

HOTLINE

The Official Publication of the Marine Air Traffic Control Association, Inc.
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Ray Mischock and Hank Flood

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NEW

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MATCA

BIRTHDAYS

December

1 Dave Pettipas
3 Mickey Urlie
3 Charlie Yetter
4 Jim Lague
8 Steve Hulland
10 Melissa Hulland
12 Hermon Moyers
12 Carole McIntosh
14 Joe Medico
17 Carol Mutter
17 Joe Calcasola
17 Charley Jones
19 Martha Nebel
22 Harold Huelson
31 Gen Calcasola

January

7 Terry Bobell
8 Maggie Lowes
9 Patricia Gibbs
13 Dan Walczak
14 Tony Tilghman
14 Jerry Bess
14 Bob Stepp
17 Davy Crocker
18 Buddy Wyatt

About the cover
See MATCU-68 article on page 9.



COMM CENTER

Ed. Note: Somehow the on-line conversation turned to Spam, and for a few days folks were chatting about their experiences with the canned treat. This reply to the issue from Bill Behan was one of the best.

Summer 1967, Dong Ha, Vietnam I was a SSGT working approach control and local control in our two portable towers. Mess hall had been blown up almost thirty days ago. Living on C-rations and some stolen MRE's. MRE's were brand new and Army special forces were the only one's getting them in country. Two of our tower guys, Cpl's Cleveland and Howatnick had spotted a pallet across the runway at air freight and investigated. They found the new MRE's. For the next four nights, the Army is slow at picking up their stuff, we made raids on the pallet and stored the confiscated MRE's in our tower bunker, almost left no room for us to dive into during artillery attacks.

One night 1st Lt. Bill Flahive, Tower Officer, a fellow New York City native from Manhattan, brought a care package up to the tower. We were all pretty tired of the C-rations and MRE's by this time. The package had the usual goodies from home, including cookies, a ball of moldy provolone cheese from Little Italy, and something new, six cans of spam. For the next six nights we fried a can of spam, sharing it between ourselves and our Air Force weather guesser that was based below the tower.

I had never had spam before and it had never sound very appetizing to me, but I must sat say that fried it was a step up from C-rations and MRE's.

As Paul Harvey would say "Now here's the rest of the sorry." Sadly Bill Flahive was killed during the siege at Khe Sahn in early 1967. I was stationed at NAS Willow Grove in Pennsylvania and following one of our weekend drills with the reserves I took a trip up to New York City to try and find Bill's family and offer my condolences. The main recruiting office was able to give me his Mom And Dad's address.

It was in one of the many low cost apartment

buildings called the "projects' in lower Manhattan. I made my way to the fifth floor apartment. Bill's father was still pretty torn up about his death and was blaming everyone that was associated with the government and the corps. He left the room and I could understand his grief. His mother on the other hand was very gracious and welcomed me into her home. She wanted to know about everything I could tell her about Bill. One question she asked was about the care packages she sent every month. Did he really like all the stuff she put in them. I related the story about how much we enjoyed the fried spam. She just glowed and smiled knowing that she had brought some joy into her son's last days with something as simple as a small can of spam.

Bill Behan

Second place goes to Buddy Wyatt for the following:

Bill - Nice story. As a child growing up in the early 50's, some of my favorite memories come from Spam cans. Back in the woods of south Louisiana during that period of time money was scarce. We grew our own vegetables and went to the woods or chicken coop for meat on the table.

Trouncing through the woods with a homemade sling shot looking for a squirrel or rabbit to poke his head out for meat to put in that big ole pot of dumplings was always exciting. Chicken was a treat once a week, so when we came out of the woods empty handed we could always count on SPAM. I loved having Spam because that meant I had another toy.

Yes, I used the empty Spam cans as a toy truck playing in the dirt. It could be used as a dump truck, a grader or any thing a young child could imagine. I never grew tired of playing with my empty Spam cans nor did I ever get tired of eating Spam. As of this writing, a quick check of the food pantry shows 4 cans of that wonderful treat. I love a cold/hot Spam sandwich, mayo and onion, with an ice cold glass of milk. No, I no longer play with the empty Spam cans, but I do hold them for a moment before I toss them in the trash, thinking of all the old memories I had with them.

Buddy

Hank Flood

Ed. Note: In mid October Hank Flood suffered a stroke. Word of his condition came to us from his friend, neighbor and fellow MATCA member Ken Clark. Ken e-mailed Jim Bacon who forwarded the messages to the group. It seems Hank is akin to a Timex watch; he takes a licking but keeps on ticking. Hang in there, Hank.

I talked to both Hank and Shirley a day or so ago and Hank seems to be making one of his legendary recoveries.

The physical therapist has him up and walking (hopping?) with a walker once a day and he now has the strength and control of his left arm and hand to do this for a short time. He still has serious blood problems. His platelets count should be around 300K and his is over a million. They're not sure if this caused the stroke or vice versa. If things continue to progress at the current rate, he may be allowed to go home on Monday (Oct. 24).

Ken

*Ed. Note: This letter is from **Herm & Rita Moyers**, who live in Georgia but used to live in Fort Lauderdale. It was written shortly after hurricane Wendy swept across Florida in October. The needs of those living through these storms of the past few years are a constant theme of survival with the barest necessities. We all should take heed and prepare emergency survival kits and make plans for the eventuality that we may be next.*

We picked up the much needed supplies for friends in Ft. Lauderdale Friday night. Left Saturday morning 5 a.m. pulled into our old neighborhood around 3 that afternoon. What an incredible mess, won't go into details but unbelievable, lots of damage, lights down, telephone poles snapped, etc. Helped with some clean up, Herm got the generator going and Jeanne had electricity and was overjoyed to crying and hugging. We took propane and gasoline, yes, Jeanne and neighbors were prepared so they thought. They had used all their gasoline with the chainsaws and you should have seen what they had already cut up. The nearest gas stations and they were price gouging were the ones 2 hours away in Vero Beach. By the time one drove up there and waited in long lines the car would be out of gas and then fill up and drive back well there goes the gas. Finding gas cans down there was impossible and we had a hard time here. We took gas (lots), propane, cases of water, generators (2), (that's all we could get our hands on), a battery operated TV, batteries and

other items we thought might be needed plus fresh fruit, lunch meat, chips,^oloaf of fresh bread, etc. We got up real early this morning and got home by 4:00 to a very pissed off dog who we left home alone (the neighbor came in to let her out). As for Jeanne and the rest of our friends they are tough and will get through this. The one very good thing was the hurricane went through very quickly, the days since have been cool, little humidity and no rain, perfect for cleanup. And needless to say we are VERY glad to be home!!!!

p.s. oh, on some houses the winds removed the paint, like a sandblasting. A neighbor's insurance adjuster said he never saw anything like it. And a neighbor had her mustang outside (she's blond) which was virtually untouched by the storm except that the back window was sucked out. Found the window a few doors down, shattered but in one piece.

