



Al & Tina Bailey  
16236 Pine Tree Lane  
Ridge, MD 20680



## Koh Tang/*Mayaguez* Veterans Organization

2018 Reunion Location



### Ramada Plaza Beach Resort

Fort Walton Beach, FL

**13 - 17 MAY 2018**

“HONOR TO THE SOLDIER AND SAILOR EVERYWHERE, WHO BRAVELY BEARS HIS COUNTRY’S CAUSE.  
HONOR, ALSO, TO THE CITIZEN WHO CARES FOR HIS BROTHER IN THE FIELD AND SERVES, AS HE BEST CAN, THE SAME CAUSE”.

*Abraham Lincoln*

## PRESIDENTS MESSAGES

As we approach May 15, 2017, the 42 nd anniversary of the Battle of Koh Tang, we find the Koh Tang / *Mayaguez* Veterans Organization in as sound as it has ever been. I'll bet even Larry Barnett could hardly believe how far we have come. It would not have been possible without his initiative, nor, the tireless efforts put forth by the office holders and members of the board of directors over the years. We have contributed what we could so that the future leaders can eventually benefit from our efforts. This brings me to the point of this short piece, WE WANT YOU to consider a leadership position in our group.



In a year's time we'll be voting on those who will replace the current leadership and it's not too early to begin thinking about stepping up and making a contribution. It matters not what part you played in the operation. It only matters that you are a member and care enough about our brotherhood to pitch in a little time and make it better.

So sometime between now and our reunion in May 2018, contemplate what you can do to advance our group. Please consider throwing your hat in the ring. New leadership is always rejuvenating and new ideas can only make us stronger.

Posted [www.kohtang.com](http://www.kohtang.com) Feb 8th, 2017

Much has happened since our reunion and I wanted to update everyone on current events. Progress is being made on several fronts as follows:

1. REPATRIATION – With the authorization of the Board of Directors, we have offered a reward for information leading to the discovery and repatriation of the remains of any US servicemen who did not return from the Battle of Koh Tang. This has been done on several fronts. Specifically, there has been an attempt at outreach to Em Son (the commander of forces on Koh Tang), Meas Muth (Son's Khmer Commander suspected of initiating the seizure of the *Mayaguez*, who is currently being tried by a War Crimes Tribunal for actions he took during the Pol Pot regime), and the Phnom Penh Post newspaper. After almost 42 years, assessing the probability of success is difficult at best, but we will pursue any reasonable lead which could bring our Brothers home.
2. NEWSWEEK ARTICLE – Matt Burke, a correspondent for Stars and Stripes, has penned an article with new information about the battle of Koh Tang which was published 1/24/17 in Newsweek magazine. For those who don't know Matt, he has been a tireless advocate for keeping our story alive. He returned to Koh Tang in May 2016 when several of us revisited the site of the battle. There has been much discussion among the Board and others concerning the facts and conclusions contained in the article. As Bob Blough aptly noted, "we all know that our memories of traumatic events can evolve over 40 years, especially if we've experienced survivor's guilt or PTSD." Without realizing it, sometimes beliefs can morph into facts over time, further obscuring what really happened. Not saying this happened in this case, just making the observation that it is something we all need to acknowledge and be aware of. For those who have not read the article, please do so and draw your own conclusions.
3. VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL – It has been a lingering slight that those who participated in the *Mayaguez* Operation have been denied the right to wear the VSM for over 40 years. For whatever reason, the time frame to be eligible to receive the medal ended 30 April, 1975, just days before the May 12 seizure of the *Mayaguez* and the final battle on May 15. The overwhelming case in favor of its award includes the fact that the names of our brothers who perished appear on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington DC; the *Mayaguez* incident is generally acknowledged as the last battle of the Vietnam War; the *Mayaguez* was cited as carrying military cargo from the Republic of Vietnam; the memorial located in the halls of the Pentagon in Washington DC include and includes the *Mayaguez* incident as part of the Vietnam War, and the list goes on. Ric Hunter, a USAF F-4 pilot who participated in the operation, has successfully lobbied his congressman, Mark Meadows, to introduce a VSM *Mayaguez* bill in the US Congress. We are in the process of obtaining the support of other lawmakers in hopes of its eventual passage.
4. F.O.I.A. REQUEST – A Freedom of Information Act Request was submitted to the Central Intelligence Agency (three times!) requesting all documents pertaining to the seizure and recovery of the *Mayaguez*. Our request was finally acknowledged on January 31, 2017 and is currently being acted upon. Perhaps this information may serve to fill in some of the blanks, answer some of the lingering questions about all the actions taken and decisions made. We will hopefully receive these documents prior to our next reunion.
5. LEAFLET – Jim Butler, 2nd Class Lithographer aboard the Coral Sea contacted me with information I had not seen before. As he put it in an email, "The Admiral in charge of the operation onboard Coral Sea ordered 10,000 leaflets printed immediately. The leaflets were printed on heavy card stock, with French on one side, and Cambodian on the other. Shortly after completing this, the Admiral called us directly, ordering us to destroy the plates, negatives, and all 10,000 leaflets. We complied and destroyed 9,996, keep 4 for posterity. We had no clue at the time what was on the leaflets, but the destruction of them, was part of the cover up of the Marines left behind." I'm having Fred put a copy of the document, as well as its translation, on the website for all to see.

