



POST SOLANT AMITY

With the Members of "G" Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment



Volume 3, Issue 1

March 2005

A full life and a big help to the G-2-6 Association

The Solant Amity website has been around for a couple of years. AND, we are into an amazing third calendar year of **Post Solant Amity's** publication. In neither case has it been easy to accumulate all that makes for a website having greater than thirty-five megabytes of text, photos and documents, or slapping together our quarterly newsletter. We've countless numbers of people to thank.

They include: our G2-6 membership; sailors; as well as the off-spring of marines and sailors...such as the daughter of L/Cpl Bill Frenz and former Marine Sergeant and son of the Gearing's "Ensign Benson." Then, too, there have been folks having no personal connection with the military like Brian Shaw of Falmouth, Maine who furnished information instrumental to our finding retired Gunny Sergeant Delwin Baily and, more recently, Philadelphia phone numbers for what may be relatives of our difficult to contact Amadio DiBounaventura.

Indeed, only today did I receive an email from an "older Corps" aficionado, retired Major Carl White, pointing out that the anti-tank vehicle "Ontos," a photo of



Colonel John W. Ripley (USMC Ret.) as a 1972 Captain, subject and hero of John Miller's "The Bridge at Dong Ha" and, more recently, the 1999 Director of Marine Corps History & Museums well as the Director of the Marine Corps Historical Center.

which being posted on our website, had six 106mm and not 105mm recoilless rifles as indicated.

The help has come in small and large ways but is ALWAYS appreciated. And, to that end, I'm going to dedicate the balance of this article to someone most of you have never heard of but is owed an enormous debt.

In November '03, Ed Hart had written to tell me he was getting help in finding our company roster: "...I've contacted Colonel John W. Ripley. He is in charge of the Marine Corps Historical Center and is working on getting a company

roster of G/2/6 as of 11/30/60, the day we boarded the USS Graham County."

Ed then went on to explain, with more than a tiny bit of reverence, some of Ripley's history, with particular reference being made to the Dong Ha Bridge *incident*. Until that moment I'd really no idea who the man might have been. Then I recalled something from my several visits to the U.S. Naval Academy, in Annapolis Maryland, where I'd seen a tribute to one of the Academy's graduates...a MARINE officer. A tribute unusual in itself because it

(Continued on page 2)

Zahara Skeletons: Islam and how some things never seem to change.

Skeletons on the Zahara is the incredibly true story about the crew of an American merchant vessel shipwrecked in the early 1800s on the west coast of Africa, just east of the Cape Verde Islands.

Not a place recognized for its civility, the Captain took every precaution to, at first, keep their presence a secret and, failing that, trying to barter for personal security and safe passage...anywhere, not there. To no avail, however.

Taken prisoner by nomadic

tribal wretches and treated like chattel their numbers quickly dwindled, as a result of repeated beatings, starvation and murder.

The story is of their journey of survival through months and miles of brutally enforced nomadic travel across the dunes and flatlands of the Sahara desert on both foot and camelback until their freedom is purchased by means equally incredible, given the time and political circumstances.

In addition, the author graphically, yet unintentionally, illustrates the mentality of "Islam" and just how

low on its scale of importance one finds the "infidel."

After closing the text, one sits in utter astonishment at just how very little progress, if any, time has provided in changing the perceptions of arch-traditionalist Muslims, today's Wahabeeists, for over twelve-hundred years.

Written by Dean H. King, it was published by Little, Brown and Company of New York in 2004. I would urge you to obtain a copy at your local library or await paperback publication. Then, enjoy.

(Continued on page 2)

Gator vs. Gearing Marines

The December issue of the Post Solant Amity had already been distributed when I received the following email from Bill Benson. I thought you'd appreciate his introspections on life with the Gator fleet versus our own and his father's experience aboard the Gearing in 1962:

"Ed, when I first learned about my father's involvement in the story of the GEARING Marines, I was a young lad, perusing his Naval memorabilia. The effect of my father's GEARING experience wasn't really driven home for many years, but eventually the message proved deceptively easy to comprehend.

"As an embarked Marine aboard a 'gator freighter,' I saw the animosity that existed between the embarked Marines, and the Navy crew. We weren't part of the crew, we were little more than cargo. So why was the experience of the GEARING Marines so different, especially aboard a warship that was really never designed to carry anyone other than its' own crew, and certainly nothing so rowdy as the Marines of a line company?"

"My dad puts it this way, 'We treated them like human beings.' It was that simple.

