



# The Brown Water Log



Volume 28 Issue 4

National Newsletter

Winter 1996

**GAMEWARDENS OF VIETNAM ASSOCIATION INC, NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, VIRGINIA BEACH VA.  
THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S OFFICE IS IN GEORGETOWN TX. ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE NATIONAL  
OFFICE SHOULD BE SENT TO P.O. BOX 1866 GEORGETOWN TX 78627-1866, VOICE OR FAX (512) 8692472**

**Newsletter Editors:** Nona and Tom Thomson.  
Material for inclusion should be in by the first of the month of March, June, September and December for mailing on the 15th of the month in order to be included in the quarterly newsletter, please help us by being on time.

## 1996 REUNION HELD IN MINNEAPOLIS

The National reunion held in August in Minneapolis is history now, and with Ken Kalish serving as reunion coordinator ably assisted by his wife, Lila, a history making art auction was held to help raise money for the scholarship fund. Many hours of work and effort went into the scheduled events. There was a memorial service held at the Minnesota Veterans Memorial Park, chapter meetings and national elections, several new people attending, old friends and people being reunited for the first time since leaving Vietnam. Many went to a riverboat casino and on shopping trips to the Mall of the Americas. As I said, a lot of planning effort went into this reunion.



Especially memorable was having Admiral Zumwalt as our keynote speaker at the Saturday night dinner dance. Admiral Zumwalt was given a

standing ovation after speaking and three cheers in appreciation. He spoke on the progress and continuing efforts to obtain recognition from our government and the VA on the many diseases related to Agent Orange. He recognized the efforts of the Brown Water Navy personnel in successfully and effectively interdicting weapons and supplies to South Vietnam. And reported that it took almost a year for the communists to retake the Delta after we left there.

Admiral Zumwalt also reported on Admiral Tran Van Chon the Vietnamese C.N.O, and his counter-part when he was COMNAVFORV, who elected to stay in Vietnam after the fall of Saigon. He served eight years in a "North Vietnamese re-education prison camp". He was finally brought to the United States with the help of Admiral Zumwalt. For some this was the first time many had seen the Admiral since Vietnam.

## Well Done to Mr. & Mrs. Kalish

A new event for a reunion was an Art Auction with all art donated to be auctioned and proceeds going to our scholarship fund. Ken Kalish played auctioneer and collected \$2845. Our thanks to all the talented artists who gave so generously of their talents and time to benefit Gamewardens.

Artist **BOB ROSE**, who served in the Navy, but not Operation Gamewarden, has in the past donated drawings for reprints for the Texas Chapter to sell and designed tee shirts with unit emblems on them, but most special of

all, surprised me at the reunion with the original drawing shown below. All of Bob's work is done with pencil in incredible detail. Bob contacted my wife, Nona, for some information, photos, ribbons, ect. He then took several events and composed the drawing, with him and Nona keeping it secret for over a year, while devoting over 500 drawing hours to this one project. The drawing will be a life long treasure and then willed to my first grandchild, should I ever have one.



Following is a list of donors and art objects:

Capt. Wiham bought Capt. Schneider's first bird print for \$50.

Larry Bissonette bought Jim Kinsey's Lladro Carlos I ceramic for \$250.

Joe Dizona bought Cecil Martin's Night Fight canvas for \$150.

Jim Kinsey bought Al White's ironwood carding for \$250.

Henry Sala bought Jim Kinsey's knot board for \$400.

Charlie Ardinger bought Brad Kowhan's duck stamp print for \$85.

T. J. Sheridan bought Capt. Stephen's Fire Fight print for \$125.

Gloria Hicks bought Joe Dizon's PBR painting for \$425.

Steve Watson bought Capt. Schneider's second bird print for \$80.

Charlie Johann bought Jim Thompson's stained glass TF 116 logo for \$250.

Basil Fri bought Jon Tehan's life ring for \$125, then turned it back in for resale.

Don Rasmussen bought it the second time around for \$175.

