



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



WEBSITE: www.b-2-1-196lib.com

Volume 4

"A Soldier Once... And Always"

August 2014

Commanders Corner: Just a reminder; a couple of months ago I added our financial reports and membership dues reports to our web site. This is a good place to check to see if you are up to date on your dues if you don't know and to see what a great job our Secretary/Treasurer, Don Hicks is doing taking care of our financial situation. Also, kudos to Rich for all the work he puts into the newsletter; remember we are still actively seeking input for the newsletter from our members. We really need to get something from you; it doesn't necessarily have to pertain to the "Nam" because I know some people still have a little trouble relaying those things to others. We are interested in whatever you are interested in telling your fellow members (except what you had for breakfast or a picture of your latest grandchild—save that for Facebook). We have some new members, and I have been remiss in mentioning new members in the newsletters lately. We welcome our fellow veterans, John Malpass (B), Paul Gaylord (associate) and Dwight Sypolt (B,C). We were sorry to hear about the passing of a member of 1st Platoon, B 2/1, Luther Miles. Luther was a big, strong guy who was a good soldier and, even though, I hadn't had any contact with him since Nam, I'll cherish the time we spent together and remember what an asset he was to our platoon. Luther lived in Inglewood, CA. and our chapter was represented at his funeral by one of our members, Young Ruff, his friend. I hope as many of you as possible can make the reunion in Houston in September; I think we will have quite an agenda to discuss at our annual chapter meeting regarding the direction we are heading in the future.

Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!

Chuck



Texas to Send 1,000 Guardsmen to Border: Texas Gov. Rick Perry, a vocal critic of the White House's response to the surge of children and families entering the U.S. illegally, plans to deploy as many as 1,000 National Guard troops to the Mexico border. Perry, who has not said whether he will seek the Republican nomination for president in 2016, spent the weekend talking to voters in Iowa, where he questioned President Barack Obama's commitment to securing the border and said Texas would do so if the federal government did not. More than 3,000 Border Patrol agents currently work in the region, and Perry has repeatedly asked Obama to send the National Guard to the border. The region has been overwhelmed in recent months by unaccompanied children illegally entering the U.S.



DoD Identifies 5 Missing Service Members: The Defense POW/MIA Office has announced the identification of remains belonging to four World War II soldiers, one Korean War soldier. Recovered are:

- **Marine Corps Pfc. Randolph Allen**, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, lost on Nov. 20, 1943, in Tarawa. The date and location of his burial is yet to be announced.
- **Army Air Force Staff Sgt. Gerald V. Atkinson**, 358th Bomb Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group, Eighth Air Force, lost on April 10, 1945, north of Berlin. He will be buried with full military honors Aug. 16 in Chattahoochee, Fla.
- **Army Air Force Staff Sgts. Robert E. Howard**, 21, of Moravia, Iowa, and **David R. Kittredge**, 22, of Oneida, Wis., lost April 16, 1945, when their B-26B was shot down while on a bombing raid to Wittenberg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. Howard was buried July 19, in Moulton, Iowa; Kittredge on a date and location to be announced.
- **Army Master Sgt. Lawrence O. Jock**, Battery A, 955th Field Artillery, 8th U.S. Army, was lost July 14, 1953, in North Korea. He was buried with full military honors Aug. 1 in Malone, N.Y.

Officers Say No 'Stand-Down Order' for Benghazi: Military officers testified that there was no "stand-down order" that held back military assets that could have saved the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans killed at a diplomatic outpost and CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya. Their testimony undercut the contention of Republican lawmakers. The "stand-down" theory centers on a Special Operations team -- a detachment leader, a medic, a communications expert and a weapons operator with his foot in a cast -- that was stopped from flying from Tripoli to Benghazi after the attacks of Sept. 11-12, 2012, had ended. Instead, it was instructed to help protect and care for those being evacuated from Benghazi and from the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli. The senior military officer who issued the instruction to "remain in place" and the detachment leader who received it said it was the right decision and has been widely mischaracterized. The order was to remain in Tripoli and protect some three dozen embassy personnel rather than fly to Benghazi some 600 miles away after all Americans there would have been evacuated. And the medic is credited with saving the life of an evacuee from the attacks.

Politicians are like people who, when they see light at the end of a tunnel, they go out and buy more tunnel.

