



"In Service To Veterans, Their Families and Community"



February 2026

February 3rd, 2026 Presidents

Notes:

Jan 15th our Associate Member and Little Brother Mr. Anh Nguyen, gave us a wonderful awe inspiring presentation about he has been negotiating and working with the Vietnam Communists to help find some of our MIA Brothers with the help of the University of Georgia Dept that is working with Ground Penetration Technology. Here is an Official Photo I found on the internet of the TET offensive near the Hue Citadel, I am just wondering if any of our members might recognize any of the soldiers??



In addition to the worst losses of Americans beginning with the a TET OFFENSIVE the most inviting sounds in VIETNAM were the helicopter Calvary of Helicopters coming to the rescue of battle hardened soldiers. Do any of our GVVA MEMBERS remember this scene of some 100 helicopters leaving the base heading to the jungles for battle? See below.

Our Lovely Life Member and President of the COBB VETERANS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, Mrs. Donna Rowe, is in a Movie about the Helicopters of Vietnam called "IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE", her part in the story is filmed about 45

minutes into the movie of how important the helicopters were, as well as, the Nurses.

If you have not watched the movie I recommend you do you can find it here:

<https://duckduckgo.com/?t=ffab&q=vi etnam+documentary+movie+IN+THE+SHAD OW+OF+THE+BLADE&ia=videos&iax=video s&iia=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com %2Fwatch%3Fv%3DjGiY9tK-wPs>

It gives a great history of the Huey and the teams of Soldiers, Marines, Navy, Nurses and others who made it the most versatile tool in our arsenal of equipment used in our war.

Do any of our GVVA MEMBERS remember this scene of some 100 helicopters leaving the base heading to the jungles for battle? **See below.**



See Below is a picture of Nurse Donna in Washington at the role out of the Movie which is now in the Smithsonian's Vietnam War section of the museum.



Have a great February 2026
Painter Dickson Lester ~
President GVVA

Sick Call/Prayer List

Harold Hollingshead, Kieran Pavlick, Bill Craig, John Overcash, John Dudley, Blackjack Ollis, Mike Gresham, Walt Molyneaux, Dave and Gail Hambrick, Gene and Gail Tatum, Patrick Ultsch's Wife, Bill McRae and his family. Tommy Hemphill

If you have suggestions for future Speakers or pictures to show, please pass that info along to Bill McRae, 770-843-3973 or wmcrae@mindspring.com

Upcoming Events

February 19 6:00 PM Chapter Meeting

Membership

2025 DUES, \$30.00, ASSOCIATE AND ANNUAL MEMBERS.

Charles Langston

charleslangston46@gmail.com

Director – Membership

Email CHANGE

**Watch for messages from:
gvva1sitrep@gmail.com**

Member Participation Wanted.

Submit an article for the Sitrep. We want to hear from you. Send it to: Gvva1sitrep@gmail.com

February Guest Speaker

Greg Parham

Greg Parham and his twin brother were born in Atlanta back in 1947. They grew up in the Ben Hill area of SW Atlanta and graduated from Therrell High School in 1966. Four days after graduation Greg arrived at Parris

Island, SC to start his training and four years of active duty in the Marine Corps.

Greg's MOS was 0311 (Infantryman). He arrived in Vietnam in November 1966 and was assigned to B Company/ 1st BN/ 3rd Marine Reg/ 3rd Marine Division, which was located at Khe Sanh, in the NW corner of South Vietnam.

Greg's unit was pulled out of Khe Sanh and sent to Okinawa for a three-week training course at the Marine Commando School. The unit returned to Vietnam as an Amphibious Assault Unit. During the next eight months, Greg participated in eighteen to twenty amphibious assault operations, until he was wounded on 31 Oct 1967. Being a "short timer" with only thirty days left on his tour, he was sent to the Charleston Naval Hospital in South Carolina to recover.

After recovery, Greg's next assignment was Sea Duty, on a Sub Tender for a six-month Mediterranean cruise based out of Rota, Spain. He completed his four years with the Marine Corps serving on another ship out of Seattle, WA. Greg was a Corporal when he left Vietnam and advanced to Sargent while at sea.

His awards and decorations are as follows: Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, Vietnam Service Medal w/2 Stars, Vietnam Campaign Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and the Presidential Unit Citation.

After military service, Greg worked for Sears and Roebuck for thirty-five years as a service technician. He also went to night school and earned a BS from Georgia State University and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from John Marshall Law School.

Greg retired from Sears in 2006, but he stays very busy. He and his wife of 37 years work with other seniors at their church. They spend lots of time at Celebration Village, playing all kinds of games with the residents there. Greg has also worked with Team Rubicon, a veteran disaster relief group, for over ten years.

Greg's twin brother was a high school teacher, and he asked Greg to tell his Vietnam experiences to the students there. Since then Greg has

made similar talks at different schools and churches. He loves working with his hands, building things, or repairing things. He stays very busy, but he is always glad to take the time to share his story.

GVVA LOGO ON SHIRT

Bring your shirt to John Drew. One Logo embroidered for free. Rest are

Donut Dollies – Very Special People

Article submitted by Bill McRae.
Author unknown.

Editor's Note: My first assignment in country was guard duty at the Red Cross Girls hooch.

A job posting in 1969 asked for single women aged 21-24. The location was Vietnam. The pay was nothing. 627 women said yes. Three never came home. America forgot them all.

December 1969. Sonoma State University. A simple job posting. College graduates wanted. Must be single. Must be between twenty-one and twenty-four. One year commitment required. Location: Vietnam.

While her classmates marched in anti-war protests and debated fleeing to Canada, Penni Evans walked into that interview thinking about something President Kennedy once said: ask what you can do for your country. She was twenty-two years old. Three months later, she stepped off a plane in Saigon wearing a powder blue dress and sensible shoes. She'd just volunteered to become what the troops would call a "Donut Dollie". The name came from World War II. Red Cross women drove three-quarter-ton trucks through combat zones serving fresh doughnuts to soldiers. In Korea, they made twenty thousand doughnuts a day. But in Vietnam's crushing heat, even the mess sergeants admitted: "It's too damn hot." So, the women brought something else instead. They brought home.

Penni's first assignment: Cam Ranh Air Base. Then Long Binh. Then Cu Chi—where just months earlier,

another Donut Dollie named Ginny Kirsch had been murdered in her quarters by a soldier on drugs. The unit had shut down after Ginny's death. Penni's arrival helped reopen it.

But it was Quang Tri where Penni spent most of her year. The northernmost province of South Vietnam. Just south of the DMZ, where North Vietnamese artillery could reach you in seconds. Firebase Sarge. Firebase Fuller. Mai Loc Camp.

Places that existed only as coordinates and sandbags. Places where nineteen-year-olds counted days until they could leave. The Donut Dollies flew to these bases by Huey helicopter. Sometimes taking fire on approach. They'd jump out carrying board games, records, craft supplies, and programs they'd designed themselves.

The mission sounded simple: help these men forget the war for an hour. But that wasn't the real job. The real job was playing cards with guys who'd lost half their platoon last week. Asking about someone's rifle to get him talking.

Reading the room to see who wanted company and who needed space.

Making nineteen-year-olds laugh at deliberately stupid jokes because a person can't laugh and cry at the same time.

"We did an awful lot of listening," one Dollie remembered. "Especially when they would vent." The military commanders understood. When a unit got decimated, they'd call the Red Cross centers: "We need two Donut Dollies up here."

The women knew those trips would be the hardest. They went anyway.

December 22, 1970. Camp Eagle. Penni stood in a crowd of thousands watching the Bob Hope Show. For five minutes before the show started, a cook passed out fresh doughnuts—the only actual doughnuts Penni saw her entire year in Vietnam. They were gone before Bob Hope hit the stage. Three days later. Christmas morning. Penni flew to a firebase near the DMZ. Admiral John S. McCain Jr. was there—a tradition he'd kept every

Christmas since 1967. Since the year his son John had been shot down and captured. While his son sat in a North Vietnamese prison cell, the Admiral spent each Christmas with the grunts at the DMZ. Talking with them. Caring about them. Penni watched him and thought: this is what service looks like.

