



DOGMAN



A Brotherhood of All Combat Veteran Dog Handlers

VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION

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War Dog Stamp Release Ceremony

By Jon Hemp ~ Sarge 46X4,
377th SPS/K9 Tan Son Nhut '68-'69

For the past several years there has been talk of, and interest in, a series of War Dog Stamps from the U.S. Postal Service. In 2012, a limited release of "military dog" stamps were made available, but it was a short run and discontinued. Many of us have long awaited the actual release of the new "non-expiration" First-Class War Dog Stamp designed by DKNK Studios in Los Angeles.

In an effort to allow for as much MWD Community participation as possible in this latest release, the US Postal Service staged 2019 release ceremonies at a number of military installations across the country, and even one in Japan. The latest and final release ceremony targeted Naval Base Ventura County, California.

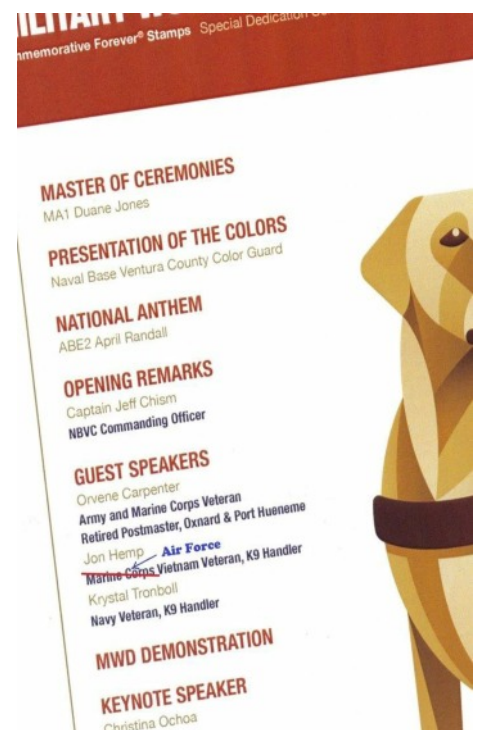
Military Working Dog Teams from Naval Base Ventura, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Fort

Irwin, and Coast Guard LA/Long Beach were significantly represented. They were also joined by a Los Angeles Police Department K9 team, at the August 2 NBVC event. Captain Jeff Chism, Commanding Officer, Naval Base Ventura, gave an appropriately respectful welcome address following the presentation of colors. Our host, MA1 Duane Jones [Chief Select], NBVC K-9 Kennel Master, served incredibly well as the Master of Ceremony. The keynote address was provided by Orvene Carpenter. Carpenter served in WWII in the US Marine Corps in Korea and with the U.S. Army Reserves. He became Ventura Postmaster as a follow-up career. Krystal Tronboll, former U.S. Navy MWD Handler, provided an incredible presentation on behalf of the current generation. Alfred Santos, District Manager, US Postal Service, addressed the audience on behalf of the Postal Service and gave credit to the stamp designers,

Mike Ryan, Greg Breeding, and Nathan Goldman of DKNK Studios, Los Angeles.

I gave it my best shot . . . trusting that Booby Trap, Mine, Scout, Tracker, and Sentry Dog handlers of our Nam era would have a significant presence in this celebration of War Dogs. I kept it "clean" and to the point. I believe the vast majority of those present left the event with a far better understanding of our generation, the Old Dawgs.

We can all head on down the road with a genuine appreciation for respect that has been afforded our pooches with these US Postal Service stamps.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

By John R. Harvey
VDHA President

Worlds Away

Thinking back on our lives, it is amazing how just mentioning a particular year or a specific date will bring back a rush of memories. Some experiences that we had first-hand, and others representing the major events of the time. The events could have been happening right in our own homes or a world away.

The year 1966 was a pivotal year for me. I was graduating from high school and decided to enlist in the Marine Corps before going to college. Unbeknown to this clueless teenager was the fact that at the age of 50, my father a World War II veteran, was just graduating from college with a BS in Engineering. He worked at Sikorsky Aircraft which manufactured the helicopters I would soon be riding to defend our country. He was trying to raise eight kids and I was trying to stay out of high school detention. As I said, sometimes we are "worlds away" or otherwise stated, in a world of our own.

