



39TH ENGINEER BATTALION ALUMNI NEWS



December, 2017

President.....	Bill Ray	Webmaster.....	Walter Lester
Vice President.....	Mike Shaw	Historian.....	Jerry Bright
Secretary.....	Jim Lewis	Member at Large.....	Open
Treasurer.....	Jim Shamblen	Member at Large.....	Oly Guerra
Chaplain.....	Fr. Vasilios (Billy) Bassakyros	Past President.....	Bruce Fonnest
Sgt. at Arms.....	Mike Male	Reunion Chair.....	Gale Helser

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Here we go again saying goodbye to another year but also looking forward to a new year with great expectations. Our reunion in Washington, D.C. was a great one; as usual there were a few glitches that always seem to happen. The great things about our reunions are that even with the glitches, everyone seems to have a great time. This year, we had a larger number than usual with members attending for the first time and members bringing their family. Several of the younger generation told me and others that they learned so much about Vietnam and some of the hardships we experienced; it is sad, but our schools don't teach students about the conflicts in which the United States have been involved in the past.

Every five years, we gather in D.C. to commemorate the anniversary of the Vietnam Wall and each time we are there, it amazes me that they find another way to make the ceremony better. All the guest speakers this year were amazing, especially the nurse who served in Chu Lai at one of the hospitals there; what a story she had to tell. Our guest speakers at the banquet were also exceptional; LTC Brian Sawser from the 39th BEB gave one heck of a presentation and filled us in on what our new Brothers and Sisters are doing to carry on the 39th's great legacy. Ret. GEN Creighton Abrams enlightened us on the new National Army Museum and the progress being made. All guest speakers were presented a display box with the 39th challenge coin inside.

There are so many members I want to thank for their help, but to be truthful, I can't remember all but I

have to mention a few beginning with Gale & Diane Helser for all the work getting this reunion together; Dave Tanner for jumping in and taking charge of setting up the hospitality room due to us not having access to the room two hours later than expected; Jerry Bright for transportation to and the seating accommodations at the "WALL" ceremony; 150 seats and we filled them all. Fr. Billy for the beautiful wreath that he, Jim Ton and LTC Brian Sawser placed at the "WALL" ceremony, and so many others of you who helped make this reunion successful.

Our raffle items were numerous and helped replenish our general fund. Congratulations to Lloyd & Tina Pedro on winning the room for next year's reunion. Also, to Dave Tanner on winning the beautiful hand carved walking cane (done and donated by Cecil Brown) and to Dick Walker on winning the 50/50 and donating half the winnings back to the general fund. Gale Helser was presented with the "Blue Bull of the Year" award. Although overlooked at the banquet, we were able to present it Sunday morning during breakfast.

There were several items of interest that came out of the Executive Board and General Membership meeting. First, due to a lack of cooperation with hotels and the CVB in the Seattle area, next year's reunion location has been changed to Tucson, AZ on September 30-October 4, 2018. Rooms in the Seattle area were going to run anywhere from \$125.00 to \$150.00 per night, which is not acceptable to the Association. Our 2019 reunion will be held in the Milwaukee, WI area. Second, we will be focusing on making the Association Tax Exempt and also becoming a Corporation to release any one individual from being held responsible for liability. Third,

election of officers were held: Officers for 2018-2019 are President, Bill Ray; Vice President, Mike Shaw; Secretary, Jim Lewis; Treasurer, Jim Shamblen; Chaplain, Fr. Billy Bassakyros; Sgt. at Arms, Mike Male; Webmaster, Walter Lester; Historian, Jerry Bright; Member at Large, Oly Guerra and Reunion Chair, Gale Helser.

The 39th challenge coin was given to each member attending this year's reunion. The coins may be purchased now for \$10.00 each, which includes shipping. Please contact Jim Shamblen.

Now for a big "Blue Bull Welcome" to our newest members.

