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PRESIDENT**

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ALWAYS FIRST!



Photos courtesy of Jerry Hunter and Dale Greenfield



Leaders of 'A' Company



PFC Hunter, SPC Carnley, and SGT Kramlich playing cards for smokes

Desert Storm

30th Anniversary p.5



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello Diehards!

I want to take this opportunity to recognize our past president, Jay Franz and his lovely wife Karen, for their years of dedication and leadership to our organization. Thank you and job well done!

As the new Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion's president, I want to thank you all for the vote of confidence. My extremely supportive wife, Lori, and I will do our best to uphold the standards of the organization as we try to bring new life and recruit new members in the upcoming years.

My affiliation with the First Engineer Battalion began when I was assigned to Bco 1st En Bn in 1989 - 1994. During that time we participated in the last REFORGER the battalion conducted. We were also called upon to liberate Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm (90-91). I was once again assigned to the 1st En Bn serving in HHC, Forward Support Company & HQ from 2003 - 2008. During this time, the battalion was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) from (03-04) conducting route clearance operations and creating Team Lioness, the forerunners of the now official FETs (Female Engagement Teams). We deployed again in support of OIF from (06-07) with the primary mission of Improvised Explosion Devices (IED) defeat and route clearance. I attended my first Veteran's of the First Engineer Battalion reunion in 2008. I have been an active member since 2015 and a board member since 2016.

The board members and I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to every past and current member who continually support the organization making it what it is today. It is the boards intention to reach out to the battalion's most recent (younger) veterans and encourage their participation within our organization. To appeal to the younger veterans, we are currently working on ways to accept electronic due payments/renewals, maintaining an updated website, growing our Facebook page and digitizing our newsletter. In this ongoing effort I wish to highlight some MVPs; Dale Greenfield for navigating the legalities of electronic payments for a non-profit, Chuck Humphrey & his son Paul for the redesign and modernization of our new website, Pam Smoulder & Jenny Coppola who originally created our organization Facebook page (currently 886 members), Kate Guttormsen our newest board member and savior of the Newsletter! A final shout out to the entire Board of Directors and event coordinators!

We sincerely hope to see as many members as possible at this year's reunion being held at the newly opened National Army Museum. Especially being the 30-year Anniversary of Desert Storm I would like to catch up with some old battle buddies there and meet some new ones!

“Always First”

Jerry Hunter

Bruce LeBeau:

Soldier and Songwriter

Before long-time member Bruce LeBeau was a demolition specialist in C Company during the Vietnam War he was a member of a band called The Wonderlands. The band was inducted into the South Dakota Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2014. Information from that organization's website shows that this early '60's group of four musicians recorded a 45 RPM record titled "Make Up and Break UP" written by lead guitar player and singer Bruce LeBeau (see photo accompanying this story.) The Wonderlands performed for several years throughout the Midwest.

After the First Engineer Battalion arrived in Vietnam in early October 1966, Bruce went on several operations attached to infantry battalions as a demolition specialist. Those experiences led to his becoming one of three members of the 3rd Platoon of C Company who volunteered to search Viet Cong tunnels (They weren't called Tunnel Rats until later in the war). Bruce was wounded three times during his year with C Company, the last while helping to install a nuisance minefield near Phu Loi, RVN in July 1966. He and others wounded in that incident spent three weeks in the 93rd Evacuation Hospital near Long Binh before returning to duty. His last Vietnam assignment was as my jeep driver.

After his year in combat Bruce worked in the quad cities area (Rock Island & Moline, Illinois; Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa). He got married, and started another band; his wife Wanda was a soloist in it. Bruce and Wanda raised two sons.

Bruce grew up near Mobridge, SD as a member of the Lakota (Sioux) Native American Nation. For several years he lived in Carson, ND, southwest of Bismarck and operated a gas station with his son. He is presently living with his son Randy in the quad cities area.

For several years now, Bruce, his sons, and other LeBeau relatives have attended our reunions. During the 2019 gathering in Deadwood, SD the LeBeau family entertained us each night by singing and playing their guitars.

