

Museum News

February 2012



Museum Acquires LVTP-5



The orange thing in the picture is a 100 ton crane. It places the 35 ton LVTP-5A1 gently into position near the Visitor Center (see picture on back page). The LVTP is a Landing Vehicle Tracked Personnel and it was used in Vietnam exclusively by Marines. It has a Continental V-12 engine.

It needs a little work and we'll be designing a garden (tentatively called the Semper Fi Garden) with the LVTP as the centerpiece. We're looking for a few good men (and women) who are interested in seeing this garden become a show place for honoring the Marines. Volunteer, donate funds, or both. More information will follow in future newsletters as we put together the plan and the budget. Who wants to help? Contact Jim Messinger at 940-452-1470 or jmessinger@wc.edu and lets get started.

Founders Association

Last issue we noted that there were 94 members of the founders association, and we suggested that you should help us get that number up to 100. Yay! We broke 100 early in December and the final count as this issues goes to press is 103. Our current Board Vice President, Bill Kane, slid in at 101 and will lead us into the next centennial. We can make it to 200 this year if everyone will talk to their friends and help get the ball rolling.

Here's the list of new members: **Laurie Mauldin; The Payne Family; Mike & Janet Holland; Lacy, Brian, & Mary Jo Watson; JoAnn Barnhart; Richard Barth; Bill & Carol Kane; John Choat; Don & Wanda Rusher & Family.**

Interesting Opportunity

Recently we were contacted by Ryan Phillips, ryanphillips29@hotmail.com; 801-599-0884.

Ryan's company has acquired a silver (999) statue replica of the three soldiers memorial statue. It is approximately 18 inches tall. He asked if we had a suggestion for a resting place for the statue, and I offered to check with all of you to see if anyone had an interest. Of course the museum would love to have it but at the current price of silver, it is out of our reach. If anyone is interested in a one of a kind piece, this is surely it. Contact Ryan via e-mail or phone if you are interested. There were only two created.

Update the Wall June 2, 2012

Reserve your seats for this years event by donating \$50 for each seat that you want reserved. Reserved seats will be in the front row (first come first served) until filled, then seats will be reserved in the second row and so on. Kimo Williams will performing this year after the update. He will be on stage in the afternoon for his presentation Me, My Music, and My M-16. In the evening he will return for a musical show with the Tarleton State University Ultra Club Big Band as his backup.

There will be an admission charge for both shows, but come to the update and plan to stay for the evening show. Details will be mailed later in the year. We expect the presentation Me, My Music and My M-16 to take place starting around 3:00 pm (1500 for you military types) and the musical performance about 7:00 pm.

Kimo Williams is a Vietnam Veteran who served with the 25th Combat Engineer Battalion in Lai Khe. An Army entertainment service director heard him playing guitar and suggested that he form a band to entertain the troops. More next issue.

Audited Financials

Audited results are in for 2010; shown here:

Total income for 2010 – \$879,353

Expenses

Total \$204,105

Program – \$190,232

Fundraising - \$5,555

Administrative – \$8,318

End of Year Net Assests – \$1,291,138

Program Expense Ratio 93% (Goal > 65%)

Fundraising Expense Ratio 1% (Goal < 35%)

NOTES-

1. Administrative expenses remain low as we are an all volunteer project and have no paid employees.
2. Fundraising expenses remain low as we focus on face to face fundraising.

The Battle of Fire Support Base Burt

Extracted from “Vietnam War
Paintings” by James Davis Nelson
Conclusion

This time instead of just a few harassing rounds of fire, there came a relentless rain of explosions and hot, jagged steel. As the bombardment began, the three man listening post one hundred meters out in front of our perimeter called in a report of massive movement all around them and then silence ... this was the last radio contact we would have from them.

Fifteen minutes into the shelling, the M-60 machine gun positioned at my left most bunker opened fire with a fury. As I looked out the ground level firing port of my command post, trip flares began popping to my front like popcorn, washing the jungle in a sea of white light. The foliage transformed into a moving wall of humanity a thick as any mob of shoppers in the mall the day before Christmas. In an instant, my middle bunker immediately in front of me went up in an explosion and the firing enemy soldiers poured through the gap the way a mighty races through a failed levee, engulfing everything in its path. As they swarmed over us, screaming and firing wildly into the night, some would stop and try to enter our bunkers from the rear only to be met with a frantic hail of gunfire from the defenders inside.