Ed. Note: Buddy Wyatt is well known on line for his "Ramblings from the River" messages

Ramblings from the River

Looks like the making of another gorgeous day in the lovely southwest this morning. Not a cloud in the sky and the wind calm. Temp outside under my verdant is 62 degrees according to my big ole foot and a half round LSU Tigers thermometer. What a wonderful day for a BFR (Bi-annual flight review). I took the Shinn up yesterday, with my 80 year young neighbor in the back seat, to polish up for today and he hogged the controls for most of the flight. He wasn't as sharp as he was in his bomber pilot days, but he sure was having fun. It wasn't until we hit a little turbulence over the mountains that he got a little nervous and thought it best that I take the controls back. I knew he meant it when he called me "boy", as in, "YOU better TAKE these controls back boy." I took the controls, got us back into smoother air and decided to make a low pass over our houses just to see if I would get a reaction out of the neighbors.

Today's flight was just beautiful. Clear skies and visibility was 75 miles plus. I was over Eagle airport at 4500 feet and could see Parker Arizona and points south clear as a bell and the smog over Las Vegas and points north.

This flight was done with no radio's and proves the theory that if your radio doesn't work, that don't mean your airplane don't work. All you tech's can

understand the problem I had with my radios. Seems like when I was doing the restoration on this airplane I had a VHF stainless steel whip bent rod antenna in front of the windscreen and another tube type VHF antenna in the left wing tip. Trying to go with the "clean look" I elected to go with the wing tip antenna and took the stainless steel one off. Seems like I had to be on top of the station I was trying to reach or be fairly close with the wing tip pointed toward the station to hear anything or talk to anyone. OK techs, are you starting to see "horizontal polarization" verses "Vertical polarization?" I'm just a hard headed controller but it didn't take a second explanation from a radio tech on the advantages of changing back to the front of the windscreen and go to a broadband type antenna. I had no radio problems at all before I changed so it makes perfect sense to go back to the original set up. So it's off to the hangar to spend a couple of hours to fix this problem and then get airborne for my BAR. Crap, I forgot, this means stalls and steep turns, arghhhhhhhh.

Buddy Wyatt

Five Years ago in the Hotline

HOTLINE

The cover of the November 2000 Hotline said it all. Our association founder, Joe Medico, wound up with a suite in the reunion hotel that was two stories tall and had a spiral staircase leading up to his bedroom. Once the word got out on his fancy digs, all the ladies of MATCA swarmed to his room to have their picture taken surrounding Joe on his spiral staircase. They all agreed that Joe, like fine wine, has gotten better with age. I'm just not sure what it is he's gotten better at.

This issue of Hotline was literally filled with praise for the Nashville reunion hosted by Jim and Arlene Dargan. From the elegant Maxwell House Hotel to the General Jackson Showboat to the excellent golf tournament, everything was fine in Nashville for the MATCA reunion goers.

The major activity of the membership business meeting that year was to establish new categories of membership that included life membership on a graduated age scale. Since initiating the life membership program one hundred twelve members have taken advantage of it. Life membership sure saves a lot of record keeping for your association and a lot of check writing for you.

Sadly, Taps reported the passing of two great Marines, Roger Hines and Gene Ploger.



Phu Bai Airfield, RVN



From The President

By: J. J. Dargan

Here it is November already and it seems like just a few weeks ago many of us were in Ft. Lauderdale. Since then Wilma came to visit and the city has yet to completely recover from it. Our thanks to Rita and Herm Moyers who took time to provide some help to friends of theirs down there. What a gracious gesture.

November brings us the Marine Corps Birthday and with it many celebrations. I hope you had a chance to celebrate with your friends and fellow Marines. It also brings Thanksgiving, a great time to have your family around you if possible. We in America have much to be thankful for. We enjoy many freedoms other countries don't have and if their leaders have their way, they never will have them.

When you sit down to enjoy your Thanksgiving dinner, say a prayer of thanks for this great country of ours, for our troops in harm's way and for the leadership of our country.

As you know this is the December issue of the Hotline and December brings the biggest holiday of all.... Christmas. It's a time for families to gather together and share in the blessings of the season and to exchange gifts to show our appreciation of each other. We hope you all have a Merry Christmas, have your loved ones around you, and remember the real reason we celebrate this day.

In the last issue I was remiss in not mentioning the fact that my old school chum Davy Crocker and his lovely wife Dana came down from Maine. As bad luck would have it, Davy and I did not have the opportunity to play golf, so for now he is still the undisputed winner. If I practice enough, I may yet beat him.

We are looking for "A Few Good Marines" to serve as officers of MATCA. The office of President, 2nd Vice President and Secretary need to be filled. If you're interested or know someone who is interested in serving please contact Skip Redpath.

Anyone who would like to host the 2008 reunion on the East Coast please let me know. We will meet again in October 2006 in Corpus Christi, TX and in 2007 we will meet in Phoenix, hosted by Skip and Jackie Redpath and Buddy and Pat Wyatt. I know they will be great reunions, so make your plans to attend.

Once again the members have voted to donate \$1500 to send packages to our Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. Brooks Bergeron has volunteered his time to set up the contacts so we know what they need and forward the packages as soon as possible. Our heartfelt thanks to Brooks, who like a good Marine, always accomplished the mission.

For those of you who are on line, you can now receive the Hotline on line, and in color. I can assure you once you've received it on line, you'll be sold on it. The one issue you will receive by mail is the Membership Issue in February since we cannot divulge the information contained in it about our members. Please give the on line issue a try. Just send your E-Mail address to Roger McIntosh and sit back and enjoy the Hotline on line.

Three of our members, Gerry Hemming, Hank Flood and Steve Hulland are recovering from illness, All of them are on the mend and doing fairly well. I have heard that Denver Parrett was ill but could not confirm it. As always there are members who are ill but do not mention it, so please keep Gerry, Steve, Hank and Denver and any other member who may be ill in your prayers. We wish all of them a speedy and complete recovery.

Our thanks to Roger and Carole McIntosh for a continued great Hotline. They really put a lot of effort into producing an excellent product. If you get a chance please thank them for all they do for MATCA.

If anyone is interested in permanent MATCA name tags, please contact me. The cost is \$10.

Finally we'll ring in the new year before the next issue of the Hotline, so we'd like to take this time to wish you all a very Happy and Prosperous New Year. Take good care of each other.

