann Foundation's mission is to benefit American servicemen and servicewomen, both past and currently serving and to act as advocates for service personnel where appropriate.

The most important function of the foundation is to assist currently serving military personnel and their families with a particular emphasis on those military families with members killed in action, severely wounded, or deployed overseas. The Foundation also identifies and assists other veterans and their families should a legitimate need be approved. All Foundation grants are awarded with absolutely no strings attached!

Members of our Board of Trustees are all unpaid volunteers:

<i>Chairman of the Board</i>	<i>Admiral Roy F. Hoffmann, USN-Retired</i>
<i>President</i>	<i>Larry Thurlow</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Van Odell</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Joe Ponder</i>
<i>CFO</i>	<i>Wey Symmes</i>

The Foundation was initially endowed by a contribution from John O'Neill. Mr. T. Boone Pickens also made a very significant donation.

This organization started awarding grants on May 4, 2005. The first grant was awarded to a Swiftie in need. Since then the Foundation has awarded nearly 2 ¼ million dollars in grants to over 300 severely wounded combat veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. The Foundation has contributed 50 thousand dollars to the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument Fund to honor and perpetuate the memory of our fallen shipmates who gave their last full measure of devotion to their Country in the Vietnam War.

It would be impossible to assist our wounded military personnel without the assistance of numerous Swifties located across our great country. Every Swiftie we've contacted to present a grant has volunteered to personally present the award letter and check with a hearty handshake to each of our recipients. Our Foundation's policy is that each of our grants be presented by a Swift Boat Sailor. The Swifties who have assisted us in this matter have never turned in a receipt for reimbursement of any kind. They've donated their time, mileage, fuel and other resources, thus allowing the Foundation to donate 98 cents of every dollar contributed to us to our recipients.

Information provided by Joe Ponder



Under the new ruling regarding hand salutes while out of uniform, several Swifties salute the flag and render honors to our now-departed shipmate, Bob Shirley during services in Dallas this January

Donations to VUMMF

Donations to the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument are always appreciated and acknowledged. Donations of \$100 or more will have an entry in a future donor panel which will recognize the individual's service, in memory of a designated person, or in honor of a designated person. One donor panel with 85 names is currently in production and will be placed on the western face of the wall when received this August. A new plaque with donors since 1 July 2007 is being populated and will be placed on the wall when 85 donor entries have been received. Following is the current list of donors waiting for addition to the Wall:

DONORS SINCE 1 JULY 2007

BREININGER, ALAN F. AND BARBARA B. - BLUFFTON, SC
CAHILL, JOSEPH F. AND JULIA A. - ST ALBANS, VT
CHOMEAU, DAVID - KIRKWOOD, MO
CONWAY, ANITA - NEWPORT, RI
FISCHER, GREG, CAPT, USN (RET) - IHO NSA DANANG SHIP-
MATES 66-67
GAMEWARDENS OF VIETNAM ASSOCIATION, INC - NORTH-
EAST CHAPTER

HARVEY, PAMELA, CDR, MC, USN: IN HONOR OF ALL
UNITED STATES NAVY MEDICAL PERSONNEL SERVING IN
IRAQ DURING OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM---FIGHTING TO
SAVE THE LIVES OF OUR NATION'S HEROES.....WITH
HEARTFELT GRATITUDE

KOCH, MAURICE P. - PBR 101, 1966 TO 1967
LA PRAD, ROBERT E. AND JACQUELINE C. - SANTA BAR-
BARA, CA
McCALL, THOMAS W., JR - ARLINGTON, VA
RELLER, ROBERT H. - PCF OINC, IN MEMORY OF THOSE
WHO SERVED
SATORIUS, JEROME M., - RIVSEC 531, LST 821, PBR 105/109
5/67-5/68
STILLWELL, JAMES F., JR., AND RUTH - SAN DIEGO, CA
THOMPSON, GARY H. - KALISPELL, MT
WALLACE, DIANE A. - IN MEMORY OF LTJG RICHARD C.
WALLACE
WOODWARD, JAMES F., JR. - RIVDIV 533 1969-1970

The work goes on....

After the reunion, the walkways at the VUMMF were redone with beautiful pavers.

Photo courtesy of Neil Geis



What Happened To The Swift Officer's Association (SOA)?