All defensive integrity of the perimeter in my sector was gone. Each of my remaining four bunkers had become an isolated pocket of American resistance fighting for their lives, firing in every direction. There was no way to approach them. Sine I was the only one in my CP who clearly knew the location of the Company command bunker, I instructed SSG Beebe to take charge. I told my RTO, David “Smitty” Smith, to leave his radio, grab his weapon, bandoleers of ammo and some “frags” and follow me.

As we crawled out of the safety of the bunker, we entered a world of darkness punctuated with bright flashes, red and green trails of tracer bullets zipping and cracking everywhere around us. The acrid smell of cordite singeing our nostrils and choking our every breath. Trying to avoid de-

tection we only fired at the enemy soldiers that trampled over us as their hordes rushed to the interior of the base. In spite of the confusion, our gunfire marked our position and the ground around us erupted in a hail of bullets from a nearby Chi-Com assault rifle.

Smitty called out "Hey, there's a hole over here!" In the darkness, he had recalled crawling through a shallow depression about four inches in depth a few feet to our rear. Oval shaped, it was large enough for us to lie on our stomachs and intertwine our legs. Smitty facing one direction and I the other, we engaged an unseen enemy that zeroed in on our position. In an instant, with a blinding flash and a thunderous concussion, the night stopped ... the only sensation was that of a great fire in my right leg, dirt in my mouth and nose, and the deafening ringing in my ears. Then there was nothing

From the depths of nothingness a distant rumble was detected. As though a volume control knob was being turned, the noise came closer and louder. As my mind's confusion began to clear, I felt a new sensation: Something was bouncing off my leg. The noise hammering in my ears made me realize that it was machine-gun fire. Spent cartridges were bouncing off my leg with every burst of fire. The VC were using me for cover like some fallen log! I lay motionless as in death, trying to conceal the beating of my heart, the function of my lungs.

My left arm was trapped under my body and it lost all sense of function. Feeling the presence of at least two enemy soldiers my mind searched for a plan of action. The cacophony of the battle raged on. This time a new sound was added; the impact of incoming artillery rounds. We must have had to call in artillery on our own positions. All sense of time was lost. Somewhere in that timeless state, playing dead, wondering if for the moment, I was the only American alive. I waited to die.

I listened intently for sounds of life and movement around me. Cautiously, I slowly moved my head ... nothing but the raging sounds of war. In the darkness I slowly surveyed my surroundings: Dead enemy, my helmet, my weapon, and Smitty's cold lifeless body.

I crawled in the direction that I hoped would be toward my platoon command post. Although bullets continued to fly everywhere, there weren't any NVA in my path. Stopping a short distance from the silhouette I recognized to be my bunker, I watched and listened for clues that might tell me who occupied it. M-16 rifle fire was coming from it but I couldn't be sure if it was coming from GIs or VC. From a position of cover, rifle ready to lay down fire, I verbally challenged the hole with our predetermined emergency password. Thank God, I heard SSG Beebe's voice in reply. I identified myself and scrambled to safety.

The platoon medic was wounded but stable. Jimmy Pierce, the other RTO was okay. Unknown to SSG Beebe at the time, he had taken a flechette through the stomach. By the time we had covered and reestablished all five bunkers, I had counted six Missing In Action, including the three men out on the listening post. During the reorganization at dawn, the NVA melted back into the jungle. Through the smoke that covered the land in the morning, I found my three missing men, away from their positions, dead on the battlefield.

As the dustoff flights were taking men out, I remember sitting on a log looking at the six poncho covered bodies of the men I lost that night. My tears streamed down my grimy cheeks at the loss of such fine men. Somewhere a chaplain appeared, placed his arm across my shoulder, and assured me it was all right to let it out.

As I made my way to one of the last dustoff birds out, I was eager to lift off and leave that place forever. The night before we had been a platoon of 29 men. That morning there were six KIAs, 16 wounded, and seven left in the field to be the 3rd Platoon of Charlie Company, 3/22 infantry.

Lieutenant Adkins is featured in this painting as he lays trapped beneath an enemy machine-gun. The National Vietnam War Museum owns the original painting completed in Vietnam.



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The LVTP-5 sits just to the west of the Visitor Center awaiting restoration and a garden to be built around it.

Picture courtesy of Jim Messinger