Semper Fidelis,
Jim and Arlene



Our Word

Roger & Carole McIntosh

Changes Coming

We have obtained a new software package for the production of Hotline. Adobe InDesign will allow greater flexibility in the pre-press production of the newsletter and also make creation of the electronic version easier. Carole, being the creative half of this team effort, will be training on the software at home. We anticipate better control of photographs and more interesting graphics as we become accustomed to the use of the program.

Renewal Time

December is the time for members whose dues are due to pay up. Look at the mailing label on the front of this Hotline. If it says "member through 2005" your dues are about to expire. As usual, I have sent a letter to everyone up for renewal this year. Please try to respond before the end of the year so that we can insure nobody gets dropped from the Hotline mailing list. Remember to mail your check to me, the secretary, in order to have your payment recorded in the Hotline database. I then forward your payment on to our treasurer, Woody Wingfield, for deposit. And let's not make it a race to see who can renew last. This past renewal cycle the last 2005 membership renewal came in during June!

Disaster Relief

The new fund, supported by voluntary contributions from members, is off to a flying start. Some very generous gifts have been received, including one for \$500, from our membership. That effectively puts the fund in operation, ready to receive requests. Please refer to the October 2005 Hotline for particulars. It seems that no part of the country is immune from devastating storms anymore, and we want to be in a position to be able to help members when they need immediate assistance.

Members

President Dargan has probably mentioned in his column that a few of our members have had problems this past two months. Hank Flood and Steve Hulland suffered strokes during October and Gerry Hemming took a nasty fall and broke some bones. The good news is that, as of the time I'm writing this, everyone is on the mend and there are no Taps entries for this issue, and that's the good news.

Holidays

Carole and I want to join JJ and Arlene in wishing everyone in the MATCA family the best of the holiday season. Another year has rolled around and in many respects it has been a momentous year filled with large scale events. Let us hope for a better tomorrow for our entire Marine family. Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year!



MATCU Camp and civilian control tower - Hue-Phu Bai

AGENT ORANGE INFORMATION FOR VIETNAM VETERANS

Ed. Note: The following information is extracted from a Veterans Affairs document provided by MATCA member John Rush.

Agent Orange was a herbicide used in Vietnam to kill unwanted plants and to remove leaves from trees that otherwise provided cover for the enemy. The name "Agent Orange" came from the orange stripe on the 55-gallon drums in which it was stored. Other herbicides, including Agent White and Agent Blue were also used in Vietnam to a much lesser extent.

Between 1961 and 1971 more than 19 million gallons of herbicide were used in Vietnam. Most were Agent Orange, which was used from January 1965 until April 1970. Spraying occurred in all four military zones of Vietnam.

In the 1970's some veterans became concerned that exposure to Agent Orange caused health problems. One of the chemicals in Agent Orange contained minute traces of TCDD (dioxin), which caused a variety of illnesses in laboratory animals. More recent studies have suggested that the chemical may be related to a number of cancers and other health problems.

In 1978 the VA set up the Agent Orange registry health examination program. Vietnam veterans who are interested in participating in this program should contact their nearest VA medical center for an examination.. Veterans who participate are asked about their possible exposure to herbicides in Vietnam. A medical history is taken, a physical examination is performed, and a series of basic laboratory tests, such as chest x-ray, urinalysis, and blood tests are done. The VA does not perform body dioxin level tests because there is serious question about their value to veterans. *The VA also makes a presumption of Agent Orange exposure for Vietnam veterans.* All examination and test results are kept in the veteran's permanent medical record and entered into the VA Agent Orange Registry.

Under Section 102, Public Law 104-262, the Veteran's Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, VA shall furnish hospital care, medical services, and may furnish nursing home care to veterans exposed to herbicides in Vietnam. These veterans will be furnished health care and without the requirement of a copayment. There are some

restrictions.

VA pays disability compensation to Vietnam veterans with injuries or illnesses incurred in or aggravated by their military service. Veterans do not have to prove that Agent Orange caused their medical problems to be eligible for compensation. Rather, VA must determine that the disability is "service connected. More information is available at the Agent Orange toll free help line: 1-800-749-8387. For disability compensation information call 1-800-827-1000.

The number of diseases that VA recognized as associated with (but not necessarily caused by) Agent Orange has expanded considerably during the 1990's. The following conditions are recognized for service-connection for these veterans: chloracne (a skin disorder), porphyria cutanea tarda, acute or subacute peripheral neuropathy (a nerve disorder), type 2 diabetes, multiple myeloma, prostate cancer, and respiratory cancers (including cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus). VA is in the process of adding chronic lymphocytic leukemia to this list. In addition, Vietnam veteran's children with birth defect spina bifida are eligible for certain benefits and services. VA now provides certain benefits, including health care, for children with birth defects who were born to female Vietnam veterans.

Several studies have been conducted to determine the effects of Agent Orange. However, VA now makes the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange for Vietnam veterans. This means that a Vietnam veteran is not required to prove exposure to herbicides in Vietnam.

In September, 2000, VA recognized that Agent Orange was used in Korea in the late 1960's and approved Agent Orange examinations for U. S. veterans who served in Korea in 1968 or 1969.

There is at each VA medical center an "Environmental Health Clinician responsible for the conduct of Agent Orange Registry exams.

Additional information is available from several sources. Online go to www.va.gov/agentorange and/or check with national veterans service organizations and state governments web pages.

Contribution to "A History of Marine ATC in Vietnam 1962-1973"

By E.A. (Ray) Mischock

MATCU-68: Hue Phu Bai, South Vietnam March 1966-April 1967

I served with MATCU-68 at Hue Phu Bai, South Vietnam from March 1966 to April 1967. L.H. Smith and I reported in at Marble Mountain after flying from Okinawa on an Air force C-124 Globemaster that landed at Da Nang. We both came from instructor duty at the ATC Schools at NAS Glynco, Georgia. L.H. Smith was at the B School and I was at the GCA School. Jerry Bess was at Marble Mountain at the time we reported in. Jerry had reported in several days prior to our arrival. A small detachment from MATCU-68 was operating the tower at Marble Mountain and also gave support to incoming MATCU personnel. After a few days, the three of us flew up to Phu Bai in a Marine CH-37C. When we boarded the CH-37C, the crew chief passed us noise-suppression headsets to protect us from the noise emanating from the twin engines powering the heavy lift helicopter. The noise in that chopper was unbelievable, and ear shattering. We were very grateful for the headset. The flight up to Phu Bai was uneventful. However, we noticed after take-off, that the pilot flew easterly and took us over the South China Sea, and then turned northwest hugging the coastline. The crew chief explained that the high terrain located between Marble Mountain and Phu Bai was infested with VC, and aircraft took small arms fire unless they climbed high enough to be out of range of their weapons. As we flew along the coastline and looked at the landscape, it appeared that South Vietnam was a truly idyllic place. There were white sandy beaches, emerald blue water and lush green vegetation along the route. There also were several large inland lagoons dotted with small sampans, and what appeared to be large angular fish traps. Walt Gimple, NCOIC of MATCU-68 was on hand to greet us when we landed at Phu Bai. MATCU-68 had recently moved to Hue Phu Bai located about 40 clicks northwest of Marble Mountain to support HMM -163 and the 131st Army Aviation Company (Night Hawks). The Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron flew UH-34D helicopters, and the 131st Army Aviation Company flew OV-1 Mohawk fixed wing aircraft, mostly at night. The OV-1's call sign was Spud, and the HMM-163 helicopters call sign was Super chief.

