



39TH ENGINEER BATTALION ALUMNI NEWS



www.39thengrbn.com

July, 2020

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The start of a new decade seemed somewhat uneventful but what a change. COVID-19 hit and our whole world took a turn for the worse. After surviving Vietnam, I did not think there could be anything that would compare but, boy, was I wrong. Stay at home orders, face masks and more restrictions than I want to list seeing as each of you are going through the same exact thing. If we use common sense and do the right things, we will get through this also.

We had a terrific reunion planned for this year in Dayton, but we decided to postpone until 2021 for the safety and health of all our members. Our hotel will remain the same and will have the same room rate as this year. We will still do our trip to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force that I believe all will enjoy without tiring us out. We will be giving the Light Denim Long Sleeve Shirt with pocket and the 39th logo embroidered on the left front to members registered at next year's reunion. The itinerary and meals should remain the same and will come out in a later newsletter along with a new registration form.

The reunion will start on Wednesday September 29 and end Sunday October 3, 2021. Our headquarters will be the Crowne Plaza Dayton Downtown, 33 East 5th Street with easy access off I-70 and will have the option of arriving 3 days before and staying 3 days later if desired.

The association officers voted to purchase an 8"x 8" memorial brick dedicated to the 39th to be placed at the entry of the new Army Museum which we will be visiting in 2022 while in Washington, D.C. for the 40th anniversary of "The Wall". The brick layout can be seen later in the newsletter.

Now for a big "Blue Bull Welcome" to our new member. Welcome and we look forward to seeing you at one of our future reunions.

NEW MEMBER

Leonce Castagnos	Mark Davis	Carl Kelly
C Co. 65-67	137LE 69-70	HHC 66-67
Anthony Overton	Jerry Slater	
D Co. 67-68	B Co. 83-85	

We held our second Memorial Service for all members who have passed at the Milwaukee reunion and we hope to be able to include the members we lost during our time in Vietnam at the upcoming reunions. If you have a member that you would like to have recognized, please send me an e-mail with the members name, unit and dates served and their date of passing.

DECEASED MEMBERS

John P. Armstrong, A & C Co. 1971 then served at Fort Devens in 1973, 1977 and 1983; John was a LifeTime Member of the 39th Alumni Association from Gardner, MA. He passed June 22, 2019. William Clyde "Bill" Jorgensen, HHC Co. 1970-1971 from New London, WI. He passed March 7, 2020. Maria Musick, wife of 39th member Gary Musick, D Co. 1967-1968 of Dodge City, KS. She passed July 7, 2020. Obituaries are later in this newsletter

As always, Carolyn and I wish each of you good health and prosperity and please stay safe during this trying time of COVID-19; we look forward to being able to be with you all in Dayton, OH in Sept., 2021.

BROTHERS THEN, BROTHERS NOW, BROTHERS FOREVER

Bill Ray
3rd Plt. 3rd Sqd. C Co. 67-68
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817-239-0787 (Cell)

REUNION 2020 HAS BEEN CANCELED – BUT 2021 IS ALL SET!

We had everything planned. Everything was set . . . and then COVID-19 hit. We held out as long as we could to make the decision whether to hold the reunion or cancel it.

After much discussion, we decided canceling was the best and safest option for everyone involved. The biggest deciding factor was the assurance from the individuals with whom we've been in contact in Dayton that all contracts will be honored for the hotel and events we had planned.

So, the good news is that everything is already done for next year. We'll have to verify everything as we get closer to next year's reunion, but you can put those dates on your 2021 calendar already.

For those of you who had sent in your deposit, you have your choice of requesting your money back or simply leaving it in place for next year's reunion.

Mark your calendar for Sept. 29 - Oct 3, 2021.

More to come in future newsletters.

Jim & Sandy Lewis, Reunion Chairs

A Co. 67-68

Jim1010lewis@yahoo.com; 219-696-0140

Sllewis6664@hotmail.com; 219-775-0256

MEMORIAL DAY

I have been a member of the local VFW since it was formed in 1973 but have not been active due to the attitude of the WWII members, my job, and volunteer fire department involvement. When I retired in 2015, a customer asked me to help with the Honor Guard after the Commander died of a heart attack. Within 6 months, I was Commander of the Honor Guard.