Hope to see you at many more reunions, Bruce!
(by F. C. "Chuck" Humphrey)



Bruce Lebeau and family (2021)



Bruce Lebeau in Vietnam as a volunteer tunnel explorer (later called tunnel rats) is attached. He's on the right. The photo was taken in March 1966. The two other soldiers were also tunnel explorers: SGT Calvin Reeder and Sp5 Jack Mathis. All three were members of 3rd Platoon, C Company while I was the 3rd Platoon Leader.

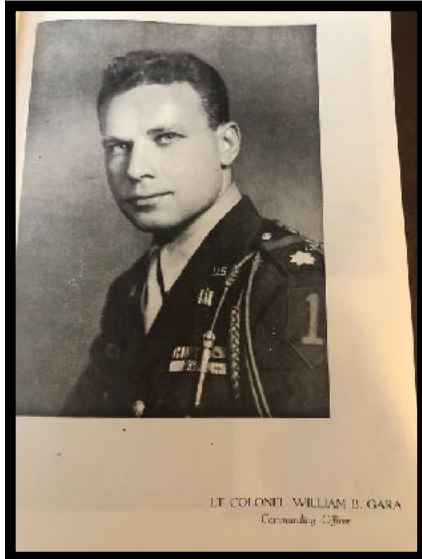


Wonderlands rock & roll band, with Bruce LeBeau standing, center.

Engineer Combat Battalion leaders in World War II

(by F. C. "Chuck" Humphrey)

A couple years ago Esther Ayrton contributed an article for our newsletter about the history of our organization. Her husband Bob was a member of the First (Combat) Engineer Battalion in 1946-'48 with the Army of Occupation. She stated that the battalion's World War II commander, Lt Colonel William B Gara and his executive officer, Major Thomas T Crowley gave a lot of help and encouragement when Bob and other WW II veterans were starting our organization. After reading Esther's article I asked my wife's cousin who does a lot of genealogy to find out more about Lt Col Gara and his executive officer, Major Thomas T Crowley: when & where they born; length of service, year of death, and grave site. Here's what she found:



William Bela Gara was born 17 January 1917 in Hungary. He emigrated from there to New York City in about 1930. "Eight Stars to Victory", the history of the First Engineer Combat Battalion in World War II, has a photo of him on page 8 in uniform, wearing "engineer brass" and the Big Red One patch on his left shoulder. He was in WW II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War, retiring as a full colonel. He died 4 February 2001 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. His grave marker shows that he received the Silver Star with an Oak Leaf Cluster.

Major Thomas T Crowley, his executive officer, was born in Brookline, MA and died in 2001 at age 82. Lt Colonel Gara and Major Crowley were in their late 20's when they led the battalion from the North African campaign in 1943 until the end of the War in Germany in May 1945 (Now, officers don't become battalion commanders until they are about age 40). Major Crowley co-authored "Eight Stars to Victory" when it was published in 1947. Morris Eastland, a

member of B Company in World War II who attended several First Engr Bn Veterans reunions, gave me a copy of that book shortly before he died a few years ago.

William Bela Gara served in the battalion from August 1942 to May 1945, as a platoon leader, company commander and battalion commander. He assumed command of the US Army's oldest and most decorated engineer battalion in May 1943 in Oran, Algeria just before the First Division landed in Sicily. When the battalion was shipped back to England in November 1943 he oversaw its extensive training in amphibious warfare in preparation for the Normandy landings in June of 1944. On 4 July 1950, at age 33, Lt Colonel Gara married June Eileen Wieburg in Washington, DC. I was unable to find information about whether they had any children or about his service in Korea or Vietnam.

Thomas T Crowley joined the First Engineer Combat Battalion in 1942 shortly after earning an ROTC commission when he graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Like Lt Colonel Gara, he served in the battalion as both a junior and a field grade officer. He was awarded the Silver Star with an Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart. His obituary stated that he was promoted to Lt Colonel shortly before leaving the First Engineer Battalion in 1945. He married Julia Coolidge Dean in 1948 and spent his civilian career in the steel industry.

The "Eight Stars to Victory" book lists the names of First Engineers who received awards (decorations) while in combat from 1943-'45: one Distinguished Service Cross; one Legion of Merit; two Soldier's Medals; 35 Silver Stars; 173 Bronze Stars; and 295 Purple Hearts. Soldiers who served in the battalion became very close after serving three years in combat. began attending reunions of the First Infantry Division soon after the war ended. Colonel Gara and Major Crowley attended the same reunions, and later helped the First Engineer Battalion veterans form their own organization.

