



River Patrol Force  
**Brown Water Log**  
Gamewardens of Vietnam



GAMEWARDENS OF VIETNAM ASSOCIATION INC.

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Fall 2004

## State of the Gamewardens

This newsletter will be fairly long and contain a lot of detail about the status of Gamewardens. It is a report card on my first two year tenure that I want everyone to know about. It covers the pluses and the minuses that have occurred in the first two years.

## San Antonio Reunion of 2004

Congratulations to everyone who attended the San Antonio Reunion of 2004. All reports indicate that we had a good time. If the beer runs to Ft. Sam Houston were an indicator, then we had a good time. The hospitality room saw lots of action. We are all thankful to Glen Fry for running an outstanding ship. **Thanks Glen!** I am getting good feedback about the Menger Hotel. There were a couple of glitches, but for the most part, we all had a good time there. 110-plus members attended with families. I do want everyone who attended to know that we got the temperature down below 96 degrees right after the reunion. We worked really hard to get it up for the reunion.

Our trip to the Admiral Nimitz State Historical Site/ National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg saw 87 members and families attend on Thursday. Thursday evening, 126 of us had a taste of Mexico at La Fonda on Main. Friday, 129 of us went to the city tour to see a bit of San Antonio's past a Mission Nuestra Senora de la Concepcion de Acuna. Fort Sam Houston, the San Fernando Cathedral and ending at the Vietnam Memorial. Friday night, we did the Riverwalk. Saturday morning, we conducted our wreath-laying ceremony memorial in front of the

Alamo. Saturday night, 178 of us listened to one of our own, Dr. James Reckner, update us about Vietnam as it now stands.

We received \$346.00 for the scholarship fund in direct donations, \$100.00 to the general fund, received nearly 20 yearly renewals and one new member. Glen has sent the treasurer \$3,568.00 in funds made at the reunion. I also want to thank everyone for supporting the Ships Store this reunion. The Ships Store did over \$4000.00 in business this reunion. We did have to bail Billy the Rat out of jail. Thanks to everyone who put up the bail money.

The Saturday wreath-laying memorial at the Alamo was conducted by Reverend Lester Westling. Twenty-three names were read after the Navy Reserve Center Color Guard presented the colors; Robert Stack, Michael R. Farney, Raymond R. Bollinger, Harold W. Sherman, Donald Rasmussen, John Branca, Richard Hicks, Donald Sheppard, Leon G. Starck, Louis C. Duty, Peter J. Schiff, William Allison, David Wright, Paul F. Bellmore, Thomas J. McQuade, Paul Graux, Ray Walker, David Spencer Bill, Leon Porter, Edward Kwane Davis, Larry Richardson, and one whose name I do have who was given to me at the ceremony. Since the reunion, we have had three members who have passed away; Frak Postall, Larry Yoakum, and Kenneth Bellamy, who will be recognized at our next National Reunion. Please keep me informed of others who pass away.

During the banquet, our speaker, Dr. James Reckner, Director, The Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, provided us with an update on the status of Vietnam today. He is

a retired Naval Officer, who was an advisor to the South Vietnamese PBR forces after we turned the boats over to them. He provided insight on Vietnam and how it is handling the aftermath of the war. He leads graduate students from Texas Tech University's Vietnam War studies to that country about twice a year. The Vietnam Center and its historical archive of the Vietnam War is one of the best that exists. Gamewardens has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the center to become our historical archive of processing and retaining. The Vietnam Center Oral History section, headed by Dr. Richard Verrone, is open to each of us to tell our story of our time in Vietnam. Dr. Verrone was at the Reunion as well, and made a presentation.

Jim Davy is handling the turn-over of GWVN documents and memorabilia to The Vietnam Center, we have turned in excess of 10,000 stored documents to date over them for archive purposes. GWVN receives credit for the material and a heading on the on-line presentation of the material.

