

Caissons Alumni Association

October 2002

Edition 2002-2

CURRENT CAISSONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Caissons Board of Directors currently consists of the dedicated folks shown below. Also shown is the year in which their term expires.

Ernie Banasau - 2003

Roger Booker - 2004

Andy Hebert - 2005

Jim Landrum - 2003

Bob Smylie - 2004

Frank Henderson - 2005

Keith Maxie - 2003

Steve Stevenson - 2004

Lawson Magruder III - 2005

Kathleen Meilahn - 2003

CURRENT CAISSONS OFFICERS

President: Keith Maxie

Corresponding Secretary: Greg Choban

Vice President: Lawson Magruder III

Recording Secretary: John Boswell

Treasurer: Bob Smylie

Historian: Jim Landrum

LIFE MEMBER HONOR ROLL

PMS Robert P. Higley	1964 MG Frank Henderson	1970 Joe Gonzales
PMS David Sain	1965 John Seawell	1970 Manuel Nunes
PMS LTC Brian Cooper	1967 Keith Maxie	1971 William Knox
PMS MAJ Matt Faddis	1967 Edwin Dorn	1972 Philip Winnsborough
1951 James Sutton	1967 Bob Binder	1972 Raymond Barrett
1952 Bob Hallmark	1968 Preston C. Hunt	1976 Ernest Banasau, Jr.
1952 Ross Blumentritt	1968 Greg G. Choban	1976 Charles P. Busbey
1955 Robert A. Bell	1969 Charles Baker	1985 Albert Lara
1955 Frank Moody	1969 Gary Gosdin	1989 MAJ Micki McCassey
1957 Gary Hite	1969 Bruce G. Luna	1990 CPT Kathleen Meilahn
1958 Andy Hebert	1969 Michael Moran	1991 Katherine Graef
1958 Donald L. Carmichael	1969 James Shaw	1992 David S. Dougherty
1962 Thomas Knapp	1969 James Smith	1994 CPT Sherri Shadrock
1964 W. Keith Setzer	1969 Robert P. Smylie	1995 CPT Brett Jackson
1964 Gregory Wene	1970 Ward T. Blacklock	1995 Steve Sin

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

Over the last year we have attempted to move to fully electronic distribution of this newsletter, but have not been successful. It turns out we change our email addresses often enough that too many were not receiving the newsletters. So, we are going to return to normal mailings augmented by emailings – at least to our dues-paying members. Please keep sending your email changes to us at: gchoban@austin.rr.com

Caissons Dues

Our next newsletter, coming out in January 2003, will have dues notices for the coming year. Remember that we are a total voluntary organization, so 100% of your dues go to assisting the UT Army ROTC Department, primarily through emergency loans and scholarships to cadets.

UPCOMING EVENTS

11 Nov 2002 0900 HRS

Veterans Day Parade – AROTC
Participates

Downtown Austin

14 Nov 2002 1530 HRS AROTC Fall Awards Ceremony Bass Lecture Hall

20 Dec 2002 1000 HRS Fall Commissioning Ceremony Capitol Senate Conference Room
Note: Location is subject to change; call AROTC at 512-471-5919 prior to 20 Dec for confirmation

FALL- BAR-B-QUE

An estimated 40 Caissons, Cadets, staff and guests attended the annual Caissons/Cadets BBQ on 21 September 2002 at RAS Hall. The Cadets seemed to really enjoy the BBQ, especially the 10-pie dessert table. The gathering was a great way to meet the cadets as well as many old friends. Everyone then moved to the UT vs University of Houston football game. (We won 41 - 11 !!!).

Scholarship Fundraising Drive – Corporate Involvement

Greg Choban and Lawson Magruder continue to move toward a fund drive targeting corporations. In the past most fund raising has involved individuals, primarily Caissons members. The current patriotic mood of the nation suggests the Caissons look for avenues to help the cadet scholarship fund grow by engaging corporate contributions. If anyone has suggestions, please contact Greg at: gchoban@austin.rr.com

BY-LAWS AND ROSTER AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS

For those interested and currently paid-up Caissons, the latest By-Laws and/or membership rosters are available upon request to the Corresponding Secretary. Email to gchoban@austin.rr.com Email is the preferred request / delivery method.

