



Pro Patria Press

#61

January 2011

*Newsletter of the 31st Infantry Regiment Association
Karl Lowe, Editor*

Reunions

Our 2011 Reunion celebrating the 94th Anniversary of the Regiment will be held 11-14 August at the Marriott Hotel 800 Front Avenue, Columbus, GA 31901. Cost \$91 per night + tax 3 days before and 3 days after. Call 1-800-455-9261 for reservations and tell them you're with the 31st Infantry Regiment Association. Then fill out the registration form on the last page of this newsletter and mail it to Jo DeAngelis with your check.



Free Columbus Airport Shuttle Bus, Free Parking, Restaurant in Hotel, Pool, High Speed Internet Access in rooms, 24 hour Business Center, Fitness Center, some nonsmoking rooms. Backup Hotel is the Doubletree 5351 Sidney Simons Blvd 31904, Tel: 706-327-6868 \$91.00 plus tax. Free Shuttle bus between hotels. Our schedule:

Thursday, 11 August Arrival Day

- Golf Scramble at local golf course. Arrive Wed, we will play early due to the heat
- 1800 Welcome Reception in the Convention Center across the street from the Marriott.

Friday, 12 August

- Bus to the National Infantry Museum
- View Graduation Parade of Infantry Basic Soldiers
- Dedication of the Polar Bear Monument and 31st Infantry Medal of Honor Pavers
- Tour of the Museum including Lunch

Saturday, 13 August (Anniversary Date of the Activation of the 31st Infantry Regiment in 1916)

- 0800 Memorial Service followed by the 31st Infantry Regiment Association Membership Meeting
- 1000 Bus Tour of Fort Benning to include Lunch with the troops returning at 3 PM
- 1730 Bus to the National Infantry Museum for the Banquet and Shanghai Bowl Ceremony, followed by DJ and dancing in the Grand hall

Sunday, 14 August Departure

Other Reunions

7th Infantry Division Association (Branson, MO) 29 Sep-2 Oct 2011 Contact: Doug Halbert, 518 Hilinai, ST, Wailuku, HI 96793

Visit the **31st Infantry Association Web Site** www.31stinfantry.org and invite your buddies to join you in the **Association**. That is how we get information to all who fought in the many Polar Bears Wars. It also gives you the history of **YOUR REGIMENT** and other valuable information.

Correction

In our previous edition, I identified Jack Logan as former Commander of the 4th Battalion. Boy, was I ever off base and I knew better but my typing finger got ahead of my brain. Jack proudly commanded the 6th Battalion in Vietnam from June of 1968 to January 1969. My apologies Jack. Karl

Regimental History

Thanks to all who have contributed to enriching our regimental history with personal recollections. You'll begin to see your experiences in this newsletter and you'll also see them as updated chapters in the history section of our web site. Please continue sending me accounts of what happened during your time in the 31st, along with any rosters, reports, or sets of orders you come across. They are very helpful and much appreciated. Please note my change of phone number and email address. Karl Lowe (5101 Portsmouth Rd, Fairfax, VA 22032, **phone (703) 978-1076 email karllowe@gmail.com**)

Combat in Korea



This is the 28th in our series on combat in Korea. In the previous edition, the battle of Triangle Hill was underway. The saga continues...

On November 14, the 7th Division was relieved by the 25th Division and went into Eighth Army reserve at Kapyong. After a period of extensive training, the division returned to the line on December 27, relieving the 2d Infantry Division in the Chorwon Valley. The 31st Infantry Regiment held the right half of the division line.



On January 25, 1953, Company E, supported by air strikes and artillery, attacked T-Bone Hill, but was repelled. The 17th Infantry relieved the regiment on line the next day. On February 27, the 31st Infantry returned to the line, relieving the 32d Infantry. The Chinese launched a series of five attacks against the 7th Division line, driving the Columbian Battalion off of Old Baldy on March 23. For the next two days, the 31st Infantry counterattacked, but could not regain the position. Sergeant Buddy G. Jenkins of A Company was on adjacent Westview OP the night the Chinese took Old Baldy. His company was being replaced by the Columbians when the attack came. Amid total confusion, A Company managed to regroup and counterattack against a Chinese unit heading toward Pork Chop Hill.