NEW MEMBERS

Dennis Dettmann	Warren Frank	Lloyd Schwieger
Unknown	A Co. 67-68	HHC 68-69

Orville Troesch Jr.	Tom Underberg	John Yurch
A Co. 69-70	Unknown	Unknown

The 39th lost another Brother since our last newsletter; Charles Stambaugh who served with the 511th PB in 1970 passed September 19, 2017.

Please keep Charles's family in your prayers.

Obituary is located elsewhere in this newsletter.

Carolyn and I, along with the Association Officers, would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a wonderful Holiday Season; if you travel during this time of the year, please be careful and we will see you next year in Tucson.

Please remember to send me any changes to your contact information so we are able to stay in touch.

BROTHERS THEN, BROTHERS NOW, BROTHERS FOREVER

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VICE PRES. REPORT

Thank You – Gracias – Merci!

Yes, there are many ways to express gratitude. And after attending the outstanding event of our D.C. reunion, I think more ways need to be found. The fine folks who planned and executed this quasi-military operation did an outstanding job and I feel they need

to be recognized. Perhaps not individually, but as a group as each of those individuals involved performed their relative task well for our event to have run so smoothly. To be blunt, it ain't easy to corral and direct a bunch of old engineers! I tried that in Vietnam, and the fellows with whom I worked were younger and more malleable than the current lot. It was a formidable task then, so I can only imagine what it takes now. However, the organizers of our reunion did it with style and class. And let us not forget the invaluable guidance and assistance of the wives and significant others who are perhaps the unsung heroes of the event. So, on behalf of those of us who had nothing to do with the success -- I wish to say a simple "Thank You" to those who did.

Now my standard accounting joke:

- You know what FIFO is... First In First Out
- And you know what LIFO is ... Last In First Out
- Do you know what FISH is??? First In Still Here. It's the last thing any retailer wants.

Mike Shaw, Vice President

Stone Mountain, GA

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SECRETARY'S REPORT

39th Combat Engineers

General Membership Meeting

Hilton Dulles Airport Hotel

Herndon, VA

Nov. 9, 2017

Start time 1600 hrs. Opening prayer: Fr. Billy

Bassakyros; Pledge of Allegiance: Bill Ray

Officers present: Bill Ray, President; Jim Lewis,

Secretary; Jim Shamblen, Treas.; Fr. Billy

Bassakyros, Chaplain; Gale Helser, Reunion chair;

Mike Male, Sgt at Arms; Member-at-large, Oly

Guerra

Minutes from the last meeting and the Executive

Board meetings were read and approved.

Treasurer reported cash on hand of \$15,210.98.

Expenses for this reunion are still being compiled.

Treasurer's report approved as read.

Old Business:

2018 reunion in Seattle, WA was cancelled due to financial disputes and accommodations with the hotel. It was discussed the alternate location of Tucson, Az. would be selected due to our recent reunion there and how well we were treated. 2019 reunion will be Milwaukee, WI. Dates for the AZ reunion is Sept. 30, 2018 to October 4, 2018.

New Business: Names for officers were taken from the floor with the following slate:

Bill Ray, President

Mike Shaw, VP

Jim Shamblen, Treasurer

Jim Lewis, Secretary

All other positions on the board are at the selection of the President. The above slate of officers serve for two year terms and were approved by voice vote from the membership.

Member Jake Neta offered a suggestion to the group to start a scholarship fund. He offered to make the first contribution of \$500. After discussion of pro and con, Jim Shamblen volunteered to investigate the feasibility of a scholarship committee. He has had extensive background with the 101st in this matter. More to be reported next year.

A motion was made to donate \$1,000.00 to our guest speaker, General Abrams, the chairman of the National Army Museum under construction.

Seconded and passed.

Challenge coins were given to both speakers as well as each member attending. Additional coins were for sale at \$10/each.