## **Board of Directors Meeting**

I provided a PowerPoint Presentation of the issues that I see GWVN facing in the near term and future at the Board of Directors Meeting. Sixteen areas were identified. These areas are issues at the West Coast Chapter (WCC) and Ralph Fries, WCC lead in the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument (VUMM), Little Creek Memorial, Memorial support in the future, membership, newsletter, identification cards, membership dues, charter change to include other small boat units, finances, website cost and operation, membership database, scholarship awards, regional chapters, and the Vietnam Center. I am going to use this outline as the basis of my review of our status, actions the BoD took, and my views and recommendations on our future direction in each of the paragraphs that follow.

I explained the outcome of events at the West Coast Chapter in that we have recovered most

of the assets and funds that were misdirected by Ralph Fires. We have identified most of the names of members who were signed by him and the funds that were directed into the Vietnam Unit Memorial without any record to GWVN. The Boat Captains handgun has been recovered and in the custody of the West Coast Chapter (WCC) President, Gene Glasco. GWVN and the VUMM have received the resignation of Fries from both organizations. We are still recovering from the misuse of GWVN assets by him. There were many members who have signed up with the WCC during his tenure that we do not know about. We have recovered many of the names and more turn up all the time. If any of you joined Gamewardens at the 2000 Reunion or after by signing up with the WCC during that time, please contact me so that we can correct any mistakes we are making about your membership.

WCC has the lead from GWVN for the VUMM building and development. We have three members on that board of directors. Steve Watson is the Vice-President. Carl Fletcher and Gene Glasco are the other two Members. The Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument Fund (VUMMF) now has its own 501 (C) charter and has made much progress in getting the memorial ready for a **May 21, 2005 dedication**. Make your plans now to attend. Gene Glasco is coordinating the GWVN effort and will be sending information about hotels, etc., and events later. The basic information is herein. The GWVN BoD voted to send \$2,500.00 to the VUMMF. Several members made private donations at the Reunion. I want to make an appeal to everyone to think about sending a yearly level donation of \$30.00 to this fund to support TF116 and the Memorial. A form can be found on the [www.tf116.org](http://www.tf116.org) website that credits GWVN for all donations from our organization. Steve Watson made a presentation from the VUMMF organization that appealed to GWVN support, which resulted in the GWVN donation.

GWVN is the major sponsor for another memorial located at Little Creek. We have a Mark I PBR in a skid as a monument located at the

Special Warfare compound. This effort was spearheaded by Larry Weatherall and Dave Wilkinson with the help of the Special Boat Unit located there. Lee Wahler was instrumental in getting the U. S. Navy Historical Department to loan us the PBR Mark I. The East Coast Obelisk was moved to this location and reinstalled. It was officially dedicated on July 18, 2003.

GWVN has a financial support obligation with both of these memorials. GWVN has signed a MOU along with the other two groups, TF115 and TF117, with the U. S. Navy to support the VUMM. We will be asked to provide funds for the upkeep of our portion of that memorial as well as provide liability insurance coverage that may be in the neighborhood of \$1,500.00 per year with GWVN being responsible for one-third of that cost. Our agreement with the U. S. Navy Historical Department for the Little Creek memorial requires that we be financially responsible for its upkeep as well. Both of these financial obligations will become cost factors for GWVN in the future.

Our membership has been holding steady for the past few years. Our current membership is 882 as of August 2004. That number breaks down as 521 Life/Life Plus members and 361 yearly members. We have had 51 plus new members since the 2002 reunion and twenty-three members have passed away since that time. Membership is the heart of our organization. It has taken me some time to get a handle on how to treat it. I now send a President's Letter to each new member. New and renewing members can sign up via the TF116 website and cover the entire transaction on-line or they can send the sign up form to the Gamewardens of Vietnam, Inc., POBox 701786, San Antonio, TX 78270. We also have a toll free number, 1 (866) 220 7477, which is attached to my telephone.

