

April 2020

Fifteenth Infantry Regiment



“The Old China Hands”

<http://www.15thinfantryra.org>

Dear Fellow Old China Hands,

I hope all of you are doing okay in this trying time of COVID-19. While you stay home and stay safe, I would like to ask you to put on your thinking caps and come up with ideas on how we can enliven our Association! Then, send them to us so we can implement them.

I am happy to announce that one of our members, John Lagow, has stepped up to help run our Association as a trustee. Our current trustees have not been active in Association affairs—no one has put their name in for a possible election to our trustee positions and I cannot run the Association alone. John has brought fresh eyes to our Constitution, By-Laws, SOP, and has some initiatives planned to re-energize the Association. Thank you, John, for volunteering and living up to the spirit of Can Do!

Tom Heitzer has arranged for a new Association website. Unfortunately, our previous webmaster, Rich Heller, is unable to maintain our website anymore for health reasons. The new website is excellent, and I would like to ask you to please send us pictures and other items you feel would be of interest to our membership and anyone who checks our website. The website is our advertising platform and a great method of getting news out to our membership.

In connection with the new website, we need a new webmaster. Tom has taken over that position to enable the transition from Rich Heller's website, but we need a full-time, well-qualified webmaster. Tom is already our database manager and took over membership when John Campbell had to step down for health reasons. Ours is not a one-man Association. Please, step up and help us all make this Association the high-functioning outfit our Regiment is known to be.

It is interesting to read LTC McGrue's message to the Association. The active battalion has an outstanding training opportunity and I hope the pandemic won't completely stop this great training. For us old Europe Can Do men from 1-15 IN and 2-15 IN, it is nice to have our regiment once again part of USAREUR, if only temporarily!

As COVID-19 continues to spread, please reach out to your friends through social media to check on them. I checked on a bunch of my fellow Top of the Rock men from my time in 2-15 IN in 1982-1983—we are all in that at-risk age group! So far, everyone is fine. As long as you are checking, make sure you sign up your old Can Do buddies as members in the Association!

So, please stay well and stay in touch. **Can Do! Tim**

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Taps

Patrick J. Hascall-LM-OPH Brimley, MI SFC, F CO, 2 BN, KW, 1950-57 DOD 01/09/2020 Report by wife, Nancy Hascall	Vernon H. Wold-LM Heber Springs, AR COL, MED CO, REGT, KW, 1952 DOD 02/25/2020 Reported by Kent Hulsey	Anthony P. Cafaro-LM Cranford, NJ SFC, G CO, 2 BN, KW, 1951-52 DOD 03/18/2020 Reported by Paul Roach
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New Members

Phil Lamirand Centeron, AR CPT, 2 BN, CW, 1969-71	Nick Russo Sandpoint, ID 1LT, A CO, 1 BN, CW, 1967-69	Putnam W. Monroe-Assoc LM Austin, TX Son of COL Thomas H. Monroe
Dwight B. Swacina-Assoc LM Beloit, WI Son of Howard Swacina		

Membership Report

NUMBER OF MEMBERS BY PERIOD		CURRENT MEMBERSHIP BY TYPE	
NUMBER OF CHINA HANDS	0	REGULAR LIFE	209
NUMBER OF WWII MEMBERS	20	REGULAR ANNUAL	37
NUMBER OF KOREA MEMBERS	92	ASSOCIATE LIFE	19
NUMBER OF COLD WAR MEMBERS	77	<u>ASSOCIATE ANNUAL</u>	<u>7</u>
NUMBER OF PEACETIME MEMBERS	17	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	272
NUMBER OF OEF FORCES	1		
NUMBER OF OIF FORCES	8		
NUMBER OF GWOT FORCES	31		
<u>ASSOCIATE MEMBERS</u>	<u>26</u>		
TOTAL MEMBERS	272		

Announcement

The 15th Infantry Regiment Association has moved. It can be found by at: <http://www.15thinfantryra.org>. Please visit and check out this user friendly site. You are able to fill out an application for membership, send to the database administrator, and pay your dues using the PayPal button. Also, you will find interesting information that will be updated on a regular basis and read back issues of the Dragon newsletter in the library section. Enjoy the new site and come back often.