Motor coaches were ordered for the ceremonies at the Wall due to the age/disabilities of membership. Cost was \$13/pp or \$25/couple. Members need to convene in the lobby by 10:15AM. Jerry Bright secured 150 seats for the 39th Engineers for the ceremonies at the Wall.

The hotel gift shop offered the membership a 20% discount on all merchandise during our visit.

Fr. Billy read the closing prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 1630 hrs.

Respectfully submitted:

Jim Lewis, Secretary

Just a short note of appreciation to Gale and Diane Helser as well as Bill and Carolyn Ray for the

tremendous efforts put forth for our reunion in Washington, D.C. Great accommodations, food, speakers, friendship and memories. A special note of thanks to Jerry Bright for arranging the seating for us for the ceremonies. It would have been a very long few hours on our feet.

Sandy and I had a wonderful time and we appreciate your confidence in us to be your secretary again for the next two years. Won't you please consider an officer's position for the next election? We don't want the same old, same old for our group. New people bring new ideas; new ideas bring more membership.

Wishing you all a blessed and safe Merry Christmas and New Year. Our love to you all.

Jim Lewis, Veteran's Service Officer (VSO)

Vietnam Veterans of America

Cell 219-730-8140

Co. A, 67-68

TREASURER'S REPORT

All, it is amazing. After about 50 entries totaling over \$20,000, and with everything else going on, the checkbook is balanced (not without some corrections, but balanced).

We are solvent at \$9,533.83 with all things accounted for unless anyone else has any more receipts to be paid.

Fight, Build and Destroy!

Jim Shamblen, Treasurer

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OBTUARY

Charles Stambaugh was born on April 23, 1949 and passed away on Tuesday, September 19, 2017.

Charles was a resident of New Windsor, Maryland at the time of passing.

Charlie was a 1967 graduate of Francis Scott Key High School and in 1969 he was

drafted and joined the Army serving in the 511th Engineers.

A funeral service was held at the church on Monday, Sept. 25 at 10:30 a.m., concluding with military honors. Inurnment was in St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery, Uniontown at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Carroll Hospice, 292 Stoner Ave., Westminster, MD 21157 or Union Bridge Church of the Brethren, 124 S. Main St., Union Bridge, MD 21791.

CHAPLAIN'S THOUGHTS

"THE WALL!"

At this year's Reunion, we had the honor and pleasure of attending the 35th Anniversary of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. Every time I have the opportunity to walk the Wall it brings back so many memories of the time I spent in Vietnam, and those who I served with. Seeing so many names, some I know on the Wall strikes a deep resounding cord in my soul. I can remember the first time I went to the Wall many years ago, and sat on the grass opposite it just looking at the marble stone slabs with the names engraved on it of those who gave all for this country.

However, every time we have a Reunion in D.C. and attend the ceremonies at the Wall it is different. Not because of the speeches from the officials of our government or from the honored guest who thank us for our service, but because we are there alongside those we served with. This comradery unites us all, the living and the Fallen in one place and time through the expression of the Wall.

Today we are occupied with other important obligations and necessities, such as family and livelihood. Moreover, we should never forget those who did not make it home and whose names are written on the Wall. Whenever we gather together as a group at Reunions, we pay respect to our Fallen and the memory of their sacrifice, may their memory be eternal. This year, we were very fortunate to have so many new members attending the Reunion with their families, along with the presence of LTC

Sawser, the new 39th Battalion Commander from Ft. Campbell, KY. We have come a long way since our first Reunion in Indianapolis, where only three of us attended.

Finally, that is why these Reunions are so central and important to each of us, and our reconciliation with the past. We did what we were called to do, and this was very noble and worthy of recognition. Moreover, we are the only ones who know and understand what our call to duty necessitated. I look forward to seeing all of you at next year's Reunion. Have a blessed Christmas and Holiday Season with Love, Peace, Joy, and Good Health!

