

## **NEWSLETTER**

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SPRING 2011 Vol. 2 # 1

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*Greetings to all former 458<sup>th</sup> members (DUKW's, LARC's, BARC's, PBR's, Whalers, and associated Military Police). This is the March 2011 issue of the newsletter and subsequent issues will be published quarterly.*

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT:**

"Cabin Fever"

With snow storms a couple times a week the crap piles up pretty fast. And again this year it looks like it is all across the country – just can't escape from it I know that damn snowplow driver sits down the street and waits for me to get the driveway cleaned out so he can come by and fill 'er in again. There must be one in every town.

A while back I bought a sewing machine at an auction (really cheap). Linda asked what I was going to do with it and I said I would give it to my grand-daughter or someone who would use it. She opened it up and realized that it was almost new and had lots of attachments, including a monogrammer. She said that she was going to keep it. Well, one day after I got done cleaning the snow out I said that maybe she could teach me how to sew on the machine. So there I am sewing dish towels when my friend Danny shows up! He starts laughing and making fun of a long-haired guy with a mustache running a sewing machine. I showed him the monogrammer and told him to keep laughing because when we get to be about eighty-five, and in a nursing home, I will be monogramming his "Depends"!

I would like to welcome all of the new/old members to the Sea Tigers and look forward to seeing everyone in Rapid City this Fall. Even though the reunion is always off yet please get your reservations in as early as possible.

Denny Hull, President

### **SECRETARY'S RAMBLINGS:**

Hello to all. Another month has slipped by and another month closer to Spring. It can't come soon enough here in the upper Great Plains. The reunion is pretty well set up. I will be

Editors: Don Cook & Mike Hebert

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mailing registration forms most likely in April. Those attending can start making Hotel reservations any time by calling The Grand Gateway Hotel in Rapid City at (866) 742-1300. Ask for Bob Hodet (pronounced Hoday) and tell him you are with the 458<sup>th</sup> Trans. Co. Sea Tigers Reunion. The earlier you make reservations the better. If you need to cancel later on, you can cancel reservations up to 72 hours before the event. In the event that you do not need to cancel, make sure you get a confirmation number from the reservations agent. The reservation cut-off date is August 10, 2011, After that date the Hotel will release the remaining rooms blocked

for us. After that rooms will be available on a space and rate available basis, so please make reservations early. I started out with a block of 25 rooms and had to up that to 50 and I don't think that will be enough as we already have 60+ indicating they will be coming. If you haven't sent your card back yet, please do so very soon so I can update the room count. If you have lost or can't find the return card, give me a call or shoot me an email so I know you plan to attend. The bus tour on Wed 14<sup>th</sup> will depart hotel at 7:00am for breakfast at Fort Hayes so please consider arriving on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

I know that the website seems frozen in time. Terry is working very hard to improve it. I have seen some samples of what is coming and I think everyone will be impressed. How long before it is rolled out? I really don't know yet. But Terry thinks by spring or early summer.

We have had quite a number of former 458<sup>th</sup> and MP members contact us. Our contact list now stands at 215 with 2 more in the offing. Our Association membership now stands at 118. You can check the website "members page" for the latest. Also, if you see the name of someone you would like to contact, let me know as I most likely have their information in my database.

I hope everyone had a great Christmas and a happy New Year. Looking forward to seeing all who can make it to the reunion.

Regards, Bill

2  
2

Life member John Rodriguez (LARC's '66-'67) passed away Saturday morning Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> after a long battle with lung cancer. John found us last year and the Philadelphia reunion was his first. He thoroughly enjoyed being there and was hoping to make a few more. John will be missed by his wife Arlene, family, and friends. Rest in peace, John

If you know someone who is sick or in the hospital please contact Bill Northrop, Don Cook, or Mike Hebert. See page 9 for contact information.

## **THE PLANE RIDE TO 'NAM**

*by Mike Hebert*

Age tends to dull the memory. Some events, however, seem to stand out forever, for whatever reason...

(January 1970) I was strapped into my seat, feeling the rumbling of the wheels on the tarmac as the Capitol Airways jet screamed down the runway. Shortly after lift-off I felt the familiar "thump" of the wheels retracting into their respective bays. The young GI seated next to me jumped. "First time flying?" I asked. "Yes", came the nervous reply.

As the plane gained altitude I settled in for the long haul across the Pacific. We had taken off from McChord AFB in Tacoma, WA bound for a refueling stop in Anchorage, AK, then on to Yakota, Japan, and finally to Cam Rahn Bay, Vietnam. The plane was eerily quiet considering we had over 200 teenage soldiers on board.