COMMANDER'S CORNER – LTC JAMES ROSE

LTC James Rose recently signed in as the new Professor of Military Science. He is a Field Artillery officer who was last stationed in Germany. We will have words from him in our January newsletter.

REMEMBERENCES – BOB SMYLIE

This is the second in a series of features highlighting careers of former AROTC cadets. This edition's story is that of our friend, Bob Smylie. Though this article was in the last email newsletter, we are including it here for those who may have missed it.

Bob Smylie

Army ROTC and Military Service

May 1969 to May 1974

I came to the University of Texas in the fall of 1966, pursuing a BBA Degree with an Accounting Major. I was working my way through College and expected to go to the Viet Nam War. In the spring of 1967 Army ROTC announced a two-year option to a commission. Better, the deal offered a kingly \$75.00 monthly stipend. I interviewed and was accepted. In the summer of 1967 a Greyhound Bus took me to Fort Benning, Georgia and a whole new world.

I had worked through High School and was never exposed to team anything. I was big, though, in good shape, and afraid of nothing. With a heaping helping of individual and unit challenge and a ton of positive reinforcement, the Army instantly hooked me!

In fall, 1967 I entered the Transportation Corps branch of the then huge Cadet Corps. Junior Year training camp was at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. In 1969 I was Battalion Commander of the Quartermaster Corps and was selected as a Distinguished Military Graduate. That allowed me to pick Armor as my branch. I had orders for Germany after training.

I went to Fort Knox for the Armor Officer Basic Course. I was privileged to stand among the top ten in my class. I was also selected as the official "Summer Love" of one of the prettiest Colonel's daughters on Post. After graduation came Fort Benning for Airborne School and the Ranger Course.

Completing Ranger School was the best training I ever had. I know the lessons learned there saved my life countless times, both in and out of the Service. Thirty years later, if I'm in a business fight that requires 48 hours of complete attention, the iron mental conditioning still kicks in.

Next spring, I stupidly thought I could requalify as the Colonel's daughter's "Summer Love". By volunteering for Organizational Maintenance Officer's course, I discovered, I could get back to Fort Knox and my beloved. I got back to Fort Knox all right, but the Colonel's daughter and my Germany assignment were gone with the wind. I was headed for Viet Nam.

I spent time as a tank platoon leader with the 2nd of the 81st Armor at Fort Hood. With the war coming, that was not at all interesting.

In August 1970, after a spirited two-week "so long" to San Francisco, I boarded a plane for Viet Nam. After a boring week in a replacement depot, a nurse and I staged a simulated mortar attack on the operations building by pelting its tin roof with beer cans. We were protesting the nighttime closing of the Officer's Club. That got me an instant posting to the 1st Squadron, 10th US Cavalry at An Khe.

The airfield at An Khe was big! It had a PX right on the flight line. On my arrival, with coke and ice cream cone in hand, I watched Cobra Gunships swooping around a hill to the southeast. There was much firing and I thought, "wow! They train hard out here". In fact, the Squadron AeroRifle Platoon had been inserted into an ambush at an abandoned firebase on top of that hill. In an instant, almost everyone on the ground was killed or wounded. I would lead that platoon when it resumed operations six months later.

The mission of the Squadron was to protect the Highway (QL19) from Mang Yang to the An Khe Pass. I led the Headquarters Company Ground Surveillance Platoon. In Germany, the platoon was to use radar to watch for enemy armor. That was pointless in Viet Nam. Since most of the Squadron assets were detailed as bridge guards, my platoon became the Squadron maneuver unit. The beauty of my command was I was it. My "mounted reconnaissance platoon" spent the next six months roaming a wide security belt on both sides of the highway, looking for movement. Where we didn't drive, we humped. We found and destroyed one big base camp. In the base camp I stepped on a booby-trapped cluster bomb device. Since I'm writing this, it obviously was defective. That instant, though, gave me a sense of perspective that will last me my life. I also stepped on a Boa Constrictor. It took five men to pick that snake up after we killed it. In addition, I got punjiied in both legs, which is how I got the Purple Heart.