As I have looked at membership, I have discovered that a major portion of our finances are carried by the dues from the Yearly members. This is \$30.00 per year from 361 members. The dues from the Life Members has gone into the

assets of the organization as a one time entry that provides the member with all the privileges of membership, but turns off a source of future money to the organization except for any donations that may be sent in. This has a great impact on our continued financial viability currently and will have a greater impact in the future. Currently, we rely on each yearly member to renew his membership. However, many times that does not occur. We are in the process of finding better ways to keep the renewals flowing. It was suggested that we change the yearly renewal process to a two-year process that charges \$50.00 per renewal. This would save yearly members \$10.00 per two years. We are currently working on the database to get it updated to reflect our current membership status. We are going to go down the list to determine how current the memberships are. I need feedback on this proposal to determine its viability.

I have appointed a new Membership Chairman in Glen Fry to assume the tasks that Charles Benninghoff has had to give up in his role as Secretary. Please send your contacts to Glen.

Membership in our regional chapters seems to thrive when there is a project or other event that gives us a chance to get together. I discovered this in my trip to Vermont to the Northeast Chapter Reunion in 2003. The core of the West Coast Chapter lies in its work on the VUMM. There will be a further get-together by this group as the hosts for the 2005 VUMM dedication. We also have an interest in renewing a chapter at Little Creek to be lead by Clarence Cooper. This group, in Little Creek, the home of Gamewardens, has been getting together in support of the PBR Memorial there. A renewal of the Southeast Chapter, lead by Ron Laratta is in the works. Several members from the Southeast have expressed interest in getting this group back together. I have asked Ron to lead an effort in December 2004 of the Commissioning of the USS James E. Williams, DDG 95, in Charleston SC. . Finally, a group of GWVN and PBR-FVA members are assisting in getting one or more PBR's and a PAC-V into

museum shape. This group is located in Bellingham, WA. We would like to establish a Gamewardens chapter there.

My plans include traveling to these locations to lend National support as the regional chapters get started.

We decided at the New Orleans 2002 Reunion to cut back on our mailing cost of four National newsletters per year. Each mailing was costing us about \$1,000.00. We were going to reach everyone electronically. As it turns out that did not work. Only about one third of the membership is on-line with e-mail. And, about one-third of the on-line group addresses were bad. Of the one third that professed to have e-mail, about one third of the known AOL addresses were cut by AOL's method of keeping mass e-mail from third sources from delivery. My attempt at getting everyone's newsletter electronically failed. We did one USPS mailing about the 2004 Reunion in late 2003 to be sure to get its information to everyone. A newsletter that was to go along did not make it into the mailing. I will post that 2003 newsletter on the TF116 website for historical purposes. During this 2004 BoD meeting, I proposed to have two postal service mailings between National Reunions. One would be in late September or after the reunion to bring everyone up to date on the reunion and to relay the organization business to everyone. That is what I am doing with this newsletter. We would send a second newsletter in the February or March timeframe of the reunion year to get the upcoming reunion information to everyone in a timely matter for trip planning purposes. The remaining newsletters would be done electronically, but with improved attempts of reaching everyone who has e-mail and by other means for those who do not have it. In light of this proposed mailing plan, we need your up-to-date USPS address and e-mail. Use the form at the end of this newsletter.

I also presented a resurrection of the yearly and life ID cards to be issued to each new member and to get cards to existing members who may not have received one. This is another proposal

that needs feedback from the membership. The artwork and one time printing costs to get the ID cards ready is approximately \$1,500.00. The artwork has been finished and presented to the BoD. This is another proposal that needs feedback.

