



Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



"Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History"

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March 2016

Oklahoma Vietnam Veterans Day

Golf Tournament

Benefitting



**Military
History Center**

and



Battle Creek Golf Club

Friday, April 29

\$60 per player, \$240 per four-person team

**Play is limited to the first eighteen teams
that register and pay their entry fees.**

**Four Person Scramble
Shotgun Start**

**For more information about participating as a player,
sponsor or donor, contact Brigadier General Tom Mancino
at 918-794-2712 or 918-277-2486.**

The MHC held its annual Oklahoma Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Day program at Broken Arrow's First Methodist Church, in the evening of March 17. The featured speaker was Mr. Pete Luitwieler, a Vietnam veteran. The program was presented by Rolling Thunder Oklahoma, whose "major function is to publicize POW/MIA issues."



Mr. Pete Luitwieler, featured speaker at the Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Day program, served in Vietnam as a military intelligence officer, 1967-69. He volunteers as a mentor at the Veterans Treatment Court, a program that helps veterans recover from addiction.

Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Day



MHC President, Tom Mancino, addressing the gathering for the flag raising ceremony at the MHC Flag Plaza



Rolling Thunder individually saluting Oklahoma's Vietnam War MIAs.



Civil Air Patrol Cadets preparing to raise the American flag



Members of Rolling Thunder Oklahoma conducting the Empty Chair Ceremony. Each item on the table symbolically represents some aspect of the MIAs. For example, the five place settings and empty chairs are symbolic of MIAs from the five services – Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard.



Ms. Kay Guynes and Mr. John Lehmann, President and Vice President, respectively, of Rolling Thunder Oklahoma presenting the program recognizing America's MIAs from World War I to the present.



The MHC salutes Vietnam veterans.

This Month's Featured Exhibit



Reproduction Model of a Viet Cong Tiger Cage

When most people think of POWs of the Vietnam War, they think of the prisoners held by North Vietnam in and around Hanoi. Seldom does anyone think about, or even know about, the POWs held by the Viet Cong in South Vietnam and sometimes in Cambodia. Those prisoners were usually kept outside in bamboo enclosures called tiger cages, similar to the model shown above. It is believed that the Viet Cong held as many as 150 American POWs over the course of the war. When POWs were exchanged in 1973, they released 114.

The Tiger Cage exhibit is dedicated to the memory of SSGT Harold G. Bennett and all other POWs of the Vietnam War, wherever they were held.



Captain James P. Gauley, USAF
March 22, 1939 – January 10, 1967
Vietnam War MIA



SSGT Harold G. Bennett
October 16, 1940 – ca. May 28, 1965

Harold George Bennett, a native of Thornburg, Arkansas, entered the army just after high school, and before his twenty-first birthday, he had graduated from the army's airborne and ranger schools.

On December 29, 1964, Sergeant Bennett and Private Charles Crafts were ranger advisors assigned to an ARVN (Army of Vietnam) ranger battalion. They were operating in the lush jungle southeast of Binh Gia, forty-two miles east-southeast of Saigon. Their unit was ambushed by a numerically superior Viet Cong force. Bennett and Crafts covered the withdrawal of the ARVN rangers and were captured.

The prisoners were kept in the jungle in tiger cages similar to the model shown above. Bennett continually resisted his captors and made at least two escape attempts. He was severely beaten as a result, and the guards came to hate him for his resistance. Bennett's condition deteriorated rapidly. In addition to frequent beatings and the lack of medical attention, he refused to eat.

According to Pvt. Crafts, as the prisoners were being moved from one camp to another, on May 28, 1965, he saw Sgt. Bennett for the last time. (Crafts may not have known the exact date. May 28 may have been the date the Viet Cong claimed Bennett was killed.) As Crafts watched, the guards kicked and punched Bennett to make him move faster along the trail. Later the guards told the other POWs that he had been killed because he was unable to travel. On June 24, 1965, the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) announced on Radio Hanoi that Bennett had been shot in retaliation for communist terrorist Tran Van Dong's execution by South Vietnamese authorities. During his debriefing after repatriation, Pvt. Crafts reported that he had heard no gunshots at the time Bennett was killed. The Viet Cong obviously beat him to death.

