



GREEN BERET

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 9 • SEPTEMBER 2017



President's Page

Hal Moore and the
Randall Knife

In Memoriam
Army Staff Sgt.
Aaron R. Butler



SENTINEL

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From the Editor

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COVER: General William Westmoreland shaking hands with Colonel Hal Moore



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Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

As mentioned in the President's Page, SFA C-78 Chapter Elections were held at the August meeting and for the first time in four years there will be a few changes in the board of directors. John Stryker (Tilt) Meyer was elected president for a term of two years along with the core board members from the past four years. The notable other change will be the addition of second vice president, a new

position which will be held by Brad Welker. President Elect Tilt Meyer consulted with Brad since Don Deathridge is absent from the Chapter area about half of the year and board activities and decisions are better handled with a full complement of officers which will be satisfied by have a dual vice president position.

The officers for the 2018 & 2019 years will be sworn in at the Annual Chapter 78 Christmas Dinner at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club on Saturday, December 16. They will officially take over duties beginning on January 1, 2017.

Since being voted in as the forthcoming president, Tilt Meyer has been on the phone and frequent email circuit to your editor with his ideas for furthering chapter endeavors. One of his goals is to continue to expand the Sentinel with several "new" columns and feature articles. During Bruce Long's tenure as chapter president he cemented our relationship with A Company, 19th SFG(A) and we supported multiple combined events with their Green Beret members. Tilt has had discussions with Richard Simonian about locating outside journalists and news media individuals who may become contributing writers for the Sentinel which may include stories from the Current War on Terrorism (both Afghanistan and Iraq). He is also looking to establish a closer relationship with local law enforcement communities, like we did for the "Green Beret Shooters Cup" since a large percentage of our membership is currently or has retired from the law enforcement community. So look for a series of stories and a continuing column on our community guardians! Sounds exciting!

Tilt has also spoken with member Tom Turney about continuing to provide the chapter (via the Sentinel) with information on the Montagnards. Today I spoke with Tom and he has a number of topics on the Montagnards that will interest us. Look for his first column in the October 2017 Sentinel. ❖

Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor



Bruce Long
President SFA 78

Call to order for our August 2017 Chapter meeting was at 1003 hrs. Our invocation was given by **Richard Simonian** followed by a remembrance of SSG Aaron Butler 19th SFG KIA.

Our pledge of allegiance was given by our SGT of ARMS **Mark Miller**.

Richard gave the Treasurer's report and after expenditures we have a balance of \$103.67. We collected \$240 at the Chapter

meeting to cover our breakfast, with a little left over.

There were twenty Chapter members present for our August Chapter meeting, along with three guests.

New member: Mark Rhodes M7377 is a transfer from the Arizona Chapter. Mark served with the 5th SFG from 1978-80 and with the 20th SFG from 1993-2003. However, Mark was unable to attend August's meeting due to an illness, but promised he will attend in September.

Range Day Update: We were unable to secure any Range time at Prado Dam due to prior bookings. However, Richard did speak with Artemis, and we will conduct our September meeting at their location. Richard will sponsor the event, and we will also have breakfast at their facility. This will also include range time after the Chapter meeting.

Jim Duffy was present for this month's meeting and is feeling a whole lot better. Welcome back Jim!

Elections were held for the new Chapter President, and it was unanimous by all Chapter members present that **Tilt Meyer** will be the next Chapter President for 2018-19. **Don Deathridge** will remain VP along with **Gary Macnamara** as Secretary and **Richard Simonian** as Treasurer. **Tom Turney** and **Brad Welker** are considering the position of 2nd VP as Don Deathridge travels about six months out of the year.

The first annual Veterans shooting match that was held at the Field Time Indoor Range in Stanton was a big success, according to the manager on duty who I spoke with. However, due to unforeseen circumstances our four-man team was unable to attend. This event will be held again next year. Hopefully the Chapter can field a team.

The Chapter membership discussed and voted on changing our Chapter meetings back to the 2nd Saturday of every month. This will go into effect January 2018.

With regards to Chapter Challenge Coins, it was agreed and voted on that there would be no cost to a Chapter member for giving out coins at special presentations. A good example, the 10th SFG reunion and the 1st Special Service Force reunion that was attended by **James Light** and **Cliff Armas**.