Chinese attacks resumed on April 16, trying for three days to throw the 31st Infantry off of Pork Chop Hill, a place immortalized in a movie of the same name starring Gregory Peck as Lieutenant Joe Clemons. Clemons earned the Distinguished Service Cross in that action, leading the men of K Company to Herculean exertions in see-saw fighting to retake lost portions of the hill. The hill was originally defended by E Company, commanded by First Lieutenant

Thomas V. Harrold. When the Chinese overran sections of the position, they were driven out in fighting at close quarters. Rifle butts, entrenching tools, and even bare hands came into play as men struggling to stay alive fought each other to the death. Companies K and L were thrown into the fight to regain control of lost portions of E Company's trench line. What follows is a paraphrased version of S.L. A. Marshall's account of K Company's role in the operation. Marshall was at the time an Operations Analyst for the Eighth Army.

The 4th Battalion 1965-1971



This is the 9th in a series on the 4th Battalion, addressing its role in Vietnam. In our previous edition, the 4th Battalion had moved with the rest of the 196th Infantry Brigade from Tay Ninh, to Chu Lai, over 300 miles to the North. Thanks to Mike Ruane, former commander of C Company, for an after action report of the battalion's first major engagement in Quang Ngai Province and an article by COL (Ret) Jim Humphries, a former Polar Bear, published in the December 2003 edition of Vietnam Magazine.

On May 17, 1967, the 2nd Platoon, C Company, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry arrived at the village of Van Tuong 1 help a Vietnamese militia platoon protect the newly-appointed village chief. Captain Mike Ruane, C Company's commander, conceived the idea and assigned 21 year-old Lieutenant James L. Williams and his 24-man platoon the mission. Although higher and more defensible terrain was available, those sites were either too far from the village or their visibility was masked by terraced terrain. The platoon therefore dug in around a pagoda at the western edge of the village, building a fighting bunker at each corner of a 50 x 75 meter rectangular perimeter and at least one more bunker on each side. The village chief, a former soldier, assembled the villagers and had them cut fields of fire for the platoon and build an angled wall of sharpened stakes to make the position more resistant to attack.

On May 21, villagers reported that two Viet Cong companies with around 180 men were in the vicinity but patrols failed to make contact. Troops set out trip flares and LT Williams sent out a squad-sized ambush along a path to the village. Sergeant Richard Wezalis recalls that around dusk on 22 May, two VC were spotted on a nearby hill, silhouetted against the skyline as if to purposely show themselves. The platoon engaged with its 60mm mortar, machineguns, and grenade launchers but a patrol sent to the site was unable to find anything in the gathering darkness.

At midnight, animal calls erupted sporadically around the perimeter, signals by the VC that they were in position. At around 1 AM on 23 May, two VC appeared at the village's southern gate but quickly disappeared into the darkness. At 3:45 AM, a satchel charge was thrown at the perimeter fence, blowing an 8-9 foot gap. Hand grenades and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) followed from every direction. 57mm recoilless rifle fire struck the fence and both corner bunkers on the perimeter's north end. PFCs John T. Trivette (24-Winston-Salem, NC) and Charlie Mack Gilmer (19-Christiansburg, VA), manning the northeast corner, were killed in the opening minutes of the assault. PFCs Donald A. Skinner (22-Lavallette, NJ) and Carl R. Stovall (19-Fort Pierce, FL) were killed at the northwest corner soon afterward. The only remaining bunker on the north end was manned by PFCs Gilbert Rivera and Donald R. Beck. Rivera was knocked unconscious by a grenade blast at the onset of the attack but Beck fought back tenaciously until another grenade wounded him and also knocked him unconscious. He recalls becoming semi-conscious and blacking out again as a VC yanked off his wristwatch. With his platoon's position becoming desperate, Lieutenant Williams requested artillery fire but his request was denied by the brigade commander, Brigadier General Frank Linnel, due to a truce marking Buddha's birthday. Linnel had been in command only three days. Angrily ignoring the prohibition, Captain Ruane ordered his own 81mm mortars to fire on the requested coordinates.

