



39TH ENGINEER BATTALION ALUMNI NEWS



www.39thengrbn.com

May, 2023

President.....	John Lewis	Historian.....	Jerry Bright
Vice President.....	OPEN	Member at Large.....	Dave Tanner
Secretary.....	Jim Lewis	Member at Large.....	Mike Shaw
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Chaplain.....	Fr. Vasilios (Billy) Bassakyros	Past President.....	Bruce Fonest
Sgt. at Arms.....	Sam Smith	Reunion Chair.....	Diane Helser & Gary Hoffman
Webmaster.....	Walter Lester	Newsletter.....	Diane Helser

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'm sitting here trying to figure out how I am going to fill a big man's shoes. Friday April 14, Diane Helser, Becky and Jim Shamblin, my wife Brenda and I attended the celebration of life for Bill Ray. I have never been more impressed in my life. The caravan of about 30 motorcycles and 30 cars left the Legion Post with a police escort to the National Cemetery. They stopped all the side street traffic so that we did not have to stop. When we arrived at the National Cemetery we went to the chapel and there was a ceremony there by the Cemetery Honor Guard and by the Legion Post. We returned to the Post where they had their Ceremony where they retired Bill's membership by burning his card in a steel pot. Then their ceremony, which was very well done, gave a tribute to Bill for starting a Veterans Day Parade in Downtown Mansfield, starting pellet gun shooting in the ROTC in the local school, and resurrecting Boys State in the High School. It was a very nicely done ceremony and tribute; I liked it so well that I am going to try and start it at our post.

As I sit here, the sun is shining, the grass is growing, the flowers are budding out and I'm sneezing, another beautiful spring day in Southern Indiana. I hope everyone's spring is starting without the danger of strong storms. We had to drive through a storm around Memphis on our way home from Bill's Memorial Service.

While we were in Mansfield, Diane, Jim, and I put our heads together and came up with solutions to a few things that needed attention. I'm glad that Diane

is taking care of a lot of the details. We are looking forward to the next reunion in Albuquerque; I hope you can come.

Once again, we will remember our fallen brothers since our last reunion. If you know of someone that you would like to have recognized, please send me an e-mail with the member's name, unit, dates of service and date of passing.

We are at the Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown, 2600 Louisiana Blvd. N.E., Albuquerque, NM. Phone numbers and website reservations are listed later in this newsletter. Our reunion dates are September 20th thru September 24th, 2023. Rates of \$139.00 are available 3 days before and 3 days after for those wanting an extended stay.

Once again, we need to mention, and can't emphasize enough - "if you have the need for special accommodations such as handicap accessibility, it is your responsibility to take care of that with the hotel when you make your reservations"; we can't do that for you.

We'll need items for the shotgun raffles, so please see if there is something you can donate. Diane will have the reunion information in this newsletter as she has all the information and I would just get it all wrong.

Since I'm new to this, I'll need all the help that I can get and I am sure to make a lot of mistakes. BROTHERS THEN, BROTHERS NOW, BROTHERS FOREVER

John Lewis
Plt Ldr D Co 3rd Plt and Field XO C Co 1971
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A SOLDIER DIED TODAY

He was getting old and his hair was falling fast,
 And he sat around telling stories of the past.
 Of a war that he had fought in and the deeds that he had done,
 In his exploits with buddies; they were the heroes, every one.
 And though sometimes to his neighbors, his tales became a joke,
 All his buddies listened, for they knew whereof he spoke.
 But we'll hear of these tales no longer, for he has passed away,
 And the world's a little poorer, for a soldier died today.

No, he won't be mourned by many, just his friends, children, and wife,
 For he lived a very quiet sort of ordinary life.
 He held a job, raised a family, quietly going on his way,
 And the world won't note his passing; though a soldier died today.

When politicians leave this earth, their bodies lie in state,
 While thousands note their passing and proclaim that they were great.
 Papers tell of their life stories from the time that they were young,
 But the passing of a soldier goes unnoticed and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution to the welfare of our land,
 Some jerk who breaks his promises and cons his fellow man?
 Or the ordinary fellow, who in times of war and strife,
 Goes off to serve his country and offer up his life?
 The politician's stipend and the style in which he lives,
 Are sometimes disproportionate to the service that he gives,
 While the ordinary soldier, who offered up his all,
 Is paid off with a medal and perhaps a pension small.

