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Conversations and Comments
with Jim Duffy — Stories
From A-109 Team Members
SFA Chapter 78 August
2016 Meeting
The Normandy American
Cemetery and Memorial





Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Green Beret Medic, SSG Matthew V. Thompson died of injuries inflicted from an I.E.D. on August 24, while on patrol in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. SSG Thompson was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

SSG Thompson was posthumously awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. Previously he had been awarded the Army Commendation Medal and the National Defense Service Medal. He had also earned the Army Parachutist Wings.

In December 2010 SSG Thompson graduated from Concordia University in Irvine, California with a bachelor's degree in theological studies. He met his wife Rachel at the university and they were married five years ago.

Services are pending and SF Chapter 78 will send representatives

Guest Speaker and fellow Green Beret Tom Turney provided an inspirational talk on "The Forgotten Army: Vietnam's Montagnards." Tom was a member of the Army Security Agency's 403rd Special Operational Detachment (S.O.D.) and had completed an 18 month tour in Panama with the 8th SFG(A) prior to his assignment in Viet Nam.

In Viet Nam, SSG Tom Turney's assignments with the 5th SFG(A) included missions with several A-Teams and the II Corps Mike Force, B-20 in Pleiku, Viet Nam. He was based out of the 403rd SOD site in B-24, Kontum. He has since returned to Viet Nam with his wife and visited several A-Team sites in the north west II Corps area and Kontum. On his return he met and spoke with many Montagnards. He is now working closely with the Vietnam Fund which helps Montagnard People remaining in their homeland, Viet Nam. Tom is working on a feature story for the Sentinel on the Montagnards.

Photos from a recent visit to the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial located in Colleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France are included in this issue. President Ronald Reagan visited the World War II Normandy Beach landing sites and the Pointe du Hoc cliffs and Ranger Memorial where he dedicated a plaque to the fallen Rangers who scaled the cliffs. See the photo of the plaque on page 6 for his dedication. ❖

Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

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COVER: SSG Matthew V. Thompson, 28, of Irvine, California, died August 23, 2016, of wounds received from an improvised explosive device while on patrol in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Thompson was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. (Photo Credit: Army photo)

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THE PRESIDENTS PAGE

PRESIDENTS COLUMN SEPTEMBER 2016

Our August Chapter meeting was held at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club. The breakfast/business meeting started at approximately 0830 hrs.

Due to some chapter member time constraints and the presentation by our guest speaker Tom Turney, it was agreed we would start our meeting early.

Sergeant of Arms **Mark Miller** led us in the salute to the American Flag and was followed by the invocation given by **Richard Simonian**.



Bruce Long
President SFA 78

Hammond Salley who was a guest at our July Chapter meeting has joined our Chapter, and is now a Life Member M14346. Ham, as he likes to be called, will also be our guest speaker for the October Chapter meeting. Congratulations Ham in joining our Chapter!

Manny Gonzales was finally presented with a Chapter Coin. Manny is one of the founding SFA Chapter 78 members.

Richard Simonian gave the treasurers report. After expenses we currently have a balance of \$1,023.80, which includes the donations that we received. An additional \$830.00 was collected at meeting with a pledge from **Len Fein** who was unable to attend this month's Chapter meeting. A total of fourteen Chapter members made donations. It was agreed that \$2,000.00 would be donated to San Diego Police Officer Jonathan DeGuzman's family. Officer DeGuzman was killed in the line of duty, and was a

big supporter of the Chapter's Green Beret Shooters Cup. **Gary Macnamara** was tasked with making the appropriate contacts with law enforcement channels so that the check, goes directly to the family.

Artemis Defense Institute (ADI) will host a Chapter meeting in January 2017. They are currently very busy with their CCW classes.

The Chapter received an update from our web masters Andrew Gaboy and Tom Tringali They promised to have the updates completed no later than October 1, 2016.

A short discussion was conducted with regards to the latest California Gun Laws, and it was agreed that **Jim Duffy** would contact Steve Lieberman owner/operator of ADI to see if he could prepare an article for the Chapter with current up to date information. At the writing of this column, I was informed that Steve Lieberman would be glad to prepare an article for the September 2016 Sentinel.