James Light will be making a presentation on the 1st Special Service Force reunion that was recently held in Sacramento.

Tilt Meyer briefed the membership on the cover picture of the August SENTINEL issue which shows MG Jack Singlaub and Mike Rose. Mike who was a medic on "Operation Tailwind" will be receiving his MOH within the next two months.

Fund raising: The Chapter membership discussed the possibility of donating firearms and holding a raffle. I mentioned that raffles in CA are limited and with current gun laws in CA it could be difficult.

Mike Pierson, who is the current VFW Commander, and Dan Prentice, an Officer with the VFW in Indio, advised that you can get special permission through the Attorney General's Office to hold a raffle for firearms, and all transfers would have to go through a licensed fire arms dealer. Mike went on to say that the VFW and the American Legion have done this before.

A committee of Mike Pierson and Don Deathridge will look into this matter and will report back during our September meeting.

Our guest speaker for our August meeting was Steve Owens, an Advance Planning Consultant who explained in some detail on the Veterans burial program. This was very informative, to say the least. If anyone has questions for Steve, you can reach him by email at stvwens@sbcglobal.net. I might also add that Steve made a presentation to Veterans Affordable Housing Program, and was well received.

Please mark your calendars for the October 21st Chapter meeting. This meeting will be very special, as Billy Waugh (SGM, SF Ret) will be our guest speaker. The event will be held at the Marie Calendars located across the street from Richard's office, as they can accommodate a large turnout.

For some of you who don't know about Billy, he co-authored the book *Hunting the Jackal* published in 1985, and was a contractor for the CIA, and deployed to Afghanistan right after 911. Google his name if you want to know more about this retired SGM. Billy also speaks at the Officers SFQ course once a month at Camp Mackall.

Latest update on A Company and SOD (N): A Company will be at Los Alamitos October 30th through November 5th. SOD (N) will be having a change of Command on or about October 21 – 24 after an Airborne Operation at Anderson DZ. More to follow as it develops.

SFA Conference will be held in El Paso, TX on June 12-17, 2018.

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING: September 16, 2017

0830 Breakfast/Meeting – 1000 Chapter Meeting

Artemis Defense Institute

11 Spectrum North Pointe Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630

(949) 305-6586 ❖

Bruce D Long

President, SFA Chapter 78

SGM, SF (Ret)

Hal Moore and the Randall Knife

By Jack Williams

It is a perplexing question. What is the connection between these:

- Colonel Hal Moore;
- Colonel Louis Compton;
- General William Westmoreland;
- General “Slim” James Gavin;
- General John Singlaub;
- Special Forces - personal equipment?

Now ... add a personal friendship dating to pre-WWII; a torpedoed troop transport in WWII; experimental parachute testing gone wrong; airmobile doctrine development and application; a wedding; battles in Vietnam; DSC presentation; and much more. What could possibly weave all these elements into a story about a piece of history worthy of research and preservation?

Lt. Gen. Hal Moore's passing a few months ago deservedly received widespread publicity and an outpouring of support and memories especially from Vietnam vets. We remember him as one of the dynamic combat leaders of the 1st Cavalry Division in the early days, 1965-6, and for his leadership in the victory at the Ia Drang Valley, LZ X-ray battle in November, 1965.

At the time, along with the national publicity about that victory came the inevitable news media photographs. Especially famous is one of Col. Moore after receiving his DSC for actions on LZ X-ray (figure 1). Though this picture has been published many times, most recently as a memorial following his passing, there is a small detail in the picture that has been overlooked – Col. Moore is pictured wearing a Randall combat knife on his web gear. Therein lies a story.

Many Special Forces troopers carried a Randall knife in Vietnam. It was one of the three legendary personal items needed to present the image of hard core SF during this era ... Randall knife, Rolex watch, star sapphire ring, (and some irreverent troopers added a fourth item...divorce papers). Therefore, for an RVN Special Forces vet, that famous picture of Col. Moore posed some questions: where is Gen. Moore's knife that appeared so prominently in the DSC photo? How did his Randall relate to the famous Randall that Gen. Westmoreland usually wore in the field in RVN? And for that matter, where did the Randall knife tradition in the airborne and SF originate?