On the perimeter's west side, PFC Joseph D. King (20-Carrboro, NC) was killed and PFC David L. Bowman was hit in both legs as they attempted to fight from the outside of their bunker. Although two of the men nearest the main breach, PFC's Robert D. Click and Douglas B. "Bingo" Chapman, were wounded, they and another Soldier with them, PFC Haskell, continued fighting throughout the attack. To their right on the southeast corner, PFCs Terry L. Strouth and Tommy G. Smith were also wounded and also continued fighting. Smith was wounded two more times as he engaged the attackers from outside his bunker. At the mortar position near the pagoda, things were no safer. There, Sergeant Richard F. Wezalis and Private Frederick A. Baker were also wounded. Total casualties were 5 killed and 16 wounded. Nine of the wounded were evacuated and others, like LT Williams, who was only lightly wounded by grenade fragments in his arm, were treated and walked out with the company. Only three men were unharmed. and 5 of the Vietnamese defenders, including the village chief, a national policeman, and three militiamen were also killed.

Within minutes of the report of the attack to the Company CP, Captain Ruane ordered his 1st and 3rd Platoons to move to the village, instructing them to stay off trails and to blast their way through any opposition they might encounter and continue moving. He accompanied the 1st Platoon from the company base camp about 2 kilometers to the north while the 3rd Platoon approached from its field location about 2 kilometers to the east. In 35 minutes, both platoons and a flight of helicopter gunships reached the village. The gunships laid down a hail of automatic weapons fire on the north side while men of the 1st and 3rd Platoons reinforced the 2nd platoon's remaining positions and pulled the wounded to safety. Knowing they could not hold, the VC withdrew, leaving 19 of their own dead inside the perimeter. Later, a nearby Marine Combined Action Platoon reported that 40-50 VC had been carried away and buried and another 50-75 had been wounded but this report could not be confirmed.

Lieutenant Williams, Captain Ruane, and Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Smith, their battalion commander, all agreed that the mission at Van Tuong 1 should continue. Americans had come to help protect the villagers and if they withdrew now, the VC would have won. Brigadier General Linnel again disagreed, ordering the withdrawal of US troops from the village. Five Americans and five of their Vietnamese allies had died there and they had inflicted nearly twice as many

casualties on the Viet Cong but without a US presence the village became less secure than ever. Van Tuong 1 was symptomatic of the way the war would go.

