



# 2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter,

## Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)

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Volume 8

“A Soldier Once And Always”

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**Commanders Corner:** I was able to spend a few days at the Americal Division Veterans Association 2018 Reunion in Oklahoma City, Ok, 28-30 Sept 2018 and met some more of you at the reunion and our annual meeting. I think Jesse Mendoza indicated that we had 21 members present for the meeting on Saturday after the ADVA Annual meeting earlier that morning.



I hoped you enjoyed the banquet and Morton Dean's presentation for the documentary on the Americal Dust Off incident and follow-on with the pilots and grunts who were involved in that medevac mission.

During the meeting members discussed the “2-1 Brick Program”; it basically is purchase of a brick honoring member who pass on and is located at the Kokomo Indiana site. We asked that each member donate during the year to the “Brick Program”. So, I am asking that during the year, or when you renew membership that you send Jesse an additional check for the “Brick Program”, at least \$5.00. If we all donate, we will have enough funds to finance a brick on the passing of each member of the association and to provide for a commemorative brick for 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment veterans that served.

A “WELCOME” to new member from the 2018 Reunion, Norman L. Linto of Oxford, Mi., he was in HHC 2-1 INF. There may have been some additional new members at the Reunion and they will be honored next newsletter. I always hope to meet some 2-1 Infantry members at these veterans' gatherings, and I did as well this time.

God bless you and your families during the rest of this summer season and for any preparation you are involved in as grandchildren head off to school for the 2018-2019 year.

Remember our collective extended family, those Americans serving in our Armed Forces all over the world, and especially to the memories of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Got a comment, idea or complaint, contact me at [Commander.2.1.jgw@gmail.com](mailto:Commander.2.1.jgw@gmail.com).

John  
Commander

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



**“It is usually futile to try to talk facts and analysis to people who are enjoying a sense of moral superiority in their ignorance.”**

**Thomas Sowell, Social Theorist**

**ADVA The Chapter Stuff:** I just wanted to write a little article to let our fellow 2/1 Chapter members know how lucky they are to have members who step up every time the bell rings. Prime examples are Jesse and Eileen Mendoza; they have been both physically and monetarily very instrumental in making this chapter what it is. The sacrifices they make for the chapter are outstanding. They have not only kept all our money straight but, also, provided the exhausting service to stock and man our hospitality rooms at the last several ADVA national reunions. Jesse has developed a mini-PX for us with chapter hats, shirts, decals, etc. The quality is excellent, the prices extremely reasonable and the small profits go directly to the chapter fund to help keep us afloat financially. They did a wonderful job at this year's ADVA reunion and every one enjoyed the refreshments, snacks and the effort put forth. I want to give my personal thanks to the Jesse and Eileen (especially since they provided Budweiser). Another stalwart has been Rich Heroux; who since the inception of the chapter has provided us with the best quality chapter newsletter in the ADVA. Rich works hard every month to put these newsletters together and they are all first rate. Thankfully, they are both in fine shape now. One thing that would help him immensely is if you guys (and ladies) would submit some articles to him for the newsletter. You don't have to worry that you may not be a great writer or spell or punctuate everything correctly; that can be taken care of. We just need some input from our members. There are a lot of stories out there and they don't have to be “war stories”. Whatever interests you may be of interest to our other members. We, as of the writing of this article, have 156 members and I'm sure their interests are as diversified as possible. Get off your butts, and send some stuff to Rich. Also, if you have any change in your address, phone or emails; get them to Rich or Jesse. Last but certainly not least, is our Idea Man, Julius “Juju” Deriscavage. Juju has supported our chapter from the beginning both financially and with his timely bitching. Juju has served the last couple of years as one of our two At-large chapter officers and his input has been invaluable; especially keeping me straight maintaining our web site. That guy could find a flea on a gnat's ass, if it was out of place. Thanks buddy. One last thing then I'll shut up. We need more members to step up and help out by either running for an officer position or just helping out with chapter stuff in general. One thing we truly need is to take some of the day to day pressure off Jesse and Eileen when we have our hospitality room open at the reunions. If you are at a reunion, volunteer a little of your time to help monitor the room so Jesse and Eileen can have some time on their own. I don't think they have seen anything but their room, the hospitality room and the inside of a local restaurant the last few reunions. I hope you didn't fall asleep half way through this but, this last paragraph as important as any of them. I know you learned not to volunteer in the Army but, this is different. If you haven't caught up on your dues, please send them to Jesse.