Searching for answers, I found a Facebook site dedicated to the memory of Gen. Moore, maintained by his two sons, LTC (ret) Steve Moore, and Col. (ret) Dave Moore. I posted a query asking about Gen. Hal Moore's Randall and received an interesting



❶ Col. Hal Moore, June, 1966, DSC Presentation

❷ Col. Moore – wearing Randall - return to LZ X-ray in 1966 with CSM Plumley searching for MIAs from LZ Albany.

message from LTC Steve saying he thought his father's Randall had actually belonged to his grandfather, Hal Moore's father-in-law, Col. Louis Compton. A short time later, LTC Steve sent me some pictures of his grandfather's Randall knife (figure 3) and another picture of Col. Compton with Bo Randall himself in Florida probably in 1942 (figure 4).



When I examined these pictures, it quickly became apparent that Col. Compton's knife was very rare and unusual. Posting these pictures on the Randall knife collector's forum attracted experts who agreed this was one of the first thirty or so model 1 "fighters" ever made by the Randall Knife shop, probably in late 1942. His military record, and his name etched on the blade combined with the picture of Col. Compton and Bo Randall made the knife potentially of great value to a collector. But who was Col. Louis Compton and how did he come to have a Randall knife, and how did Gen. Moore get it and why did he take it to Vietnam?

Col. Compton (figure 5) began his career as an officer during WWI, and his service spanned over 30 years. When deployed to Europe, he was with the artillery of the 15th Army, the last US Army deployed in early 1945. Ironically, in December, 1944, his transport ship taking the main body of the HQ of the 15th Army to France was torpedoed in the English Channel and sank. Col. Compton received a bronze star for his actions saving lives and organizing the ship evacuation. Later, after WWII, he served on the staff of a satellite Nuremberg tribunal and later helped author several studies of war-time armor before retiring in 1951. He presumably carried his Randall with him to the ETO, having likely acquired it from the Randall shop in 1942.

Immediately before WWII Col. Compton apparently mentored a young Lt. William Westmoreland, who was assigned to artillery when just out of West Point. This is thought to have been the source of a long-time bond of personal regard between Westy and Col. Compton. But perhaps his greatest accomplishment was fathering a beautiful daughter, Miss Julia Compton. In 1949 she married Lt. Hal Moore, a young promising West Point officer who had volunteered to be part of the Airborne Test Section of the Army Field Forces Board, stationed at Fort Benning. The Airborne Test Section was commanded by Col. Compton who reported to General Harry Kinnard in Fort Bragg. Gen. Kinnard later commanded the 1st Cavalry Division in the Ia Drang Valley campaign. At that



- ③ Col. Compton's very early 1942 Randall knife
- ④ Col. Compton and Bo Randall, 1942
- ⑤ Col. Louis Compton
- ⑥ Gen. James Gavin (back to camera) wearing Randall – with Gen Mathew Ridgeway during Normandy campaign

time Moore was making some of his 300 jumps testing new parachutes and techniques. During this assignment he twice survived terrible chute and jump malfunctions.

When LTC Steve forwarded the pictures of Col. Compton's early Randall, the vintage Randall collector community eagerly examined and debated the old knife's significance ... what a find!! But what quickly became apparent was this: though Col. Compton's knife was indeed an important historical artifact, it was not the knife Col. Moore was wearing when he received his DSC. Thus the original questions were still unanswered even though a trove of interesting information had been discovered. And ... why a Randall?



7 Gen. James Gavin web gear and Randall in West Point Museum

“Why a Randall?” – requires going back in time. In late 1942, Col. James Gavin, CO 505th PIR, acquired his famous Randall knife, and carried it into the Sicily campaign. A magazine interview with him in Sicily prominently mentioned his Randall and he was thereafter frequently photographed with it. One such picture taken during the Normandy Campaign showed him wearing his knife while consulting with General Ridgway (figure 6). He later wrote a letter saying: “I carried it with me on my four combat jumps, and to the best of my knowledge, I was never without it. It filled a need for me, and I still have it.” (*Gen. Gavin’s famous Randall is on display in the museum at West Point – figure 7.*)

Almost immediately after the story of Gavin and his Randall was published in Life magazine in 1943, first the officer corps of the Parachute Infantry Regiments (PIR), and then many enlisted men began acquiring Randalls as their personal equipment. Among the Airborne officers who emulated Col. Gavin was Lt. John Singlaub (later General) who acquired his knife in 1943 and carried it during his tour with the Jedburgh in ETO, and thereafter throughout his career. In 1985 he was quoted as saying that his Randall knife had served him well throughout the years and was still part of the emergency equipment he kept packed and ready.