By late 1970, the war had changed. Troop levels dropping. Drug use rising. "Fragging" becoming common—enlisted men using grenades to kill unpopular officers. In December at Quang Tri, one fragging killed two officers who'd asked some troops to turn down their music. Penni kept doing her job.

Flying to Khe Sanh in fog and darkness. Playing softball at Cu Chi. Running programs for men who'd seen things no nineteen-year-old should see. Being the girl next door, ten thousand miles from any door that mattered.

The numbers tell part of the story. Six hundred twenty-seven women. More than two million miles logged. Over two hundred eighty thousand servicemen visited. Fourteen recreation centers operated.

But three numbers tell a different story.

Hannah Crews. Jeep accident, Bien Hoa. October 2, 1969.

Ginny Kirsch. Murdered in her quarters, Cu Chi. August 16, 1970. Lucinda Richter. Guillain-Barré syndrome, Cam Ranh Bay. February 9, 1971.

Three women who flew into combat zones wearing powder blue dresses. Three women who never came home.

When Penni returned in 1971, she learned something the military had never mentioned. She wasn't a veteran. She didn't qualify for VA benefits. She had no DD 214 form. She'd spent a year in a combat zone, developed what would later be diagnosed as PTSD, and came home to a country where saying "I was in Vietnam" got you immediately dismissed.

"I learned early on not to say I had been in Vietnam," Penni remembered decades later.

For twelve years, she thought she was alone. Then in 1983, a reunion brought the Dollies together. Penni met her sisters again—women who understood. Women who'd done the same impossible job. Women who'd flown into firefights armed with nothing but smiles and board games.

A grassroots veterans center eventually accepted her without that DD 214 she'd never have. They helped her process what she'd carried home. But it took until 2025—fifty-four years after she served—for Congress to even introduce legislation to award them a Congressional Gold Medal.

The veterans never forgot them, though. Decades later, when Donut Dollies met Vietnam vets, those men would stop. They'd give an extra thanks. An extra smile. They'd say: "You made us feel less lonely. Less abandoned. Less cut off from everything we held dear. You made life a little easier for us."

Because that was the gift Penni Evans and six hundred twenty-six other women brought to Vietnam. Not doughnuts.

Not entertainment. Not distraction. They brought the reminder that someone back home still cared. That someone had chosen to be there. That someone had volunteered to fly into the middle of hell wearing a powder blue dress and sensible shoes, just to play cards and listen and laugh at deliberately stupid jokes. They brought home to men who had no home to go back to yet.

And when the mortars fell and the helicopters lifted off and the firefights raged on, those men remembered something: A twenty-two-year-old woman had been brave enough to be there too. Six hundred twenty-seven women answered a job posting that promised nothing but danger. Three gave everything. All of them were forgotten by their country for decades.

But the boys they served—the nineteen-year-olds in powder-stained fatigues counting days—those boys never forgot. Because sometimes the bravest thing you can do isn't fighting. It's

showing up in the middle of someone else's war just to remind them they're not alone.

Ever wonder where the old sayings came from? Here is one from WWII that still fits in today's world of leaking lips of Washington DC!! "LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS".

[The Historian's Den](#)

During World War II, American submarines played a decisive role in the Pacific, strangling Japanese supply lines and sinking hundreds of enemy ships. Early in the war, U.S. submariners noticed a crucial advantage: Japanese depth charges were often set too shallow.

When attacked, American submarines could dive deeper than the explosions reached, escaping damage that might otherwise have been fatal. This technological edge quietly saved countless lives and allowed U.S. submarines to operate with remarkable effectiveness behind enemy lines.

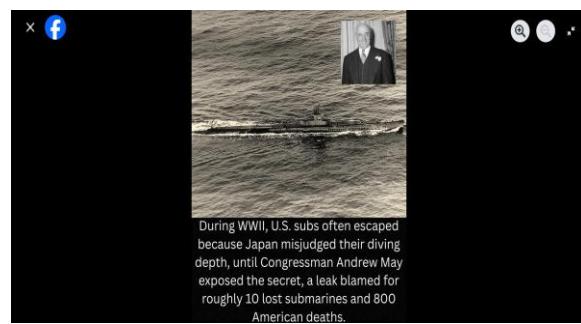
That advantage may have been compromised in 1943 by an unlikely source, Congressman Andrew J. May of Kentucky, then chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee. After returning from a visit to the Pacific theater, May spoke to reporters and publicly remarked that Japanese depth charges were detonating at insufficient depths to destroy U.S. submarines.

Although he did not reveal exact figures, the implication was clear. The comment appeared in newspapers, and soon afterward, U.S. submarine commanders noticed a deadly change: depth charges began exploding much deeper.

The consequences were severe. In the months following the disclosure, U.S. submarine losses increased sharply. Admiral Charles Lockwood, commander of U.S. submarine forces in the Pacific, later stated that the remark had directly cost the United States roughly ten submarines and as many as 800 sailors.

While modern historians debate whether Japan would have corrected the problem eventually through combat experience alone, there is little doubt that the timing was ominous and that the public disclosure removed any remaining margin of safety.

The episode became one of the most cited examples of "loose lips sink ships." May was never formally punished, but the damage to his reputation endured. Within the Navy, the incident reinforced the absolute necessity of secrecy, even when speaking in general terms. Information that seems harmless to civilians or politicians can be life-or-death intelligence to an enemy listening closely.



MARINE CORPS TANKERS

VIETNAM

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION'S

Vietnam Personal Accounts

Marine Tanks in the Battle for Hue City: Tet 1968 – A Tale of Two Cities

by Ray Stewart

Editor's Note: Look for references to our own Dave Hambrick in this article.

On 8 March 1965, Marine Tankers came ashore in their M48A3 Gun and M67A2 Flamethrower Tanks with the 9th MEB (later designated MAB) across Red Beach in the city of Da Dang, Republic of (South) Vietnam. Tanks were among the first ground combat units introduced into the Republic of Vietnam. On 9 March the LCU's landed "A" Company, Third Tank Battalion (3d Tanks), commanded by Capt. Edward A. Cercone, embarked on the USS Vancouver (LPD-2). The tank company moved ashore, establishing its

command post a few hundred yards west of "Dog Patch" with two of its three platoons. The tank company's mission was to defend the Da Nang Airfield. A third platoon was sent north to Phu Bai in support of 2/3. This landing was followed on 7 May by "C" Company, 3rd Tanks across the beach at Chu Lai, RVN, to the south of Da Nang, in support of the 4th Marines.

Two months later, Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 3/7, supported by 3d Plt, "B" Company, 1st Tanks landed at Qui Nhon, RVN. Within days, BLT 3/7 was replaced by BLT 2/7, which was supported by 2d Plt, "B" Company, 1st Tanks. In the meantime, "B" Company, 1st Tanks moved its CP from Okinawa to Chu Lai and came under the administrative and logistics control of 3d Tanks located in Da Nang. 1st Tanks was under the operational control, and/or in direct support, of Col. Oscar F. Peatross' Regimental Landing Team (RLT) 7 and its subordinate units.

Shortly thereafter (18-24 August, 1965) Marine tanks participated in, and acquitted themselves admirably, during what Otto Lehrack refers to in his book as "The First Battle", Operation Starlite, *[Dave's Note - I was in Operation Starlite with A, Company, 7th Engineers between August 1965-Oct 1966]* south of Chu Lai, RVN. Operation Starlite, the first regimental-size - and largest amphibious - operation conducted since the Korean War, brought tanks ashore from the Amphibious Landing Force (AL:F) with those already based 9 miles to the north at Chu Lai, together under the command of Capt. Allan W. Lamb, C.O., "B" Company, 1st Tanks.

Marine tanks - attached to, and in direct support of, Marine infantry units - participated in virtually every aspect of ground combat operations from the opening days of the Vietnam War to their final back-load across Red Beach, Da Nang, RVN more than 5 years later.

Today, when a Marine Corps Vietnam Veteran Tanker is asked what he "did" in Vietnam, his reply "I was a Tanker" is as often as not met with "Tanks? I didn't know they had tanks in Vietnam". Or, "That wasn't 'tank country', was it?" And, it is a testimonial to the aggressiveness and inventiveness of Tankers that, in many cases, tanks were in fact employed at all. Tracked Vehicle School, located at Camp Del Mar, Camp Pendleton, CA offered tactics training in tank/infantry coordination, somewhat grudgingly covered the use of tanks in an artillery-type role, did not address anti-tank mine and missile avoidance tactics, and spoke little of convoy/Rough Rider operations. Training needed to adequately and successfully prepare the Tanker for the situation and terrain to be encountered during operations in Vietnam was not yet clearly and doctrinal developed. And certainly - if triple canopy jungle, rice paddies, and rivers were not "tank country" - urban warfare with house-to-house fighting - was even less so.