On December 30, 1981 Bob Elder, then treasurer of the SOA, wrote to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (*in part*) -

"I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of \$791.02 for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. [this was all the money in the organization and it was disbanded]"

Over the years we have accumulated some money and always intended to create or contribute to a memorial for those officers and men who lost their lives while serving on Swift Boats. Your organization is a fitting memorial to their service and their sacrifice."

Image courtesy of Bob Elder

SBSA Marches In Washington On Veterans' Day



This year's Veterans Day weekend was extra special for me because not only was it my birthday (11-11) but I was able to join other Swifties and participate with a bigger band of brothers in a collective Vietnam Welcome Home celebration in Washington, D.C. I have already posted some images of the celebration and parade on the MyFamily web site and I'll also be sending them to Jim Deal so that he can post them on our web site.

Although our group numbered less than fifteen, I felt the presence of not only the twenty-five to thirty Swifties that I had hoped would join us, but I must tell you that our Swift Boat Honor Crew took their position behind the SBSA Welcome Home banner. A memorial wreath, with a ribbon that read "Swift Boat Honor Crew" was placed on the front grill of Tony Snesko's Jeep. In the Jeep was "LATCH," Admiral Hoffmann, who proudly waved a flag staff that carried our colors, the South Vietnamese flag and the POW/MIA flag. Charlie Lloyd PCF-4 Skipper and Billy Alford (PCF-52) also rode in the Jeep.

Our parade slot was toward the tail end, nonetheless, we received a number of good cheers and A"Thank You"s" from the crowd along the parade route. As we approached the review stand, The MC called out our group by name and approached Terry Boone for comment. Terry announced that CTF-115, Adm. Roy F. Hoffmann was in the Jeep, which drew more applause and salutes from the veterans present. Our group stopped in front of the review stand and Ken Briggs called us to attention, facing the review stand and then ordered us to a hand salute.

One of the most memorable parade events for me was when an old salty Boatswains mate approached the Jeep off it's starboard bow and proudly standing at attention, piped the Admiral's arrival. Admiral Hoffmann was smiling from ear to ear.

We broke ranks at the end of the parade route and gathered by the SBSA Float for a group picture. We then proceeded down to The Wall to place the wreath in memory of our Honor Crew. We saluted our brothers and bid them a warm Welcome Home.

Virgil Erwin, SBSA's Newest Board Member and Vice President Reports Some Good-To-Know Experience



[written September 7, 2007] Got home last night, Tuesday, a day early. I thought I was going to write an interesting journal of a great 30 mile hike by a 64 year old Swift Boat Sailor with my boys, Chris, 30, Bret 23, both strong hockey players. Instead, this reads like a medical synopsis. Feeling better today but my legs still hurt.

Friday - Bret, Chris and I arrived in Yosemite's Cury Village at midnight. Chris' flight from Denver was six hours late. We spent two hours getting our backpacks organized and then not more than four and half hours sleep.

Saturday - 8 AM, Yosemite Valley to Toulumne Meadows via backpackers bus I started hiking with a 40 pound backpack. We started out at 9,000' climbed up to 10,000' and back down to 9,500' 7 miles in six hours. Slow goin'. 80 degrees. Drank one liter of water, constant dry mouth. Shortness of breath. Stomach cramps started when we stopped hiking. Ate one apple. Skipped dinner, no appetite. Slept 14 hours (6 PM to 8 AM)

Sunday - Chris and Bret put my stove, lantern and other heavy items into their packs Hiked from 9,500' to 8,000' 7 miles in five hours. Lots of up and down terrain. (I hate the up part) 85 to 90 degrees. Drank two liters of water, dry mouth, felt dizzy at times Ate a small can of tuna at noon All the rivers are dry. Passed by Sun Rise High Sierra Camp. They wouldn't give us water due to severe drought. Found a small spring three inches deep just as we all ran out of water. Filled our camelbacks and disinfected with iodine pills. Shortness of breath all day, stomach cramps in the evening. No appetite. Forced myself to eat four spoonfuls of chicken and rice