An open discussion was held with regards to having Alex Quade, a renowned War Correspondent as our guest speaker. A unanimous agreement was made by all of those in attendance that the Chapter would pay for her airfare to attend our upcoming Christmas party. More to follow...

A/5/19 is currently still deployed, but will be retuning soon to begin yet another pre-deployment in November, 2016.

I was recently contacted by SOD/North (Commanded by COL Wise) and was told that Military Appreciation Night is scheduled for November 6, 2016 at the Anaheim Ducks Stadium. I've been asked to see who can attend.

2016 SFA Conference – *Unconventional Warriors, The Mission Continues*

The conference will be held at the Double Tree Inn. I highly suggest that you make early reservations if you want to stay at the Double Tree Inn even if you decide not to go, you can always cancel 24 hours before arrival. The DoubleTree's phone number is (910) 323 8282.

Our next Chapter meeting: 09/17/16 at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club, 1601 Bayside Drive Corona Del Mar, CA 92625. Breakfast business meeting at 0830 hrs. Chapter meeting at 1000 hrs.

As usual, please feel free to contact me. ❖

Bruce D Long
President
SGM, SF (Ret)
SFA Chapter 78



**Manny Gonzales receiving a Chapter 78 Coin
from President Bruce Long**

CONVERSATIONS AND COMMENTS WITH JIM DUFFY

Stories From A-109 Team Members



Charlie Inot
SSG, Wpns Sgt
A-109 Thuong Duc
November 1967 to February 1968

This is what happened to me on 2/25/68, after I sustained minor wounds in an ambush and medevaced to the Naval Support Activity – Danang.

Charles Inot The helicopter landed on the pad in front of the Naval Support Activity Hospital, Da Nang. A dozen Navy personnel quickly off loaded all the casualties onto canvas stretchers. SP4 Tomkins was carried directly into the emergency room and I never saw my buddy again. My stretcher was taken to and placed on one of many sawhorses arranged in rows under a roof. This location, known as Treatment 1, was where triage of the wounded was conducted.

Around me were several wounded CIDG soldiers. A team of US Navy Corpsman began to swiftly prepare the casualties for evaluation, collection of vital information, and life saving measures. Each corpsman had a specific duty to perform. Some corpsman just cut clothes off people with scissors. Luckily I was conscious when my clothes were removed because I had to ask a corpsman to get my pants off the floor so I could retrieve my wallet. One corpsman's sole job was to take blood pressure readings. Another corpsman would take a pulse. I noticed that each casualty's vital readings were written on their chest with a black marker pen. Another corpsman or maybe a doctor examined for injuries and classified priority of treatment.

At this point I was lying naked on stretcher patiently waiting for the next step in the process. I was cold and shivering. I noticed a corpsman with a clipboard going to each CIDG casualty and requesting the soldier's name. I watched the corpsman pointing at his own name tag and speaking in Pidgin English, "Me Smith (fictional)" then pointing at the soldier and saying, "What your name?" All the CIDG casualties were in pain and could only respond with moans and groans. Obviously, the CIDG soldiers did not speak English and the corpsman could not speak Vietnamese.

I watched the frustrated corpsman make his way to my side, point at his name tag, and say, "Me Smith. What your name?" Now physically, because of my Filipino genes I can pass for an Asian. The corpsman saw my 5' 8", 160 pounds of a sun-darkened body with straight black hair and assumed I was just a big ethnic Montagnard soldier. I heard him repeat, "What your name? Me Smith. What is your name?" I slowly and calmly responded, "I am Staff Sergeant Carlos M. Inot, you @\$%^& &*\$%@" He immediately jumped back in wide eyed surprise and loudly proclaimed to all present, "Hey, this guy speaks English!" It then dawned on him to ask, "Are you an American?" When I answered in the affirmative he said,



Charlie Inot. View is to the east down the valley towards Hill 52



Receiving (Triage) area, Naval Support Activity Hospital – Da Nang

"What are you doing out here?" What I concluded from his statement was that US personnel got to buck the line for further treatment. I was soon removed from the triage site and taken for x-rays and treatment. I stayed overnight in a hospital ward.