It's so easy to forget them, for it was so long ago,
 That the husbands, sons, and fathers went to battle, but we know
 It was not the politicians, with their compromise and ploys,
 Who won for us the freedom that our country now enjoys.
 Should you find yourself in danger with your enemies at hand,
 Would you really want some cop-out politician with his waffling stand?
 Or would you want a soldier who has sworn to defend,
 His home, his kin, and country, and would fight until the end?

He was just a common soldier, and his ranks are growing thin,
 But his presence should remind us, we may need his like again.
 For when countries are in conflict, then we find the soldiers part,
 Is to clean up all the troubles that the politicians start.
 If we cannot do him honor while he's here to receive the praise,
 Then at least let's give him homage at the ending of his days.

Perhaps a simple headline in the paper might say,
 "Our Country is in Mourning, for a Soldier Died Today."



THE VIETNAM WALL AND WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND –

Considered by many as the most moving war memorial in Washington D.C., the Vietnam Wall is a study in solemn dignity. The design is both striking and symbolic, and the most visited in the area. From over 1400 submissions, Yale architecture student Maya Lin's was chosen by the selection committee. This amazing visual creation touches the viewer on so many different levels.

And visitors respond in a myriad of ways, with the most common being to leave behind a significant gift. Since dedicated in 1982, more than 400,000 items have been collected by the National Park Service. The Service is charged with the responsibility to collect, curate, and administer items left. This was an unexpected phenomenon, and at first these were accumulated in a storeroom that quickly overflowed. Anything voluntarily "abandoned" is deemed the property of the Service, and park staff may choose to save items or respectfully dispose of them.

In addition to the expected remembrances such as photos, crosses, flags, MIA bracelets, caps, boots, dog tags, award medals, bibles, unit symbols and rank badges, lighters, baseballs and other sports items, stuffed animals, etc., many unusual gifts are left as well. Among these: Toy airplanes and other military equipment, a baby sweater, roller skates, 45 RPM records, socks, a Kimono, bicycles, and even a prosthetic leg! The largest piece was a real motorcycle!

In the past, some have been on public display, most notably at the Smithsonian, but currently there is no permanent museum. However, there are several online virtual displays. One of the better ones is: nps.gov/vive/learn/collections. It is well worth a visit and prepare to be spiritually moved.

The Vietnam Wall and these treasures are an integral part of the American fabric of life. Shall we never forget the sacrifices made for the benefit of us all.

Respectfully submitted –

Mike Shaw

C Co. 70-71

nsxtarga@bellsouth.net

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

An Officer and A Gentlemen!

My heart goes out to Carolyn Ray, for the loss of her best friend and husband. From all the interaction we have had in the past, I can say they are two peas in a pod. Because of that I can understand the mutual attraction and love they had for each other. As Christians, we believe Bill is still alive in Christ waiting for Judgment Day. I can hardly

imagine Bill having any difficulty or trouble with that by the way they handled the many aspects of their life together.

Furthermore, we were all drawn together many years ago to fight for our country when it called us to duty. As you know we all left mothers, wives, children, girlfriends, and families behind to stand together in a foreign land where we gave our life for what we believe in and love.

I was blessed to be with three great battalions in my military life and career. It was in the 39th I realized the depth of what comradery is about during my tour in Vietnam. I spent many nights riding shotgun on Earth Movers and Dump trucks while getting to know the operators. Guys like Ray, Canci, and Boney, always made the duty less frightening because of their focus on the task at hand.

On the other hand, most of the guys were from the South and Midwest. So many times I could not decipher a word they were saying. When I met Bill and Carolyn for the first time after so many years at a Reunion, I had a flashback to those days where I needed an interpreter to figure out what they were talking about. I made fun of their accent, and they made fun of mine (which I don't have), the same way we did in Nam. When people can make fun of each other a great bond is created, and not the other way around as you see today.

Moreover, throughout the many years of our Reunions, Bill and Carolyn along with many others, helped to grow our Association and participation in our Reunions. Under their leadership, we could always expect a successful Reunion that brought together our Brotherhood and Sisterhood. I hope and pray that the 39th will continue their legacy and commitment to serve the Brothers and Sisters in the future.

Likewise, we have seen many of our Brothers and Sisters Fall Asleep in The Lord and now we weep the passing of our President and American Legion Post Commander Bill Ray, whose name will be added to the List of the Fallen. I thank God that Bill did not suffer and deteriorate over a prolonged period of time. This may sound insensitive to Carolyn and the family, but as a priest, I see so many people go through years of the dehumanizing effects that cancer ushers in on them and their loved ones. Bill deserved a passing equal to his devotion to Carolyn, our Country, and the 39th, with honor, dignity, and respect.

