



# COUNTERPARTS

## TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á

### SITREP

Volume XXIII

Issue 3

Fall 2024

## **2025 Reunion, April 29-May 2, Costa Mesa, CA.**

Dave Priddy, our Reunion Coordinator has done lot of advance planning and coordination. Here's a short summary from Dave:

We have shifted the Reunion dates from our traditional arrival and departure days. We ask all to arrive on Tuesday, 29 April. 30 April will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Republic of Vietnam and we have contacted the City Council of Westminster about the remembrance ceremony for "Black April". Westminster is the heart and soul of "Little Saigon", the largest community of former Vietnamese in the United States and outside of Vietnam. The City Council hosts a ceremony every year. No concrete plans and agenda yet but the City Council will prepare a program of events.

We have expressed interest in having COUNTERPARTS members and guests attend and participate in the ceremony and are awaiting more information from the City Council. We don't know how long the program will be, but we plan to attend.

Tom Vo is arranging a program and lunch after the event at a nearby Vietnamese restaurant, *Parasol*. Based on his Vietnamese military schooling and service, he is coordinating with members of former Vietnamese military organizations to attend. They will be identified by their service branches (i.e., Army/Navy/Marines/Air Force as Rangers or LLDB or pilots, etc.). We hope to have sufficient information on the attendees to share prior to the Reunion and the opportunity to meet and possibly renew old acquaintances and friendships. It will be a multicourse Vietnamese lunch. There will be a separate cash bar for adult beverages.

On 1 May, we have an optional tour to a local air museum in the morning and early afternoon. We plan to have member presentations in the afternoon and also on Friday afternoon, 2 May after our Business Meeting. I have one presentation request thus far. We all enjoy talking about memories and experiences, especially when we all served in different times and locations. Please consider sharing your experiences if you haven't done so. The presentations will be held in the rear section of the Hospitality Suite.

On Friday, 2 May, we will have our annual business meeting in the hospitality suite from 0900 to 1200 hours. Additional presentations will made in the afternoon. At 1600 we will close the Hospitality Suite in preparation for our evening event. 1700-1900 will be drinks poolside at the hotel, dinner and keynote address from 1900-2200.

As many know, Orange County is a high cost area as is California in general. We still need to lock in bus transportation for our local travel; labor rates and fuel costs adversely impact getting reasonable rates this early. We are actively monitoring the situations.

As of early September, I have received two confirmed attendance reservations. So mark your calendars, check your flight tables, make your reservations and clear the moths out of your purses and wallets!

***Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like to be a presenter.***

***Dave Priddy, 703-627-2109 or [dave.priddy@yahoo.com](mailto:dave.priddy@yahoo.com)***



# COUNTERPARTS SITREP

The Official publication of COUNTERPARTS/Thương Hữu Đồng Nam Á

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## Commander's Corner

Earlier this year CSM Ray Robison passed away. Those of you who served with Ray, and the many of us who knew Ray, know what a consummate soldier's soldier Ray was. He was a very fervent supporter of our group and our Reunions from the very start. We've missed him these past several years and his ever-present vest and his ability to recall anecdotes from his long and wild career with five tours in Nam and the many special people he served with.

I remember my first Reunion in 2014 in Greensboro, NC. The first person that greeted me as my wife and I entered the hospitality room was Ray ... his right hand extended to shake my hand and his left extended with a beer!

Ray was a patriot and proud of his army career and his advisory role with the South Vietnamese army, the RD Cadre, and Peoples Self Defense Force. He will be missed and will long be remembered by those of us proud to have known him.

At the 2025 Reunion, we will be gathering with many South Vietnamese military veterans to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the fall of South Vietnam. If you have never attended a COUNTERPARTS reunion or you haven't attended one recently -- this will THE ONE to attend. Dave Priddy and Tom Vo are doing an excellent job with the planning.

The Reunion schedule, registration form, and the link for discounted hotel reservations are all available on the CP website. It is strongly suggested that you fly into John Wayne Airport in Orange County, CA.

The hotel is just 15 minutes away by the hotel shuttle bus. We will have the opportunity to participate in the Black April Ceremony on Wednesday April 30<sup>th</sup>, with the community and many South Vietnamese veterans. Additionally, Tom Vo is coordinating a catered luncheon following the ceremony that will include members of former Vietnamese military units, including ARVN, VNAF, VNN, VNMC, Airborne, /Rangers, and others.

Our focus going forward as an organization is to foster a sense of community and mutual support among our members, provide a platform for engagement, support the historical preservation of our unique legacy, and cultivate lifelong connections among our members.

If you have a personal need or a suggestion, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at [cheoreo1@hotmail.com](mailto:cheoreo1@hotmail.com) or 307.682.0123.