Monday - Chris and Bret took more weight from my pack. Bret (Marine) is as strong as a pack mule. Hiked from 8,000' to 4,000' (Yosemite Valley) 16 miles (poor judgment) 90 to 95 degrees, little shade. Drank the last two liters of my water. Found another spring, thank God and disinfected with iodine. Felt faint sometimes, losing my balance, knees killing me going down steep granite stair-step switch-backs, dry cotton mouth. Chris said I was slurring my words, like I was drunk. Ran out of water again and refilled from a pool at the top of Vernal Falls. Waded in with all my clothes to cool off. Ate a small can of tuna at noon

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Bob Shirley Embarks On His Last Patrol

By Raul Herrera

Last night, nine Swifties attended the Memorial Service for Bob. It was quite moving. It began with a Buddhist Service. The rites are conducted as expressions of respect and gratitude to the deceased for the blessings and traditions left to us. Bhuddhist memorial rites are held in grateful memory of the deceased. The room was packed with Vietnamese family and friends, all chanting prayers as part of the service.

Following this service we were invited by Kim Anh and her children to address the guests. On behalf of all the members of the SBSA, I extended our most sincere condolences. Due to the majority of the guests present not being able to understand English, an interpreter made a beautiful attempt to convey my remarks. I had a number of emails from SBSA members that I wanted to read, however the interpretation effort made it almost impossible. I was able to read Major Ivan Consiglio's words of sympathy to the family. The group of Swifties stepped forward and faced Bob Shirley. Joe Lavoie then called us to attention and hand salute while he piped Bob Shirley aboard for his Last Patrol.

I then presented Kim Anh a framed photo of Bob, the one that shows him at the helm. I also gave the same photo to the three children. Thomas Shirley had found Bob's tiny gold PCF pin and had it place on Bob's left lapel. I also presented similar pins to Kim Anh and to Thomas, Jennifer and Michael.

Following the Memorial Service, we all went to Houston's, an outstanding steak restaurant. Before dinner, we raised our glasses and made a toast to Bob's memory.

This morning, we went to the funeral home to say our last good-bye's. Thomas asked four Swifties to assist in taking the casket to the hearse. At the DFW National Cemetery, we were surprised to learn that Col. Ken Cordier (former POW) had learned of Bob's passing and he made it a point to join us. He assisted in taking the casket from the hearse to the kiosk. Joe Lavoie once again piped Bob "Axelrod" Shirley along.

The final ceremony was very emotional. An active-duty Navy and Army team folded the flag and presented it to Jo Lavoie who in turn had the honor of presenting the flag to Kim Anh and family on behalf the Commander in Chief, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Swift Boat Sailors Association. The DFW Honor Guard (a group of mostly Vietnam Veterans) provide the three-man rifle team salute and one Marine-uniformed veteran bugler stood up above on high ground behind the rifle team. After the rifle salute, we all stood at attention with hand salute while Taps was sounded. After Taps, one of the Honor Guard members presented three spent shells to Kim Anh. They represented Duty, Honor, and Country. Thomas Shirley then expressed his final thoughts on his father. His remarks left no one present with dry eyes.

I want to thank all of the SBSA members that attended the service. Your presence warmed the hearts of the family. Special thanks to Col. Cordier and to Tom Wright for having his brother attend the service in his absence. "Bravo Zulu"

Change of Address?

Stay in touch with your shipmates!

**Contact Gene Hart, Secretary/Treasurer-
Tel. (908) 880-6412 Email- ghart@unf.edu**

New SBSA Members

May 2007 – December 2007 (includes Members & Family Members)

Wallace Bettencourt - Kenneth Bloch - John P. Chenoweth III - Carl C. Frederickson - Raymond F. Gillin - Michael P. Hudson - Jose E. Maez - Terry L. Mason - Tammara Pellitier - Robert L. Roberts - Thomas A. Steffes - Kenneth M. Troutman - James D. Sarver - Raymond E. Wetzel - William C. Pfeffer - Terry G. Whitaker - Don Brown - Lowell D. Jensen

Good-To-Know Experience...cont.

Reached the walk-in camp next to Upper Pines on the Valley floor at 5 PM. Breathing worse, stomach cramps started at 6 PM, threw up 9 times in one hour

Went to the Yosemite urgent care clinic at 9 PM at the insistence of Bret and Chris. Glad I did.

