



THE FRAG

2D Recon Battalion Association Newsletter Fall 2023

Greetings Marines, Corpsmen, and Recon Families,

I hope this finds all of you doing well. First off, I apologize for getting this out late, even though it is still Fall for another week or so. It's hard to believe that this year is almost over, as it seems they come faster and faster every year. Remember when you first went in to the service and your EAS seemed a hundred years away, and your platoon sergeant looked ancient, even though he was in his 20s? Not so these days!

Unfortunately, this issue contains several members and loved one whom we have lost during the year: Col. Bill Page, TNSG (Ret.), our Chaplain; Sgt. Mark Ford, a respected team leader during the Gulf War; Col. Glenn Wagner, USMC (Ret.), the platoon commander for C-3 in Beirut; and Ms. Anne McGowin, the wife of MSgt. Frances ("Top") McGowin, USMC (Ret.)

Also in this issue is the book review of *Inside Force Recon* by Michael Lanning and Ray Stubbe, and for your entertainment, a short story titled *Don't Mess with Our RIPsters!*

Semper Fi,

Wayne Dillon
President, 2d Reconnaissance Battalion Association

Reunion 2024

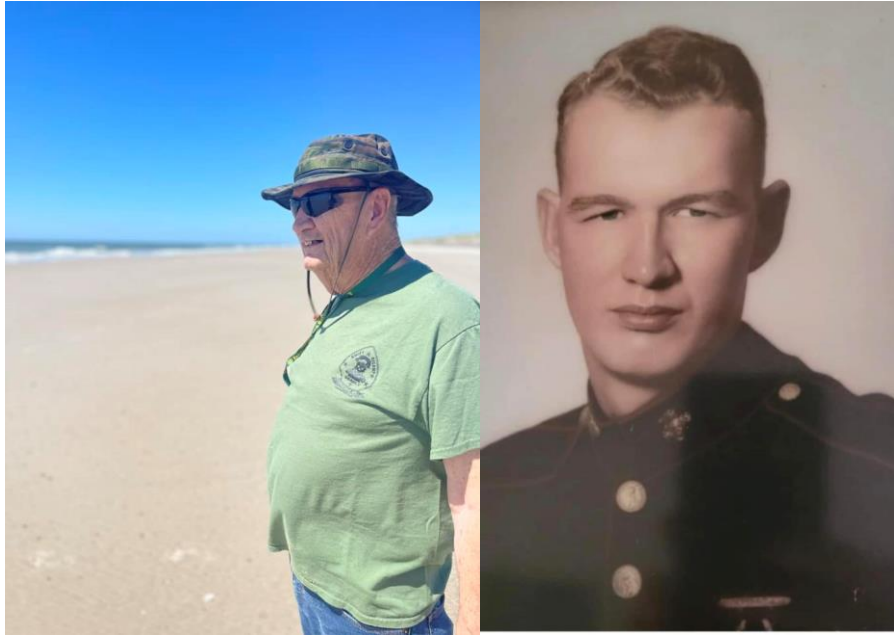


Our reunions just get bigger and better all the time! Plan now for the upcoming reunion, which will be held 27-30 June 2024. We have a group rate of \$156.00 per night, which must be reserved before 27 May.

The general plan is to check in to the Hampton Inn Sneads Ferry, NC, on Thursday, 27 June at 1500. Friday will be our day with the battalion to burn their ammo, give awards, eat barbecue, etc. and conduct our membership meeting. Saturday is an open day for visiting the beach, base, etc. until our dinner at the Officers Club in the evening. Sunday is pack up and retrograde.

To make your reservations, call the Hampton Inn at 910-327-5555. Don't delay!