I remember shortly after arriving while we were still talking with Walt on the tarmac, a UH-1E Huey slick landed nearby. On board was a Spe-

cial Forces Team that had just recovered several bodies of their teammates from a Special Forces Camp in the Ashau Valley. The camp located near the Laotian border and was lost when the 95th NVA Regiment and VC overran the camp earlier in March. Helicopters from HMM-163 pulled out most of the men during that evacuation, losing three UH-34 helicopters. LtCol House, CO of HMM -163 was piloting one of the choppers that were lost. After landing and picking up a full load of men, his A/C was disabled by ground fire just as he was lifting off. Being senior officer there, he took charge of the remaining men and walked them out to safety. He received the Navy Cross and was up for the Congressional Medal Of Honor. The recovery team told us that the NVA stuck the heads of the dead Americans on stakes, booby trap the bodies and placed them so that they could be observed from the air. The SF Team had to use grappling hooks to retrieve the bodies and get them into the chopper. This was my first encounter with body bags. In the coming months, I would see many more being unloaded from C-130 aircraft on the Phu Bai tarmac, usually late at night. That same day, a Marine C-130 landed and off-loaded an in-flight casualty on a flight from Dong Ha. Sadly, a Marine MSgt on his way home after completing his tour of duty received a fatal wound from that "Silver Bullet" which came through the belly of the aircraft as it was approaching Phu Bai for a landing.

Hue Phu Bai Airfield was located approximately 8 miles Southeast of the city of Hue just off Highway 1. The runway was 09 and 27, 150 feet wide and 5,600 feet long. There was a permanent terminal building that had a four-story tower, with a waiting room and small restaurant on the ground floor. There also was an airfreight shed attached to the west side of the terminal building operated by the U.S. Air Force. Charlie Med was located across the road in front of the terminal building, and a detachment of Seabees quartered a mile or so south of the field. The terminal building was located mid-field on the south side of the runway and had a large aircraft parking ramp on the runway side. At each end of the parking ramp was a taxiway that intersected the runway approximately one-third distance from either end. After landing, many fixed wing aircraft would have to turn around and taxi on the runway to get to the taxiway. The parking ramp was large enough to hold several C-130 aircraft. HMM-163 had a parking ramp for its helicopters with two taxiways to the runway on the southwest corner of the airport. MATCU-68 operations site was located

mid-field, directly across from the terminal building, between the two taxiways, the parking ramp and the runway. There was a small unit from a Marine Air Control Squadron (GCI) located next to the runway approximately 100 yards east of the MATCU site. Their call sign was Water boy.

MATCU-68 had a TSQ-18 complex with two TPN-8 radar units. An ASR MMR with no working secondary radar (we worked with pure raw radar) a Wicks Tower, a long shed for our diesel generators and several squad tents. One TPN-8 radar transmitter site was housed in a geodesic dome. Later, Walt Gimple contracted to have a ready room built for us out of mud brick using local Vietnamese labor paid for out of our soft drink fund. We named the new ready room "The Alamo". (An Army SFC ATC controller who I worked with at the Army ATC School, Ft Rucker wrote me that the Alamo was still standing and in use after the Marines left Phu Bai). I remember that there were rats as big as jackrabbits prowling around our unit site at night. To take care of the problem, Hank Flood, one of our duty officers sent home for a powerful air pistol. Our living area was located approximately 150-200 yards from radar site on the other side of the west taxiway. We were quartered in an area next to the personnel from HMM-163 in squad tents, using wood pallets as a floor.

My first few days at Phu Bai were spent familiarizing myself with the TSQ-18, TPN-8 radar sets and the control area. Some of us were CPN-4 and FPN-36 controllers and had not worked with the TSQ-18 Complex and the TPN-8 radar sets. Much time was spent reinforcing our position with sand bags. There was an abundance of sand, in fact we were situated on a big pile of sand and it dusted us constantly. Everyone helped to fill sand bags. Later, several of us were promoted to GySgts. I was on Gene Nebelungs crew and took the crew over when Gene returned to the states. Hank Flood was one of my duty officers and he also commanded a perimeter defense unit. Jerry Bess, Sam Sagarian and Willie Howe also had their turn as crew chiefs. We were on Port & Starboard watches until we obtained more personnel. The weather was six months of clear VFR, followed by six months of monsoon in which the weather was always IFR and many times at or below GCA minimums. We had a mixed bag of military air traffic. In addition to the local OV-1 and CH-34, there were C-130, C-124, C-123, C-47, A-1E, U-8, U-6, UH-1, CH-46, and later CH-53 traffic. Occasionally a civilian Air Vietnam DC-9 would come in. Most of our traffic was Air Force and Marine C-130 aircraft out of Da Nang, Dong Ha and Khe Sanh. From

Da Nang, C-130's would depart and climb out to Point X-ray (a TACAN fix) that was about 30 miles northeast of Da Nang. At Point X-ray, Da Nang departure would release the aircraft to contact us (we had no ground communication with Da Nang). This made it simple to give them a left turn for identification and put them on a long straight-in approach to runway 27 our primary IFR runway. The C-130 pilots came to trust our GCA controllers and made many landings in weather at or below GCA minimums. Don Feilen, who worked day watches because of our shortage of controllers made many of these approaches. I don't recall one aircraft making a missed approach on a GCA final during IFR weather while I was there. There was one C-130 pilot (Air Force) who made several missed approaches attempting straight-in TACAN approaches one VFR night with no moon. Our runway lights were out and we tried to get him to make a PAR approach and turn on his landing lights at 1/4 mile, but he eventually returned to Da Nang. An Air Force pilot of one of the C-130 aircraft told me that they often threw their A/C in full reverse prop when passing the runway threshold, 10-15 feet in the air when landing at Phu Bai and short strips. The C-130's never could make that last taxiway and always had to turn around and taxi on the runway.