Blood pressure: 145/86

Pulse, EKG and Chest X-Ray were taken but don't know the results

O2: 98 – 97 (good)

White cell count: 218 (Bad, normal is 90)

IV: two liters + sedative + anti-biotic (sedative was great!)

Advised to leave Yosemite for lower altitude and check-in to doctor in San Diego

Advised not to do this hike again. Doctor said I was a dumb ##%(& , I said I was a Swift Boat Sailor. She said, "Figures."

Discharged at 11:30 PM (wonder what this cost?)

Tuesday - Chris drove me home to San Diego and then flew back to Denver.

Wednesday - Went to Scripps Clinic. Dr Lin said he has had this same experience. Said heat exhaustion and altitude sickness impaired his judgment. He said 16 miles on a hot day was poor judgment.

Blood pressure: 120/80 (perfect)

Weight: lost 11 pounds

Dr. Lin said no exercise for a week. That's OK with me.

I'm still alive, cancel the 21 gun salute, or is 7 for dumb ##%(& - ?

Ed. Note: There are other directors and officers who will carefully watch Virg to see if this condition worsens!

SBSA Marches...

One other observation – I was impressed by the Vietnamese contingency. Their numbers were huge. They took their position in the parade as last group. I interpreted their gesture as one of gratitude to our effort and sacrifice.

Ray Bruder (USS Krishna) has produced an outstanding Comcast (Slide) Show for all to enjoy at - <http://photoshow.comcast.net/watch/WG7PM4PJ> "BRAVO ZULU", Ray! Your commitment and dedication to the SBSA is greatly appreciated. (Ray's email - bruder@duq.edu)

Here are the names of those who attended this memorable event:

Admiral Hoffman, "LATCH," CTF-115 (MAY '68-'69) - Arthur Ismay, COMBoatRon One / ComPCFDiv 101 / CTF-115 (1965) - Tony Snesko - Ray Bruder and wife Penny - Charlie Lloyd and wife Leslie (PCF-4 Skipper) - Burke Salsi, wife Lynn, son Brian - Andy Covitz, daughter Jenna - Pete Larkin and wife Barbara - Terry Boone - Ken Briggs - Bud Kittle - Bill Miller - Norm Koehler (Air Force - Charlie Lloyd's friend) - Samuel M. Singletary (Krishna) - Vincent Hawkins (Krishna) (Sam and Vince are friends of Ray Bruder)

By Raul Herrera





from VUMMF-

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This morning the CNO appeared before Spec Warfare members adjacent to the Memorial with the Wall and Boats in the background. The purpose of the visit was to present a Silver Star and 4 Bronze Stars to Seals for heroic actions in Iraq.

The Vietnam Unit Memorial is becoming the site of choice for many ceremonies. The new CJCS knows how to pick 'em.

Dagwood was talking to Blondie, "I had a dream last night where I was climbing a giant hot fudge sundae and there were cherries on top as big as bowling balls.... then it got weird."

The SBSA has formed a committee where Swifties can go for information about disability claims and medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Where it got weird is labeling the committee members as VA reps. Actually, none of the committee members represent the VA. More properly, some of us are service officers for various veterans organizations and some of us just have a lot of knowledge about the disability claims process.

When you have to go to court you are always well advised to have an attorney and none of us would perform surgery on our own bodies. When one approaches the VA, which is the second largest of the federal executive departments (only the Defense Department is larger) having a service officer in your corner is the way to go.

Service Officers all work for the veterans and without cost. They range all over the map in competence, knowledge and skillfulness. Every veterans organization, and most especially, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Fleet Reserve Association and Veterans of Foreign Wars have post service officers. If you live at the end of the known world, such as Bonners Ferry, Idaho on the Canadian Border, that post service officer may be your only choice.

Almost every county employs a veteran service officer (VSO). Here in my county, the second largest in Idaho, we have two full time VSO's. The next county north of us has a county VSO that works half a day every day. North of them in Bonner's Ferry, their VSO works half a day once a week.

Every state has state VSO's. These state VSO's are often found in the state capitol at the Department of Veteran Services, in the state veterans homes and in the VA Regional Office for that state.

All of the big veterans organizations have national service officers. The Disabled American Veterans employs 280 National Service Officers stationed at the VA Regional Offices where disability claims are adjudicated. The DAV is the only organization that has VSO's in every VA Regional Office.

