



THE LEGION POST

OTIS SAMPSON POST 59 STOUGHTON, WI
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VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2012

Commander's Report

2011-2012 OFFICERS

Commander

Sonny Swangstu

1st Vice Commander

Steve Grady

2nd Vice Commander

Larry Ambrose

3rd Vice Commander

Service Officer

Dan Call

Sgt. at Arms

Ken Schieldt

Finance Officer

Jim Oler

Historian

Odean Teigen

Adjutant

Dennis Rodenkirch

Judge Advocate

Terry McCardle

Chaplain

Monte Whitford



Hello Comrades,

Happy New Year to All!

I am writing this article after the loss of the Packer's game. Uff da – not so good...maybe next year – Yah Yah. The Badgers and Packers did not play well at all at the end.

Our raffle is going quite well and I believe most of the tickets are gone. Check with Steve Grady for any available. Dan Call has donated one ticket to be given away at our next Post dinner. One lucky winner will be drawn from the dinner guests. So, don't miss out on a chance to have your name put in the Post drawing for the guest drawing. You could be the winner of one cash prize.

Our addition is coming along in

hopes of being completed by our cleanup day which is Saturday, February 4 (as noted in the Auxiliary President's article). Thank you to Jim Oler (our new Finance Officer) for his donation of most of the floor tile. We have used it in both bathrooms.

Another thank you to Asleson's True Value Hardware for all the paint they donated. Post volunteers and outsiders as well deserve a big hand for helping out on the project. Ken Stelzer, Lyman Hawkinson, and Al Phelps were working with me most everyday since we started. Without everyone's help, this project would not have been possible. We sure miss Al Phelps around the Post. Get Well Soon! We will try and send some pictures of the addition to Al when we are finished. The Post thanks each and every one of you!

Our Friday Fish Fry is doing well. Mike Dickman (our cook) and the Friday night help are doing a fine job.

Let's keep our success going by asking for your help once every couple of months. Please volunteer and get a free fish dinner also.

The Madison Mallards Baseball organization has invited us to join them at a game this summer. It would be a good family event, so let's keep this in mind. I will have more details at a later date.

Comments or suggestions are welcome, so stop in and visit the Post and check out our new addition.

Finally, many thanks to John Christopherson for his many contributions as 3rd Vice Commander. He has resigned to care for his wife, Kathi.

Commander Sonny

Auxiliary

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873-9428

Vice President

Karen Whitford

873-4020

Secretary

Lisa Olson – 873-8924

Treasurer

Lynn Robertson

873-4889

Chaplain

Marlene Bierman

873-7397

Sgt. at Arms

Mary Copley

873-5804

Historian

Kathy Teigen

873-7518

Membership

Lisa Olson – 873-8924

Junior Leader

Jona Chat – 622-4574

Auxiliary News



Hello to all,

I would like to start the New Year off with a prayer for Elvera and Al Phelps. The trip down South turned into a scary thing for Elvera with Al's serious open heart surgery. Being away from family in a time like that can be quite an adjustment for the patient as well as the caretaker. We wish them all the best and hope he will be able to travel when they decide to come home. Get well wishes from all your Stoughton Legion friends.

I would like to thank everyone that made the New Year's celebration at the Post a success. I didn't mean to get the flu and miss all the fun! I am finally back to normal after two weeks of no energy and lying low. Also, thanks to everyone for their help in trying to keep the Post half-ways clean with all the dust and dirt that is being tracked inside from the new addition. The color scheme tuned out pretty well. We mixed and matched and became real creative! **I would like to schedule a cleanup day on Saturday, February 4th 8-12:00.** Hopefully by then everything will be completed in our new addition, so please set this morning aside and I would like to see as many of the members, (both men and ladies) helping. This is plenty of advance notice.

and services for the Veterans from **April 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012.** The Department wants this information sooner than the March 31, so you will have to do a guess on the remainder of March as to what you will be volunteering for the period of time March 1 through March 31. I have copies of year-end reports if you need one. I can send an attachment of one by e-mail, pick one up at the Post or you can also e-mail the info you have and I will fill one out.

