



"In Service To Veterans, Their Families and Community"

March 2026

March Presidents Notes

From February 20 to February 27, I was in Galveston for a reunion with my shipmates from the USS Waddell (DDG-24). We proudly served aboard this Adams-class guided-missile destroyer, saving thousands of lives and making history under our motto: "Have Guns Will Travel - Bad to the Bone."



Vietnam WAR VETERANS SPANNING 1963 through 1975

Shipmates who served at various points from the ship's keel laying until it was sold to the Greek Navy (where it served for another 20 years before being sunk).

I am incredibly proud to have served with this group. I've attached a few photos from the event:



VIETNAM BLANKET DICKSON LESTER brought for VIETNAM VETERANS



All shipmates with our spouses.

- Third picture: Those of us who served on board during the Vietnam War; there are not many of us left.

One of our sailors calculated that our group has a combined sea time of over 200 years. It is a reminder of the dedication of the approximately 50,000 sailors at sea on any given day. God bless the U.S. and our troops currently serving in Iran.

For those interested, here are the key dates of the Waddell's service:

- Keel Date: 02/06/1962
- Launch Date: 02/26/1963
- Decommission Date: 10/01/1992

Sick Call/Prayer List

Harold Hollingshed, Kieran Pavlick, Bill Craig, 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, Skip Bell

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

March 19 6:00 PM Chapter Meeting

**March 29 4:00 PM. Post 29, National Vietnam War Veteran Celebration
May 15 8:00 AM 3:00 PM Vet Connect**

Membership

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

Charles Langston

charleslangston46@gmail.com

Director – Membership

Email CHANGE

Watch for messages from:

gvvalsitrep@gmail.com

Member Participation Wanted.

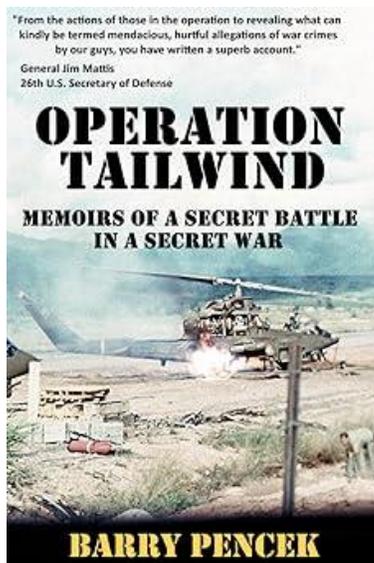
Submit an article for the Sitrep. We want to hear from you. Send it to: Gvva1sitrep@gmail.com

March Guest Speaker

Barry Pencek

USMC Helicopter Pilot

Wrote This Book About A Mission He Flew In 1970



The Studies and Observations Group (SOG) was a covert American military unit in Vietnam that specialized in clandestine cross-border operations in Laos and Cambodia. In September 1970, sixteen Green Berets and one hundred and twenty Montagnard

mercenaries departed on **Operation Tailwind**, the largest and deepest raid in SOG history. Their mission was to disrupt and distract the enemy in support of a larger CIA operation that originated in the White House.

Over the next four days, as their ammunition dwindled and casualties mounted, these soldiers, and the aircrews overhead that went to extraordinary lengths to keep them alive, achieved the improbable if not the impossible.

Twenty-eight years after Tailwind concluded, CNN produced a documentary about Tailwind, called "Valley of Death," accusing the participants of war crimes, specifically using nerve gas to kill women, children, and American defectors. This broadcast created a media firestorm that reached around the world.

The book: *Operation Tailwind: Memoirs of a Secret Battle in a Secret War* gives an incredibly detailed account of the four-day running battle and does a thought-provoking deep dive into the failure of journalistic ethics at CNN that created a media debacle. Besides being one hell of a war story, *Operation Tailwind* provides a great example of the need for the highest integrity in journalism and should be required reading for all J-school students.

GVVA LOGO ON SHIRT

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

GVVA Lost 2 Members

GVVA mourns the loss of Tommy Hemphill and John Overcash.

A BATTLE OF DAI DO SURVIVOR AND ONE OF THE MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS

*By Dave Hambrick
Captain of Marines
February 19, 2026*



While serving in various leadership roles in several veteran organizations I had both the privilege and honor to meet and get to know many veteran heroes, some more humble than others. Nevertheless, this story relates to one of the heroes from part of the Tet Offensive in 1968, pertinent to the northern part of I Corps in Vietnam - Sergeant Thomas E. "Tommy" Hemphill, U. S. Army.

Some background

The Cửa Việt River served as a vital supply line for the [3rd Marine Division](#) in northern Quảng Trị Province, running from the [Cửa Việt Base](#) to the [Đông Hà Combat Base](#), also called Dai Do, which in turn supported the Marine bases along the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ).

