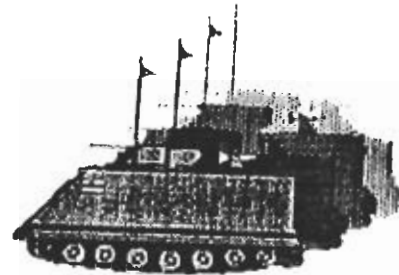




1ST BATTALION (MECHANIZED) 50TH INFANTRY

" ON THE RIGHT TRACK "



VOLUME NUMBER 1 -- DATED 07 DECEMBER 1997 -- ISSUE NUMBER 07

FROM THE  
EDITOR'S DESK...



HERE COME'S SANTA...

I hope everyone has most of their shopping done by now, especially the buying of MY Christmas Gift. However, let us all not forget what the true meaning of Christmas is as that day approaches. Let us also not forget our POW/MIA's at this time of the year and say a prayer for their safe return. Later in the newsletter, you will find a poem which I "borrowed" from a fellow veteran on the Internet. I found it very amusing since it seems to hit the truth in our times. "Politically correct" all the time may appease the "war gods", however, it seems to take the meaning away from so many things. But, as my daughter says, "Dad, get with the times, this is the Nineties." Oh, for the "Good ole Days" again. Scary when you think about that: Twenty years from now, they will be calling today the "Good ole Days."

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Each newsletter will feature a brief history of the battalion members.

This month's spotlight is on a newcomer to the association. He was with Bravo Company and arrived in country on the USS Pope. Darrel Sourwine served as a Lieutenant, assigned to Captain Guthrie's unit. After leaving the country, Darrel pulled many assignments with the Army until his release in 1973. Darrel now is an instructor at Fort Lee VA in the Army Logistics Management College. Darrel resides in Virginia.

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New Infantryman to his commanding Officer:

"Sir!" "Where is my foxhole, Sir!"

The officer's reply:

"Soldier, you are standing on it right now. Just throw the dirt out of it."

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- 1. Vietnamese merchants and bar girls called us this when we would not pay their exorbitant prices. What was that?

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EDITOR'S PAGE  
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AMERICA'S VETERANS ARE BEING SOLD OUT...

The budget proposed by the President and passed by the house and senate calls for the deepest cuts ever in veteran's benefits.

It means hundreds of thousands of disabled and needy veterans will be denied the proper health care.

It means cuts ... including permanent cuts ... in compensation for service-connected disabled veterans.

It means cuts in pensions of the poorest and neediest veterans.

It means slashing needed funding for VA hospitals and freezing appropriations at that level for the next five years.

Yet, the budget deal calls for billions of dollars in spending for new programs ... programs being paid for at the expense of veterans who served and sacrificed in defense of America.

Congress still has a chance to do what is right: Support full federal funding for veteran's programs. Honor existing commitments before new ones are made. Please don't sell out the American veterans, Congress! The only people who can help us now are the members of the House and Senate Appropriations' committees. If you are a constituent of one the members listed below, please call the phone number and remind them of America's commitment to our veterans.

Thank you for your support

Senate Appropriations Committee

VA-HUD and Independent Agencies Subcommittee

Christopher S Bond, Chair; MO	(202) 224-5721
Conrad Burns; MT	(202) 224-2644
Ted Stevens; AK	(202) 224-3004
Richard C Shelby; AL	(202) 224-5744
Ben Nighthorse Campbell; CO	(202) 224-5852
Larry E Craig; ID	(202) 224-2752
Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member; MD	(202) 224-4654
Patrick J Leahy; VT	(202) 224-4242
Frank R Lautenberg; NJ	(202) 224-4744
Tom Harkin; IA	(202) 224-3553



House Appropriations Committee

VA-HUD and Independent Agencies Subcommittee

Jerry Lewis, Chair; CA	(202) 225-5861
Tom Delay; TX	(202) 225-5951
James T Walsh; NY	(202) 225-3870
David Hobson; OH	(202) 225-4324
Joseph Knollenberg; MI	(202) 225-5802
Rodney Frelinghuysen; NJ	(202) 225-5034
Mark Neumann; WI	(202) 225-3031
Roger Wicker; MS	(202) 225-4306

There may be additional members to these committees that I am not aware of. If so; please forward their names and phone numbers to the editor for insertion into the next newsletter. Any numbers or names that are incorrect, please pass that info on to the editor also.

2. What were you said to be in when you got yourself in trouble?

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LETTERS AND NEWS FROM THE GUYS  
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*Where Friends Meet*

Heard from several more guys the past three months.