2018 REUNION VENUE – Due to many logistical and other reasons, the location of the 2018 reunion has been moved from Pensacola to Ft. Walton Beach. Al and Tina Bailey have done extensive research and concluded that the Ramada Plaza Beach Resort in Ft. Walton Beach can best accommodate our needs. The dates are May 13-18, 2018.

## PRESIDENTS MESSAGES

Posted [www.kohtang.com](http://www.kohtang.com) June 12th 2016

As we depart Cincinnati from our reunion marking the 41st anniversary of the Battle of Koh Tang, I'm reminded that these events require enormous effort. Once again, Al and Tina Bailey deserve great credit for their tireless work in organizing the convention. Gatherings Plus did a fabulous job of choosing and scheduling our entertainment. The tour of Cincinnati, the River cruise, and the excursion to Wright Patterson AFB to visit the Air Force Museum and the *Mayaguez* exhibit were all interesting and memorable experiences! Finally, a gigantic thanks to Mr. Gary Sinise for his part in honoring and supporting us and making this group of veterans feel very special. He is a genuine patriot and a great American.

Tom Noble deserves praise for rounding up the many sailors from the Harold E. Holt and the Henry B. Wilson and inviting them to attend this year's reunion. Their contribution to the safe return of the SS *Mayaguez* and its crew are as important as any who participated. From those who refueled the warplanes to the engine room crews, all deserve credit for the successful outcome of the operation.

I think all would agree, this year's mission debrief was among the most moving and varied as any we have had. Of particular interest was the Navy's perspective of the operation. Many of us have waited 41 years to hear their experiences. Especially William Polly recounting the marshaling in of Bob Blough's HH-53 to the Holt's postage stamp deck, in the dark! And the effort Tom Rieter made to spin up the Henry B. Wilson's engines to max speed to hasten their arrival on scene from a position half way to Australia. These are just two of the unsung heroes among the many who participated.

As those who attended are aware, we have received tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code. This simply means that any contributions made to the organization will be tax deductible to the donor. Fred Morris deserves credit for initiating this effort long ago which has now come to fruition. Many thanks are due Jeff Steffen of Hutchison and Steffen Attorneys for his tireless efforts in wading through the myriad of paperwork involved in its successful completion. Since we have received our tax exempt status in late January, we have been blessed to receive contributions of more than \$7,000, including \$3,000 from wonderful people and true patriots, Terry and Cheryl Holden as well as a \$2,000 anonymous donation. Thanks also to Tom Rieter, Alex Wright, and Lore Guilmartin for making generous contributions of \$500 each. I intend to continue the fundraising efforts in the next 24 months so that we may have the resources necessary to achieve our goals.