Prior to the Vietnam War, few if any Marine units - infantry, tracks, artillery, air, engineers - had been adequately trained for city fighting - "combat in built-up areas". What abbreviated individual training or small unit training that was provided did not extend to the actual coordination of combined arms - especially in the context of city fighting.

During most of the Vietnam War, Marine Tankers "sold" the use of their weapons system to the mostly skeptical supported infantry in any way they saw appropriate, often outside the schoolbook doctrine they were taught at Camp Del Mar's Tracked Vehicle School. For example, tanks supplemented artillery in long-range fires. To do so they were ramp-ed up and tubes were set at maximum range to deliver harassing and interdicting (H&I) fire. The smaller bursting radius of both white phosphorous (Willy Peter) and high explosive

(HE) 90mm tank rounds was compensated for by the greater accuracy and quantity of rounds placed on the target. When the supported infantry units realized the effectiveness of tanks in the "artillery role", their use as such became routine. Similarly, Tankers developed "Rough Rider" procedures that enhanced the security of the convoy and ensured the continued resupply of forward operating bases. Capt. Harris Himes, in an oral interview taken at the end of his Vietnam tour, articulated quite clearly how best to employ tanks in the convoy mode. Tankers busted bunkers and cleared anti-personnel mines that saved many infantry casualties. Road, checkpoint, and airfield security were among the many "employment opportunities" presented the Tanker. "Doctrine" was arrived at ad hoc and none so clearly developed and applied as the tank, Ontos, infantry coordination and teamwork during the Battle for Hue City.

The sub-title "A Tale of Two Cities" must be explained. The "City of Hue" was more accurately 2 cities. Nolan states "Just as Hue was actually two cities, the battle to retake it turned into two distinct fights." North of the Perfume River was the Old City, or often referred to as "The Citadel" and as the French called it, of classical Chinese and French military engineering. Within massive walls honeycombed with narrow winding streets, the Old City housed a population of more than 65,000, not counting refugees, which had flooded the city during the war. Inside the walled city was the Imperial Palace more accurately called "The Citadel". Across the Song Huong or "River of Perfumes" and connected by the Nguyen Hoang bridge was the "New City" or South Hue with its wide boulevards and modern, westernized buildings. The battle for each of these "Two Cities" started and finished at different times - the battle to secure the South City being fairly well concluded by the time the pitched battle for the North City

began. Both the friendly and enemy orders of battle were separate and distinct - other than that both friendly forces were under the distant and nominal command and control of Task Force X-Ray [Dave's note, I became a member of Task Force Xray at that time] with Headquarters located at Phu Bai. Simplistically enough, 1/1 and 2/5, supported by 3d Tanks, fought the South City battle and 1/5, supported by 1st Tanks, fought the North City battle. As Hammel points out "... two battles is what any two units, from company on up, fight in adjacent sectors." This was even more obvious with the "Battle for Hue City". And, in the context of tank deployment, the rather unstructured and checkered use by 2/5 of the 4 tank "Provisional Platoon" led by 2dLt. Georgakis in South Hue contrasted starkly with that of the closely coordinated tank/infantry/Ontos employment by 1/5 which included the tank platoon led by 1stLt. Ron Morrison [Dave's note - I was very honored to serve with Ron during this historic period] in North Hue.

Tankers and Ontos crewmen carried with them into the Battle for Hue City their considerable experience gained in improvising. The Tankers had essentially no prior training or practical experience in the use of their "crew-served weapon" in urban house-to-house, block-by-block, street-by-street fighting. Nor had the supported infantry been trained in either combat in built-up areas tactics or close-in tank/infantry coordination. Further, Tankers had no street fighting experience in working with the Ontos. Yet, a tribute to the infantrymen, tankers, and Ontos crewmen, tactics were worked out and developed on a case-by-case basis, often under the harshest combat environment. This article presents just some of the story how Marine tanks and Ontos participated in, and contributed to the success of, the Marines' "Battle for Hue City".

Over the years the ancient imperial city of Hue, former capitol of Amman, pre-dating the Republic of Vietnam, had become an "open city" by the time of the opening shots of the Vietnam War. There was minimal military presence in the city. The 3d RVN Regiment, closest to Hue, was 5 kilometers to the northwest. U.S. Army and Marine forces were located at Phu Bai 12 kilometers to the south and U.S. Army units were positioned to the west of the city.

Hue was planned to play a significant role in the NVA campaign to conquer Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. The city was a key choke point along the critical U.S. and ARVN north-south line of communications (LOC), Highway 1. A railroad also ran through Hue. Navy supply boats used its ramps as an embarkation and debarkation point for supplies moving to and from the ocean.

[Dave's note - this LCU ramp, near the University of Hue and the Military Advisory and Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Compound was where our Tank company departed, via the Perfume River, after we left Hue' City] Taking Hue would sever the American's LOC and prohibit the movement of supplies from Da Nang to the DMZ. The NVA viewed the city as a weak link in the allied defense of the two northern provinces, which were increasingly oriented against an anticipated attack along Route 9. As part of the January "Tet Offensive", the NVA began infiltrating Hue some days before to augment the VC 5th Column already infesting it.

"11 January, as part of Operation Checkers, in an effort to rotate units of the 1st Marine Division north to relieve the 3d Marine Division, Task Force X-Ray (commanded by Brigadier General Foster "Frosty" C. LaHue) Headquarters was activated at Phu Bai. Task Force X-Ray subsequently relieved the 3d Marine Division Headquarters at Phu Bai, which moved to Dong Ha in Quang Tri Province."

"As the month of January drew close, the Viet Cong announced a seven-day Tet truce to last from 0100, 27 January (1967) until 0100, 3 February." They had no intention of honoring that temporary truce and, in fact, were on the move toward offensive operations across the length and breadth of South Vietnam designed to catch the American forces completely off guard. In addition to the country-wide confusion caused by the NVA/VC violation of their announced truce, the surprise launching of the "TET Offensive" in late January further complicated the Marine's ability to counter it since they were on the move to the north. In response to earlier intelligence reports, radio intercepts, and other indicators that the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) was staging north of, and infiltrating through, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), entire Marine units were being relocated from the south to meet the enemy build up. In support of the re-deploying infantry units, 3d Tanks had moved its command post (CP) from Da Nang to Phu Bai. 1st Tanks was moving its CP from Chu Lai to Da Nang and then further north to Phu Bai.

During this time, "With an invisibility almost incomprehensible to Occidentals, the North Vietnamese had infiltrated two regiments of regulars into the ancient imperial capital of Hue to join the local force Viet Cong units already embedded in the city. At 0340 on 30 January 1968, as part of North Vietnam's great Tet Offensive; these forces materialized behind a thundering rocket and mortar barrage and seized most of the city in an iron grip." When the enemy signaled the occupation of Hue on 31 January with a mortar and rocket barrage, the enemy occupiers changed into military uniform and took control of the city. What the enemy did not take control of was the Military Advisory and Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Compound and the "LCU Ramp" in South Hue. Also, the ARVN Compound

in the northeast corner of the Old City remained in the friendly hands of ARVN forces.

In response to the urgent calls from Hue and with "Inadequate intelligence concerning the attack initially prompted TF X-Ray to dispatch just a single rifle company, Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines (A/1/1), to relieve the U.S. and ARVN forces under siege". Company "A" moved north to Hue from Phu Bai along Highway 1, linking up by pure chance with four 3d Tanks tanks along the way south of the new city. Since the VC were unsuccessful in their initial attempts to drop the An Cuu Bridge, A/1/1 was able to cross over the Phu Cam Canal before it came under heavy attack just short of the MACV Compound. With Company "A" pinned down and stalled, BGen LaHue attached Company G, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines (G/2/5) to LtCol Marcus J. Gravel, the commander of 1/1, and dispatched him to Hue as well.