~John Quinton~

Army Retiree Council Voices Concerns: The Army Chief of Staff Retiree Council concluded its 54th meeting and provided Gen. Raymond T. Odierno and Sgt Maj of the Army Raymond F. Chandler about the concerns of the retired community. The council represents 918,000 retired Army soldiers and 246,000 surviving spouses. The council's key recommendations include:

Sustaining the Army surgeon general's initiative to increase the number of Medicare-eligible retired soldiers and their families being treated in Army medical treatment centers where capacity exists.

Sustaining no-cost co-pay for generic drugs ordered through Express Scripts

Retaining the commissary benefit in the continental United States, adding generic products and incorporating the commissary into the exchange system to maintain the benefit, if necessary.

Supporting legislation that maintains the current cost-of-living adjustment method instead of the consumer price index method.

Issuing permanent identification cards to spouse over age 65.

Reviewing current funding procedures in order to fully fund retiree appreciation days.

Institutionalizing the Soldier for Life program within the Army G-1's authorization document and funding requirements.

Promoting The Soldier for Life message- "once a Soldier, Always a Soldier... A Soldier for Life"- to soldiers from initial entry training through and after retirement .

Military Suicides Up a Bit in 2014; More Seek Help: Suicides among active-duty military have increased a bit so far this year compared with the same period last year, but Pentagon officials say they are encouraged that more service members are seeking help through hotlines and other aid programs. Pentagon documents show there were 161 confirmed or suspected suicides as of July 14, compared with 154 during the same time frame in 2013. The uptick was among the Air Force and Navy, while Army and Marine suicides went down. While the 2014 numbers are likely to change over time as each death is investigated, the slight increase this year is a reversal in the sharp decline in active-duty suicides last year, compared with 2012. According to the final report released, active-duty suicides dropped by nearly 19 percent in 2013, compared with the previous year, going from 319 to 259. Suicides among National Guard and Reserve members increased by about 8 percent, going from 203 to 220. Jacqueline Garrick, director of the Defense Department's suicide prevention office, said in an interview Tuesday that while there is always a concern when officials see the number start to go up again, it's still too early to tell because things could change.

Exchange Wants to Open Website to All Veterans: The Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), which operates Exchanges, Class Six stores, Shoppettes and gas stations on Army posts and Air Force bases worldwide, wants to expand who can use their online shopping option. Right now shopping both in brick and mortar stores and online is limited to ID card holders (Active Duty, Retirees, Guard and Reserve), 100 percent disabled veterans and, for the physical stores, veterans who are on hospitalized near a store location. That means that 90 percent of veterans aren't eligible to shop at the stores, which offer products with no sales tax -- a potentially major savings, especially if you are buying high ticket items.

It there was a way to read a woman's mind, I am not sure I would want to. I hate shoes, shopping, gossip, and I already know I am annoying.

Stories from you contain historical value for all who served. Please send your story to Editor, 2/1 Newsletter either by email rheroux1@nc.rr.com, or by snail mail at 2005 Montgomery Road, Franklinton, NC 27525. (See page 6)

We Did it Together: Former Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Pitts doesn't like to use the word hero in reference to himself. But he freely used it to describe others July 22 when Pitts was honored for being just that -- a hero. During his induction ceremony into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes -- which came less than 24 hours after he received the Medal of Honor -- Pitts praised those who fought alongside him in 2008's Battle of Wanat in Afghanistan, the families of those who lost their lives during that battle, and former and current members of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, aka the "Chosen Few." Nine U.S. servicemembers died during the battle when Pitts and his fellow paratroopers held off a force of more than 200 enemy fighters attacking Observation Post Topside and Vehicle Patrol Base Kahler. During the attack, Pitts took shrapnel in his arms and legs but continued to lob grenades at the enemy before firing a machine gun from his knees. With the support of four other soldiers who helped hold the position, Pitts was able to call for air support that would repel the attackers. Had the attack been successful, the enemy would have been on high ground and able to inflict heavier casualties on the vehicle patrol base. Those who gave their lives that day are the true heroes, Pitts told a packed Pentagon Auditorium audience that included family members of the servicemembers killed in the line of duty at Wanat. "Our fallen ... fought to their last breathes to ensure the rest of us could return home," Pitts said. "They are the real heroes. These men and so many others displayed extraordinary acts of valor that day. No one man carried the fight. We did it together."



Tighter Tattoo Policy Means Smaller Recruit Pool: Uncle Sam still wants you -- just not as heavily inked.

