

WASHINGTON D.C. REUNION 2011

REUNION RECOLLECTIONS SENT TO NICK DRAGON FROM GARY DUNAGAN

10-12-11 Nick – thank you for your call the other day. Congratulations again on being our New President – and thanks for your willingness to serve.

First of all – let me start by saying the entire experience was Magical. In a word – I could say “Perfect”.

Buddy Sherry had called me years ago – and mentioned something about this – but for some reason I was never interested. He again called me earlier in the year and invited me to this re-union – and mentioned some of the guys in our Platoon who were expected to attend. I began thinking about it – and the more I thought – the more I wanted to attend. My wife – Colleen – encouraged me and that’s when I decided to sign up.

- We registered with the Hotel –and they were very pleasant
- I contacted Ruben Barkley and his wife – and they were “Perfect Hosts” and could not do enough to make this a pleasant experience.
- I did see Wayne Brown right after we got back – but had lost contact over the years.
- Don Nollmeyer – our Grenadier – called several years ago – and mentioned that he was raising “Beets” out in Montana.
- Buddy Sherry – Radio Operator – had previously called
- Shorty Menendez – “Tunnel Rat” - had called inviting us to a reunion.

As soon as we got there and registered – I decided to go downstairs to the reception and see if I could recognize anyone. As I walked into the reception room – I could see several people gathered around various tables – looking at what turned out to be photo albums. I continued to walk around – like I was lost – when one of the guys at a nearby table got up and walked over to me and gave me a “Big Bear hug” and said – “Welcome Home Dunagan”. It was Shorty Menendez – and he made me feel so Welcomed. He said to “Follow ME” and he would introduce me to some of the other guys in our Platoon – who were at another table nearby.

- There was Jim Cunningham & his wife Marty.
- Bob Bessette and his wife Carol.
- Terry Buchholz and his wife Susie. (I had seen her name on his Helmet many times)
- Buddy Sherry and his wife Dottie.
- The Dinner Cruise – very good meal & fellowship on the Potomac.
- The Service @ the Vietnam Memorial Wall. It was like a Funeral Service – and I was given (2) names to read off – Excellent job.
- The Banquet was superb. I am sorry one of the wives at our table got sick and had to leave early – Carol Bessette.

We enjoyed hearing the speakers at the Banquet – as everyone was so attentive. I especially enjoyed hearing from Capt. Don Haramoto. This was his First reunion – and he too had not wanted to attend a reunion – as it would remind him of experiences he didn't want to think about. He had wanted to forget about this time in his life as he felt responsible for those in his command. Well – he said he was so glad he did come back – as it was a Healing time for him – and everyone had made him feel so welcomed.

· And when I shared them with others who were there – like Cunningham who said – yes – and do you remember what else happened.... and I had never got this type of feedback.

- Cunningham said his claim to fame – is that he walked Point in the Bo Lo Woods – and lived to tell about it!!

· And how Sherry would call in the Choppers & Support – and how Doc Berger would make sure we had taken our Malaria tablets – remember the big Orange one.

· And when we were pinned down on Nui Ba Den – there was a Soldier right next to me who was struck in the head with a round – that knocked him to the ground. I had forgotten his name but he reminded me at the Reunion - Steve Todd. The round pierced his Helmet – and the Helmet saved his Life – and I know he's been saying "Thanks you Lord" ever since.

· And our Preacher gave a Sermon one Sunday about Battlefield Conversions. After the service – I went over to him and shared an experience I had on Nui Ba Den. Here again – one night while pinned down – with all the Rockets, Mortars, Machine Gun fire etc. being thrown at us – and wondering if the next explosion would be my last – I made a Deal with the Lord. I promised him that if he would help me to get out of there alive – I would Live for him. Well he did – and I have tried to remember. I also remember – the next day – Capt. Pride called us in for a briefing. He said – Sgt. Dunagan – your platoon is going to lead us out of here first thing in the morning. And we did – and the Lord brought us home Safely.

Well – fortunately – I did not earn the Purple Heart – as many did – but at the Re union – I did receive the "Red Ant Award" – which I proudly display in my Office. Thanks again to those involved with this.

Thanks again to all those involved – and we look forward to seeing you again in Orlando. Gary & Colleen Dunagan

- an inscription on a momenta I received upon leaving said it very well – "For those who fought for it – Life has a Flavor and Meaning – the Protected will never know". Brothers Forever –