....Steve King

Commander, COUNTERPARTS/THDNA

DUES NOTICE: Annual Counterparts dues are payable now. Annual dues are \$35.00, or you can upgrade to lifetime membership for \$350.00. Our dues fund the several projects that Counterparts supports for our former Counterparts in Southeast Asia. Please make your check out to "Counterparts" and mail to Membership Officer John Haseman, 555 West Saddle Drive, Grand Junction CO 81507. Lifetime members do NOT pay dues, but those who may like to make a contribution are warmly received! If you are not sure of your membership status or payment record, feel free to email John at: [jhaseman@earthlink.net](mailto:jhaseman@earthlink.net)



***Book your Reservation***

**Group Name: Counterparts Reunion, Group #15507**

**Blocked Dates: April 29 - May 3, 2025**

**To book your reservation online, please click on the link below:**

<https://costamesagroups.ayreshotels.com/?coupon=15507>

Deluxe Room Rate: \$159 (single/double occupancy)

Cut Off Date: 04/08/25

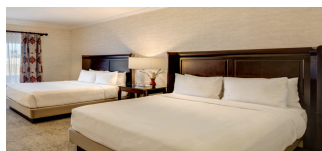
*(Please make your reservation before the above cut off date; after this date, rate and availability cannot be guaranteed) (24-hour cancellation policy)*

#### **COMPLIMENTARY AMENITIES:**

- Parking & Wi-Fi
  - Shuttle to/from John Wayne
  - Cookies in the lobby each evening
  - Shuttle within a 3 mile radius
- (Based on Availability)*

#### **THINGS TO DO**

- Minutes to the Sand in Newport Beach
- Balboa Island
- Newport Dunes
- South Coast Plaza
- Fashion Island
- Restaurants within walking distance
- Trendy shopping & dining at The LAB and The CAMP



#### **HOTEL INFORMATION**

284 deluxe guest rooms and suites, Flat-screen televisions, Irons and ironing boards, hair dryers, Refrigerators and coffee makers, MP3-compatible clock radios, EV Chargers, New Fitness studio, 2 heated pools and spas

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## COUNTERPARTS REUNION 2025

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

#### Tuesday, 29 April

Arrival day, hotel check-in  
1200-2200 Hospitality Room

#### Wednesday, 30 April

0800-2200 Hospitality Room open  
0830 Load buses for Black April ceremony in Westminster  
0845 Buses depart  
0915-0925 Arrive, proceed to seating  
1000-1130 Black April Ceremony Counterparts Wreath Ceremony  
1130 Load buses, proceed to Vietnamese luncheon  
1200-1500 Vietnamese Luncheon (***Cost included in Registration fee***)  
Counterparts Reunion attendees & South Vietnamese military veterans  
coordinated by Tom Vo  
1530 Load buses for return to the hotel  
1600 Hotel - free time  
Dinner on your own

#### Thursday, 1 May

0800-2200 Hospitality Room open  
0900 Load buses (***Optional Trip- \$45/per person. Includes bus & entry fee to the museum***)  
0930 Arrive at Lyon Air Museum  
1000-1130 Tour Air Museum  
1130 Load buses & return to hotel  
1200 Lunch on your own  
1400-1600 Member presentations\*\* (30 minutes each)  
Free time  
Dinner on your own

#### Friday, 2 May

0900-1200 Counterparts Business Meeting (Hospitality Room)  
0900-1200 Wives event (TBD)  
1400-1600 Member presentations\*\* (30 minutes each)  
1600 Hospitality Room closed  
1700-1900 Cash bar - cocktail hour  
1900- 2200 Banquet

#### Saturday, 3 May

Farewells & check-out of hotel

***\*\* Those wishing to present need to contact Dave Priddy to schedule your 30 minute time slot, provide a presentation title, outline & copies of any slides/pictures you will be using.***



## 2025 Counterparts Reunion

### REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Fees:

\$195.00: Includes access to hospitality room & refreshments, banquet dinner, bus transportation to the Black April Ceremony & lunch. (further details on the lunch menu will follow)

**Registration must be received NLT April 5, 2025**

\$70: Spouse/Guest for banquet dinner only.

\$45: Optional bus tour on Thursday

\$ 45 x \_\_\_\_ per = \_\_\_\_ (Optional trip to Lyon Air Museum)

\$195 x \_\_\_\_ per = \_\_\_\_ (Registration, hospitality, Black April Ceremony & banquet)

\$70: x \_\_\_\_ per = \_\_\_\_ (This only applies if this person is attending ONLY the banquet)

Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_

Entrée Selection for Banquet Dinner (select one for each person registering):

Chicken Brest in Lemon-Herb Sauce \_\_\_\_

Grilled Salmon with Lemon-Butter Sauce \_\_\_\_

Skirt Steak with Chimichurri Sauce \_\_\_\_

(All dinners served with a Spinach salad with choice of dressing, served with rolls & butter; fresh brewed coffee, tropical iced tea & chocolate cake for dessert.)

Member Name: \_\_\_\_

MACV Team # \_\_\_\_

Spouse Name: \_\_\_\_

Guest Name: \_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to Counterparts and mail to:**

Dave Priddy

31392 Abanita Way

Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

703.627.2109

## XO NOTES

Aloha Advisors, it has been 5 months since our last get together and what a grand time we all had. As always it was an opportunity to meet old friends and greet new members. I am looking forward to our next reunion in LA next year.

This month makes 53 years I ended my deployment with my Seabee Team (1019) in My Tho and stating my extended stay in Vietnam with the Naval Advisory Group. I can't believe it has been that long! I never planned to stay on active duty that long but a rare opportunity came into my lap that I could not resist. I can't recall the exact memo or word of mouth but I somehow heard that they were looking for sailors with a farming background. I went to Saigon and talked with a Navy Chief (Crozier) and he took me in to meet Navy Capt. Walker. He asked me about my farming background and Wham!!! I was part of Admiral Zumwalt's "Pig's and Chicken's program." I left the team a few weeks before the team was to be relived and redeploy back to CONUS. Since leaving Nam I have found via the internet/face book 8 of the 13 members our team, 3 are deceased. The rest my tour will be at a later date.

