Fifteenth Infantry Regiment



"The Old China Hands" http://www.15thinfantryra.org

Dear Fellow Old China Hands,

Happy New Year! I hope each of you had a great holiday season, despite all the COVID-19 restrictions in place all over the country. Let us hope 2021 will allow us once again to gather with friends and family.

With the passing of COL Bill Ryan, WWII veteran of the 15th Infantry, our Association has only 15 living WWII veterans remaining. We also lost Charles Condren in October, who had served in the 3rd Battalion beginning in Italy. This is quite sad, considering when the Association was founded the vast majority of our members were WWII veterans, but 25 years has taken its toll. We need to keep their memory alive and a great way to do so is to remain engaged in the Association's activities and recruit new members! I have added a tribute to Bill Ryan—his is a very interesting story.

We are happy to have 3-15 IN back from Eastern Europe after ten months of intense training there. Reading LTC Fisher's letter, it does not seem the battalion will have much time off before it goes back into intensive training mode with EIB and marksmanship training in the Spring. Of course, one thing he did not mention is the likely personnel turbulence the battalion will experience after stop-loss is lifted, but in time honored tradition he and his chain of command will master that also. I look forward to when our Association members will once again get to personally meet and mingle with our Can Do Soldiers of today. Perhaps, this year we can finally have our Rendezvous and Organization Day again in May.

As you will read, we are starting a new fund-raising campaign under John Lagow's energetic leadership. I would like to thank our first five major donors—Robert Warden, Donald Alsobrook, Albert (Win) Dodge, Jim Tucker, and John Lagow. As you all know, our membership is way down, so our dues revenue is also way down. These generous donations enable the Association to maintain its operations and build up funds to purchase small historic items for the China Room and to restore some of our fabric and paper items which are suffering from age. Please do make a generous donation to the Association, it may be tax deductible!

In my duties as Historian, I continue researching our Regiment's history and assisting others on projects connected to the Regiment. An author living in Savannah, Georgia, Alex Kershaw, is researching the Regiment in WWII, especially 1st Battalion's Baker Company and three MOH recipients: Audie Murphy, Keith L. Ware, and Mike Daly. His email is akers78451@aol.com. Should you have any special experiences or insights from your service or your own historical research, please drop him a note. I know he would appreciate any help you can give.

Perhaps some of you have not yet heard, but it appears our Regiment's next Medal of Honor recipient will likely be SFC Alwyn Cashe, for actions in Iraq in 2005. Congress passed legislation waiving the time restriction on the award and DOD has approved it and forwarded it to the President for final approval. Hopefully, this will be done by the time you read this newsletter. SFC Cashe is the epitome of the dedicated, professional Infantry NCO and died because he took care of his Soldiers first. His name will be a great addition to the list of amazing American Soldiers with the MOH from our great Regiment!

Again, Happy New Year! Please resolve to become an active participant in your Association this year—we have plenty of open positions which need filling! **Can Do! Tim**

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Taps

Jere C. Hodges-LM	Alex Blanca-Non Member	William E. Ryan JrLM
Clarksville, TN	New Castle, CA	Haymarket, VA
CW3, HHC, 1 BN CW, 1970-73	E-5, A CO, 1 BN, CW, 1966-68	LT, I CO, 3 BN, II, 1944-45
DOD 10/30/2020	DOD 12/11/2020	DOD 12/23/2020
Reported by son Jere C Hodges Jr.	Reported by Tom Heitzer	Reported by Tim Stoy

New Members

Robert D. McClure	Raymond Tewes-Upgraded to LM
Tucson, AZ	Temple City, CA
2LT, C CO, 2 BN, CW, 1977-78	SP/5, A CO, 1 BN, CW, 1966-68

Membership Report

NUMBER OF MEMBERS BY PERIOD		CURRENT MEMBERSHIP	BY TYPE
NUMBER OF CHINA HANDS	0	REGULAR LIFE	196
NUMBER OF WWII MEMBERS	15	REGULAR ANNUAL	36
NUMBER OF KOREA MEMBERS	82	ASSOCIATE LIFE	19
NUMBER OF COLD WAR MEMBERS	78	ASSOCIATE ANNUAL	6
NUMBER OF PEACETIME MEMBERS	17	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	257
NUMBER OF OEF FORCES	1		
NUMBER OF OIF FORCES	8		
NUMBER OF GWOT FORCES	31		
ASSOCIATE MEMBERS	<u> 25</u>		
TOTAL MEMBERS	257		

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.