This summer has been a landmark of memories from 50 years ago. We have been reminded by the media of the events of 1969. The United States put its first men on the moon July 20, 1969. Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became American heroes. The famous words "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for Mankind" would become an inspiration. Many of us would only learn the details of this historic event weeks, months or even years later, before its significance would even register in our consciousness. We had other things on our minds. Then there was the music of the day being celebrated at a place called the Woodstock Festival the week of August 15th. Janis Joplin, Joan Baez, Joe Cocker, the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and hundreds of others were some of the headliners.

I visited Bethel Woods, New York this past spring. This was the actual location of the festival. I visited the Woodstock Museum and basked in the memories of that time. I felt privileged to be able to go back in time and imagine what it must have been like. In 1969 I had been worlds away both physically and mentally.

Fifty years later, I can honestly say that there have been times when I never expected to make this milestone of remembrance. The summer of 1969 I had been in-country almost five months. My dog was named Prince. As all of you can relate, we were constant companions. Our instructors told us loyalty must go down the leash before it will ever come up. Around the same time Apollo 11 was landing on the moon, Prince

and I received orders to join the 2nd Battalion 5th Marines in a movement into the mountains in order to secure an enemy stronghold. The area had been bombarded for days with artillery and air assaults. After fifty years I admit my memory sometimes overlaps and becomes confused with events.



Prince, Marine Corps scout dog.

I remember picking up my orders and getting a ride out to DaNang airport where I got on a helicopter to the field. Upon arriving at Battalion Headquarters, I was told that I would not have time to stop by the S-2 bunker in order to find out what the operation was about, what kind of enemy activity was in the area of deployment and what were the last friendly casualties. So Prince and I quickly reported to the S-4 Sergeant. I told him which platoon we had been assigned to, and gave him 30 days of dog food. I explained that we would need to be re-supplied every three days along with the rest of the platoon.

After fifty years, the details sometimes become blurred. The company began to load up on "6-bys" (a 5-ton, six-wheel military truck from World War II with a 6' by 6' bed), also known as a Marine Corps M923A1.

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... WORLDS AWAY

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We transported out to the helicopters that would bring us out to the base of a large mountain complex. The mission was to climb the mountain along trails leading along the various ridge lines in search of enemy personnel, supply caches and base camps. Weather conditions in this terrain were tricky.

With summer monsoons or pop-up rainstorms, the winds were constantly changing. Moving from ravine to ravine and valley to valley, we were always moving forward and upward. At times the winds came directly from the front at 5-15 miles per hour. Other times they blew up from directly behind the patrol. The winds were also bouncing off of the tree lines on the other side of the ravine. Because of the conditions, Prince and I would change from walking point to being positioned further back in the middle of the patrol.

We all have those memories which seem emblazoned on our sub-conscious. They remain a mere nanosecond from being brought forward to our full consciousness by a smell or sound or an image in the clouds. One such image I have from that day, is rounding a corner on the trail, and directly in front of me, probably 50 yards away, on an opposite ridgeline, stood a body. The body's left arm, or at least what was left of it, stood pointing towards the sky. The body had literally melted in place. The clothes and skin and surface muscles burnt away from what was obviously the result of a napalm attack. The legs below the knees were merged together by what appeared to be cement, but was actually melted flesh. This provided the stability for the upper body to remain erect. The memories are a world away.

The trail seemed to flatten out. Prince and I had resumed point. Early afternoon we made contact with a tunnel and bunker complex dug deep into the side of the mountain. Prince and I, along with our shot gun James, found a number of exits on the backside of the hill. Returning to the front of the complex, we began to cross in front of what appeared to be the primary entrance.

At that moment a tunnel rat emerged from the opening and yelled "grenade." Not having a protective area nearby, the three of us went prone, seeking cover from any upward blast. As happens with life's unexplainable events the chi-com slid up between James and Prince before exploding.

My world began to spin. With a small yelp I knew

Prince had been hit. Apparently James never had a chance and I believe died instantly. A corpsman soon showed up with field dressings for me to press against Prince's wound in order to stop the bleeding. An evacuation helicopter was dispatched to our location. However, as it approached the make shift LZ with 30 foot trees in the center, it started to receive small arms fire far down in the valley and boogied without making a pickup.