Lt. Col. Karl J. Fontenot had just returned to be C.O. of 3d Tanks when the Tet Offensive broke, and his battalion (as part of Operation Checkers) was in the process of displacing north towards Dong Ha. "We had four remaining tanks.... They were due to go into the city of Hue that morning that Hue fell to load onto LCUs to go on up to Dong Ha." The vehicles included the two command (M48A3 90mm gun) tanks (H-51 and H-52) from 3d Tanks headquarters, and two additional (M67A2 Flamethrower) tanks (F-32 and F-33).

2Lt Lt J.E. Georgaklis, C.O. of H&S Company was packing up his kit to move 2 of his headquarters M48A3 gun tanks - H-51 & H-52 - and 2 of his M67A2 flame tanks - F-31 & F-32 - to the LCU ramp 8 miles north in Hue. And then to join the rest of 3d Tanks in Northern Quang Tri Province at the Tactical Command Post (TCP) at Dong Ha. Lt. Georgaklis had no idea that the anticipated "administrative" move would take 2 ½ weeks, would include some of the toughest and unique

fighting tanks had encountered to-date in the Vietnam War, and would write another page in the impressive history of Marine Tank operations.

Despite the (Tet Holiday) truce, Fontenot's CP had taken thirty or forty rockets the night before. "We were shelled that night, but we didn't know any more than that. The four tanks left in the morning with the Division Embarkation Officer to go up there and boat in."

According to the 3d Tanks' January Command Chronology, "At 0800 on 31 January the gun tanks from Battalion Headquarters and two flame tanks departed the Battalion Command Post en route to Dong Ha via Hue. On Route #1 the unit was advised of heavy enemy activity toward Hue. The unit continued on and linked up with an infantry company also moving toward the city. In the vicinity of YD 7821 the tanks and infantry encountered another infantry unit (A/1/1) which was engaged with the enemy. The combined force fought its way into the southern portion of the city in an effort to reach the LCU ramp. While en-route the unit was ordered to relieve the MACV Compound in Hue, which was under siege. (The tank/infantry ad hoc team was reinforced by G/2/5). After eight hours of house to house street fighting the unit (crossed the Phu Cam canal bridge and) entered the MACV Compound (at about 1445) and joined in its defense."

LtCol Fontenot had gone to the Division HQ, where he found that "The G-3 didn't know that I had tanks on the road. I went in and told him, I said 'I've got four tanks going up the road, and I'm just going to tell them to join the first unit they find.'" The Division Embarkation Officer, an unnamed infantry officer, stayed with the tanks, "... and I had a major, who was with the tanks, he was on leave from the United States. He took leave to go there and observe what was happening, and he ended up in Hue. He got a good

look." Perhaps more than he had counted on.

A/1/1, commanded by Captain Gordon Batcheller, [Dave's note, I served with Major Batcheller at MCDEC Quantico later in 1969] now pinned down outside of South Hue City, had been on the move north with the DMZ in mind. When LtCol Fontenot found that the infantry was on the road into Hue, says he, "I got on my radio and called my tanks (Plt. Cmdr. 2D Lt J.E. Georgaklis) and told them to watch for this battalion, and lower their gun tubes and get ready to fight when they went in (to South Hue and the MACV Compound)".

LCpl Carl "Flash" Fleischman, a tank driver of H-52 tells his story in graphic detail. The first indication that the situation was dangerous was when Fleischman "saw an ARVN M41 tank blown up with human pieces hanging out of it." Then, when crossing the Phu Cam Canal on the southern border of Hue "all hell broke loose. Having no idea of what was going on and with no prior combat experience" Flash witnessed the Tank Commander (TC) riding in the cupola of the lead tank (H-51) shot through the neck with the round exiting his back. Cpl. Hicks was evacuated to the rear and the column of tanks and infantry fought their way toward the MACV compound.

Some of the Grunts had left their trucks and, seeking the protection of heavier metal, climbed onto the four tanks. With Captain Batcheller taking his place along side the turret on the lead tank (H-51), they proceeded down the road, pouring fire into the silent buildings as a precaution. To speed up the advance and take advantage of the cover tanks could provide, Captain Batcheller "... ordered the rest of his men to leave the trucks and climb onto the tanks." "... and they hauled ass down the road".

Then the incoming increased - small arms rounds sounded like gravel

thrown against a metal-sided building, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) knocked exterior-mounted equipment off the tanks, and B-40s did their best to deal a mobility or fire power kill to the tanks. The riding infantry was swept from the tanks. The tanks buttoned up and were guided by the supported infantry's eyes and ears. In turn, the TC commanded the gunner where and what to shoot and Flash where and how to maneuver his tank.

Suddenly, the lead tank took a direct hit from an NVA B-40 rocket. The crack and boom of another B-40 erupted and automatic weapons fire sprayed the entire column. A Navy corpsman fell dead and Captain Batcheller's young radioman was blown off the tank, mortally wounded. Batcheller jumped from the tank and began pulling the dead and wounded to cover. He was joined by GySgt J. L. Canley - the Company Gunny - a huge black man with a reputation for bravery, while the rest of the company crouched behind the tanks, triggering their M-16 rifles, returning fire. Captain Batcheller had been seriously wounded when the B-40 hit the tank he was riding. He was later med-evacuated and ultimately recovered from his wounds.

When the Task Force X-Ray-dispatched G/2/5 reached the tank/infantry column they coordinated their plan to advance to the MACV Compound. Several Marines climbed aboard the tanks and continued down Route 1. The road cut across an urban rice paddy, with two large buildings situated on either side of it halfway through. Small trees lined the street and a cover of leaves swept the road. The tanks led the way and the remaining infantrymen trailed behind, using the tanks, trees, and road bank as cover from the fire coming from the city. At around 1430 the tank-infantry team swept into the MACV compound to the joy of its Army and Marine advisers.

Platoon Sergeant Sgt B.L. Mitchell, describes his role in the fight 1/G/2/5 was in to force entry into the MACV Compound. "A/1/1 was already there when we came up. They were pinned down and we combined our outfits along with some tanks that were with A/1/1. We took the point along with the tanks. They provided a tremendous base of fire and kept the snipers off our ass. We directed the tanks from the phone on the rear fender. They provided us cover as we moved toward the MACV Compound. Tanks was the only way we could get them gooks out. Without them - hell, we'd still be there getting our asses shot off".

No sooner had the combined tank/infantry force reached the MACV Compound when G/2/5 received orders to attack across the Perfume River via the Nguyen Hoang Bridge and "take the Citadel". The tanks were not allowed to provide main gun 90mm covering fire for the attacking Marine company out of concern for damage to North Hue's buildings. However, the tanks took on the snipers across the river with high volumes of .50 cal and .30 cal. machine gun fire. "With the help of tanks, they (G/2/5) got across the river but at great cost." The attack stalled and the infantry began to sustain unacceptably high casualties. "G" Company's C.O., Capt Chuck Meadows, requested permission to withdraw his company back across the bridge. His first request was denied but later granted

1st Lt R.L. Horner, Platoon Commander, 2/F/2/5 describes the same effort by his unit the next day when the just-arrived F/2/5 was called on to assist the pinned down G/2/5. Paraphrasing Lt Horner, two tanks were called up to provide support but the rules of engagement were such that they could not use their 90mm main guns. They, however, did provide suppressing covering fire with their .30 cal and .50 cal machine guns while the infantry withdrew. Subsequently, they went forward to rescue the

fallen wounded and extract the Marine KIAs. When all the Marines and Corpsmen were "present or accounted for", the combined force returned to the MACV compound. As Keith William Nolan wrote in *Battle for Hue: Tet 1968*, "The Marine command at Task Force X-Ray was separated from Hue by eight miles of road and by a wall of optimism, disbelief, and misinformation."

There was no time to relax. Cpl R.D. Hull, assigned to the MACV Advisory Group under Maj. Frank Breth, was in the MACV Compound on 31 January when alerted to the infantry attack by the NVA. He describes the attack and his participation in stopping it: Then, going on the offensive the next day, when they busted out of the compound with 2 tanks and 60 Marines in an attempt to rescue some US Army and civilian communications personnel in an adjacent compound. According to Hull, eight Marines were killed and the force took many casualties. Unsuccessful in reaching the compound, they returned to the MACV compound with the protective cover of the tanks.