Treasurer's Report

CHECKING ACCOUNT AS OF 01/01/2020: \$1,177.82

INCOME FOR 2020:

 DUES COLLECTED IN 2020:
 \$795.00

 DONATIONS FOR 2020:
 \$1,350.00

 INTEREST ON CHECKING ACCOUNT 2020:
 \$2.62

 TOTAL INCOME FOR 2020:
 \$2,147.62

 MONEY TRANSFER FROM SAVINGS:
 \$1,922.01

 TOTAL:
 \$4,069.63

EXPENDITURES FOR 2020:

PRINTING & SHIPPING DRAGON: \$1,316.35
MAILING OF DRAGON POSTAGE: \$209.28
ALL OTHER POSTAGE: \$73.45
OFFICE SUPPLIES, ECT: \$66.21
MAILING PERMIT: \$240.00
FILING IRS FORM 990: \$39.95
PAYPAL FEES: \$21.88

WEB PAGE FEES: \$40.00 (JAN-MAR) FREE REST OF YEAR

WEBPAGE CONSTRUCTION: \$1,506.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR 2020: \$3,513.12

SAVINGS:

(\$ 1,122.80 MONUMENT FUND MONEY) (\$ 270.00 GIFT MEMBERSHIP FUND MONEY) (\$ 2,485.80 LIFE TRUST FUND MONEY)

(\$ 7.45 INTEREST FOR 2020)

TOTAL BALANCE SAVINGS: \$3,886.05

PAYPAL ACCOUNT: \$0.00

CD ACCOUNT: \$30,725.54 (LIFE TRUST FUND MONEY)

RECAP FOR 2020:

CHECKING ACCOUNT BEFORE EXPENTURES: \$5,247.45
TOTAL TRANSFERRED TO SAVINGS: \$215.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR 2020: \$3,513.12
TOTAL IN CHECKING AS OF 12/31/2020: \$1,519.33

15th Infantry Regiment Association Dragon Fund

Dedicated to the members of the 15th Infantry Regiment—past, present, and future—Can Do!

Welcome to the Introduction to the Dragon Fund

Did you know that the 15th Infantry was constituted on 3 May 1861?

Did you know the 15th Infantry Regiment Association is dedicated to the preservation and traditions and history of the 15th Infantry Regiment?

Did you know the 15th Infantry has more overseas service than any other Regiment in our Army?

Did you know that your financial support through dues/donations will sustain operation of the Association?

Did you know that former US President and then LTC Dwight D. Eisenhower served as commander of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry from March to November 1940?

Did you know that the 15th Infantry Regiment Association is a non-profit IRS 501{c}{19} service organization?

Did you know that the 15th Infantry served for 26 years in China?

Did you know that the Association publishes the Dragon newsletter quarterly to keep the membership informed of recent on ongoing activities and items of general interest?

Did you know the Dragon and the Pigdin English motto "Can Do" on the regimental crest symbolize the China service of the 15th Infantry?

Did you know that the Association maintains a website for membership use and information?

Did you know that General of the Army George C. Marshall was Regimental XO from 1924 to 1927 in China?

Did you know that the Dragon Fund includes giving through annual and lifetime membership dues, and contributions to the Awards and Monuments Fund and the General Fund?

If you do not know by now, we are asking you for your financial support through your continued membership dues and a gift to the fund of your choice at a level of giving that is comfortable for you.

You need to know that your support will be greatly appreciated and provided needed support to sustain current operations, expand membership and enhance program support of the 15th Infantry Regiment Association.

Please detach the form below and send with your gift to Tom Heitzer, 231 Normandie Drive, Bonne Terre, MO 63628 or go to our website at www.15thinfantryra.org and click on the "DONATE" tab.

Suggested gift levels are: Dragon Fund Levels
\$15 - \$149—Dragon Entry Level
\$150 - \$249—Dragon Donor Bronze Level
\$250 - \$349—Dragon Level Silver
\$350 - Above—Dragon Gold
Please designate my gift to the:
Awards and Memorial Fund
General Fund
Gift Membership Fund
*These gifts may be tax-deductible—please consult w/your tax professional before filing your taxes.