Like all of us Advisors we all took a different path in Country. For some it was a constant challenge to do our job with limited support and others it may have been a bit less challenging. But we all did our job to the best of our abilities regardless to where we were and what resources were given to us. We were somehow what I would call the un-recognized Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines of the war.

I hope that you like our new SITREP. It now provides a new format on what we can send out to our members. We now can post more Advisors reflections of their experiences and save a lot of money in our mail out. We are updating our Web site to benefit our members more. I was also saddened to hear of CSM Robison's passing. He will sorely be missed by all that knew him. If you have reflections about Ray would please pass them on to our commander.

Be well, safe and see you in LA,

Hank Choy, XO

### ***...And a Special Offer for Members,***

I am COUNTERPARTS member Patrick Gillis, and I was in Vietnam in 1968 in the Delta on MACV team 56 in Can Tho. About 10 years ago I started a collection project of photos and images from Vietnam from fellow veterans. I can preserve the images for all by computer digitizing them for safe keeping and legacy purposes. I am doing this project at no charge. I currently have over 7,000 images from all 4 Corps in my collection. The images date from 1963 to 1973.

If any of you have any slides, pictures, or negatives from your time in Vietnam, and would like to save them permanently as part of your legacy, just let me know. Once completed by me I will send the originals back to you along with a computer flash drive containing all the images you sent me. Please contact me by phone or E-mail, for more information or to further explain the complete process, and if you have questions or concerns.

**Phone 951-533-9769**

**Email: [pgilli20@yahoo.com](mailto:pgilli20@yahoo.com)**

## **RAY J. ROBISON**

Counterparts has lost a deeply admired and respected friend. Ray Robison passed away on 18 April 2024. Ray was an active member and well-known for his heavily-embroidered vest at our annual reunions. Despite severe macular degeneration, Ray planned the 2019 Houston reunion and was well into planning a 2020 Fort Benning reunion that was cancelled due to COVID. In the years to follow, his wife had to read his mail for him. He was a patriot and proud of his army career and his advisor role with the South Vietnamese army, the RD Cadre., and Peoples Self Defense Force. He served five consecutive years as an advisor in Vietnam and would have stayed longer but the most senior officers required him to depart (see Rich Webster's article in this issue). Ray was awarded the Legion of Merit for his advisory work at Advisory Team 66 (Dinh Tuong Province), an extraordinary honor usually presented to far more senior officers. Ray's friendship, professionalism, and patriotism will long be remembered by those of us proud to have known him.



### **Legion of Merit**

#### **CITATION:**

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, 20 July 1942 takes pleasure in presenting the Legion of Merit to Sergeant First Class Ray J. Robison (ASN: RA-19606180), United States Army, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States during the period August 1969 to November 1972, while serving as Assistant Development Advisor, Advisory Team 66, Dinh Tuong Province, Delta Regional Assistance Command, Republic of Vietnam. Sergeant Robison performed with superlative skill a wide range of advisory assignments in the development programs of the Government of Vietnam. He consistently displayed outstanding qualities of leadership, professionalism and technical competence while assisting his ministerial-service counterparts in achieving more effective results in their areas of responsibility. During his lengthy tour of duty Sergeant Robison constantly sought, and was assigned, an increasing number of advisory portfolios. Initially, he served with rare distinction as Advisor to the Rural Development Cadre and the People's Self-Defense Forces. Later he revealed superb ability in managing the province Hamlet Evaluation System program and after conducting arduous training, transferring it to Vietnamese officials. During the final phase of his long tenure, Sergeant Robison assumed advisory responsibility for four more national programs, which he handled with undiluted efficiency. His work style was distinguished by sincerity, a high degree of savoir-faire, and articulate ease. He traveled far and wide in the province, and became an acknowledged authority on hamlet conditions. His unequalled competence and exemplary character earned him the deep respect of senior sector officials, particularly the Province Chief. Sergeant First Class Robison's professional competence and outstanding achievements were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army.

*This interview with Ray Robison was first published in the 2016 SITREP.*

RAY ROBISON; FIVE YEARS A CO VAN IN VIETNAM

By Rich Webster

Sergeant Major Ray Robison spent five straight years in Vietnam as an advisor with our South Vietnamese allies and wanted to serve longer. Asked why he kept extending his tours, he said “My 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 41st Regiment, 22<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Division was attacked early morning on 10 January, 1968, and overrun by the NVA. Two NVA hand grenades were thrown into the command bunker. The first grenade wounded 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Richard Morris, Staff Sergeant Robert Harcum, and Sergeant Gerald Deady. The concussion blew me against the wall of the bunker. The second landed at my feet. Private Do Van Tan, threw himself on that grenade and saved my life and ended his. I felt I had a debt to pay to the Vietnamese people for placing that brave young man in my life at that time.” Private Tan was one of three ARVN soldiers to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross during the Vietnam War.

Ray may be the only enlisted man to be forced out of Vietnam by the supreme commander of all American forces there, General Frederick Weyand.

Ray explains, “In mid 1972 I put in for another extension, but was turned down twice. The Vietnamese province officials asked if they could put my request through Vietnamese channels. Sometime later, Dr Evans, the Senior Advisor of Dinh Tuong Province, told me about a personal call he had with General Weyand. It seems Prime Minister Khiem had gone to him on my behalf. General Weyand evidently took umbrage with the Prime Minister’s request to extend my tour of duty. General Weyand said there is no E-7 in the US ARMY with that kind of clout and not being on the take. He would not listen to Dr Evans. General Weyand said you have 30 days to get that SOB out of Vietnam.”

