



Pro Patria Press

#65

January 2012

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

Reunion 2012

Our regiment's 96th Anniversary Reunion will be 10-13 Aug 2012 at Washington D C. Host hotel is the Westin in Alexandria, VA, (400 Courthouse Square). Phone 1-800-837-8461 for reservations and tell them you are with the 31st Infantry Regiment Association to get our rate of \$109 per night (plus \$13 tax). *Cut-off date for reservations is July 30.* Agenda is still subject to change but so far, it looks like this:

Friday 10 Aug (arrival, socialize at the hospitality room, Executive Board meeting at 5PM)

Saturday 11 Aug (10 AM memorial ceremony at the George Washington National Masonic Memorial; lunch; afternoon at the WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam Memorials on the Mall in DC; nearby museums on the Mall; evening at the White House for those who sign up for the tour. Cost of bus transportation to and from the hotel is not yet firmed up.)

Sunday 12 Aug (9 AM General business meeting at the Westin; hospitality room open until 2 PM; open time for sightseeing in DC; 6:30 PM Reunion Banquet at the Westin. Banquet will cost around \$45 per person. We'll have a surprise guest speaker.)

Monday 13 Aug (departure)

NOTE: All meals are on our own. We requested a White House Tour for Saturday night sponsored by Congressman Moran of Virginia. If approved by the White House staff, I must submit the names of all attendees by March 5. The security form is near the end of this newsletter. Even if you aren't sure you can attend, send me your information anyhow because the White House security office cannot approve late entries.



If you fly into Reagan National Airport, you might not want to rent a car. For a fare of \$1.60, hop on DC Metro's yellow line train toward Huntington and get off at King Street Station, two stops (7 minutes) away. At the station, there will be a Westin shuttle bus waiting to take you to the hotel, 3 blocks away. The hotel is near the George Washington Masonic Memorial (picture at right), offering a panoramic view of DC from its little known to floor observation deck. We'll take a bus to and from the mall on Saturday (cost not yet firm). To visit the attractions in DC, return to the King St station and for a fare of just \$2.15, take Metro's yellow line train toward Fort Totten and get off at Archives Station, only 7 stops (19 minutes) away. The Smithsonian Museums; WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War Memorials; National Archives; Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials,



Washington Monument, the Capitol, and the White House are all nearby. I'll be your point of contact. Call me at 703-978-1076 or email karlhowe@gmail.com if you have questions. Karl Lowe

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. Also see the 6th Battalion 31st Infantry's website at www.6thofthe31st.com; the active duty 4th Battalion at www.drimum.arm.mil/2ndBCT/pages/4-31Infantry; the 196th Light

Infantry Brigade at www.196th.org; 7th Infantry Division at www.7thinfantry.com; and 9th Infantry Division at www.octofoil.org

Fund Drives

Polar Bear Memorial. To avoid drawing down the Association Treasury, please join our fund drive to maintain the Polar Bear memorial dedicated during our recent reunion at the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning. Putting the memorial in place is only the first step but it will continue to cost the association to maintain that fitting tribute to the regiment's service. Send your contribution to our Treasurer, Joe DeAngelis at 3035 El Rio Dr, Meridian, ID 83642. Please feel free to solicit donations from local businesses, banks, and fraternal organizations in your home town as well.

Reunion 2012. To support our 2012 reunion in the Washington, we solicited contributions from local businesses. The first came quickly. **Morgan Borszcz Consulting** of Arlington, VA contributed \$1500, sent by check to our Treasurer, Joe DeAngelis. The Chief Operating Officer and VP of that firm is Michael Morgan, son of Bill Morgan who was Recon Platoon Leader and Assistant S-3 with the 6th Battalion in 1969-70. We're very grateful to Michael and his firm for their exceptional generosity. We also received a \$30 donation from a good friend of the regiment in Italy, Luigi Trevisan.

Regimental History

Thanks to all who have contributed to enriching our regimental history with personal recollections. Regardless of your era of service in peace or war, 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 helpful and appreciated. Please note my phone number and email address. Karl Lowe (5101 Portsmouth Rd, Fairfax, VA 22032, **phone (703) 978-1076 email karhlowe@gmail.com**).