Interestingly enough, Charlie Manos who bought Bob Rose's Mark I PBR drawing for \$500 served aboard that particular boat. It was a wonderful happenstance since neither of them knew the other before the reunion.

**Randy Prunty** from (RivDiv 553) videotaped highlights of the reunion. If you didn't see the order forms there or if you would like to get a copy, send a check for \$17.95 to Randy at 204 E. Orchard Pl., Peoria, IL 61603. Telephone Home 309-682-1371/Work 309-671-3758.



I would like to take this time to wish Ken Kalish and our organization all the best luck in the coming years.

I am sorry that I was not able to run my office for the 95/96 term to the best of my abilities. As most of you know I have had health problems for the last year and a half. I have enjoyed serving as your president and would have liked to continue, however my doctor doesn't

think it would be advisable. I am sad to report that due to my health, I am unable to continue as President of Gamewardens. For the past year and a half, I've had high blood pressure which is uncontrollable and I've been unable to work for the past year. Ken Kalish volunteered to take over the presidency and was elected for the 1997 through 1998 period and will relieve me early from my term which expires December 31, 1996. Although, I will no longer be president, I will move to the Chairman of the Board position and be available to any and all in an advisory capacity should anyone need my advice, that is. I urge all of you to support Ken and the new treasurer, Ralph Fries. Ralph will also take the position of supply officer. At present, there is no one to fill the secretary position, and if any of you would like to volunteer, please contact Ken. Ken has two toll-free 800 numbers; the first is 800-450-8699, the second is 800-29LIKEN. Ken's e-mail address is [liken@parkrapids.polaristel.net](mailto:liken@parkrapids.polaristel.net).

Ralph Fries, Treasurer, Supply Officer, can be reached at 1000 Erica street, Escondido CA 92027. His home phone number is (619)7964495, however after the first of the year he will have a toll-free number, 1-888-722-GWVN (4986).

This will be the last newsletter that I send out. I've enjoyed doing them during my term and know that I've been successful in terms of helping people obtain hearing compensation from the VA, locating and reuniting members who had not seen each other in years, and providing Agent Orange information to members who needed it.

The next newsletter will be coming from Ken and since he has a Masters Degree in Journalism I am sure there will be improvements.

This organization has the finest men that I have ever served with in the United States Navy. This was proven over and over by what we accomplished in Vietnam. I know that if I ever needed help in any way all I would have to do is

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yell "cover boat" and I would have it. I served twenty-four years in the Navy, I know that for a lot of you this was nothing. I was on the USS Wedderburn DD684 a 2100 class, The USS J.C.Owens DD-776 a 2200 Short hull WW II DD,s. The USS Dahlgren DLG-12 one of the first guided missile ships built, the USS Truxton DLG(N) 35, Radarman "B" School, NIOTC, River Division 573, we turned over with River Division 515 in 1970 to form Vietnamese River Patrol Division 58, I was the leading Chief of the Air Intercept Control command at NAS Jacksonville FL, the USS Reeves CG 24 out of Pearl Harbor, the USS Kinkaid DD-965, and retired as the leading Senior Chief and assistance Officer in Command of The Multiple Unit Link-11 Test and Operational Training System, Det-1 that provided certification for all ship and aircraft with the computer to computer link-11 and link-4A data links.

After Gamewardens absolutely no other command had the camaraderie or esprit de corps that we had in country. My heart was always in the U.S. Navy but my career and the need to test my self to the best of my ability was never the same after running the rivers with you. Your friendship means a lot to me. Thank you for your friendship and help while I was in office. I would also like at this time to express my thanks to Ron Laratta, Jim Davy, Steve Watson, Jay Eichhorn and all of the West Coast Chapter for all of the support that they offered me. Your expertise was invaluable. You will always be in my thoughts and my heart. May you always have fair winds and following seas.