Finally, he is now in a place where there is no pain, sorrow or sighing, and resting in the bosom of Abraham and numbering him among the holy ones. May your memory be eternal our brother, deemed happy and ever to be remembered. God Bless You Bill, you have been a true brother and friend, we will all truly miss you! My deepest sympathies to Carolyn, family, friends, and the American Legion Post he loved. God now has another earth mover in His Battalion if needed!

Father Billy Chaplain 39th

REUNION 2023

It's time to make your reservation for our next reunion. The deadline is August 18, 2023 and it's sneaking up fast! We've got everything set to make this a fantastic event. The cost is \$139 plus state and local taxes per night. The reunion will be held starting Wednesday, September 20th with our traditional Meet & Greet event at 5:00 pm. The reunion runs from Wednesday through Sunday, September 24th when we close everything up right after breakfast, say our goodbye's, and start planning our next reunion.

This year's reunion will be held at the Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown, 2600 Louisiana Blvd NE in downtown Albuquerque. It's within walking distance to many restaurants and two malls (which the Sheraton van will take you to at no cost if you prefer not to walk). It will also take you to Old Town Albuquerque at no cost.

Because we set aside 3 days before and 3 days after, the website shows all the dates available for our reunion group. If you are attending only the reunion, simply choose Wednesday, the 20th through Sunday, the 24th. Or, you can call the reservation line at **800-325-3535** or local **505-830-5781**. Tell them you are part of the **39th Engineer Army Battalion** to receive our discounted rate. That rate is also in effect for 3 days prior and 3 days after the reunion if you'd like to make a full vacation out of the trip. You must use a major credit card to guarantee the first night room deposit (but will be refunded if you cancel the reservation). The deadline for reservations is August 18, 2023. Please make your reservations even if you're only considering attending. You have until September 18, 2023 to cancel without being charged. Here's the link:

[Book your group rate for 39th Engineer Army Battalion Reunion 2023](#)

For special requests on reservations, or need help with the link, please do not hesitate to call the hotel directly at 505-830-5781 and ask for Nichole in the Sales Office.

39th Engineer Army Battalion Reunion 2023

Start Date: Sunday, September 17, 2023

End Date: Tuesday, September 26, 2023

Last Day to Book: Monday, August 18, 2023

PLEASE SELECT YOUR DATES USING THE LINK, ADDITIONAL DATES BEFORE & AFTER ARE OFFERED.

- **Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown for 139 USD per night**
- [Book your group rate for 39th Engineer Army Battalion Reunion 2023](#)

We're planning to visit the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History. This brilliant Smithsonian affiliate traces the history of the atomic age and how clear science has dramatically influenced the course of modern history.



Exhibits include replicas of Little Boy and Fat Man (the bombs dropped on Japan at the end of World War II), a compelling display about the difficult decision to drop atomic bombs, and a look at how atomic culture has dovetailed with pop culture. The campus also contains the 9-acre Heritage Park, which has a B-29 and other mega-airships, plus rockets, missiles, cannons, and a nuclear sub sail. One highlight is the restored 1942 Plymouth that was used to transport the plutonium core of "the Gadget" (as that first weapon was known) down from Los Alamos to the Trinity Site.

After the Nuclear Museum, we'll have just enough time to stop at Tin Can Alley for lunch on your own. This is a grouping of 10 different restaurants where you can choose something light like a juice bar to a brew pub. You'll find pizza, burgers, Latin and Vietnamese cuisine, and a dessert bar.



We have also scheduled a visit to the Sandia Peak Aerial Tram where the view at the top is spectacular. This is a tram with up to 30 people. It is the longest aerial tram in the country and travels 2.7 miles through the mountains to an elevation of 10,378 feet.

Friday is our free day. You can simply sit and visit in the hospitality room, take the shuttle to Old Town, shop at either of the two malls that are within walking distance (or take the shuttle)...OR...join us for a hot air balloon ride!

