



# 39<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEER BATTALION ALUMNI NEWS



JANUARY, 2014

President.....	Bill Ray	Webmaster.....	Walter Lester
Vice President.....	David Romans	Historian.....	Jerry Bright
Secretary.....	Dave Miles	Member at Large.....	Tim Driscoll
Treasurer.....	Jim Shamblen	Member at Large.....	Mike Shaw
Chaplain.....	Fr. Vasilios (Billy) Bassakyros	Past President.....	Bruce Fonnest
Sgt. at Arms.....	Mike Male	Reunion Chair.....	Gale Helser

## 2013 RECAP & 2014 UPDATE

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

I would like to thank all members for their support this past year and a special thanks to the members who attended the reunion in Tucson; we had a great turnout and I believe all had a great time (I know Carolyn and I did). The Association continues to grow not so much this year in new members but in current membership participation and being more involved in our operations. As you know, this year we elected officers for 2014-2015 with some names you will recognize and a few new ones starting with Bill Ray President, David Romans Vice President, Dave Miles Secretary, Jim Shamblen Treasurer, Father Vasilios Chaplain, Mike Male Sgt. at Arms, Walter Lester Webmaster, Jerry Bright Historian, Gale Helser Reunion Chair, Tim Driscoll and Mike Shaw Members at Large and of course Dale "Doc" Shepherd, Gale Helser, Bruce Fonnest Past Presidents. Please give your support to the new officers as you have done in the past.

As I have already mentioned our membership hasn't grown in 2013 as it has in past years but membership participation is great and I am sure that it will continue. David Romans will be handling new membership and also lifetime membership so you may not hear from me as much as in past years. With any new cabinet of officers, it takes some time for everything to flow smoothly but I feel you have confidence in your elected officers and will give them your continued support.

Now for a big "Blue Bull Welcome" to our New Members and New Lifetime Members, it is with great pleasure to welcome you to the Association.

### NEW MEMBERS:

John J. Pedro    Otis Rowland    Tom Spencer  
 A Co 68-69    HHC & A Co 65-66    C Co 68  
 Wayne St. Louis  
 C Co 90-92

### LIFETIME MEMBERS:

David Romans    Wayne St. Louis  
 A Co 66-67    C Co 90-92

I would also like to make a correction from the last newsletter which showed Richard Joseph Smith as being with C Co and A Co which was incorrect; Richard served only with A Co in 1968. Sorry for the misprint.

Gale will be giving a rundown on all the happenings at the reunion so I won't give you that information. The exception will be to let you know that some of us were able to meet with CSM Daigle Jr.; son of our own member CSM Roger Daigle whom was with the 39<sup>th</sup> at the time of stand down in 1992 and retired our Colors to Fort Leonard Wood, MO. CSM Daigle Jr. is Garrison CSM at Fort Huachuca and he enlightened us about the time the 39<sup>th</sup> spent there right before the stand down in 1992; I will pass along more information on that in a future newsletter.

In closing, Carolyn and I hope each and every one of you had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Please be safe in all your travels and we will see you next year in Nashville, TN.

### BROTHERS THEN, BROTHERS NOW, BROTHERS FOREVER

Bill Ray, President (817) 239-0787  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt. C Co. 67-68  
 6205 Big Springs Dr., Arlington, TX 76001

## TREASURER'S REPORT

### REUNION INCOME

MEMBERS	\$1,845.00
GUESTS	\$610.00
BANQUET	\$2,835.00
TOUR 1	\$1,500.00
TOUR 2	\$2,160.00
ROOM RAFFLE	\$1,030.00
RAFFLE	\$1,065.00
39TH PLAQUES	\$210.00
	\$11,255.00

### REUNION EXPENDITURES

GALE HELSER	\$3,786.86
BILL RAY	\$414.50
HOTEL	\$2,720.71
SPACE MUSEUM	\$962.00
TITAN MUSEUM	\$442.00
RETURNED REGISTRATIONS	\$130.00
	\$8,456.07
REUNION TOTAL -	\$2,798.93