REUNION RECAP

It was great to see so many friends and family at the Reunion in Washington, D.C. It was really the first time we'd asked you to consider bringing your



kids. Often, we never really talked to them about our time in Viet Nam, and it just seemed like the timing was right to have our kids learn from our 39th family members. I don't know if you're like me, but it



seems to be a lot easier to talk to a stranger than it is to talk to our own kids about those things, for whatever reason! I think they all came away with a better understanding of us.

Hopefully, everyone took advantage of their free time to visit the monuments and the new Air and Space Museum near our hotel. My two kids joined us with their spouses/significant others, and we had a great time. We got to see the comedy group, The Capitol Steps and see a play at the Kennedy Center that's been running for at least 20 years, Shear Madness in addition to visiting the Wall and monuments at night.

There is always something special about the quiet and beauty of the difference between the day and night down on the Mall.



Special thanks to Jerry Bright for getting us seating at the ceremonies at the Wall on

Veterans Day and for helping us put together the buses to bring us to the event and back



to our hotel. The speakers were fantastic. So, it didn't really seem to matter that it



was a little chillier than we had hoped!

We also enjoyed the camaraderie that always happens at our events and were happy to see so many enjoying themselves as well.



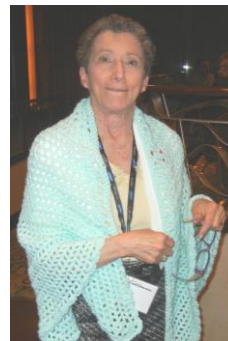
I heard a lot of great comments about our new Challenge Coin. Thanks to Roy Flores for starting the ball rolling by proposing that we create our own coin, and then helping in the design and efforts put into making it all happen. I think our

speakers greatly appreciated their gift of our Challenge Coin in its own wooden display box.

Once again, thanks to Jim Shamblen for handling our Auction at the Banquet. Special thanks to all those who donated to the Auction



to make it a success!



And, now that it's over, it's time to think about coming to next year's reunion. Check out the next article describing some of the things we've already got planned. By the next newsletter, we'll have the hotel number available for you to call and lock in your reservations.

Gale Helser, Reunion Chair
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REUNION 2018

Mark your calendars today for Sept. 30th – October 4th, 2018. We will meet at the Desert Diamond Resort and Casino in Tucson, Arizona. Once again, we will be afforded accommodations for 3 days prior and post reunion for those who wish to take in additional activities and extend their stay. It is a very active and interesting area and there are



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plenty of things to do and places to see. We will be sharing activities and venue information in future publications and online throughout the year. Hotel registration forms will be out in the next newsletter and on our web site in the coming months. But now is a good time to block out the dates and start planning.

We will, of course, celebrate our traditional event with some local adjustments. Our Annual Pizza Party will have some southwest flair. Some of the featured events will include: the Pima Air and Space Museum, the Davis Monthan Air Force Base, including the Boneyard of aircraft from the previous wars, Old Tucson which became a very famous movie set featured in many older westerns, The Biosphere, which tested the grit of a number of scientists and laypersons who attempted to see what extended living in a fish bowl was like. And a day trip to Mount Lemon with evening entertainment at the Gaslight Theater. This venue is a melodrama theatrical performance that will keep you laughing all night. Some of you may also want to visit the Old Mission at San Xavier, which was founded in 1692.

We look forward to seeing you at the Reunion!

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

February 15th for the next newsletter issue.

Please send articles to the editor, Diane Helser at diane_helser@yahoo.com or mail it to Diane Helser, 941 W. Rio Guaymas, Green Valley, AZ 86514.

Remember, this is your newsletter and your tool to keep in touch and share information with your Blue Bull brothers.

Sept. 30 – Oct. 4, 2018 Tucson, Arizona

Mark your calendar for our next reunion of the 39th Engineer Battalion Alumni.

Our next newsletter will contain the phone number of the Desert Diamond Hotel to make reservations (remember, you can cancel up to 48 hours prior) along with the reservation form and more specifics on what to see and do in the Tucson area.