"In short, the GEARING crew did not just 'put up' with the Marines, they tapped into that oh-so grunt-like curiosity, and exploited it. If an individual Marine demonstrated a bit of curiosity about how to drive a ship, the officers of the GEARING had the courage to take the position of "let's not just put the lad behind the wheel, let's get him qualified on the books, and make the experience noteworthy!" (And, somewhere down the line, a few of the Navy helmsmen caught a nice break for a little while, thus increasing their readiness should the ship actually be called into combat.)

If there was a Marine, such as Sergeant Baily, who was interested in the propulsion systems, "give him a wrench and let him go!" (We've seen the magnificent results of that

Gator vs. Gearing Marines—Cont.

episode! It's apparently become a beloved sea story for all concerned!)

"Leadership, pure and simple. Treat somebody like they're a part of the team, and they'll perform miracles for you.

"My father saw this happen firsthand, and included this in the leadership traits he developed as he rose through the ranks of Naval Officers. They were passed down to me. I used them with my Marines, with far greater success than methods used by some of my fellow NCOs: balancing the team-building aspect with the "fear of God" credo. Even now, with my own 10 year old son, I have found that the basic aspects of team-building apply.

"And why? Well, because a bunch of sailors were willing to treat a bunch of Marines as teammates, and the Marines returned the favor and responsibly took full advantage of the opportunity.

"The second influence doesn't really have to do with the GEARING, but it was a significant epiphany. In April of '75, the country of South Vietnam ceased to exist. We, the Benson family, were stationed at Subic Bay Ship Repair Facility, Republic of the Philippines. One day, all was hunky-dory, blue skies and palm trees. The next, we had a raft of former SVN refugees inbound, on anything that would float: freighters, fishing boats, warships, a bunch of logs lashed together, the works.

"Overnight, thousands of tasks had to be accomplished to receive this wretched mass of humanity. A secure facility had to be built. Thus, a joint operation between the Seabees and Marine Barracks Subic Bay turned the Grande Island recreational facility into a tent city. The Red Cross, with which my mother was involved, was directed to take care of humanitarian needs. The Air Force's Logistical Airlift Command was tasked with getting massive amounts of supplies and equipment in, and processed refugees out. And finally, those vessels formerly carrying arms and ammunition needed

Pay attention, get involved, and never allow this to happen again.

to be secured, cleaned out, and made safe.

"My father was a part of this and amidst the turmoil, he took the opportunity to give a select few dependents a personal tour of the vessels, once they'd been declared safe. As a 10 year old kid, I thought that this was 'neat'.

"We went aboard a few destroyers, and a couple of armed merchantmen. There was trash and garbage EVERYWHERE! And it began to dawn on me that, after having had the opportunity to tour American men-o-war, there was something strangely wrong.

"Every time I'd stepped onto the

deck of an American ship, there were fellows in khaki, there were fellows in blue shirts and dungarees going to-and-fro in the performance of their duties. There was always the subtle vibration of the power-plant rumbling through the deck. In a sense, as if it were the very heartbeat of the ship. Everything was freshly painted, not a speck of rust to be seen, and the bright-work glistened! All things VERY impressive to a little kid!

"But aboard these dead warships, of a dead nation, there was no heartbeat. There were no people. There was rust, dirt, blood, and all manner of debris. When I put my hand on the bulkhead of the ship, instead of feeling that confident rumble of an American man-o-war, that unspeakable power of American pride, dedication to mission, and brute force, I felt nothing save a sense of fear, desperation and helplessness.

"It struck me, out of the blue, that this is what happens when nations die. This is what happens when the system fails the people that it is supposed to provide and protect. I literally wept, without knowing why.

"Dad came over and gave me a hug, and stood with me on the deck of that dead ship and said, 'This is what happens when you don't learn how your country works, when you don't get involved, or don't care.'

"Talk about a civics lesson!

"Years later, I was to meet with pretty much the entire South Vietnamese refugee population of Westminster, California, during their Tet Celebration. I met members of their "Tiger" Special Forces, most of them spent a decade in the not-so-loving clutches of the communists. Given half a chance, these old fellers would have gone back and retaken their country by force! I told them my side of the April, '75 story and of what the experience had taught me: Pay attention, get involved, and never allow this to happen again.

"So, my GEARING Marine *Uncles*, I thank you for being part of the systemic infrastructure that keeps our men-o-war humming, and our people safe and secure in our own homes and not having to worry about which way to run, or where we should go in times of crisis.

"Thanks for setting the example for guys like me to follow, and most of all, thanks for demonstrating to my Dad what real leadership can accomplish!

"Merry Christmas to all, and a safe and Prosperous New Year!"

Bill Benson

Thanks Bill and consider this a belated "back-at-ya" and Semper fi from *Uncle Eddie*.