Thanks,

Chuck Holdaway

**5 freed from Gitmo in exchange for Bergdahl join Taliban's political office in Qatar:** Five members of the Afghan Taliban who were freed from the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay in exchange for captured American Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl have joined the insurgent group's political office in Qatar, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said recently. They will now be among Taliban representatives negotiating for peace in Afghanistan, a sign some negotiators in Kabul say indicates the Taliban's desire for a peace pact. Others fear the five, all of whom were close to the insurgent group's founder and hard-line leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, bring with them the same ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam that characterized the group's five-year rule that ended in 2001 with the U.S.-led invasion.

**The 5,239 Troops Headed to the Border is Just the Beginning:** The number of troops who will deploy to the U.S.-Mexico border will rise beyond the 5,239 personnel already on orders and expected to be in place within days, U.S. Northern Command chief Air Force Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy said recently. O'Shaughnessy did not have a cost estimate for the rapidly-growing — and without recent precedent — mission of dispatching thousands of active-duty forces to Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California to counter a caravan of an estimated 3,500 migrants traveling from Central America. "There will be an additional force, over and above the 5,239," O'Shaughnessy said. "The magnitude of that difference, I don't have an answer to right now." Even though smaller numbers of active-duty forces have supported drug interdiction efforts on the border, they have not been the go-to to address immigration influxes, and certainly not in an order of this magnitude, border security experts said. Responding to immigration influxes has typically been the purview of the National Guard, such as Operation Jump Start from 2006-2008 under former President George W. Bush, said William Banks, author of "Soldiers on the Home Front: The Domestic Role of the American Military" and the former director of the Institute for National Security and Counter-terrorism at Syracuse University's College of Law. In that operation, according to the National Guard Bureau's historical services division, "as many as 6,000 National Guard men and women at any one time participated in the operation ... not to close the Nation's border with Mexico but to make it more secure for legal immigration and commerce." The use of military troops to secure the border has been tightly monitored since a 1997 incident where U.S. Marines assigned to the border to support drug interdiction ended up firing on and killing an 18-year-old, Esequiel Hernandez Jr., a U.S. citizen who was herding goats along the border.



**Wounded Warrior Project Pledges \$160 Million to Battle PTSD:** The Wounded Warrior Project pledged Tuesday to raise \$160 million over the next five years that would be funneled to four institutions for two-and-three week courses of intensive treatment for veterans suffering from PTSD and traumatic brain injury. The fundraising was aimed at veterans who "have the courage -- yes, the courage -- when they return home to seek help," retired Army Lt. Gen. Mike Linnington, chief executive officer of WWP, said in an announcement aboard the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum on Manhattan's West Side. "When they return home, they've earned our support, and that's really what today is all about."

Old age is coming at a really bad time. When I was a child I thought "nap time" was a punishment. Now, as a grownup, it feels like a small vacation.

**Army Expelled 500 Immigrant Recruits in 1 year:** The U.S. Army discharged more than 500 recruits who were recruited across the globe for their language or medical skills and promised a fast track to citizenship in exchange for their service. The decade-old Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest recruiting program was put on hold in 2016 amid concerns that immigrant recruits were not being screened sufficiently. The Army began booting out those enlistees last year without explanation. The recruits from countries such as Brazil, Pakistan, Iran, China and Mongolia said they were devastated by their unexpected discharges or canceled contracts. Until now, it's been unclear how many were discharged and for what reason because the Army has refused to discuss specific cases. But the Army's own list, submitted to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia last month, says 502 service members who enlisted under MAVNI were discharged between July 2017 and July 2018. The list, which was unsealed this week after a request from the AP, offers "refuse to enlist" as the reason for expelling two-thirds of the recruits. That is the reason given for 35 percent of enlistee discharges Army-wide, according to a research study posted on a Defense Department website.

**Offutt lab's ID Brings Two More WWII "Unknowns" Home to Families:** Fireman 2nd Class George C. Ford died at Pearl Harbor inside the pulverized battleship USS Oklahoma, on America's first day fighting World War II. Pfc. Fred Ashley died in the last days of the war, murdered by German soldiers on patrol in Czechoslovakia. Both spent decades buried in the wrong place, far from home, mourned by loved ones who could only guess at their fates. Saturday, more than 70 years after their deaths, both men are being laid to rest with military honors, mourned mostly by family members too young to ever have known them. Ford will be buried next to his siblings in Glidden, Iowa. His bones had been buried in graves marked "Unknown" at the National Military Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, mixed with those of his shipmates.