On Jan. 17, 1991, Operation Desert Shield became Operation Desert Storm, backed by public support after diplomacy failed.

The U.S. and 40 allied nations, including several Arab nations, flew more than 18,000 air deployment missions, more than 116,000 combat air sorties and dropped 88,500 tons of bombs. After air attacks that lasted for six weeks, the ground campaign lasted only 100 hours before Kuwait was liberated. -defensegov.com



Sgt Jerry Salazar and Cpl Dale Greenfield
Photo courtesy of Dale Greenfield



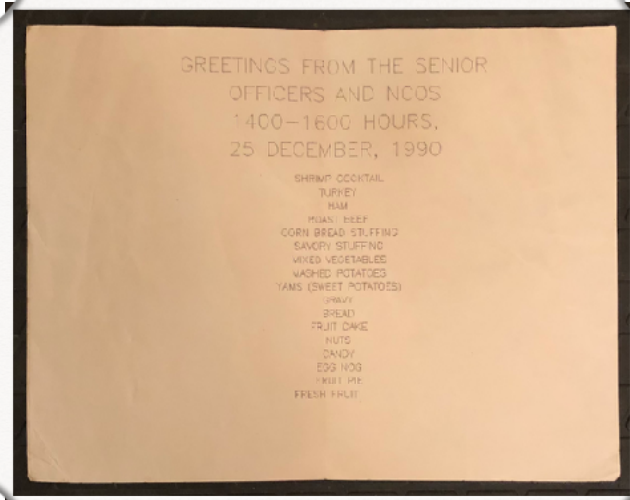
Photo courtesy of Dale Greenfield



Photo courtesy of Dale Greenfield

In December of 1990, our battalion deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. The battalion breached and cleared lanes through Iraqi obstacle belts that allowed the passage of two divisions. **The battalion destroyed 58 Iraqi tanks, 41 antiaircraft artillery pieces, and other large quantities of ammunition and war material.** The battalion returned to Fort Riley in 1991 and received the Valorous Unit Citation for actions in Southwest Asia.

Christmas Dinner Menu in Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers. Units were staging for combat.

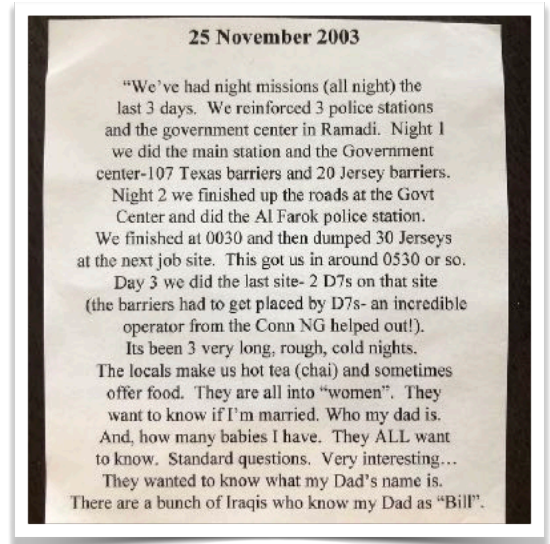


OPERATION INSTANT FORTRESS

Iraq 2003-2004



HHC Conducting Instant Fortress Mission on 25 Nov 2003



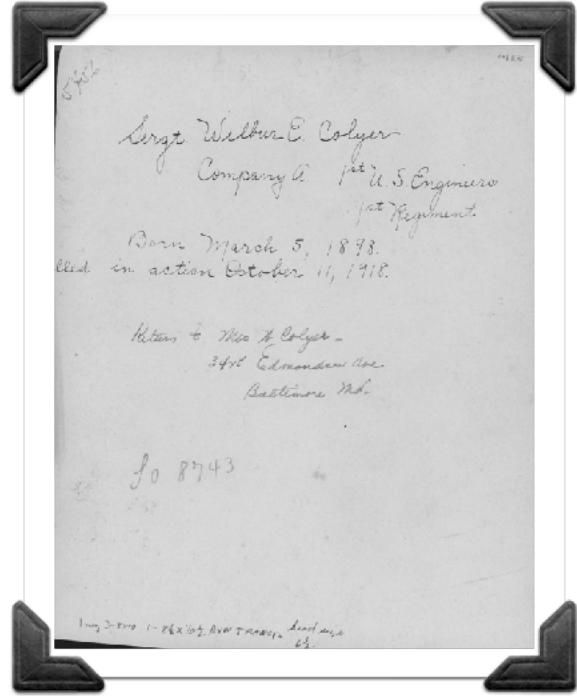
Kate Guttormsen's journal entry (HHC, 1EN BN)