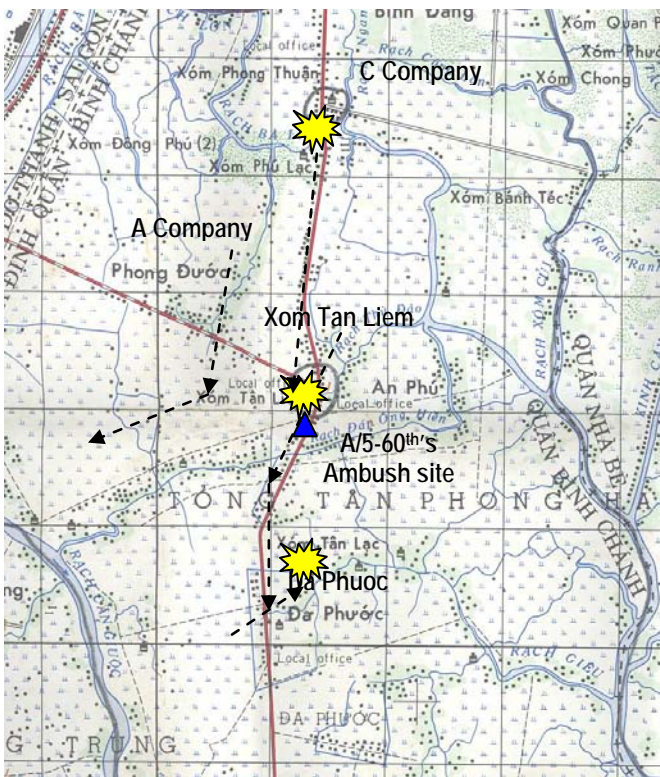
The 6th Battalion 1967-1970



This is the 9th in a series on the 6th Battalion, addressing its early combat actions in Vietnam. In our previous edition, the 6th Battalion was fighting to regain control of Saigon's southern approaches, fighting along Provincial Route 5 and the village of Xom Ong Doi..

To B Company's east, A and C Companies were concluding the fight for Xom Ong Doi. Before nightfall, a resupply of ammunition was flown in and the last of the wounded were evacuated. The night passed quietly. In the morning, the Bearcats conducted a house-to-house sweep, moving west to east, across the tadpole-shaped island on Xom Ong Doi's south side. Helicopter gunships covered potential escape routes. On reaching the town's center, A Company found 36 dead civilians in a housing complex inhabited by the families of RVN Marines. It was unclear whether they had been murdered by the VC or killed by artillery, helicopter gunships, or air strikes used to drive the VC out. Grieving RVN Marines who had fought all day to re-enter the town after being sent north to defend the Y Bridge the morning before, now had to bury their families. Only 16 dead VC were found in the town's wreckage, but the fact that they had been forced to abandon some of their dead and their weapons, spoke to the punishment they suffered.

Earlier that morning (May 10), A/5-60th Infantry was ambushed on Provincial Route 5A while moving through the village of Xom Tan Liem. Their company commander had been killed and most of the American dead still lay alongside the road. A and C Companies of the 6-31st were flown in to help. They were greeted by a morale-killing scene. Burned out APCs still smoldered and soldiers' bodies covered with ponchos lay in clusters all along the road. If the VC



could do that much damage to a heavily armed mechanized unit, what chance would the lightly armed Bearcats have? Time would soon tell. A sense of foreboding set in as the two rifle companies fanned out to the south and west. C Company picked up a wounded VC and carried him along.

Finding no enemy, A Company established a blocking position two kilometers west of Xom Tan Liem as dusk approached. C Company continued through town to reinforce a Popular Forces¹ outpost that had been attacked early that morning. While one platoon set up an ambush outside the compound, the rest of C Company entered the cramped mud fort. American GIs joined militiamen on the perimeter berm. While Americans were armed to the teeth with grenades, claymores, automatic rifles, machine guns, and grenade launchers, plus radios to call in artillery, helicopters, and air power if needed, the militiamen had only World War II-era carbines and semi-automatic rifles. Toward evening, the Vietnamese gathered around large metal pots cooking smelly fish and rice for their evening meal while Americans ate C-rations from cans. After dinner, a joint watch rotation was established, allowing both Vietnamese and Americans to get some sleep between guard shifts.

¹ Popular Forces were militiamen from the local community who reported to a district chief. They were equipped with World War II-era weapons and usually manned static outposts protecting their towns. Regional Forces were organized into companies and sometimes battalions. Their armament was the same but they reported to a province chief and could be called on to fight anywhere in the province. Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) units were organized in regiments and divisions. They reported to the four corps commanders and were assigned areas of responsibility from which they seldom moved. The ARVN Airborne and Marine Divisions constituted a national reaction force. They reported to the Chief of the Joint General Staff and could be employed anywhere in the country.