On a very sad note, I heard from Lt Col Cheney Bertholf, the battalion commander during most of 1968. His wife, Alice, of 48 years, passed away on 16 June 1997. We extend our deepest sympathy to him in this time of sadness.

Had a call from David Lynch from Oregon. He would like to see some of the early history of the battalion in the newsletter since he arrived in country after the original boat people had mostly left. David, I will talk with our historian, Mike Deal, and see if we can get history pages finished so I can include some in each newsletter.

Received a call from Matt Morrison in November. He wanted to check out what was upcoming and asked about the next reunion. He expressed his regrets about missing the last one. Oh well, Matt: we will see you in KC if not sooner.

Been getting a bunch of e-mail from the fellows out there who are on-line. If anyone wishes to e-mail these guys, check the directory of e-mail addresses. If you don't know the "other fellow," drop him a line and welcome him home. You might be surprised to find a new friend.

Got a note from Dick Guthrie: He checked on Col Hutson, our first battalion commander. Seems Mr Hutson died three years ago. Sorry! Was hoping to talk to him before he passed away.

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FOR ANYONE THAT IS "ON-LINE", WE NOW HAVE A "HOME PAGE."

Please take the time to check it out every so often. The address for this new service to the Ichaban troopers is:

<http://web2.airmail.net/npage/1st50th>

Another good source of information is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund section. You can reach that at: <http://www.vvmf.org>

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An article from the "Bits and Pieces" magazine:

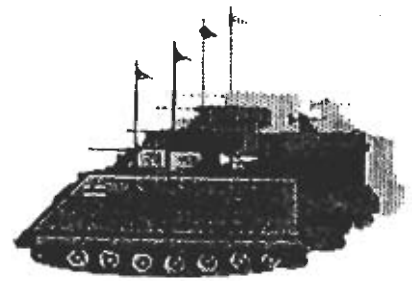
We can't all be heros ... Someone has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by.

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Several notes: Next month I will be sending out a new Directory of listings. Please gentlemen, check over the original directory plus each newsletter and verify the information I have about you is correct. If it is not, send me revised information by 30 December 1997, so I may correct the new Directory prior to its release. ALSO, GENTLEMEN; YOUR 1998 DUES ARE NOW PAYABLE. Please remit to address on editor page prior to the end of this year. Thank You!!!

3. Women of the American persuasion were always called what?

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A CHRISTMAS POEM  
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'Twas the night before Christmas and Santa's a wreck,  
How to live in a world that is politically correct?  
His workers no longer would answer to "Elves."  
"Vertically Challenged" they called themselves.  
And labor conditions up at the North Pole,  
Were alleged by the union to stifle the soul.  
Four reindeer had vanished, with out much propriety,  
Released they were to the wild by the Humane Society.  
And equal employment had made it quite clear,  
That Santa had better not use just reindeer.  
So Dancer and Donner, Comet and Cupid,  
Were replaced with pigs; that looked stupid!  
And the runners had been removed from his sleigh,  
The ruts caused were termed dangerous by the E.P.A.  
And people had started to call for the cops,  
When they heard sled noises on their roof tops.  
And to show you the strangeness of life's ebbs and flows,  
Rudolf filed suit over the unauthorized use of his nose.  
And had gone on Geraldo in front of the nation,  
Demanding millions in over-due compensation.  
So half of the reindeer were gone, and his wife,  
Who suddenly said she had enough of that life.  
Joined a self-help group and left in a whiz,  
Demanding from now on that her title was Ms.  
And as for the gifts, he never had any notion,  
That making a choice would cause such a commotion.  
Nothing of leather and nothing of fur,  
Which meant nothing for him, and nothing for her.  
Nothing that might even begin to pollute,  
Nothing you could aim and nothing to shoot.  
Nothing that clamored or made lots of noise,  
Nothing for just girls and nothing for just boys.  
No candy or sweets; they were bad for the tooth,  
Nothing that seemed to embellish the truth.  
And fairy tales, while not yet forbidden,  
were like Ken and Barbie; better off hidden.  
No baseball, no football; someone might get hurt,  
Besides, playing sports exposed the kids to dirt.  
Dolls were said to be sexist; and should be passe,  
And Nintendo would just rot your entire brain away.  
So Santa stood there, disheveled and perplexed,  
He just could not figure out what to do next.  
He tried to be merry, he tried to be gay,  
But he had to be careful with that word today.  
His sack was quite empty, limp to the ground,  
Nothing fully acceptable was to be found.  
Something special was needed, a gift that he might  
Give to all without angering the left or the right.  
A gift that would satisfy with no indecision,  
Each group of people and every religion.  
So here is that gift, it's price beyond worth...  
"May you and your loved ones enjoy peace on earth "