The **AGLU** We don't hate religion.
We just hate Christianity!

Colonel John W. Ripley—Cont.

is, after all, a NAVAL academy.

More recently, the Commanding Officer of the 22nd MEU in Afghanistan, Colonel Kenneth McKenzie, had the following to say about the man after whom the Forward Operations Base (FOB) and Command Center was named: "he's a true warrior, an honorable man and amongst a small group of Marine leaders mentioned prominently in the Corp's proud history."

But such summaries rarely do justice to a man's life efforts. Alas, some details.

Ripley joined the Marine Corps in June '57 as an enlisted man. A year later he secured an appointment to the Naval Academy, graduating in '62 with a degree in electrical engineering and the gold bars of a Ma-

rine 2nd lieutenant. He served aboard the USS Independence, was a platoon and weapons platoon commander with 2nd MarDiv's 2/2 and Force Reconnaissance. Over the years, he completed Airborne, SCUBA, Ranger, Jumpmaster and Royal Marine Commando courses.

Beginning his first tour in Vietnam in October '66, he was assigned to the 3/3 in the hotly contested combat zone of *Leatherneck Square*, an area encompassing Dong Ha, Con Tien, and Khe Sanh. Thereafter he returned stateside, acquired more training and was assigned to work with British Royal Marines in Europe.

Returning to Vietnam's "same, same" in '71 as an advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps and in late Spring '72 push, known as the Easter Offensive, Ripley and his battalion found themselves in the

path of the Communist advance.

Realizing the Dong Ha Bridge was a key avenue for the North Vietnamese advance, Ripley set about destroying the bridge. Supported by South Vietnamese marines and Army Major Jim Smock, Ripley spent a harrowing five hours nearly single-handedly rigging the bridge for demolition.

Under near-constant rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire, he affixed more than 500 pounds of explosives to the bridge. To do so, he was forced to repeatedly hand walk the beams beneath the bridge, attach the explosives while dangling precariously over the water, crimp detonators with his teeth, and race the burning fuses to safety.

This feat destroyed the bridge and stymied the North Vietnamese

advance, forcing them to find alternate routes south and earned the young captain the Navy Cross, an award second only to the our nation's Medal of Honor.

In addition to the Navy Cross, his personal decorations for service in Vietnam include the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, two Bronze Star Medals with Combat 'V,' the Purple Heart, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal, and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Subsequent to Vietnam, Ripley served at Headquarters Marine Corps, commanded Marines at the battalion and regimental levels, taught at the Naval Academy, worked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was assistant chief of staff for the 3d Marine Expeditionary Force, and commanded the Navy-Marine Corps (Continued on page 4)

TRIVIA: What infantry divisions made for the 5th Amphibious Corps during the Battle for Iwo Jima, which landed on Dday and which was held in reserve for five days before coming ashore on February 24, 1945? (See answer 1, Trivia on page.4)

Here's a few surprises

In reviewing the 60th Anniversary ceremonies on Iwo Jima, on 12March of this year, the New York Times had the following to say:

- The 36 day battle resulted in 6821 Marine and Naval personnel deaths.
- Which was "four times more than the number of American troops killed in two years in Iraq. [Most amazing about this statistic is that the NY Times published it!]
- Twenty-two thousand Japanese died.
- The last two Japanese soldiers to surrender did so in November of 1949!!!
- The battle is largely ignored in Japan while much, instead, is made of the Tokyo firebombing and the loss of 100,000 Nipponese, the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the U.S. "occupation" of Okinawa.

Of course, neither the Japanese people or their government nor the New York Times choose to recall the Bataan Death March, the Railway of Death, the Rape of Nanking, the Pillowing [enforced sexual slavery] of Korean women, the common use of prisoners for bayonet practice to "harden the hearts" of their troops, documented evidence of the *not of the Abu Grahib kind of torture*, cannibalism of prisoners, OR a place called Pearl Harbor. No, theirs is the convenient blessing of "selective memory."

On a more pleasant note, later this year, Clint Eastwood begins filming the movie version of James Bradley's "Flags of our Fathers." One can but thank God that "Vietnam War Expert" Oliver Stone won't be doing it.