Staff Sergeant Harold G. Bennett is believed to have been the first POW of the Vietnam War intentionally killed by the enemy, but not the last. He was posthumously awarded a Silver Star for his heroic actions for the period December 29, 1964 - June 25, 1965. His body was never recovered.



Memorial Bricks for Vietnam War MIAs

The Military History Center is dedicating a portion of the Memorial Flag Plaza as a special section to honor Oklahoma's thirty-two Vietnam War MIAs with memorial bricks. Each of the thirty-two bricks will include the MIA's name, rank, branch of service, city and date listed as missing.

The first MIA brick to be laid in the Plaza was donated by the City of Ringwood in memory of Captain James Paul Gauley, USAF, of Ringwood, reported missing January 10, 1967.

We invite you to join the MHC in honoring these heroes by sponsoring a brick to perpetually remember and honor an Oklahoma MIA. The cost of each brick is only \$100. Please contact the MHC for information.

Oklahoma MIAs, their city of record, branch of service and the date they went missing:

Sergeant First Class Melvin Morris was awarded the Medal of Honor "for acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as Commander of a Strike Force drawn from Company D, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, during combat operations against an armed enemy in the vicinity of Chi Lang, Republic of Vietnam, on September 17, 1969".

Then a staff sergeant, Morris was initially awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for the same action. Pursuant to the 2002 Defense Authorization Act, which mandated a review of the service records of veterans of specific ethnic backgrounds from World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War to ensure that no prejudice was shown to those deserving the Medal of Honor, Morris's combat record was reviewed. The Army elevated Morris's Distinguished Service Cross to the Medal of Honor. He received his Medal of Honor at a White House ceremony, on March 18, 2014.

Melvin Morris was born in Okmulgee, OK, on January 7, 1942. In 1959, he joined the Oklahoma Army National Guard and soon after joined the regular Army. In addition to the Medal of Honor, Sgt. Morris has two Bronze Stars for heroism in battle and two Purple Hearts among many other awards. He retired from the Army in 1985 and now lives in Florida.

William O. Bare	OK City	USAF	27 Jul 67
Wayne L. Bolte	Claremore	USAF	02 Apr 72
Charles F. Bookout	OK City	Army	4 Jul 70
Robert W. Burnes	Edmond	USMC	5 Jan 70
Neil S. Bynum	Vian	USAF	26 Oct 69
Allen B. Cecil	Holdenville	Army	21 Sep 69
Dennis I. Day	Blackwell	Army	3 Nov 70
Jerry D. DewBerry	Ardmore	USMC	5 Jul 65
George J. Eisenberger	Pawhuska	Army	5 Dec 65
Charles W. Fryer	OK City	Navy	7 Aug 66
James P. Gauley	Ringwood	USAF	10 Jan 67
Tommy E. Gist	Durant	USAF	18 May 68
James A. Green	Boynton	Army	18 Jun 70
Donald J. Hall	Stroud	USAF	6 Feb 67
Jimmy D. Hyde	Caddo	Navy	5 Dec 65
Wayne C. Irsch	Tulsa	USAF	9 Jan 68
Steven B. Johnston	Muskogee	USAF	4 Jan 73
Larry C. Knight	Wilburton	Navy	9 Apr 70
Henry L. Mosberg	Putnam	Army	26 Sep 66
David P. Neislar	Norman	Navy	20 Feb 69
Stanley E. Olmstead	Marshall	Navy	17 Oct 65
Fred M. Owens	Picher	Army	10 Jun 65
Samuel J. Padgett	Tulsa	Army	10 Apr 68
Martin R. Scott	Tulsa	USAF	15 Mar 66
Howard H. Smith	OK City	USAF	30 Sep 68
Lilburn R. Stow	Vici	USAF	26 Apr 68
Aubrey E. Stowers, Jr.	Sentinel	USAF	21 Mar 68
James H. Tucker	Pawnee	USAF	26 Apr 66
Ronald J. Ward	Anadarko	USAF	18 Dec 72
Frank P. Watson	OK City	USAF	18 Jun 65
John E. Wilburn	Luther	Army	19 Apr 68
Samuel A. Woodworth	Minco	USAF	17 Apr 65

Support the Military History Center

Do you want to join the many patriotic Oklahomans who are already supporting the Military History Center's mission of "Promoting Patriotism by Preserving Military History"? If so, contact the Military History Center at (918) 794-2712 to learn how you can be a supporter, or click on the link below go to the MHC website at <http://www.okmhc.org/donate/>.