**Remains of Vietnam-era Pilot, Plane's Observer to be Buried in Arlington:** Remains of an Army pilot and an observer killed more than 50 years ago when their plane went down in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War will be buried with military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. The Defense Department's POW/MIA Accounting Agency says ceremonies for Staff Sgt. Marshall Kipina of Calumet, Michigan, and Lt. Col. Robert Nopp of Salem, Oregon, are scheduled. Nopp, the pilot, was 31 and Kipina was 21 when their aircraft failed to return in 1966 from surveillance mission over Laos, which shares a border with Vietnam. Nopp piloted the plane. On July 13, 1966 Kipina and Nopp were on a night surveillance mission from Phu Bai Airfield over Attapu Province, Laos in a heavy thunder storm visibility was poor as the aircraft flew its mission over mountainous terrain. The crash site was identified in the 1990s and later excavated. The remains of Nopp and Kipina were accounted for earlier this year.

**Soldier Killed in WWII Tank Battle is Finally Buried at Omaha National Cemetery:** Sgt. Melvin Anderson's life ended 74 years ago, in a rain of murderous German artillery fire that set his M10 tank destroyer ablaze in the battle of Hürtgen Forest. But the World War II soldier's journey back to his home state of Nebraska ended only this week, with his military burial at Omaha National Cemetery. "I am so proud to be doing this today, to honor Mel," said Joani McGinnis, 67, one of Anderson's four surviving nieces. "He's home now. That's the best part." McGinnis and the three other nieces were among about 100 people who attended the military honors ceremony — long delayed because his remains had lain unidentified in a grave at a U.S. military cemetery in France since 1951.

**Former Walter Reed Chief to Take Over at Troubled VA Medical Center:** VA Secretary Robert Wilkie on Monday named retired Army Col. Michael Heimall, a seasoned military health care system administrator, to take over at the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center. His unstated mission: to get the hospital off the VA's "critical" list. "Michael's proven experience is what we need to continue to stabilize and make further improvements at the medical center," Wilkie said in a statement. The center was once a flagship in the VA system but has been the subject of two scathing VA Inspector General's reports warning that patients were at risk. "I believe our employees, volunteers and veterans will greatly benefit from his strong leadership," Wilkie said of Heimall, who previously served as chief of staff at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, from 2015 to 2017. Heimall, a fellow at the American College of Healthcare Executives since 2007, received his commission while earning a Bachelor of Arts degree at Norwich University in Vermont. He holds Master of Strategic Studies degree from the Army War College, as well as a Master of Health Administration degree from Baylor University. As director at the D.C. center, he will be in charge of a facility serving more than 121,000 veterans in the D.C. area, on an operating budget of \$610 million. The continuing problems at the hospital were considered a factor in President Donald Trump's decision last March to fire then-VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin. In April 2017, VA Inspector General Michael Missal took the unusual step of issuing a preliminary report on the center to prod the Veterans Health Administration into action. Missal's report said that storage areas for medical supplies were filthy, management was clueless on what was in the storage areas, medical supply rejects may have been used on patients and more than \$150 million in supplies and equipment had never been inventoried. The IG said that staff at the center at times had to make emergency runs to neighboring hospitals to ask for supplies.

**Black Woman who Fought Discrimination During Trailblazing Navy Career Dies at 83:** Raye Montague, a trailblazing black woman from Arkansas who revolutionized the way the Navy designed ships, has died. She was 83. Montague developed a computer program that created rough drafts of ship specifications. She told the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette in 2012 that the program allowed the Navy to cut the time it took to build a ship's draft design from two years to 18 hours and 26 minutes. She fought discrimination throughout her career. When a co-worker wouldn't show her how to operate a computer, she taught herself. She said: "I had to run circles around people, but when they found out I really knew what I was talking about, they came to respect me."