“It just so happened that my counterpart and Prime Minister Khiem grew up together and were personal friends, so that was my connection. I got kicked out of Vietnam for being too close to the Vietnamese. A while back I visited my counterpart, who is alive and well in Houston, Texas. He spent 14 years in the reeducation camps. Sadly he told me that all of our RD Cadre who did not escape, were summarily executed at the conclusion of the war.”

Ray knew the famous Vietnamese General Le Minh Dao when he was a Colonel and the Province chief in Dinh Tuong Province in 1969. “I was working with the RD Cadre at the time. General Dao Spent 17 years and 5 days in the Reeducation Camps (called revenge camps by the South Vietnamese). I spoke to him on the phone sometime back. General Dao was a bundle of energy and over the years I developed a personal relationship with him. I hated to see him leave the Province but I knew he had bigger and better things ahead for him.”

“I got to Dinh Tuong Province in mid-august 1969 when there was a lot of VC activity in the province. I was wounded a week after I arrived. Before that I was with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 41<sup>st</sup> ARVN Regiment, 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division with people being killed and wounded all around me.”

“I came to the RD Cadre at the turnover between the CIA. I would make the trip to Can Tho and pick up a couple bags of piasters. I wore civilian clothes at the time. My counterpart and I then would meet with Colonel Dao and his finance chief and they would sign for the funds. Since I wore civilian clothes, everyone thought I was CIA. The more I denied it, the more they believed I was.”

Ray spent three & one-half years with the RD Cadre and the PSDF (People’s Self Defense Force). “You could say the RD Cadre was my first name, the PSDF my second. I spent a lot of time sitting in ambushes with fingers crossed hoping that the bad guys didn’t show up. The PSDF were old men and young women, completely outgunned, armed with M1s, carbines, and an occasional BAR up against AK47s and RPGs.”

“When the RD Cadre were in 59 man teams, it was not that difficult to form, arm, and train the local PSDF because they were a formidable security force. By the time we left a village, elections were conducted, there was an armed PSDF and development projects were ongoing. In some cases, the RD Cadre were elected to office and discharged for the duration of their term. Some even married local girls.”

“The RD Cadre were the primary PSDF trainers and we lived in the villages for 6 to 9 months. I had some villages where the women could shoot the pants off of the men. I spent many a night in the villages checking out the local PSDF. Some were fairly competent but others were marginal at best. Their being armed seemed to act as a deterrent. An armed woman defending her kids can be very dangerous”.

A former Viet Minh, Colonel Nguyen Be designed the concept of the teams to combat the propaganda effort of the VC at the local level. Improving the life of the villagers to win them over to the GVN was the primary moving idea behind the teams. One half the team was devoted to security and the other half worked on village projects to improve the life of the villagers/peasants. Ray explains, “The RDC was an effective antidote to communist propaganda and helped win back the villages. General Dao accurately described the communists when he said they poisoned the peasants’ minds.”

Ray explains, “We encouraged *Chieu Hoi* to cross over to the GVN side and also coordinated GVN programs for the disabled, Veterans, welfare payments, and the Land to the Tiller program. The RD cadres were the people’s interface with the CORDS program.”

“Colonel Nguyen Be did a great job of training the Cadre at the Vung Tau training school. He believed the field was the classroom with no set down lectures. As a place to call home and work out of, they had to build a hamlet from scratch. They had specialists on the Cadre knowledgeable in the latest farming techniques. Col Be emphasized that when the RDC were deployed, they were under the control of the village chief and their conduct had to be above reproach. I never met Colonel Be but he was held in high esteem by all Cadre. I served three and one-half years with the RD Cadre, wore civilian clothes, and worked side by side with the civilian CORDS personnel.”

“I thought most of the VC were nationalists but the VCI were hard core communists who did much to agitate the local populace. They ruled by terror. In April 1972 at the beginning of the Easter Offensive, in the village of Vinh Kim, Sam Giang District, they booby trapped the gate to the local school. When two teachers and 20 children opened the gate, they were blown all over the place. I arrived shortly afterwards and it was gruesome.”

“One of the biggest unreported success stories in Vietnam was the” Land to the Tiller” program when the peasants started getting title to their lands, so the attitude towards the South Vietnamese government started to turn favorable.”

Ray has this to say about his Vietnamese Counterparts. “The ARVN former French officers that I dealt with, the captains and lieutenants were very competent. If after 13 years, they hadn’t advanced in rank, it meant they were very good leaders. General Dao loved his fellow soldiers and spent time eating/socializing with all under him down to the private level. He was a great leader and cared for his men. That’s why they fought bravely for him.” General Dao’s 18<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division defeated 3 NVA divisions at the Battle of Xuan Loc in April 1975 before running out of ammunition and supplies.

“Upon my completion of duty with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 41<sup>st</sup> ARVN Regiment, I came to the conclusion that one of the problems with ARVN was there lack of adequate training. I did a tour of duty at the Lam Son National training center for 6 months but that was a mistake. I had experience as a drill sergeant but I discovered that they did not listen to a sergeant. For the most part, the ARVN NCO’s were not held in very high regard and in many cases that translated back to their opinion of the American NCO.”

