

Steel Tigers 1/77th ARMOR ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Volume 3

March 2002

Standing Firm Then



Standing Firm Now

Words from our New President...Jerry Brown:

The 1/77th Armor Association is a brotherhood of mounted warriors that fought together in the Republic of South Vietnam. We are veterans. We are tankers, cavalymen, artillerymen, medics, engineers, mechanics, cooks, and every other MOS that served in the Battalion in Vietnam. We were unified in our mission, and every job was important in the accomplishment of that mission. We are proud of our service to our country, and we honor the special friendships that grew from trusting and sharing with our brothers in arms in that common struggle against tyranny. We cherish those special bonds, and we honor the memory of those who died on the battlefield.

The 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) advanced party arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on July 2, 1968. The rest of the Brigade began to arrive at Wunder Beach on July 22, 1968. The Battalion fought in 8 campaigns from July 1968 to November 1971, and the Battalion, HHC, A, B, C, and D Companies were awarded Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry with Palm. In addition, A Company was awarded a Valorous Unit Award.



The motto on the 1/77th Armor Regiment Coat of Arms is "Insiste Firmiter," STAND FIRM, and that is exactly what the men of the Battalion did during World War 11, Korea, Vietnam, and in Bosnia. On the 1/77th Armor memorial located next to the Patton Museum at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, these words are inscribed: This Memorial is dedicated to the valiant men of the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mech) who in a selfless act of love and valor "STOOD FIRM" against tyranny. Their service and sacrifice to the people of America was accomplished with honor in the noble struggle to help the Vietnamese people remain free. "Freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it" -Pericles ([See Brown, p. 2](#))

(Brown, continued from p. 1)

Two and a half years ago, we had no way to come together to renew and nurture those special friendships borne in battle during our youth. Because of the vision, determination, and much sacrifice of Tom Rosser and Patricia Johnson, the 1/77th Armor Association was soon to be a reality. I know that most of you feel the same way, we will be eternally grateful to those two who sacrificed much for the veterans of the 1/77th Armor.

A few weeks ago, John Metcalf, Chuck Winslow, and myself were asked by the 1/77th Board if we would be willing to serve on your behalf as interim members of the board until full elections could be held. It is our intent to hold elections as soon as feasible, but no later than at the next reunion to be held in 2003. There is much that needs to be done before the next reunion and we will need your moral and physical support.

All of the board members, old and new, are humbled that we have the opportunity to serve you. We will perform our duties to you in a manner that will honor the men of the 1/77th Armor who we serve. As the Interim President, I pledge to you that the 1/77th Armor Association Board will work hard to put the Association on a solid administrative and fiduciary foundation. It our intent to conduct elections at the next reunion and possibly earlier if we can put all of the legal and required documentation together so that when we hand the Association off to the next line of board members, a sound frame work to operate from will exist. As of March 1, 2002, the new 1/77th Armor Board members are as follows:

Jerry A. Brown-President

Bruce Goldsmith-Vice President

John Metcalf-Secretary

Chuck Winslow-Treasurer

Bob Rushforth-Historian

Jim Spiller-Chaplain (Non-Voting Member)

I want to thank Jim Eversol and William Wahl for their service on behalf of the men of the 1/77th Armor. They volunteered their service and gave much effort on our behalf and it is greatly appreciated. They put the ball into scoring position and we will attempt to carry it across the goal line.

As your new President, I want to let you know what an honor it has been to serve with you in the service of our nation in Vietnam. I look forward to serving you again.

Friendships forged in battle bind men's hearts together in a way that no other experience can compare.

God Bless America, Jerry A. Brown

Bio on the Prez...