Active Battalion Update

Greetings 15th Infantry Regiment Association,

Since our last newsletter contribution, the China Battalion completed operations in the European Theater in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve. The majority of the Battalion conducted a combined brigade-level command post exercise and a Battalion Combined Arms Life Fire Exercise with our Hungarian partners as part of Exercise Brave Warrior. Apache Company conducted a Company Combined Arms Live Fire with our Romanian partners as part of Exercise Justice Eagle. A platoon from Charlie Rock competed in the Hellenic Tank Challenge in Greece coming in a close 2nd place. Finally, our Snipers participated in the Jager Shot Sniper Competition in Germany taking 1st place.

The Battalion reconsolidated in Romania and executed redeployment operations, which included preparing over 260 pieces of equipment for vessel operations and redeployment back to Fort Stewart, GA. The China team remained motivated in their efforts and properly executed this arduous effort in a safe and controlled manner.

As I write this, the China Battalion is consolidated at Fort Stewart, and the focus has shifted to ensuring redeployment operations are completed before Soldiers take holiday block leave. As you can imagine, our Soldiers are excited to spend some quality time with their families after a busy 10-month deployment. Upon China Battalion's return from holiday leave in late January, the battalion staff will participate in the 3rd Infantry Division Warfighter Exercise, a division-level command post exercise that assesses units' abilities to plan, synchronize, and execute large-scale and multi-domain combat operations. The companies will focus on small arms, crew served, and special purpose weapons qualifications. Our Soldiers will have ample time on the range to hone their skills, increase unit lethality, and set conditions for our Soldiers to be successful during upcoming Expert Infantryman Badge and Expert Soldier Badge testing in the Spring of 2021.

CSM Paske and I are extremely proud of what the China Battalion has accomplished and will continue to accomplish over the upcoming year. Best of wishes to all The Old China Hands. CAN DO! (and enjoy the following photos).

Rock of the Marne! Send Me! Can Do! LTC Brian Fisher "China 6"











January 2021 <u>Historians' Corner</u> Submitted by Timothy Stoy

COL William E. Ryan, Jr. Dies at age 97

Colonel Bill Ryan, WWII veteran of the 15th Infantry Regiment and life member of the 15th Infantry Regimental Association, died on 23 December 2020 in Northern Virginia.

When we returned from Germany in 2006 Monika saw an ad in the local newspaper asking for interested persons to help with the 27 July Korean War commemoration at the Korean War Veterans Memorial in 2007. She joined the team and mentioned she was trying to find veterans of the 3d ID from WWII and Korea. COL Ryan's name was mentioned as a WWII veteran who had worked at the ABMC and assisted in the approval for the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Monika called COL Ryan for three years before she was able to arrange a meeting at the Ryan's home where we met him and his lovely wife, Margaret. A great friendship grew from our initial get-together and we learned a great deal about Bill and the 15th INF in WWII!

Bill went to work early while in his teens, working in the shipyards in San Diego, California. He was good with numbers and quickly moved into the accounting part of the business. He earned enough money to attend UCLA and was commissioned through ROTC. In later years, he would say he attended OCS. Either way, he was commissioned into the Air Defense Artillery, but Bill wanted action, so he volunteered for the Infantry and the Army obliged.

One of his many interesting stories was about his arrival at the 3d Infantry Division. He had arrived by ship in the South of France and along with a group of Lieutenants moved by rail to somewhere in the vicinity of Nancy, then by truck to the division rear area near Epinal. All the new officers were then marshaled in a tent to be greeted by the division commander, Iron Mike O'Daniel. They waited for quite some time as General O'Daniel was delayed, but finally they were called to attention and the CG strode in to the tent and up to the microphone. According to COL Ryan this is what he said, "My Lieutenants die like flies, but we gain ground. Good Luck" and then strode out of the tent. That is a hell of a way to be welcomed to combat, but Bill Ryan remembered that the rest of his life!



During the heavy fighting in late December 1944 outside Bennwihr for Hill 216, which had changed hands numerous times after the liberation of the village on 24 December, LT Ryan was the acting company commander. Regimental and Division policy was that each unit would conduct night patrols for security and to possibly capture enemy prisoners. One of the officers in his company, K Company, was LT Victor Kandle. Kandle had been nominated for the award of the Congressional Medal of Honor for actions in the Vosges Mountains in October 1944, but had not been withdrawn from frontline duty. Kandle was known as an aggressive officer and regularly volunteered his platoon to conduct these night patrols. After a while LT Ryan pulled him aside and told him, "You don't have to do this all the time—you have been nominated for the Medal You have more than done your part, but Kandle never appeared to be concerned over the danger and told him that it was his job.