There's something to accommodate everyone's budget. Monetary donations, as well as gifts in kind, are tax deductible, subject to IRS regulations.

We invite you to be a part of this unique opportunity to support a first-class military museum and history center in Oklahoma.

Sample Brick

James P. Gauley
CPT – USAF
Ringwood
10 January 1967

The Vietnam War

On July 8, 1959, a few American advisors detailed to the South Vietnamese Army settled into their mess hall at their camp at Bein Hoa to watch a movie. During the showing, communist guerillas poked their weapons through the windows and sprayed the room with automatic gunfire. Major Dale R. Buis and Master Sergeant Chester M. Ovnand were killed instantly. They were the first of 58,307 American military personnel killed during the Vietnam Era.

In 1955, the United States government began pouring money and thousands of advisors into South Vietnam to support that government and to train its army. By 1963, there were over 16,000 American advisors in the country. After an incident in the Gulf of Tonkin off North Vietnam in August 1964, President Lyndon Johnson asked Congress for unlimited authority to suppress the communist insurrection in South Vietnam. After the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed on August 7, 1964, the U.S. began a massive build-up that within four years reached over a half-million American military personnel.

The first American ground combat troops entered Vietnam in March 1965, when a unit of United States Marines famously waded ashore at China Beach near Da Nang. In November 1965, in the Ia Drang Valley, U. S. regular army units – from the 1st Cavalry Division – met North Vietnamese regular army units in battle for the first time.



U.S. air cavalrymen of 1st BN, 7th Cavalry under fire at LZ X-Ray (Landing Zone X-Ray) in the Ia Drang Valley, November 14, 1965.

The American commander in Vietnam, General William C. Westmoreland, continually assured the President, and thus the American people, that the U.S. was winning in Vietnam. That illusion was shattered by the 1968 communist Tet Offensive. North Vietnamese regular army units and their Viet Cong allies had infiltrated practically every place in the South and on January 30, 1968, they burst forth, completely surprising the Americans and South Vietnamese in what was called the Tet Offensive. They even invaded the American embassy in Saigon and captured the old imperial city of Hue. Nine days before the Tet Offensive began, the North Vietnamese had surrounded the American marine base at Khe Sanh, putting it under a ground siege that lasted seven months. Although American forces inflicted a crushing defeat on the communists, the Tet Offensive

shocked the American people and shattered the confidence of the President.



U.S. Navy Mobile Strike Force troops waded through the swampy Plain of Reeds in the Mekong Delta in 1969.

When President Richard Nixon took office in 1969, he began a policy he called “vietnamization”. That policy called for progressively turning over of the war to the South Vietnamese and withdrawal of American troops. At the same time, he accelerated the heretofore fitful peace negotiations. Those negotiations would go on for almost four years, culminating in the Vietnam Peace Accords, signed on January 27, 1973. The ink was barely dry before the communists began violating the terms. By 1975, they had completely overrun the South, and the last remaining Americans, military and civilian, were literally chased out of the country from atop the American embassy in Saigon.



Evacuation of CIA station personnel from the roof of the American embassy in Saigon, April 29, 1975.

Vietnam was America’s first lost war, but not by military defeat, as American forces didn’t lose a battle. Rather, it was the result of poor political decisions (or indecisions) made at the highest levels of government, and after the disillusionment of the Tet Offensive, the steady erosion of confidence in the government and massive resistance to continuance of what, for a great many Americans, had become a hopeless war.

Battle for LZ X-Ray – Ia Drang Valley



SP4 Willard Parish, on the left, with his mortar squad reading an issue of *Time*, in which they were featured – Vietnam 1965.

Willard Parish is a native of Bristow, OK, where he graduated from high school in 1959 and was drafted into the army in 1963. He was trained as a mortar man and sent to Vietnam as a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry “Garyowen” Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile). At age twenty-four, he was the “old man” of his platoon.