TRIVIA: Of the following Academy Award Winners, which was NOT a Marine: Gene Hackman, Lee Marvin, Sam Peckinpaw or George C. Scott? (See answer 2, Trivia on page.4)

Simulating shipboard life

1. Sleep on a shelf in your closet.
2. When showering, shut off the water just after soaping down.
3. Put a diesel fuel/water mix in your humidifier, set it to "HIGH," sit back and breathe deeply.
4. Run a half-choked lawnmower in your living room six hours a day.
5. Have the paperboy give you a haircut.
6. Blow compressed air up your chimney, making sure the wind carries the soot across onto your neighbor's house. Then, laugh when he curses at you.
7. Store raw garbage at one end of your bathtub.
8. Down a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or can of cold ravioli at 2355 hours nightly.
9. Set your alarm clock to go off at random times during the night.
10. Monthly, take every major appliance apart and rebuild them..
11. Use 3 scoops coffee per cup. Let stand for 5 hours before drinking.
12. Invite 85 people you don't like for a six month visit.
13. Install a tiny lamp on bottom of a coffee table and use to read books.
14. Raise thresholds and lower the top sills on your front and rear doors. Then, practice your response to tripping and/or hitting your head.
15. Prop up one side of the pan while cooking pancakes.
16. Throw your cat into the swimming pool and shout "Man overboard, ship recovery!"
17. Sweep the pots, pans and dishes off the counter, and yell at your wife for not having the place "stowed for sea".
18. Wake up at 0-Dark-30, stand in the driveway in a light drizzle, and have your mother-in-law criticize your clothes while reading you the newspaper.

Compliments of Joe "JJ" Teklits

Puller's Math

During a battle on ROK (Republic of Korea) commander, whose unit was fighting alongside Marines, called the legendary Marine, then Colonel, Chesty Puller to report

"A major Chinese attack in his sec-

tor," reported the commander.

"How many Chinese are attacking you?" asked Puller.

"Many, many Chinese!" replied the excited officer.

Puller asked again and got the same answer "Many, many Chinese!"

"X*#dammit," swore Puller, "put my Marine liaison officer on the radio."

After a brief pause, an American voice came over the air: "Yes sir?"

"Lieutenant," growled Chesty, "exactly how many Chinese have you got up there?"

"Sir, we've got a real shitload."

"Thank God," exclaimed Puller, "at least someone up there can count!"

Compliments of Charlie Wilson

TRIVIA: The capture of Iwo Jima provided an emergency landing strip for crippled B29s returning from bombing runs throughout the region. By the Pacific War's end, how many bombers and crewmen had cause to make that emergency landing on Iwo. (See answer 3, Trivia on page.4)



Ooops! Sorry, Harlon....

When seeing the Iwo Jima flag raising photo in a Weslaco, Texas newspaper on 25Feb45, Belle Block exclaimed, "That's Harlon!" pointing to what she thought to be her son on the right side.

The military had identified the flag raiser as Harry Hansen of Boston. But Belle never wavered in her belief: "I know my boy." No one—not her family, her neighbors, the government or the public—had any reason to believe her. Yet 18 months later, a Congressional investigation revealed that it was Harlon in the photo, proving, indeed, that Belle did know her boy.

Harlon Block was killed by a mortar round on 1Mar45.

Sales Tax Deductions on Your Federal Return

Congress approved your right to claim sales taxes on this year's federal return.

So much of what we buy today is on credit cards. Call their customer service divisions and ask for the statements for each month of last year.

Once received, unless you live in a state that taxes even groceries, run a line through supermarket purchase. Then, add the remaining entries and deduct credits provided for items returned. What you have left is the total dollar amount spent on taxable items, including the sales tax. Circle that number and do the same thing for each month on every statement received, then add them up and write the total off to the side someplace as "total (A)."

Now divide total (A) by 1 (one) plus the decimal equivalent of your state and local taxes. On Long Island that would be 1.0875, representing 8.75%. In Florida that would be 1.065, for the 6.5% charged there. The result (B) is the amount your spent LESS the tax.

Subtracting (B) from (A), the

result represents the taxes you paid on credit card purchases for the year.

Of course, you can avoid all this math and use the Fed tables in IRS Publication 600.

After you've calculated all the sales taxes, you may claim either your sales taxes OR your state income taxes, which ever is higher on your Federal return.

If you've already filed, perhaps an amendment is in order.

TRIVIA: In the photograph of the flag raising on Iwo Jima, made famous by AP Photographer Joseph Rosenthal, how many personnel and to what branches of the service were they assigned? (See answer 4, Trivia on page.4)

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See the whole story at:
SolantAmity.com

The First Marines to “land” in Monrovia

The full life of Colonel John W. Ripley—Continued from page 2.

ROTC at Virginia Military Institute until his retirement in June 1992. He went on to become the President, and later Chancellor, of Southern Virginia College until 1996 when he moved on to assume responsibility as the President of the Hargrave Military Academy.