As most of you know, the officers and board of directors have put forth an ambitious agenda for the next two years. I intend to update everyone, through this website, on our progress. We'll need many things to go right for us. There are many variables we cannot control; however, there are many we can. Chief among them is our united effort, and I'm certain I can count on each of you to do your part. Since some of this is uncharted territory, I'll need input from anyone who has a good idea, as well as well intended criticism where you see something that can be done better. I'll listen to all. So get ready and hang on, because we're about to have the most exciting period yet in the history of the Koh Tang/*Mayaguez* Veterans Organization!



### **KTMV Organization 2016-18 Board of Directors**

President  
Don Raatz  
Las Vegas, NV  
(702) 460-3371  
[draatz1@cox.net](mailto:draatz1@cox.net)

Vice President  
John Steiert  
Springfield, MO  
(417) 882-3293  
[johnsteiert@missouristate.edu](mailto:johnsteiert@missouristate.edu)

Past President  
Dave Fowler  
Mobile, AL  
(251) 463-9000  
[kohtangkid@hotmail.com](mailto:kohtangkid@hotmail.com)

Treasurer/Webmaster  
Fred Morris  
Evansdale, IA  
(319) 234-3147  
[kohtangmorris@kohtang.com](mailto:kohtangmorris@kohtang.com)

Secretary  
Dan Hoffman  
Columbia, SC  
(803) 422-6842  
[kohtangdan@gmail.com](mailto:kohtangdan@gmail.com)

Director's  
Al Bailey  
Ridge, MD  
(240) 876-9717  
[altinabailey1988@gmail.com](mailto:altinabailey1988@gmail.com)

Bob Blough  
Signal Mountain, TN  
(423) 886-5026  
[jolly44a@aol.com](mailto:jolly44a@aol.com)

Tom Noble  
Oden, IN  
(812) 636-8002  
[TNoble68@yahoo.com](mailto:TNoble68@yahoo.com)

Store Manager  
George Wagers  
Wellton, AZ  
(928) 920-7766  
[kohtangvet@yahoo.com](mailto:kohtangvet@yahoo.com)



**HAVE A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE IN  
YOUR LIFE YOU WOULD LIKE TO  
SHARE. SUBMIT A PICTURE WITH A  
SHORT STORY OR CAPTION FOR  
FUTURE ISSUES OF THE KTMV  
ORGANIZATION NEWSLETTER.**

ALLEN & TINA BAILEY  
16236 PINE TREE LANE  
RIDGE, MD 20680  
[altinabailey1988@gmail.com](mailto:altinabailey1988@gmail.com)