We have talked about making changes to the current GWVN charter to make it easier for other Brown Water sailors to join. In 2000 at San Diego, and, in 2002 at New Orleans, the current Special Warfare sailors had expressed great interest in being able to join as full veteran members. They meet the veteran status now. The Special Boat Unit sailors would like to have a home to go to when they are finished serving those units. Our current charter, from Virginia State, recognizes GWVN as a retirement non-profit organization to last until the last Vietnam era River Patrol sailor dies. The charter actually calls out that 75 percent of the members must be from the Vietnam War. There are three ideas being talked about. One is to modify the current charter to bring in members from other conflicts. Another is to scrap that charter and make GWVN a full 501 (C) non-profit organization without restrictions. The third idea is to not make any change at all, but let them organize their own groups.

The Mobile Support Team (MST)/STAB units that came into being in Vietnam and were assigned to TF116 can join now. That is how I came into GWVN, through the MST Two group assigned to TF116 from Boat Support Unit One. In a conversation with Tom Hawkins, President of the SEAL/UDT Association, their retirement group, he indicated that they would like for GWVN to become the umbrella group for SBU retirees.

We heard this from the SBU sailors when we talked to them. It is my personal opinion that we need to make the changes. One reason is that we have long-term financial obligations with the memorials that we have helped to establish in the memories of those who died in Vietnam and elsewhere that will out live our ability to cover. Another reason is that we are a decreasing population of sailors who for the most part, if

have not joined by now, will not join. A third reason concerns the fact that we should support all small boat/brown water sailors. I have had e-mail on this subject already. This is another area that I need feedback on.

Our finances in general are allowing us to operate without problems. Our assets have decreased from our 2002 report to our 2004 report by approximately \$2,000.00. We are holding our own with our website expenses through the Ships Store sales. Our main expenses come from the website maintenance (\$760.00 per month), PO Box (\$127.00 per year), 1 (800) number (\$26.00 per month), one newsletter mailing per year (\$1,000.00 per mailing), memorial maintenance (approximately \$2,500.00 per year), and scholarship awards (up to \$2,000.00 per year).

The membership database has undergone a major change under the guidance of Charles Benninghoff, Secretary. We have purged it to the best of our ability to make sure it is accurate. It is on-line with very limited access. It will be available to me as President, the Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chairman, and Webmaster for input changes. The Secretary has the ability to pull information from it for mail list purposes and other functions. Eventually, it will mesh with the Website roster so that member list can be kept current. We will now be able to more accurately keep member payments up to date. We will be able to make changes from individuals quickly and accurately. From the 2004 Reunion, we had 47 changes alone. The Excel copies that have been used are only as good as they were when received and kept up to date by the individual who holds them. As we gain knowledge on how to securely allow access to the database, we will open it to others. Again, please use the form at the end of this newsletter to update your address and e-mail.

At no time will the database be available other than for GWVN use.

We made Scholarship awards of \$500.00 each to four individuals this year. David Ajax is our Scholarship Chairperson. The four awardees

for 2004 are: April Nichole Winston, Vaughn Schuler, RS 534 sponsor; Shari Hopson, Ken Kalish, RS 523; Michelle Fowler, Walt Fanton, RS 533, sponsor; and Emily Justice, Avarille Justice, VAL-4, sponsor. Each was nominated and voted on by the BoD. There was some discussion about thinking about when to terminate this function. This is another area of discussion that I need feedback on.

The [www.tf116.org](http://www.tf116.org) Gamewardens website is a valuable asset for our organization. Larry Bissonnette has done a super job of making it the resource it is to GWVN. It is sustained for the most part by the sales in the Ships Store. Larry had a great selection of goods here at the Reunion and I believe that we did a good job of supporting it. Membership renewals and purchases can be made on-line through it. Contacts with other members can be made through it and it is a depository of our TF116 memories. So, use it often.

The final subject at the BoD meeting concerned The Vietnam Center. Dr. Richard Verrone made a presentation explaining its function and scope. This project, headed by Dr. James Reckner, PhD, History, Texas Tech University, was started in 1989 when a group of Vietnam Veterans got together to discuss how to preserve their experiences in Vietnam. There are several areas within its preview. The Vietnam Archive, a collection and preservation location, that holds documents submitted for future review and study, is one of the areas. Documents delivered to this archive are scanned and placed on their website for all to review. There are about 700,000 documents on the [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu) site now and more are going up all the time. GWVN has provided much of its documentation being held in garage storage to them. We have now signed a MOU with them, making them the official site for our history. Jim Davy is our coordinator for this effort.