## REUNION 2013 RECAP

To everyone who attended the 2013 reunion in Tucson, AZ "What a Great Reunion." To those who were not able to attend, you missed a terrific time in a beautiful area of our glorious country. We missed you and look forward to seeing you at a future reunion, next up Nashville, TN. Despite a few snags at the Titan Missile Silo and the federal government shutdown that limited our visit to Ft. Huachuca, all our trips and activities were first class events. The hotel treated us like VIPs and our banquet ran like clockwork. We awarded many raffle prizes and, in the process, we raised some additional funds which will be used to offset some of the costs at our next reunion. The free room at the Nashville reunion was won by Ed and Debbie Gac. Their room will be complimentary; a big thanks to our host hotel next year, The Sheraton Music City. The Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau donation of a city-wide back stage pass entitling the winner to enjoy hundreds of dollars of Nashville attractions and events was won by Butch Hawkins. Congratulations to our many other winning members as well.

## THE CHAPLAIN'S WORD

America's Parade!

A few weeks ago we celebrated Veteran's Day and New York City was bustling with military men and women along with their families to participate in "America's Parade." People from all over came to see and pay homage to all the military personnel who marched up 5th Avenue. Onlookers lined the parade route as thousands of military, active, and inactive, walked or rode up Manhattan's streets to the cheering voices of a grateful citizenry. As I watched the parade on TV and from my easy chair, I could see the respect and honor that all the military personnel felt as they either marched or were sitting as onlookers. I had reports to create for our Archdiocese dealing with the Hospital Ministry and I knew it would take me most of the day to finish them. So this year, I am sorry to say, I did not attend the parade.

However, as I watch and saw the love for this country these military members have for it, it really moved me. I have been to many Reunions and

Parades with my brothers in arms for years, and have experienced first-hand the ugliness of war. No one can understand the deep emotion that one feels for this nation except for those who served our country in the military and that includes myself. To give your life for something greater than yourself is an awesome feeling, and being able to make it to the end is an honor and blessing. That is why when I heard the military band play our National Anthem I got up from my chair and saluted the Flag. We hear it being played at every athletic event possible, and at other public functions, but it does not have the same impact as during a military event.

During the Olympics we hear every kind of national anthem imaginable. As each contestant mounts the podium in their respective places, only the winner of the contest hears his/her national anthem. As you watch each winner their expression is always of joy, and the feeling of knowing that they did the best he/she could that day. It is all about conquering individual goals and obstacles that motivates each participant.

On the other hand, for the military it is about the country and not personal goals even though the Army at one time used a commercial campaign that stated "An Army of One." The military does not see an individual, but sees all in it as one. That is why we

Veterans who served in the military are so closely knit. When one of our comrades falls we all fall, but we pick up where he/she left off. Each one of us remembers those who fell and when the sound of the trumpet playing our National Anthem is heard, it sends chills up our spines. As our Lord in St. John's Gospel put it, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends (15:13)." Those who have seen and felt their brother fall in battle will never forget it, and when they hear the symbol and hymn that they died for it moves us all.

Furthermore, during the Vietnam War many came to bring a little joy to those over there by way of the USO. Some of them did it to gain recognition and to boost their own careers. Others, however, did it to support fellow countrymen and to lighten the load of our warriors. One such person was Martha Raye. In 1967, she helped the wounded and dead off the Chinook helicopter when it landed in Pleiku. Then she went to the USAF Medical Center to help with the wounded and to assist the nurses, But after all this, still managed to do a show for the "boys and gals." She wore an Army uniform with Colonel insignias and a Special Forces Green Beret. Her rank of Colonel was honorary, as was her membership into the Green Beret Special Forces unit. Not to be left out, the US Marines also gave her the rank of honorary Colonel. This exceptional woman upon her death on October 19, 1994 was granted a burial site among veterans of many wars at the Fort Bragg Cemetery in Fayetteville, NC, the home base of the Special Forces Green Berets.