In late 1965, the U.S. Army was beginning an offensive in the Pleiku area in the Central Highlands. Word had come down that there was Viet Cong activity around the Chu Pong Massif next to the Cambodian border. At the eastern foot of Chu Pong lay the Ia Drang Valley. Commanders acted on “strong instincts and flimsy intelligence,” in the words of one military official, as quoted in a 1990 news story by UPI reporter Joseph L. Galloway. A battalion of just under 430 soldiers and thirty officers was sent out to confront what turned out to be two North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiments – about 3,000 fighters who were tunneled into Chu Pong and ready to rumble.

Lt. Colonel Hal Moore’s 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry (1/7) was ordered to lead the attack. The helicopter airlifts started mid-morning November 14 onto a football field-sized clearing called LZ X-Ray just southeast of Chu Pong. The fighting started almost immediately between the NVA troops and members of 1/7 Companies A and B, and later C and D. By nightfall, eighty-six American troops were dead or wounded and uncounted NVA soldiers were dead; however, the major bloodshed would come the next day.¹

SP4 Parish was an assistant squad leader in C Company’s heavy weapons platoon, but by the second day of battle, they were out of mortar rounds. He had been outfitted with a spare machine gun and rifles collected from casualties. His squad had been put on the D Company perimeter.

Parish’s story is best told in his own words: “When we were hit, I remember the tracer rounds, and I wondered how even an ant could get through that. Back to our right, we started hearing guys hollering: ‘They’re coming around. They’re coming around!’ I was in a foxhole with a guy from Chicago, PFC James

E. Coleman, and he had an M16 [automatic rifle]. I had just my .45 and his .45, and I had an M-60 machine gun. We were set facing out into the tall grass.

I was looking out front, and I could see some of the grass going down like somebody was crawling in it. I hollered, ‘Who’s out there?’ Nobody answered, so I hollered again. No answer. I turned to Coleman: ‘Burn his ass.’ Coleman said, ‘My rifle’s jammed.’ I looked at him; he at me. Then I looked backed to the front, and they were growing out of the weeds. I just remember getting on that machine gun, and from there on I guess the training takes over, and you put your mind somewhere else, because I really don’t remember specifically what I did. I was totally unaware of the time, the conditions.”

What he did, according to his Silver Star citation, was deliver “... lethal fire into the advancing waves of Viet Cong” until his machine gun ran out of ammunition. “With complete disregard for his personal safety, Specialist Four Parish picked up two .45 caliber pistols, stood up in his position and inflicted numerous casualties upon the approaching insurgents.” When the firing stopped, more than a hundred dead North Vietnamese lay in a semi-circle around Parish’s position.² “I feel like I didn’t do any more than anybody else did up there. I remember a lot of noise, a lot of yelling, and all at once it was quiet.” The battle for LZ X-Ray was the first between a North Vietnamese regular army unit and Americans. Seventy-nine Americans were killed and 121 wounded, almost fifty per cent casualties.

The action of 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry at LZ X-Ray has been documented in a book, *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*, by retired Lt. General Hal Moore and Joseph L. Galloway. Galloway was present during the second day of the battle. The book, in turn, inspired a movie released in 2002, “*We Were Soldiers*,” starring Mel Gibson as Lt. Colonel Moore. So many acts of heroism occurred during the battle that not all could be portrayed in the movie, including SP4 Parish’s actions.

Parish had only two weeks left in the Army. After the battle he went directly to battalion headquarters and began the process of mustering out. After the war, he returned to Bristow and a career with the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority. On the side, he and some friends put together a country and western band that regularly performed in the Tulsa area. Parish still lives and works in Bristow.



SP4 Parish’s mortar squad was featured on the cover of *Time*, October 22, 1965. Parish is on the left, shirtless.

¹ Galloway, Joseph L. “Vietnam Story, The word was that Ia Drang would be a walk through. The word was wrong.”, *U.S News*, March 2002

² Moore, Harold G. and Galloway, Joseph L, *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*, p. 155-56, Random House, New York, 1992



Members of the Broken Arrow Civitan Club tour the MHC on February 18. They are viewing MHC's extensive collection of military headgear.



City Manager Spurgeon enjoying his tour of the MHC at one of the Vietnam War exhibits.