My e-mail address is hemi-rt@charter.net

The report should include: *Hours volunteered, dollars personally spent, home service (any projects you have done to help Veterans at home or at the Legion), field service (physically helping a Veteran from the outside not including a relative) such as helping at the VA Hospital, taking a Veteran to the doctor or doing visits to their homes, making Veteran's meals, etc.*

Examples for volunteered hours can be: *Poppies distributions, VA Ice cream Social, working with care packages sent to troops overseas, welcome home events regarding Veterans, making cards for Veterans, fluffing poppies, doing fund-raisers, breakfast working hours, interviewing the history of a Veteran.* I am sure there are some I haven't thought of that others can come up with for this part of your reports. So, please mark this as a project to complete. It will make my job easier. Thank you!

Linda Swangstu
Auxiliary President

CALENDER OF EVENTS

December 31 - Northern Lights

8:00 pm – 1:00 am

January 24 - Legion Dinner - 6:30 pm

January 28 - Mikey Foss Cherokee Band

7:00 pm – 11:00 pm

February 19 - Legion Breakfast – 7:00 am

February 28 - Legion Dinner – 6:30 pm

Event Pricing

Post Dinner: 6:30 pm \$11.00

Breakfast: 7:00-11:30 am
\$7.00 adults, \$4.00 children

CHAPLAINS CORNER

STAY BLESSED

When I pay for my gas at the fuel pump, I don't typically pay too much attention to the messages that cross the little screen. Do I want a car wash? No. Do I need a receipt? Usually not. Would I like to apply for a company credit card? Definitely not.

But one time was different. It had been a long and stressful week, followed by an out-of-town weekend meeting. I still had several hours to drive, and I'd been pushing the car to the limit. The needle was on empty when I pulled into the gas station. I swiped my credit card and pumped gas as usual. And then, after I'd returned the nozzle to its place, I saw the message flash across the screen; "Thank you for shopping at the Kenosha Truck Stop. Stay blessed!

Gas pump evangelism? Not what I expected, but exactly what I needed. It wasn't just the blessing for the rest of my journey that struck me. It was that word "stay". It reminded me that I was already blessed, that God's blessings had been with me all throughout that difficult week. I think of that message now almost every time I buy gas. It refuels me, not just my car.

FAITHFUL GOD HELP ME RECOGNIZE YOU AS
MY CONSTANT COMPANION ON LIFE'S
JOURNEY. AMEN

*If you know of anyone who is hospitalized, or in need
please contact Monte at 873-4020.*

The Wall- Vietnam

Interesting Veterans Statistics off the Vietnam Memorial Wall

There are 58,267 names now listed on that polished black wall, including those added in 2010.

The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized. It is hard to believe it is 36 years since the last casualties.

The first known casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, of North Weymouth, Mass. Listed by the U.S. Department of Defense as having been killed on June 8, 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with that of his son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, who was killed on Sept. 7, 1965.

There are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall.

39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger.

8,283 were just 19 years old.

The largest age group, 33,103 were 18 years old.

12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old.

5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old.

One soldier, PFC Dan Bullock was 15 years old.

997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam.

1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam.

31 sets of brothers are on the Wall.

Thirty-one sets of parents lost two of their sons.

54 soldiers attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia.

8 Women are on the Wall, nursing the wounded.

244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War; 153 of them are on the Wall.

Beallsville, Ohio with a population of 475 lost 6 of her sons.

West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita in the nation. There are 711 West Virginians on the Wall.



Douglas S. Olson

U.S. Navy - Vietnam Era

I was born on June 20, 1948 in Stoughton, WI, graduated from Stoughton High School in 1966, and lived with my parents in the suburbs of Cooksville until I enlisted in the Navy and entered Great Lakes Naval Training Center on December 18, 1966. Since a lot of my training was during what was called the Blizzard of '67, I had become accustomed to a cold weather regimen. Naturally, the Navy assigned me to the USS *Valley Forge* – LPH-8, based in Long Beach, California, being readied for a nine-month tour off the coast of Vietnam.

In March 1967 I reported for duty and found the ship in drydock but it was finally set afloat in June 1967. LPH-8 (Landing Platform Helicopter) was commissioned in 1945, was 888 feet long, displaced 52,000 tons and had six 5-inch guns. In Vietnam it carried more than 1,200 Marines, 1,200 sailors, a squadron of helicopters, two surgical teams, and a large morgue cooler.