In June 1999, Col. Ripley returned to the Marine Corps fold when he became the Director of Marine Corps History and Museums, and Director of the Marine Corps Historical Center.

Col. Ripley is seen as the benchmark by which other Marines judge themselves, and he is the subject of, or mentioned, in more than 30 books on combat leadership and adversity. "The Bridge at Dong Ha," written by John G. Miller, recounts Ripley's exploits on Easter Day 1972, and he is

widely sought as a motivational speaker.

Given all of this history, this incredible record of achievement, a lengthy and near fatal battle with cancer in the late '90s, what must be a still staggering level of administrative responsibilities, Colonel John W. Ripley found the time to respond to a request by our former G-2-6 member, Vietnam veteran and retired Staff Sergeant Edward Hart. Thus, we acquired a copy of the roster we so urgently needed, if we were to put together the remnants of what is a so-long-ago disbanded unit.

My personal thanks therefore go to Colonel John W. Ripley and our very own solo-circumnavigator, the intrepid world traveling Marine, Staff Sergeant Edward Hart, Retired.

Semper fi to them both.

Forgotten Nippon Atrocities

On December 13th, 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army captured the then capital city of China, Nanking. Immediately upon entering the city, the troops with superior officer approval proceeded to murder nearly 400,000 of the city's occupants and rape an estimated 80,000 woman and children.

At one point, civilians and ex-soldiers of the Chinese Army were gathered together, their hands were bound and they were collectively marched to the outskirts of the city where they were systematically, in groups, raked with machine gun fire or individually: beheaded and/or otherwise victimized by Japanese samurai sword practices; used for bayonet practice [photos were first published in this country by Life magazine], doused with gasoline and set afire, beaten to death or buried alive. Two Japanese lieutenants maintained an ongoing competition to see who would be the first of them to behead 100 victims. Both reached their goal and kept right on going.

No Japanese government apology

has ever been forthcoming; indeed, to the contrary, much effort has been made to suppress its ever happening. Nothing of the matter is taught in Japan's schools. Public officials demanding that an apology be made to the Chinese have been assaulted and received death threats. As a matter of fact, in just



such a case, the equivalent of one city's mayor was shot by irate Japanese nationalists.

Much of the Nanking, China atrocities is chronicled in a photographic history entitled "The Rape of Nanking - An Undeniable History in Photographs," by Shi Young and James Yin and published by Innovative Publishing Group of Chicago, in 1997. It's available from any bookstore. Many of the photographs were taken by Japanese soldiers, wishing to have a memento of their activities. Definitely a "must read" for America's anti-multiculturalist community.

For more on Japanese atrocities and still more splendid historical multi-cultural events, proceed to: <http://wakingbear.com/mlticult.htm> on your computer.

Mailed as a black on white copy, a fully colorized version can be found at our website, where on page one you'll find a link to a downloadable version.

I hope you've enjoyed this latest effort. Send in your stories by e-or-snail mail to make for an even better next issue.

Semper Fi; Ed Shea

Enlightening Odds and Ends for your reading pleasure:



Recognize any part of this?

George Bitsoli, inveterate historian and political analyst, remains ever vigilant to the vagaries of despots both home and abroad. If not, as he is, comfortably ensconced in CA, George would be in Louisiana holding James Carville's feet to the flames. Ooorah!

Trevor and Ruth Davies are moving to Boynton Beach, Florida, sometime in June of '05. "We've had enough snow and northeast taxes for six lifetimes," explained Trevor.

TRIVIA: In the movie "The Outsider," who was it that portrayed

Ira Hayes? (See answer 5, in Trivia)

Ed Hart, after a recent refitting of his sailboat, will be taking "Hooligan" and himself to the Chesapeake region in late May.

Ken Kollai took early retirement in March '04 and, except for last years hurricanes, he and Charlotte have been enjoying life.

Though near badly hit Punta Gorda they sustained no damage.

Dick Landry has made a move to the Atlanta, GA area. Permanent contact information was not yet available at the time of publication.

Bill and Donna Frenz are looking forward to the upcoming graduations of two grand-children: 13 year old Brittney and 17 year old Allison. Congratulations to ALL responsible.



Ira Hayes, John Bradley, John Wayne and Rene Gagnon—"Sands Of Iwo Jima"

Trivia Answers:

1. The 4th and 5th Divisions landed on D-day. The 3rd Division was held in reserve.
2. All were Marines
3. More than, 2,400 B-29s carrying 27,000 crewman made unscheduled landings on the island.
4. There were six men. Five Marines (Hayes, Block, Gagnon, Strank, Sousley), three of whom died before battle's end. And, a Corpsman (Bradley.)
5. Tony Curtis