However, on what turned out to be his final night, before departing on patrol, he went to Bill Ryan and gave him his personal effects, asking him to please get them to his wife should he not return. Bill told him not to worry, he always comes back, but if something happens he will make sure she gets them. That night Kandle was KIA. His premonition came true.

The 3rd Infantry Division launched Operation Grand Slam on 22 January 1945, spearheading the 2nd French Corps attack to finally collapse the Colmar Pocket. The 7th and 30th Infantry Regiments were in the lead and the 15th Infantry and the attached 254th Infantry Regiment in trail to reinforce or exploit as necessary. The 30th Infantry made swift progress and had crossed the III River at a location named the Maison Rouge, or

Red House. It had turned south and moved several kilometers into the outskirts of the village of Holtzwihr when it was counterattacked by strong German forces supported by tanks and tank destroyers. Unfortunately, and disastrously, the repaired damaged bridge over the III at the Maison Rouge had collapsed when the first American tank tried to cross and there was no armor in support of the 30th Infantry on the east side of the river.

The 30th Infantry was driven out of Holtzwihr and was withdrawing across an open plain of frozen ground with no cover, an Infantryman's nightmare. At this time the Division ordered the 15th Infantry across (through) the river to establish a defensive line and assist the 30th Infantry. LT Ryan was still the acting K Company Commander and he led his troops across the river onto the plain and attempted to prepare some elementary fighting positions. As previously noted the ground was frozen solid and the soldiers were unable to even dent the ground to create any kind of protection. With enemy armor advancing over this open ground with machine guns blazing the troops didn't have a chance but orders were orders.

There was a Lieutenant in his company, COL Ryan never gave us his name, who Ryan believed was a coward. He was forward with his platoon when the German attack hit and he panicked. He was on the radio and told Ryan he was withdrawing. Ryan told him, on an open battalion radio net, so everyone heard it, that if he withdrew he would personally shoot him! Well, the Lieutenant didn't listen and began running to the rear with his troops. He ran in a straight line and was gunned down by one of the tanks. Ryan, leading another group of soldiers, eventually withdrew but instead of running straight back in the field of fire of the tanks, moved laterally and by zigzags bringing his troops back safely to the river. Unfortunately, the ground remained frozen so the only cover the Infantry could find was the river bank, and they held there in the freezing cold water while the Division organized relief.

The German counterattack was finally defeated by massed tanks and tank destroyers on the river bank, as well as massive artillery fires. The 30th Infantry lost more than an entire battalion in POWs in this fight, and the 15th Infantry also took severe casualties, but the division quickly recovered and continued its relentless drive towards the Colmar Canal to isolate that city. Several days later Audie Murphy would have his famous fight on the outskirts of Holtzwihr with his decimated B Company of only 17 soldiers.

After the successful conclusion of the Colmar Pocket battle in February 1945 the Division rested, refitted, and rehearsed for the planned crossing of the Rhine River in March. The division rest area was in the vicinity of Epinal again. Bill Ryan related the story of a party one evening in the officers' mess where everyone was feeling no pain and he found himself standing on a table with Iron Mike O'Daniel belting out the Dogface Soldier at the top of their lungs! If only someone had a picture of that!

Bill was wounded on 15 March 1945 when the 3rd Infantry Division attacked the Siegfried Line, and he spent a month recovering in a hospital in Nancy, France. The first two weeks of his time there he was confined to his bed and orderlies brought him his meals. The third week he had to go to the mess hall. He was ambulatory but needed crutches to walk. He worked his way to the mess hall but was refused admittance because he didn't have a tie on, which was the standard there. He was not amused. Having been evacuated from the front line he did not have any of his uniform items other than what he was provided upon arrival at the hospital. He struggled his way back to his billeting area, found a dark green sock, tied it around his neck, stuck the end into his shirt, and went back to the mess hall. He was admitted.