Albuquerque is known for hot air balloons and holds an annual Festival every October. The cost is \$180 per person. World Balloon picks us up at the hotel and takes us to the loading point. We ride for approximately an hour, then touch back down for a champagne toast and light appetizers. **Due to high demand for hot air balloon rides, the deadline is July 24th.**





**39th Engineer Battalion Alumni
2023 Annual Reunion
Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown
2600 Louisiana Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM**

**Payment Deadline: August 18, 2023
Hot Air Balloon Deadline: July 24, 2023**

Name _____ for name badge _____

Spouse/Guest name _____ for name badge _____

Unit and Years in country _____ E-mail address _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Emergency contact & Phone _____

Registration fee: _____ \$50.00 member _____ \$45.00 Spouse/Guest Total \$ _____

Member Gift: Windbreaker Sizes: S - M - LG - XL - XXL - XXXL (circle one)

(Registration includes member gift, hospitality supplies, Meet/Greet party, beverages & snacks)

Special requests for beverages or snacks? _____

9/21 Nuclear Museum & Sandia Tram \$60.00/person _____ number attendees Total \$ _____
www.nuclearmuseum.org and www.sandiapeak.com

9/22 Hot Air Balloon Ride \$180.00/person _____ number attendees Total \$ _____
www.worldballoon.com (Deadline for sign-up is July 24, 2023)

Banquet: \$55.00/person _____ number attendees Total \$ _____

Menu Selection includes Dinner Salad, Dinner Rolls, Seasoned Vegetable Medley, Appropriate Starch, Iced Tea, and Coffee with 39th Sheet Cake for dessert.

Menu Choices: (Choose one per person)

1. Roast Beef with a Wild Mushroom Sauce _____
2. Chicken Marsala with a Marsala Mushroom Sauce _____
3. Grilled Salmon with a Lemon Dill Sauce _____

Total enclosed (min. deposit required to hold all selected events \$100/or pay in full) Total \$ _____
(Fully refundable if canceled prior to August 18, 2023)

If paying by credit card: Circle one: VISA MasterCard Discover American Express

_____ Expiration Date: ____ / ____ 3-digit Code on Back of Card: _____

American Express 4-Digit Code on Front of Card _____

Describe any special needs (i.e., room amenities, mobility issues, dietary considerations, etc.)

Arriving via (check one) _____ flying _____ driving

Mail reservation Form and payment to: Diane Helser
941 W. Rio Guaymas
Green Valley, AZ 85614

Make checks payable to: 39th ENG BN
OR EMAIL TO: dianemhelsers@gmail.com



39th Engineer Battalion Alumni
 941 W. Rio Guaymas
 Green Valley, AZ 85614

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IF I ONLY KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW!

This article is for anyone that lost a friend while serving in the military.

The few of you that know my story know I lost a friend in Vietnam. Jose Ruiz served in Company C from 4/24/68 to 9/16/68 honorably as the supply clerk for most of his tour. Jose pestered the command for weeks before he was allowed to go on mine-sweep with us and on his first time in the field, he was taken from us by an IED (Bouncing Betty).

Throughout my life he has been in my thoughts and prayers during moments of reflection. I often thought of contacting his family to let them know of his patriotism and bravery but never did. Now that I'm officially an old soldier, I continue to try to contact his family to no avail Henry (Teeberry) Barkman, Company C 67/68, henrybarkman@netzero.net, 562-667-6765 (Cell)

and that, my friends, is the point of this article. For me, there probably will never come a time when I will be able to tell them of his bravery and his friendship and that is something I must bear. Please, if you have someone in your past or present who has made an impact in your life, whether they be military or not, seek out their loved ones and let them know what that person means to you. It will bring you and them Grace, Peace, and Love. That is what I know now!

2023 39TH ENGINEER ALUMNI ASSN TENTATIVE ITINERARY

Mon	Early arrivals	Fri	8:00-9:30am Breakfast
Sept 18	Meet with hotel staff	Sept 22	Free Day or Hot Air Balloon Ride
Tue	Officers arrivals		Hospitality Room Open All Day
Sept 19	Set up Hospitality Room	Sat	8:00-9:30am Breakfast
	Hospitality Room Opens	Sept 23	8:00-9:30am Breakfast
Wed	10:00am Exec Board Meeting		10:30am General Membership Meeting in Hosp. Room
Sept 20	12:00pm Registration		Open afternoon for individual sightseeing
	Hospitality Room Opens		6:00pm Social Hour Cash Bar
	5:00pm Meet and Greet Pizza Party		Hospitality Room Closes for Social Hour and Banquet
Thurs	8:00-9:30am Breakfast		7:00pm Banquet and Cash Bar
Sept 21	10:00am Load buses for tour of Nuclear Science & History Museum		8:00pm Blue Bull presentation, announcement
	11:30am Load buses for Tin Can Alley		Hospitality Room opens following Banquet
	12:00pm Lunch on your own		Raffles/Silent Auction Winners announced.
	12:30pm Load buses for Sandia Peak	Sun	8:00-9:30am Breakfast
		Sept 24	8:00am-Noon Clean-up and Farewell in Hospitality Room