Jerry A. Brown graduated from The Citadel in 1966, and after Armor Basic, Airborne, and Ranger Schools, he was assigned to the 1/37th Armor in Ansbach, Germany until his assignment in November 1968 to A Company, 1/77th Armor Battalion, 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Quang Tri Providence, Republic of South Vietnam. He served as the A Company Commander and the Battalion Adjutant during his tour in Vietnam. After leaving Vietnam, he served in various assignments in the US Army until his retirement in 1988 as a LTC. He is also a graduate of the Florida Institute of Technology, the Army War College, the Defense Systems Management

College, the Defense Language Institute (Greek), and the Defense Security Assistance Institute. His last assignment in the Army was in the Pentagon in the Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research, Development, and Acquisition. He now resides with his family in Springfield, VA. The light of his life is his wife of 35 years, Kathie. His oldest daughter, Sheri was born while he was serving in Vietnam and she now has a son and daughter. His younger daughter, Rebecca, was born in Ft. Benning, GA. and she is the mother of a son. He is a typical Grandfather who is always ready to talk about them or show their pictures. Since leaving the Army, he has worked with the same company, ADI Technologies, Inc. located in McLean, VA. Jerry is active in his church, outreach ministries, seminary, and the Boy Scouts. He loves to fish and tell his fish stories, grow tomatoes and eat BLT's most of the summer, hike trails in the mountains with his wife, and play with the grandkids.



Yep! That's him on the left.

Col. Milia Remembers the 1/77th

It's been over 33 years since the young men of the "First of the Fifth" left Ft. Carson to land in Danang and Wonder Beach on the DMZ in Viet Nam. Our mission was to help the marines who were being attrited with heavy casualties. On the DMZ, the war was relatively conventional. We knew that if we went north, we could always find an NVA regiment and if we went west, we could get into a scrap in a Viet Cong base camp. Our terrain ran the spectrum of mountains, piedmont, rice paddies, coast land and a major highway running through civilian villages. As contrasted with the experiences of other U.S. units, we did not have all the problems associated with fighting a faceless foe in civilian villages.

As the second battalion commander of the 1/77 Armor during the early days, permit me to make some observations from a historical perspective.

--The battalion performed its mission superbly and professionally. Like any other marine infantry or army maneuver battalion, we occupied and pacified an area of operations that we finally turned over to the Vietnamese Army. The tank companies fought over 2800 square kilometers of the DMZ with only a handful of casualties during the period 1968-69.

--The 1/77 Armor fought as a classic combined arms team. We attached our tank companies routinely to the 1/11 Infantry and the 1/61 Mech Infantry and in return were supported by their rifle and mech companies. We pulled our weight doing the unsavory tasks associated with patrols, ambushes, mine sweeps, convoy escort and civic action projects. Our parent brigade always provided for artillery, air and naval gunfire support.

--Without a doubt, the tank companies did the heavy lifting in the fighting. Tank companies (A, B, and C) all had their own character and personality. One was steady; one was flashy; and one was a plodder. (I'll leave it to you old soldiers to determine which was which.) But they were all dependable, professional and successful. But after all these years, four other platoons are stuck in my memory---the scouts, mortarmen, medics and mechanics.

--The scout platoon was like a fourth line company. With 50 good men mounted in 10 M113 ACVs, the scouts drew all the odd missions, mounted or dismounted. And they did their jobs superbly. The mortars were our organic artillery. We didn't move until they were in position. They were so good, other mortar platoons came to them for gunnery training.

--Of the 12 KIA that we suffered in our first year, the majority were our mechanics and medics. That fact will be a lasting testimonial to their dedication and presence under the worst of situations. They were there when they were needed.

The highlight of my tour with the 1/77 was, of course, Task Force Remagen. History remembers it as a resounding success. We operated for nearly two months, 40 kilometers behind the lines and independent of land lines of communications. The terrain was so rugged that wheeled vehicles were not permitted. The operation was such a classic of an independent task force that it was taught as an example of a reconnaissance in force at the Marine Corps School at Quantico.

In summary, I quote from a chapter in the history book "Nam-the Viet Nam Experience 1965-1975" about our battalion---"In spite of it all, when the US Army was given a real task to fulfill, it responded magnificently-even when that task involved taking tanks over ravines and moving an armoured column into the NVA heartland without any ground supply."