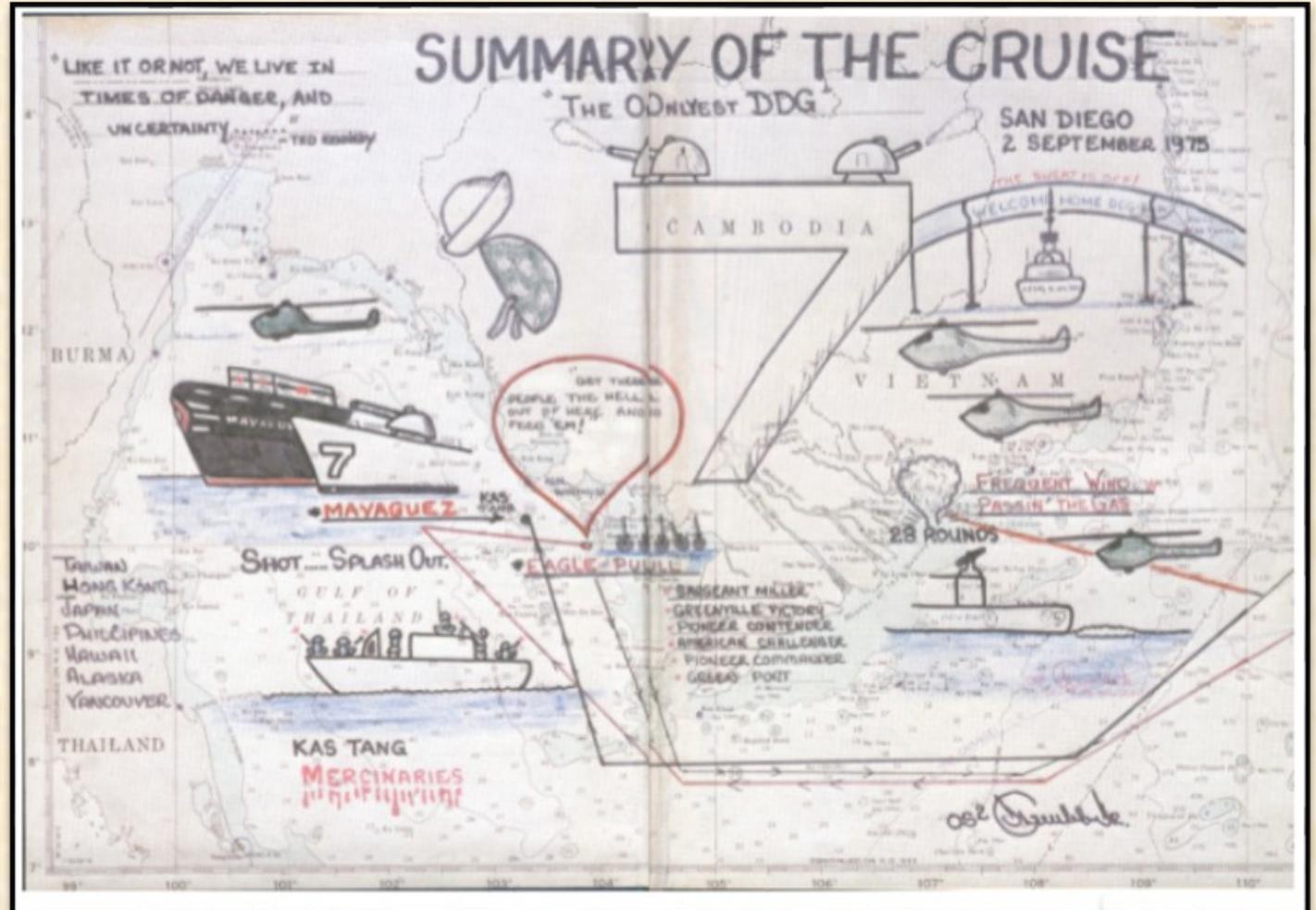
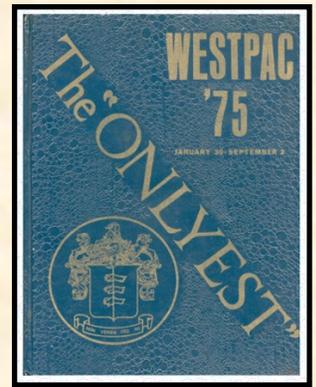


**From the Cruise Book of the Henry B Wilson's (DDG-7) [www.uss henrybwilsonddg7.com](http://www.uss henrybwilsonddg7.com)**

The following messages were received as a result of the *MAYAGUEZ* operation:

Recent weeks have seen United States military forces called upon to perform some of the most difficult and unique assignments in our nation's history. Again, as in previous weeks, I am pleased to express my admiration, respect, and gratitude to Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy personnel, for the successful completion of a highly professional military operation. Our military reaction to the piracy of the *Mayaguez* was a reaffirmation of our principle of peaceful ocean transit. This nation and the entire civilized world can be grateful for the skill shown by American military forces in gaining the release of the *Mayaguez*, its crew, and by doing so, guaranteeing freedom of the seas. My highest commendation to all who participated in this operation.

James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense



**Letter received from Staff Sergeant RC Pruitt Junior United States Marine Corps**

I sincerely want to thank all of you fine gentlemen for your hospitality and genuine friendship that you gave to the people of second Battalion Ninth Marines and for the crew of the gig that was the most beautiful site that could be seen at nine-thirty the morning of the 15th of May. I want to thank those men individually. My prayers will always include a line or two for you gents and I do hope that God and good fortune will a smile on you for the rest of your days. There will always be a fond memory when I think of you gentlemen.

