



The HARD CHARGER

May 2013

Comments from the President

John Dynes

On Friday, March 29th, on the anniversary year of the “conclusion” of hostilities, Fort Sill held a Vietnam Veterans Welcome Ceremony for those who served during the conflict. *(While the United States continued to provide logistical support for the South Vietnamese, military involvement was effectively ended in 1973 by the Case-Church Amendment. That piece of legislation required that the President get congressional approval for further use of military force in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, a scenario that doomed the Vietnamese to defeat in 1975.)* The Ceremony was intended in part to recognize the fact that unlike the reception given our troops returning from the wars in the Middle East, we Vietnam vets enjoyed no such welcome. Several of our association members were able to attend the event, and their reports follow in this issue of the newsletter.

Our 20th Annual Reunion starts next month in Fort Collins, Colorado. Fort Collins, as previous issues of the newsletter have pointed out, is one of the gateway cities to the Rocky Mountains and will provide a scenic and entertaining base for our assembly. While a number of our “stalwarts” will not be able to attend, only a few seem to be related to physical ills as opposed to travel issues and scheduling conflicts. But those who do make it will enjoy the company of our “Band of Brothers” and the camaraderie of those who shared experiences that were ours alone, not to be comprehended nor understood by those at home. We will have a good time at the 20th Reunion and look forward to the resumption of our normal turnout at Fort Sill in 2014!

John

Don't forget to



check the web site!

www.hardchargers.com

Smiles and Tears...

That is what I saw at the Vietnam Veterans Welcome Ceremony at Fort Sill, OK, on Friday March 29th.

As I arrived at the staging area at the Fort Sill Museum, I was greeted with much handshaking and backslapping as a large crowd of Vietnam veterans met each other or renewed old friendships. I met up with two other Hard Chargers, Jim Harris and Ron Curry, which was a very good surprise. After receiving the registration packets, we were loaded onto buses for a troop movement to the Rhinehart Gym.

As the buses and cars moved along a designated route, the streets became lined with active duty soldiers and Lawton community members waving and shouting "welcome home." The buses made the turn onto Geronimo Road and the entire elementary school (students, teachers and staff) lined the fences. Those little children knew nothing about who the guys in the buses were, but they knew they were shouting and waving signs for heroes! As we continued on the route, even the civilian employees and construction workers stopped their work with many coming to attention as the busses passed. Throughout the whole procession, I saw grateful Vietnam veterans who had never received any type of welcome waving back at those cheering people and many had moisture in their eyes.

The veterans and families/friends de-bussed at the gym site. The families/friends were asked to enter the gym and were directed to an assigned seating area. As we entered the building, loud and sustained cheering and applause erupted. The gym was packed with soldiers and civilians who were very vocal with their cheering. There were signs and banners everywhere.

The veterans in the meantime had formed up into a semblance of a formation outside and as they entered the place erupted into a standing ovation that lasted until all of the approximately 500 Vietnam veterans had entered. It was very evident that this reception had a profound effect upon those assembled on the floor. Again there were grins and tears flowing throughout the gymnasium. MG McDonald, commander of The Fire Center of Excellence and Fort Sill, gave a very real and fitting welcome speech that held a lot of truths that the Vietnam guys should have heard 45 or 55 years ago. When the assembly was dismissed, there was a rush from the stands to shake hands and slap the backs of those long-ago heroes.

After the ceremony, the buses moved the group to the Patriot Club where a very good meal was served. Entertainment was provided by a group from the 77th Army band, which played a whole set of '60's music (excellent jobs). They even had a group of soldiers who have formed a bagpipe band. They played traditional bagpipe lore, but for the first time in my life I heard the bagpipe play the lead in a rock and roll song! It was a great time with more visiting.

The Vietnam veterans were then honored guests at the monthly retirement ceremony at the Old Post Quad. It had been a long time since I had viewed a full pass-in-review service. This dignified ceremony was cool military and brought back some good but tiring memories.

To end a very good day, Jim, Ron and I were invited by LTC Krieg, the commander of the 1st/30th F.A. training battalion, to the Friday post beer call. I had a wonderful time, because I got to mingle and have very real conversations with some of our active duty brethren.

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I wish it had been possible for every one of you to be at this ceremony, because you deserved to be honored in the way that the Army/Lawton community showered praise upon these few. It was an honor for me to represent the 30th Field Artillery Regiment Association. It is my honor to say that I am a part of the wonderful and storied group.