4. What were all of our buddies called while in "Nam?"



#####  
 MISCELLANEOUS  
 #####



I have been trying to track down a source to copy (color prints) the pictures taken at the reunion with little success. The cheapest rates I have received to date have been \$.65 per copy. Considering we need a minimum of 125 copies of each set of eight prints (I have 16 sets), the cost is provocative. Any one with suggestions or contacts out there?

5. Why did all GI's want to buy a car when they got home, but hoped that they would never buy a farm?

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 REUNION UPDATES  
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Plans are going forward for the 1999 Kansas City Reunion. If you are considering going, even though it is a ways off right now, just keep this in mind, it was two years ago that I originally contacted some of you about having the one in Alexandria VA. I am compiling a list right now of potential reunion goers. Guess who is first on the list?

1. KENNETH G RILEY - CHARLIE COMPANY '67 - '68

+++++  
 THE OFFICER'S CORNER  
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FROM YOUR CHAPLAIN:

Hello! I guess by now, if you are like me, you are back home and settled back into the every day routine. The reunion, like the time we spent in service together, now seems to have only been a dream.

My hope is that each person at the reunion enjoyed it as much as I did. My hat goes off to Kenneth for the fantastic job he did, along with, I'm sure, a lot of help from his wife. Thanks from the bottom of my heart to both of you.

For those who did not make it to Alexandria, there is no way I can describe what you missed. But in two years, you will have another chance at Kansas City Missouri. Please plan on attending this reunion.

As your chaplain, I have several duties which I will be more than glad to perform, but I would like to hear from everyone by letter or phone, (573-448-3707) anytime, good news or bad, I will try my best to serve you.

As for my message to you for this newsletter, it is as follows:

God was with us before our experience together,  
 God was with us during our experience together.  
 God is with us now. My prayer is that we all realize this.  
 May God Bless.

Toby Jordan, Chaplain

6. After a napalm strike, the bodies were referred to as what breakfast cereal?



## "WHAT IS A VETERAN?"

As veterans, we can walk with pride in our hearts and strength in our souls because we have all walked the walk and paid a price for our patriotism and devotion to our country. Many of us are still paying that price. We served our country with honor. We did not run away. We did not hide within the system and shirk our duty as Americans. We did what we had to, and DAMNIT, WE DID IT WELL. Without the sacrifice made by veterans, this great republic of ours would not enjoy the liberties so many Americans, especially the youth, take for granted.

A friend and fellow veteran is a professor at a college. He can not work full time because of injuries received. Several weeks ago, he e-mailed me to let me know he had to have an operation. Several days ago, he e-mailed an update of his condition and it did not sound good.

BUT! He sent this along and I think we all will hear ourselves in these words. He asked a night class of adults to write an answer to this question:

## "WHAT IS A VETERAN?"

THIS WAS ONE ANSWER ...

Veterans are men and they are women. They are dead or alive. They are whole or maimed, they are sane or haunted. They learned from their experiences or they were destroyed by them. Sometimes, they struggle to find a place in between. They lived through hell or had a pleasant adventure. Veterans were Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, Red Cross, civilians of all sorts. Some of them enlisted to fight for God and Country, and a lot of them were drafted. Some were gung-ho, and some went kicking and screaming.

Like veterans of all wars, they lived a tab-bit or a great deal closer to death than people like to think about. If Vietnam Veterans differ from others, perhaps it is because some never recognized their enemy. They heard gunfire and mortars but they rarely looked into the enemies eyes. Those that did are haunted for life by those eyes, those sounds, those fears that ran between themselves, the enemy, and the likelihood of death for one of them. Or they got hard, calloused, tough. Veterans were crazies dressed in cammo, wide-eyed, homeless and drunk. Or they wore Brooks Brothers suits, and were doing million dollar deals downtown. They were housewives, or they were college professors who engaged in the pursuit of the truth on the history of their experience. They were sleepless. Often very sleepless.

They pushed paper; or they pushed shovels. They drove jeeps or bulldozers. They built bridges, toted machine guns through dense brush or deep paddies. They lived on buffalo milk, fish heads, and rice. Or they ate C-rations. Or steak and budweiser. They did their time in the high mountains drenched by endless monsoon rains or on the dry plains or on muddy rivers, or at the most beautiful beach in the world.