MATCU-68 was chronically short of qualified radar approach and GCA controllers. When it was VFR and we could conduct training, the tactical aircraft didn't have time to shoot a GCA, and when it was marginal, the pilots wanted qualified controllers on the scope, and didn't want to hear "would you accept a supervised trainee". During VFR weather, I would spend more time in the tower with my tower crew. We used the Vietnamese tower in the terminal building and kept our TSA-11 tower located at the TSQ-18 site as a backup. There were several Vietnamese civilian controllers also operating with our Marines in the tower. They would mysteriously disappear whenever our perimeter came under attack usually from small arms fire. There was a Vietnamese NDB located in a building adjacent to the terminal building. Our maintenance personnel kept the NDB working. The Army OV-1 Mohawks at Phu Bai were not equipped with a TACAN NavAid, and had to use the NDB. There was one case when an OV-1 (Spud -21) contacted us for an approach around 0300 in the morning. The OV-1 was coming in from a mission over the Ho Chi Minh trail, and Laotian border area. He reported his position inbound as approximately 25 miles northwest of Phu Bai heading 120 degrees. The ASR scope was clean except for one target tracking 120, but that target was about 15 miles

southeast heading outbound from Phu Bai over the South China Sea. Spud -21 was immediately given a turn back to Phu Bai and we requested his fuel state. The pilot questioned the turn because he felt he was being turned away from Phu Bai with only 40-45 minutes of fuel remaining. He did not believe his radar position after his turn was observed. So we let make another turn on his own, and identified the direction of his turn and his present track. He had over-flown the NDB. We vectored him back to Phu Bai and he landed with about 20 minutes of fuel remaining. It was determined that the VC had a strong beacon on a boat off shore overriding the NDB at Phu Bai, according to Army sources.

A few weeks after arriving at Phu Bai, Wayne Haney, one of our controllers and a radar technician SSgt Harvey, was sent to Khe Sanh with an FPN-36 Quad Radar set to provide ATC and GCA service there. They were there until relieved by personnel from MATCU-62 that set up operations at Dong Ha. We continued to provide approach control service to Khe Sanh and Dong Ha without the luxury of ground communications. Don Carman and Jerry Bess worked approach control and provided this service with a lot of in-flight coordination. Aircraft landing at Khe Sanh or Dong Ha would be advised to contact the GCA there, bingo our frequency if no contact. We would then close that air space to IFR traffic until they departed and climbed high enough to re-establish radio & radar contact. Our control area for IFR operations began north of Da Nang to the DMZ, and from the Laotian boarder to the South China Sea, from the surface to 10,000 feet. We were always short of flight strips, and had to use them a second time by turning them over.

MATCU-68 took control of the base camp operations at Phu Bai from HMM-163, and ran the utilities and the clubs. Between watches Sam Sagarian and I tended bar at the "O" Club and Jerry Bess at the Staff Club. L.H. Smith became manager of the Staff Club and EM Club. A former Mess Sgt who got picked up as a 2nd Lt, became Mess Officer, and managed the "O" Club with our help. Sam and I got to know many of the HMM-163 pilots personally. Sam would occasionally play cards with them before the bar opened. I remember one incident receiving a call from one of them on a MedEvac flight from Dong Ha to Phu Bai late one pitch-black night, requesting a vector home. He reported having a bad case of vertigo. He recognized my voice and then it became a real personal matter. We got him home safely and he thanked me the next night at the club.

Several out-of-the-ordinary events happened. An Air America (CIA) Pilatus Porter PC-6 turbo prop made a short takeoff and bounced one wheel off our geodesic dome. Actually putting a dent in the dome. Weeks later we got a visit from a CIA operative wanting information on the aircraft. The A/C was missing. We had a Navy F-4 make an emergency landing and sailed off the end of runway 9 in a cloud of dust. The pilot survived. After the engines were removed, an Army CH-54 Flying Crane airlifted the aircraft to Da Nang. We also had an A-1E make a wheels up landing also on runway 9. Fowled our runway for several hours until we got it removed through the efforts of the 3rd Division Motor Transport Section. This all happened during VFR conditions. One unfortunate incident happened during a radar-monitored departure. Willie Howe was monitoring an OV-1 departing on runway 09. Radar contact was lost 2.9 miles east of the field and the scope was marked. A chopper was vectored to the spot and found that the OV-1 had crashed with no survivors. Ground fire was the blame.

There was an event that I still chuckle over. One bright and clear VFR day we got a call from an Air force C-140 Lockheed Jet Star out of Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. They wanted to checkout the TACAN NavAid and our GCA procedures. The TACAN, Channel 69 was installed and maintained by the U.S. Air Force and located at the west end of runway 27. They requested a GCA approach to be conducted by a qualified controller. They were instructed that the approach would be made using a 4-degree glide path because of reported ground fire in the local area. They insisted on a 3-degree glide path. Throughout the approach, their radio transmissions sounded as if the pilots were flying a corporate jet, sitting in an executive armchair, drinking coffee, smoking a cigar and having a causal chat with the controller. We gave them the requested 3-degree glide path with another warning about the ground fire. About three miles out on the GCA final the A/C pulled up abruptly and the pilot screamed over the Guard frequency that they took a round through their instrument panel. Bedlam reigned in the cockpit, and their voice patterns were several octaves higher and near hysterics. We requested their intentions with a blanket landing clearance. They requested a clearance direct to Clark AFB, and departed the area never to return. They must have spilled coffee all over themselves.

I remember waking up one night hearing thuds at a distance and found Jerry Bess sitting at the

entrance of our hooch. There was a Marine artillery unit from the 11th Marines stationed nearby that conducted fire missions usually at night, so we were used to the sound of outgoing. We both quickly determined that this wasn't outgoing but INCOMING. Apparently the VC was aiming to mortar the HMM -163 helicopters parked adjacent to our living area. The first mortar rounds fell short in an empty field between Highway 1 and our quarters. The mortar rounds peppered the officer's two holer trap door head located near our perimeter defense wire. The next batch of mortar rounds fell well to the left of the helicopter parking area and into a Marine Supply Unit located west of the field. They must have readjusted their elevation but screwed up their azimuth. Unfortunately, several Marines were lost from the supply unit during that attack. If they had not changed their azimuth with the elevation correction, those rounds would have dropped right on top of us. Later we learned that a Quad 50 position on the perimeter of some 3rd Div unit, observed flashes from mortar tubes coming from a nearby village, and requested a fire mission. The mission was denied, because it was deemed a friendly village.