More than three months after the Army implemented a more stringent tattoo policy, recruiters say they are the ones feeling the pinch. "It certainly makes our job a little more challenging," said Staff Sgt. Carrington Oliver of the South Holland recruiting station. The new regulations, which went into effect around April 1, mean turning away about 10 to 12 potential recruits at his office each month, Oliver said. Still, he endorsed the changes. "It's all about projecting a more professional image." The tighter rules, which went into effect around April 1, ban body art on the head, face, neck, wrists, hands and fingers. Soldiers are allowed a maximum of four visible tattoos below the elbow or knee, but they must be smaller than the wearer's hand, which means that "sleeves" are also prohibited. (Extremist, sexist and racist tattoos have always been taboo.)

Mexican Judge Sends Tahmooressi Back to Prison: A Mexican federal judge sent Andrew Tahmooressi back to prison after the U.S. [Marine](#) sergeant made his first official courtroom appearance since being locked up more than three months ago for accidentally crossing the border with guns in his pickup truck. The 26-year-old veteran of two tours in Afghanistan was finally able to tell his story to a judge, after his case had been delayed by both Mexico's unpredictable legal system and his own trouble settling on a lawyer. It was not immediately clear what Tahmooressi said at the evidentiary hearing, which was closed to the public. The next hearing in the case is scheduled for August 4. Despite the judge's ruling, Tahmooressi's attorney, Fernando Benitez, told reporters that he was confident that the Marine's case was on the right track. Benitez said that his client's statement to the judge was "sound and made perfect sense," and claimed that irregularities with Tahmooressi's detention were grounds for dismissal of the case. The attorney said that his client was not provided with consular services for nearly eight hours after he was detained, nor did he have access to an adequate translator.



Committee Examines Mental Health Access Between VA-DOD: The House VA Committee held a hearing to discuss mental health access for service members transitioning from DOD to VA. The hearing was a preview to a press conference held later in the day to introduce a suicide-prevention bill that the VFW helped craft. The committee members heard from parents of service members who had taken their lives after struggling with PTSD and having difficulties accessing VA services. Legislation includes suggestions from those on the ground—military professionals, mental healthcare providers, family caregivers and veterans, who struggle with the effects of PTSD every day. Some of the provisions include reforming the discharge review process within DOD by requiring military review boards to reexamine the circumstances surrounding those discharges entirely, establishing a VA community outreach program focused on successful transition from active duty to veteran, and increasing access to mental healthcare for service members and guard and reservists.

Bush Holds Ride for Wounded Veterans at His Ranch: Former President George W. Bush says wounded U.S. military members joining him for his annual mountain bike ride "turned their circumstances into good" by displaying courage and sacrifice. Bush spoke at his Crawford ranch in Central Texas as part of the three-day Warrior 100K, a 100-kilometer ride. Sixteen current and retired members of the military wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan are participating in the ride. This is the fourth year that Bush has hosted the event and he'll be riding the full 100K. He holds the gathering to show appreciation for the sacrifice of veterans. Bush said he was surrounded by "extraordinary" people who were injured after volunteering to serve the nation. The race is part of the Military Service Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute in Dallas.

Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

John Adams

Wounded Airman Program: The Air Force Association (AFA) Wounded Airman Program supports the work of the [Air Force Wounded Warrior \(AFW2\)](#) office at each of the adaptive sports camps, as well as directly helping Airmen financially, with adapted equipment, and lifestyle items. Receive requests for aid for Wounded Airmen in two ways: directly from AFW2's office, or through an Airman that has been identified by one of the Air Force Association (AFA) members in the community. Once the organization has confirmed that the Airman is properly recorded, it then takes the necessary steps to fulfill requests as it can. For more information, visit the [AFA Wounded Airman Program webpage](#). For more information on the Air Force Wounded Warrior program, visit the program's website at www.woundedwarrior.af.mil.

Stage Set for Military Pay Reform: Commission Interim Report 'Sets Stage' for Pay Reform. Military folks upset that recent defense budgets have targeted their pay and benefits have no reason to fear a new 358-page "interim" report from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission. The nine-member blue ribbon panel does present, in impressive detail, the full range of military and veteran pays, allowances and benefits that Congress has enacted over recent decades including the last 13 years of war. It's a document recruiters could use to great effect if not for its heft. But the commission reaches no conclusions on whether any of the compensation offerings, or their combined effect, is excessive. Therefore, it gives little comfort to budget analysts and even military leaders who want to dampen compensation costs through caps on pay raises and housing allowances, hikes in health care fees and cuts to the commissary benefit. Commission Chairman Alphonso Maldon Jr., says the intent of the interim report is to present a "comprehensive resource tool" for understanding military compensation. It shows what commissioners have learned the past year, and "sets the stage" for critical analysis and recommendations to modernize compensation. A final report to President Obama and Congress is due next February.