I had dozed off for a few minutes when the sound of faint sobbing awoke me. Looking over to the young kid I could see the unmistakable traces of tears running down his cheeks.

I tried my best to make conversation and calm him down a bit. He was fresh out of high school, a farm kid from the Midwest (Indiana, I think, maybe Idaho). Not only was this his first plane ride it was also his first time away from home.

He was positive that he was on his way to certain death in a far-away land, fighting in a war that nobody cared about. He missed his mother, father, brother, and sisters. To make matters worse, the poor kid was Infantry, possibly the worst MOS to have in Vietnam! He had been drafted and he was scared. I did what I could to console him, but I don't think it was very effective, I was scared to death too, I just wasn't crying!

The kid must have cried all the way across the Pacific Ocean! I don't think I've ever seen anybody cry so much in my entire life.

Arriving in Cam Rahn Bay, we shook hands and parted ways. By now the kid even had me convinced that he was going to die. As I watched him walk away, a feeling of sorrow came over me. I didn't know what else I could have done to help him. I just felt as though I hadn't done quite enough...

The year in Vietnam passed (not quickly, I might add). Arriving at Cam Rahn Bay for the flight home, I got in line at the airport checkpoint and hoisted my duffel bag up on the counter to be inspected. A friend had suggested placing our unit 18<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade armband on top of my clothes. The MP on duty was, of course, 18<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade. He opened my bag, saw the armband, closed the bag back up, and wished me a safe flight home.

I was standing around in the terminal waiting with a couple hundred other anxious soldiers. We were all watching a group who had just come in on a flight – fresh new uniforms! I remembered when that was me.

All of sudden I heard someone say "Hey! How have you been?. I turned around and was greeted by the smiling face of the kid, now an E-4 and proudly wearing the bright blue Infantry lanyard suspended from his shoulder. Shaking his hand, I couldn't help but notice the Purple Heart and Bronze Star ribbons pinned to his chest.

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## **“Abandoned Scripts & Concepts”**

by Lee Russell, *Tour of Duty* Advisor

*(Editor’s Note: Tour of Duty was very possibly the finest television program ever produced regarding the Vietnam War. This is an interesting concept that never made it to the small screen. Ruiz, Goldman & Anderson were regular characters on the show).*

### “Apocalypse Tour of Duty”

This isn’t the correct name, but it gives you the idea. It was one of only two examples I know of where an outside writer was brought in and assigned a Tour of Duty concept to develop. Many of the Tour of Duty scripts had their inspiration in Vietnam movies. This was to be Tour of Duty’s “Apocalypse Now”. The guest writer was an older television writer who had apparently not worked in a bit.

The concept and treatment for this episode was pretty straightforward. The Tour of Duty guys are out on patrol and get into a firefight with the North Vietnamese. They are pushed back toward a river when suddenly a US Navy PBR (Patrol Boat River) intervenes and saves them with its firepower. The patrol gratefully scrambles onboard. Suddenly Ruiz gets into a violent fight with one of the PBR crewmen, another NYC Puerto Rican. It turns out that they were in rival gangs in the Bronx and Ruiz had accidentally caused the death of the sailor’s brother. This is shown in a flashback. As the boat returns to its base, the two have to be kept apart. Finally, at the shows end, the PBR sailor is killed, ironically saving Ruiz’s life.

Looked at technically, the show needed to find a PBR. The US Navy didn’t use them anymore. Francis Ford Coppola actually had a real one, stolen from post-takeover Vietnam and sailed to the Phillipines, full of refugees. Tour of Duty would have to find something similar, buy it, and modify it for the show. Happily, I knew where to find the plans for the PBR. I also started researching PBR crewmen’s uniforms for the costumer.

The writer brought in to do this script never seemed to get it together dramatically. There were continual ambushes to get through, as well as fight scenes and arguments between Goldman, Anderson, and the PBR’s skipper. But it just wasn’t very good.

The final disposition was made that the script was unfixable and probably too expensive to shoot anyway. It was finally abandoned.