On November 10, 1967 we set sail, via Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines for the South China Sea. My duties in V-1 Division aboard the ship were to man a fire fighting control station, push helicopters for positioning on the hangar deck, and perform stretcher duty for the dead and wounded. I kept a diary of daily events and the following are entries from that log. I was 19 years old at the time.

Thursday, 21 December 1967 - 5 days at sea

Operation Fortress Ridge, our first day of operations: we're somewhere off the coast of the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) between North and South Vietnam. At 0900 we started launching Marines for a strike near Dong Ha. The USS *Newport News* has been using her 8-inch guns to shell the VC and by 1700 we had launched almost 1,000 Marines plus artillery pieces.

India Company, which led the strike, was dropped into an area that hadn't been bombed. They were hit the minute they landed. This evening they brought back more than 25 stretcher cases and many walking wounded. One man was brought back in a cargo net in pieces and was taken down to the morgue cooler. We've had 2 KIA, 2 DOA, and 2 die in surgery. From what I heard, there were 12 more dead still on the beach. I'll probably know tomorrow. Sleep is getting scarce around here. One-half of the hangar deck crew is on deck 24-hours-a-day. Tomorrow night is my turn. Reveille has sounded at 0500 and before for the past week. The Vietnam coast is approximately five miles this morning.

Friday, 29 December 1967 - 13 days at sea

Today was very overcast with occasional rain and high seas. Flew very few flights except for emergencies. I

bought a Buck knife for \$10.55 this noon. About 4 or 5 more KIAs came in.

Daily Working Party: carried the boots, helmet liners, & other articles taken off the dead Marines to the fantail to be thrown overboard. Liners with bullet holes in them, boots held the stench of the dead, and blood soaked clothes all went to the deep. The morgue has bodies piled high with the smell filling Hangar Bay Three.

Saturday, 27 January 1968 - 42 days at sea

I got on a stretcher bearing team to carry 8 dead Marines to a helo to be taken to Da Nang. Jack, Morales, Cooper, and I got the last stretcher in the procession. The stench that rose from the plastic bags was sickening. We piled the bodies on top of each other to make room for the other gear and supplies.

Thursday, 8 February 1968 - 54 days at sea

Some new Marines were brought on board today – 140 of them to replace the old ones. They've been in the Marine Corps for three months, just out of boot camp. Word is that they aren't expected to go into the battle zone with much more than a 50-50 chance of living. I got in a fight with Toole. The tension of the days at sea is starting to show.

Saturday, 4 May 1968 - 8 days at sea

Today was a day of color. The purple hue of the mountains seemed to rub off onto the western sky. The beach itself is indistinct and the ever present haze obscures the water line. The sunlight seems to come from everywhere as the rays are reflected in the mist. The air is charged with a static caused by the constant crackle of the H-46's and the low thudding of the bombing on the beach. Put all these things together and what have you got – another day gone by, another day shorter.

Continued on page 6



Membership Report

As of December 10, we stand at 92% have renewed their dues. If you haven't paid your dues by the end of December, you will be considered late. Please renewal today if you haven't.

We have 10 new members who have transferred in from either the State holding post AD-2930 or other posts. Welcome to all of them!

Orland Elvekrog
Paul Rodgers
Bernald Hron
William Ray
Paul Splitter
Philip Peterson
Donald Dobeck
Donald Gruenberg
John Jay

Thanks,
Dennis Rodenkirch



Special thanks to Ginny Hanson for making the cover for our meat slicer!