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Jerry Edward Cline Sr., 65, died Sunday, July 15, 2007, at his home in China Grove, NC. Death was unexpected.



Born Sept. 21, 1941, in Cabarrus County, Mr. Cline was a son of the late James Fred Cline and Ethel Mae Tilley Cline. He was educated at China Grove High School, the U.S. Navy Class "A" Radioman School, International Correspondence School and Rowan Technical College. He served from 1958 to 1967 in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War and was proud of being part of the SWIFT Boat Sailors Association.

Throughout the years, Mr. Cline worked for Fiber Industries and General Electric in Salisbury, where he was a supervisor. He had also worked at different times in his life at Gamewell Manufacturing, J.D. Tadlock Painting Contractors and G&S Metal Co.

Mr. Cline was a member of North Kannapolis Wesleyan Church in Kannapolis and enjoyed fishing in his spare time.

Surviving are sons Jerry E. Cline Jr. of Salisbury and Fred L. Cline of Concord; daughter Carolyn Christy of China Grove; brother Gary Cline of Salisbury; sister Helen Tadlock of Mooresville; grandchildren April Christy, Jeremy Cline and Kacey Cline of Salisbury and Kevin Christy of China Grove; and great-grandchildren Damian Sechler, Alissa Parrish and Allie Parrish.

Submitted by Gene Hart & Joe Lavoie

Larry Arnette Lail, HMC USN, RET, 69, passed away Wednesday, July 11, 2007 in Midlothian, Virginia. He was a resident of Charlotte Court House for 25 years.

He is survived by his daughter, Anita L. Munyak and her husband, Donald T. Munyak, Jr.; grandchildren Jacob, Megan and Lindsey; Sue B. Lail; a brother James Lail; sisters Jennie Creel, Susan Rand and Edith Lail; and several nieces, nephews and friends.

He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1956 and subsequently served two tours of duty in the Vietnam War. He was a member of the Fleet Reserve Association, American Military Society, Swift Boat Sailors Association, Inc., Mobile Riverine Force Association, Naval Support Activity DaNang Veteran's Association and the VFW Post 7059 in Farmville. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, reading and helping others. He was devoted to his family and friends, his community and his country.

The family wishes to thank two beloved friends, Dr. Charles Anderson of Farmville and Dr. Ted Georges of Catawba, who provided a great deal of care and support to Mr. Lail and his family during his illness.

A memorial service will be held at the Chapel of Jeffress Funeral Home in Brookneal at 2 p.m. on Sunday and an informal gathering of family and friends to celebrate his life will be held at his home in Charlotte Court House at a later date.

Ed. Note: Many will remember Larry Lail as instrumental in the recovery of Tony Chandler from the sinking of PCF-19. Though not a Swiftie as a crewmate, Larry was a true friend and genuine Honorary Swiftie for life!

Don Blankenship's friend Hai Tran provides this picture of all our worst dreams come true.



Location and date of the picture are unknown!

From the Command Master Chief of Inshore Boat Unit 17

I personally would like to thank you for allowing us to participate in your reunion. I believe our Captain, myself and the limited crew of (IBU 17) Inshore Boat Unit 17 gained valuable experience from the event. We would have liked to have you on our boats all day, however the number of people participating in your reunion and our limited number of boats made it difficult. I personally believe the Navy has a great history and is rarely memorialized as it should be. Your members, I believe really brought that concept to a reality for all 16 of our crew members that volunteered that day. Again we thank you for your service.

I would have like to have talked more with your members, unfortunately I was busy driving Boat 9. By the way if anyone got wet I do apologize but your members were enticing me. LOL

The participating crew of IBU 17 felt it was a very important evolution and we are very proud to have participated in this reunion and would be very proud to participate again.

Once again we thank you for your service

Very Respectfully,
Michael Kari
Command Master Chief
Inshore Boat Unit 17

Ed. Note: These are the folks whose boats we rode around Glorietta Bay and regaled with our stories of heroism, youthful daring, and casual fearlessness in the face of overwhelming enemy fire. This was while we were trying to figure out how to even start these boats - there were more electronics in the small cabins than SEPIA had in the whole compound!

Dagwood was talking...

