



# HARBORSITE NEWSLETTER

**Jeff Brami**  
 Echo & Bravo Companies  
 17 April 2024

**Sgt. Tim Johnson**  
 Echo Company 2E3

A Celebration of Life was celebrated for Tim in Columbus Ohio, on 6 April, 2024.

I was fortunate to have Tim as my first team leader in Vietnam; he was my mentor, role model and esteemed friend. We spent seven months on many patrols before I was transferred to Bravo Company after they had many casualties at Khe Sahn.

Sandy Newman, his partner of decades was in the front row as were Tim's two daughters and their families. The Boy Scout Troop that was a big part of their lives sent a group to troop in the American flag and lead us in the pledge of allegiance. Many of Tim's relatives and childhood friends told stories and tried to describe how important Tim had been to them. First and foremost, everyone was deeply aware of what our US Marine Corps meant to Tim. Wade Johnson, Tim's younger brother, was also a memorable Marine present. Wade retired as a Colonel and served as a platoon commander with Third Recon in Okinawa.

My old teammate from Bravo Company, Ronnie Smith, (Coolidge AZ) and I had discussed going to the memorial service and met in Columbus to drive together to the church where the ceremony was to take place. Several other Recon Brothers made the trip to say goodbye.

My first patrol with Tim was an OP (observation position) on Hill 819 and memorable for many reasons; the severe monsoon storms quickly taught us what nonstop torrential rainstorms meant. Our six-man team spent a month on that rain drenched hill. We had C Rations and plenty of Ham and Limas; this was long before we had Long Range Patrol Rations. We set up a defensive position in a rough circle with me in my machine gun bunker with my M60 facing a disused old trail. My bunker filled with water and I slept five nights with only my face out of the water. Tim was less fortunate; his fighting hole filled with water and then collapsed on him, burying him in the mud.

He told me that it initially felt good because it was warm but quickly became a little heavy.

Some months later we accidentally walked into a large NVA base camp and an intense firefight ensued. F4s delivered memorable, effective and precise close-air support. We were about to be overrun when they dropped the first canister of napalm that nearly engulfed us. The first F4 came down the valley just above the jungle below us. I told Tim at a 3<sup>rd</sup> Recon reunion that he might not believe me but that when the pilot went by, I could see writing on his helmet. Tim said he believed me replying that 'the back seat pilot (RIO Radar Intercept Officer) had a thin mustache.' Tim and I were standing together firing at the NVA when the napalm baked us.

One of our teams was designated as **Temple Lake**. On a patrol we always called the 'Tank Patrol' we heard voices and the sound of chopping wood. One night, around two AM, we were awakened by the sound of vehicles just below us on a road down the valley. This was on February 27, 1969 on the Laotian border. We crawled toward the sound and saw an approaching convoy. We peered carefully over the lip of the hill separating us from a massive NVA unit.

Tim was the team leader and Butch Fraley was the assistant team leader; Tim began counting the NVA soldiers on one side of the trucks and Butch counted soldiers on the other side. They both stopped counting soldiers after they had each counted 200 communists. We were so close, we could hear them as they marched past.

We observed two Soviet 100mm assault guns rumbling east on that dusty road. I was the assistant radio operator and used a page from my radio notebook to make a pencil drawing of one of the tanks; that drawing was to play a pivotal point during the debrief. The vehicles and communists seemed to be unaware of our watchful presence.

We were very quiet.

After watching tanks and two stake-bodied semi-trucks at night, we continued watching Route 926 during the day. NVA troops continued moving through the area but they arrived and departed too quickly to call in air support.

We felt very alone.

At one point, a platoon of NVA wearing natural camouflage on their large packs marched through - spread 50m apart. They double timed with their AK47s at port arms. It was an impressive display by a well-trained communist unit providing entertainment on a hot summer day on a remote hillside. Of particular interest was one NVA soldier talking on what appeared to be a PRC 25 radio. We also observed the NVA carrying an 82mm mortar and two large trucks towing 122mm howitzers.