MHC President, Tom Mancino, giving Broken Arrow City Manager, Michael Spurgeon, a tour of the MHC on February 25.



MHC docent, Dennis Hoch ((far right), giving a tour to WWII veteran, Junior Nipps, and Russell Repschlager, Dawson Repschlager, Connor Largent, Emily Largent and Braxton Repschlager, on Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Day, when museum admission was free, March 17.



MHC President, Tom Mancino, explaining Civil War artifacts to City Manager Spurgeon and Jennifer Hooks, Assistant to the City Manager

Museum Hours and Admission Fee

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 – 4:00; Saturday: 10:00 – 2:00
Closed Sunday and Monday and major Federal holidays

Adults – \$5.00

Members and Children under 18 – Free

For more information, call (918) 794-2712

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Click on the following link to download an order form for a memorial brick:

<http://www.okmhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2015bBrick-order-form-.pdf>

Civil War Exhibition

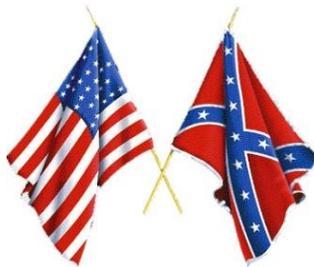
The MHC hosted a Civil War outdoor exhibition in the Flag Plaza on Saturday, March 19. A local group of living Civil War historians, portraying Co. E, 77th Pennsylvania Voluntary Infantry, produced the event. Non-military re-enactors at the event, both men and women, were dressed in period clothing.



Lori Cooper and Johnny Manley, who portrays a Union battlefield surgeon. Johnny has a large collection of authentic Civil War surgical instruments, which he is displaying.



A squad of Co. E, 77th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry firing a rifle salute as their company first sergeant looks on.



MHC docent and Civil War re-enactor, Dennis Hoch, in the uniform of a Union infantry corporal standing by a 12-pounder Blakely field gun. British Army Captain, Theophilus Alexander Blakely, designed both smooth-bore and rifled-bore guns in several bore sizes. This particular gun is a smooth bore with a 3.5 inch bore designed to fire 12-pound iron solid shot (that is, a twelve pound iron cannon ball), but it could also accommodate shells and canister. This gun tube was cast by Fawcett, Preston Engineering Co., Ltd. of Liverpool, England in 1861, based on Blakely's patent No. 24. The re-enactors (not shown) who crew this Blakely portray a Confederate gun crew. Blakely's were used primarily by the Confederate Army, but British weapons manufacturers sold weapons to both sides, and did quite well financially in the process.



Co. E, 77th Pennsylvania Voluntary Infantry at Fort Gibson
January 2007

The actual 77th Pennsylvania Infantry was enlisted into Federal service at Pittsburgh, PA on October 15, 1861. The regiment first served in the Army of the Ohio and later in the Army of the Cumberland. It participated in numerous battles and campaigns in Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. After the war, the Regiment served in the Department of Texas in the Victoria and Indianola areas until December 1865.

“Lest We Forget”



Vietnam War Memorial – Washington, DC

President Harry Truman sent the first military advisors to Indo China in 1950 to assist the French in their fight against the communists Viet Minh. After the Viet Minh drove the French from Indo China in 1954, Cambodia and Laos gained their independence, as did Vietnam, which was divided at the 17th Parallel between the communist north and non-communist south. In 1955, South Vietnamese communists, Viet Cong, the so-called National Liberation Front, began a low-level insurgency, which became increasingly more intense and violent, with North Vietnam giving substantial overt assistance by 1960. The war *officially* began for the United States on August 7, 1964, with the enactment of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. American combat involvement quickly escalated after that. The war lasted until May 7, 1975, when President Gerald Ford declared it to be at an end. 2,709,918 Americans served in uniform in the Vietnam War Zone, of whom 58,307 have been positively identified as having been killed in action or died from their wounds (as of Memorial Day 2015). The names of the dead, including 988 Oklahomans, are engraved on the Vietnam War Memorial shown above. Six times the total number of killed were wounded. 1,624 Americans, including thirty-two Oklahomans, remain unaccounted for (MIA).

Freedom is not free.



THANK YOU