Forty-five minutes later, Prince died in my arms. We were a world away. The order came down to pack up because we had to move out. I immediately gave my C-rations and extra ammo to members of the platoon. A suggestion had been made that we bury Prince there in those ragged mountains. Apparently the look on my face indicated that was not an option. I hoisted Prince on to my shoulders and started off for our next LZ. The day was July 27, 1969.

Fast forward fifty years. Steve Reichenback, a friend and former dog handler, called and invited me to dinner. We met at the Breakers in Palm Beach on Saturday evening July 27, 2019. We are a whole world away from the chaos of that time. It was a celebration of survival and friendship and a ceremony of homage and honor to those who had given all. As we observe the events of this summer, the good, the bad and the memorable and forgettable, let us remember and pay homage to all those who made it possible to still be here. A WORLD AWAY.



Prince was buried at Camp Kaiser in Da Nang.

Remembrance: Vietnam and the Dogs that Served

By Bob Dunn

Unit Director, 212th MP Co, Sentry Dogs

This past Memorial Day, I had the privilege to give remarks at the Memorial Day Remembrance, held each year in our little town of Deale, Maryland. Although we are a small community, we take pride in our honoring those who have served. It is held outside at the Deale War Memorial located in the parking lot of our local church. Tables are set up, with pictures of all veterans from the area who have served their country. The entire town shows up to show their support.

It was a beautiful day, sunny, in the eighties. After the playing of the National Anthem and brief introductions, it was my turn to give my presentation. I had decided to talk about our four legged soldiers, what they did and the important role they played in the Vietnam war. I began by giving a quick summary of why I enlisted into the U.S. Army. But this would be about the dogs. I wanted those attending this service to understand what those military working dogs, those brave soldiers, did for our country, as many were not aware that dogs were used in Vietnam.

I took them through the training I went through with Duke, my partner, who I picked up and trained with in Okinawa. I explained the obedience and agility training and the aggression sessions. I talked about the alert and detection exercises. Then I discussed what it was like to patrol the perimeter of the ammunition depot at Long Binh; the lonely nights and trudging down to your post in four inches of mud during the monsoon season and how Duke would alert on the perimeter. I talked about being afraid, but knowing Duke would remain by my side, no matter what.

My talk was well received. Many people approached me once the ceremony was over. Most never knew we used dogs in Nam, nor the impact they had in saving thousands of lives over there. The legacy of the Sentry Dogs should continue to be spread, and I am glad to be a small part of it. It was a very rewarding experience, and I plan to do more presentations in the future. Let's all do our part to continue to inform everyone of the history of our four-legged soldiers and the importance of their service to our country.

... WORLDS AWAY



Sgt John R Harvey (left) and Navy Cross honoree Sgt Robert Stockman (right) standing at the graveside for Kaiser, KIA on July 5, 1966.

DOGMAN

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Letters and stories are subject to editing. Email all submissions to Dogman@VDHA.us or mail to Steve Lemish, Dogman Editor, 152 W. Park Avenue, Suite 150, El Cajon, CA 92020 (include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want them returned).

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TRACKER REPORT



By John Dupla

This year's reunion for the trackers was both interesting and memorable for all that attended. It was held in Rapid City, S.D. this past June with a very good turn out. We had several new attendees and some that we haven't seen in years. Here is a little back ground info about the reunion. Rapid City became a fall back site when the original site fell through. However, it turned out to be the best decision. Ester Enders, the wife of deceased tracker Doug Enders, who died in December of last year, requested that we hold it in Rapid City where she would have a Memorial service for Doug. We agreed.

Chuck Steward, SGM, USA (retired) made all the arrangements at the Best Western, from securing the hotel and up to the dinner Saturday night. I got there a few days early to take in the sites.

One of the first objectives was to get over to Sturgis and catch up with a good friend Chuck Boyd from my local VFW. He and his wife travel the country every year in their RV. They stopped off in Sturgis and were there at the same time I was. Tracker Sonny Apman and I drove over to have breakfast with them. After breakfast, Sonny and I made it over to Ft. Meade. It was there that we found out the practice of observing the Star Spangled Banner was started.