I intend to keep the Gamewarden's telephone number in operation until the end of the year should anyone have need to call me. My home Address is 205 Innwood Drive, Georgetown TX 78628, please keep in touch. My home telephone is area code 512 930-9190. Nona and I would love to hear from any of you and if you are ever in the State of Texas please come to see us. (Please call

first to make sure we are home.) Very Respectfully, Tom Thomson

**Old Business:** In 1994 at the Las Vegas Reunion, Mr. C. J. Clifton who had been national treasurer for many years announced he had donated the proceeds of his late wife's insurance policy to the Gamewardens scholarship fund. At that reunion business meeting I was elected president, Ron Laratta was elected treasurer and Mike Persico, secretary with our term of office to begin January 1, 1995. We all went home and awaited the turnover to become effective. By March 1, 1995, when we, the new officers, had not received any Gamewarden records or funds in order to operate the organization, I wrote a demand letter to John Williams, past president asking for him to effect the turnover with copies of the letter going to all members of the Board of Directors.

Apparently, Mr. Clifton became angry in Las Vegas after Ron Laratta was voted in as treasurer, and wrote a check from Gamewardens' General Operating Fund in the amount of \$11,259 to take back the donation he had previously made. In addition, Mr. Clifton wrote another check from Gamewardens' General Operating Fund in the amount of \$2,500 to have money for a start-up fund for a Norfolk Chapter. Gamewardens national only provides a new chapter with \$100 and post office box rental for one year.

By laws prohibit any check from being written over \$500 without approval from the board of directors/membership.

Mr. Clifton was not authorized to remove the funds from Gamewardens accounts. He made the withdrawals on December 28, 1994 and did not inform anyone until March 1995 after my demand letter for turnover of funds and records. Mr. Clifton, did in March or April, give John Williams a personal check in the amount of \$2500 to repay the \$2500 he had previously taken from Gamewardens. John Williams then in turn, sent a Cashier's check in the

amount of \$2500 which was re-deposited to our treasury.

Ron Laratta tried to have an audit done of Gamewardens funds, but records were so incomplete, it was impossible to get a full audit.

I, along with other board members, have made many efforts to get Mr. Clifton to return the \$11,259 which he removed without authorization and said in his letter he donated it to a women's club.

Finally, in June 1996, I sent a complete package of documentation to the Virginia Beach Police Fraud Department regarding this entire situation, and I am now reporting that an investigation is underway by that department.

After several discussions with the Board of Directors Executive Committee, the officers felt that this was the best way to handle the matter without incurring legal fees for Gamewardens which we can certainly ill afford.

This matter was reported to the General membership meeting in Minneapolis. As you can imagine, it has not been an easy situation or decision to make, but it was felt that such a substantial loss of money from our funds must be reported to the membership in general and the legal authorities in particular. I regret that Mr. Clifton took the illegal actions he did and so affected his reputation in Gamewardens after over 20 years of dedication to Gamewardens.

Further developments will be reported in future newsletters.

## National Newsletter

I have received calls and mail regarding the previous newsletters that we have put out in the past (most were in good light) however I am very sure that Ken Kalish would very much appreciate hearing from you on what you would like to see in Your Newsletter. Also we are going to try something new. We would like to place the names of

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members that donate \$5.00 or more, and to companies that donate \$25.00 or more along with the company's logo or business card in "THE BROWN WATER LOG" in order to help offset the cost of printing and mailing. If you would like to help, please send your name, and if a company, your logo or business card, and of course the money to Ralph Fries National Treasurer, 1000 Erica St., Escondido, CA 92027. The printing would be for one newsletter only at that price. This would help offset the cost immensely. And remember, all donations are tax deductions. (See demonstration on back side of Mailer, I think that this will work well.)