Bob Waller
XO Det A-109
Thuong Duc
July 1968 to July 1969

Shortly after arriving at the "C" Team in Da Nang late July 1968, I received the "rah-rah" briefing from LTC Connelly about my assignment to a relatively quiet and safe camp called Thuong Duc, Det A-109. Seems they hadn't taken any incoming in almost a week, he relayed. So naive me climbs onto the next chopper out the following morning. Now I had flown in helicopters many

times before, even briefly piloted one once [but that's another story], so I knew this WO was not making the usual approach as he roared into A-109's helipad.

After we flared and bounced hard and flat on that landing, I began to question LTC Connelly's definition of "relatively quiet and safe" My memory is a little hazy at this point, but I recall starting to toss my duffel bag out when it was wrenched from my grasp by an unseen force and it went flying into the back of a camp jeep that had approached at warp speed, skidding to a halt beside us. Then, out of nowhere, a beefy hand shot past my face, latched onto the back of my BDU shirt, and flipped me head over heels onto my duffel bag as though I were no heavier than a 10-lb sack of potatoes.

Other bags went flying past me into the chopper as I was being somersaulted into the jeep. The chopper took off like a bat out of hell and within seconds the jeep was careening back toward the compound while MSG Ralph Loff (the beefy hand) introduced himself and then said, "Listen... those thumps you're now hearing are the incoming mortar rounds leaving the tube! Welcome to Thuong Duc, Lieutenant!" And less than two month later the Siege of Thuong Duc was in full bloom at that "relatively quiet and safe camp".

On another occasion many months later, I had flown into the C-Team [Da Nang] to get supplies, pick up CIDG payroll, scrounge anything not nailed down, etc., and was spending the night there.

A friend from another A-team, who also happened to be over-nighting, and I decided to check out the night life in downtown Da Nang. Not having any transportation and it being dark, we liberated the newest looking jeep in the HQ parking area and drove it into town.

After several hours of letting off steam and enjoying the company of local entertainers while consuming distilled spirits, we decided it was time to head back to the compound as we had an early morning helo departing for our respective camps. It being after curfew and neither of us having the requisite passes, we sang a loud and lusty version of "The Ballad of The Green Berets" as we approached the ROK (Republic of Korea) highway check-point en route to the C-Team. Assuming [there goes that word] they would recognize this illustrious song and wish us Godspeed, we accelerated through the check-point on toward the compound.

As luck would have it, the ROK were not very good shots or they just weren't trying... but we did hear a few familiar sounding pings of lead hitting metal... and a few of splintering wood. We parked the jeep from whence it came, reattached the chain and lock, got a few hours rest and were waiting on the pad when the helo crew arrived. It was a few days later that word got back to me that the newly assigned SF commander who had replaced LTC Connelly in Da Nang, had woken later the day we lifted off and was fuming about how his jeep had gotten shot up and the wooden placard in the spare tire rim had been shredded by what appeared to be bullet holes. One of life's little mysteries I suppose... after all, I also heard the C-Team was considered to be a relatively quiet and safe compound!

Walt Yost
(D-2732L, SFA) CA/PO
Thoung Duc(A109) 67-68

I guess one of the most memorable moments during my tour at A-109, Thoung Duc occurred while the C Team CO Col Shungel and Sergeant Major Harmon D. Hodge were visiting our Camp for who knows what. For those of you that have ever met or had any dealings with "Preacher" Hodge, you will understand. For those of you that have never had the privilege to have known him, well, just ask around.

The incident happened when we got a frantic call that our return convoy was under attack and we had an American KIA. A mad scramble to the Huey on the pad was made by the good Colonel, Preacher, and myself. We jumped on the ship to over fly the area and lend assistance however we could. We started to take incoming small arms fire and I offered a handy flak jacket to the Sergeant Major to sit on. He however refused and instead decided to sit on a steel pot. Just about the time he got comfy we got a few more rounds coming through the bottom of the ship and I heard a grunt. I looked in his direction to see blood coming from his buttock area. (Took a round in the right cheek). About that time the pilot, calmly said over the headphones that he was taking incoming and he would be leaving for Da Nang, (Hate it when the back of the ship is frantic and the pilot remains clam).