Colonel Raye (Honorary) is not your typical everyday individual who goes about their life with eyes that are so very myopic they learn to ignore those who are struggling around them. However, she was married 7 times, and if she was Orthodox, the Church would have looked at her in a negative light, since we allow only 3 marriages by divorce. Her religious affiliation is revealed in one of her famous quotes, "One paper says I'm Catholic and the other says I'm Jewish. I guess that's fitting because as a Methodist I'm meant to be undetermined some of the time."

Finally, no one knows what is in each person's heart, but the best way to find out is to see from where they came from and then see who they are today. Each person has to find his/her own way, but it is through a life of sacrifice and struggles that we can understand

that God has and will always be with us no matter what. Many times we call upon God to fix or make something happen for us like, sickness, money, marriage, children, and other things we of the "Dust" must go through while here on earth. That is why our Lord says in Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Let all of us thank God for all the things He has given us, and has let us go through for our betterment. This life is not by chance and He made it for us all, but do we thank Him for it? A beautiful prayer from the Orthodox Sacrament of Baptism is very telling about what He has done for us.

"For by Your Will have You out of nothingness brought all things into being and by Your power sustain all creation and by Your Providence direct the world. You, from the four elements, have formed creation and have crowned the cycle of the year with the four seasons; all the spiritual powers tremble before You; the sun praises You; the moon glorifies You; the stars in their courses meet with You; the light hearkens unto You; the depths shudder at Your presence; the springs of water serve You; You have stretched out the Heavens as a curtain; You have founded the earth upon the waters; You have bounded the sea with sand; You have poured forth the air for breathing; the angelic Powers minister unto You; the Choirs of Archangels worship before You; the many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim, as they stand and fly around You, veil themselves with fear of Your unapproachable Glory; for You, being boundless and beginningless and unutterable, did come down on earth, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; for You O Master, through the tenderness of Your Mercy, could not endure the race of men tormented by the devil, but You did come and saved us. AMEN!

Fr. Vasilios (Billy) Bassakyros

### **39th COMBAT ENGINEER ALUMNI ASSOCIATION GENERAL MEETING**

**DATE: 1 October, 2013**

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Bruce Fonnest, President; Bill Ray, Vice President; Jim Shamblen, Treasurer

**OFFICERS NOT PRESENT:** Floyd Babcock, Secretary; Jerry Bright, Historian; Father Vasilios, Chaplain  
President Bruce Fonnest called the meeting to order at 8:10 AM, leading the "Pledge of Allegiance". The invocation was given by Jim Shamblen.

The minutes of the 10 November, 2012 Meeting were read. A motion to approve was made, seconded and the motion was approved by the membership.

Jim Shamblen gave the Treasurer's report. A motion to approve was made, seconded and approved by the membership.

### **New Business**

**Election of Officers:** President Fonnest opened the floor to nominations for Officers. Gale Helser proposed a slate of candidates:

Bill Ray, President  
David Romans, Vice President  
Jim Shamblen, Treasurer  
David Miles, Secretary

No other candidates were nominated. The nominations were closed. A motion was made to approve the slate of candidates, seconded, approved by the membership. The New Officers were installed.

New President, Bill Ray, requested a moment of silence for all members of the 39th who were lost in Vietnam, for members who were lost since Vietnam and those lost since our last reunion. New members were welcomed, and all members were encouraged to spread the word about the Alumni Association. Bill turned the podium over to Gale who provided details on the upcoming evening's banquet. Bill also recognized members who were providing shuttle service to the airport for reunion attendees.

**Upcoming Reunions:** Gale Helser had provided videos of proposed 2015 sites in Virginia and Georgia during the bus tours. He requested a show of hands vote on the 2015 site and Virginia was selected (Florida - 6, Georgia - 9, Virginia - 12). Gale also discussed the difficulty of e-mail communication with members. Communications with members will be provided by hard copy through the US Mail. Details of the 2014 Reunion will be provided by US Mail.