They are also doing oral histories of individuals to maintain and keep that history alive for the future. We have had some members do the oral histories and it is my hope that more of us

do our personal story. The Oral History Project will take the interviews, your documents, pictures, slides and any other items you may want to preserve. They scan and photograph everything and provide you with transcripts, and CD-ROM copies for your use. Their Oral History phone number is (806) 742-9010. The Vietnam Center phone number is (806) 742-3742.

## 2004 General Meeting

The General meeting was well attended. I made my presentation again. Two additional areas were covered during the General meeting: election of officers and directors for the next term to end in 2006 and the location of the National Reunion in 2006.

The election results are: John Woody, President; Herb Stephan, Treasurer; Charles Benninghoff, Secretary; Jim Davy, VP West Coast; Walt Fanton, VP East Coast; Larry Bissonnette, BoD; Clarence Cooper, BoD; Ron Laratta, BoD and SEC President; Mike Wiley, BoD; Glen Fry, BoD; Steve Watson, BoD; Gene Glasco, WCC President; and David Ajax stays as Scholarship chairman. We also have two BoD (Life) members who serve, John Williams and Burt Witham as emeritus members.

The following were not voted on and have terms that end in 2006 Ken Delfino, John Babcock, and Walter Campbell.

After some lively debate, the site for the 2006 National Reunion will be in Denver. W.W. Cater will head this effort. WW will have details in the February 2006 newsletter about arrangements for this reunion. Start making your plans now for the 2006 National Reunion. Branson MO and Little Creek were the other two locations voted on. Both are in the running after Denver.

## Commissioning of USS James E. Williams DDG 95

Right after the San Antonio Reunion, we received notice that Gamewardens and PBR-FVA were to be invited to the commissioning of the USS James E. Williams DDG 95. The Commissioning

Group headed by ADM James Flatley have invited all TF116 veterans from these two organizations to be at the commissioning ceremony on December 11, 2004 at Charleston, SC. GWVN has provided a mailing list to the Commissioning Group. Expect an invitation in the mail. The invitations should be arriving in late October or early November.

Ron Laratta, SEC President, has taken on the task of hosting this event as a mini-reunion. He has established our hotel at a Ramada Inn. The name of the hotel is Ramada Inn Coliseum/ Convention Center, 2934 West Montague Avenue, North Charleston, SC 29418. The Reservation phone number is 1 (843) 744 8281. Ask for accommodations under "G13-44 Navy River Patrol". The hotel rate is \$59.99 plus tax. The full agenda is posted on the GWVN website. Ron has designated a \$15.00 cover charge to help defray the expenses. Make your plans to attend now. Send Ron or me an e-mail about your intent [rflaratta@worldnet.att.net](mailto:rflaratta@worldnet.att.net) or [President@tf116.org](mailto:President@tf116.org)

We are giving the ship an obelisk with one of our TF116 Presentation Coins embedded along with a beret and metal flash. The WCC, Carl Fletcher, is bringing the extra Williams plate for installation on the ship.

## Dedication of the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument

The Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument Fund organization has selected **May 21, 2005**, Armed Forces Day, as their dedication day for the VUMM. This is the culmination of many years of work by those dedicated to establishing our memorial to those who died in Vietnam. Gamewardens (TF116), Swift Boat Sailors Association (FT115), and Mobile Riverine Force Association (TF117) are the sponsors of this memorial located on the Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado.

Gene Glasco, WCC President, is heading this mini-reunion for GWVN. He has arranged for hotel space and will be providing that information

via invitations, e-mail and our TF116 website. I have included information about the hotel arrangements herein for planning purposes.