**Even the Coast Guard has Sharper Snipers than the Marines:** For the second year in a row the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment beat out nearly 30 military, civilian and foreign sniper teams at the 2018 International Sniper Competition held aboard Fort Benning, Georgia. The Corps' two-man team hailing from the Quantico, Virginia, Scout Sniper Instructor School placed 10th overall, just behind the Coast Guard's Special Mission's Training Detachment. It's the second year the Marine team has been bested by the Coast Guard. In 2017, the Corps' snipers fared slightly better taking home the seventh place slot. The last time the Corps won the competition was in 2009 with Sgt. Joshua Huskey and Sgt. Grant Royal from the Corps' Camp Pendleton Sniper School. And the multiday competition that tests a range of sniper skills from long range marksmanship to stalking, isn't the only sniper competition where the Army has recently beaten the Corps. In April, two Army snipers took the top honors at the 2nd Marine Division's Marine Corps Scout Sniper Basic Course.



**Oklahoma City ADVA Reunion a Huge Success:** Who was it that said, "there was nothing of importance to see or visit in the OK city"? Whoever it was should have taken a tour bus with the likes of the fellows and gals who attended our reunion. There wasn't a murmur of adverse discourse from the attendees at this year's ADVA reunion. The reunion staff performed admirably and the attention getters were numerous. The Thursday scenic tours were informative giving the tourists plenty to discuss. Even the trip to Fort Sill was eventful even though the lunch meal was somewhat lacking. The memorial service near the newly dedicated ADVA Monument was well presented. For the Saturday evening for 450 members and their family, everything was very well organized. Who can complain with the wonderful video and story presented by Morton Dean. His thoughtful presentation was well received. Everyone enjoyed seeing the video and being introduced to the other players in the story. Our Chapter meeting room was a bit shabby and crowded but by and large adequate for our needs. Save your pennies for our 2019 ASDVA Reunion in Rhode Island.

**Construction of National Army Museum Moving Along:** The National Museum of the United States Army is quickly taking shape on 84 acres of land at Fort Belvoir, Va., less than 30 minutes south of Washington, D.C. The museum will honor and celebrate the service and sacrifice of the more than 30 million men and women who have worn the Army uniform since 1775. It is scheduled to open in 2020. Construction of the \$200-million privately and publicly funded museum broke ground about two years ago, with the main building consisting of 185,000 square feet that will display Army artifacts, documents, images and artwork. The majority of these items have never been seen by the public. A few artifacts include the M3 Bradley Cavalry Fighting Vehicle that led the 2003 charge from Kuwait to Baghdad; the M4A3E2 Sherman "Jumbo" Tank, known as "Cobra King," which was the first tank to break through German lines during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II; one of the few remaining "Higgins boats" certified to have carried U.S. troops ashore Normandy on D-Day; a World War I Liberty Truck, Korean War-vintage Jeep and Huey helicopter. Other attractions inside the museum will be the Soldiers' Stories Gallery, Army and Society Gallery and Fighting for the Nation Galleries, which will cover the Army's history from the Revolutionary War to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I was walking home last night and decided to take a short cut through the local cemetery ... 3 girls walked up to me and explained that they were afraid to walk alone passed the cemetery at night. So I agreed to allow them to walk along with me. I told them I understand ... I used to freak out to when I was alive. Never seen anyone run so fast.

**--REPORT FROM VIETNAM--January 1969**

Dear Editor:

I am now taking another Viewpoint of the Vietnam War. I am now serving as an Infantry Company Commander. My Rifle Company at the present time is located on an observation post some 45 minutes flying time northwest of the Americal Division base camp at Chu Lai, South Vietnam. Company B (Bravo) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry, 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, has around 100 soldiers. Most of these men are combat hardened. They have been in the field some four months and have one of the best records of any company sized unit in the Americal Division. The mission of the rifle company, that is subject to daily change, is to hold this observation post that is shared by a Battery of 155 mm howitzers. The company sends out daily patrols, usually platoon size (25 – 30 soldiers) to insure that the NVA/VC do not sneak up on the position unnoticed. The patrols leave the observation posts at around 0630 hours and return at 1645 hours. The terrain surrounding the O/P is thickly vegetated and has an atmosphere of a tropical area. In many cases the patrols have to cut their way through this vegetation in order to get to the desired location on which has been given as a destination for the patrol. The rainy season has come to South Vietnam and therefore making travel restricted to the use of air. Due to the elevation of the mountains where the company fines itself around 600 meters above sea level, fog lowers into the area around 1600 hours and seldom rises until 1100 hours the following morning. This leaves little time for resupply of needed items that the company must have to subsist. The morale of the soldiers in this company is very high. Most of the company is composed of young men who were drafted into the U.S. Army. They came over to Vietnam as youngsters and will return mature men. They are aware of their duty here and are making a strong attempt to see this war through to a successful completion. No one knows what is ahead of us as far as military operations are concerned, but we are enjoying our security mission before coming up to this hill the men have spent 20 days in the mountains, jungle terrain of Vietnam. The many days left for all of us will reveal new and unparalleled experiences. I will attempt to keep you all posted as to the adventures of my new command as time passes.