Rapid City is near Mt. Rushmore, the Black Hills, the Chief Crazy Horse statue, and so many more points of interest. Many of the trackers had a hard time deciding where to go. Then on Saturday morning, a group of trackers, with Frank Merritt leading them, took off to Wall, SD and prepared to participate as honor guards for Doug Enders' services. The rest of us followed up to join them. It was great to see all the trackers pay tribute to one of our own.

Some of the trackers made it special for me; the attendance of the majority of 1st Cav trackers with whom I

served. John Dotson, Frank Merritt, Bill Reed, Larry Troutt, the brother of Dennis Bueke (KIA), K.O. ills, and Steve Cradick were there. I hadn't seen John Dotson in 18 years. The list of trackers that make it worth going went on and on.

Bob Konarske made several hand-crafted walking canes to pass out. He started to make a few for veteran friends and trackers. When people found out about his work, they started to donate the oak wood for him to make more. I believe he's made over one hundred. Norm Shaw gave me a jar of legally-made moonshine he made in Ohio.

Next years reunion is to be in Greenville, S.D. The dates and hotels TBD. However, since this past June we've lost three trackers. Roy Burchfield died June 23. Chuck Steward drove to Rapid City and just got home when he decided to attend Roy's services in Mobile, AL. Roy was in Chuck's tracker team and they became a good friends after their military careers. Rick Tidwell, who served with the 173rd trackers, died July 16. Then I got word that Reginal Sharpe, 101st Airborne tracker team, died Aug 8. FYI I met Reginald at a local Veterans Administration ceremony, when he walked up to me, stating that he was tracker. He happened to be in town; he lived in Alabama and was visiting a fellow VN friend.

I also lost a personal VN friend this last month. Tommy Hildenbrand and I went to school together and kept up with each other. Then our VDHA Secretary, Vernon Anderson, had an episode that sent him to the hospital. We made a couple of trips to visit with him. All this makes me want to attend our Washington DC reunion. Whether they are trackers or VDHA members, it's always good to meet up with friends that I've met through the years. Hope to see you there. Until then, SEEK ON.

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*The deadline
for new
articles, photos,
letters, etc. is
November 23
for the next
issue.*

Brotherhood and Reunion: A Story of Healing

This personal story recounts the lasting damage war can inflict. We all know brothers who, even though they lived to return from Vietnam, never made it all the way back to the World. For many it is a continuing process. In the first three parts of his story, Mike recounted leaving Vietnam after two serious head traumas. He got back to the states and didn't know why he had huge gaps in his memories. After a long time, he found the VDHA website and a special VDHA member. This last installment starts in Vietnam after Mike suffers a friendly-fire incident and ends with him at our recent VDHA reunion.

By Mike Hurder

Donnie wasn't involved in my last knock on April 17. I think he had a sapper sweep that night. I was on a heliport and had been taken off sapper sweeps since the previous week's incident. I've always thought the heliport was for the 11th CAV, at least the emblem looked like the 11th's, but I now think it was the CAVs own 365th Aviation Detachment heliport for their gun ships. These were all cobras or gunned up Hueys. It was a wicked awesome display.

Our CO made a good choice keeping me close, so to speak. I was a wreck. I was drinking to get to sleep and then I was struggling to even gear up for my mount. The CO said, "no more remote stuff for Shorty, Top. He's the scrounge team leader from now on." This meant I got all the dream posts and that most of the posts I was guarding for the night were not only on base but had 'stuff in abundance that we needed for the deteriorating 34th compound. The only thing I was doing right was Prince. Prince and I had kush jobs and we ate like pigs too, comparatively speaking. I was humiliated and humbled.

Even so, I wasn't up to the job. This heliport was literally our first duty in a 'threat environment' since the April 10th incident. Of course, there had to be incoming that night during my watch. I also had to be close enough to hear the call on the PRC-25 in the guard shack as we past it. I managed to stay Prince, then I lost it. I couldn't remember where the bunker was, and Prince, of course, was as agitated as I was. When I found the bunker behind me, I was facing the opposite direction from what Prince was facing. When we both took off for the bunker, there was about three feet or so of slack in the leash. Well, Prince weighed 130lbs. I know, I know, "WTF, over?" That's what I said too...he weighed 138 when I took him over and he was fat and

lazy. If I ate three full meals, I could weigh as much as 128 lbs. Going in opposite directions as fast as we could, the slack was taken up and there was a pop, then some screaming, then it was lights out for Boston Shorty. Incidentally, there is no record of incoming on Bien Hoa on 17 or 18 APR 1972. It was a false alarm! I still dream this sequence constantly and the scene of us entering the woods...Prince's reactions haunt me still today.