In Memoriam



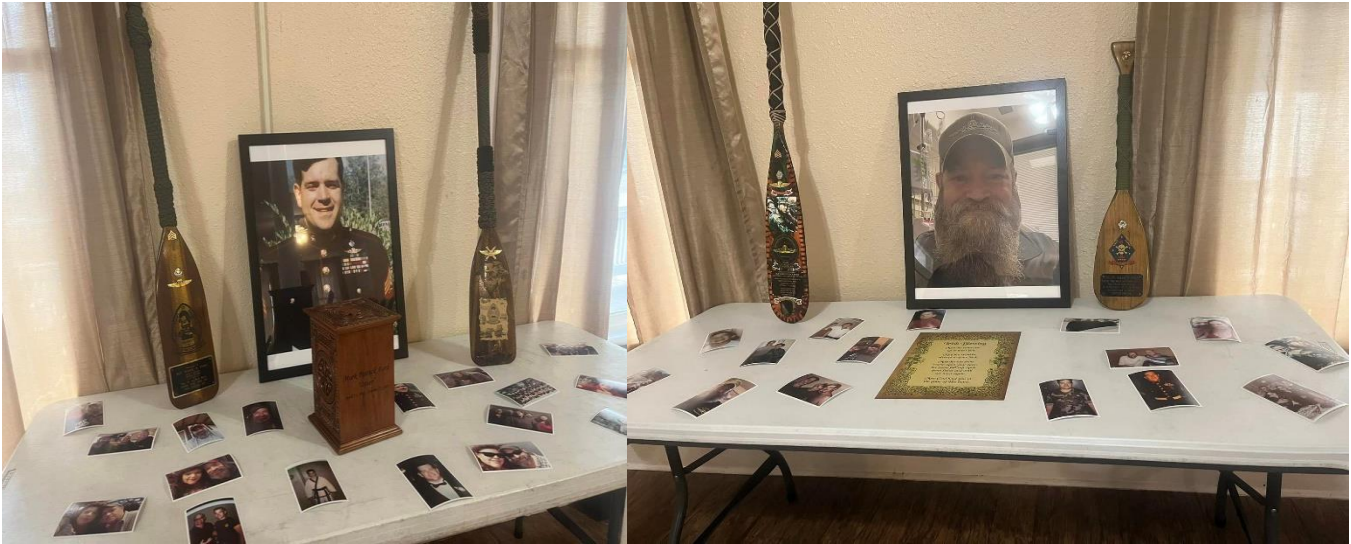
Colonel Bill Page

We lost our Chaplain and good friend, Bill Page in November. Bill and his grandson, Eric, a Sergeant First Class in the U.S. Army (he calls himself our “Army liaison”) steadfastly attended the reunions. Bill was noted for his heartfelt and lengthy invocations at the reunion dinner. I once told him, “Now, Bill, we only have the club for a certain amount of time. If you don’t shorten it up, I’m going to get a Methodist!” He just laughed and gave a great invocation.

Bill got hit by what he called a “suicide driver” near Morristown, Tennessee. I talked to him and he told me he was doing pretty well, just really sore. A week later, I was notified that he had passed away. I was privileged to attend his service in Morristown, and it was very well done, with a lot of references to his service. Bill was in the Marine Corps in the early 1960s, then went into the Army, where he served three tours in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat “V” and the Purple Heart. He retired from the Army as a Master Sergeant. After retiring, Bill earned a masters degree and served as a school superintendent. He also became an ordained Southern Baptist minister. When the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, occurred, Bill felt the call to serve again. He joined the Tennessee State Guard, attaining the rank of colonel. He is buried in the East Tennessee Veterans Cemetery alongside his wife, Ina, the wonderful lady who made quilts for our auction.

Semper Fi, Chaplain.

In Memoriam



Sergeant Mark Ford

We lost Mark Ford this fall in Texas after a long illness. Mark is survived by his longtime partner, Tammy McNamara and his brother Mike, also a Recon Marine. Several members of the Association attended Mark's funeral in November.

I knew Mark during the Gulf War timeframe. He was an outstanding team leader in Charlie Company. In a recent issue of the FRAG, the exploits of Cpl. Cook's patrol into Kuwait during the Gulf War were recounted, and in it, Steve Burgess tells of linking up with Sgt. Ford's team as they returned to friendly lines.

I'm sure Mark wouldn't mind me telling this story, as he had a great sense of humor. After the Gulf War, we got a new battalion commander, LtCol. John B. Kiser, an outstanding officer. On the other hand, we got the worst Marine officer I have ever encountered for an executive officer—Major Cook. Cook was a fat little tyrant and a poor example of a commissioned officer. He was universally hated by the battalion. We always joked that he must "have some dirt on someone." Rumor had it that Mark had the plan to dispose of him all ready—shotgun, shovel, alibi, etc. The last time I talked to Mark, I told him that no one would blame him if that had happened, but I was glad that it didn't. And I believe he was too.

Despite all the health challenges that Mark faced, he always remained upbeat and cheerful. We miss you, brother. Semper Fi.

In Memoriam



Colonel Glenn Wagner

Col. Wagner had a long and distinguished career. A native of Pennsylvania, where he was a track and cross-country star, he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1971 and served at MCAS Cherry Point achieving the rank of sergeant. After finishing his enlisted service in 1976, he attended Pennsylvania State University and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1979. After serving in two Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) units, he was assigned as the platoon commander for 3rd Platoon, C Company, 2d Reconnaissance Battalion. As you all know, this was the platoon that suffered grievous casualties during the terrorist attack on the Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, on October 23rd, 1983. Col. Wagner also had multiple deployments, including Okinawa and Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM.

Two C-3 Marines, Pablo Arroyo and Philip Amrhein, attended the services for their popular platoon commander, held at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Bechtelsville, Pennsylvania in May. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Semper Fi, Sir.

In Memoriam

MSgt. Frances “Top” McGowin lost his wife of many years, Anne. Though Top has not been able to attend the reunion in recent years due to health issues, he was always a fixture, sitting outside with his basset hound and smoking his pipe. Our sympathies are with you, Top. Semper Fi.

Don't Mess with our RIPsters!