Late one morning I was on my way from the radar site to the tower. I had noticed earlier that morning that there were several ARVN armored cars and troops in ranks at the terminal building. Tower had called down to the TSQ-18 where I was that morning that a C-54 with South Vietnam in large letters painted on the fuselage had landed. A person from the A/C was taken with a military escort toward Hue. I was curious, and I stopped on my way to the tower at the C-54 boarding ladder. Just then, Nguyen Cao Ky in a leather flight jacket, white scarf and carrying a swagger stick came over to me with his hand extended and said "How are you Sergeant". "Fine thank you", I said shaking his hand. He boarded the aircraft. I had a camera hanging on my shoulder and never thought of taking a photograph at that moment. Later we found out that President Ky had come to Hue that day for a political rally to shore up support for him in the up coming election.

Across Highway 1 from our living area was an old French Army compound with permanent buildings being occupied by the U.S. Army 8th Radio Research Field Unit. They had a bathroom building with hot and cold running water for their showers and flush commodes. We were living on the ground with a three holer trap-door head, cold-water showers and drinking water out of jerry cans. To get to the Army unit we would have to pass through our perimeter defense wire

next to the officers head and cross the empty field where the mortar rounds first landed, then cross Highway 1, and talk our way past the Army gate guard. At first this was no problem, then the Army decided that we couldn't bring our weapons into their compound. We got around this for a while by surrendering our weapons to the gate guard for safekeeping. The Army then decided that the gate guard couldn't accept weapons. Always resourceful, we would stuff our holsters with an empty zipped dust cover most of us used to cover our 45 Cal pistols, making it look like we were still armed to a casual VC observer. I never felt really comfortable outside our perimeter wire without a weapon, but the lure of a warm shower and to sit on a stateside flush commode was just too much. This Army unit had air-conditioned house trailers for their living quarters and believe or not, a swimming pool.

Special Forces people who were stationed at a nearby MACV compound invited several of our SNCO's to a steak dinner at their club. The compound was located a Ω mile or so northwest of the Phu Bai perimeter next to Highway 1. This was an ARVN boot camp overseen by MACV. We piled into a truck and drove over one afternoon. We all

h a d o u r
side arms. I was with Jerry Bess, L.H. Smith and several others having a good time. The steaks were great and there was much fellowship with the Army. My crew was coming on duty the next day so I decided to leave early before it got dark and walk back to our perimeter. I did not want to breakup the good time they were having to have one of them drive me back to the compound. I walked through the MACV gate, the ARVN sentry popped me a salute and I turn left on to Highway 1 and started to walk back to our perimeter. Then it struck me like a ton of bricks. Highway 1 was absolutely deserted in both directions and I was alone walking with my back to the setting sun, up to a roadblock with wire barricades, guarded by a M-48 tank, and a bunch of 3rd Division Marines. I remember it was so quiet I could hear my boots hitting the deck. I decided to walk in the center of the road, and as I approached the roadblock, I could see the Marines getting excited and scurrying around getting into a defensive position. The hair in the back of my neck started to bristled. Thinking fast, I began to sing as loud as I could a song I remembered when I was with the 1st Marine Regiment in Korea. "The First Marines went over the hill, parlay voue, the Second Marines went over the hill, parlay voue, the Third Marines stayed behind, *loved* all the women and drank all the wine, inky dinky

parlay voue". The Marines must have heard because they settled down and as I passed the roadblock they acted as if nothing was happening and gave me a "Good Evening Gunny".

The most memorable time I had in this tour of duty was when I took my first R&R. I passed up several R&R opportunities because my wife of four years wanted us to meet in Hong Kong. So I waited over six months to take my R&R. There was a lot of coordinating with the R&R office so that I could give her a definite date that I would be there. When I got to Da Nang for the PanAm flight to Hong Kong, they gave me the number 2 boarding priority behind a LtCol Troop Commander to the wonderment of a Major and several Captains. During the two-hour flight I began to worry if my wife had gotten to Hong Kong. This was her first foreign travel. After landing, the Hong Kong R&R team came aboard and gave us a quick run down on the available hotels they would take us to, and items of importance. As this was going on I was looking up at the terminal building's second floor open-air observation deck where many people were standing. My wife was nowhere in sight. We departed the aircraft at same sequence as we boarded following one of the R&R staff members to the terminal building and a waiting bus. As we entered the doors of the terminal building with sun shining through the windows on the opposite side, I saw a shadow running toward us and recognized a pair of legs. The R&R staff member we were following put up his arms, I guess to protect something and ended up between us in our embrace. The next few seconds she and I were on cloud nine. The R&R staff member extricated himself and regained his composure, shoved a card into my hand and told me to let them know where I would be staying. We were still hugging and kissing when the rest of troops filed pass and all of them patted me on the back. We had an exciting week, and have many wonderful memories of the joyous time we had there.

I left Phu Bai April 1967 with orders back to NATTC, NAS Glynco for instructor duty. I retired there in 1969 and went to work for the Department of the Army at Fort Rucker, Alabama as an instructor at their newly formed ATC School. There were several Navy and four former Marine ATC instructors from Glynco working with me there. The Marines were "Whammy" Maurer, Al Becker, Lee Wisnoske and Hiram Peterson. All the former Glynco Navy and Marine instructors were pickup as GS-11's whereas most of the other services were given GS-9 positions. Several years later, Dewey Sund came on board. While at Fort Rucker I earned a BS Degree with a major in business, and a MS Degree in Education System Engineering from Troy State University. Then I moved up from the ATC School to the Department of Aviation Training Developments at Fort Rucker as an Education Specialist. Al Becker also left the ATC School

for a controller position at Libby Army Air Field at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Later he moved up and became the Facility Chief. He retired as a GM-13 and is living in Tucson, Arizona.

From Fort Rucker, I accepted a position and promotion with the Naval Warfare Training Systems Center located in Orlando, Florida as a Training Systems Analyst. I was assigned to the Subsurface Warfare Branch with collateral duties on Naval and Marine Air Traffic Control training systems. The other selected candidate was Len Aquire, a former LtCdr who I worked with at the Army ATC school at Ft. Rucker. He left there to take a position with the Navy in San Diego, CA. I lost touch with him several years later, and was delighted that he was selected for the other position when we met again in Orlando. Interesting that we both thought we were going into be assigned to the Aviation Warfare Branch because of our ATC background and we both had private pilot ratings. He was assigned to the Surface Warfare Branch. Little known to others, the submariners look down their nose at the surface Navy as I quickly learned. To them, surface ships are targets. Also, I learned that they have a high opinion of the Marine Corps. This comes from the close relationship with the USMC in protecting strategic weapon systems and submarine bases.