The memories from this point to the C5A are spotty at best. Hypnosis didn't shed any light on this time at all. I have had these memories since I came home though, never sure of their authenticity:

1. Waking momentarily on the tarmac. I hear footpads before I wake fully and open my eyes. Then Prince is on my chest whining and licking my face at the same time and I can see the nose of a Huey just above his right ear and I can't say anything because I can't get a breath with him on my chest. I try to get up, but I think trying to use my arm set me off again. More screams...pretty sure they were mine...then nothing much for a while.

2. Gurney trips and yelling orderlies...I must have been a real jerk.

3. I think I remember telling someone 'I fell' when they asked me what happened, and I think I was remembering the drunken fall off the bunker. I don't know if that was at the infirmary on Bien Hoa, the hospital in Saigon, on Clark or Anderson???

4. Hospital beds

5. Vietnamese girls in AO Dais making a throat-slash gesture when I smiled at them...I was on a gurney entering 3rd Field Hospital, I think.

6. A medal ceremony...not mine...for the guy in the next bunk over.

7. Looking out the window by my bunk, at the sandbag fighting position on the roof of the portico below us. In bold, black 10" letters, a huge "FTA" was scrawled in the concrete. That, I believe was also in 3rd Field Hospital, Saigon. It's one of the few very vivid memories I have.

8. Somebody saying, "we have to relieve the pressure on his brain." Someone else responding, "What, you want to drill his skull?" I don't know where that was or who they were talking about...for sure, but I seem to remember dropping out of reality occasionally and taking a good spill/knock-on-the-squash, and everyone freaking out every time I tried to do anything

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Brotherhood and Reunion: A Story of Healing

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on my own. (From my medical records we found that right up to the day they released me from Chelsea Naval Hospital, outside of Boston, I had an orderly stationed within catching distance of me...all the damn time.)

9. Waking up strapped to a gurney that was lashed to the floor of a huge vessel. It was so big, I freaked out at first, then I started screaming for Prince and my .45. Then an orderly said, "Hey, you woke up. Nice to see ya. Goodnight." He turned a valve on my IV and I next woke up in a hospital bed on Guam.

That's about it...if any of it is real. What I do remember fully occurred before the April 10th knock and after the last one on April 17. I woke on the 23rd on that C5A. We landed at Hanscom Air Base in Massachusetts on May 1. The other stuff that slipped away after that, I've recovered all. That was mostly drug and denial-induced insanity. So, it's just those 2-3 weeks that are still somewhat AWOL...sigh!

I have filed away several names for future reference, for when we meet again or for the first time, at the Gate. These people, my heroes, have gotten me here. One such hero, and God forgive me for not making that trip in 2016, was Perry Money. When Perry passed, I said, "no more. No more without me meeting them, damn it!" Even in his passing, he was saving another brother. That's our Perry, eh? The 2018 reunion was to be my re-entry.

Donna and I came to San Diego with the clear understanding that it might not turn out as I hoped. I was, after all, still not one of them in my heart. Then we got here. So much for that crap. The men and women of the VDHA welcomed us both with open arms and true understanding for this old trooper. I mention the following only because I started most days 'bitchy and twitchy.' The bed was not my sleep number bed! My back was protesting each morning for a couple of hours until the meds kicked in, but I'd do it again in a minute.

Folks, I haven't talked so much since high school and it was all good. I met so many wonderful people that the emotions ran high for the first day or so...then it ratcheted upwards. My heart swelled. I was home at last. It didn't stop at the reunion either.

Two days after I got home I got a message from Joe and Terry Robinson, along with the message was a photo taken by Joe on Bien Hoa sometime in early 72. The photo was of me. Joe and I were platoon mates. This is that 'full-circle' we must travel to come home.