Regrettably, we have only 8 pages of space per newsletter so there is much to pack into very few pages. This edition of the newsletter will focus only on Korea because the Battle of Pork Chop Hill in 1953 is one of the war's concluding battles and because the ranks of Korean War veterans are thinning. Their story should be told while they are still living. This is a tribute to their valor and sacrifices more than a half century ago.

Combat in Korea



This is the 32nd in our series on combat in Korea. In the previous edition, the battle for Pork Chop Hill was underway. The saga continues... The most complete account of the Battle of Pork Chop Hill is from a 1956 book by that name written by S.L.A. Marshall, a famous Army historian. Much of what appears in the following account is drawn from his work.

Lieutenant Clemons faced a dilemma. The harder he pressed the right end of his line forward, the greater his company's disorganization. Supply remained unassured, his channels of communication to the outside were narrowing, and his heavy weapons carriers were shirking the fight. He did not have enough able-bodied men to take the hill by storm, but too many to plead fatal weakness. Those who were fighting were dangerously dispersed. To withdraw and regroup would yield hard-won ground to the enemy. It was time to get his house in order, but answers weren't coming very readily.

On the right side of Pork Chop, Sergeant Johnson, joined by Sergeant Robert E. Hoffman, continued moving straight down the trench. They soon reached a bunker where two men from E Company's 3d Platoon survived the night by playing possum. At dawn, three Chinese had discovered them and began grenading their hiding place. Having snatched a few hours sleep, the men decided to fight back, although between them they had only one helmet and a dirty carbine that wouldn't fire automatic. They took 15-minute turns at the fire post, one man operating as a sniper while the other stayed down. Their initiative was just enough to keep the Chinese from rushing them.

One of the men motioned to Hoffman and Johnson to move on down the trench to take the Chinese from the flank while he held their attention from the front. By then, several others had reached the spot. Before Johnson could move, seven artillery rounds exploded along the embankment. One silenced the Chinese, but another landed among the Americans. Corporal Robert Rosserelli was an arm's length from Johnson when the first round struck. The explosion sat him down hard on his buttocks and the shock was so violent that he just sat there stunned, certain that his behind had been blown away. Because the trench was partly covered and filled with debris, he temporarily lost sight of Johnson.

Then he heard Johnson say calmly, "Well I'll be damned, I'm wounded." As Johnson stood up, the shoulder of his field jacket was already blood soaked. Despite what must have been a very painful wound, he called out in a booming voice, "Hoffman, it's time for you to take over." For the next 20 minutes, Hoffman could hear him belaboring stragglers farther down the trench. "Damn you, get up there and help Hoffman."

The first flamethrower reached Lieutenant Clemons as Johnson disappeared across the slope. Its operator, PFC William W. Sykes, was given a squad to cover him as he advanced toward a bunker 50 yards away on the left side of the hill. Around a dozen Chinese were there, some inside and others behind sandbag revetments. The squad advanced cautiously, spread over both embankments. As they came within throwing distance of the bunker, a shower of grenades landed among them, wounding them all. The Chinese had left the bunker, regrouped on higher ground, and grenaded the squad from the flank. Not seeing how it had happened, Sykes continued right down the trench with his flamethrower and flamed the bunker's doorway for a full 30 seconds. As the doorframe caught fire, a grenade landed in the trench, shooting fragments into Sykes' buttocks. He couldn't make his legs move. PFC James Freley helped him from the hill, surprised that Sykes had made his run, gotten hit, and retired without uttering a sound.

Clemons made a rough guess that he had lost at least half of his men. Most had been knocked out by hand grenades or artillery. Apart from the worrisome noise of enemy burp guns, they had done little damage. Clemons worried that his men were about out of ammunition, though fanned out as they were, he could only guess. He decided that it was time to bring his reserve platoon into the fight. Two enemy-occupied bunkers, on opposite sides of the trench and 40 feet apart, had stalled the advance on the right side of the hill. Burp gun fire laced the ditch, the gunners operating from behind bunker walls, grenadiers covering the embankments. Sergeant Hoffman looked at his watch. It was 0745. The company had been on the hill around two hours, advancing less than 200 yards. It was clear to Hoffman that the company was already beyond the point of exhaustion. Some were dragging their weapons as if too spent to carry them. Others sat in the trench staring vacantly. When NCOs tried to direct them, their words were slurred, as if uttered by sleep walkers.

But the job was not even half done. The Chinese still held two thirds of the trench line, including all of the covered parts of the trench. The artillery had made it easier for the remnants of both sides to hold their positions. The collapse of a great part of the trench made any sighting along it impossible. Bunker doorframes had broken under the weight of artillery hitting sandbagged roofs. Timbers that had supported the near end of the covered trench were splintered and fallen, closing the trench to observation and giving cover to its defenders. From within the ruins, grenades were hurled at the Americans in surprising numbers, and incessant burp gun fire on both sides of the hill kept them pinned to defilades churned up by the night's shelling. Feeling that his men were stretched to the breaking point, Clemons saw no choice but to mark time while waiting for help. He was no longer in touch with the outside. The artillery had cut his field telephone wire and his five radios had been knocked out one-by-one. Three of the operators had been hit and evacuated. From the chow bunker, where the wounded were taken back to Hill 200, a half-track was shuttling out the worst cases. Its predecessor had been hit by a mortar round that killed the driver and re-wounded two passengers. From Hill 200, casualties were moved onward by litter jeep and helicopter.

L Company, which had fought its way up the right side of the hill, was about to bolster K Company's ranks, but not much. It had started up the ridge with 62 men commanded by Lieutenant Forrest J. Crittenden. When Crittenden was wounded, Lieutenant Homer F. Bechtel took command, but he was soon struck down by an enemy hand grenade. When Lieutenant Arthur A. Marshall brought the survivors to join K Company, only 12 remained and they were reduced to 10 by a burst of machinegun fire before they reached the trench.

New Members

Our list of new members is too short. The association grows by your efforts. Help us grow by urging others to join. Please post copies of our membership application form (last page of the newsletter) in VFW and American Legion Posts and Veterans Hospitals. You'd be surprised how many Polar Bears out there don't know they have an Association. Welcome to the following new members.

Franklin Burton	(CPL, Korea, C/1 st Bn, 1954-55)	Peru IN
James A. Nielsen	(T/Sgt, Korea, D/1 st Bn, 1950-53)	Houghton Lake MI
William P. O'Sullivan III	(SPC, HHC/4 th Bn, Iraq, Ft Drum)	Bensalem PA

Taps

Marvin J. Hopp (CPL, Korea, B Co, 1950) Griffith, IN

Herman J Spoto (SGT, Vietnam, 2nd Plt/D Co/6th Bn, 1968-69) Pensacola, FL

Tom Murray (SGT, Rcn Plt/1st Bn, Korea, 1968) Tom spent his last few years helping Mohave County vets with their VA claims. He was also among the “Kingman Five” who dedicated a memorial to the 31st Infantry in that city’s Veterans Memorial Park.

Col (Ret) Gerald J. Carlson (LTC, Cdr 6th Bn, Vietnam, 1969-70) “Jerry” Carlson, the longest serving commander of the 31st Infantry Regiment Association, died on November 21, 2011. He graduated from West Point in 1951 and served in Korea as a platoon leader and company commander with the 17th Infantry, earning the Silver Star; Bronze Star (for valor); two Purple Hearts; and the Combat Infantry Badge. In 1969 and 1970 he commanded the 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry in Vietnam. There, he earned his second and third Silver Stars; the Distinguished Flying Cross; his second and third Bronze Star Medals (for valor); 17 Air Medals; and the Combat Infantry Badge. He completed a distinguished career in 1981 as Deputy Commandant of the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. On retirement, Jerry was Executive Officer of the El Paso Apartment Association, serving for 28 years until his second retirement at the age of 80.



Officers of the Association

Our current Association officers, elected at Columbus, are listed below.