On Memorial Day, we honor deceased veterans by going to the local cemeteries. The six veterans' organizations in the county visit 35 cemeteries and perform ceremonies. At the 7 cemeteries that we go to, we read the names of all veterans that are buried there except for the one that has 526 veterans in it. Due to the sheer number of veterans buried there, we only read the veterans who have passed in the last year, which was 5. The rest have 7, 15, 19, 55,

62, and 100 veterans. The cemetery with 55 has 1 Revolutionary War, 1 Indian War, 3 Spanish American War, 6 Civil War, 7 WWI, 29 WWII (and 1 was D Day), 3 Korea, 3 Vietnam, and 2 peacetime.

There are 128 known cemeteries, big and very small with some plowed under in a county of 37,000. There are, on average, 45 Veterans laid to rest each year. We try to have 18 members participate to provide full honors with 4 presenters under the tent doing the introduction, eulogy, flag folding, flag presentation, prayer, 3 rifle volleys with taps and final salute. At the end, we provide the family with 3 shell casings fired at the ceremony in a plastic sleeve representing the 3 volleys and a list of the members present in the Honor Guard.

I hope you find this information as interesting as I have. I never knew how much was done at the funerals as I have never attended one until I joined. My father was WWII, but my mother did not want honors. I wished that we had honors for him.

John Lewis, Vice President

C Co., D Co. 1971

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CHAPLAIN'S WORDS

Make Your Bed!

Each one of us has experienced every range of emotions throughout our lifetime. Some inspire us, others give us joy, and a few make us sad. However, there is one that all of us hope and pray we never experience in our lifetime, but it is inevitable. How we deal with it will enable us to grow and do things we thought were impossible, which we know too well.

Life is full of ups and downs riddled with emotional turmoil caused by pain and suffering. Pain and suffering are something that most people avoid like the plague. Why? Because it prohibits us from reaching our goal and a life of peaceful equilibrium. Many do not realize how pain and suffering can have beneficial properties and can be profitable for the soul. That may sound crazy, but many of the early Church Fathers understood this very fact.

St. John Chrysostom realized the benefits of suffering and affirms that "The suffering that accompanies sickness likewise produces repentance, facilitates

compunction, and leaves the soul well disposed toward prayer. These last effects are particularly fruitful since they essentially motivate all spiritual life.”

As you can see pain and suffering can have a positive effect on the soul of an individual because it turns our mind and soul to prayer. As a result, prayer becomes more intense and from the heart. It will lift the individual to a spiritual level that was not actualized before.

Moreover, it can enhance not only the spiritual growth of a person but also propel him/her to achieve physical tasks that were before impossible. To prove the point, I will quote someone who knows all about pain and suffering.

One day I received an email from one of my Vietnam buddies with a link attached. I followed the link that took me to a commencement address by Admiral William McRaven at the University of Texas. As a Navy SEAL, he had empirical knowledge of pain and suffering and realized how it can destroy one’s hopes and dreams. His address was based on his experiences while training to become a Navy SEAL and his life’s journey in the Navy. Over ten million people viewed the address, because of that he decided to publish a book entitled “Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life . . . And Maybe The World.”

The book, like his address, reinforces the notion that we can achieve great things if we can deal and endure the pain and suffering that comes with any endeavor in life. He says that “Life is full of difficult times. But someone out there always has it worse than you do. If you fill your days with pity, sorrowful for the way you have been treated, bemoaning your lot in life, blaming your circumstances on someone or something else, then life will be long and hard. If, on the other hand, you refuse to give up on your dreams, stand tall and strong against the odds – then life will be what you make of it – and you can make it great. Never, ever, ring the bell.”