Then the word was passed that medevac helicopters with a supply of ammunition were incoming. Again, the tanks with accompanying infantry, saddled up and proceeded to the adjacent LZ. They picked up the wounded as they fell while providing suppressing machine gun fire received from the enemy on the north side of the Perfume River. To the consternation of the Army Colonel in charge of the MACV Compound, the tanks took the most direct - and safest - "route" to the LZ. They "walked" their way to the LZ through houses and walls. Ed Gilbert writes, "Tanks were used to smash a path through buildings to make a narrow, protected path to the LZ." Hammel in Fire in the Streets said "After January 31, (LtCol, C.O. 1/1) Gravel always took a tank along to make new streets, right through buildings and walled compounds. The method

destroyed a lot of Hue, but it saved (Marine and civilian) lives."

Col S.R. Hughes, C.O. of the 1st Marines and commander of the "Hue City Task Force", along with LtCol E.C. Cheatham, C.O. of 2/5, [Dave's note - I served with LtCol Cheatham at the 6th Marine Corps District in Atlanta between 1970-1974 where he served with the Officers Selection Director] arrived at the MACV Compound on 3 February. LtCol Cheatham took command of his H&S and three of his four letter companies. No time was wasted in attacking out of the compound. The next day 3/F/2/5 with 2 tanks attacked west down the street. Within no more than a block or 2 the NVA fire brought the attacking force to a halt. While the tanks provided volumes of suppressing fire, the NVA in well-concealed and heavily covered building and from behind concrete walls, could not be overcome by the inexperienced infantry. Marines, fighting in urban environment that was foreign to the most seasoned Vietnam veteran - used to fighting in the rice paddies and jungle - would require. To paraphrase LtCol Cheatham "however, it took less than 36 hours for his Marines to become the match of the best street fighters."

"Because every street constituted a prepared killing zone over-watched by snipers, the Marines were forced to employ ingenious tactics and techniques to attain their objectives. The steep learning curve was by trial and error, and it was costly. Accustomed to rural and jungle warfare against hit-and-run ambushes, the Marines in Hue now faced both VC and NVA troops in an urban defense in depth. Tanks (and Ontos) were the only advantage in weaponry the attacking Marines had, and the movement of these weapons was greatly restricted by the NVA's use of B-40 anti-armor rockets." While RPGs could not readily destroy a tank, they proved deadly to its crewmen. The small hole apparent on the exterior of the tank sustaining an RPG hit

resulted in interior spalling, sending the tank's shrapnel throughout the turret. The damage by the newer RPG-7 was much greater than the older RPG-2. "Hue clearly demonstrated the value of direct tank fire in mid- to high-scale urban combat. The M48s provided critical support to the infantry by opening 'new' routes knocking down walls and obstacles and blasting openings to enable troop movement and casualty evacuation under cover."

Within a couple of days the tanks were supporting the 2/5 attack toward Hue University. Flash, driving H-52 witnessed his first death - a 2/5 infantryman who was shot in the head. Flash has never been able to erase the incident from his mind. The Marine "died with a big smile on his face". Shortly thereafter H-52 took an RPG round that severely wounded the exposed Tank Commander (TC) Cpl. Robert Hall. Flash and others got Hall back to the aid station. "The doctor and the corpsman said that there was nothing they could do for him because he had no face. Robert was holding on to me. They said 'just hold on to him until he passes on'. I did. And he passed on". Flash returned to his tank. He said in an interview with Ed Gilbert "It was still functional, the gun would still function even though we had holes in it. Unfortunately, the brain matter and the blood and everything from Robert and the other guy (the loader) were throughout the tank, it was still a functional tank. We kept going. To this day it still haunts me on that one."

And the 2/5 attack continued west along the Perfume River. Tanks and Ontos - working together as teams - usually in pairs by providing cover for each other and, at the direction of the supporting infantry, blew holes through the concrete walls separating the buildings that provided cover and concealment to the NVA.

LtCol Gravel's meager force, comprising A/1/1 with tank/Ontos attachments, was ordered to take the Joan of Arc School. After battling its way to - and then into - the compound, the Marines entered the church to clear out the snipers. Upon entry, the Marines were taken under attack. The NVA were in the rafters, dropping hand grenades on the Marines. LtCol Gravel, fully understanding the possible ramifications of destroying the building, weighed his options. Placing the well-being of his Marines first, Gravel turned to the tankers and said "Take the roof off." The tanks first blasted the roof with 90mm H.E. Then blew holes through the walls to provide ease of entry. In an oral interview taken just after the battle, PFC. R.P. Albright described what he saw - "The dead gooks were hanging from the rafters like spaghetti."

Captain Ron Christmas H/2/5 [Dave's note, this is the same outfit that 2nd Lt Michael Lambert was the Platoon Leader] was given the Provincial Capitol to secure. He called for tank support and one came rumbling up. Christmas directed the tanks fire from the TI phone at the rear of the tank. The tank blasted the building with its 90mm main gun and .50 and .30 cal machine guns. The tank took 2 (maybe 3) incoming B-40s but didn't stop shooting.

With 1/1's taking of the Joan of Arc School and 2/5's occupation of the Provincial Capitol, Nolan states in his book "Battle for Hue", that the NVA enemy fighting in south Hue "back was broken." "By the end of the first week of the battle, enemy resistance on the south side began to show signs of crumbling, although LtCol Cheatham's battalion was still in heavy contact. With the securing of MACV and the nearby major enemy positions - including Joan de Arc - the battle broke down into a systematic house-to-house action of squad and platoon rushes. Success depended on the coordination of mortars, tanks, and recoilless

rifles, good radio contact, as well as strong leadership and the valor and aggressiveness of the individual Grunts." There was still a lot of fighting ahead in South Hue but never again did the Marines falter in their steady advance.

"Poor tactical maneuver initially had operational consequences as it produced excessive casualties. The Marines of both 1/1 and 2/5 were ill-trained for urban operations, both having been committed to Hue following extensive jungle fighting. The learning curve was very steep. What the Marines lacked in formal urban training, they made up for with 'the imagination, aggressiveness, and esprit de corps' of each combatant."

On 9 February one of 2nd Lt Georgaklis' 2 gun tanks (H-51) was destroyed by 4 RPG rounds (also reported as B-40s) that hit the turret front just below the gun mantle. The hits, penetrating the turret, caused the considerable quantity of ammunition stored inside the turret to explode. The tank burned all day as the 90mm rounds cooked off. The 3d Tanks' Command Chronology describing the incident, reports that 3 of the crewmen were wounded with the anti-tank hits and also while exiting the flaming tank. However, an eyewitness reports that the crew was actually out of the tank at the time of the RPG attack assisting civilian evacuees, so "there could not have been casualties". Such is the result of "the fog of war".

The battle assumed a rhythm: the Marines would attack each morning after a cold C-ration breakfast, fight all day, with luck, be fed one hot meal, and at night hold up. LtCol Cheatham, during a 1973 panel discussion held at the Amphibious Warfare School with his 3 former company commanders, described this rather routine scenario in South Hue as somewhat of a "gentleman's war - in fact, almost civil". By 6 February 2/5 had retaken the province headquarters, the prison, and the hospital. 1/1 had taken the

Joan of Arc School. By 9 February they had "snuffed out all organized resistance south of the river". According to official Marine Corps documentation, "Last organized resistance south of the (Perfume) river was extinguished on 9 February".

On 11 February A/1/1, commanded by Lt Ray Smith, was making a sweep near the Hue stadium. The 2 supporting tanks - one gun and one flame - was flanked by protecting infantry. The gun tank was hit by 3 or 4 B-40s and/or RPGs. The tank was stopped, belching smoke. The dying tank driver was pulled out of his hatch and he, along with a number of wounded infantry, were piled on the flame tank, which backed quickly away. In doing so, the tank backed over a wounded corpsman. Luckily enough - considering what it might have been - the hapless corpsman sustained only a broken arm.

In an oral interview, Lt Mike McNeil described his fight for South Hue as a Platoon Commander in G/2/5 leading 48 Marines. His platoon was soon reduced to 15 effectives by the time he assaulted through the hospital to the prison. Of interest is that he expressed great pride in his "John Waynes" and cites with pride no employment of tanks or Ontos to support his Marines. Go figure. One wonders how many young warriors, his "John Waynes", would still be among us today if McNeil would have provided available "tank or Ontos support!!!