## History Book

Ken Kalish has also asked for me to inform you in this newsletter that the announcement that he made at the end of the dinner about having Turner Publishing Company returning your money for the History book was in error. The morning that I left for Minneapolis I called Bob Martin at Turner and informed him that if I did not have a draft copy of the history book waiting for me at the desk of the hotel we would have to consider canceling our order. The book was there, Jim Davy, Steve Watson and I reviewed the document and thought that it was well done. This information was to be put out by me at the business meeting, however I had a blood pressure reading of 254/146 and was unable to attend the general meeting and thought that the meeting would be put off until the next day. (The meeting was held that night without everyone knowing it.) Ken was not told of the book because he was not an officer or board member at the reunion at that time.

Jim Davy is the main reason that the book was published as soon as it was, he set a fire under Bob Martin and Turner Publishing and got in touch with Mr. David Turner the owner in Paducah KY. Mr. Turner flew to Oregon and talked with Jim and guaranteed that Gamewardens History book would be

the very next published, and it was. It is scheduled for shipment the first week in October. If you do not receive it in October please call Turner Publishing at 1-800-788-3350 or Ron Laratta at (770) 641-8065. I hope that you enjoy it even though I had nothing to do with the publishing.

The History book committee was John Williams, James Davy and Ron Laratta.

Good Job guys, the fact that it was so late was not your fault!



## Hearing Loss

We would like to hear from you if you are experiencing hearing loss. If anyone has been successful with a claim with VA please contact me immediately. Most of us seem to have ringing in our ears and increasing loss of hearing. We would like to do an official survey of our members. Further, was anyone told when discharged that there was a two year time limit to claim service-connected illnesses and injuries? If so, this is not the case. I did have in my personnel file a copy of my exit physical exam which included hearing tests and documented my loss at that time, and over the years my hearing loss has increased. I have just applied for hearing disabilities and have been told that I will receive hearing aids and disability compensation. I haven't been informed of the amount of compensation. Along these lines if any of you need supporting documentation, a letter from the President or other members about the noise levels may be helpful. I wrote one for Lewis Hitchcock and he wrote back to say that the information I supplied was exactly what he needed and that the VA had awarded his compensation and that my letter was cited as one of the criterion which the VA based Hitchcock's award.

## Norfolk Chapter Start-up

Anyone interested in helping to get the Norfolk Chapter started, please call Clarence Cooper at (804) 340-6330, or write him at Gamewardens of Vietnam Association Inc., Norfolk Chapter P.O. Box 55114 Virginia Beach, VA 23455.

## Joseph T. Musetti, Jr. Veterans Memorial Park,

On September 24, 1995, a parade and dedication was held in honor of all who served. PO2 Joseph T. Musetti, Jr. Was born in Hall Quarry, Maine. Joey joined the Navy in 1964. In 1965 Joey volunteered for duty in Vietnam serving aboard a river patrol boat on the Mekong River. During his first tour all 13 boats were sunk by the enemy. In February 1967, he volunteered for his second tour in Nam and was assigned to PBR 100 in the Vihn Long/SA Dec area. On September 28, 1967 Joey's boat was struck by three B-40 rockets. His remains were never recovered. Joey is Mt. Desert, Maine's only Vietnam war casualty. The following North East Chapter men attended the Joseph T. Musetti, Jr. Memorial dedication.

Jack Babcock, Dave Butcher, Ray Snow, Colin Carter, Don Fallon and Brian Mullen, John Blust, Walt Campbell, Ross Maddocks and Dennis Skully.



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### 1996 Scholarship Winners

This year we had only two scholarship applicants who we felt qualified for the scholarships. Usually we award three scholarships per year.

Eligibility is based on being a dependent and/or descendant of living or deceased U. S. Navy River Patrol Force (Task Force 116) "Brown Water Navy, or any other U. S. Military unit that served in direct support of Operation Gamewarden in the Republic of South Vietnam between 1966 and 1977.

Qualifications Academic ability, financial need, extracurricular activities based on school or community, recommendations from teachers, counselors or principals, and friends and a statement of 250 words as to why the applicant thinks he/she deserves the scholarship.

Additional points are given to an applicant whose sponsor is a member of Gamewardens.