Now apparently the pilot got on another channel and broadcast to the "C" Team that Hodge had taken one in the ass because when we arrived at the helipad everyone from "C" team was there. Medics were standing by with a stretcher but Preacher just grunted and gripped a shoulder limping to the dispensary.

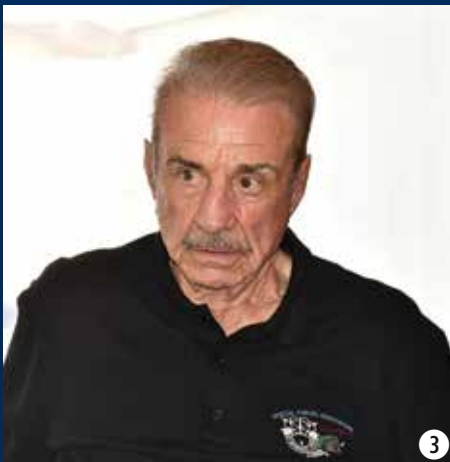
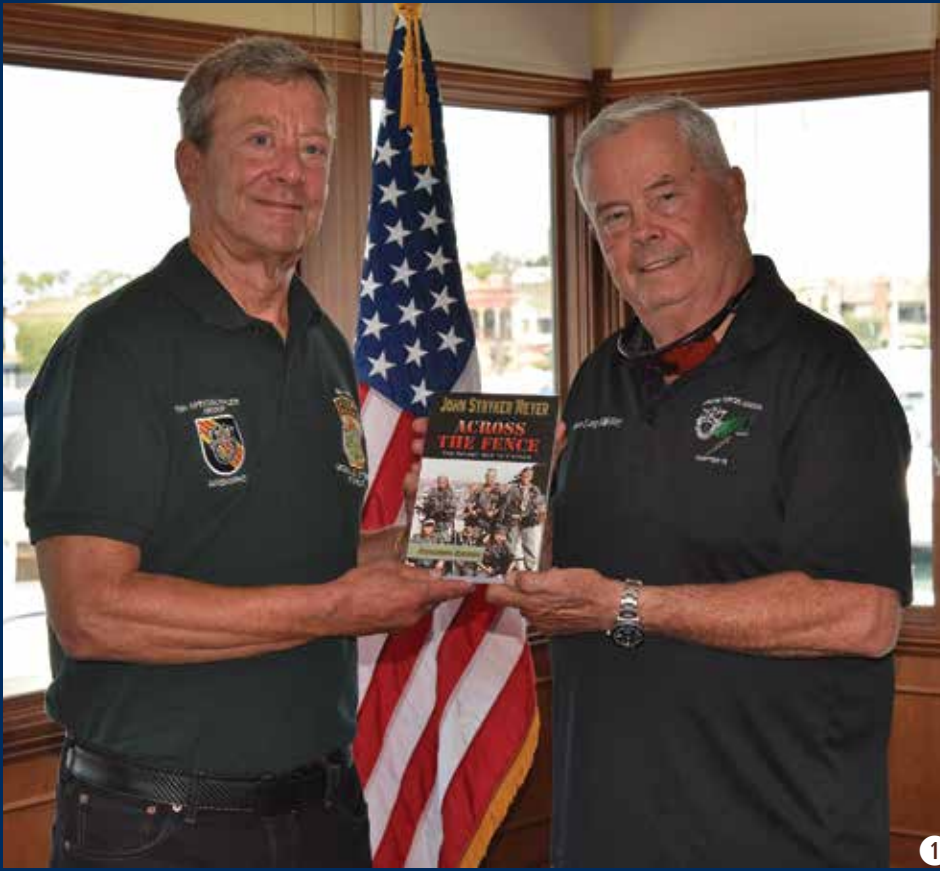
He was back to duty in short order.