AMERICAN LEGION BAR 803 N. Page St. Stoughton, WI

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Bar open to serve you Wednesday - Sunday

Wednesday & Thursday: 3 – p pm or later

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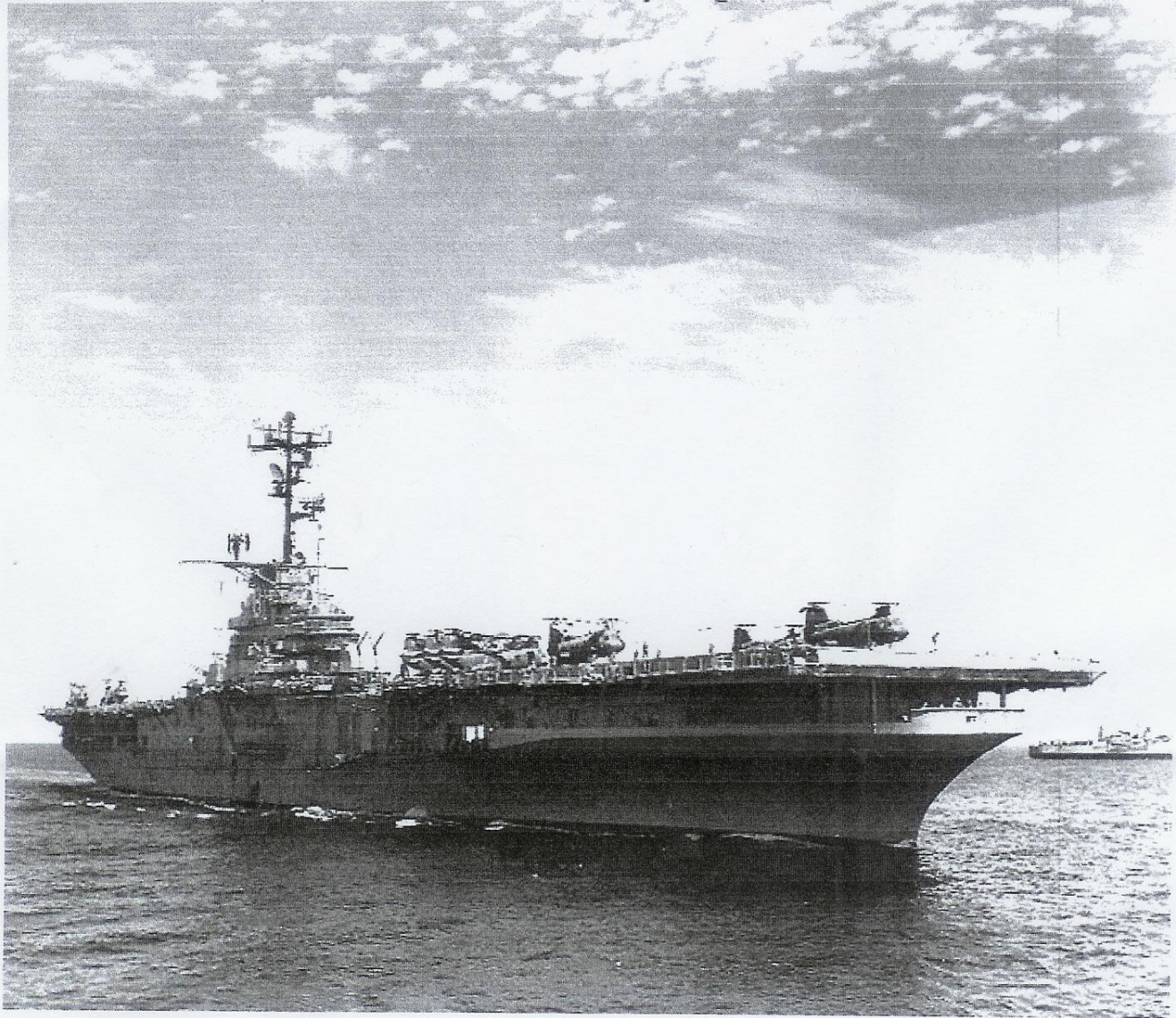
Sunday: 11:30 am – 6 pm or later

Wednesday Ladies Night

\$.50 off any Ladies drinks



Photo # NH 96947 USS Valley Forge (LPH-8), circa 1968



USS VALLEY FORGE

*This is the ship Doug Olson was assigned to during his service
in the Vietnam Conflict.*

Continued from page 3

My mother saved all of my letters to her from Vietnam and parts of one letter sort of put the nine-month cruise in a nutshell:

Letter to Mom

Hi Mom, 27 Dec. '67

We're operating just south of the DMZ about 2 miles. We had our first helo shot down today with 15 casualties in board plus the crew. Don't know how they came out but I don't think it was good. This morning they brought on 3 prisoners. One of the two men was on a stretcher but the other one was walking. The third POW was a girl. From what I saw of her, she didn't look too old. She and the other man were taken down to the brig for right now. A lot of casualties have been brought on board with probably more this evening.