## **SEAGOING SOLDIERS**

*A poem by CWO-3 Ken Hunter (Ret.)*

Does the Army have boats?  
you bet we do  
and the soldiers who run them  
are the best to be sure

We have both Deck and Engine

and they work hand in hand  
The Chief keeps the vessel running  
while the Mate keeps her off the land

Our fleet is of Tug Boats  
both big and small  
and we have landing craft  
to answer the call

We push up the rivers  
and we tow deep sea  
and we land on the beaches  
to keep us all free

We handle the ships  
in a war zone port  
and deliver the ammo  
for front line support

We're a breed of our own  
We've passed all the tests  
We're Seagoing Soldiers  
The Best of the Best

©2000 Seagoing Soldiers  
Kenneth C. Hunter

*(CWO-3 Hunter, a published poet and Vietnam Veteran, is a Navigation & Radar Instructor at the US Army Transportation School, Ft. Eustis)*

## **4**

4

*Courtesy of Haivenu-Vietnam,  
Special thanks to Ms. Vo Bich Ha, Director*

*(Editor's Caution: The authors of this article are Vietnamese Travel Agents with a biased interest in promoting tourism to what is still a communist-controlled country and economy, which sometimes confuses propaganda with the facts)*

Vietnam is changing, and changing rapidly. It's a young county – 65% of the population is under 25! Remarkable progress has been made since opening its doors to foreign investment in the 1990's. Vietnam's progress in reducing poverty has outstripped that of any other country. They have become the world's second largest exporter of rice and coffee, and consistently maintain a high GDP growth rate.

The potential bottled up by wars and the restrictions that followed as the painful process of reunification and reconciliation proceeded, is now being unleashed.

In cities, almost every street has a building site. Slum dwellings are being demolished and replaced by high and low-rise buildings, and country areas are being provided with a clean water supply, electricity, and new coal and gas-fueled power stations.

Forms of transportation are improving daily, Entertainment facilities are expanding, supermarkets are appearing, and tourism is opening up new areas and locations to visitors. Previously associated with war and conflict, Vietnam today is a place of beauty and culture.

The roots of Vietnam's culture are firmly embedded in a thousand years of Chinese domination, but more recently the impact of other nations has dominated life there. The French ruled the country from 1945, bringing European-style administration, religion, arts, and cuisine. The influence of the USSR was considerable after the United States departed. Realizing that the country was on the brink of economic collapse, the Communist Party opened up the country to the outside world in 1986 and embraced the concept of a market economy. ●

The coastline of Vietnam stretches for 2100 miles, meaning plenty of beaches. Most people, however, do not sunbathe – unlike Westerners. Most beaches are deserted

except for those in high tourist areas. One of the most popular beaches is DaNang, of "China Beach" fame during the Vietnam War. Further south, the beaches of Vung Tau are usually crowded with visitors from Ho Chi Minh City. Many attractive hotels and resorts are beginning to spring up around the country.

Almost 70% of the population still works the land. For a small county, about the size of Italy, the geography of Vietnam is varied and complex. A sizable mountain range in the northwest leads down to forested uplands, then an elevated central plateau, and finally down to two large river deltas. Vietnam today offers mountain streams, boiling hot mineral springs, sheer rock cliffs, serene freshwater lakes, white sand beaches, and much more.

### *Vietnamese River Side Village*

Vietnam's wide range of fauna, flora, and marine species place it in one of the top 10 countries in the world for the variety of its bio-diversity. Vietnam is home to some of the most endangered species in the world, including elephants, rhinoceros, black bears, leopards, wild buffalo, primates, pythons, and crocodiles.

Vietnam is gradually being "tamed". Flooding is being brought under control and electricity and telephones are gradually making their way to all residents.

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**5**

5

***... continued from Winter 2010 issue***

In the quiet of the night you could hear the two GMC diesels come to full throat in the distance and the sounds of a PBR hull on plane. Then it began: *whump... whump... whump*, as the crews rhythmically tossed the one pound concussion grenades overboard alongside the anchored ships and barges. I wonder how

many fish we killed in those exercises to keep sappers at bay. I also wonder how many merchant seamen had their pucker factor raised until someone explained the purpose of those explosions.

### *Ammo Barges at Anchor*

Young GI's and concussion grenades are a dangerous mix. The temptation for play is irresistible. I recall listening one night to a run from the shore. The rhythmic *whumps* were punctuated by a flash and a loud BANG.

### *Full Bore*

Apparently one grenade got tossed up in the air, instead of down in the water. I'm sure there was more play than I ever heard about, especially out in the back waters. Some of it, I know, was deadly dangerous. Having had demolition training, I knew fist-hand what that stuff can do.

### ***Exhibit A***

The main focus was to keep sappers away from those ammo ships. One night a small merchant freighter wasn't so lucky. It was at anchor between Cat Lai and Nha Be. It's rudder and propeller were pretty much gone. It was a real rust bucket. While not our responsibility it stood as Exhibit A in testimony to the risk we lived. The theoretical was possible.

### *Sitting Low in the Stern*

### ***Frustration***

*Keep the sampans out of the harbor and away from the ships and barges.* That was our charge. It was easier said than done. It would be easier to keep high school boys away from high school girls.