In March of 1971, I was asked to take over the AeroRifle platoon of D Troop, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry. D Troop was the Air Cavalry component of the Squadron. Their call sign was Shamrock, and I will go to my grave as Shamrock Ground. I was instantly addicted to the exhilaration of standing on the skid of a Huey screaming towards a landing zone with the Cobras curving rockets in ahead of us. Mercifully, none of our assaults were the like the disaster I watched my first day with the 10th. All together, I participated in 40 insertions. We killed 9 Viet Cong, captured 6 and liberated 26 Montagnard tribes people from VC controlled territory. We lost one man, Clifford Bench, killed in an ambush.

I returned to a tour with the 173d Support Brigade at Fort Hood, but by then the Army and I were headed in different directions.

I was awarded the following:

Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Air Medal, Good Conduct Medal,

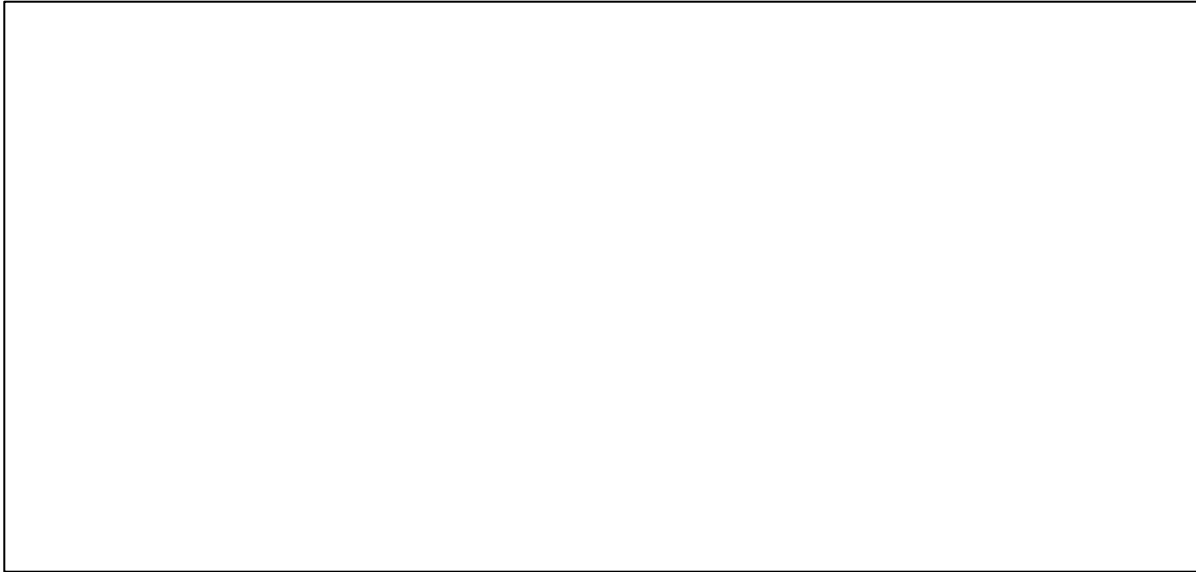
Vietnamese Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry (Unit Citation), Airborne Wings, Ranger Tab, Combat Infantryman's Badge.

I was Honorably Discharged from the Army in August 1985 as a Captain.

I am very proud to have been part of the United States Army. I apply the lessons I learned from the service daily in my company's operations.

The Army is never far from me. All it takes is the pop of rotor blades or the clank of tank treads, and my soul goes back to the home I once knew. In that home, every new day was an adventure. Scotch was 35 cents a glass, room and board were free, and the paycheck never bounced. Some stay in and make the Army a career. Some go on to do other things. What's important is that we all served our Country, and we all did the best we could.

**The Texas Caissons Alumni Association, Inc.
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