**By Law Amendment:** Bill Ray recommended a change to the "Members at Large" section of the BY LAWS. He proposed "Members at Large" should attend the Executive Meeting, prior to the start of the 2014 Reunion. The "Members at Large" would be able to provide input and recommendations at the Executive Meeting, but will not have a vote in the outcome of those meetings. A motion to approve the change was made, seconded, and approved by the membership.

**Reunion Committee Reimbursement:** Up to this date, members of the Reunion Committee who were involved in visiting proposed reunion sites have been paying related costs from their own pocket. Jim Shamblen

moved that the Reunion Committee be authorized reimbursement for mileage, hotels and other related expenditures, not to exceed \$1,000 for each reunion. These reimbursements are to be covered with reunion funds. A motion to approve was made, seconded and approved by the membership.

**Discussion:** Bruce Fonnest had been downloading reunion pictures and will make them available to members. Sharing of members e-mail, telephone and address information was addressed by Bill Ray and Gale Helser. Due to privacy issues, the membership roster will not be made available on the website or through e-mail. Individual information will be made available by officers when requested. Bill said we have approximately 375 members and members are responsible for all changes to their contact information.

With no further business or discussion, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded and approved by the membership

Jim Shamblen gave the Benediction.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 AM

David Miles  
Secretary

## **FROM THE PAST PRESIDENT**

I would like to thank everyone in the 39th Alumni for allowing me to be your President for the past 3 years. It was an honor to serve all of my brothers as your president. I know you have a great president in Bill Ray along with all of the other officers that were voted in. I look forward to seeing all of you at next year's reunion. I know that you will give Bill Ray and all the other officers great support, as you did for me.

As well, it has come to my attention that some of you may have had a problem with the DVD you received from me. If anyone has had a problem with the DVDs, please let me know and I'll make a new one and send it to you as soon as I can make sure that all the pictures did make it to the DVD. I don't know what happened, but I had one of our brothers that purchased a copy of the DVD and it only had around 30 pictures, so I checked all of the extra DVD's that I had. Only four of them had the pictures and around 10 were blank. Again, I'm sorry if you got a DVD that was blank or had only a few pictures.

Bruce (The Flag Guy) W. Fonnest  
Past President,  
39th Engr. Bn. (CBT) Alumni

## IN MEMORIAM



David Nathan Wagner, 91, WWII veteran of the 39<sup>th</sup> Engineers, died on 7 Oct 2013 in Queens, NY. David and his wife Selma are pictured here at

our 2012 reunion in DC. Hurricane Sandy almost cancelled their trip to DC, but they fought their way through to us. Our sympathies to Selma and her family.



AUGUSTA, Ga. - Command Sergeant Major (Ret) Scotty Ray Smith, beloved husband of Betty Sherrer Smith, entered into rest Tuesday, October 29, 2013 at Eisenhower Hospital, Fort

Gordon, Georgia.

CSM Smith retired from the U.S. Army with 32 years of service. After his retirement, he became Director of Safety and Security at Georgia Regents University. He continued his military passion by serving with the Wounded Warriors Project. Our sympathies to Betty and her family.

January, 2014

## FROM THE REUNION CHAIR

**Operation Nashville 2014 – 615-231-1242 – ask for Julia - Call Now!!**

Mark your calendars for **September 27, 28 & 29, 2014**. The Blue Bulls will once again be gathering for our annual reunion event in the music capital of the world. It's not too early to make your reservations. As a matter of fact, the earlier, the better.