“I had a strange unexplained incident happen to me while I was assigned to Advisor Team 40 at the Vietnamese Lam Son National Training Center in Duc My. A Special Battalion of Cambodian soldiers wearing the FANK patch on their uniforms showed up for training. First thing the Vietnamese did was take away their weapons. A few nights later, I heard gunfire. The Deputy Senior Advisor said they were under attack and stay out of it. I knew the Cambodians were unarmed so I grabbed a medic and headed to the compound where there were dead and wounded all over. Again I was told to stay out of it. I asked if I was going to be court martialed for giving aid to the Allies.”

“The next day, I walked the perimeter to see where the bad guys had entered. There was nothing-no holes in the fence, no sign of a unit breaking through. Sometime later, I was told that it might have been an ARVN ranger unit, because of their hate for the Cambodians. I was then told very sternly to leave it alone.”

“We fought a different war as advisors. We lived with the Vietnamese, dined with them, fought with them, and in some cases died with them, especially the advisors who served on MAT teams and with Vietnamese infantry units. I even had one Vietnamese soldier die for me.”

“I thought we were winning the war by the time I left in Nov 72. I could drive all over without worry. I often went out to the district headquarters to coordinate with the district team and the ARVN HES officers. I was convinced that we had won, even though there were NVA units in the area. Our *Chieu Hoi* rate had gone way up as the Northerners were treating the local VC like a bunch of crap. I still believe the majority of the VC were tricked by the communists.”

After Ray returned to the US after his 5-year tour of duty, he was awarded the Legion of Merit, an almost unheard of award for a Sergeant First Class. Ray concludes, “I was ashamed of our country for abandoning our South Vietnamese allies. After the War, I avoided any contact with the South Vietnamese and couldn’t look them in the eye because of the way we had abandoned them with Congress cutting off all aid to them.”



**MEDAL OF HONOR  
SERVICE AS ADVISOR TO VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES**

**One in a Series**

**By Colonel John B. Haseman, U.S. Army - Retired**

**Then-First Lieutenant Jack H. Jacobs**

Colonel (retired) Jack Jacobs was commissioned as an infantry officer in 1966 from the ROTC program at Rutgers University.

He served twice in Vietnam, both times as an advisor to ARVN units. He was assistant battalion advisor to 2nd Battalion, 16th Regiment, 9th ARVN Division, Advisory Team in 1968, during which he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions when moving with the battalion's lead company. The unit was ambushed, the Vietnamese leaders wounded and the company became disorganized. Although wounded several times, then-First Lieutenant Jacobs assumed command of the ARVN company, organized an effective defensive position, and repeatedly raced through heavy enemy fire to recover wounded Vietnamese soldiers and his battalion advisory NCO while awaiting medevac flights.

He returned to Vietnam in 1972 as a Captain and sought assignment as an advisor to the ARVN Airborne Division in I Corps (Advisory Team 163). He admitted in his memoir that he used trickery and subterfuge to return to a combat role in Vietnam after being awarded the Medal of Honor, since the army was loathe to assign Medal of Honor recipients to combat roles. He remained senior advisor to the 1st Airborne Battalion, fighting NVA units near the DMZ, until his advisory team was withdrawn in accordance with the peace accords requiring advisors to leave the country by January 1973.

In addition to the Medal of Honor, Jacobs received two Silver Stars, three Bronze Star Medals, and two Purple Hearts for his service in Vietnam.

Jack retired as a Colonel in 1987 and embarked on a successful career in investment banking and finance. He is well known to the public through his frequent on-air television interviews as a military analyst for NBC and MSNBC.



Medal of Honor Society website  
<https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/jack-h-jacobs>

Jack described his life and careers in his memoir *If Not Now, When?: Duty and Sacrifice In America's Time of Need* (Penguin Group, October 2008, co-authored with Douglas Century). He also authored *Basic: Surviving Boot Camp and Basic Training* (Thomas Dunne Books, co-authored with Daniel Fisher, May 2012).

**Citation**

**Presentation Date & Details: October 9, 1969**  
**Presented by Pres Richard M. Nixon**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Capt. Jacobs (then 1st Lt.), Infantry, distinguished himself while serving as assistant battalion adviser, 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam. The 2d Battalion was advancing to contact when it came under intense heavy machine-gun and mortar fire from a Viet Cong battalion positioned in well-fortified bunkers. As the 2d Battalion deployed into attack formation, its advance was halted by devastating fire. Capt. Jacobs, with the command element of the lead company, called for and directed air strikes on the enemy positions to facilitate a renewed attack. Due to the intensity of the enemy fire and heavy casualties to the command group, including the company commander, the attack stopped and the friendly troops became disorganized. Although wounded by mortar fragments, Capt. Jacobs assumed command of the allied company, ordered a withdrawal from the exposed position, and established a defensive perimeter. Despite profuse bleeding from head wounds which impaired his vision, Capt. Jacobs, with complete disregard for his safety, returned under intense fire to evacuate a seriously wounded adviser to the safety of a wooded area where he administered lifesaving first aid. He then returned through heavy automatic-weapons fire to evacuate the wounded company commander. Capt. Jacobs made repeated trips across the fire-swept, open rice paddies, evacuating wounded and their weapons. On three separate occasions, Capt. Jacobs contacted and drove off Viet Cong squads who were searching for allied wounded and weapons, single-handedly killing three and wounding several others. His gallant actions and extraordinary heroism saved the lives of one U.S. adviser and 13 allied soldiers. Through his effort the allied company was restored to an effective fighting unit and prevented defeat of the friendly forces by a strong and determined enemy. Capt. Jacobs, by his gallantry and bravery in action in the highest traditions of the military service, has reflected great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army."