Sera Suminski is the daughter of Jack and Julie Babcock. Sera received \$500 payable toward her tuition at Michell College in New London, CT. Jack is currently the N. E. Chapter Treasurer and has been president, vice-president, and probably janitor of the East Coast Chapter since its beginning. Julie is always involved in helping run the chapter and may be editor of their newsletter. Congratulations, Sera, for your own many accomplishments, but with Jack and Julie for parents, it's to be expected. Good luck with your future

goals of becoming a Graphic Designer or Graphic Artist.

Our second winner, Victoria J. Spiers, is the daughter of Gary (Pappy) O. And Victoria Q. Spears. Victoria was also awarded \$500.00 payable toward her tuition at University of California, Davis, CA. Throughout her high school years, Victoria maintained a 3.7 GPA, while working at various jobs. Victoria's mother is with the Foreign Service and as a result their family has moved from country to country during most of her school years. Gary served aboard the USS Harnette County patrolling the rivers off the coast of Vietnam. Unfortunately, Gary is disabled and cannot hold down a full time job. Congratulations, Victoria on your scholastic accomplishments and good luck with your academic goals. **No picture was available.**

## TAPS

I am sorry to report that Captain William Bell passed away just before the National Reunion. I'm sure many of you remember him well. I certainly do as, after one Sunday service, he asked if there was anything else he could do for us. I asked him if he would provide more moon light that night so our star-light scopes would provide better coverage. Capt. Bell just laughed and said, "Son, you'll have to talk to management, I'm just in sales." I am sorry to know he has passed on, but I'm sure he'll be up in heaven praying for us as he always did, we loved him dearly.

## SEEKING HELP

Mrs. Judy Lemon is the widow of Jimmy R. Lemon, USS Navy PBR Riv Ron 5 Unit. Jimmy filed a claim for PTSD in 1984 and the government says there is no proof of him being there. Jimmy passed away November 27, 1994, and now Mrs. Lemon is having a

really hard time. Jimmy was assigned to the USS KASKASKIA (AO-27), but was transferred to Riv Ron 5 on the Quang Tri River in I-Corps January 1968. Mrs. Lemon says she has been told that there is no reference to Riv Ron 5 on his DD214, but on his DD215 one of his medals mentioned may have only been given to Riv Ron 5. This medal definitely was not given to the crew of the USS KASKASKIA. She states she is doing this for Jimmy to receive the recognition he deserves, but that she could certainly use the money. Mrs. Judy M. Lemon, 4113 Highlander Ave., Lake Havasu City, AZ. 86406. Telephone 520-543-4934, collect if necessary.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



Did you hear the one about the old man that was sitting at the table with his wife one morning and said "I think that I will go down to the social security office and apply for social security today." His wife said "you can't get social security, you were born on a farm and there is no record of your birth. You need a birth certificate in order to apply." The old man said that he was going to try anyway so he went to the social security office. Upon arriving he filled out the paper works and submitted it to a lady. She said that all looked correct and asked him for a birth certificate. He told her that he didn't have one. She said that would not be a problem and asked him to unbutton his shirt and ran her hand over his chest. After this, she said that he was in fact 65 and would receive his first check in about two weeks. Satisfied he went home and told his wife the good news. She asked him how he got by without having a birth certificate. he told her what happened and she told him he should have unzipped his pants and he would have gotten FULL DISABILITY!

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS !**

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### "The First SEAL"

by Roy Boehm

I have just talked with Commander Roy Boehm. He informed me that his book would be out in June 1997. He hopes in time for the West Coast reunion, if so he will be there to sign copies. If not he will be at the National reunion in Portland Oregon. I can't wait to get my copy. I know it will be one hell of a book! Roy and his lovely wife have started up a company to build and sell motor driven para sails. He told me that he had just run out of height, air speed and luck at the same time and had to rebuild his undercarriage. You would think after all the jumps that he has had he would know better!

The following are some pictures from the 1996 reunion:



