

## Milwaukee Reunion Report From Bill Schwindt

Guys and gals, I've been home from the reunion for several days now and just got a reminder from Art Mandler that I haven't sent an email to everyone about the reunion. So here goes.

It was another great reunion, approximately 230 people attended the banquet and this includes women and children. Our best-attended reunion ever was DC in 97—250 people attended that banquet. And 235 attended St Louis in 95, so I think this puts Milwaukee in third—very close to a tie with Baton Rouge in 2001 at 225. All these figures are from memory and don't hold me to accuracy, please. The point isn't about numbers, although the more the merrier usually applies. It's really about the people who attend, the personal reunions that happen, and what people take home with them.

At one time in the hospitality room (I think it was Friday night) a feeling hit me strong as has happened before at these events. I saw groups of guys standing together, sitting, talking, laughing, and having fun. I saw no one by themselves; I saw no one not smiling. I saw no one not involved with their friends. That always gets to my heart because of my involvement with helping to put it all back together. So, at that moment I saw that it was working perfectly and I had to step out of the room for a moment, as I wouldn't want anyone to think anything was wrong while I shed some tears of joy at this success.

There were lots of first-timers attending this year, first reunion ever for them. And I got to personally witness several of those first-time reunions. (First time two guys have seen each other). One of those I witnessed up close was Oscar Harris and Jose Pina of 1st platoon 67-68. I saw instant recognition between the two, then big huge smiles, and hugs. Whoops, getting those tears again. But there were many first-time reunions (in each of the eras) and I didn't see them all, but know they were all similar to this one. By the way, Jose Pina can use our prayers as he is fighting some lumps in his throat.

The biggest group of first-time reunions was the 4.2 mortar platoon of HHC 2/12th. They had 26 people in attendance just by themselves. They've been working hard this past two years and completed finding all 40 members of that original platoon just in the last month before the reunion.

I brought up their success at our business meeting; they certainly had a higher percentage of "found" guys attending than we did. And I think the reason they were so successful is that for them it's all brand new. For two years now they have been talking on the phones as each one was found. It reminds me of how it was for us in the beginning... phone lines just burning up with excitement all over the country.

So my suggestion is this (and I'm one of the worst at not doing this): Pick up the phone and call your friends. Emails are great, but they are poor substitutes for a personal phone call. If we can get back to calling our friends, telling them about this reunion, if you attended, or talking about the next one in Sacramento CA in 2007, we will improve our percentage of people attending that reunion.

Since the reunion I saw a posting on our website, [www.c322association.org](http://www.c322association.org) by Benny Peralta in CA. He says he will be in Sacramento, and I think this will be a first time reunion for him. So if you were 68-69, he's listed as 1st platoon—for sure you'll want to attend. And if you knew him, call your friends and get more of them to commit to attending Sacramento too. Call Benny and tell him you're coming. This is the type of phone calling we need, building newness back into our reunions with the excitement of attending and seeing your friends for the first time. And for those of us who attend often, we too, haven't seen ALL our friends yet. But if we call, we will get to see more of them in Sacramento.

One of the really memorable moments of this reunion happened at our banquet. At the end of the reading of the names ceremony, one of our grandchildren attending (10 yrs old I think) sang for us a song that has become tradition whenever we gather: "God Bless the USA". There wasn't a woman there who didn't have tears in her eyes, and half the men too—me being one of those. It was Joe and Diane Nett's grandson. I'm sorry that I don't have his name.

Speaking of grandkids, at our business meeting we voted to start a college scholarship fund for children and grandchildren of ours. Small scholarships of \$250 each to begin with. Both the division reunion groups do this. More later on this. We also voted to have a 3-man team contact all our members in the affected area of Katrina and see if they needed help. If so, we set aside \$5000 to help them. More on this as it develops too.

General Flint attended again, and at the banquet, he told us some funny stories about Chuck Boyle and Dick Prairie in Vietnam. But what impressed me most was what he said about us at the end. He said, partly in reference to our establishing the Katrina committee and fund, that we are the best group of men he knows. That impressed me. But I already knew that anyway.

I love you all,

bill