Gibson: VA Has Lost Trust of Vets, American People: The Department of Veterans Affairs has lost the trust of veterans and the American people as a result of widespread treatment delays for people seeking [health care](#) and falsified records to cover up those delays, the agency's top official said recently. Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson said the VA has created an environment where workers are afraid to raise concerns or offer suggestions for fear of retaliation and has failed to hold employees accountable for wrongdoing or negligence. The agency also has devoted too many resources to meeting performance metrics — such as prompt scheduling of patient appointments — that were subject to manipulation and may not accurately reflect quality of care, Gibson said. "As a consequence of all these failures, the trust that is the foundation of all we do — the trust of the veterans we serve and the trust of the American people and their elected representatives — has eroded," Gibson told the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

Sergeant: Research sources have the word originating from Medieval term "Serra Gente" meaning the veteran foot soldier equipped with a long pike who would march on the sides of the infantry company, keeping the men in tight ranks.

Mother, Daughter Veterans Receive Home Makeover: A week after the Wounded Heroes Fund presented a brand new home to a former Marine who lost both legs to an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan, two more local veterans got housing assistance from volunteers wanting to show their gratitude to those who have served their nation. This time it was a mother and daughter whose Taft home got \$5,000 worth of improvements, not counting the donated labor. Virginia Walton, 70, served as a truck driver for the U.S. Army in the 1970s before going back to school to study nursing. She worked as an emergency trauma nurse before retiring. Walton lives with daughter Veronica Cawelti, 47, a former U.S. Navy hospital corpsman who served during the Persian Gulf War, then followed her mother into nursing. Both women have disabilities. Walton had to leave the Army after a leg injury and Cawelti is temporarily off work with a back problem. A team of 15 volunteers -- 14 Home Depot employees and a local contractor -- replaced all the kitchen cabinets, two leaky, wobbly toilets, a bathroom sink and a front door. "It really wasn't a front door at all," said Home Depot Team Captain Amanda Riley. "It was a side door, and it didn't have a door handle." The volunteers gave the veterans a proper door with a handle, and also installed a white, metal screen door for added security. The 1,000-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bathroom house was built in the 1990s, but "this was a manufactured home," Walton said. "They tend to fall apart real fast."

Special Forces at Risk to Insider Threat in Iraq: U.S. Special Forces teams in Iraq will have to consider the "insider threat" posed by the Iraqi military before working more closely with them in an advisory role against Islamic militants, Pentagon officials said. "It would be imprudent, it would be irresponsible" to assign special operations teams to be advisors without considering the possibility that the faction-ridden and disorganized Iraqi security forces could pose a danger to them, said Rear Adm. John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary. Kirby said the Special Forces teams, who have worked out of Joint Operations Centers in Baghdad and northern Irbil, have completed their assessment on the status of Iraqi forces and their ability to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The report was forwarded through Gen. Lloyd Austin, head of the U.S. Central Command, and reached Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Monday, Kirby said. "It will be a matter of some time here as we work our way through" the assessment before decisions are made on putting Special Forces teams in advisory roles and possibly employing U.S. air power against the militants, Kirby said. "It's more important to get this right than to get this quick," Kirby said

The VFW Elects New Leadership for 2014-2015: The VFW closed out its annual National Convention by electing into office new VFW Commander-in-Chief John W. Stroud of Hawthorne, Nev.; Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki, Jr., of Robinson Township, Pa.; and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian J. Duffy of Louisville, Ky. Stroud, an Air Force retiree who served from 1976-1997, addressed the current crisis in care and confidence in the Department of Veterans Affairs by saying it's a health care system worth saving that right now must identify and fix what's broken, hold people appropriately accountable to the fullest extent of the law, and restore the faith of veterans in their VA. He also challenged all VFW members to recruit or reinstate one new member this year, to tell their individual stories to others, and to get involved in VFW projects and programs that serve veterans, service members and their families.