### *Ubiquitous Sampan*

***... continued in Summer 2011 issue***



**6**

6

*by Walt Kierzkowski*

Driving the DUKW's was a lot of fun! It's that first time you get to drive into the sea and when you are coming up to moor alongside of the ship and try hitting the brakes!!! They don't work!!! You soon learn how to overcome that: learning how to reverse the prop, cutting down on your speed, etc. You have to get the crewman to hook up the mooring line and then you turn your wheels out so that you're up

against the hull of the ship. Then you let the throttle out a bit to keep tension on the line.

We used to work in pairs. One DUKW would hold the other up against the side of the ship while the Terminal Service people would have to climb the cargo net on the side. I've climbed that net many times since. I would sometimes have to hang out the mooring lines for the DUKW's and landing craft to hook up to. The US Army had a cargo ship named the *Hickory Knoll*. It had no holding tanks back in the 50's. We were working with the Marines at the time. (They used to give us a hard time at Little Creek or in town if you were in uniform etc...you get the picture). Well, the Marines had to come in from the fantail in order to get to one of the cargo holds that held their supplies. We would give a hand signal to somebody in the rear head and all of a sudden the marines would get a "shower". We never really flushed anything but CLEAN water on them, but you can imagine what they thought as they passed through the untimely shower. They could have stormed the ship like a bunch of pirates since we had the cargo nets hung out, but their officers always kept them at bay. This was just a bit of payback. ☺

Taking a DUKW off a hard road and driving into the sand dunes was an experience in itself. First, you were to lower the tire pressure down to around 10 PSI's or less, from the lever on the dash. (It gave estimated pressures for different types of terrain). This made it easier to maneuver through the dunes without getting stuck. All DUKW's had winches on the fantails. (A compartment on the stern allowed access to replace the shear pin, in case it snapped on the drive). DUKW crewmen were issued a Bowie knife, pliers, and screwdriver in a scabbard that you could put on your belt. Each vehicle also carried Heavy-duty gloves, a flashlight, small tool pouch, and a 6-volt pistol trigger-type spot/signal light. We mainly used the winch to tow back disabled DUKW's from out at sea. The SOP was to run in pairs. Certain DUKW's had an A-frame derrick mounted on them to help load and offload cargo. These were referred to as "Molly DUKW's"

Yes, if I ever hit the lotto I would love to buy a DUKW and restore it and run it. I would take my friends out fishing...get them all excited as you race towards the water with them unprepared for what's coming next... maybe leave the manual drains open (not the three brass plugs underneath) so it would flood a bit, getting the water to slap up against the floor and have the water shoot up alongside the cargo compartment where they would be sitting! Yes, A DUKW can be a lot of fun to drive!

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## **WARNING TO VETERANS**

*Forwarded by Kevin Secor, VSO Liason*

*Office of the Sec. of Dept. of Veterans Affairs*

*Submitted by Don Cook*

An organization called **Veterans Affairs services (VAS)** is providing benefit and general information on veterans. **This organization is not affiliated with VA.**

VAS may be gaining access to military personnel through their close resemblance to the VA name and seal.

VA General counsel requests that if you have any examples of VAS acts that violate



chapter 59 of Title 38 United States Code, such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits, please contact:

Michael G. Dougherty, Staff Attorney  
Dept. of Veterans Affairs  
Office of General Counsel  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

7

7

*by Charles Rynberg*

*(We've all seen them, sitting in our seats on the plane, waiting for takeoff, and looking out the window. They're always scurrying about...the little airport tractor tugs pulling baggage carts around...Ed.)*

One day in Vung Ro Bay an LST pulled into the harbor to offload equipment and supplies for the nearby US Air Force base at Tuy Hoa. They spent the entire afternoon unloading and placing items and supplies in a secure, fenced-in area next to the PBR compound. The LST crew off-loaded three airport tractor tugs, bound for the Air Base. Everybody was investigating the tractor tugs. Someone asked what the tractors were for. The reply was that they were told to drop them off at Vung Ro bay. Nobody seemed to know why.

The LST departed that evening, with the supplies safely stored until the next day when the Air Force would arrive to retrieve everything.

That night, the tractors became the property of the 458<sup>th</sup> PBR's! We raced them in circles, drag raced them, and played demolition derby most of the night! If I remember correctly, two of them blew their engines – don't know why!

The next day the Air Force showed up with a large truck to pick up the tractors. They were trashed! The Air Force wanted to know what had happened to their vehicles.

