



39TH ENGINEER BATTALION ALUMNI NEWS



www.39thengrbn.com

February, 2022

President.....	Bill Ray	Historian.....	Jerry Bright
Vice President.....	John Lewis	Member at Large.....	Dave Tanner
Secretary.....	Jim Lewis	Member at Large.....	Oly Guerra
Treasurer.....	Jim Shamblen	Member at Large.....	Mike Shaw
Chaplain.....	Fr. Vasilios (Billy) Bassakyros	Past President.....	Bruce Fonest
Sgt. at Arms.....	Mike Male	Reunion Chair.....	Jim & Sandy Lewis
Webmaster.....	Walter Lester	Newsletter.....	Diane Helser

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our hope is that each of you are weathering this current virus and that your health and that of your family's is good. The hardest decision I had to make, and I am sure the same could be said for the other association officers was to "postpone the reunion again due to safety concerns" but here we are. It is 2022 and we are moving forward with our 2022 reunion.

We had a terrific reunion planned in Dayton, and maybe sometime in the future we may try that location again. We now have our hotel set for being in Washington, DC for 2022 and the 40th anniversary of "The Vietnam Wall". We will be giving the Light Denim Long Sleeve Shirt with pocket and the 39th logo embroidered on the left front to members registered for this year's reunion.

The reunion will start on Wednesday, November 9th and end Sunday, November 13th, 2022. Our headquarters will be the Crowne Plaza Dulles Airport, 2200 Centreville Road, Herndon, VA 20170 and will have the option of arriving 3 days before and staying 3 days later if desired. Our room rates will be \$109.00 with breakfast for 2 included, free parking and free shuttle service to and from Washington Dulles International Airport with scheduled runs on the hour and service to the nearest Metro Station. Reservations can be made by calling **877-390-5944** now or by using this booking link (**Society 39th Eng Bn**). In order to receive our rate, you will need to identify that you are with the (**SOCIETY OF THE 39TH ENGINEER BATTALION**). Information and registration forms can be found in this newsletter.

Once again, I want to mention and can't emphasize enough "if you have the need for special accommodations such as handicap accessible, it is your responsibility to take care of that with the hotel when you make your reservations"; the Association can't do that for you.

Our planned activities will be a trip to the new Army Museum at Fort Belvoir, VA. on November 10th and our trip to "The Wall" for the 40th anniversary on November 11th Veterans Day. The association purchased an 8"x 8" memorial brick dedicated to the 39th to be placed at the entry of the new Army Museum which we can see when we are at the Army Museum.

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 member's name, unit and dates served and their date of passing.

As always, Carolyn and I hope you and your family and friends had a wonderful holiday season and we wish each of you good health and prosperity through the coming year. We look forward to being able to be with you all in Washington, DC this coming November.

BROTHERS THEN, BROTHERS NOW, BROTHERS FOREVER

Bill Ray

3rd Sqd., 3rd Plt, C Co. 67-68

bill39th@sbcglobal.net; 817-239-0787 (Cell)

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Up the road from my house about 2 miles is a cemetery. It's one of those that we decorate the veterans' graves with flags and do military honors for the 531 veterans who are buried there. We do seven other cemeteries in the Township, but this is the largest.

One of the veterans buried there is E. L. Lincoln, first cousin of Abraham Lincoln. E. L. served in Co B, 58th Infantry in the Civil War. He came back to Fort Branch (named after a stockade from the Indian war that ended with the Battle of Tippecanoe) and farmed in the area until his death in 1916.

John Lewis
C & D Co. 71
lewisjohn49@twc.com
812-385-6044

REUNION 2022

Every five years, we go back to Washington, DC to see the memorials, see what has changed or was added, and, of course, visit The Wall. This year is even more memorable, as it will be the 40th anniversary of The Wall. Each year, individuals volunteer to read the names that are on The Wall. If you have never been there during the reading, you should really make the time to go and listen. Most are family members who are able to read their loved one's name within the group of names they are given to read. It's very moving and well worth your time, especially at night.

Be sure to get your reservations in as soon as possible. We need to be sure we booked enough rooms and have reserved enough buses to take us to the various venues we've chosen this year.

The reservation form is in this newsletter for your convenience. Please fill that out and send with either payment in full or your down payment. Then, contact the hotel and make your reservations for our reunion dates. Remember, you can also take advantage of our special rates three days prior and three days after our convention is over. There is a lot to see!

The reunion dates for 2022 in Washington, D.C. are Nov. 9th through Nov. 13th, 2022. Our planned activities will be a trip to the new Army Museum at Fort Belvoir, VA and our trip to "The Wall" for the 40th anniversary and Veterans Day.

The association purchased an 8"x 8" memorial brick dedicated to the 39th to be placed at the entry of the new Army Museum which we can see when we are at the Army Museum.

Our headquarters will be the Crowne Plaza Dulles Airport, 2200 Centreville Road, Herndon, Va. 20170 and will have the option of arriving 3 days before and staying 3 days later if desired.