The Cửa Việt area was part of the [Napoleon/Saline operational area](#) with the [1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion](#) responsible for securing the Cửa Việt Base and its vicinity. The 1st AMTRAC Battalion had operational control on a rotational basis of various Marine infantry battalions.

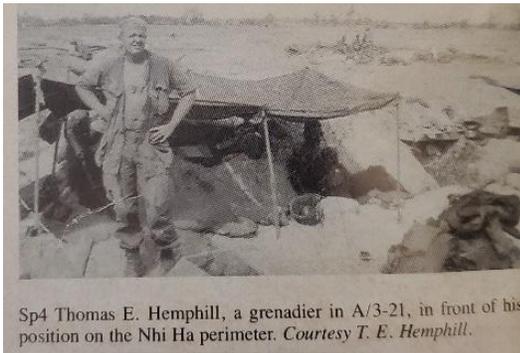
So, the Battle of Dai Do, also known as the [Battle of Dong Ha](#) took place from 30 April to 3 May 1968 in Quang Tri Province the South Vietnam. This is about one of 125 survivors of that 4-day battle (30 April - 3 May 1968) that has been considered by analysts since then to have been the [fiercest battle in the Vietnam War](#). Marines had many KIA/WIA's during that madness, with only a few hundred Marines going against well trained and well entrenched, in many cases, of about

8 - 10,000 NVA regulars of the 320th NVA Division (inclusive of the 3rd Battalion, 48th Regiment and the 6th Battalion of the 52 Regiment), along with their supporting arms.

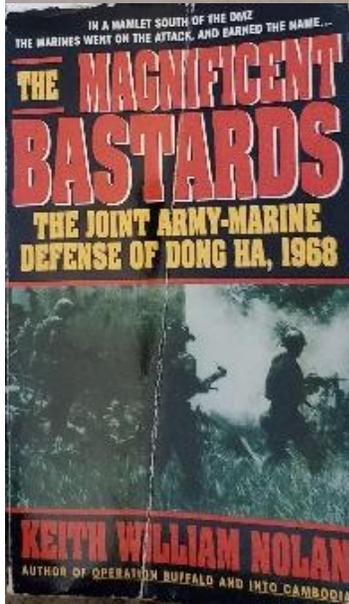
The 2nd Battalion 4th Marines commander [Lieutenant Colonel William Weise](#) felt that inadequate resources were provided for the attack on Dai Do, both in terms of men and air and artillery support. [Major General Rathvon M. Tompkins](#) the 3rd Marine Division commander could not be sure whether this was the main thrust of the [May Offensive](#) along the DMZ or a diversion for a larger attack still to come, however by the end of 30 April it was clear that the PAVN intended to either attack Đông Hà Base or move through the area and attack [Quảng Trị](#). With limited Marine reserves available, Tompkins requested Army reinforcements from [I Field Force](#) commander [Lieutenant General William B. Rosson](#) who sent the [3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment](#) to a landing zone north of Đông Hà on the morning of 1 May.

Not only did the Marines fight this blood wrenching battle, but the [Army's 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment](#) were called in to assist as well, and with that group was [Sp4 Tommy Hemphill](#) from "A" Company, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry (and photographed in the book "[The Magnificent Bastards](#)") who was with that Army unit.





Sp4 Thomas E. Hemphill, a grenadier in A/3-21, in front of his position on the Nhi Ha perimeter. Courtesy T. E. Hemphill.



Taken from page 359 of that book.

Alpha Three, completely disorganized, still had men pinned down on the right flank, including Sp4 Bill Eakins, who, although wounded in the back, had tackled a panicked soldier and calmed him down in the crater. Also stranded was Sp4 Thomas E. Hemphill, a grenadier who had jumped into another crater with one of the replacements. The enemy fire was ringing right over their heads. The new man, who was petrified, kept asking what should he do. Hemphill, a country boy with a Georgia accent, told him to keep his head down adding "but if anybody comes over that hole, you shoot that sorry thang".

Hemphill, keeping his own head down, lobbed about 15 or so M79 rounds toward the tree line to the right. There was a lull then, and he heard movement in the next

crater over. He hollered to ask who it was. Luckily, it was one of his buddies, so Hemphill and his greenseed scrambled into the position with them. One of Hemphill's best friends, David Betebrenner, was among those in the crater. His steel pot had a hole in it. He'd been shot in the head and was unconscious and barely breathing. Betebrenner, a soft-spoken, deeply religious man, had been up firing his M16 when he was hit. "I cried for a minute - I did. He was good friend of mine. He was a good fella. He had a little girl..."