Dan Mitchell



Photo provided by Dan Mitchell

Caption:

Fort Sill commanding general MG Mark McDonald thanks a crowd of more than 500 Vietnam veterans Friday for their loyalty and courage in fighting a war that was unpopular at home.

The Event was way beyond anything I was expecting...

There were over 500 veterans, including Ron Curry and Dan Mitchell, and family members there. The Vietnam Veterans Welcome Ceremony kicked off at 0900 Friday in the parking lot of the Field Artillery Museum with check in, bus assignment and meal ticket, and 45 minutes later we proceeded to the Rhinehart Fitness Center. The entire route was lined with soldiers, marines, motorcycle clubs, civic organizations and other civilians just wanting to show their appreciation. Even the construction crews stopped what they were doing and stood at attention. Then there was the best and loudest, the kids of Geronimo Elementary School.

When we reached the center the family members were sent into the gym to take their seats. This is a rather large gym and the bleachers were filled to capacity with both soldiers and civilians. When the veterans entered, they were met with what can best be described as THUNDEROUS applause and cheering. And it went on and on. They tried to start the program but everyone was still applauding and cheering. The veterans were never seated. We just stood on the gym floor. Finally it got calm enough for the program to begin. The speaker was MG McDonald, and he was excellent. He got straight to the point with no wasted words or time. He was brief but thorough in his praise and thanks. The line I remember best was “This is a homecoming that was 40 years in the making.” When the program was concluded, soldiers and civilians alike poured out of the bleachers to shake hands and express appreciation to the veterans. We even got a few very enthusiastic hugs from some of the ladies—always much appreciated!

From there it was on to the Patriot Club for a very nice lunch. Then we continued on to the Old Post Quadrangle where we browsed a little until the 1400 hours retirement program for about 15 individuals. We had a nice visit there with Ted and Marilyn Janosko. The spokesman here (I believe it was the Post Commander but I’m not sure.) also demonstrated that he could speak with thrift, and paid adequate praise and congratulations to all retirees individually in a matter of minutes. We were rewarded with a “Pass in Review” complete with the Half Section, the donkey “Deuce” and the goat “Short Round.” Someone said that Short Round had recently been busted a stripe for biting Deuce’s ear. I was unable to verify that but I don’t doubt it! Later 1/30 commander LTC Krieg hosted Ron, Dan and me at Happy Hour at the Patriot Club.

I wish all of you gentlemen could have made the trip. It was truly a memorable event.

Jim Harris

Caption: *Jim Harris of Tennessee, who served in Vietnam with the 30th Field Artillery in 1968-69, stops to look at the statue of “The Field Artilleryman” outside the Field Artillery Museum.*

Photo provided by Dan Mitchell



Jim Harris of Tennessee, who served in Vietnam with the 30th Field Artillery in 1968-69, stops to look at the statue of “The Field Artilleryman” outside the Field Artillery Museum.

After having read Jim Harris' account...

I have a couple of things to add to our review of our visit. While at the museum about 0830 hours, you could hear the far-off firing of artillery. Being on Fort Sill, it was not an unusual event other than that the firing we heard were the 155's of A Battery, 1/30 Arty, firing a 21-gun salute while in the field. A Battery had been in the field all week. (I found out about it later, but our guides and the host were unaware of the salute because of a lack of communication, so there was no announcement.) I think Jim covered the actual welcome home ceremony quite well, and after having some of the enthusiastic hugs and also noting that some of the veterans were going after seconds, we boarded the buses for the Patriots Club for lunch and entertainment. There was a four piece band playing late '60's music, and after a bit we were treated to three bagpipes and a drummer playing a couple of traditional pipe tunes. THEN to our surprise the lead bagger (a stalwart fella about 6'2" or so and about 220) started playing a rock 'n roll tune on his pipes...and then he started dancing while playing! If we can, we need to try and get these guys for our next reunion at Sill –very unique and entertaining.

Then we boarded the busses to go to the Old Fort Sill Quadrangle. I left the group and took my pickup over to the 30th area and hung out for a bit there. Then I went over to the A Battery area. When I walked in the building, I was greeted by everyone I met like a favorite relative. I was allowed walking-around privileges in the yard. That's where I met the A Battery CO, CPT Stebbins, and he asked if I had heard the salute that morning. Our conversation went on from there. All of the NCO's and officers were just great answering my questions, and I answered theirs, comparing the old and new and about NAM. I answered their questions as best I could with no war stories or BS, just facts. (Welllllll, maybe a little of the BS...) A LT Crane (a female platoon leader) said with a smile "So it was you guys (meaning the 30th in NAM) that left us this legacy to live up to." I stood a little taller, a little more proud, and replied with a smile and a wink, "Well, yes, I guess so." Gentlemen, as I walked away from the A Battery area, I left with a feeling of camaraderie, pride and confidence after having met with and talked to this younger group of Red Legs, and I know that they will keep the legacy going.