HHC providing various size barriers for protection throughout Ramadi, Iraq

Medal of Honor Spotlight

PVT WILBUR E. COLYER



Rank and organization:

Sergeant, U.S. Army, Company A, 1st Engineers, 1st Division.

Place and date:

Near Verdun, France, 9 October 1918.

Entered service at:

South Ozone, Long Island, N.Y.

Birth:

Brooklyn, N.Y.

G.O. No.:

20, W.D., 1919.

Citation: Volunteering with 2 other soldiers to locate machinegun nests, Sgt. Colyer advanced on the hostile positions to a point where he was half surrounded by the nests, which were in ambush. He killed the gunner of one gun with a captured German grenade and then turned this gun on the other nests silencing all of them before he returned to his platoon. He was later killed in action.

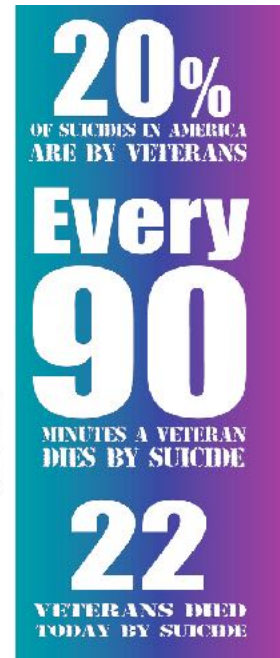
Courtesy of the 1ID Museum

Check out Brian Gibson's new initiative!

THE WAR ON VETERAN SUICIDE STARTS AT HOME

**PROJECT
DIEHARD**

www.Projectdiehard.org



MISSION STATEMENT

To bring public awareness to veteran suicide and to assist veterans in coping with the stress and difficulties in transitioning from active duty military to civilian life.

Go to www.projectdiehard.org to learn more and see how you can support!

Chaplain's Corner

"I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things."

-a Civil War Soldier



1SG William Nadeau, CPT Larry Blair

HAPPY HOLIDAYS 2020

Dear Friends and Family, *Dear All!*

The sad news this year is the loss of my beloved Howie, and the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on all our relationships.

Howie and I started with a Hollywood marriage in 1947, joined the military, lived in Germany, Japan and Turkey, had kids, I learned to paint and act while Howie deployed three times to combat ... what an exciting time! When Howie retired to civilian life, we lived in New York City where I continued portrait painting and acting while he worked as a Vice President for Metropolitan Life, and later ConEd. But a longing for where we were both raised brought us back to California in 1977. Howie became a movie producer for Omstar Productions, shooting IMAX movies for Disney. The footage was used for several years at Epcot Center's Tomorrowland. As Howie was declining, we were fortunate to be able to videoconference with family so all could express their love. After many wonderful years in Los Feliz, we said goodbye to Howie on 28 October 2020. I would like to thank everybody for the wonderful flowers and letters of condolence sent for Howie, and the pictures drawn by Ellis, Giselle and Bram given to Howie before he passed. He loved those pictures (see below).

Partly because of our health, and partly because of the pandemic, we didn't go to the Hollywood Bowl concerts, or host our annual Oscar Party. We also didn't go on any cruises for the same reasons. Getting old is no picnic.

What we did do is Skype, FaceTime, and WeChat to keep in touch. Skyping with Jim, Rosie, and Lisa Stark has been fun, and helps when we cannot cruise the world anymore. It has been wonderful to see baby Dashiell, Taylor and Kay Sargent in China using WeChat, and Holland, Erin and Taylor Lusk in England using FaceTime. Wow, I love seeing everyone's happy faces - isn't technology wonderful? We were also so fortunate to have Erin, Holland and Karen visit Howie this year as I know he was aware of their being here. Having Chris visit us several times this year has meant very much to me, also. When Ken and Chris work together to help with all we must do it is really a godsend. We are glad Ken and Sonya live nearby as our Sunday dinner visits have been a great way to stay in personal touch.