Jesse, Chambers, German, Shimanek, Noble, Gottfried, Wallace, Dick, Krauser, Pete, Bubba, Browne who I thank for the shirt. Shively and all the others, and Chad.

I'll always remember you gentlemen.

Hey Brothers and Sisters,

I had my truck wrapped to represent the memories I have everyday about the mission we were in. Like my neighbor said, it tells my story.

You may have seen or heard about the 2013 movie "Captain Philips." It was about the Maersk Alabama merchant ship pirated in 2009 off the coast of Somalia. When the movie came out, I heard a TV reporter say that the seizure was the last American ship to be pirated in the last 200 years. That was a lot of bull, because as we know, he was wrong. I tried to contact the news station to tell them they were wrong, but no one got back to me.



I plan to show my truck at car shows, Memorial Day and Veterans' Day parades, and other events I can get into to let people know that the *Mayaguez* was seized in 1975, so it hadn't been 200 years since a US merchant ship was hijacked.

A lot of people who see my truck say "Wow, that is really nice looking. What is it all about?" Then I tell them the story. I would like to get some brochures made up so I can hand the people one to read and spread the word.

Semper FI Terry Brooks



At our 2016 reunion Navy E-5 Tom Rieter mentioned that he was on deck of the USS Wilson with a movie camera when a plane dropped something with a parachute and it ended up being a bomb we know as the Blue 82, Daisy Cutter. The largest non-nuclear bomb in the US arsenal. This along with some actual combat video which includes the Wilson's Captain gig footage, HH-53, OV-10 and more.

Thanks Tom for these great shots!



THIS IS A VIDEO  
[www.kohtang.com](http://www.kohtang.com)



After several years of trying, new member Dan Deleuw is pictured here delivering the plaque to the SS Jeremiah O'Brien to be displayed where the Captains desk from the SS *Mayaguez* is on display. Shown here with General Manager Matt Lasher who is a retired US Marine himself.

Thank You Dan!

[www.ssjeremiahobrien.org](http://www.ssjeremiahobrien.org)

## A Life Changing Experience



James (Gunny) Gregory & Chuck Wright

## Run For The Wall 2014

For those of you who have never experienced the loss a spouse due to suicide, all I can say is that you are very fortunate.

My loss came May 20, 2011. Six years after her retirement from teaching Seventh Grade Math for thirty years and tutoring three and four nights a week afterwards, my wife took her life in the woods a half mile behind our house. It took four days before volunteers found her; without a doubt, the worst four days of my life. I could never explain the feelings and emotions I experienced during that period. She left a two-page letter telling me how much she loved me and that her actions were not my fault but due to her continued failing health. She asked for me not to have any memorial or even obituary. She only wanted cremation and nothing else. No directions as to where her ashes were to be placed. It was my decision to scatter her ashes from a helicopter over a beautiful peaceful area in the Appalachian Mountains; an area we had toured many times on my motorcycle. I no longer have my riding partner; it's like I'm missing part of my bike.

The tragedy of losing my wife now supersedes the other continuing tragedy that I have experienced in life. Using the word "continuing" is due to the fact that as a Platoon Sergeant, the bodies of three of my Marines lost in the last combat action of the Viet Nam War, May 15, 1975 have never been recovered. The pain, horrors and extreme miseries I experienced for four days searching for my wife somewhat ended when she was recovered and put to rest. The families of PFC. Gary L. Hall, LCpl. Joseph N. Hargrove and Pvt. Danny G. Marshall have had to endure the like for over 39 years now never having had the opportunity to experience closure by laying their sons to rest. Their loss has weighed heavily on my mind for years and has now been elevated as I relate my own experience to what their families must be going through. Fighting depression is one hell of a battle experienced by many vets (and civilians). Tough times never last, tough people do; Many times, I have to ask myself, "Why?".