The following letter from Col. Pickarts, deploying commander of the 1/77th Armor, was read at the 2001 reunion:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Comrades of The First Tank Battalion,

I am disappointed that we will not be able to attend this year's reunion. However, a year ago, I attended our battalion reunion and had a most enjoyable, exciting, and fun filled time. Initially, I wasn't sure what to expect, as with one exception, I hadn't seen a First Tank comrade for over thirty years. However, the moment I entered the reception area, it was as if we had never parted. Our lives picked up exactly where we had left off...further, it was most pleasing to note how well all had matured over the years and what happy wives accompanied these old soldiers. In summary, I found a very handsome group of people, of which I was honored to be a part. I suspect some are experiencing similar thoughts today. I wish I could be there. Next time I will.

As known, my years with the First Tank Battalion were the most interesting, challenging and gratifying of my career. I was proud that I was honored to be the commander of such a fine organization, filled with such dedicated and honorable men. Men who worked hard, knew what their responsibilities were, and accomplished them superbly. Some units are good, others aren't so good. The First Tank was always good, with a reputation all of us can be proud of... even to this day.

The battalion served several years in Vietnam, and no doubt there are many present tonight that joined later and have different experiences to recall. Although we didn't serve together, it is easy to tell the battalion never let down as it's reputation never went down. This reinforces the fact; veterans of later time had the same confident and proud bearing about their duties as those before them.

As with all conflicts, Vietnam brought forth many different emotions and concerns. The war wasn't fought perfectly, we knew that, but we didn't have much influence in the political matters that directed how the war was carried out. Even so, we should be extremely proud of our actions, each of you carried out your duties well, and the units you were part of performed assigned missions in a superb manner. Our country called and we performed. I have nothing but respect for each of you. May God bless all of you and your families.



Col. Reese is the tallest one!

The 77th Armored Regiment moved from Ft. Carson to Germany in 1984 and the 3rd and 5th Battalions became part of the 8th Infantry Division at Manheim. Later they were assigned to the 1st Armored Division when the 8th ID was deactivated after the Persian Gulf War. In June 1994 the two battalions (and all the soldiers and equipment) of the regiment moved to Ft. Lewis, WA and became part of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. In 1995 both battalions were deactivated and the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor was reactivated in Schweinfurt, Germany as part of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division where it remains today.

In 1997 the Steel Tigers deployed to Bosnia for six months as part of the follow-on rotations of SFOR. After a year back in Germany the battalion had just begun a deployment to Kuwait (the Army keeps a battalion task force in Kuwait all year long) when it was abruptly cancelled on April 1st of 1999 and the advance party was called back from the Middle East. In May the Steel Tigers began training for the possible invasion of Kosovo. When an armistice between NATO and Yugoslavia was signed in the first week of June 1999 the battalion deployed via C-17, train and sealift to Greece and Macedonia enroute to Kosovo as part of the initial entry forces where it served until December 1999. It distinguished itself in restoring law and order to that war-torn region. While in Kosovo we were visited by the Supreme Commander of NATO, General Wesley Clark, who had commanded the battalion at Ft. Carson in the early 1980s.

In Kosovo the Steel Tigers lost one soldier, SGT Joe Henson of the S-2 shop, who died of disease during the deployment.

Some Vietnam War veterans who wanted to form a 77th Armor Association contacted us upon our return to Germany; we eagerly joined in. We invited Mr. Bruce Goldsmith to our formal All Ranks Ball in April 2000. He presided over the dedication of our M48A3 tank (permanently "parked" in front of the BN HQ) in memory of the Steel Tigers who were KIA in Vietnam. Bruce spent the day with the soldiers and NCOs of the battalion, especially the men of the Scout Platoon for which he had been the platoon leader in Vietnam. Bruce also delivered a memorable speech to the soldiers, NCOs and officers of the battalion at our ball. His visit had a lasting impact on the soldiers of the battalion. They had just written a page in the regiment's long and distinguished history and to connect with those who had done so in previous operations was a rare treat and an honor.