Captain Owen's command group set up in a cramped little bunker, sharing what space there was with the VC who had been captured on the way in. As a precaution, the company's senior medic sedated the prisoner after checking his wounds as he lay on a wooden table. Everyone in the bunker except one man on radio watch was asleep when mortar shells began bracketing the compound around 4 AM. The prisoner rose at the first sound of incoming and dove off the table. Thinking he was going for a weapon, Owen and one of his radiomen grabbed their rifles and flipped the safeties off. The medic urgently called them off, realizing the man was just taking cover under the heavy table. He was so badly injured and heavily sedated that Owen couldn't believe he was even capable of moving.

Officers of the Association

Commander: **Charlie Tapp** (SSG, D/6th Bn, VN, 1970)
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 Membership Chairman: **Jack Considine** (CPL, B Co, Korea, 1951-52)
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Board of Directors:

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mrdpwilson@comcast.net 18005 87th Ave E, Puyallup WA 98357 253-875-1901

New Members

Stephen A Acosta	(SSG, B/4 th Bn, Ft Drum and Iraq, 2005-2010)	Tampa, FL
Joe A Aiquera	(SGT, A/1 st Bn, Korea 1954-54)	Yuma, AZ
Walter R Evans	(SGT, D/1 st Bn, Korea 1947-48)	Snellville, GA
Edward J Fuller	(SGT, D/6 th Bn, Vietnam 1968-69)	Atlanta, GA
Robert S Lewis	(1LT, E/2 nd Bn, Korea 1953-54)	Venice, FL
Gilbert E Manasselia	(SGT, C/4 th Bn, Vietnam, 1968-69)	Fresno, CA
Terry J Nedelka	(SSG, C/6 th Bn, Vietnam, 1968)	Plymouth Meeting, PA
George C Newcomb, Jr	(SGT, E/6 th Bn, Ft Lewis and Vietnam, 1967-69)	Christiansburg, VA
Greg A O'Neil	(SP4, C/4 th Bn, Vietnam, 1970)	Long Beach, CA
Edward H Taylor	(SP4, D/6 th Bn, Vietnam 1968-69)	LeRaysville, PA
Robert C Whisenhunt	(CPL, HHC, Korea 1952)	Stonewall, OK

Deceased

Jerome McCabe
Harry J Scott

(LT, Hvy Mort Co, Korea, 1950-51)
(CPL, Regt'1 HHC, Korea, 1950-51)

California, MD
St Petersburg, FL

Fund Drive

In order to avoid drawing down the Association Treasury, the Association is initiating a fund drive to emplace and care for the Polar Bear memorial being dedicated next summer at the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning. Please send your contribution to our Treasurer, Joe DeAngelis at 3035 El Rio Dr, Meridian, ID 83642.

31ST INFANTRY REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
Reunion, Marriott Hotel, Columbus, GA
11-14 August 2011
(Registration Fee of \$30 is required for all members and guests)

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____ Cell _____

GUEST _____

GUEST _____

Company/Battalion of the 31st Infantry _____

When _____ Where _____

Are you a member of the 31st infantry Regimental Ass'n? _____

Are you interested in becoming a member of the 31st Ass'n? _____

Reunion Costs:

Registration @\$30 per person.....\$ _____

Welcome Reception 11 Aug @\$30 per person.....\$ _____

Bus 12 Aug to Museum & Lunch @\$40 per person.....\$ _____

Bus 13 Aug to Ft Benning & Lunch w/Troops @\$35 per person.....\$ _____

Bus to Museum 13 Aug for Banquet @\$50 per person.....\$ _____

Total \$ _____

Registration Deadline is July 15, 2011. Make checks payable to the 31st Infantry Regiment Association. Mail check and Registration Form to:

Joseph DeAngelis
31st Infantry Regiment Association Treasurer
3035 El Rio Drive
Meridian, ID 83642-6741

IMPORTANT: Plan to arrive 11 Aug or you will miss the 0700 12 Aug Bus for the Basic Infantry Graduation Parade, Polar Bear Monument Dedication and National Infantry Museum Tour and Lunch