Army Retirees Have a New "Soldier for Life" Website The Army's "Soldier for Life" website is designed to be a new online home for retired soldiers. The Army's web portal "Army Knowledge Online" - better known as "AKO" - has been available to retirees and family members for many years. However, the Army is transitioning to a more secure enterprise network for business users—soldiers, Army civilians and contractors. Retirees will continue to be able to access important information about the Army, and information pertaining to health, retirement, employment and education benefits online at www.soldierforlifew.army.mil. In February, the Army Retirement Service Office was moved under the newly created Soldier for Life (SFL) program because retired soldiers are part of the Whole Soldier Life cycle. Right now on the website, retirees can also opt-in to receive a newsletter that lets them know what's going on in the Army with primary focus on news that retired soldiers care about.

Reservations Open for Disabled Veteran Memorial Dedication: Reservations are now open for the Oct. 5 dedication of the VFW-supported American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, which is being constructed at the foot of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The dedication is free and open to the public with no assigned general seating; however, due to security requirements, a maximum of only four guests can be registered at one time, and each registrant must have a unique name that matches a photo ID. For more information and to register.

Army's Pink Slip: Details Emerge: Army officials provided greater clarity behind its ongoing involuntary drawdown efforts with MOAA and other major veteran and military service organizations. The teleconference followed swift negative reaction by the press and legislators when various "pink slip" news stories surfaced regarding the way the Army handled the notification of nearly 1,200 officers involuntarily selected to separate; some while deployed combat zones. During the teleconference, Army officials emphasized that leaders were involved in the notification process. The 87 deployed captains (O-3), once notified, immediately received "change of mission" orders and will be out of country within 30 days. They were given the choice to either return to home duty station or to a transition location of choice and given 10 months to separate. These separations are just one method the Army is undertaking to bring their active duty force down from 570,000 members to 490,000 by 2015. Enlisted drawdown efforts will largely be adjusted by reducing the accession pipeline but more officers can expect pink slips early next month when the involuntary separation board results are released for majors (O-4). The Army is in a difficult predicament. Sequestration and other budget cuts have led to significant end strength reductions that hit the Army and Marine Corps hardest. The Army's Soldier for Life Transition program is working with MOAA and other Military and Veterans Service Organizations to assist in providing transition services for these service members.

Personal hygiene left much room for improvement in the early days. As a result, many women and men had developed acne scars by adulthood. The women would spread bee's wax over their facial skin to smooth out their complexions. When they were speaking to each other, if a woman began to stare at another woman's face she was told, 'mind your own bee's wax.' Should the woman smile, the wax would crack, hence the term 'crack a smile'. In addition, when they sat too close to the fire, the wax would melt. Therefore, the expression 'losing face.'

The Ghosts of War

We met on the battlefield at Kham Duc. They lost.

By John Shoemaker

Exhausted, I laid back in my flimsy hammock to rest. My rifle lay across my stomach. I remember marveling at just how dark it was as I lifted my hand in front of my face and could not see it. It was pitch black. As I slowly closed my eyes, BAMMM! It was so close and so LOUD. I rolled out of the hammock in an instant. Clutching my M-16, I tried peering out in the darkness trying to see anything and seeing nothing. “Do not move, I said to myself, “don’t even breathe.”

Our platoon had spent the entire day slowly hiking down a valley, across a river and up the other side. It took over six hours in the heat. We sweated every inch as we knew we were only a few meters away from the Laotian border and the NVA were known to be crossing through this area as they came south from North Vietnam through Laos to hit our positions in I Corps.

Their trek had to be grueling. Months on the move through mud and jungle without all the support and supplies Americans received. They mostly walked for hundreds of miles. They also had to dodge attacks from the air, especially those invisible but death-from-above B-52’s. Then there was the disease, the bugs, lousy food, rubber tires for sandals, and no Medevac’s if you got hit. There were just so many ways for them to get sick or die.

Waiting for those who made it were Army and Marine infantry platoons on the search for them. Platoons like mine. “The Third Herd”, Bravo Company of the 2nd Battalion 1st Infantry, 196 Infantry Brigade, Americal Division.

When we crossed the river and reached the top of the valley on the other side, we could see the trail. Well used and wide enough to prove that this was a major infiltration route. It was getting dark so I organized a circular night position just off the trail, in thick jungle, and ordered the placement of “claymores” on either side of us along the trail itself. Some had cleared shallow holes around the perimeter or hung hammocks to stay off the jungle floor.

Claymores are very powerful anti-personnel mines used with a trip wire that ran across the trail. Anyone coming down that trail was sure to trip it and the results were devastating.

Again, another explosion! BOOM!