Finally, the reference to the “bell” is what trainees ring when they give up and washout of SEALs. It hangs in the courtyard waiting for those who have been beaten by the training ring. When the pressures of life bear down upon you and it looks like you cannot endure anything else that is the time to ask the Lord for the strength to continue one more day. After a while one day turns into two, two into three, three into four, etc. and finally you will reach your goal. Moreover, you

will find the courage and fortitude to face whatever comes your way. Hope is something that can never be created within someone without God’s grace, but with it you gain trust that will get you through the trials and battles you will face in your lifetime.

Fr. Vasilios Bassakyros

“IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES”

Little Charlie Dickens was on to something when he wrote those immortal words so very long ago. However, his famous saying applies to today’s situation as it did then, perhaps more so.

I am a gambler and would have bet the house – another famous saying, generally spoken by one about to lose his proverbial shirt – that what we are seeing today with this horrible COVID-19 virus could have never happened. And, like my fictitious gambler friend, would have lost.

While there is certainly enough bad news to go around, there are unquestionable bright spots as well. In spite of health and political issues, we live in what most folks of the world would consider the greatest nation in the world! And, speaking from personal experience as one who has been fortunate to have traveled most of the world, I can attest to indeed how fortunate we as Americans are.

Yes, we are not always right. No country can be. But when viewed in totality, ours is a record no other nation can top. And much of the achievement of America is directly attributable to the United States Military – its success and sacrifices. Each of us who has served has played a role in helping the United States secure leadership greatness. It is an accomplishment of which to be proud.

No doubt COVID-19 has dealt a difficult punch on so many levels. But to borrow another famous line – “This too shall pass!” If each of us does our part to practice recommended health guidelines and maintain discipline, it will pass much quicker.

A closing axiom - Hang in there! Better days and times are yet to come...

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Shaw, Member at Large; C Co., 1970-71
nsxtarga@bellsouth.net; 678-895-1871 (Cell)

OBITUARIES

John P. Armstrong, a resident of Gardner, MA, died June 22, 2019. He was born in Lewiston, ME on March 28, 1947, the son of the late John R. Armstrong and Loretta (Allain) Armstrong. Husband of Beverly Armstrong, he entered the US Army. After serving in Vietnam, he was awarded the purple heart for being wounded in combat. He was an instructor in: Mine Warfare and Obstacles at the US Military Academy West Point. He continued to served in the United States Army as a Demolition Specialist Combat Engineer. John also served as a Military Police Supervisor and Operation Sargent, and Unit First Sargent at Fort Devens, MA.

After John retired from the US Army, he obtained his certification as a Refrigeration Technician. He worked as a federal employee for the US Army until he was medically retired due to his service-connected disabilities.

John loved his wife, Beverly and daughter, Lynda and the many puppy dogs and kitty cats they invited into their home. He will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

He is survived by his wife of over 50 years, Beverly Armstrong and daughter, Lynda Armstrong; granddaughter, Sheryl; his wo sisters, Cecil Iskra and Connie Adams, both of Connecticut, and his brother and sister-in-law, Mike and Laura smith of Virginia, along with many nieces and nephews.

William Clyde Jorgensen, age 71, passed away unexpectedly at his residence on March 7, 2020. The son of Clyde and Sally (Stroebe) Jorgesen, he was born in Neenah, WI on February 12, 1949. Bill served his country in the US Army. He retired from Pierce Manufacturing.

He is survived by his sister, Ellen Davis and two nephews, Quinn James Davis and Ian Christopher Davis. His parents preceded him in death. Per Bill's wishes, a private ceremony was held at a later date.

Maria Elaine Musick, 78, died July 7, 2020 at the Kansas Soldiers Home in Fort Dodge. She was born on December 5, 1941 in St. Mary's, the daughter of George and Catherine (Johnston) Verschelden.



Maria spent her childhood in St. Mary's where she graduated from St. Mary's High School. She went on to further her education at Marymount College and Newman College, obtaining two different Associates Degrees. Maria married Pat Hutley and they made their home in Copeland, raising three children. They later divorced. Maria continued her education, attending St. Mary of the Plains in Dodge City. She earned both a Bachelor of Arts and a

Bachelor of Science degrees in education.