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Active Battalion Update

Greetings from Poland,

I sincerely hope that this letter finds everyone doing well. The battalion is doing very well and in high spirits. Those high spirits are justified too. As a part of the larger brigade mission in deploying to an allied country, the brigade as a whole performed superbly and garnered a highly respectable reputation across the Army and the European continent. We set out to demonstrate that when our Nation calls upon the Spartan Brigade to go forward and provide a combat credible brigade, we can answer that call profoundly and ease the minds of our allied family. In doing so, this brigade, with much effort from the China Battalion, achieved the overall arching goal.

The battalion is now set in our location and ready to participate in Defender 2020. Although recent events have scaled down the overall scope of this training exercise, the China Battalion will still execute training that allows us to enhance fundamentals and fortify our lethality. We look to develop training that will give us certified platoons across the battalion, enabling us to provide companies that are ready to conduct tactical operations.

Speaking of recent events, I would be remiss not to address the current epidemic that is sweeping across the globe. Although scientists and medical professionals are still scrambling to identify ways to defeat this virus, know that the China Battalion has taken combating this virus very seriously. Currently, we are isolated from large populated areas and we are restricting ourselves from physical contact with much of the outside world. In addition, we are adhering to the recommendations that are being put forth by our medical professionals that are here with us, as well as following all directives that are being published from higher headquarters. This virus is, in a sense, in its infancy stage and is not fully understood. We do know that it is not fully understood. With that in mind, we are taking heed of reliable information being published and ensuring that our Soldiers (your loved ones) have the knowledge to combat this virus and prevent it from spreading in our formations.

In closing, I want to reiterate that the spirits here remain high. As a matter of fact, this past Sunday on March 15 (also known as 3-15) we conducted a Platoon Competition. View photos from the event at: https://www.facebook.com/pg/3151N/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10158162323818631. In addition, mail has begun to arrive and that too has lifted our Soldiers' spirits. If you do not have the address, please contact your loved ones' Family Readiness Group for the official mailing address. Finally, thank you for your continued support to not only your loved ones, but to this battalion. This battalion thrives from the support given by you all and it is truly appreciated.

Rock of the Marne! Send Me! Can Do!
LTC McGrue III, China 6

Historians' Corner

The China Hands

By Tim Stoy and Tom Heitzer

The 15th Infantry was stationed at Fort Douglass, Utah when it was alerted for duty in the Philippines. It arrived in the Philippines in December 1911 and, in January 1912, the 1st Battalion deployed to China where its mission was to guard US business interests and secure the railway between Tientsin (now Tianjin) and Beijing. Politically the mission was to show the prestige of the United States. This was the period when the Manchu Empire fell and the new Chinese Republic was founded. There was great uncertainty as to the stability of China and the safety of westerners and western property.

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It was followed several months later by the 3rd Battalion, with the 2nd Battalion remaining in the Philippines. In 1916, the 2nd Battalion was called to China and from that point the Regiment had 1000 men in 3 battalions serving there. In 1921, the 1st Battalion was ordered to the Philippines until it was inactivated in 1929. From 1921 until 1938, the Regiment only had two battalions in China along with the Regimental HQ.

The Regiment served through the Chinese Civil War in the 1920s and saw the increasing aggression of Japan in China in the 1930s. It was withdrawn in 1938 to prevent any hostilities with the Japanese in Tientsin from triggering a war. It missed WWI entirely, but one of its Regimental Commanders, Colonel Edwin Sigerfoos, was transferred from China to France to command a Brigade and ended up the highest ranked American officer killed in the war. COL Morrow, who commanded the regiment from 1919 to 1921, had commanded the 7th INF Regiment in the Meuse-Argonne in 1918.