We told them that we didn't know what had had happened. "Looks like the work of Charlie!" we told them. We never heard anything about them again.

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**44 Boat SitRep** Winter 2010 - 2011

*by Bob Brower*

**11/11/11 – Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day at the Eleventh Hour**, 2010 we (Gamewardens) had the operations MK2 PBR in tow full of Riverines at the Albany Veterans Day Parade, Albany, Oregon.

This year we were honored at the Fraternal Order of Eagles along with many other veterans groups and individual veterans from the area to a wonderful dinner and drink.

The morning of our parade found it cool and dry. Normally cool and wet...brrrr! with a surprise visit by one retired Navy Chief, Bob Cook. Bob was told apparently a year ago that Gamewardens had several 458<sup>th</sup> Army veterans. He was thrilled as I was to meet me. Bob Cook was one of my instructors at Mare Island. He had served at Mare Island from 1966 to 1970, Weapons & Boat Handling, including the snatch and grab. He remembered Bob Foley (Big Bob).

In 1970 he was assigned to Vietnam, returned and eventually retired out. Some of you may remember Bob. A patriot and American fighting hero. I think that we can all agree that the training we received helped us enormously upon our entry into the brown water operations in Vietnam.

*Bob Cook (L) and Bob Brower*

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**8**

8

*Courtesy of Jim Rogers, Director  
US Army Military Police Museum  
Fort Leonard Wood, MO*

Fort Leonard Wood was visited by a tornado on New Year's Eve. The twister touched down at 0945 and proceeded east-northeast through training areas, the museum's WWII area and vehicle park, near a water treatment plant, and through a housing area. Although there were 35 homes destroyed and 141 damaged, luckily there were only minor injuries to a few residents.

The WWII historic area suffered the destruction of two historic structures and damage to others. In the historic vehicle park, the MP Museum's river patrol boat was overturned in addition to damage suffered to other historic equipment. The museum's V-100 armored car and UH-1B helicopter were surrounded by debris but otherwise unharmed.

The MP Museum's MKII River Patrol Boat is not one of the original MP boats, but it is an accurate representation of the 39 Army PBR's deployed by the 18<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade in Vietnam beginning in early 1968. Damage included the cockpit frame that was bent and broken, a break to one side of the cockpit wall, and the front turret and mufflers that fell out of their mountings. It is expected that the damage will be relatively easy to repair. The boat will be repaired by the Ft. Leonard Wood DOL Maintenance shop, the same folks who accomplished the excellent restoration of the boat in 2003. The good people of the 458<sup>th</sup> Transportation Co. reunion group have pledged their assistance as well and are providing a replacement radar dome which the boat had been lacking since the 2000 relocation from Ft. McClellan.



9

The new web address for the 458<sup>th</sup> is  
**www.458thseatigers.org**

We're getting a bit more contributors to the newsletter lately! A very special "thank you" to those of you who have already shared your experiences with us.

Back issues of the newsletter are available. Just contact one of the staff listed below.

We appreciate your submissions, feature ideas, corrections & criticisms. Please submit info to:

Bill Northrop: norwill6@sio.midco.net

Don Cook: dccookjr6@cox.net

Mike Hebert: michaelhebert@cox.net

**458<sup>th</sup> SEA TIGERS ASSOCIATION**

Bill Northrop, Secretary

2600 E. 49<sup>th</sup> Street

Sioux Falls, SD 57103

Email: norwill6@sio.midco.net

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A d d r e s s :  
\_\_\_\_\_  
—

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Military Info:**

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates w/Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check this box if you **DO NOT** want information on this application shared with other members of our organization.

**DUES** (check box):      1 year; \$20.00      3 years; \$45.00      Lifetime;  
\$195.00

Please submit verification of service with application. We will need any of the following:  
copy of orders, copy of 201, photos, or a member who can vouch for you.

*Thank you for your support!*

**458<sup>th</sup> SEA TIGERS ASSOCIATION**

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Sioux Falls, SD 57103

Email: norwill6@sio.midco.net

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

A      d      d      r      e      s      s      :

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Military Info:**

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates w/Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Thank you for your support!*

**458<sup>th</sup> Sea Tigers Officers**

President: Denny Hull  
Vice President: Robert Ness  
Secretary: Bill Northrop  
Treasurer: Pete McGuirk  
Chaplin: Larry Kallod  
Historian: George Paavola

**Coming in Summer 2011 Issue**

*Qui Nhon Today*

*Confessions of the 458<sup>th</sup>*

*“Refections” by Tom Wonsiewicz*

*Bob Browers PBR Project*

*DUKW’s of the World*