No one knew what happened to the rest of the platoon. They decided they would pull back to the left. After throwing a smoke grenade in that direction, they ran through the colored smoke as cover and made it back to the black machine gunner on the mound. David Betebrenner was dead when they moved out. They left the body in the crater. "I closed myself out to any new people that came in", said Hemphill. "You were friendly to 'em and helped 'em out, but I never got close to 'em. You didn't want to get close to somebody who would get killed. It was like losing a brother."



Tommy at GVVA functions. Tommy with Dwight Cole as Wreath Bearers



Tommy with Dave Hambrick and Ken Finch at a GVVA event.



Tommy as a Semper Fi Knight of the Round Table, along with some other Knights (l to r) John Bevich, Bill McRae, Harold Hollingshed, Patrick Malone, Dave Hambrick, Bob Humphries, John Dudley, Tommy Hemphill, Lee Johnson & Rich Sale.



Brass Plate for Tommy to be presented and placed at the Rally Point/Semper Fi Bar and Grille in Woodstock soon.

The Plaque on the Wall

by Donna C. Rowe (CPT ANC Vietnam '68-'69)



As many of you know I get many requests speak about the Vietnam War and the wonderful men and women I served with in Vietnam. I do this gladly because I firmly believe "our" stories need to be told before lost in the dust of history.

This Newsletter entry is just one of many meaningful stories I've seen and heard along the Speaking Tour routes I've taken over the years sense the movie I am in, "In The Shadow of The Blade", won the World Film Festival's Documentary division in the early 2000's. This one though hits close to home and involves many of my good and dear friends in or formerly from the South Cobb area. So here it goes.....

In mid-October of last year, I got an urgent call from the manager of Austell City's Veterans Day Event, requesting I come to an extremely important event at the Austell Veterans Park on Veterans' Day. I question why it was such an important event for Austell and she relayed this moving story to me.

In the mid to late 1960's the classmates of Kill In Action Vietnam Veterans from their High School had made a large bronze plaque with the Names of all THIRTEEN (13) of their classmates that died in the Vietnam War. The plaque was proudly dedicated in the late 1960's and there it hung with great honor on the Main Lobby wall of South Cobb High School for many years. Then the unforgivable happened! I think was in the early 1990's the High School went through some sort of renovations that required the REMOVAL of this sacred plaque. And there the plaque laid unnoticed and uncared for in the rumble of construction. But fortunately, NOT for long as the dear School Janitor rescued and saved the Plaque in his Office for almost 30 years. Then as he approached his retirement days, he went and told the Principle (T.J. Perry) about this important and truly sacred Plaque. The notable classmates that include Governor Roy Barnes and many other now well know community leaders engaged to re-hang the Plaque back onto its honor spot on "the Wall" and arranged a replica to be made to be installed at the Austell Veterans Park just down the road from South Cobb High School.

Needless to say, having heard this most moving story I told Connie, the Veterans' Day event manager, that I definitely WOULD be there to help honor these 13 men who gave their all and sacrificed their lives in Vietnam. Well! As the Veterans Day Event drew close, I was very ill in Kennestone Hospital with very serious "double pneumonia" which I had acquired on a recent vacation to Greece & Italy. But not being deterred by this condition, I was discharged from Kennestone Hospital on November 7th and on home oxygen due to very low O2 Levels. As the very COLD morning (22 degrees) of November 11th arrived I packed my oxygen portable tank in the car and drove to Austell to keep my promise to honor my fellow veterans, who needed to be honored in so many ways. This indeed was small sacrifice by me as all THIRTEEN of these great patriots needed to be honored not just on Veterans' Day BUT every day. My speech was for them!



Sign at Austell Veteran's Park.

Then on December 15, 2026, the South Cobb High School Principal, Connie and the classmates of the 13 Vietnam Veterans invited me to the "Hanging on The Wall" for this special and sacred plaque. What a nice a meaningful simple ceremony with all present plus the ROTC representatives and some Jr ROTC students of South Cobb. South Cobb High, I understand, has over 200 Jr ROTC Cadets this Plaque will exemplify to them the sacrifice the school's past students made for

their Nation and their precious freedoms.



Donna and former students with the ORIGINAL Plaque from the 1960's that the Janitor "saved".

I am so glad the Plaque is now **On the Wall**....Good deed done by all who cared.

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Past Presidents

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 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 |

Past Vice President

Harold Holingshed
haroldshed@att.net 770-926-5603
Standing Committee Chairs

Chapter Store:

Newsletter: John Saari
Nominating: Al Heflin
Programs: Bill McRae

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 scholar-ship 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 Sevices
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”