At 112200 the 2d Platoon, "A" Company, 1st Tanks landed at the LCU ramp having boated through a severe storm up from Da Nang. The C.O., Capt C. Casey set up his Company CP in South Hue [Dave's notes - *I helped set-up this HQ along with 1stSgt Lightfoot and other of course, but was part of it - actually it was on the Gia Li Combat Base*] from which he monitored the North Hue battle soon to be joined by 1/5. His company provided support for the remaining infantry units of 2/5 in South Hue.

On 11 and 17 February additional 1st Tanks assets arrived by landing craft at the LCU ramp from Da Nang.

When a second A/1st Tanks platoon was landed on 13 February, Lt Georgaklis' 3d Tanks Provisional Platoon tanks were on the move back to the LCU ramp. On 17 February at 1630 3 of the 4 tanks that helped break the ambush en route to the MACV Compound with A/1/1 and G/2/5, made their way to the LCU Ramp and loaded out for Dong Ha to rejoin their parent unit. Flash recalls that he saw the platoon of "A" Company, 1st Tanks offloading on the North Side of the Perfume River as his tanks were boarding their LCUs on the South Side. Says three-time wounded Cpl Fleischmann, "I was one of the original ones there who made it through the whole thing." Flash picked up his second of three Purple Hearts on the way down the Perfume River to the open sea. And that's another story.

The 3d Tanks' Command Chronology reports that the Provisional Platoon's 2 gun tanks fired 1,147 rounds of 90mm, the 2 flame tanks expended 60 seconds of napalm, the 4 tanks fired 15,000 rounds of .50 cal, 155,000 rounds of .30 cal. The 4 tanks took a total of 28 anti-tank weapons (RGP-2's and -7's and B-40's) hits. The platoon sustained one KIA and 14 WIAs and was credited with 145 confirmed enemy KIA. Not that shabby for 4 tanks, fought by previously-inexperienced crews, who made up their "rules of engagement" and tank/infantry/Ontos coordination tactics, communications, and teamwork pretty much on their own under the most trying of combat conditions.

1st Lt W.M. Sherer, the Artillery Liaison Officer who observed the battle of South Hue not in the street but from the bigger picture perspective, stated in an in-country interview a few weeks after the conclusion of the Battle for Hue City that "Tankers did one heckuva job. When the front door entry was not an option (i.e., the streets being raked by mutually

supporting machine gun and rocket fire) the tanks made the difference. They'd blast holes in the building's (which were often more bunker than residence) and compound's concrete walls to allow the infantry to enter the building without exposing themselves to the street."

Similarly, Tank Officer, 1st Lt R.M. Johnstone, who had just returned to Vietnam from the hospital in Guam recovering from a non-combat injury, observed the tanks in action from the "A" Company, 1st Tanks Command Post (CP) in South Hue. Lt Johnstone, in an oral interview taken shortly after the operation's completion, stated "I was sent to Hue City as an Assistant S-3 (Operations) Officer. While there, I was basically an observer of Alpha Company, commanded by Capt Casey, who did a marvelous job in supporting the infantry" - both Marine and ARVN.

On 12 February, as 2nd Battalion/5th Marine Regiment - supported by the just-arrived "A" Company, 1st Tanks - was mopping up the few remaining pockets of resistance and expanding its offensive to both the east and west of South Hue, Major (LTCol-Sel) Robert H. Thompson's 1/5 was heli-lifted into the North Hue - the Old City built around the Citadel. The heli-lift coincided with additional troops and a platoon of M48A3 90mm gun tanks from Capt Collin Casey's "A" Company, 1st Tanks via LCU. They'd boated up the Perfume River from Da Nang. The tanks, and accompanying infantry, entered North Hue through the Trong Dinh Gate, located in the northeast corner of the city's wall, and into the adjacent 1st ARVN Division Compound.

The platoon - referred to as the "Second Platoon" - was in fact a cobbled together mix of Captain Casey's Company Headquarters tanks (A-51, A-52 blade tank) and one tank from each of the three tank platoons (A-11, A-21, A-31). Lt Ron Morrison's unit could be referred to as a "platoon" because it

comprised 5 tanks. However, the Marine Tankers - from different platoons, having met each other for the first **time on the LCU ride up** from Da Nang, and with no experience in urban combat - would probably not have called themselves a "well oiled fighting machine". That they were Marine Tankers, led by a superior Tank Officer (who was to receive the Silver Star Medal for his recognized bravery), who would fight like no others, there was no doubt.

1st Lt. MORRISON, RONALD C.

Synopsis:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star Medal to Ronald C. Morrison (0-101324), First Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on February 15, 1968. By his courage, aggressive fighting spirit and steadfast devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, First Lieutenant Morrison upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

Upon his arrival, Lt Morrison met and game-planned his proposed use of tanks with Major Thompson and his staff. It was determined early-on that the supporting tanks, with their infantry protection, would fight the battle together. Included on this team was the 106mm recoilless rifle-armed Ontos. Each element of this team brought to the party unique capabilities that, if worked together, would ensure the best chance for success in winning the battle for North Hue - The Citadel.

According to Cpl Mario Tamez, a tank TC, typically, every night as the day's battle wound down, the tanks came clanking back to the ARVN Compound. Then-LTCol Thompson said during an interview, that

"They reminded me of knights returning to the castle after fighting the dragon." The infantry squad leaders assigned to the team - and who provided the eyes and ears to the Tank TC as they worked through the confined streets - met with the tank and Ontos crewmen to critique the day. After the evening meal, the next day's plan of attack was worked out for the team. The tanks would top off with fuel, ammo, and food for the next day. After gun cleaning and maintenance, they usually enjoyed a fairly decent night's sleep - used to the sniper rounds and occasional mortar hits.

Cpl Tamez estimated that the platoon took more than 63 RPG/B-40 hits during the 9 days they battled the NVA/VC enemy. This number was confirmed during an interview with another tank crewman, LCpl Dennis Martin. The tanks led the attack down the narrow streets. Tamez stated that "we were always entirely surrounded." Martin said that within a few days the tank crews were down to 3 Tankers. The TC (and senior Marine) was often a LCpl., and the remainder of the crew PFC's.

Capt C.R. Casey, C.O. A/1st Tanks was also Task Force X-Ray's Armor Officer. He stated in a personal interview, and also quoted by Gilbert, "The Ontos was primarily used as a back up for the tank. We primarily used them in a hit and run type of thing." While they had great firepower - 6-106mm recoilless rifles - their armor was thin and could be penetrated quite easily by the NVA's weapons "so the Ontos was best employed by protecting them. It was primarily a building buster, just like we were doing with the tanks."

However, though Capt Casey was an advocate for the full use of combined arms, the unique status of Hue dictated caution. For example, "The M67A2 flamethrower tank saw limited use. The amount of collateral damage they could cause in the somewhat 'protected' city

was too much of a risk." Capt Casey stated that the flame tanks saw "Nowhere near what the gun tanks did." But, a testimonial to the Tanker's aggressiveness and inventiveness, a flame tank crewman stated "So we were a (armor-protected) gun platform, and we just fired the hell out of the thirty and fifty. Non-stop".

In an telephone interview with retired Col Bob Thompson, he acknowledged the value he and his company commanders placed on tanks. The rules of engagement (ROEs) required pinpoint accuracy of his supporting arms. Tanks and Ontos provide that. When asked "What would you have done without the tanks?" Col Thompson said. "Oh, we would have won; it would have taken us longer and we would have sustained greater casualties - greater than the 60% we did." At one point during the battle, Thompson's force had gone 4 days without resupply. Because so much of the success of the battle was dependent on tank and Ontos support, then-Maj Thompson would not continue the attack until they were re-armed. Maj Thompson's 1/5 used "his" tanks "... to clear streets. As long as we could keep some form of infantry protection around them we could run them down those streets. Where they were receiving fire, we could knock a hole in that building, and usually put a damper on that fire."