One big improvement to our property has been a major landscaping effort to beautify while making the land less fire prone. We had all the dead trees and grass removed and planted jade plants everywhere. The jade succulents should prosper and help prevent the future potential for the grass catching on fire.

I've got to mention how much I appreciate my wonderful neighbors, Alex, Denise, Rudy and Michelle who always offer their help in any way. You don't know how much that means to me.

I would like to wish all of you a wonderful holiday season. I am truly fortunate to have a loving family, and friends that have been so nice to me and Howie. Love you all!



Meg

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Please notify Chaplain Larry Blair if any member of the Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion passes away. Provide details, obituary, name and address of next of kin if possible. blairylar@hotmail.com

You're invited

To the 38th Annual Reunion

VETERANS OF THE FIRST ENGINEER BATTALION

When: Friday, September 17- Monday, September 20, 2021

Where: Herndon, VA (Washington DC/Fort Belvoir)

(See the attached schedule and registration form)



2021 REUNION VENUE

Hilton Washington Dulles Airport Hotel, Herndon, VA

YES, IT'S BEEN A ROUGH YEAR AND WE WERE FORCED TO CANCEL OUR 2020 REUNION. BUT THIS IS A NEW YEAR AND A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO RENEW FRIENDSHIPS. JOIN US THIS SEPTEMBER AS WE PAY A VISIT TO THE NEW NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE US ARMY AND HOMAGE TO OUR COMRADES AT THE MEMORIALS ON THE MALL IN WASHINGTON.



Museum of the US Army



First Division Museum

Our reunion will be held at the Hilton Washington Dulles International Hotel just minutes from Dulles International Airport and close to both the Army Museum at Ft Belvoir and Washington, DC. We negotiated a great deal with the Hilton. Rooms for two with breakfast are \$109 (\$122, including all fees and taxes). Parking is complementary for cars and motor homes. Complimentary local area shuttle is also available including stops at Washington Dulles Airport and the National Air and Space Museum at Dulles Airport. For those wishing to spend more time in Washington the hotel will offer the Reunion rate from the nights of September 15 to September 21, so act early to get the reunion rate for the additional nights. The Hilton has opened a dedicated reservation website for our group:

(<https://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/I/IADAHHF-V1EB-20210915/index.jhtml?WT.mc.id=POG>).

If requested use group code V1EB. You may also reserve by phone at (703) 478-2900. If you reserve by phone be sure to say you're registering for the First Engineer Battalion reunion- group code V1EB-and verify the rate. Since we are all concerned about travel during these uncertain times, hotel reservations may now be cancelled without penalty up to 24 hours prior to your scheduled arrival.

Our Reunion starts on Friday with registration, an afternoon at leisure and a casual evening in the hospitality room. Saturday we have our membership meeting in the morning. Saturday afternoon is at the new ARMY MUSEUM. We depart early afternoon for a tour of the Museum with time to explore the galleries at leisure and walk the grounds to see the Battalion memorial plaque and brick. Bus transportation to the Museum is planned. The evening will include a buffet dinner followed by casual time in the Hospitality room. Sunday morning is at leisure. We will depart the hotel at noon to visit the First Division, WW2 and Vietnam memorials (and, if open, the new Desert Storm/Desert Shield Memorial). Bus

transportation to the Memorials is planned since auto parking is not available. On Sunday evening we will have our banquet at the hotel.

There's plenty to do in the Washington area. The Smithsonian Air and Space Museum is ten minutes away on the hotel shuttle. The NRA National Firearms Museum is fifteen minutes by car in Fairfax VA. The metro is nearby and provides quick, easy transportation to Arlington Cemetery and the Washington Mall. For those with autos the Marine Corps Museum, Manassas Battlefield and Mount Vernon are a short drive. This is a great opportunity to see Washington. Add an extra day or two and explore the Capital. Hertz car rental has set up a convention rate for the reunion. You may use CV# 022Q9486 when reserving with Hertz.

Anyone who has served with the First Engineer Battalion is cordially invited to attend the reunion. Registration and schedule details are in the attached registration form.

Why not form a group and meet at the Reunion?



Reunions past

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(September 9, 2020)**

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