Bill related one other story about his time in the hospital. He was out for some fresh air outside the hospital when a staff sedan pulled up next to him and out jumped LTG George S. Patton, Jr., Commander of the 3rd Army! Bill came to attention as best he could and Patton came up to him and said, "Lieutenant, I just want to shake the hand of a 3rd Infantry Division man!" So, he stuck out his hand, Ryan shook it, and the general got back in the car and drove off. Later Bill learned LTG Alexander M. Patch, Jr., Commander of 7th Army, parent unit of 3rd ID, was also in the car and that Patton was trying to twist his arm to let him have the 3rd ID for 3rd Army's drive to the East! Bill really relished telling this story.

Shortly after the war ended and the Regiment was on occupation duty in the vicinity of Salzburg, Austria the 3d Battalion Commander, Major John O'Connell, organized a battalion party. Bill was at that time seeing a nurse from a nearby hospital and Major O'Connell asked him to ask her to bring some of her fellow nurses to the party, and she did. Everything was going fine and Bill with his date were at the bar with the Major and another nurse when Bill excused himself to use the restroom. When he returned, he found Major O'Connell trying to grope his date. Bill told him to desist, an inebriated Major O'Connell took a swing at him, and Bill punched him. Bill Ryan was a tough little Irishman and had learned how to use his fists while working in the San Diego shipyards as a youth, was pugnacious anyway, and successfully decked his battalion commander, in full view of all and sundry officers of the battalion!

The next morning Bill received a call from the BN S-1 telling him the battalion had received several slots for officers to rotate home and that he was one of the officers that would be leaving. Bill knew he didn't have the necessary number of points to be rotating home so soon and told the S-1 to let someone else who had been serving in theater longer have the slot. The S-1 told him all these factors had already been considered and that it had been determined he was indeed eligible to go home. Ryan still declined when Major O'Connell got on the phone and told him to pack his bags and that he was leaving! Unfortunately for Bill he only shipped out of the Regiment and Division and ended up with another unit in Austria. He didn't give much detail of that outfit, but he related to us that one of his duties was to organize wood for the winter for the occupation forces in that part of Austria, which was the American zone. He organized details and did end up cutting and preparing major supplies of wood for the winter!

Bill ended the war as one of hundreds of thousands of junior officers but wanted to remain on active duty. In order to do so, he returned to the Air Defense Artillery and had a very successful career, rising to the rank of Colonel and commanding a NIKE-HERCULES Missile Brigade which protected the entire East Coast of the United States!

In the late 1950s or early 1960s, he was serving in California. One day he received the order to notify Lieutenant General Iron Mike O'Daniel, his former Division Commander, then retired in San Diego, of some important matter. Bill traveled to Iron Mike's home and rang the doorbell. When Iron Mike opened the door he exclaimed, "Ryan, what in the hell are you doing here?!" It was quite a thing for a General who had commanded tens of thousands of soldiers and hundreds of officers in WWII, and then a Corps in Korea, to remember young Lieutenant Ryan 15 years later! It says a lot for Bill's reputation, and for Iron Mike's memory!

Of interest to us was learning about Bill's service as an advisor with the Korean Military Advisory Group 1947 to 1949. Fortunately for him he wasn't in Korea on 25 June 1950 when the North Koreans attacked and found many of the American advisors serving with isolated ROK Army units! Having returned from Korea he was stationed in Tokyo, where he met his future wife, Margaret.

Another interesting story Bill related to us was of his service with the United Nations Monitors between Pakistan and India. He was at a social function and somehow he and a foreign officer ran afoul of each other and decided to settle the matter as gentlemen, with their fists! We suspect the other officer underestimated Bill Ryan due to his size—a big mistake! The affair of honor concluded, Ryan departed the following day as scheduled with no further ramifications!

As if all these adventures and stories were not enough, Bill Ryan could claim to be one of the longest serving Army officers in the Army's modern history—he was on active duty for 53 years! Having successfully commanded a brigade and reaching the rank of Colonel there was little for him left to do, but then he was nominated and accepted to serve as the Operations and Finance Officer for the Battle Monuments Commission! He served in this job for almost 30 years, and literally knew where all the skeletons lay buried. He was responsible for all the military cemeteries overseas and travelled extensively over those years to inspect and control each of these facilities. By the time we met him, he had been retired for 10 years, he was still well-known within ABMC and had the reputation as a very stern task master.