"By combining the M48 tanks with the Ontos antitank vehicles, the innovative Marines dominated the close-range fighting along the confined streets of the Citadel. While tank fires were correctly employed at the tactical (in fact, the small unit) level, it is critically important that the operational commander makes armored assets available to his subordinate commanders in these circumstances. In studying armor employment during the battles of Hue and Khorramshahr (Iraq), one officer found that 'armor dominance in the urban setting translates to a four to seven-fold increase in the

application of combat power in the close fight.'"

The toughest objective (in North Hue) was the massive **Dong Ba** tower which looked down on and controlled access to the Dong Ba Gate which was at the mid-point along the eastern wall of North Hue. Tanks were somewhat disadvantaged in that they could not elevate their 90mm guns sufficiently to engage the top levels of buildings. Also, the streets in some sectors of North Hue were so narrow that the tank track end connectors made contact with the building on both sides. Without prior recon, tanks could find themselves in blind alleys.

On 21 February, L/3/5 employing Lt Morrison's tanks and the Ontos in a similar fashion as 1/5, turned the corner toward the Imperial Palace and presided over the waning NVA/VC resistance. "On 22 February, the Marines seized their final objective, the southeast wall of the Citadel." None of Capt Casey's tanks - on either side of the Perfume River - were disabled or destroyed though each sustained multiple hits.

Pfc T.L. Foster, whose squad was assigned "Tank Security" in the battle of North Hue, describes the block-by-block fighting from the ARVN compound to the Citadel in great detail - tactical Phase Line by Phase Line. His tank - taking 2-3 hits every day from RPGs and B-40s, continued to knock down walls - both of bunkers (fortified houses) and surrounding compounds which gave the NVA/VC enemy both cover and concealment. Says Foster, "If had it not been for tanks we could not have pushed in - they had bunkers every where. Tanks is about all that saved us at Phase Line Purple."

At midnight on 27 February, Operation Hue City officially ended. Lasting 26 days, the battle for Hue was the longest and bloodiest of the Tet Offensive. A total of 3 Marine battalions and 11

ARVN battalions were eventually committed to retaking the city. Ten thousand homes were damaged or destroyed. The battle created 116,000 homeless refugees and left 80 percent of the historic city in ruins. Americans lost 216 killed and 1,364 wounded in action, while the ARVN lost 384 killed and 1,830 wounded. Some 5,800 civilians died, at least 2,800 of which were killed by the VC/NVA, who sought out and exterminated those with pro-U.S. sentiments as well as those who could identify them and compromise their efforts. The United States estimated enemy casualties at 5,000 with 1,042 killed.

Notes:

During a panel discussion held at the Amphibious Warfare School, Quantico, VA in 1973 LtCol Cheatham and his 3 Hue City Captain Company Commanders - Majors Michael P. Downs, George R. Christmas, and Charles L. Meadows - described very briefly the value of tanks in breeching walls and buildings - allowing the infantry to move through the city to some degree without canalizing and exposing the ground troops to the enemy pre-planned fires down the streets.

I've played way down the fact that LtCol Cheatham didn't like tanks - though I have some eyewitness quotes with his expletives. Hammel, who gives tanks great coverage in both his Hue City books, says that Cheatham has softened a bit with his indictments.

Col. Thompson loved "his" tanks and could not have done the job without them with the same outcome.

A number of oral interviews taken by the Oral History Section of the Marine Corps History Division just after the battle (s) for Hue City are replete with troopers' testimonial to the value that tanks provided. Several of the troopers stated during their interviews that they believed they would not be telling their story had it not been

for tank support. I cited but a couple in this article.

Dr. Allison's organization provided unlimited access to the Marine Corps Oral History Archives from which many of the quotes and a whole lot of first-hand information has been extracted for this article. The Marine Corps Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation has received a grant to write summaries of the several thousand Vietnam War oral histories collected - both in-country and shortly after returning to CONUS - of Vietnam Veterans.

And my many "Tanks a lot" to Combat Photographer Sgt. Steve Berntson, USMC (Ret.) who gave us a first-hand account of the battle from his perspective. Sgt Berntson was seriously wounded and med-evacced before the final day of the battle in north Hue just short of the Imperial palace when the tower - reduced to rubble by Lt Morrison's tanks - collapsed on him.

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(L to R) Unnamed company Corpsman, SSgt "Satan" Ernie James, Sgt Dave Hambrick, Captain C. R. Casey and partially hidden 1st Lt R. C. Morrison behind Sgt Carey with a confiscated RPG-7 Rocket Launcher at Company A, 1st Tank Bn at Gia Le Combat Base - circa March-April 1968



Sgt Dave Hambrick with left leg/ankle broken during incoming mortar 1968, Gia Le Combat Base

The Civil Rights Impact of Black Veterans

[Home](#)[News & Media](#)[News](#) How Black veterans became leaders of the Civil Rights Movement
Posted on Jul 23, 2024 By Brian Buckwalter



On parade, the 41st Engineer Regiment at Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty), North Carolina, in a color guard ceremony. National Archives photo.

July marks 60 years since the Civil Rights Act became law, ending legalized racial segregation in the United States.

It was a major milestone for social justice and an outcome championed by well-known activists including the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. Lesser known, though, is the movement's connection to Black veterans of World War II who suffered mistreatment and the many who broke barriers on multiple fronts in uniform.

Their service overseas, particularly those who served in World War II, was a catalyst for the fight for equality when they returned home.

"There's no way you could go through all that ... and come back and then just go right back to sitting in the back of the bus and not think anything of it," said Yvonne Latty, author of "We Were There: Voices of African American Veterans, From World War II to the War in Iraq." "To me, they were the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, whether in big or small ways in their communities."

Before World War II, Black service members were limited in what jobs they could perform in the military, often relegated to stateside duties or menial support roles, such as stewards. But as the war

progressed, high casualties and the need for more people to fight opened up more opportunities for Black service members.

"I don't think that they could continue having a robust Army and discriminate," said Latty.

Black service members served with distinction. Historical accounts from deployed segregated units, including the Tuskegee Airmen, the 761st Tank Battalion (Black Panthers) and the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion (Six Triple Eight), reveal stories of bravery, sacrifice and determination.



Edna Cummings, a retired Army colonel, has championed efforts to recognize the service and contributions of Black veterans, especially the women who served in the Army's 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion during World War II.

"Everybody wanted to do their part," said Edna Cummings, an expert on the Six Triple Eight and a retired Army colonel. "They were patriots. They loved their country."

The Six Triple Eight was an all-Black female unit that deployed to England in 1945, tasked with processing millions of pieces of backlogged mail accumulated over years. While in Birmingham, England, they were given six months to finish but cleared several hangars full of mail in just three months. (The January/February 2024 edition of *DAV Magazine* has an in-depth article about their achievements.)

Their motto was "no mail, low morale," but they knew they were serving for a greater purpose. Cummings said that before the unit deployed, Mary McLeod Bethune, a civil rights leader who advocated for Black women to be able to serve in the Women's Army Corps, sent a telegram telling them that they represented 15 million Black citizens, to carve a niche for themselves and to do well.

Like other Black veterans at the time, their military experience empowered and equipped them to get involved in the Civil Rights Movement when they came home, said Cummings, who is a member of DAV Chapter 33 in Fort Meade, Maryland. "One thing the military teaches you is how to task organize, manage and lead under harsh conditions," she said.

The distinguished service of Black service members during the war was part of the reason that President Harry Truman signed an executive order integrating the military in July 1948.

It was a positive step forward, but it also created a dichotomy for many Black people who served in the military during that time, especially those who were stationed in the segregated South.



Tony Prince

DAV member Tony Prince of Chapter 55 in Porterdale, Georgia, recalls his father Stacey's experiences when he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1956. He was with field artillery during his two-year enlistment and was stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. On duty, racial discrimination wasn't much of a factor, he said.

"They were just giving everybody hell," said Prince. "That was the nature of the training as a Marine during that era."

But after hours and off base, things were different. Prince said his father and other Black members of his unit would keep to themselves in the barracks, always traveled off base in groups of two or more, and were careful to avoid certain places.

"Your being in uniform and on leave didn't necessarily mean you were immune to racial stuff and what was going on," said Prince.

Unequal treatment continued after Prince's father left military service in 1958, such as when he and his wife had difficulty renting a home in Washington, D.C. However, because of his service and the service of others in the integrated force—everyone together in uniform regardless of background—the cultural tide was beginning to shift.