31st REGIMENT ASSOCIATION QUARTERMASTER STORE ORDER FORM

Please print clearly to avoid errors in your order

Name _____
 Mailing Address _____
 Email _____ Telephone # (_____) _____
 (in case we need to contact you about your order)

ITEM	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
7th Div Order of the Bayonet Badge	\$ 8.00	X _____	= _____
Combat Infantry Badge (small)	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Combat Infantry Badge (reg size)	\$ 4.50	X _____	= _____
Ball Cap w/31st Infantry Regiment and Polar Bear Patch embroidered on front			
Royal Blue	\$12.00	X _____	= _____
Infantry Blue	\$12.00	X _____	= _____
31 st Infantry Regiment Association Bumper Sticker w/campaigns	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Window decal CIB	\$ 2.50	X _____	= _____
Window decal Korea Veteran & Proud	\$ 2.50	X _____	= _____
Decal of Polar Bear crest	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Window decal Vietnam	\$ 2.50	X _____	= _____
Army Belt (Blue) & Buckle w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 7.50	X _____	= _____
Dog Tag Key Ring w/Regimental Crest	\$ 5.00	X _____	= _____
Money Clip w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 4.50	X _____	= _____
Polar Bear patch	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
7th Div shoulder patch	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Bronze Star	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Regimental Crest (facing set)	\$ 8.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Silver Star	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Shanghai Bowl cup	\$165.00	X _____	= _____
Tie clasp w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Purple Heart	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Bola Tie w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 9.00	X _____	= _____
Zippo Lighter w/Polar Bear Crest	\$14.00	X _____	= _____
Tee Shirt w/31st Infantry Regiment and Polar Bear Crest			
Size (circle one): S M L XL			
		Light Blue	\$12.00 X _____ = _____
		Navy Blue	\$12.00 X _____ = _____
Size: XXL		Light Blue	\$15.00 X _____ = _____
		Navy Blue	\$15.00 X _____ = _____
Polo/Golf shirt w/31st Infantry Regiment and Crest			
Size (circle one): S M L XL			
		White	\$ 26.00 X _____ = _____
		Navy Blue	\$ 26.00 X _____ = _____
Size: XXL		White	\$ 29.00 X _____ = _____
		Navy Blue	\$ 29.00 X _____ = _____

ORDER TOTALS - NUMBER OF ITEMS/ TOTAL COST: \$ _____

SHIPPING CHARGES - add to your order total SHIPPING: \$ _____

under \$10.00 add \$ 2.50
 orders \$10.00-\$25.00 add \$ 5.00
 orders \$25.01-\$50.00 add \$ 6.00
 orders over \$50.00 add \$ 8.00

CHECK ENCLOSED \$ _____

CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: **31st INF REGIMENT ASSOCIATION**

Mail Order form and check to:
Dale Mills
6331 Dobson Rd
Macon, GA 31220

Email questions to: sdalem@bellsouth.net

Membership Application - 31st Infantry Regiment Association

first name nickname middle initial last name

street address city state zip code phone number

31st Inf unit (Plt, Co, Bn) rank & duty position

rank when retired Highest award earned

Where did you serve with the 31st?

When?

Philippines	_____	_____
Korea	_____	_____
Japan	_____	_____
Vietnam	_____	_____
USA	_____	_____

Membership desired:

life member -	age 49 & under	_____	\$60
	age 50-59	_____	\$45
	age 60 & over	_____	\$35
annual member		_____	\$10
associate life member (family)		_____	\$25
associate annual member (family)		_____	\$5
active duty member		_____	\$5



Make check to **31st Inf Regt Assn** & mail to: **Jack Considine, 144 S River Rd, Tolland, CT 06084**

**31 Infantry Regiment Association
Vincent Zike, COL (Ret)
21 Caskey Road
Glen Spey, NY 12737**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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