In the Subsurface Warfare Branch I worked on training systems and equipment for nuclear powered fast attack and ballistic missile submarines that included: Los Angeles class, Ohio class and the Sea wolf class. Later I moved up and became the Assistant Branch Chief and Senior Analyst for the code. The Branch Chief was a USNR two star Admiral. I had the privilege with two other Department Of The Navy civilians from my code (all Naval Academy Graduates and former submarine commanders) to have a Captains Tour of the Navy's first Trident Submarine, the USS Ohio SSBN 726. The Ohio came to Port Canaveral, Florida just after commissioning for the boats initial weapons testing. Wearing my ATC hat several times, I prepared the analysis, training plan and development for new radar training equipment for the RATTTC, GCA and CATCC courses then located at NATTC Memphis, Tennessee. I also developed a tower trainer concept that used computer-generated visuals that was later used and further developed by the FAA. I retired in 1988. I am now and have been a state licensed residential contractor in Florida since retiring.



MATCU site - Phu Bai



C-124 Globemaster passing the GCA site

*Ed. Note: Received the following e-mail from **MSgt. Brooks Bergeron** down in Pensacola. He, once again, is the facilitator for our MATCA SANTA Christmas project. The membership has provided \$1,500 for gift packages to be sent to all ATC Detachments deployed in combat areas. Brooks buys the gear, packages it up and mails them for us. The on-line group has seen this message, but all of the members should be aware of this activity of your association.*

November 9, 2005

Got the MATCA Christmas check from Woody (Wingfield) today! I will start shopping next week for our deployed Marines. This year will be a little easier for me. Seems all the MATC Detachments have a single point of contact / mailing address that I can use. MSgt Gary Edge (old friend of mine) is the S-6 for ALL the "In-Country" Detachments (he is In-Country as well). I contacted him and he assured me that he would distribute all of our gifts to each of the Dets! That will help me as to the tracking of the packages I send and many other logistical matters. I know that our Marines will be thankful for your thoughts and generosity.

Thank You Marines for supporting our Devil Dogs on the "Tip of the Spear"!

I will be slow to respond to emails (again) due to starting another on-line school course AND taking my spousal unit to the Marine Corps Birthday Ball this weekend.

In case I do not have the chance to say so before 10 NOV, 2005:

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARINES!!!

I realize that we have a diverse group here. Some spent 20+ years and retired, some spent 4 years and moved on, and many in-between. But each and every one of us IS a MARINE, and that no one

can take away. It is something that is thicker than family by marriage, thicker than family by blood, it IS a BOND that no one other than another Marine could ever explain. And THEN only another Marine would understand because, well that's how we are. Each and everyone of us impresses a mold on the Marines to come in the future And that, my fellow Marines, leads to a quick story (I hate to call it a "Sea Story" because it's true.

I was traveling from Hawaii back to Okinawa via civilian airlines. As I stood in the long line one must stand in to get their baggage checked & x-rayed, I noticed one of the many airport guys that were there to go through your bags and check your I.D. I had lots of time to observe him, as the line was long, and compared his "presence" to the other possible four baggage guys that I might have to encounter. This one guy struck my attention for some reason, and I knew there was something DIFFERENT about him. Well, as luck would have it, when it was my turn to go through the gauntlet, I pulled his line. He looked at me (I was in civilian clothes) and said "Semper Fi Marine". I looked at his Air Port badge and saw for the first time a little Eagle, Globe, & Anchor pin! I told him that I somehow knew that he was a Marine, and sure enough he was! He had been out for about five years, but his "Presence" still remained. I told him as much. He just "waved" me through and we both knew at that space and time that the Marine Corps is something special and being a Marine never stops. It was a special moment that I will remember, and hope that each of you will experience often because each of you rate it.

So again, I wish each of you a Happy Marine Corps Birthday. Ya'll are the Hero's and Legends of Marine Air Traffic Control and have my full respect.

Da Cajun TOP



Left: Flight line reception for RVN President

I must confess that from the evidence presented in the Hotline of November, 1995, MATCA membership consisted of a much more robust, party hearty bunch than the properly sedate group I witnessed last September. Of course it could be that the writings of Jim Bacon (KOEP)* and Boyd Murdock are more imaginative than anything I have come up with. But on the other hand, the core group of revelers were ten years younger.

San Diego (first time) was quite a bash with hula dancers dressed in coconut halves and bagpipers playing the Marine's Hymn from balconies. Any trip to San Diego must include a Boot Camp graduation, as did this one. The chance to mix again with newly created Marines stirs vivid memories for all who have undergone the tender care of a senior drill instructor.

The lead article, written by Jim Bacon with contribution from Roy Kibbee, Ed LeBaron and Ed Trimmel, was titled "K-3 – Beautiful Pohang-Dong By The Sea.

Jim recaps the invasion by the North Koreans, the response put together by the United States, the involvement of the United Nations, and the movement of the Marine Corps into the operation of K-3 Airfield. The establishment of air traffic control was accomplished by GCA Unit 41-M. This period actually predated the formation of MATCUs'. They set up a wooden tower, which incorporated a manual approach control, GCA and nav aids. It was an all-Marine operation until the Air Force was assigned to come in and operate everything except GCA. After the truce of 1953 the Marines again took control of the field.

It is a great article, complete with pictures and makes a significant addition to the history files of MATCA.

Syd Wire graced the pages of this Hotline with his after-action report on the reunion and another of his Irish influenced tales, this one concerning a Father "Cokebottles Ernesto Padric Wong. Syd's collection of stories is marvelous, and all of them absolutely true. He couldn't possibly have made these things up.

For those of you who pulled duty on Okinawa since WWII, here is an excerpt from a short story by Rick Reichenbach. He was there for the Battle of Okinawa:

"On Dakeshi Ridge we had a Christian Scientist shot in the face. We bandaged him and sent him to the aid station. He accepted the fact he needed medical aid.

We set up a defense line on the ridge and that night a Japanese soldier tried to sneak by us. I borrowed my buddy's Thompson and it jammed. Then I threw a couple of grenades and the last thing I saw was the soldier skylighted as he went back over the ridge. We set up a secondary line of defense just outside Naha and things were quiet. Some of the guys found a large concrete pad and started playing ball. I have no idea where the ball came from. Anyway, there was a small pile (about 2 inches high) lying on the edge of the concrete. Fortunately someone finally got suspicious about the innocent looking net and found it to be booby-trapped!

That night an Okinawan woman was prowling around and not knowing that it was a civilian making the noise, she was shot and killed. The kid that did the shooting almost came unglued until we convinced him it was one of those unfortunate incidents that occur in war.