When selecting a veteran service officer to assist you in filing a claim, my rule of thumb is that full-time, employed, service officers that are certified by the VA are your best choice. Such people have on-line access to VA forms, your VA records and attend training courses.

Your phone book is an excellent start in locating a VSO. Local veterans posts are good starting points. The local VA Medical Center will often have DAV or State or Departmental Service Officers. Your VSO should walk you through your military service asking about broken bones, hearing, injuries, sicknesses, wounds, and work experience. He should ask about current health. A Vietnam veteran with Prostate Cancer or Adult onset Type II Diabetes is automatically presumptive as being caused by Agent Orange.

You should put in your claim for every thing that happened to you. More on that in the next column. Your claim starts when the date time stamp is put on it in the VA Regional Office Mail Room. All payments are retroactive to that date.

The HALO EFFECT: Because some of us seem quite knowledgeable about some aspects of the VA claims process it is easy to think that we are experts in everything. There are so many benefits available to veterans and much fine print in the explanation that few people really know it all. The VA Committee members are here to offer what advice they can and guide you to the right place.



One of Several Unique "Coincidences"

As we briefed the Marine Honor Guard on where to stand for the 21 gun salute, Bret Erwin (Virg's son) immediately recognized the Squad Leader - they served in Falujh together. They had a great reunion - we all did.

One of the committee members asked me to respond to a lady about DIC, which is Dependents Indemnity Compensation paid to widows of veterans who have died of service connected disability. I was surprised when he said he didn't know anything about it. His posts on VA matters have always been very sharp. It just so happened that I had just written an article for a military officers newsletter on that very subject. However, when the lady called, it wasn't so simple. She was having a terrible time qualifying for the payments. There are often no simple answers, but getting someone in touch with a good VSO is a big step in the right direction.

In the last month, I have received requests from four different Swifties on very complex questions. When there is not an immediate answer, it is because it is so difficult to even begin to answer that it is necessary to consult with professional VSO's in order to begin to figure out how to answer the inquiry. We won't blow anyone off. We will try to assist to the best of our ability.

My particular background is going on ten years as a DAV Chapter Commander and Adjutant and having been a DAV State Commander. I have attended state and DAV service officer schools and have access to county and national service officers.

Robert B. Hunt, QMC, USN (Ret) Post Falls, ID 208 773-1074 cinc@verizon.net

I regret to inform you all that yesterday, 9-18-07, **Billy Carwile** passed away after his motorcycle was struck by an 18 year old girl in Fayetteville, NC. Billy was a shipmate of mine on several Swift Boats in Viet Nam during 1969 and 1970, and we finally reunited in 2001. We were able, during that time, to ride several times to Rolling Thunder in DC, Sturgis South Dakota and we even met once at the Moving Wall in Daytona Beach, Florida. Billy spent his whole life in service to his Country, and will be missed. After his service in the Navy as a Gunner's Mate, he joined the Army as a Ranger, and after retiring, he worked as a computer consultant to the Army at Fort Bragg.

Services will be held at Fort Bragg, NC on Friday, 9-21-07. I will try and keep you guys informed.

Submitted by David Borden

This Is What Reunions Are All About!

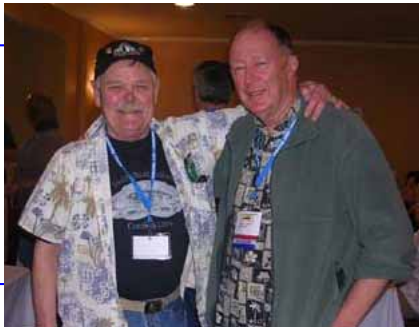


Here are former LTjg Michael Hudson and former QM1 Joe Lavoie reunited after 38 years.



Victoria Robertson and Robert Eugene Hornberger, GMG2, winner of the PCF-43 model and sole surviving member of the 43 boat crew that fateful day. **Another unusual coincidence!** His name was drawn from more than 500 raffle tickets sold and drawn randomly.

Here are Monty Montoya and Bruce Johnson reunited for the first time in 40 years.



JACKSONVILLE IN 2009

It's Official! We're gonna go to JAX in '09! June 24 - June 28 at the Wyndham Jacksonville Riverwalk Hotel.

Watch for details on the SBSA website- www.swiftboats.org

If you're in the JAX area, contact Gene Hart to see how you can help!



To-



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