From Gene,

*“Well, after visiting many hotel properties in San Diego, I believe we have finally found one that will serve us well. Our reunion hotel will be the Doubletree Club Hotel, on Hotel Circle South in San Diego. This is a Hilton affiliated property. We’ve got great Standard room accommodations at \$95.00 per night (not including room tax). A very functional and large Hospitality Room and beautiful Banquet Room are available. The hotel has a knock out buffet breakfast, great little restaurant and bar, pool, Jacuzzi, work out room, game room and just as importantly, flexible hotel management and staff that will accommodate our every need. I’ll be receiving brochures on the hotel for a mailer we need to do to the membership. Our block of rooms is fifty (50). If we don’t fill all fifty, they will allow us a little leeway and keep our room price and free Hospitality Suite as is. The other hotels were not as accommodating or flexible. I think you all will be pleased, at least I hope so. I’m going to go ahead and sign the agreement. I’ll then get with Catering and we’ll put together a menu for our dinner Friday night 5/20/05. Will a dinner ticket of say \$25 to \$28.00 per person be too much to ask? Would you like me to see about the breakfast buffet on Saturday morning the 21st? It will probably range from about \$10.00 to \$15.00 per person. Next thing we need to do is put together the application/reservation information. I’ll start working on this soon and send it around for your input.*

*Regards, Gene”*

Gene has also blocked rooms at a Comfort Inn. The toll free number is 1 (866) 710 7239 and mention Gamewardens for the special rate of \$95.00 per night.

Send Gene or me an e-mail about your intent:

Gene Glasco: [gene69-70@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gene69-70@sbcglobal.net) or [president@tf116.org](mailto:president@tf116.org)

## **Destruction of Military Records**

The e-mail going around about the military records destruction is another urban myth. RAO Bulletin (August 2004 – 3-1) explains what they are doing. The NPRC quote in full:

NPRC SPOOF: A message is being sent around the military community via email that alleges the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) is automating their storage and management of our military records. When this is complete they plan to destroy the hard copies of records unless requested by the veteran or a deceased veteran’s family to send those records to them. It further states that if a veteran or members of the veteran’s family wants to request those records be sent to them instead of being destroyed they can make their request by mail to:

National Personnel Records Center  
Military Personnel Records  
9700 Page Ave.,  
St. Louis MO 63132-5100

or

make their request online at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>.

The only part of this allegation that is true is the procedure provided for obtaining copies of a veteran’s record. There is a study, repeat study, at NPRC to possibly digitize CIVILIAN personnel files if a former federal CIVILIAN employee returns to federal CIVILIAN service. Rather than send the new agency paper, the Civilian Personnel Records area of NPRC may scan and transmit them electronically. The paper file would then go back on the shelf. For the last 10 years all the military services have stored their permanent military personnel records on electronic media. Prior to that the records were on microfiche, and before 1972 those records were paper only. At this time NPRC receives, stores and services military personnel records only in paper and/or fiche. [Source: NPRC Management Analyst msg dated 28 AUG 04].

Jim Davy called and found out that “this is NOT

true, it is a hoax. I called the records center and the Dept in Maryland that they work for and this is not true... It has popped up several times in the past and they will not respond to letters. But they get thousands when this happens. You can call them at (314)538-3135 if you like to verify this if you like." Thanks Larry and Jim for tracking this rumor down.

## **South East Chapter**

Ron Laratta is leading a group to get the South East Chapter going again. They met at the National Reunion and formed their BoD. As noted above, this group will lead the mini-reunion during the DDG 95 commissioning. They will host a meeting in Charleston for everyone who attends the commissioning. As with all reunions, there will be some cost of operation involved. SEC will let us know what to expect in support of the costs of the events.