FROM THE SECRETARY

America recognizes troops time in service each November on Veterans Day but now a bipartisan group of senators wants to set aside a day for Gold Star families each September to better honor their sacrifices.

On Tuesday, the lawmakers introduced the new Gold Star Families Day Act which would make the last Monday in September – just about 6 weeks before Veterans Day – a federal holiday to recognize families who have lost a loved one while serving in the military.

Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) are leading the effort for this 12th federal holiday.

Advocates have estimated as many as 3 million Americans may be related to service members who gave their life in the line of duty.

Jim Lewis
A Co. 67-68
jim1010lewis@yahoo.com
CELL 812-385-6044

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

The Four Chaplains

Some years ago, I went on vacation to Columbia, South Carolina, to visit my cousins who live there. It had been some time since I saw them and it was good to get away from the pressures of my hectic work schedule and be with the family again. Since I was down there, I thought it would be a good idea to

try and visit my first military duty station. Also, my cousin Michael's father-in-law worked as a volunteer at the hunting and fishing recreational area at Fort Jackson, so, I stopped by to see him. Boy, had the Fort changed since I was there in 1965.

As I have written before it was like going back in time seeing Ft. Jackson again where I began military life. It was lunchtime so I noticed a Burger King on the post and decided to have some lunch. However, what I did not know is that Ft. Jackson had widened their Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) at the post.

I was wearing my clerics and when I entered Burger King, I saw NCOs and Officers with religious insignias on their uniforms, and many from different branches of the military. So, while standing in line waiting to order I asked a Marine Major in front of me what is going on at the Fort that there are so many other branches of the military on an Army Base? He stated that Ft. Jackson is designated as an Army Chaplain Center and School for all branches of service. So, he gave me directions to the Center and after eating I headed over to the Chaplaincy Center.

When I reached the Center, greeting me was a large Memorial Wall dedicated to Chaplains who died in battles while serving our Country. The Memorial is divided into sections listing each War at the top and below the list of the names. The first panel lists the Chaplains who died during the Revolutionary War, WOW. After that the rest of the panels followed suit until the last the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. What I noticed is that the section and panel from World War II has the most names by far. Listed on that section were also the names of the "Four Chaplains", Alexander D. Goode, George L. Fox, Clark V. Poling, and John P. Washington who perished together on a ship. The account of that incident follows:

"On February 3, 1943, the civilian liner SS Dorchester, which had been converted for military service, was enroute to Greenland with 902 military members, merchant marines and civilian workers. It was being escorted by Coast Guard Cutters Tampa, Escanaba and Comanche. . .The Coast Guard alerted the captain of the Dorchester that U-Boats had been sighted and he ordered the crew to sleep in their clothes and life jackets. Most of them ignored it

though, because it was either so hot down below or they couldn't sleep well with the life jackets on.

At 12:55am, a German torpedo struck their ship. A large number of men were killed instantly from the blast and many more critically injured. It knocked their power and communications out, leaving them unable to radio the other ships for support. By some miracle, the CGC Comanche saw the flash of light from the explosion and headed their way to help. They had radioed the Escanaba for added support, while the Tampa continued its escort of the fleet. . .

According to records, panic and chaos had quickly set in. Men began throwing rafts over and overcrowding soon set in, causing capsizing into the frigid waters. But four Chaplains became a light in the dark for the terrified men. They spread out throughout the ship comforting the soldiers and civilians, bringing order to the frenzy. As the life jackets were being passed out, they ran out. The Four Chaplains took theirs off, giving them to the men.

Engineer Grady Clark witnessed the whole thing. Each Chaplain was of a different faith, but worked in unison to serve and save the men. Despite their orderly work, the ship continued to sink. They helped as many men as they could. When it was obvious the ship was going down, the Chaplains linked arms and began praying together. It was said that the crew in the waters below could hear hymns being sung. Survivors would later report hearing a mix of Hebrew and Latin prayers, melding together in a beautiful harmony as they went under, giving their lives to save the rest. Of the 902 men, only 230 survived.

Before boarding the ship and leaving to serve, Chaplain Poling asked his father to pray for him. The words were poignant and a deep insight to the character of the man he was and those he died alongside. He asked his father to pray 'Not for my safe return, that wouldn't be fair. Just pray that I shall do my duty...never be a coward...and have the strength, courage and understanding of men. Just pray that I shall be adequate.'

Although many fought for these brave men to receive the Medal of Honor for their bravery and

heroism, the stringent requirements prevented it from happening. They all received the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross. In 1961, Congress created the Special Medal for Heroism, The Four Chaplains Medal. It was given to them and them only, never to be awarded again." End.

God bless all of them for their service to God and Country!