Famous Can Do men who served in China were General of the Army George C. Marshall, Generals Vinegar Joe Stilwell, Matthew B. Ridgway, Charles Bolte, Walton H. Walker, George Wedemeyer, Paul Freeman, Earle C. Wheeler, James E. Moore, and numerous general officers 3-star and below. China duty was viewed as prestigious and a good deal—no prohibition in China, no fatigue duty as the coolies did all the work, and there were no first enlistment soldiers in the Regiment so there was a high level of professionalism. Tom Mason, one of the last of our China Hands, served as driver for the Regimental Commander, COL George A. Lynch. Additionally, quite a few Old China Hands served as Division Commanders in WWII and Korea. Then Colonel Marshall pulled many Old China Hands who had served with him to serve at the Infantry School from 1925-1928 and these men had a great impact on the Army in the 30s and beyond.

The 15th Infantry Association has been fortunate to have as members eleven China Hands over the years. Unfortunately, they are all gone now, but let's not forget their service to our country and the 15th Infantry Regiment: LTC Arthur Brockway, SSG Howard Palm, PVT Frank Eaton, CPT Edwin Schierhorst, SGM Melvin Greek, WO Glen Smith, LTC Adam Komosa, LTC William Steele, PVT Arthur Locke, SSG Walter Wolf, WO Thomas Mason.

Riding the Dragon

By John Lagow

February 1964 – February 1967

In June 1963, a new high school graduate was looking for a future. However, not in Jackson, Michigan as career opportunities were limited to becoming a factory worker in the many industrial plants to include Kelsey Hayes, Clark Equipment, and Yardman to name a few. With construction work, as many in my family had done before, I had limited experience in that field or advanced education through college.

I was raised by loving grandparents who provided for my every need, but as my grandfather, honest and hardworking, was a factory employee that had limited income capabilities. Hence, college was not on my to do list at that time. My recourse was to escape and I did with a friend, Dale N., to Davenport Iowa. Don't ask me why Davenport, Iowa—I just jumped at the opportunity. Dale had some friends there and the four of us set up house. We rented the upstairs with the first floor being occupied by our landlord, who also ran a real estate office there. We all worked as night stock crew in a Kroger store on Brady

Street. It worked out great as we slept most of the day, which did not interfere with the office business downstairs and of course we were gone most of the night at work. I was happy, independent, had a place to live, and a job that didn't pay much but held some promise. The store manager, Bill, thought I had potential and alluded to advancement opportunities with the company. Things were going well for me and then up jumped the devil. In this case Dale N., who was older than me got homesick for

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Michigan (go figure). Dale N. owned the only car transportation we had and he was heading back home. Also, one of the other roommates decided to get married and the other decided to go back to college. That left me alone to foot the rent and I couldn't do that. I was at a crossroads with decisions to make that did not include going back to Michigan.

I began to take interest in the news broadcasts that reported an increase in US military involvement in Southeast Asia. Perhaps, the circumstances were right to consider a service obligation. I went to the Army Recruitment Office and, low and behold, they had a place for me. On September 25th, 1963—my eighteenth birthday—I enlisted in the US Army. My grandparents were not thrilled about my announcement, but I was my own man at this point. After processing, I was sent to Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri and assigned to B/4/3 for basic infantry training. That unit was B Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Training Brigade. Army life has its own set of rules, regulations and language. Our First Sergeant, 1SG Pool, was nicknamed GD due to his excessive use in taking the Lords name in vain during his daily formation presentations. The company clerk and 1SG's right hand man was a WWII corporal named Woodbridge also possessed a foul language capability to accompany his huge stomach. Our Platoon Sergeant, a typical DI screamer, was nonetheless a good leader and trainer. Basic training was preceded by rigorous physical training and all the infantry skills required of combat ready soldiers. Our basic infantry weapon was the M1 Garand rifle the standard infantry rifle of 1963, which ultimately played a role later in my career as an advisor in Viet Nam.