## **Jere Beery**

I want to take this time to touch on another subject affecting one of our members. Jere Beery was a .50 caliber gunner on a patrol that was ambushed in 1968. Lt. Richard Godbehere, Harold Sherman, and Dave Otto were other members of that patrol. Jere was wounded very badly by an anti-tank rocket that day. Jere is involved in resisting assignment of his earned VA disability compensation as part of a divorce settlement. The judge from Georgia has wrongfully assigned this compensation. The U.S. Code specifically states that disability compensation is not part of any property settlement in divorce cases. I have developed a letter from Gamewardens about the wrongful application of earned disability compensation for all of to use. I went to the Texas law code and found specific statements about disability compensation not being available. Check with your state's law and make it part of your letter. My letter will be on the TF 116 website for download and use.

The address for the Georgia Judge in Jere's case is:

Judge Allen B. Keeble  
Superior Courts, Coweta Judicial Circuit  
Colonial Bldg., Suite 20  
119 Ridley Avenue  
LaGrange, GA 30240-2747  
Phone: (706) 883-1730  
Fax: (706) 883-1639

The address for the Tennessee Judge for Van Luven:

Judge Muriel Robinson  
4<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court, 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court  
Davidson County  
523 Main Stream Drive  
Nashville, TN 37228  
Fax: (615) 862 37228

## **Northeast Chapter**

The NEC has two events on schedule. One is a meeting on November 7, 2004 to celebrate Veterans Day at the Bourne National Cemetery. The second is their annual picnic to be held at Berkley American Legion Post 121 in Berkley, MA on June 25, 2005.

## **Little Creek Memorial Dedication of the LAST MK I PBR and Gamewardens Memorial Monument Obelisk by Larry Weatherall**

The last available MK I PBR belonging to the United States Navy is now located at Naval Special Warfare Group Four (NSWG4) headquarters on Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek in Norfolk, VA..

The short version of what led up to the Dedication of the MK I PBR and relocation of the Gamewardens Memorial Monument Obelisk goes something like this:

Lee Wahler worked for the Military Sealift Command (MSC) at the Washington Navy Yard in DC. One day Lee noticed a familiar shape under a plastic tarp in a storage yard. His investigation turned up a MK I PBR on a shipping cradle that belonged to the Naval Historical Center (NHC) which they were preparing for

shipment to a long-term storage facility. Lee contacted the NHC to find out more about the boat and ultimately, as the Gamewardens of Vietnam Association on site Representative, arranged with NHC to transfer the MK I PBR to the custody of the Gamewardens of Vietnam. Lee used his contacts within the MSC to have the boat sea lifted from WNY to Little Creek where Special Boat Squadron 2 (SBR2) was located.

While Lee was working on getting the boat released from NHC, Larry Weatherall was asked to be the Gamewardens Point of Contact in the Little Creek area and to be the liaison with the Active Duty Navy personnel in refurbishing the boat to become a Memorial in the Little Creek area. His answer, as a former MK I PBR sailor, (The famous 105 of River Patrol Section 531.) was an enthusiastic "YES"!!

David Wilkinson, a Gunners mate buddy of Larry's in Vietnam (River Patrol Section 531, Assigned to River Boat 109.) and long standing friend was recruited to assist on the boat. Many people ask why the port side hull number of the MK I PBR is 109 while the starboard side is numbered 105.

The two took on an active role in contacting SBR2, Captain Walter Pullar III, and commenced a nearly daily contact with PAO and JAG, LCDR Tobey Tolbert. Captain Pullar had accepted responsibility for the display of the MK I PBR at Little Creek as long as Gamewardens would arrange to have it moved from WNY. Captain Pullar's vision was that the MK I PBR would be the first of a series of boats

That would be put on display as memorials to the various incarnations of the Special Boat Units since their inception with Task Force 116 in Vietnam.