Charlie Tapp (pictured at right), completed his term as our commander and his successor is **Chuck McCammon** (pictured at left). Both are exceptionally talented former members of the Vietnam-era 6th Battalion.

Colonel of the Regiment

Lieutenant General (Retired) **Sam Wetzel** (LTC, CDR 4-31st Inf, 1968)

Wiint322@aol.com 1425 Dartmouth Rd, Columbus, GA 31904 706-576-4204

Officers

Commander:

c-mccammon@31stinfantry.org

Vice Commander:

bjowen11@comcast.net

Adjutant:

vzike@challengecoin.com

Treasurer:

31stpolarbear@gmail.com

Membership Chairman:

the31stira@yahoo.com

Quartermaster:

sdalem@bellsouth.net

Sergeant at Arms:

mamahowdy@yahoo.com

Chuck McCammon (SP4, A/6th Bn, VN, 1969-70)

307 S 90th St, Mesa, AZ 85208 480-586-1343

Bill Owen (CPT, C/6th Bn, VN, 1968-69)

360 Glendobbin Rd, Winchester VA 22603 540-535-0666

Vin Zike (SGT, D/6th Bn, VN, 1968-69)

21 Caskey Road, Glen Spey, NY 12737 845-858-2030

Joe De Angelis (SGT, C/6th Bn, Ft Lewis & VN, 1967-69)

3035 El Rio Dr, Meridian, ID 83642 208-631-8084

Jack Considine (CPL, B Co, Korea, 1951-52)

144 S River Rd, Tolland, CT 06084 860-875-9032

Dale Mills (SGT, C/6th Bn, VN, 1968-69)

6331 Dobson Rd, Macon, GA 31220 478-787-2679

John Howdeshelt (SGT, D/6th Bn, VN 1969)

788 Eagledale Cir, Kettering, OH 45429

Board of Directors

Senior Director/Historian:

karlhlowe@gmail.com

Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY) **Ed Bettis** (CPL, G Co, Korea, 1951-52)

edbettis@netzero.net 3728 Highland Ave, Skaneateles, NY 13152 315-685-3944

Mid-Atlantic (NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC, VA, WV) **Ron Corson** (CPT, A/6th Bn, VN, 1969-70)

jcorson@aol.com 3620 Bridgewater Dr, Williamsburg, VA 23188 757-253-1311

Southeast (NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, AR, LA, PR, VI) **Noah Halfacre** (LT, E/6th Bn, VN, 1969-70)

echo66@comcast.net 2740 Oxford Hall Ave, Murfreesboro TN 37128 615-893-9715

Great Lakes (KY, OH, MI, IN, IL, WI) **John “Pops” McNichol** (SGT, D/6th Bn, VN, 1970)

usmcbmc@ameritech.net 900 Fisk Ave, Joliet, IL 60436 815-741-1788

Midwest (MN, ND, SD, NE, IA, MO, KS, OK, TX, NM, CO) **Phil Harris** (SP4, C/6th Bn, VN, 1968-69)

c631grunt@yahoo.com 13081 N 99th Dr, Sun City, AZ, 85351 360-607-2032

West (HI, AK, WA, OR, CA, NV, AZ, UT, ID, MT, WY) **Dave Wilson** (LT, C/6th Bn, VN, 1968-69)

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



31st Infantry Regiment Association

White House Tour--Reunion 2012

Washington, DC

Congressman Jim Moran has agreed to sponsor our request for a White House Tour as part of Reunion 2012 but it must be approved by the White House Security Office. To that end, they need the following information on each person who will participate **NOT LATER THAN 5 MARCH 2012**. Even if you are unsure you will attend the reunion, return one of these forms for yourself and each of your guests to me at the address on this form because the **White House Security Office cannot accept additions to the list after March 5**.

Last Name _____

First Name _____

Middle Initial (if none, enter NMN) _____

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) _____

Social Security Number (all 9 digits) _____

Citizenship (US Citizen, yes or no) _____

Country of birth _____

Gender (M or F) _____

City and State of primary residence _____

Return this information for yourself and each participating guest to Karl Lowe, 5101 Portsmouth Rd, Fairfax, VA 22032 not later than 1 March 2012.