Epilogue: Skip ahead to 2002, 44 years later at the 50th Anniversary of Special Forces and the SFA Convention in Fayetteville. I had just reunited with my Team mate from Thoung Duc, Charlie Inot and we were telling lies when Harmon D. Hodge's name came up and Charlie mentioned that he was "just over there."

I didn't really want to see him cause of the bad taste I had for him but Charlie convinced me to just say hello, that he wasn't all that bad. Well, Charlie was right and after conversing for about half an hour or so I left that formerly grizzly old Sergeant Major with these words, "Next time I offer you a flak jacket, Sgt Major, take it" to which I received a hardy "YES SIR" and a giant belly laugh.

The winter of 2002 was the last I heard from the good Sgt Major via a Christmas card. He was now retired to the life of a country gentleman in Kentucky. ❖

SFA CHAPTER 78 AUGUST 2016 MEETING



- ❶ Chapter 78 President Bruce Long presenting a "Chapter Coin" to Guest Speaker, Tom Turney.
- ❷ John Stryker Meyer and Ed Barrett. We believe that Ed has retired from his law practice.
- ❸ Richard Simonian
- ❹ Thad Gembacz computing and John S. Meyer observing.
- ❺ Thad Gembacz, after the computations, yes, the numbers are all correct!
- ❻ John Creel, past member of 10th Special Forces Group (A) in Bad Tolz, Germany, in the 1950's. He is wearing his ORIGINAL SF Beret and Trojan Horse pin from that era.





7 Fritz Saalmann, retired SF and current JROTC Instructor, John Creel and Chris Martin. Chris is relaxing after a long night on duty as a “new sergeant” in his police department.

8 Secretary Gary Macnamara looking at the July Chapter 78 business meeting minutes.

9 “Our Computer Geeks,” Thomas Tringali and Andrew Gaboy of Grid 35, who are revising the Chapter’s website and bringing it up to date.

10 SFC Robert Pugh, Guest Speaker Tom Turney, Chapter 78 Past President Lonny Holmes and SF trainee.

11 Chapter 78 President Bruce Long making a point on his opening statement.

12 Richard Simonian and Jim Duffy



THE NORMANDY AMERICAN CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL

Colleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France



Photos by Lonny Holmes

Chapter 78 member Lonny Holmes visited the Normandy American Cemetery And Memorial in Colleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France recently. The Memorial honors American Troops who died in Europe in World War II. Located on a bluff overlooking Omaha Beach (one of the landing beaches of the Normandy Invasion) and the English Channel, the cemetery contains the remains of 9,387 American military dead, most of whom were killed during the invasion of Normandy and ensuing military operations in World War II.



THESE ARE THE BOYS
OF POINTE DU HOC
THESE ARE THE MEN
WHO TOOK THE CLIFFS
THESE ARE THE CHAMPIONS
WHO HELPED FREE A
CONTINENT
THESE ARE THE HEROES WHO
HELPED END A WAR.



RANGERS
"AND THE AMERICAN RANGERS BEGAN TO CLIMB. THEY SHOT AND FELL OVER THE FACE OF THESE CLIFFS AND FELL TO THE OCEAN'S BOSS. THESE RANGERS WERE FELL, ANOTHER WOULD TAKE HIS PLACE. WHEN ONE RANGER WAS CUT, A RANGERS WOULD GRAB ANOTHER RANGERS AND PUSH HIS CLIMB AGAIN. THEY CLIMBED, SHOT BACK, AND HELD THEM FOOTING. SOON, ONE BY ONE, THE RANGERS FILLED THE CLIFFS OVER THE TOP, AND HE SEIZING THE FIRST LAND AT THE TOP OF THESE CLIFFS, THEY BEGAN TO SEIZE BACK THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE."
PRESIDENT EISENHOWER, JUNE 6, 1944

Bronze plaque at the Ranger Memorial. It honors U.S. Army Ranger Units who sustained heavy losses during the battles for Pointe du Hoc (shown at left) and Omaha Beach.



Right: Ed Barrett and granddaughter Gianna

Left: John Joyce, Lonny Holmes, and Terry Cagnolatti at what has become a regular monthly event — an unofficial Chapter Annex meeting in Las Vegas.