"It was impossible to make society go back to what it was before the military was integrated," said Prince.

He said the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 was the final bit of muscle needed to push back against those who opposed change. Prince, like his father, played football in high school. He went on to play at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and was a part of its Army ROTC. He received his commission as a second lieutenant in the Army in 1982.



Stacey Prince enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1956, serving in an integrated unit at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, during a time that segregation was legal in the United States.

Stacey Prince, who died in 2023, had never seen a Black officer during his time in service.

"When I first got commissioned, and he pinned my lieutenant bars on me, I said, 'Hopefully, Dad, being an officer makes up for not being a Marine,'" Prince recalled. "He said, 'It does. I'm proud of you. I'm so proud of you.'"

Prince's military experience was vastly different than his father's. "I have never seen, when I was in and after, that it has ever mattered what your race, ethnicity or what part of country you were from," he said. "And I believe that's from earlier generations and what all they had to go through and put up with both in the service and when they got out."

Cummings, who grew up in Fayetteville, North Carolina, also came from a military family. She saw service as a practical career step and, in 1974, was the first Black woman to receive a commission in the Army from Appalachian State University's ROTC program.

"I know when I came in, my generation were considered pioneers," she said. "But there were pioneers before us that no one ever talked about and no one ever used to motivate us."

She spent 25 years in the military never hearing about the Six Triple

Eight, only learning about the battalion after she retired. Since then, she has used its story as a way to inspire the next generation of Black women in the military and as a way to bring the many untold historical accomplishments of Black service members to light. Her efforts were a large reason the Six Triple Eight from President Joe Biden in 2022. Latty, who talked with more than two dozen Black veterans for her book, said a common theme received the Congressional Gold Medal in her conversations was pride of service and sacrifice, even in the face of adversity. And through their sacrifices I think they made this country better, and I think it's up to us now to take advantage of the things they have done, the doors they opened for us.

...



September 21, 1990. Protesting in Support of our Troops in the Middle East.

L to R. Bob Humphries, Bill Bosch, Tom Johnson, Tom Foster, Lisa Young, Rick McDowell, Joni Dryden, Bruce Publicover.

On the next page is a letter Tom Foster received from General Norman Schwarzkopf as a result of this protest.



COMMANDER IN CHIEF
UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
OPERATION DESERT STORM, APO NY 09852

12 April 1991

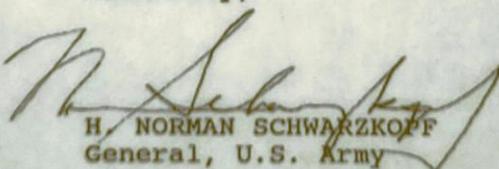
Dear Mr. Foster,

I want to express my sincere thanks for your letter voicing support for our valiant troops. Thanks also for the great shot of the supporters of the Vietnam Veterans of America Post #239. The tremendous outpouring of encouragement by the American people has been the foundation and driving force behind our success in both Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.

You and thousands like you have provided us the strength and determination to liberate Kuwait and fulfill the United Nations Resolutions. It is because of this visible demonstration of concern for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coastguardsmen that we in the military are proud to be serving our country and its citizens.

Again, thank you as we look forward to the day when our last servicemember returns to the shores of our great nation.

Sincerely,



H. NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF
General, U.S. Army

Mr. Tom L. Foster
465 Windol Court
Marietta, GA 30066

<p>President: Painter Dickson Lester 678-836-4391 pdl721@bellsouth.net</p> <p>Vice President and Morale & Entertainment Ronnie Futral rif4@bellsouth.net</p> <p>Secretary: Ken Buechel</p> <p>Treasurer: Patrick Ultsch</p> <p>Board of Directors</p> <p>Membership: Charles Langston charleslangston46@gmail.com</p> <p>Operations: Bill McRae 770-843-3973</p> <p>Communications:</p> <p>John Saari 770-713-4984 sitrep@saarihome.com</p> <p>Webmaster: Paul Quillen</p> <p>Stores: David Thomas davidjthomas01@yahoo.com</p> <p>Fundraising: Ken Buechel kenbchl@gmail.com 404-510-8324</p> <p>Chaplain: Roy Lantz RoylantzE5@gmail.com</p> <p>Historian: Andy Zimmerman 678-709-4041</p> <p>At Large</p> <p>John Bevich tjmb6484@yahoo.com 678-849-3062</p> <p>Gus Vasquez GJV@ENGINEER.COM</p> <p>Donna Rowe Home: 678-401-4424 Cell: 404-285-3357</p> <p>Tom Foster 404-906-5266</p> <p>Past Presidents</p> <table> <tbody> <tr> <td>Dr. Tom Johnson</td> <td>Rich Sale</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bob Humphries</td> <td>Chuck Davis</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Woody McFarlin</td> <td>Terry Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td>John McDougal</td> <td>Al Rowe</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jim Baskin</td> <td>Robert Ledee</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bill Kalish</td> <td>Walt Molyneaux</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dave Hambrick</td> <td>Al Heflin</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Past Vice President</p> <p>Harold Holingshed haroldshed@att.net 770-926-5603</p> <p>Standing Committee Chairs</p> <p>Chapter Store:</p> <p>Newsletter: John Saari Nominating: Al Heflin Programs: Bill McRae</p>	Dr. Tom Johnson	Rich Sale	Bob Humphries	Chuck Davis	Woody McFarlin	Terry Cash	John McDougal	Al Rowe	Jim Baskin	Robert Ledee	Bill Kalish	Walt Molyneaux	Dave Hambrick	Al Heflin
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Mission Statement

The mission of Chapter 1, GVVA is to provide quality services and support, based upon the concepts of self-esteem and self-improvement, to advocate patriotism, to promote the ideals of American freedom and democracy, and to recognize those who served, and honor those who gave their lives in the Vietnam War, and to promote the positive image of the Vietnam Veteran, their dependents and the widows and orphans of deceased Vietnam Veterans throughout the State of Georgia in order to enhance and enrich their lives and the lives of their families. And further, to provide the same service and support to all veterans of all wars and to our communities' first responders

General Purpose

Chapter 1, GVVA will be a community based service organization. It will identify, initiate and expand programs within the limits of manpower and finances. Chapter 1, GVVA will aggressively perform fund raising activities for veterans, their families and community. These services will include, but not limited, transition and homeless assistance, employment services, PTSD and substance abuse, leadership and scholarship program and other essential needs of human existence. And further, to provide the same service and support to all veterans of all wars and to our communities' first responders.

GVVA Chapter One Website

<https://www.GVVA1.org>

Georgia Dept. of Veterans Services
Suite 350, 1150 Powder Springs St. Marietta, GA 30064
770-528-3254

<http://veterans.ga.gov/marietta>. Hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Monday through Friday

VA National Cemetery, Canton, Georgia
- arrangements for veterans burial :
1-800-535-1117

VA Assistance & Benefits Info:
-800-1MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)

<https://www.AmericanDisabledVeterans.com>

VA Regional Office (claims)

1-800-827-1000

VA Hospital 404-321-6111

VA Center Counseling 404-347-7264

Military Honors Survivor Assistance:

Air Force – Dobbins ARB

Military Honor Guard 678-655-5272

Casualty Assistance 678-655-6092

Navy / Marines

Military Honors 678-655-5092

Casualty Assistance 678-655-5092

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Member: _____ New Life Member: _____ Renewal: _____

Membership in the GVVA is open to all veterans and organizations whose members served in the U.S. Armed Forces during a period of conflict. Associate memberships are available to families of veterans and to the public at large.

Full Name _____ Date _____ / _____ /20_____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

E-mail Address (to receive the newsletter): _____

Branch of Service _____ (A Copy of your DD-214 is Required)

Combat Tours _____

Unit(s) _____ Other Veteran's Organization _____

Annual Dues \$30, Associate Members \$30, New Members \$30 Life Membership 0-39 yrs. old- \$260, 40-49 yrs. old-\$220, 50-59 yrs. old-\$180, 60-69 yrs. old-\$140, 70+ yrs. old- \$100

Return to: Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance, Chapter One, PO Box 414, Kennesaw, GA 30156

Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance
Chapter One
PO Box 414
Kennesaw, GA 30156

“A lot of who we are is where we’ve been”