Fr. Vasilios Bassakyros

FALLEN SOLDIER TABLE

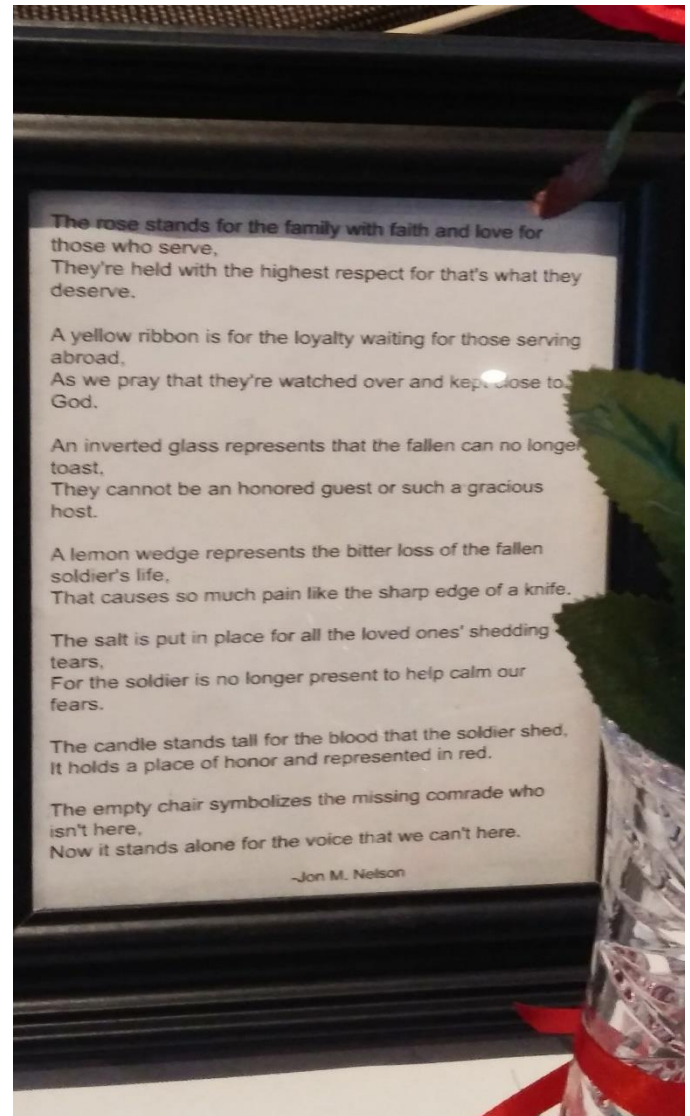


In December, my wife and I spent a week in Hilton Head, SC. While visiting Shelter Cove there, we happened upon a nice restaurant called "Top Dawg Tavern". (O.K., so the owner does not know how to spell "Dog", but it's a University of Georgia thing...).

Shelter Cove has many fine dining establishments. But what attracted our attention and convinced us to dine here was their permanent "Fallen Soldier Table". Top Dawg Tavern devotes a prime patron table to honoring our fallen brothers. Virtually unheard of in today's restaurants where more tables = more profits.

As those of you who attend our reunions are aware, on banquet night we too pay respect with our "Fallen Soldier Table". And a most moving experience it is!

So, thank you to the owner of Top Dawg Tavern for sharing his compassion and honoring our



missing comrades. And by the way, the food was excellent!

Mike Shaw, Member at Large

C Co. 70-71

nsxtarga@bellsouth.net

39th Engineer Battalion General Meeting Saturday, November 12, 2022

10:30 am

All members and guests invited to attend.

Items for discussion:

- ➡ **Elect new board members** – please consider serving on the board.
- ➡ **Reunion locations** – Offer suggestions and vote on possible locations for upcoming reunions.



39th Engineer Battalion Alumni
 941 W. Rio Guaymas
 Green Valley, AZ 85614

PRESORT STD
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 McALLEN, TX
 PERMIT NO. 333



2022 39TH ENGINEER ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REUNION ITINERARY



Mon Nov 7	Early arrivals Meet with hotel staff	Fri Nov 11	6:30-9:00am Breakfast 10:00am Load buses for "The Wall" 2:30pm Return to Hotel Hospitality Room Open All Day
Tue Nov 8	Officers arrivals Set up Hospitality Room Hospitality Room Opens	Sat Nov 12	6:30-9:00am Breakfast 10:30 am General Membership Meeting/Election of Officers in Hospitality Room Open afternoon for individual sightseeing 6:00pm Social Hour Cash Bar, Hosp Rm closed 7:00pm Banquet and Cash Bar 8:00pm Blue Bull presentation, announcements Hospitality Room opens following Banquet. Raffles and Silent Auction Winners announced.
Wed Nov 9	10:00am Exec. Board Meeting 12:00pm Registration Hospitality Room Opens 6:00pm Meet/Greet Pizza & Wings Party	Sun Nov 13	6:30-9:00am Breakfast 8:00am – Noon Farewell in Hospitality Room and Clean Up
Thurs Nov 10	6:30-8:30am Breakfast 9:00am Load buses for tour of Army Museum. Lunch on your own at Museum Restaurant. 2:00pm Return to Hotel Hospitality Room Opens		