Monday May 19, 2014 (the day before

the third anniversary of losing my wife) I rode my 2003 Harley-Davidson Ultra motorcycle from my home in central Alabama to Meridian, MS. to meet up with 350+ other military vets on their bikes at the Meridian Agriculture Center. The group had started their trip several days before in California as the Southern Route of the "Run For The Wall" on their annual journey to Washington, D.C. to honor those who never made it home. I read somewhere that some crazy Marine had started this RFTW thing back in 1989 so I thought this could be the ride I belong on. Maybe it would ease some of the painful memories of those four days in May 2011. Besides the Southern Route there is a Central Route and a Midway Route all starting in California, and all finishing in Washington D.C. on Memorial Day. The theme for the ride is always, "We ride for those who no longer can."

Spent that night in Meridian on the ground in a small tent outside the Agri. Center as several others did who opted not to pay for a room. In the morning, my body was telling me to remember my age and in the future to shell out the money for a room. My plan was to ride with the group all day on the 20th, spend the night in Chattanooga then back home the next day.

After departing Meridian, we stopped at a VA Hospital in Tuscaloosa, AL and visited other Vets for lunch; always a pleasure to hear stories from some of the older vets and thanked them for their service, and our freedom. Next stop Asheville, AL. for fuel and a break, then on to Chattanooga for the night.

First time I had been on a road trip since I lost Cindy. Riding the roads, we had been on so many times before was getting to me and the thought of riding through an area the next day not far from where I had spread her ashes was something I did not think I could handle and convinced myself that going home would be the best idea now that May 20th was coming to a close.

We had supper at and donated by Thunder Creek Harley-Davidson, then after a short period of socializing everyone departed to various hotels nearby.

Not having reservations and not really wanting to socialize anymore I opted to search for a room a little further away from where everyone else was staying; about 10 miles away.

After checking into a Hampton Inn I made preparations to head home in the morning (not caring if I actually made it or not). Removed my wristband and tape on



my bike identifying me as a registered biker with the "Run For The Wall" and started to settle in for the night. Heard what I recognized as a Harley pull in nearby and wondered if it was someone with the RFTW group since as far as I knew I was the only biker there.

Around 10:30 that night I walked outside (was on first floor) and towards the lobby to get some ice. About five doors down I noticed another Harley-Davidson similar to mine; had a USMC Gunnery Sergeant sticker, a Drill Instructor Association sticker, plus one that really stood out, "Mayaguez Recovery", which was the last combat action of the Viet Nam War.



### WHO THE HELL WAS THIS PERSON?

There were only a little over 200 of us that were on the operation, May 15, 1975. Looked for lights on in nearby rooms and saw none so I left a note on the bike for him to contact me in room 151 before leaving in the morning, as I was heading home at daylight.

At 0530 (5:30 am) there's a knock on my door...it had been 39 years since the operation so we had to announce our names and immediately hugged each other. We really did not know each other while in the unit, but the fact we were there together is all it took to be Brothers (besides being Marines).

I knew that it was a Marine who started the "Run For The Wall" in 1989 from California and was in awe when I found out that the crazy Marine was standing in front of me; Retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant James Gregory, aka Gunny. Told him to go outside and look at my bike which was covered. When I removed the cover I'm sure if you looked close enough you would have seen tears in both of our eyes.

Those three Marines were the main reason he started the "Run" and for all the other guys who never made it back... We were riding for all of them.

He and his wife, Patti just got in town to join the run the night before. They had been at the Annual Mayaguez Reunion in Branson, MO. I was going to go but had some mental and emotional issues relating to May 20th that made me cancel a few days before.

We were the only ones associated with the "Run" at that Hampton Inn, which was

several miles from the main group. Gunny said for me to come down to his room as he wanted to show me something. Not knowing Patti was in the room, off I went barefooted and only a pair of gym shorts. Went a few doors down, met his wife and was shown pictures on his laptop of the *Mayaguez* Reunion they had attended the day before.

James (Gunny) told me they choose the Hampton Inn away from the main group to ensure they would get a full night's sleep since once they're around their "family" all night socializing is too hard to resist and they were already worn out from being on the road for several days.

Informed them I would have breakfast with them and then head back south. Well, like a true Marine, he informed me that I would be going to D.C. with them and not home (and riding along side of them).... sooo, after breakfast, off we went.

Believe it was somewhere around Bristol, TN. that Gunny suggested we peel off from the main group and take a more scenic route through the mountains to Wytheville, VA where we were to spend the night.