*Jack Jacobs continues to speak out about leadership and the service given to this country by our serving, retired, and deceased military personnel. Two Counterparts members were in the same class as Jack at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1976-1977. Although neither of us were a close friend with him, we do recall him as a humble man who never talked about himself or his personal bravery in combat, but rather the importance of military service and what it brings to our nation. He is one of the few Medal of Honor recipients who were cited for their courage as advisors with, and in support of, our Vietnamese counterparts.*



## **Happiness Is Fixing the Boy's Face**

**By Colonel John B. Haseman, U.S. Army- Retired**

One of the most satisfying programs run by the American medical community during the Vietnam War was surgical repair of children's harelips and cleft palates. Volunteer American doctors came to Vietnam periodically for this project and conducted the surgeries at the U.S. Army 3rd Surgical Hospital in Saigon. In late 1972 I was the District Senior Advisor (DSA) in Hàm Long District, Kiến Hòa Province and I was well-aware of this humanitarian project. Our province senior medic, "Doc," frequently reminded district advisory team members to keep their eyes open for children with this facial deformity -- surgery for younger children was much easier than for older people. Doc managed the program from his post at the Advisory Team 88 province compound in Bến Tre.

In October 1972 during a tactical operation in a heavily VC-influenced area of Phu Tuc Village, near the Mekong River in the northern part of the district, we passed through a scruffy and obviously poor hamlet. As we passed through the hamlet I spotted a young boy with a harelip and cleft palate, standing off by himself at the edge of the hamlet. I did not see any friends around him. When our patrol returned to the district compound I reminded the District Chief, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Nguyen Van Son, about this medical program. I told him that we would be able to help the boy if he would authorize another operation to return to that hamlet and we could persuade the boy's family to let us "borrow" the child. LTC Son immediately agreed. He assigned the District S-5 to plan and command the operation.

I informed Doc by radio about this young prospective patient. He encouraged me to attempt to persuade the boy's parents to let us take the child to Saigon for the surgery. If all went well the DSA (me) would obtain permission from the child's family and transport the boy to Bến Tre. Doc would take the child to Saigon and turn him over to the doctors there. After surgery and a short recovery period, Doc would return to Saigon and bring the child back to Bến Tre, and the district would do the rest.

About a week later the S-5, Lieutenant Do, led Sergeant Bé (my interpreter) and me, with a platoon of Popular Force (PF) soldiers for security, back to that hamlet. After a few questions of residents, a villager showed us the very ramshackle bamboo-and-leaves house where the boy lived with his mother and his blind grandmother -- there was no father at the house. We tried our best to convince the mother that American doctors in Saigon could "fix" the boy's face. If she brought the boy to the district headquarters compound and trusted me, I would take the boy to Bến Tre and entrust him to Doc. In turn, Doc would take him to the hospital in Saigon and bring him back after the surgery.

The hardest part was persuading the family to let the child go with a strange American soldier and trust that we would take good care of him. Most of the time when a Vietnamese of any age went to a hospital, one or more of the family went along as well to help care for, feed, and look after the patient. We made our "pitch" to the mother and then our operational force returned to district headquarters.

Then we waited.

Some time later, I don't remember how long after the meeting with the child's mother, she arrived at the district headquarters with her son. She was clearly worried about turning him over to people she didn't know -- particularly to "the tall American." Lieutenant Do convinced her to trust us, and after considerable conversation, she agreed. The S-5 and I drove her and the boy to Bến Tre, turned the child over to Doc, and took the mother back to Hàm Long.



*The disfigured boy and his family lived in a hamlet in this isolated area of Hàm Long District. The area had been defoliated a few years earlier by the U.S. 9th Infantry Division, using Agent Orange.*





*Lieutenant Do, the District S-5, with Boy and His Mother*



*Close Up: Boy with Facial Deformities*

A few weeks later Doc notified me that the boy was back in Bến Tre. LTC Son quickly arranged a security operation while Sergeant Bé and I went into Bến Tre to pick up Doc and the boy and drive back to Hàm Long. Then we walked with a platoon of PF soldiers to take the boy back to his family.

By then it was obvious to me that the operations to and from the boy's home hamlet had required a lot of security forces each time. Yes, it was a VC-supporting hamlet in a bad area. The big surprise came when Lieutenant Do told me that the boy's father was a senior Vietcong officer. Our multi-agency team had treated the young son of a senior enemy soldier!



*boy with his "new face" after surgery*

*My thoughts, written shortly afterwards:*

*. . . The small boy, aged 11, with the grotesquely deformed harelip and cleft palate. Explaining to his mother and blind grandmother that it can be "fixed." After weeks of waiting, getting permission to take him to Saigon for surgery. The S-5 asking if I knew his father was a senior VC, my surprised reply that I hadn't known and honestly adding that it didn't matter. Then joy when the boy returned with hardly a mark on his face, the tears in the eyes of his blind grandmother when she feels his face with her fingers and "sees" the results.*

This incident has stayed with me for the many years since this all happened in late 1972. I have thought long and hard trying to determine what had gone so well that an American advisor and an ARVN officer were able to convince a senior Vietcong officer and his family to let us take care of his son and arrange life-changing surgery. Now, with the benefit of many friends and colleagues sharing their wartime thoughts with me, I think I've worked out *The* what happened. It had everything to do with the importance of trust.