RICHARD HEROUX

Captain, Infantry

**First Female Completes Second Phase of Marine Raider Selection:** No female Marine has yet to successfully navigate the elite Marine Raider assessment, selection and Individual Training Course, or ITC, to earn the coveted 0372 Critical Skills Operator job field. But one female Marine has moved the baton a little further. Recently, Sgt. Bailey Weis, an aviation maintenance controller, became the first female Marine to complete the second phase of Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command's Assessment and selection course. Four women and five attempts total have been made by female Marines at the MARSOC selection, Maj. Nick Mannweiler, a spokesman with MARSOC, told Marine Corps Times. Only Weis has made it through phase two. She ultimately was not selected to move onto the next phase of ITC, a nearly 9-month training evolution where Raiders learn and hone their skills to become special operators, Military.com reported. The Raider's assessment and selection is divided into two phases. The first highly competitive phase is nearly three weeks long and includes ruck runs, a swimming assessment and classroom instruction. The second phase helps the Corps identify candidates who share traits with its elite special operators and who would be successful in the job field. Since being passed over in selection, Weis told Military.com that she is leaving the Corps, with plans to begin a master's degree in international relations and earn a commission in the North Carolina National Guard.

**Koreas Finish Scrapping Land Mines from Border Village, Now Plan to Pull Out Weapons, Guard Posts:**

The two Koreas have completed removing land mines planted at their shared border village as part of efforts to disarm the area located inside the world's most heavily fortified border, South Korean officials said recently. The announcement came following a meeting among military officers from the Koreas and the U.S.-led U.N. Command at the border's Panmunjom village earlier Monday. It's the second such trilateral meeting to examine efforts to demilitarize Panmunjom, the most well-known place inside the 155-mile-long Demilitarized Zone that bisect the two Koreas. Disarming the village was among a set of tension-reduction agreements signed by the Koreas' defense chiefs on the sidelines of their leaders' summit in Pyongyang last month. As the next disarmament steps at Panmunjom, the two Koreas and the U.N. Command agreed on withdrawing weapons and guard posts there by Thursday. The three sides will then spend two days jointly verifying those measures, Seoul's Defense Ministry said in a statement. The Koreas eventually aim to have 35 unarmed personnel from each side guard the village.

**Army Wants to Use Robots to Help Conduct Precision Strikes on the Enemy:**

Army maneuver officials are hoping that a consortium of experts in non-military robotics can find new ways for combat units to defeat the enemy, especially in dense urban terrain. The Army's Capabilities Development and Integration Directorate, or CDID, at Fort Benning, Georgia, recently partnered with the National Advanced Mobility Consortium to conduct an outcome-based innovation workshop -- an approach to challenges that has been "proven in the commercial industry sector but never potentially used in a partnership with the military to get after some of the military's problems," according to Col. Tom Nelson, the head of CDID's Robotics Requirement Division. The consortium recently had discussions with various groups, such as soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment; Army captains from the Maneuver Captains Career Course; and Training and Doctrine Command officials representing Army infantry, armor and Stryker brigade combat teams. Between now and April, the consortium will consider tactical problems and potential solutions involving robotics and autonomous systems, Nelson said. Army officials are hopeful that the group can help develop a solution that can be used for precision engagement in close urban terrain, for dealing with enemy forces that hide among the population in large cities.

**French Town is Still Grateful to American Pilot Shot Down in WWI:**

They meet on French soil, two American military pilots separated by 100 years. One pilot is a living, breathing Alabama native who speaks French and lives in Omaha's Dundee neighborhood. U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. John Fowler is 39 and wears his Air Force dress blues and Ray-Ban shades in the Autumn sun in the tiny village of Courville, outside Paris. The other pilot is but a memory, frozen in time to an August day in 1918 when he lost a dogfight with the Germans after the Second Battle of the Marne, his plane falling to the earth near the then-obliterated village of Courville. Lt. William Muir Russel is depicted in a monument and photographs, a handsome 24-year-old in U.S. Army Air Service dress, one hand jauntily tucked into the front pocket of his uniform pants, which are stuffed into knee boots. The pilots hold different places in history. But the two share so much in common: The sheer pleasure of flight. The desire to serve their country. And deep gratitude for a long friendship with France, a place that continues to recognize American service with events like the recent one in Courville. "This is a country — one of our allies — who remembers what we did for them and how we fought together," Fowler said. "Even though it was three generations ago, they haven't forgotten."