The power of tradition, the beauty, and admittedly the high cost of a Randall made it a premier status symbol among the early paratroopers, especially officers. Five years later use of a Randall during the Korean War solidified its reputation, and it was without a doubt the prestige blade of both the Ranger battalions and the Airborne. When Special Forces formed in 1952, many of the earliest transfers came from Airborne units or from the disbanded Ranger battalions ... and so the Randall almost by default became a symbol of SF in its earliest days.

But what about General Moore’s knife and the other questions? Hal Moore graduated from West Point in May, 1945, and chose infantry branch (*years later a young West Point cadet, Norman Schwarzkopf, opted for infantry in part because of his esteem for one of his*



8 Gen. Williams Westmoreland in RVN with Randall and Rolex

professors, then Major Hal Moore). After some glider assault training and some infantry assignments Captain Moore volunteered for Airborne and became a test-jumper for experimental parachutes, twice surviving near fatal situations. In Korea, Captain Moore was in combat for 14 months in the 7th ID, leading a heavy mortar company, and then a period commanding an infantry company.

In 1957-58, Hal Moore was assigned to work directly with General Gavin developing the prototype air mobile concepts. Being airborne qualified and working directly for General Slim Jim would have exposed him to the lore of the Airborne/Randall knife connection. But even at this time no record has been found of Hal Moore carrying a Randall knife nor do his sons remember him having one in the house. Furthermore, there doesn’t seem to be any record of his using his father-in-law’s WWII Randall either.

So ... fast forward to Vietnam. General William Westmoreland arrived in Vietnam in December, 1963 and took over MACV in mid-1964. In mid-1965 the newly organized and trained 1st Cavalry Division, the first air-mobile division in the world, deployed with LTC Hal Moore commanding the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. Almost immediately committed to the border fight near the Special Forces camp at Plei Me (A-5/217), the battalion engaged in the famous battle in the Ia Drang Valley at LZ X-ray. The victory at X-ray proved the air-mobile concept and made the 1st Cavalry into the “first team.” That famous battle made LTC Hal Moore a household name for his leadership, valor, and for the victory. It later spawned a best seller book *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*, followed by a block buster movie starring Mel Gibson as LTC Moore.

Immediately after that battle, General Westmoreland, presumably wearing his famous ivory handled Randall knife (figure 8), personally visited the 1st Battalion. A few days later, Hal Moore was promoted to full bird and took command of the 1st Cav’s 3rd brigade, the famous “Gary Owen” brigade. And something else most likely happened. General Westmoreland, in an unusual personal gesture perhaps prompted by his friendship with Hal Moore’s father-in-law,



9 Col. Hal Moore, RVN, 1966 with Randall

10 Col. Moore decoration ceremony, 1966 with Randall

11 Col. Moore at ceremony, 1966, wearing Randall

presented the Colonel with a Randall knife in personal recognition of his valor and leadership and as a symbol of his Airborne pedigree.

When higher resolution pictures provided by LTC Steve were published, experts in the vintage Randall collecting community identified his knife as a model 2 with 7-in blade in a Johnson brown button sheath likely made late in 1962. But those are details for collectors. What is most important was that Col. Moore wore that knife in the field and in ceremonial occasions thereafter.

And for the rest of the story? LTC Steve wrote the following:

“Jack – my brother ... [Col. Dave] told me that Dad treasured the pictured knife. It was given to him by Gen. Westmoreland and was stolen out of the shipment when the family moved from Korea to Fort Ord, CA.

My brother moved to Auburn after he retired from the Army to make sure Dad was taken care of and spent far more time with him than the rest of us. Many times when Dad would see the picture with the DSC (people would send it for his autograph), he would express his sadness at the loss of the knife.”