In the meantime, Lee had used his considerable influence and contacts within MSC and arranged to have the boat moved from WNY to Little Creek aboard the MSC Ocean going tug USNS Mohawk on May 18, 2002. Once the tug was

tied up at Little Creek, its own crane was used to offload the MK I PBR onto a flatbed that SBU2 had arranged. While in the bone yard waiting for its relocation, the Vietnam era MK I PBR was placed alongside a MK V Special Operations Craft (SOC). Seeing the two craft side by side made it very clear that there had been a radical change in what the Navy is being asked to do since the MK I's, MK II's and Swift Boats were used in Vietnam.

One of the first things that Lee, Larry and David had to do was to inspect the MK I and to prepare a report of its condition to provide an idea of what we had to work with and what we had to do to make it ready for Dedication. Overall, the boat was in pretty good shape, considering that it is vintage 1966 and had seen service for 30+ years. Sadly the boat is missing its engines, pumps, electronics and miscellaneous hardware but the basic hull structures above and below the waterline is in sound condition. Dave and Larry spent the next four days straight working on the boat, reinstalling fuel tanks, reinforcing the deck, installing the gun tub and changing the MK II Canopy into something that looked good on a MK I PBR. See the Gamewardens Website for pictures of the process.

In July 2002, Captain Pullar was relieved by Captain Randy Goodman and LCDR Tolbert was relieved by our new point of contact CWO4 Rich Soper. The Reorganization of the Naval Special Warfare required that the SBU2 be called the NSWG Four command.

Thanks again, Larry Weatherall and Dave Wilkinson for your effort in getting this memorial up and going for us.

## **Political Support**

During the National Reunion in San Antonio, we were bombarded with requests by both sides of the Swift Boat groups to set up tables for political purposes. On a straw vote from those present in the Hospitality Suite, it was decided that GWVN is not a political organization. I concur completely with that position. I do however, take

the position that each of us individually need to take our personal position about how we feel about this Presidential election and act on it.

It is my personal belief those four months as an LTJG does not qualify one for Commander-in-Chief. Further, I have a personal problem with the anti-war statements of 1971. And, I do not care for the Senate voting record for the past 20 years.

Be vocal in your political position as it is not often that veterans have this much clout during an election.

## **Short Takes**

Support the [www.tf116.org](http://www.tf116.org) website and Ships Store.

Make your plans now for the upcoming events:

### ***Commissioning of DDG 95***

on December 11, 2004 in Charleston SC

### ***Dedication of the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument***

on May 21, 2005 in San Diego,

### ***Northeast Chapter Picnic***

on June 25, 2005 in Berkley, MA

### ***National Reunion***

August 2006 in Denver, CO

Send me an e-mail with your latest address, phone, and e-mail, or mail it to the GWVN Post Box here in San Antonio. We need to get the membership database up to date.

Give us feedback on the subjects from the BoD summary above.

VA Applications go online. Veterans can now apply for benefits and health care online. Health care can be filled out and submitted using the VA 10-10 EZ form. Veterans applying for compensation, pension, and vocational rehabilitation via the VA VONAPP form. Both are accessed at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

## Newsletter format form:

We need feedback from each member as to how you want the newsletters to arrive at your location. It has been proposed that the **B O D** ask each member how he wants delivery. Each new newsletter will be posted on the TF116 website for archive and retrieval purposes.

### The two choices are:

**1. Electronically; this would be by e-mail and would be the most cost effective for GWVN**

**2. Mail by USPS; a hard copy to be mailed. Keep in mind that this method costs GWVN at least \$.37 per copy mailed.**

**Please mail this form back to the GAMEWARDENS of VIETNAM INC.**

### **1. E-Mail**

E -Mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

### **2. US POSTAL SERVICE :**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street or POB: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, and Zip + 4: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please note, even if you choose to have the news letter mailed to your street address, and you have an E-Mail GWVN would like to have your E-Mail address for our Database. This is strictly for our database and will not be shared, without proper authority.*

Mail to: **Gamewardens of Vietnam, Inc.**  
P O Box 701786  
San Antonio, TX 78270

**John Woody**  
President