### Vietnam Vets Reunite to Help Heal the Trauma of War:

Story submitted by Jim Gales.

Larry Cannon, a Vietnam veteran, was cruising in his vintage 1962 Buick Skylark out on Route 66, taking the vehicle from his home in Minneapolis to his winter place in Arizona. He received a text from his wife stating that someone from his Army service in Vietnam was trying to make contact. Cannon's military service in Vietnam was 46 years ago. He tried hard to put the intense experience, and even the buddies he shared it with, behind him. He often felt angry and would walk around with a loaded handgun, while at the same time telling himself he was fine. "I never reached out or attempted to contact anybody," he said. "I pretty much tucked it away and didn't want to revisit it." Now here was Jim Gales, from Glendale, Wisconsin, trying to reach him by going through a relative he found on Facebook. Cannon decided to take a chance and call this man he remembered from his mortar platoon with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. 1<sup>st</sup> Inf in Vietnam in 1971 and 1972. Upon answering the phone "I just started crying and crying. I couldn't really talk. Then I called Serge and went through the same thing, crying. I knew at that point I had not come home yet," said Cannon, who served the platoon as a fire direction controller. Serge is Larry Tallacus, who reunited with Gales four years ago after he spotted a story Gales wrote for a VFW magazine about their platoon. Living in Washington state, he, too, had not reached out to his war buddies for many years. He served two tours in Vietnam and spent 20 years in the military. They formulated a plan to meet at Serge's house in Washington. Cannon drove up from Minneapolis to visit with Gales and Tallacus. Tallacus, a Native American and a member of the Makah tribe; presented Cannon with a revered eagle feather. He said, "This is something that a Native Americans give to recognize people that bring about achievements, and a lot of times recognize a warrior status." Moved to tears, Cannon hugged his former platoon mates and said it was hard to put into words the enormity of the honor.

"It's a combination of getting together after all these years with fellow veterans. It's a combination of what I believe in my heart, the oneness we all share on this planet," he said. All three men wrestle with post-traumatic stress disorder related to their war days. They now believe that getting back together with the guys who shared this experience is perhaps the most important step in the healing process. Coming from a military family, Jim Gales enlisted in the Army a couple years after graduating from Custer High School. He volunteered for dangerous infantry duty in Vietnam and wound up in the mortar platoon, serving at firebases in northern South Vietnam around the A Shau Valley. He has an image of the 81mm mortar tattooed on his arm. "I was the gunner. We fired any time the infantry people worked around the hill in the woods and the jungle. If they got in trouble, we fired for them or anybody in the area. We fired at night at predetermined targets, targets the enemy might use to approach the hill. And we fired illumination rounds to light up areas where groups were in contact so they could see the enemy a little more easily," Gales said. He was there 11 months. Stress was constant as the men took sniper fire and bombardment. When Gales returned to civilian life in Wisconsin and a job installing carpets, he spent a lot of time wandering forests, avoiding crowds and fireworks, and watching war movies over and over. Many of his buddies divorced, but Gales credits his wife, Darlene Gemoll, with helping him cope with his PTSD. He remained in contact with about 10 platoon mates by cards, calls and emails, and they encouraged each other to use veteran benefits. After he found Larry Tallacus, they put together platoon reunions in 2016 and this past August at the serge's home in Sequim, Washington. Tallacus presented eagle feathers to 16 men at this reunion. This eagle feather and certificate were presented on to Larry Cannon, who was recently reunited with his fellow platoon members from the war in Vietnam. And now he was able to honor Cannon in this special way. "The eagle feather is the same importance to Native Americans as the American flag is to Americans," Tallacus said. Four veterans from their platoon have died, all from Agent Orange-related illnesses. And there is one more brother they hope to locate. "His name is Gary Smith from Sparks, Nevada," Gales said. "We haven't found him, but I'm not giving up hope."