We have started with a block of 30 rooms at The Sheraton Music City, [www.sheratonmusiccity.com](http://www.sheratonmusiccity.com), and those will go really fast. In order to add to our block, we need to have the first 30 reserved before they open up

an additional block. If you *know* you are going to attend, please make your reservations NOW. If you *think* you are going to attend, make your reservations NOW. Even in you only *think or want* to attend, make your reservations NOW. (See the pattern here?!?) We only have until August 28, 2014 to adjust our maximum room block. There is no risk by making a reservation early and there is no deposit required, so there is no cost until you arrive. In addition to no risk, you can also cancel up until 48 hours prior to the reunion without any charges. This is a very popular hotel and it fills up very rapidly, so book today. The hotel is also offering a "3-day prior and 3-day following" price protection for anyone who would like to arrive early or stay after the reunion to see more of the area. We have secured an extremely good rate of \$99 per night, which is very good for this area and the hotel is a first class property. The Contact person at the Sheraton is Julia Purdue at 615-231-1242 on-site at the hotel. Be sure to mention that you are with the 39th Eng Bn Reunion to be sure to get this rate. DO NOT use any of the 800 reservation numbers or go through a third party to make your reservations. Be sure to deal directly with Julia. Once again, timing is very important so we can add more rooms and be sure that everyone who wants to attend is able to.

**Getting There.** Most of the East and Midwest areas are within a reasonable driving distance and we will be sending driving directions to anyone who requests them. Flying is another good option as the airport in Nashville is very close to our Hotel. The hotel will also provide pick-up and drop-off service for flyers.

**The Hotel.** Sheraton Music City is a full-service, very highly rated property located near the Nashville Airport and many local attractions. Our accommodations are very spacious and our meeting areas are convenient and comfortable. The Hotel is smoke-free; however, there are many outside areas with easy access and a patio area just across the hall from our Hospitality room. The hotel is very large with many amenities; check it out for yourself on line.

This year's activities have not yet been finalized but may include an evening at the Grand Ole Opry, a Riverboat cruise on the General Jackson, a Trip to Downtown Nashville where you can visit the Wildhorse Saloon or Printers Alley, Tootsies or any of dozens of famous taverns and pubs where many country stars got their start, Studio B where Elvis recorded all of his



**39th Engineer Battalion Alumni**  
32423 FM 2925  
Rio Hondo, TX 78583

hits as well as dozens of additional Rock and Roll Stars, The Hermitage-the home of President Jackson, and the list goes on forever. Take advantage of the 3-day prior and after guaranteed low rate to take in all you care to see and do. We will also plan some activities as a group during those days. Our next newsletter scheduled to be out in late March or early April will have the registration form and all of the scheduled events listed. All events are elective and not required. The only required charges will be for registration fee and Banquet if you are planning to attend. We are working to have the ability to accept credit card payments for registration both in advance and at the door. This year only, a partial deposit will be required in advance. However, you may pre-pay all of your elected activities if you wish.

We expect this to be one of our biggest reunions yet, so get your reservations in early. If you have any

questions, feel free to contact myself or President Bill Ray; our contact information is listed in this newsletter. Brothers then, Brothers now,  
Gale Helser, 32423 FM 2925, Rio Hondo, TX 78583  
(galehelser@peoplepc.com)  
(956) 367-0999

## **NEWSLETTER DEADLINES**

**March 1st** for the Spring Registration Issue

**July 1st** for the Reunion Issue

Anyone who has an article to submit, please send them to the Editor Diane Helser at [diane\\_helser@yahoo.com](mailto:diane_helser@yahoo.com) or mail it to Diane Helser, 32423 FM 2925, Rio Hondo, TX 78583.

Remember, this is your newsletter and your tool to keep in touch and share information with your Blue Bull brothers.

### **Where and How to Find Your Fellow Members**

In our next newsletter, a member list will be published with all of the names, unit and years in country for everyone on our mailing list. This is the only information that we will make available in print. If you recognize a name that you would like to make contact with, you will need to submit it to Bill Ray who will contact that person so that if they wish, they can contact you. Send any requests via e-mail or mail to Bill. Due to privacy laws, we cannot release personal information any other way. If you have a name and/or address of a 39ther not on our list, feel free to send it to us with their permission so we may add them to our mailing list. Let's make this a year to grow.