The mother trusted a strange American with the life of her son. Why? There is no doubt in my mind that she discussed the medical prospects we explained to her with her VC husband. The father then tasked his clandestine sources at the Hàm Long district headquarters for their evaluation of "the tall American." Those clandestine VC supporters probably told a worried father that they trusted the American advisor to do the right thing. It took a couple weeks before the mother brought her son to the district headquarters and turned her son over to me. Wartime communications in a rural Vietnamese district sometimes took time.

There was great trust exhibited in this humanitarian incident. A distraught mother trusted a stranger, "the tall American" as they knew me, with the life of her son. A senior Vietcong officer trusted that his enemy would not betray them by harming their son. We all trusted that western medicine would make a big difference in the child's future life.

I think I won a few hearts and minds as a result.

No advisor could succeed without trust.

## Memories of Team 31

Jim O'Malley

*(This is the second part of COUNTERPARTS member Jim O'Malley's story of his Vietnam experience. More will follow in future issues)*

*...the Editors*

Some of my more interesting mission related incidents happened when I was chosen to remain in camp. The most memorable was a two company operation accompanied by a Captain whose name I can't remember, Lt. Polston, and our American RTO. I was staying by the radio almost without break because they were going down by Calui where we had never gone before. The Captai. called and said they were in contact and were going to need air support ASAP. Before I could even get contact with province he called back and said in a kind of funny voice that I should wait a minute he had to check something. I was really puzzled because I could hear the rifle fire over the radio when he called me the first time. He called back and said to cancel the air support but they needed medevac for about 10 wounded. Now I was really confused, but I called the medevac and got them on the way.

The Capt. finally called back and said that the two friendly companies has mistaken each other for VC and had begun shooting. This seemed odd to me since where they were the Yards were quite familiar with the area. As time went on I found that all the wounded were Vietnamese soldiers from our artillery and HQ units. No Montagnards or Americans were even scratched. Knowing what we knew about the relationship between the two groups maybe this wasn't as accidental as we thought. Nothing that I know of was ever said or done about the "accidental" contact. Maybe they didn't want another revolution.

The trouble had just begun, unfortunately. The medevac had to use jungle penetrators to get through the jungle to the wounded and after they had gotten about half of them out the VC showed up. Needless to say the pucker factor went up. A fire fight broke out and the medevac took what they had and left. It was starting to get dark and they said the area was too hot to come back. The Capt. said that the badly wounded were out and the rest could walk or be helped out. I was coordinating artillery. Our guys finally broke contact and figuring things weren't going to get better since we figured this was a heavy VC area, made a run for camp getting in about 2AM. The Capt told me that I deserved a lot of the credit for their safety because I never panicked and remained calm on the radio and got everything done, he said it gave them confidence that they would be OK. I don't know whether I helped or not I hope so but at least all our guys got back safely.

There were other Vietnamese- Montagnard incidents. One Sunday I was taking what we called "Pot Time", the afternoon nap that the whole country seemed to take. About an hour into my nap shooting broke out like nothing I had heard in the field or camp. The firing was obviously inside the camp. I thought how the hell did they get into camp with no one even raising the alarm? A couple of bullets went through my hooch up high near the roof, so I grabbed my M16 and as many magazines as I could carry and low crawled out of my hooch into a mortar pit right outside the door. As I peeked over the edge one of the artillery VNs waved at me and said no sweat then let off a magazine of M16, not at me but kind of up in the air. It turned out that the HQ VNs were holding the artillery's VN commander hostage over something to do with somebody's girlfriend. The day before I remembered a couple of VN getting in a pretty good fight out by the air strip so I figured the two must be connected.

In the middle of all this the artillery fired a round. Soon after, a lady had run into the compound and said that the artillery round had killed a Montagnard woman. This immediately changed everyone's demeanor. The VNs forgot their dispute and were formed up in a defensive perimeter that overlapped the American part of the compound and every Yard and every gun including the 50s were pointing in. We were one shot away from a

massacre, and who knows how many would be hurt. I knew if I didn't do something this was going to be a chapter in the history books and the outcome would not be positive. I think I was senior in the compound. There may have been one other officer there but if he was I was sure he was hiding since he had panicked a few other times under a lot less grave circumstances than this. I grabbed the reluctant interpreter and since everything was quiet said something like hold on, or wait a minute, or don't shoot me. I figured neither side would start the party by shooting an American. I got between the Yards and the VNs and got the Yard commander to go with me outside. We determined that the artillery round was a smoke round, still no small thing at point blank range and it had indeed hit near the woman, however it only scared her, she jumped into a nearby draw that went down to the river and took off. All the people that saw the round from inside the compound saw was she was there, then there was a boom and smoke then she wasn't so they thought she was a goner.

Once we determined she was alive a very tense truce ensued. For maybe a month after that the Americans were the only ones that could move freely around the compound. The VNs set up separate compounds with concertina wire and full time guards and since the Yards hated them anyway they were afraid they might take advantage of the situation to "accidentally" knock off a few VNs. I don't remember what finally brought things back to normal but I think our head guys from Cheo Reo got together, there was some kind of meeting and everything got back to just tense like it always was. At least all the compounds within the compound were dismantled.