COL Ryan played a role in the approval of the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the National Mall. Any such military monuments would need to be approved by the American Battle Monuments Commission, as well as the Commission for Fine Arts, and the National Park Service. COL Ryan ensured the memorial received ABMC's approval.

We had the great honor of having COL Ryan come with us for the 65th anniversary commemoration of the flag raising ceremony on the Obersalzberg on 5 May 2010, the plaque dedication in Salzburg on 4 May 2010, the plaque dedication in Augsburg on 28 April 2010, and V-E Day commemorations in Colmar and the plaque dedication on the Zeppelin Field Tribune in Nuernberg at the end of May 2010. In keeping with COL Ryan's WWII history, we returned him to the Infantry for the trip by giving him 15th Infantry Crossed Rifles and Infantry cord and we put the 15th Infantry DUI over his unit awards!



Nurenberg Tablet Dedication 31 May 2010 and Memorial Day at Oise-Aisne Cemetery

Bill was a regular attendee at our Colmar Pocket historical seminars. We assisted him in requesting the French Legion of Honor for his combat service in France in WWII and he was awarded the medal in a ceremony during our banquet in December of 2010 by Colonel Brice Houdet, French Military Attaché in Washington!

On 7 November 2011 we accompanied Bill Ryan to a Veterans Day event in Greenbelt, Maryland at which veterans from WWII and following conflicts related some of their experiences from their service. His reflections were videotaped and are still available on the internet on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQHpeKhCdyI

Later that month Bill joined us as we commemorated the 3rd Infantry Division's 94th birthday with a historical seminar, commemorative luncheon, and visit to the 3d Infantry Division Monument in Arlington National Cemetery. While there we also paid our respects to Audie Murphy. Bill knew Murphy during the war, even though they were in separate battalions of the Regiment; it should be expected to two scrappy little Irishmen would find each other!



COL Ryan at Audie Murphy's Grave - Veterans Day 2011

It was a great honor to have Bill Ryan present for Tim's retirement ceremony at the Pentagon in May 2012. Bill joined Major General Ramsey, Colonel Henry Bodson, Bob Dutil, and John Keller as WWII veterans who were there for the ceremony—five WWII veterans! That was a very special moment.



Tim's retirement ceremony with some of the guests, including Bill Ryan

Sadly, Margaret died in 2014, and Bill's worsening memory led to his being moved to an assisted living facility. He later moved to another facility with his daughter Patty and son-in-law Steve visiting frequently until Virginia's COVID-19 mitigation measures placed such facilities off limits for outside visitors. A lifelong avid adherence to physical fitness (he did 100 pushups every morning) kept him in great physical condition for being well over 90, and he remained happy and managed to keep his long-term memory until the last years of his life. Patty and Steve were blessed in that he remembered them until the end. Patty told us that this included remembering the words to the Dogface Soldier, which he would sing whenever he heard the tune!

We were deeply honored to have known Bill, have spent quality time with him, and remain deeply grateful to his family, especially Margaret Ryan and Patty, for their having allowed us to take Bill on these trips overseas. We truly appreciated their trust in our being able to take good care of him.

Rest easy, Bill, and enter into your just reward! CAN DO!

January 2021 Chappy's Message

By Chuck Trout

As I was in the process of writing this article, I received the news that I was selected to receive the Audie Murphy Achievement Award. What an honor! I must admit that this would not have been possible if it were not for the help of others. One example is John Burke. The year before John went to be with the Lord, he helped me design a sympathy card which I, as your chaplain, send on behalf of the 15th Infantry Association, to each family when they lose a loved one.

Also, a close friend and business associate, Paul Park, helped me develop a web site www.echohopenow.org, designed for veterans seeking hope for any situation they may be facing.

My first year on active duty included fighting in the Korean War. In that war, 33,746 Americans lost their lives and 8,177 were missing in action. At the time, I wondered why we were involved in the war. Now, I fully understand—our efforts were not in vain. Compare South Korea, which remains a free country, because we prevented the communists from taking over to North Korea, which lives under a dictatorship.

As we head into a new year, it is a good time to remember all those who gave their lives so we can be free today. They gave all their tomorrows so we can enjoy the present. Maybe that is why we call today "the present". It is their gift to us!

I wish each of you and your families a Happy New Year and may God continue to bless America.

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