They wore berets, bandanas, flop hats, or they wore steel pots. They got shots constantly but still got diseases nobody could diagnose. They spent nights on cots or shivering in foxholes filled with waist high water or lying on cold wet ground, their eyes imagining Charlie behind every bamboo blade. Or they slept in hotel rooms in Saigon or in the barracks in Thailand or in cramped ship's berths at sea.

They feared they would die and they feared they would kill. They simply feared, and often they still do. They hate the war or believe it was the best thing that ever happened to them. They blame Uncle Sam for every wart or cough or bump they have. They often wonder if Agent Orange got them.

"WHAT IS A VETERAN?" (Continued)

Mostly ... and this veteran's believe with all their heart ... mostly, they wish they had not been so alone. Some of them went as a unit; but most were civilians one day, jerked out of "the world," shaved, barked at, insulted, humiliated, and taught to kill, to fix radios, or to drive trucks. But they went, put in their time, and then they were ungraciously plucked out of there and put back into the real world. They smoke pot or they drink beer. Or they attend church services almost everyday. Their wives seem so distant and strange. Their friends want to know how often they had killed someone.

And life goes on, as if they hadn't even been there, as if Vietnam was a topic of political conversation or college protest, not a matter of life and death for so many thousands.

Vietnam Veterans are just like you. They served their country, proudly or reluctantly. What makes them different... what makes them Vietnam Veterans ... is something they understand, but they are afraid that nobody else does.

Veterans are white, or they are black, or beige. Their ancestors came from Africa, from Europe, from China. Or they crossed the Bering Sea Land Bridge during the last Ice Age. They formed the American Indians, they built pyramids in Mexico, or they farmed corn along the Chesapeake Bay. They were named Rodriguez or Stein or Smith or even Kowalski. They were American, Australian, Canadian or Korean. They were farmers, students, mechanics, steelworkers, or priest when the call came that changed them forever. They were sons, daughters, lovers, poets, convicts or lawyers. They were rich or they were poor; but mostly poor. They were educated or not; but mostly not. They grew up in the slums, in duplexes or bungalows, houseboats and ranchers.

Many never saw combat. They waited at home for those they loved. For some, their worst fears were realized: that knock on the door announcing the loss of a loved one, a flag-draped coffin, the color guard, the rifle volley's, the sound of taps being played in the background, the carefully folded flag, and the words, "On behalf of a grateful country..."

For others, their loved ones came back, but they would never be the same. They came home and marched in protest, shrieked their anger for all to hear. Or they sat alone in small rooms, or in VA hospitals, or they went to places where only the crazy go. They were Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, Buddhists or Atheists. Though even the atheists prayed to get out of there alive.

Veteran's were hungry or they were full. They were full of life or they were clinging to death. They were injured, they were the curers. They were loved or they were lost. They got too old too quick, or they never grew up. They want desperately to go back, to heal their wounds, to revisit the sites of their horror. Or they never want to see the place again, to bury it, its memories, its meaning. They want to forget or they wish they could remember.

Despite their differences, veterans have so much in common. There are few of them who don't know how to cry, though they often do it alone so nobody will ask, "What's wrong?" They are afraid they might have to answer. During the Vietnam War, peaceniks such as Jane Fonda said those who fought were baby killers. Upon returning home, some veterans were spit on, abused, and in some cases accused of being yellow bellies who lost the war.

I am sure the Fonda's of America are now sorry they attacked these young men and women who fought and died so bravely for their country at the orders of their president. Just as I am sure the millions of Bill Clintons who did not do their duty now regret that decision.



"WHAT IS A VETERAN?" (Continued)

For the infantry grunt, Vietnam may have been America's toughest war. For most ... unless they went out in a body bag or on a litter ... Vietnam meant 365 tormented days where contact was eminent from hit and run opponents who fought from the shadows, and every time the veteran took a step, they didn't know if a mine would take their foot, their leg, or their life.

Hear this people! Have no doubt that our Vietnam Veteran fought well and stood tall. That bad war was not lost because of them, but because of lousy leadership and bad politicians.

So! If you want to know what a Vietnam Veteran is; get in your car, or bus, or board a train, or plane, and go to Washington. Go to the Wall. There will be dozens ... no, hundreds there. Watch them. Listen to them. Come touch the wall with them. Rejoice a bit. Cry a bit. NO! Cry a lot. I will. I am a Vietnam Veteran; and after 30 years, I am beginning to understand what that means.