Beer call at the Patriots Club was an easy going event to remember with three of us older Hard Chargers and LTC Krieg and a couple of others. This trip to Fort Sill was an experience, not just of welcome home being said and shown, but more of the atmosphere of the whole base. It was a genuine heartfelt feeling from them to us. If there is another celebration for us, I will go back and I would hope to see many more of you there.



Ron Curry

Comma 's Comments

This is the last newsletter before we meet in Colorado. I am so looking forward to seeing all again. Can all believe that it has been almost six years since our 2007 Reunion in Colo. Springs? I 'm looking up at the photo from that reunion which is hanging above my desk. The thought hit me that any reunion is nothing but memories. Our reunions are very much the same. We have memories of being young and serving in the 30th Field Artillery and the memories of our past reunions. Any new reunion is nothing but memories in the making. You cannot, however, have memories of this reunion unless you attend. Come make memories with us!

Just for everyone's information, I will be on site at the hotel on Monday afternoon, 3 June. I will not set up the quartermaster sales area until Tuesday morning. If anyone wants to order anything to wear at the reunion, go ahead and mail in the order with payment. Unless you tell me otherwise, I will have your order ready for pickup on Tuesday at noon at the hotel. If you are going to want your order before the reunion, please submit your order NLT 20 May. I will be packing up the QM supplies on the 27th.

Guys, see all in a month!

The Comma, out!

Charles Causey

Use or copy this form to pay your dues

For those members who enroll as active members on a yearly basis, please complete the following form and send it with a check as indicated. You can also take this opportunity to enroll as a lifetime member and end the annoyance of having to do this every year!

First Name _____ MI _____ Last Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____ (Email) _____

I am enclosing my check (money order) for \$15.00 to cover my 2013 dues _____

I am enclosing my check (money order) for \$150.00 for lifetime membership _____

I am enclosing a contribution of \$ _____ to the Association to help cover expenses.

Mail to: J Pat Little, 30th Field Artillery Association, Membership

P.O. Box 4283, Greenville, DE 19807

30th Field Artillery Regiment Association Reunion

Fort Collins, Colorado June 4 through 7, 2013

Tentative Agenda

Tuesday, June 4, 2013

Welcome and sign in throughout the day. The Hospitality Suite will open about noon. In the evening, a poolside reception with picnic fare (hamburgers, hot dogs, etc. and a cash bar) will be held for the attendees. There will be a \$10 charge per person for those partaking.

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

The bus will leave the hotel at 10 AM for Estes Park, CO. Arrival time at EP should be around 11:15. Attendees will have until 1:30 PM to eat, explore, purchase souvenirs and so on in the town. The bus will depart at 1:30 for a three hour tour of Rocky Mountain National Park. A guide from the Park will accompany that part of the trip. We should be back at the hotel about 5:30. Dinner will be on your own.

Thursday, June 6, 2013

The bus will leave the hotel at 10AM for the New Belgium Brewery in Fort Collins. New Belgium is one of the better known of the small craft breweries. Its most widely distributed brew may be Fat Tire. The bus will return us to the hotel about noon. At 2:30 PM we will depart for the Anheuser Busch facility NE of Fort Collins for a very different experience at a much larger operation. The tour will begin at 3:15, and the bus will return us to the hotel at approximately 5 PM. Dinner is on your own.

Friday, June 7, 2013

The General Meeting will begin at 9 AM in the hotel. The Memorial Service, also in the hotel, will follow at approximately 10:45, or a short while following the General Meeting. The hospitality suite will be open following the Memorial Service. The rest of the day will be yours to enjoy. The Annual Banquet and World Famous Auction will be held in the hotel in the evening at 6 PM, preceded by an open cash bar at 5:45. ***Be thinking now of your contribution for the auction!***

Saturday, June 8, 2013

The annual celebration of the *Taste of Fort Collins* will begin on this day, so if you wish to stay and experience some of it, your hotel rate will be unchanged. Otherwise, it's "close station, march order" for those wishing to do so, until we gather again in 2014.

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NEXT ISSUE

August 2013

Deadline for submissions— August 9, 2013

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