Basic training was in its final phases on November 22, 1963. In the early afternoon, we were loading onto a cattle trailer, which was a large flatbed semi-trailer with benches and side rails. Enroute to the hand grenade rang, a recycle recruit—someone who had failed to complete the training satisfactorily and was hence recycled—burst out the front door of the barracks and yelled that the President had been shot. Most of us disregarded his report as his credibility was always somewhat in question. Two hours later, while throwing hand grenades in the rain, suddenly all training was halted. We were reloaded on the cattle trailer and returned to the barracks. We were formed into company formations on the street and, as far as you could see, on both sides of our formation all training companies were also formed. Standing in silence for some time, our minds began to race as reality set in. A somber announcement was finally made that the President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, had been assassinated earlier that day in Dallas Texas. We, as was the world, were stunned, angry, and heart broken.

Although we continued our training cycle under a somewhat subdued atmosphere, we began to look forward to graduation. In reflecting on what I had learned, in addition to military basics of an infantryman, I learned to live with people and, more importantly, I learned to live with myself. The composition of the unit was a great cross section of Americana. Our two-letter prefix to our service number reflected our choices and decision-making. I was a Regular Army volunteer, but there was a need for two-year draftee, Army Reserve and for National Guard soldiers. This all provided for a great mix of personalities and backgrounds which only added to the learning and living experience. The relationship building produced many new friends with lasting promises to maintain contact for the rest of our lives and, of course, that never happened.

In preparation for graduation and our next steps in the military, we were evaluated and asked to prepare our "Dream Sheets", which was a wish list of where we wanted to go and for what further training we desired. I asked for straight leg infantry, as I had reasoned that if you were going to be in the Army, be in the infantry. I was offered to attend training with the Army Security Agency, or as a member of the Old Guard in Washington DC—guarding the tomb of the unknown and other pomp and circumstance activities. I declined both offers, saying I didn't want a desk job or to stand guard for three years. As it turned out, I was designated for advanced infantry training in heavy weapons infantry and assigned to Ft. Polk Louisiana. Be careful what you ask for.

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There are, of course, many opinions regarding various training facilities as far as environment and living conditions, as well as location. Fort Polk was no exception to any of these observations and could realistically be described as less than pleasant. Training progressed until near Christmas time and, without prior knowledge, we could go home for the holidays. The explanation was that a break in the training cycle was unusual, but authorized for the holiday period. Although not quite awarded, many of us, added the coveted Blue Infantry rope to our uniforms prior to leaving the base.

Returning to Ft. Polk after the holidays, we continued the training cycle, during which time I qualified for and was awarded the badge "Expert" as a 106 RR, Recoilless Rifle, gunner. The 106 RR was and still is an anti-tank weapon. We were also trained in the use and employment of the 81mm Mortar. This training included fire direction control and forward observer training. We all became proficient in these skills at least to the satisfaction and approval of the cadre. All this training and qualifications resulted in the military occupation specialty designation of heavy weapons infantry. I had made it and now what? A Company, 1/15, here I come.

Chaplain's Message

Submitted by Chaplain Chuck Trout

When one of our Association members passes away, I receive a notice of their death. Within a few days, I send a sympathy card to the family of the deceased. John Burke and I designed the card many years before his own death. The card reads: "The light of a distant star continues to reach the earth, long after the star itself is gone. In the same way, the LIGHT and LOVE your loved one gave will continue to SHINE in many hearts. We thank God for your loved one's life and are thinking of you during that difficult time. You and your family are in our thoughts and prayers.

What you don't see are the messages of thanks that the families of the deceased send back to me to thank the Association for remembering their loved ones. As long as I am blessed to be your chaplain, I will never "chargeback" the Association for the postage to mail the sympathy cards. It is my small way of saying thank you for allowing me and my wife to be a part of this great organization.

A few year ago, a business associate and I decided to create a web site for anyone seeking help. We realized that times change and people change, but the problems people face remain the same. The web site has over 300 videos and addresses 20 categories that a viewer may find useful if they need help and hope. As a chaplain, I have found that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Please take a moment and view the website: www.echohopenow.org. It is totally free—no membership and there are no ads popping up to distract you.

Photos

Submitted by Randy Koivisto

Harvey Barracks, Kitzingen Germany in 1968-1970



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