Don't forget to book your room **before October 1, 2024**

## IN MEMORIAM

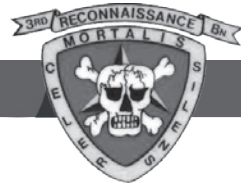


## HARBORSITE NEWSLETTER

It has been brought to the Association's attention that the following Recon Marines have passed away since our last posting of the Harborsite Newsletter. (June 2023)

<b>DONALD R. CAMERON</b>	<b>3RD FORCE</b>	<b>"67"</b>	<b>DOD: 01-18-2024</b>
<b>ANTHONY P. DEBELLIS</b>	<b>BRAVO CO.</b>	<b>"65"</b>	<b>DOD: 02-18-2024</b>
<b>GARY "DOC" RATLIFF</b>	<b>BRAVO CO.</b>	<b>"69"</b>	<b>DOD: 06-29-2023</b>
<b>TIMOTHY RENN</b>	<b>3RD FORCE</b>	<b>"67"</b>	<b>DOD: 10-02-2012</b>
<b>JACKIE L. BRANTLEY</b>	<b>CHARLIE CO.</b>	<b>"65"</b>	<b>DOD: 01-19-2024</b>
<b>JAMES E. THOMAS</b>	<b>BRAVO &amp; DELTA</b>	<b>"68"</b>	<b>DOD: 06-30-2023</b>
<b>CHARLES R. PILKINTON</b>	<b>ALPHA CO.</b>	<b>"68"</b>	<b>DOD: 06-13-2024</b>

Their names will be proudly recognized and displayed at our next reunion in Sparks, Nevada. Should any Member have information concerning the recent passing of any additional member, please notify **ROY RAGER @ (404) 520-3059**.



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When Tim and Butch were debriefed at battalion headquarters, the officers were incredulous. Tim and Butch were interrogated separately and shown photo albums with pictures of vehicles. Their stories matched perfectly. Tim pulled my sketch of the tanks out his pocket and showed it to the senior officer. That sketch matched their story and the photo in the album

[Information from team patrol debrief – Declassified Command Chronology dated March 1969]

After I was transferred to Bravo Company and Jeff Dwight was transferred to 3rd Force, Tim's new team formed up with several new Marines. The newly formed team led by Tim included L/Cpl Charles Moe Jr, HM3 Dennis Rhen, Cpl. Charles Herman, PFC Raymond Wood and L/Cpl Tommy Dean Gaddis. That team was **Drakepool**.

Their first patrol was in the western jungle near the old US Special Forces camp at Lang Vei. Just a few clicks from Lang Vei, Drakepool was inserted near another lonely mountain village - Khe Sahn.

After being inserted by a 'Slick', the team moved out, established an OP and verified their bearings. They continued stealthily moving along a ridge.

On May 17, 1969, Drakepool was hit hard; my old teammates Doc Rhen and Chuck Moe were killed as was the newest member of their team Raymond Wood. The team fought hard until the reactionary team arrived on a CH46 and extracted them.

One of the Marines who volunteered for the rescue mission was Robert 'Lefty' Cole, the M79 man on my first team with Tim. Lefty was scheduled to rotate out and had been made a company driver for the few remaining days in his 13 months.

Tim, lying on the bloody ground saw the reactionary team arrive and was surprised to see Lefty. He saw Lefty looking down at him with a face that said: 'I got this.' Lefty was working out with an M60 on his hip – firing at the NVA in the jungle.

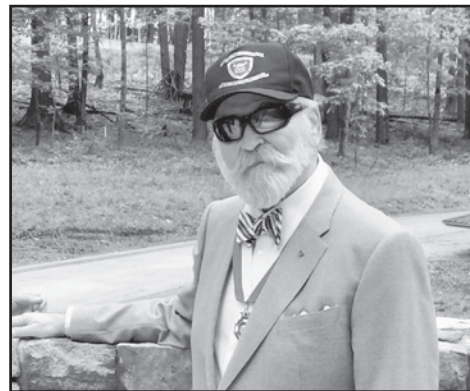
Tim spent a year in Bethesda Naval Hospital enduring many surgeries there and another 40 years having additional shrapnel removed as infections occurred.