I'm finally out of tears, friends. It's all smiles, and oddly enough, some few memories from those two weeks are seeping in. I remember Joe Cassasa and Jeff Williams

bringing me my duffle bags before I left for home and my helmet; my helmet with the ding where I landed on it at the heliport. Ha!

So, my brothers and sisters, I write this for many reasons. Writing is a salve to me much like photography and music, when I can manage to get my pen out. Getting this down on paper will serve me for a long time to come, and who knows, maybe someone else will read it someday and say to themselves, "if that old codger could do it after 45 years, well, so can I." That would be the best possible outcome. I also wanted you all to know who I really am and what this reunion meant to us Hurders. I hope this essay does that.

I was a REMF, brothers and sisters. I don't mind saying that I was quite pleased with that status. The guys in the CAV going out to support firebases in the bush had NOTHING good to say about that duty...go figure! I was indeed safe and sound in and around Bien Hoa Base Camp, relatively speaking. I have come to realize though, that there were no safe spaces in Nam. We were all at risk. While I was a stay-at-home grunt, the 34th was only that way for a while. After I left, our teams started supporting the CAV out on their fire bases too, and regularly. I missed all the real fun!

I'm still a REMF (Recovering Energized Motivated Free) as defined in my title for this piece. You all are an integral part of that. The words I want to say are: Thank You. Your brother and sister always, Mike (Shorty) and Donna Hurder and Prince 16X5, 34th IPSP/P, very proud, and grateful members of the VDHA. Woof!

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Bob Palochik

Checking	\$31,982.21
Savings	5,075.60
Total	\$37,057.81

REUNION UPDATE: To date there are 36 members and 26 spouse/guest showing tentative interest in our 2020 Washington DC reunion. We will shortly be publishing additional information on when hotel reservations can start. There will be a 4-hour guided bus tour to include stops at the Washington Monument/Pentagon/Arlington Cemetery and of course the Wall where we are planning to lay a wreath. Please check out the *Dogman* and website for additional information. We would like this to be a large VDHA turnout.

War Dog Memorial Celebrates 20 Years

By Ernie Ayala

Twenty years ago today there was word of a large War Dog Memorial going up in Southern California. At the same time, certain members of the VDHA were being interviewed for an upcoming documentary to be shown on the Discovery Channel. The philanthropist who made all this possible was dog food mogul and the owner of the Nature's Recipe brand of dog food, Jeffrey Bennett.

Over 700 dog handlers trekked to Riverside, California and were shown top hospitality by the Riverside VFW Post 1225. All Vietnam dog handlers were given a War Dog jacket and were part of a commemoration for the dogs of war and their handlers. Wives, children, military and civilian police all played a part of this historic day on Presidents' Day, 2000.

Meanwhile, in Hollywood, many members were invited to the premiere of the War Dogs documentary narrated by "Apocalypse Now" star Martin Sheen. There was a red carpet going into the theater and many of the "stars" were interviewed by the press. It was truly an electric night they'll never forget.

March Air Base in Riverside also never forgot that historic day as 19 anniversaries have passed, each year with a ceremony remembering the day. Generals, politicians, police chiefs, celebrities and authors were asked to speak and then the emcee recognized all the former dog handlers in the audience and invited them to step up and present flowers at the memorial.

In 2020, Jeffrey Bennett will be running the show. He has updated the old War Dog CD and will be making 200 copies for that day. Also, the much asked for and never found War Dog memorabilia will be on sale this time and will be available in our base exchange soon.

The word will be getting out to all dog handlers to attend this most auspicious event. West coasters will personally be called, as they are closer to the event and should really try to be there. I missed the very first unveiling in 2000 but attended about 15 or so anniversary ceremonies since. It will never make up for missing the first one but at that the time I didn't even know we existed. Five years later, I invited our LAPD Chief of Police, William Bratton, to speak. His appearance was so inspiring, especially when he

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spoke of his time in Okinawa and Long Binh. He served with the 212th MP Co., 67-68.

I can assure you, you do not want to miss this one. We will all take part in the activities and ceremonies.

Scheduled to be there will be the memorial's original sculptor, Thomas Schumberg along with other notable dignitaries which I will reveal in future issues.