A lot of my more exciting experiences were in various types of air transportation. I never thought about why all the planes I flew on had civilian American pilots until one day someone outside the Highlands was bragging about how he got to fly with Air America. My response was how else do you get around. He then told me that Air America was CIA. That explained a few things and made sense of some things that were yet to come.

One day I needed to go to Nah Trang. I choppered to Cheo Reo and went out to the air field to wait for the AA DC 3. Pretty soon this two engine turbo prop plane landed and a couple of civilian pilots got out with an Army 1LT. They took off in a jeep and when they came back I discovered that they were going to Nha Trang also. They asked me if I had a secret clearance, I said I did, they said get on we'll take you to Nha Trang. Once on board I found the route to Nah Trang went through Ban Me Thout, where we landed in to a welcoming committee of no one. There was no one anywhere which needless to say was nervousness inducing. The pilot said we were low on gas, and when he got out he checked the wind and said we really needed gas since we had a head wind. We waited about 15 minutes and he said lets go. I said "gas?". He said don't worry about it. I couldn't figure what had changed since no one ever showed up so I knew we hadn't invented more gas, but my choices were limited. if I stayed I would be alone and unarmed. So I got back on the plane.

I can count between 5 and 10 times in Viet Nam where with just a little bad luck my name would be on the Memorial. This was to be one of them.

We took off and immediately were in the soup. We broke out into the sunshine but soon I could see the pilots tapping gauges and talking to each other in hushed tones. I don't know much about airplanes, outside of plenty of gas is a good thing, but soon they started turning handles I assume were gas tank controls and one of the motors almost quit. I figured well this was it no one would ever know how in the world I managed to die in a secret CIA crash when I wasn't even supposed to be there. Maybe it would just be one of those generic announcements. It even crossed my mind that since we were over the mountains they might not even find the wreck, and no one would ever know what happened to me.

Just about when I figured we were done an opening appeared in the clouds and through the clouds was the Nah Trang runway. We made a downwind approach with the pilot yelling on the radio we were coming in clear every one out. We landed and ran out of gas just as we got to the terminal.

Another day I was heading to Cheo Reo on another unremembered task. Half way there I noticed something wet on the floor. I put my finger in it and took a whiff. Smelled like kerosene. I am no flying machine expert but I do know that helicopter fuel smelled like kerosene and it was much more useful in the tank than flowing across the floor. I slapped the gunner in the face with my kerosene soaked ed hand and pointed at



the floor. Once again I observed an air crew member suddenly turning pale. He got on the radio to the pilot and we made the quickest decent I ever saw from 2500' to ground.

I had heard that all planes in Viet Nam had a "come help me" button. This must have been true in our case since within minutes of landing we had about 10 various aircraft overhead. We investigated the leak and found a container of something that was leaking. Don't know if it was JP4 or not but it was thrown away post haste. I told the pilot since we were in possible VC territory maybe it might be a good idea to get the hell out of Dodge. He replied that it hurt the motors if they got started up too soon. I asked which was better a hurt motor or an RPG into the helicopter. Guess even a pilot could understand that logic since he fired up and away we went.

The compound sometimes was more dangerous than the field. One night we were sitting around drinking beer and playing cards when the team house door opened and in walked a Yard I didn't recognize. In his hand he held a Chi Com grenade. It looked about 2' tall, it was big but probably not that big, situational awareness and all. We, trying not to make any sudden moves, asked one of the interpreters to ask him what the deal was. The guy said he had found it and wanted to turn it in. We said well thank you very much but how about taking it outside and putting it on the other side of the sand bags which he did. One of the 740 troops took it somewhere but it showed how vulnerable we were to an attack.

*(this ends the second installment of Jim O'Malley's account of his time in Vietnam. Watch future issues of SITREP for more)*

*.....the Editors*

### ***New Map Index Being Completed***

***By***

***Jim Alkek, Webmaster***

In September I will add a Map Index to the website that will link to expandable topographic maps of Vietnam (RVN and DRV) and the border regions of China, Cambodia and Laos.

The Map Index will allow searches by Map Sheet Number, Country, Province, Districts and a few cities and towns. Each search may also be sorted in alphabetical order by Country, Province, Districts and Map Sheet Number.

For example, you may search by the Province Name and all the maps will be listed that contain that Province name. Eventually, after the smaller cities and towns are listed, you will be able search for example, An Loc, to get all the other maps that mention the town.

The 1964-1971 topographic map files (mostly PDF files) are stored at the University of Texas Library in the PCL Maps Collection-Vietnam. The Map Index links directly to each map sheet.

To enhance the usefulness of the maps to Vietnam Veterans, I am also building a Province/District Reference that will allow you to search by using the 1968 Vietnam Province or District Names to get to the correct 2023 Province or District location.

This will allow you to find locations regardless of changes made over the years to the Provinces and Districts. The changes by the DVR included name changes, boundary changes, additions of new Provinces and Districts, deletions of Provinces and Districts, and restoration of Provinces and Districts, which weren't always the quite same as the original.

I selected the 1968 Map of South Vietnam because it lists all the Districts for each province, shows the Corps areas and displays the autonomous city/areas ( Saigon, Hue, Da Nang, Da Lat, Vung Tau and Cam Ranh ).

*Please visit the new map pages on the [Counterparts.net](http://Counterparts.net) website and try a few searches. Let me know if it worked or didn't work for you.*