In the last issue of the FRAG I told the story of “How I Averted War with Canada,” the night I and Sgt. Duncan were on duty when the Canadian paratroopers were having a bit of adult entertainment in our club. As I commented in that article, “*strange things happened at Onslow Beach.*” Yes, they did, and I will tell of one more thing that happened during that time!

This was sometime during the summer of 1993. My platoon, Bravo 1, had just returned from our deployment with the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) with Sixth Fleet. I was a gunnery sergeant, serving as assistant operations chief. Like all staff NCOs, I regularly had to serve as Officer of the Day (OOD). I pulled duty on a Saturday. As soon as I did the turnover with the off going Marine, LtCol. Kiser came into the headquarters. He told me that he had a task for me, which was to investigate an incident that occurred the night before. It seems that our new Marines in the Recon Indoctrination Platoon (RIP) had been granted liberty the night prior to their departure to go to (I believe) Fort Pickett, Virginia. As I learned, there was a maintenance unit having a party at one of the little cabanas on Onslow Beach. Apparently, a scuffle began and some RIPsters were attacked by the maintenance guys. They came back to the barracks, where upon seeing this, the Duty NCO called all the barracks and gathered up a “reaction force.” This ad hoc force quickly formulated a plan—I don’t know who the leaders were and never will—using standard infantry tactics. One element was set up as the blocking force, waiting for the assault force to push through the cabana and flush their opponents into the waiting arms of the blocking force!

Their plan worked out very well. That morning, I went to the scene of the crime. Bloody chunks of concrete, broken pool cues, broken bottles, etc. littered the scene of the one-sided battle. I interviewed one of the maintenance Marines in the base hospital. His jaw was wired shut, so he couldn’t say much. As far as I can remember, none of our Marines needed medical treatment (if they did, our Corpsmen kept it quiet), nor were any punished, probably due to their use of shock, violence and stealth.

The moral of this story: If you mess with one of us, you mess with all of us!

Book Review

Inside Force Recon

Recon Marines in Vietnam

Michael Lee Lanning and Ray Stubbe

I'm sure that like me, most of you have read this book. Recently, a friend gave me a copy from a yard sale (the book was first published in 1989). I couldn't resist reading it again, and just as before, it was a page turner. And yes, the title says it is about Force Recon, but interestingly, 1st and 3^d Force Recon Companies operated under the control of their respective Reconnaissance Battalions, 1st and 3^d, in support of 1st and 3rd Marine Divisions, until later in the war, when U.S. forces began to withdrawal, at which time they were put under control of the Marine Amphibious Forces (MAF).

As the missions were mostly land-based, the patrols that both Force and Battalion teams were very similar, and at times the two units supported one another. An example is when SSgt. Jimmy Howard's 1st Recon Battalion platoon fought their epic battle at the Rock Pile, near Chu Lai, on 16 May 1966. Howard's platoon had been on the OP for two days. Normal procedure is to stay no longer than 48 hours; however, the platoon was instructed to stay in place one more day to serve as a radio relay for a combat jump by a Force team. Howard's platoon was attacked by a battalion of Viet Cong. The situation became so dire that the Marines resorted to throwing rocks at the enemy until an infantry company came to relieve them. Five men were killed and all but one of the 18 Marines and Corpsmen were wounded. Howard received the Medal of Honor. The Force jump, the first of only three during the war, was considered a success.

The book also describes the development of techniques which we used and are still in use today, such as rappelling and SPIE rigging, as well as in-depth descriptions of the planning and preparation that went into patrolling, as well as the courage of the Marines who faced daunting odds and overcame them.

Inside Force Recon is available on Amazon.com and numerous other bookseller sites.

Offsites

Memorial Day Weekend: This get together in southwest Indiana is held Memorial Day weekend annually. Site has 131 acres of woods with a 16-acre lake, shooting ranges, fishing, cabin bunks, shower, disco ball, 8-track tape player, and world-class outhouse. If interested contact Wayne Dillon at 931-561-2575 or leatherneck75.wd@gmail.com.

Sawmill Shootout: Held in early October at Frank Seaman's Virtue of Defense tactical shooting facility in the beautiful western North Carolina mountains. Contact Frank at 828-442-7404 or vodtac@gmail.com if interested.

Supporting our Community

Scholarships

Two scholarships are available to Association members and their dependents. The Larry Ashton Memorial Scholarship, administered by the Ashton family, is dedicated to supporting those who are studying to work as health professionals. The Association administers a general scholarship. The deadline for these scholarships is 15 August. For more information, contact Wayne Dillon at leatherneck75.wd@gmail.com.

Community Support

The Association has recently been able to provide financial to the partner of a deceased member, as well as helping a member who had suffered some financial challenges due to a hospitalization which impeded his ability to work. Like all the Marines I've talked to in this situation, he was very humble and said he had a hard time asking for help. I assured him that it was a grant, not a loan, but he insisted that he pay it back. This seems to happen every time! It speaks well to the character of our Marines.

Membership



Jerry Newland is our Membership Chairman. Connect with Jerry with any questions or issues you may have.

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