On our approach to Naha we discovered a Japanese supply cave and there were many boxes of white porcelain balls about the size of softballs. A call was made to battalion and the demolitions officer was sent. He took a couple and struck a small circular extension with a scratch pad. He then hurled it away and it exploded with a big bang. It turned out to be a concussion grenade and so we just made a bigger bang by blowing up the cave with a satchel charge."

I don't know about you, but Okinawa was a lot quieter when I was there.

This issue of Hotline even included a couple of letters to Boyd from me, your present editor. I was then and still am wondering whatever became of the children of Bud and Edie Harry, Lawrence, III and Ellen. Bud and I were great friends and fellow watch officers at Beaufort, and both Bud and Edie died of cancer at an early age. They are buried together in the National Cemetery at Beaufort, SC.

Oh, by the way, I noticed the dues for MATCA then were the same as now. Twenty bucks! What a bargain. The only inflation in MATCA seems to be waistlines.

* KOEP = Kindly Old English Professor

Marine Earns Two Awards

Trip Home from Iraq

Marine Corps News | Katina J. Johnson | October 28, 2005

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION BEAUFORT, SC - When Marines do an outstanding job, they might hear an 'Oohrah' from fellow comrades, but when they go above and beyond the call of duty some receive a lot more than a motivating shout.

For Gunnery Sgt. Joseph A. Dobbins, the assistant Marine Air Traffic Control mobile team leader and ATC crew chief for Marine Air Control Squadron Detachment A, the story is no different.

On Oct. 12, Dobbins received the Kenneth A. Innis Aviation Command and Control Marine of the Year Award at an awards banquet in Reno, Nev. Every year, one Marine from an Aviation Command and Control Unit in the Corps is awarded based on outstanding service.

"The award is a way for the Marine Corps to say thank you," said 1st Lt. Kapell Eugene, an ATC watch commander aboard Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. "Dobbins is an outstanding Marine and we should be saying thank you to him for all he does for us."

Dobbins received the award for developing forward arming and refueling points at Forward Operating Base Mudaysis, Iraq and for providing safe and expeditious handling of more than 12,000 military personnel and 1,400 medical evacuations and combat sorties. He also provided extended aviation support for the II Marine Expeditionary Force by establishing a landing area on a section of closed highway in Fallujah, Iraq. The landing area became the initial collection point for wounded personnel during heavy combat operations. His actions were a force multiplier for all coalition forces supporting the war on terror and in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and United States Naval Service, according to the award citation.

"This Marine is the epitome of unselfishness," said Sgt. Maj. Alexander McBride, the sergeant major for the Air Station. "I am so proud to have him as one of my Marines."

To receive the award, Dobbins was flown from Iraq to Beaufort and then to the awards ceremony

in Reno.

"I was presented the award by the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (General) William L. Nyland," Dobbins said. "It was quite an honor."

After the awards presentation in Reno he was flown back to Beaufort so he could return to Iraq. However, before Dobbins could board his return flight on Oct. 19, he was presented with another award from Tri-Command Military Housing, a check for more than \$1,000, which was equal to one month's basic housing allowance.

"We wanted to do something special for him and his family to show how much we appreciated his service," said Katie Smith, the director of marketing for TCMH. "We don't want him over there (Iraq) worrying about his family; that's our job. We hoped this check would be of use so he could do his job over there and not have to worry about how his family was doing over here."

On Oct. 17, Smith, Vicki Sharp, the director of property management for TCMH and Denise Dominguez, a service accountant for TCMH, presented Dobbins with the check during a ceremony at the Welcome Center aboard Laurel Bay.

"I was so shocked when they gave me the check," Dobbins said. "I thought I was coming for a letter of appreciation or something. This has been such an outstanding experience, from getting an award in Reno, to receiving the check. I'm just glad to represent the Marine Corps as best I can."

Three days after receiving the check, Dobbins departed the Air Station one final time to return to his unit in Iraq.

"This whole experience has been very memorable," Dobbins said. "When I left Iraq to come here, a lot of people wanted to be my 'battle buddy.' In Iraq, you have to have a 'battle buddy' wherever you go, so a lot of them volunteered. They were happy a Marine from the unit was being recognized. Overall I'm just honored to serve."



Giving Thanks
From: Jean Langlois

I am not certain of the exact provenance of this,
but it came from a friend

The Sands of Christmas
Michael Marks

I had no Christmas spirit when I breathed a weary
sigh, And looked across
the table where the bills were piled too high.

The laundry wasn't finished and the car I had
to fix, My stocks were down another point, the
Dolphins lost by six.

And so with only minutes till my son got home
from school I gave up on the drudgery and grabbed
a wooden stool.

The burdens that I carried were about all I could
take, And so I flipped the
TV on to catch a little break.

I came upon a desert scene in shades of tan and
rust, No snowflakes hung
upon the wind, just clouds of swirling dust.

And where the reindeer should have stood before
a laden sleigh, Eight Hummers ran a column right
behind an M1A.

A group of boys walked past the tank, not one was
past his teens. Their eyes were hard as polished
flint, their faces drawn and lean.

They walked the street in armor with their rifles
shouldered tight, Their dearest wish for Christ-
mas, just to have a silent night.

Other soldiers gathered, hunkered down against
the wind, To share a scrap of mail and dreams of
going home again.

There wasn't much at all to put their lonely hearts
at ease, They had no Christmas turkey, just a
pack of MREs.

They didn't have a garland or a stocking I could
see, They didn't need an ornament— they lacked
a Christmas Tree.

They didn't have a present even though it was
tradition, the only boxes I
could see were labeled "ammunition."

I felt a little tug and found my son now by my
side, He asked me what it was feared, and why
it was I cried.

I swept him up into my arms and held him oh so
near and kissed him on the forehead as I whis-
pered in his ear.

There's nothing wrong my little son, for safe we
sleep tonight, Our heroes stand on foreign land
to give us all the right,

To worry on the things in life that mean nothing
at all, Instead of wondering if we will be the next
to fall.

He looked at me as children do and said its always
right, to thank the ones who help us and perhaps
that we should write.

And so we pushed aside the bills and sat to draft
a note, to thank the many far from home, and this
is what we wrote:

God Bless You all and keep you safe, and speed
your way back home. Remember that we love you
so, and that you're not alone.

The gift you give you share with all, a present
every day, You give the gift of liberty and that we
can't repay.



Happy New Year

Happy Hanukkah

Hanukkah begins December 26

Snowmen by "Snowgirl studios"



Happy Holidays from the Hotline Staff

Marine Air Traffic Control Association, Inc.

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Marine Air Traffic Control Association

the **HOT-**

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