

Guys, I walked into the hotel lobby in Colorado Springs Tuesday around 4:30 PM. Already, there were 8-9 guys there, and all but one of them was from my platoon in Vietnam. I've never missed a national reunion, so I've seen them all before. But seeing them again is just as great. As it turned out there were over 20 of us there that evening and we all went to dinner together. That's always a fun time. Those of us who come early, for that Tuesday evening, always say, "I can't wait for the reunion to start tomorrow so we can have some fun, HA!" And we say it with a laugh, because we are already having so much fun it's hard to describe.

People arrived each of the following days until we had 230 people for our banquet night dinner and program. Some of those were our current soldiers from Ft Carson and their dates/wives. I believe the total count of our guys attending was 120, and most bring their wives/friends.

There were 16 guys from my time in Vietnam, my exact platoon, and another 17 guys that I knew well from my company in Vietnam 66-67. So that's a really great reunion for me. But I've made so many good friends with the guys who came later because I've attended all the national reunions that most all of them are my good friends.

We had some new attendees this year as we always do. We call them first timers, it's their first reunion. They are always special. If you ever get a chance to watch a first time meeting of two guys who were close in Vietnam but have never seen each other since then, well, it's just really one of those special times.

Although I'd seen both Picket and Alec White before, this was the first time they'd seen each other since Vietnam. Both of them were in the command group carrying the company radio and battalion radio for the captain. They spent a lot of time together. Anyway, I got to be there when they first met. In fact I walked in front of Picket so Alec wouldn't see him until I stepped out of the way. Alec got right up and gave Picket a hug, one of those "Oh, so special times."

To me, it really doesn't matter where the reunion is next time as long as we continue moving it around the country to give everyone a chance to attend without having the huge travel expense. Some of our guys just can't afford that. But we hope to see them when we are in their area.

By the way, our next reunion is in Washington DC. It's our second time there, we were there in 1997, and I'm already trying to put together something very special for that reunion. If I'm able to do it, and I think I will be, I'll get together with our current command group to make it happen.

This year we had a very special gift for everyone who attended. David DeMauro gave a CD to each of us. It's a remembrance of our service in Vietnam and of those we lost there. It's called APO 96385, the APO at Tay Ninh where David and the 68-69 guys were basecamped. But the remembrance is for all the years C3/22 served, and has the pictures of all our KIAs on it, except 1 or 2 that didn't get to David in time.

You know, we all went through a lot together in Nam. And this is why it's so special to see you guys again. But I have a goal in my life, and that is to see everyone I knew in Vietnam again before I die. You can all help me accomplish that by coming to DC in two years. Like I said, I'm planning a surprise for DC, something very special. You won't want to miss out on getting it.

Bill Schwindt