The Steel Tigers are still at home in Schweinfurt, Germany training as hard as ever. Currently the battalion is slated to return to Kosovo in May 2002 for another tour of duty. As our last deployment showed, however, anything can happen without any warning! The Steel Tigers continue to add to the regiment's distinguished history.

Steel Tigers - Blood on the Axe!"

LTC (P) Tim Reese (Commander: Jul'98 -Jul '00)



1/77th ARMOR HISTORY

The 1st Battalion, 77th Armored Regiment was born on 16 December 1940 when A company, 73rd Medium Tank Battalion, GHQ Reserve, was constituted in the Regular Army of the United States. It was redesignated as Company A, 753rd Medium Tank Battalion and officially activated on 1 June 1941 at Ft. Benning, Georgia. The 753rd continued under this designation throughout World War II.

During World War II, the 753rd's first assignment was with the 36th Infantry Division's amphibious assault at Sicily. The battalion fought valiantly throughout the Mediterranean Campaign. In all, the 753rd Medium Tank Battalion participated in seven campaigns: Sicily, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno, Southern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe.

On 20 March 1949 the 753rd was redesignated as Company A, 77th Heavy Tank Battalion as an element of the 7th Infantry Division. During its tour with the 7th Infantry Division in Korea, the unit served in six campaigns, twice receiving the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation. The battalion was later inactivated on 10 November 1951 in Korea and relieved from its assignment to the 7th Infantry Division.

The unit was once again redesignated on 19 February 1962 as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor and assigned to the 5th Infantry Division at Ft. Carson, Colorado. The 1/77th fought in Vietnam with the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division. Consequently, 1/77th Armor was the first unit of the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division committed to combat in Vietnam. By the time of its redeployment to the United States, the 1/77th Armor had participated in eight campaigns while in Vietnam.

The unit was relieved from its assignment to the 5th Infantry Division and reassigned to the 4th Infantry Division at Ft. Carson, Colorado on 21

March 1973. The 1/77th was later inactivated on 15 December 1989.

On 5 April 1996, the "Steel Tigers" Battalion was again activated in Schweinfurt, Germany as part of the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized).

In 1997, Task Force 1-77 joined NATO Peacekeepers in Bosnia as part of Operation Joint Guardian, serving from 7 April to 12 October. Once again in July 1999, the Steel Tigers made history by being the first American Tank Battalion to roll into the Yugoslavia Province of Kosovo in Operation Joint Guardian II, serving in theater from 5 July to 12 December 1999.

From the ominous days prior to the start of World War II, throughout three long and difficult conflicts...right up through today's challenging peace keeping missions in the Balkans, the Steel Tigers have exemplified Armor's basic mission: to close with and destroy the enemy with the use of mobility, firepower and shock effect.



Patton Museum, 2001 Reunion
A Man and His Tank!

STEEL TIGERS 1/77th Armor Association
Membership/Change of Address Form

____ New Application
____ Annual Renewal dues \$20 (Includes newsletters)
____ Address or Information Change

Special Note to all Charter Members: Your annual \$20 dues are now due!

For new or non-charter renewal membership with the association - \$20 is due!
All Association members receive newsletters, membership directory and Reunion Registration discount.
____ Address Change (Check here if your address is now different than in our records)

Be sure and include updated address, phone and e-mail information!

Your Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Country: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: Home: _____ Work: _____

Occupation: _____ Talents/Hobbies: _____

Complete if you remember:

Service Dates with 1/77th Armor (Mo/Yr to Mo/Yr): _____

Company: _____ Platoon or Section: _____

Nickname: _____ Call Sign: _____

Names of 1/77th Armor Buddies : _____

Additional Information or Comments: _____

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ for my Steel Tigers 1/77th Armor Annual Membership.
Make your check or money order to: "Steel Tigers 1/77th Armor Association". Mail this completed form to:

Charles Winslow
Steel Tigers 1/77th Armor Association
8537 E. Roma Ave.
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Chaplain Spiller's Message...A Time for Healing

I was surprised a few weeks ago to hear that two of our Steel Tigers officers had resigned. Not being a board member, I had no knowledge of the reasons for this action. I know, however, that such actions are not ordinarily taken unless there has been considerable unrest and dissension in the organization. Those who were elected as our first officers wanted very much to create an organization that creates occasions to share memories and friendship and honors all veterans of our esteemed battalion. In bringing a relevant organization out of nothing, there are different opinions expressed which sometimes are not resolved. I can only assume that something of that sort happened to precipitate the resignations.

I want to express my appreciation to Jim Eversole and Bill Wahl for the effort they expended as our president and treasurer and assure them that I want them to stay involved with Steel Tigers even though they are no longer officers. They are honorable men, comrades in our military ranks, and I am thankful for what they contributed to our organization's formation.

The time has come to close ranks behind a new interim president and treasurer. Jerry Brown and Chuck Winslow are also honorable men and they step in at a critical time to plan next year's

reunion as well as build an association that draws us all together across the miles and across the years. It's time to put the past behind and support new leadership in these offices. The past is over and gone, the future is ahead of us and hopeful.

The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3:13-14, "... forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Our Steel Tigers goal is not the "upward call of God" but the advice of the apostle is sound: forget the past and press on toward the goal.

Prayer: Lord, sometimes our opinions and convictions get in the way of more important work and disharmony results. Sometimes we fight too hard for treasured goals that others don't share, and we just don't have the heart or conviction to continue when we are outnumbered. Where there is conflict in our ranks, Lord, pull us together like a seasoned commander whose eye is on the big picture. Forgive us when we have wounded others, and help us pull together as a single unit with our eyes on the prize. Make us humble servants of one another as you have taught us in scripture and in the example of Jesus.

Amen



PLANS FOR REUNION 2003 ARE UNDERWAY!

Your reunion planning committee has been hard at work putting together a plan that should make for a great time. The reunion is set for July 24-27, 2003 in Colorado Springs, Colorado...previous home of the 1/77th Armor and the 5th Infantry Division. Plans call for arrival on Thursday afternoon with check-in and lots of casual time for visiting old friends and opportunities to make new ones. Friday will be a day on your own with friends to play golf, sight see or just hang out. The day will be capped off with a wine and cheese reception, followed by dinner at the "Flying W Ranch". Saturday will be a day at Ft. Carson with a static equipment display provided by the 3rd ACR hopefully, (Chaplain Spiller's high-powered prayer needed here!) We will tour their museum and have lunch in their mess hall...just like old times. After leaving Ft. Carson, time permitting, we will take in a local tourist attraction. That evening will be our semi-formal banquet with guest speakers, good food and drink and lots of time for visiting...a few surprises might also show up!!! Sunday morning will be breakfast at the hotel followed by a worship service and then our business meeting and election of officers.

A registration fee will be charged for this event, in addition to your regular dues, which must be current. (A membership form is included in the letter.) The fee will cover the transportation cost for the tours, lunch on post, touring entrance fees, wine and cheese reception, dinner at the Flying W, the banquet and finally, breakfast on Sunday. We will try to come up with some reduced fee structure, for those that might arrive late or have to leave early. We will get you those details when the registration form comes out later this year.

We will try to keep you updated on the reunion and other Association business on our website, located at: www.geocities.com/scout0806. For information on Colorado Springs facilities and sites, you may want to contact the Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau at 515 South Cascade Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80903 or call at (877)-745-3773; or on their website at www.coloradosprings-travel.com.

Vets that are actively working on the reunion and those that have offered help are listed below:

Bruce Goldsmith, chairman, Bird Nagel, constitution, Walt Evans and Bob Basner, address book, Len Renoux and Pat Sullivan, reunion details, Carl Fellhauer, Bob Urso, Mike Leone, Jim Stafford and Pete Occhialini, general.

Steel Tigers...Blood on the Axe!