Needless to say, we did not sleep that night. We felt like the jungle was crawling with the enemy coming all around us. Controlling fear is not easy. This was just one night in a tour that lasted one year, 1970.

The next morning we learned we had caught two NVA soldiers by surprise. Fully loaded with equipment and weapons, the unsuspecting enemy soldiers ran into our “Mike-Alfa’s” or mechanical ambushes. Searching their bodies, I was struck by what I found. Pictures, drawings, poems all showed that they were just like us in some ways. They missed home.

The pictures were just a few of the many faces of war: young, full of energy, ambition and pride.

The drawings were penned with ballpoint ink, mostly blue ink, but some with color. The fancy poems and pictures were done on thin, fragile strips of paper. To this day, I don’t know all what they mean.

In pensive moments, I sympathize for their families knowing their bodies never made it back home.

I kept their pictures and those of many more that would meet the same fate in the months that followed. For this was our mission – to stop them in their tracks. We knew if we did not get them, they would surely not hesitate to get us. We were all in a race to kill or be killed. When I look at these faces, a feeling comes over me that they wasted their lives.

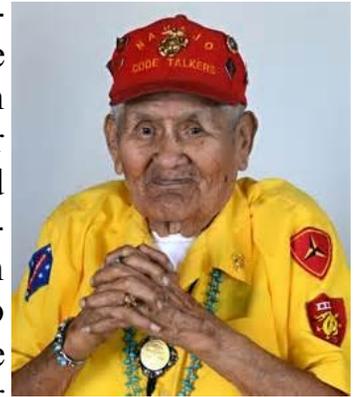
But then, when you see the names of our American soldiers on the Vietnam Wall, like the Movable Wall recently on display in Natick, MA, you trust that ours did not waste their lives.

One fact remains, they all died young and away from home on a dark trail to nowhere.



The Last of the Code Talkers:

As the Pacific theater of WW II darkened, the U.S. military searched for ways to keep its messages secret. The Japanese had broken every code. The Japanese were extracting heavy damage in both men and morale. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, civilian Phillip Johnson proposed using the little-known Navajo language to transmit confidential communications. Marine Corps officers were skeptical but gave the go-ahead to test the concept, a decision that proved instrumental for victory in the Pacific. The precise Navajo language was an ideal way to mask a code. With elaborate syntax, grammar and tones, it could easily throw off a non-speaker trying to listen in. Only 30 non-Navajos understood the language at all, and it did not appear in books. Long before the Marines famously planted a U.S. flag on Iwo Jima, actual Navajos had to be recruited to create and transmit the code. The Marines selected “Chester Nez and 28 other young Navajo men to serve as the original 29 code talkers. They had never left their reservations in the southwestern United States except to attend boarding schools. Ironically, the strict English only made possible their selection, as the Marines needed bilingual Navajos. In 1941, the reservation’s slow, quiet tempo was a stark contrast to a world at war. Young Nez said; “Our country has joined the war. I think the military will want us. We are warriors.” After



Basic Training, they were sent to Camp Elliott, CA to create an unbreakable code using their native tongue. Thus began the work of the all-Navajo 382nd Marine Platoon. The code talkers were not just sending code and translating messages with their 30 pound machines. They were in the heart of the battle, translating orders while finding cover from enemy fire. A proud nation Nez also served at Bougainville, Guam, Peleliu and Angaur, where he and the other code talkers continued to pass along secret messages, fight the enemy and long for home. After Nez was discharged, he traveled to his serene homeland - a far cry from the jubilant homecomings in major cities that welcomes other troops home. He arrived in Gallup, NM. By bus and hitchhiked toward the reservation, where he reunited with his family. When the code talkers returned home, they could not tell anyone what they had done, in the event they would be called upon again. Nez lived his life with two mantras: the “right Way” of the Navajo and the Marine Corps’ *Semper Fidelis*. He finished high school and later received a degree in fine arts from the University of Kansas. He served in the Korean War as a Marine Corps reservist before raising a family and working at the VA medical center in Albuquerque, N.M. where he retired in 1974. In Navajo, “always faithful” means that you love and support everything that America stands for, he said. “I am very proud to be one of those people who helped out during World War II. “Hey, you Marines out there, wherever you are: Come home in one piece. As Cpl. Chester Nez, I say to you guys that are out there: *Semper Fidelis*. Take care and come home. Chester Nez died June 10, 2014 after a battle with failing kidneys in Albuquerque. He was buried in Marine dress blues at the national cemetery in Santa Fe.