So now the story is completed. General Westmoreland presented Col. Moore with his Randall Model 2-7 knife after the battle at LZ X-ray. Gen. Westmoreland had an impeccable airborne pedigree, was a close personal friend of the in-laws of Hal Moore, and had his own cherished Randall knife that he routinely wore in the field (*Westy's knife is on display in the South Carolina Military Museum in Columbia, SC*). Westmoreland's apparent esteem for the Randall, and the fact that his long-time friend, Hal Moore's father-in-law Col. Compton who had his own vintage Randall carried in WWII, were possibly the inspiration that prompted the special presentation of a personal Randall knife to Col. Moore.

Where General Westmoreland acquired the knife he presented to Hal Moore that November day, 1965, cannot be ascertained though it could have been given to him upon his assuming command of the XVIII Airborne Corp in 1963 prior to his departure for Vietnam. What is documented is that Hal Moore proudly wore the knife General Westmoreland presented to him thereafter, harkening back to the airborne tradition established by Gen. Gavin.

As LTC Steve wrote:

“Dad clearly loved the knife. The only thing certain is what he told my brother – Westmoreland gave it to him in VN.

Westmoreland was an old airborne guy and, as the thread pointed out – they all had Randall knives. I [would think it possible] this was Westmoreland's personal knife he carried and he replaced with the ivory one.”

And ... the answer to the final question? Unfortunately the knife was stolen from Gen. Moore's personal baggage when he was returning from assignment as Divisional CO of the 7th ID in Korea.

So a footnote in history is filled in. Col. Louis Compton, Mr. Bo Randall, Gen. Gavin, Gen. William Westmoreland, Hal Moore, airborne/Special Forces troopers and Randall knives, torpedoed transports, Nuremburg trials, a wedding, air-mobile training, 1st Cavalry Division, Landing Zone X-ray, DSC awards all these elements go into an incredible collage of historical trivia. And perhaps someday, Hal Moore's knife will surface. We can only hope

Postscript: In 2002 Gen. Moore wrote a draft book tying the evolution of his personal leadership style to specific events in his life. That book lay dormant, like the Randall knife, until it was discovered on an old hard drive. LTC Steve worked closely with Mike Guardia, a noted military author, to finalize Moore's final gift to the Army. *Hal Moore on Leadership; Winning when Outgunned and Outmanned* was published in July and is a powerful read of the very personal stories Hal Moore used to make his points. ❖

In Memoriam

Staff Sgt. Aaron R. Butler



(U.S. Army photo)

The Department of Defense announced on August 17, 2017 the death of Staff Sgt. Aaron R. Butler, a soldier who was supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Staff Sgt. Aaron R. Butler, 27, of Monticello, Utah, died August 16 in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, of injuries suffered from an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations. The incident is under investigation.

Butler was a Green Beret assigned to the 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Camp Williams, Utah. A former high school wrestling champion in his hometown Monticello, Utah, his former coach Kent Adair has said that Butler was always determined to succeed. "His first match in high school he got pinned," Adair said. "And so, rather than be deterred at his goal, he worked hard and he fixed things he needed to fix and he was determined enough to do it."

His family said in a statement. "In a life that was all too brief, our dear son and brother made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. While we are heartbroken to become a Gold Star family, we honor Aaron's service and sacrifice. Aaron was a strength to us, an inspiration to those around him, and a joy to have in our family."

His military education includes the Combat Engineer Course, Basic Airborne Course, Special Forces Qualification Course, Special Forces Engineer Sergeant Qualification Course (Distinguished Honor Graduate), Basic Special Operations Language Training (French), Advanced Leader Course, and Military Free-Fall Parachutist Course. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star (Awarded 16 Aug 17), Purple Heart (Awarded 16 Aug. 17), ARCOM, National Defense Service Medal, Non Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Reserve Component Overseas Training Ribbon, Special Forces Tab, Military Free-Fall Parachutist Badge, and Parachutist Badge.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert ordered all Utah and U.S. flags to be lowered to half-staff on Saturday, August 26, the day Staff Sgt. Butler was laid to rest in his hometown. More than 1,000 people gathered in the small town to show their support at his funeral service.

Staff Sgt. Butler is survived by his father, Randy K. Butler; his mother, Laura A. Butler, of Monticello, Utah; seven siblings, and his fiance Alex Seagroves. ❖