[Information from 'Action in the Republic of Vietnam on 17 May 1969 on 17 May 1969' dated 15 March 1998]

Tim was awarded a Silver Star.

I expect that, one day, I'll see Tim and the rest of my brothers at our last harborsite.

We'll have dry racks, cold beer and no 'ham and mothers'.



### SAVE THE DATE

Attached with this mailing is the **REGISTRATION APPLICATION** for those wishing to attend our next scheduled reunion in Sparks, Nevada. (ALSO POSTED ON THE WEBSITE) All pertinent information concerning hotel reservations, phone numbers and dates are included. NOTE: If you're experiencing difficulty in contacting the hotel, please use **(775) 853-3669**. Please complete and forward your application in a timely manner to **CYNDIE LEIGH**. Checks for this event should be made out to 3rd Recon Association Reunion 2024. The hotel allows cancellation within 24 hours of the scheduled arrival date. The cutoff date for our group rate is **Tuesday the 1st of October, 2024**.

### CALL FOR CHESTY AWARDS

The CHESTY AWARD Program is being overseen by Al Mizia, who volunteered his services last reunion to replace Jeff Brami as the director. If anyone would like to nominate a Member who has shown to be supportive of the Association, please write a detailed explanation and forward same to either of the current panel members, those being, Bob Hoover, Jeff Brami or Leland Upshaw.

**OPERATION SPARKS**  
Association Harbor Site: **NUGGET CASINO & RESORT**  
1100 NUGGET AVE  
SPARKS, NEVADA 89431  
(775) 356-4195 (3rd RECON ASSOC.)

**Operation SPARKS Registration Form**  
**10/22/2024 THRU 10/27/2024**

**Arriving: Tuesday, OCTOBER 22, 2024**  
**Departing: Sunday, OCTOBER 27, 2024**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Itinerary/confirmation emailed to you

Recon Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Years: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Reunion? \_\_\_\_\_

3rd Recon Assoc. Status: ( ) Member ( ) Assoc. Member ( ) Friend of Association, etc

#### REGISTRATION FEES

Fees are based on the total package of events and are separate from hotel registration. Fees cover all planned reunion activities and battalion banquet.

How Many? \_\_\_\_\_ Couples \$250.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Singles \$125 ea. \_\_\_\_\_ Child 12-17 \$65.00

TOTAL NUMBER ATTENDING: \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL FEES: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs or Handicap Requests? \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Guests: (Print clearly- indicate "A" for Adult or "C" for Child)

How Many? Banquet Entrée Selection: Beef \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken \_\_\_\_\_

(Attire: Jacket or shirt & tie)

#### Hotel Registration Details:

1. Book your hotel room by **OCTOBER 1, 2024** by calling **(775) 356-4195**. A credit card will be required to hold your room. Check with hotel for **THEIR** cancellation policy.
2. Mention Group **3rd Recon Assoc.** for your discounted rate.
3. **Register for reunion ASAP or BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2024 to help planning.**
4. You **MUST** have a Reunion Badge for all venues
5. Call Company Presidents to nominate a Member in need. Comp rooms available.
6. Reunion fees, separate from hotel fees may be canceled 30 days prior for full refund.
7. **Reunion registration fees are payable to: 3rd Recon Association 2024 Reunion Escrow.**

#### NEED MORE INFORMATION

**Bob Hoover** 1-843-302-2151  
**Roy Rager** 1-404-520-3059  
**Cyndie Leigh** 1-702-271-0365

#### MAIL THIS FORM & CHECK/MONEY ORDER TO:

**Cyndie Leigh**  
3812 Casa Blanco PL.  
Las Vegas, NV 89121

PROOF	1	SIZE	17.0x11.0in
BLEEDS	SWATCHES	Process Black	
NO			