Maria taught for 12 years in Copeland before moving to Dodge City where she taught 8th grade reading for 16 years. Maria's love for learning continued. She not only went on to receive a master's degree from Kansas State University but also accumulated over 30 hours in theology. On November 20, 1998, Maria married Gary Musick at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Dodge City. She retired from teaching in 2004. Maria enjoyed reading and volunteer work. She was highly active in the organization, Justice for Immigrants.

She was a member of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Dodge City. Maria volunteered for many areas in the church, always helping where needed.

Maria is survived by her husband, Gary of Dodge City; three children, Julie Chase and husband Derek of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Sarah Ambrosio and husband Joel of Cape Coral, Florida, and Pete Hutley and wife Ruth of Columbus; three step daughters, Renee Shriner and husband Bart of Cimarron, Robin Mann and husband David of Leavenworth, and Rebecca Garcia of Mulvane; a sister, Janet White of London, Ohio; one brother, Michael Verschelden and wife Nancy of Sachse, Texas; 16 grandsons; four granddaughters; and special friends Chris Milo and Katherine Bland-Robins both of Dodge City. She is preceded in death by her parents; two brothers, George and Bob Verschelden; and a sister, Katrina Clark.

Thoughts and memories may be shared in the online guest book at www.swaimfuneralhome.com.

39TH BEB BULL STRIKE UPDATE



On June 11th, at Charlie Company's change of command ceremony, we congratulated CPT Hill on a successful command and welcomed CPT Chrusciel to her next Rendezvous with Destiny as a Strike Co. Commander.



2nd Brigade Combat Team "STRIKE" was in the field the weekend of June 27-28 conducting a Combined Arms Maneuver Live Fire

Exercise at Fort Campbell. The company-level exercise was preparing Strike Soldiers for their upcoming rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Center.

39TH ENGINEER COMMEMORATIVE BRICK AT THE U.S. ARMY MUSEUM

Army Museum Commemorative Brick Program
Fulfillment Center
615 E. 43rd St.
Boise, ID 83714

William Ray
6205 Big Springs Dr.
Arlington, TX 76001

Dear William L Ray,

Please accept our sincere appreciation for your support of the Army Historical Foundation through your participation in the Army Museum Commemorative Brick Program. A brick bearing your unique message shall be placed at the National Museum of the United States Army, symbolizing your commitment to the American Soldier. We hope you enjoy this tangible symbol of your place in Army history for many years to come.

Sincerely,

*Army Museum Commemorative Brick Program
The Army Historical Foundation*



39TH ENGINEERS (CBT)
BLUE BULLS
FIGHT BUILD DESTROY
WWII TO PRESENT
BROTHERS & SISTERS
THEN, NOW & FOREVER

This 8" x 8" Commemorative Brick will be installed at the entrance to the new National Museum of the United States Army in Washington, D.C.

The National Museum of the United States Army is planned as the official museum for the history of the United States Army and is under construction just outside Washington, DC. The National Museum of the United States Army celebrates over 240 years of Army history and honors our nation's soldiers—past, present and future—the regular Army, the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard. The objectives of the museum are to honor America's soldiers, preserve Army history, and educate the public about the Army's role in American history.

It is one of the locations we plan to visit when we hold our reunion there is 2022. For more information, visit their website at: thenmusa.org.



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**39TH ENGINEER (CBT)
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REUNION
29 SEPTEMBER 2021 – 3 OCTOBER 2021
DAYTON, OHIO**

The 2020 Reunion has been canceled. However, our contacts in Dayton, Ohio have graciously agreed to move the dates of our contracts to 2021. So, the new dates are September 29, 2021 through October 3, 2021. Save the dates! Room rates will be \$119.00 with 3 days before and after the reunion available at the same rate.

We will not be able to reserve our rooms yet, but you can mark your calendars to set aside the days to, once again, visit with friends and comrades.

The Crowne Plaza is easy access off I-70 and airlines into Dayton International Airport include Allegiant, American, Delta and United. There are several non-stop flights out of major hubs. Our hotel offers a free shuttle.

Some attractions we plan to visit include the Air Force Museum, Carillon Park, Packard Museum, 2nd St. Market, Wright Brothers Memorial and Hawthorn Hill.