28 Dec. '67

Last night was really bad. There were 17 killed in action by 10 PM and brought on board. As of 0600 this morning 6 more had died. It was really terrible in Bay Three on the hangar deck. Dead and wounded were all over the deck. The Chaplain was up last night real late. There are still more than 100 wounded in sick bay and they're running out of room to put them. There's a hospital ship here plus the *Iwo Jima* LPH-2 and about five other ships. The destroyers have been shelling the area almost all day and night.

Yesterday reveille sounded at 5 AM and we finally knocked off at 10 PM, but it was almost midnight before we got everything straightened out. This morning reveille sounded again at 5 AM for V-1 Division. There are a lot of tired guys this morning. We've had about 15 casualties come in this morning and its only 9:30. They just flew on some more a minute ago. The battle is near Hue.

The beaches of Vietnam are just beautiful. The pilots say they are some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. I believe it. The white sand stretches for miles from north to south as far as the eye can see. It's too bad that war has to scar this beautiful country. If you could only see it you'd know what I mean. We're about three miles off the coast now and as the VC are pushed back we'll probably move closer.

Tell Rick the chow is great. That is if you like recombined milk (sterilized), powdered eggs, and Kool-Aid that tastes like it was made with sewer water. How the Navy can make Kool-Aid taste bad is beyond me. The meat is good if you can get your fork into it, to say nothing about your knife, and the potatoes are good if ya like em charred or else raw. I really haven't got much to gripe about though. At least I've got three meals a day and a rack to sleep in at night. That's better than what those Marines are getting over on the beach.

Going to have to stop for now, we're getting ready to move birds. With Love, Doug

From January 1, to March 31, 1968 alone, we handled 2,500 casualties. Our tour was during the Tet Offensive and it didn't take long to become numb to the entire situation. For me it became like watching a movie and I tried to detach myself from the carnage around me. For a lot of us it was the only way to keep our sanity.

I didn't learn until years later that we had been exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange. In 1968 the use of it was at its peak, with the DMZ receiving some of the heaviest (and indiscriminant) saturations of the war. It didn't help that the military was using concentrations of 8 to 30 times that which was recommended by the chemical companies. Last year the government conceded that Agent Orange was linked to heart disease and that I and hundreds like me would receive care and compensation for our condition.

On July 4, 1968 we left the combat zone and headed for the Long Beach, via Hong Kong, Yokosuka (Japan), and Hawaii. The plan was to make a stop in San Francisco but anti-war protesters had threatened to dump garbage on US warships passing under the Golden Gate Bridge. So to avoid any confrontations the idea was scrapped. Welcome home.

When we were back in Long Beach, a lot of us rented lockers in town to store civilian clothes, since "civvies" weren't allowed aboard ship. Once ashore, we changed out of our uniforms and tried to blend in as well as we could but at times that didn't work either. People in uniform weren't exactly popular at that time in some areas.

In November 1968 I transferred to AZ school in Memphis, TN and then ended my military service at NAS Key West as a Third Class Petty Officer (E-4). I was honorably discharged in August 1970 having been awarded the Vietnam Service medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal and the perfunctory "Gee Dunk Medal" (AKA National Defense Medal). Note: A Gee Dunk was like a PDQ store on board ship except you couldn't buy gas or beer.

It was in August 1970 that I was finally able to blend in with the general population and since that time I have been blessed with a wonderful wife (Lisa) of 27 years, three great sons (Todd, Kevin, and Patrick) and five beautiful grandchildren. I'm a member of American Legion Post 59 and also a life member of VFW Post 328.

In a few short months in 1968 a 19-year-old farm boy from Stoughton, Wisconsin had his hero change from John Wayne to John Lennon. I have no regrets about my service in the Navy and in fact, have the military to thank for my Associates Degree, through the GI Bill. Finally, I would like to believe that the experience made me a better person with a greater appreciation for life and living.

God Bless America!

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