To say the least, it was scenic alright. Confident I was following someone who was familiar with the area, the ride was very enjoyable, (even though some of the roads did not seem to be traveled often). My comfort soon turned to concern when Gunny's GPS directed us to turn left up ahead into what was actually a farmer's driveway. Was it time for me to turn on my GPS since Gunny's Piece of S\_\_\_ was leading us astray? Without hesitation though Gunny was up and running in a new direction....while I was praying he may have relatives in them there hills to help us out. Soon we were back on a well-traveled highway, (one which I swear we had been on earlier). Eventually we did arrive in Wytheville a little behind the main group.

Laughing about our adventure, Gunny stated his mind drifted off to how we met up in Chattanooga and he wasn't paying attention to where we were.

They introduced me to some very interesting Viet Nam and Middle East Vets; Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. They also had their own personal stories worthy of more recognition than they will ever receive. Many supportive people also made the ride wearing patches on their vests stating, "Maybe we weren't there, but WE DO CARE." Their support as true Americans can only be described as invaluable and sincerely appreciated. All welcomed me to join their family.

I felt like the Honored Guest of the man who started this run after he got on stage and told the story of our meeting in Chattanooga. Literally everyone there knew "The Gunny" and had high respect for his accomplishments.

There were several former and retired Marines riding with the "Run For The Wall" but James and I were the only ones with customized helmets; Mine on left, his on the right.

To this day, we are still scratching our heads as to how in the world did two Retired Marines, the only two, (as far as we know) end up staying at the same Hampton Inn just a few rooms apart.

The only two associated with "The Run For The Wall", whose main group were in hotels several miles away.

Two Marines who had not seen each other in 39 years and shared experiences of the last combat action in Viet Nam.

Two Marines who have been haunted for years by the loss of three fellow Marines 39 years ago.

Two Marines proud enough to mount the Marine Corps emblem on the front of their helmets long before seeing each other again



in 2014. Both of us being Ex-Drill Instructors...and that's just some of the things Ex-DI's do.

And two Marines riding Harley-Davidson Ultra Classic motorcycles, (but only one without his partner).

As Patti stated at breakfast, "Our meeting in Chattanooga was meant to be".

James and Patti had to leave early heading back home to Charleston, S.C. so I ended up touring DC pretty much on my own. (Democrats must have laid out those streets.)

Actually, I wanted to be alone anyway when I visited "The Wall" for the first time to find the names of Hall, Hargrove and Marshall.

**"Mission Accomplished"**

Spent the night in Arlington, Virginia then headed back home 721 miles with 30-minute nap-stops, and a few comfort and feed stops.

Rode back by myself with "years to come of fantastic memories", and something to finally look forward to next year.

Thanks Patti and James (Gunny); meeting both of you made May 20th bearable.

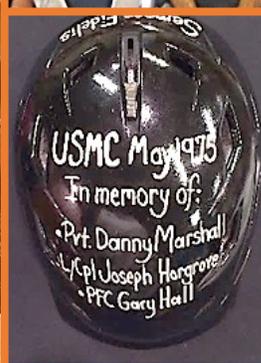
Semper Fi,  
Sincerely,  
Charles (Chuck) D. Wright  
USMC Retired



My name is Brena Davis and Alex Wright is my grandfather. I live in Tucson, Arizona. I went on an 8th grade trip to Washington, DC in April this year. Mr. Bailey and Mr. Wagers had given me a coin to put at The Wall. When we got there I did it. My friends asked what I was doing so I told them that my grandfather and Mr. Bailey and Mr. Wagers and a lot of others had been in a bad battle in Cambodia that day. A lot of my friends cried. I saw a lot of cool stuff in Washington, DC, but The Wall was the best.



2016 Cincinnati Ohio Reunion



JERRY GETTELFINGERS  
HELMET



We'll Be Friends Til We're Old And Senile  
Then We'll Be New Friends

# National Museum of the Air Force, Dayton, Ohio

## FINAL COMBAT: The Mayaguez Incident at Koh Tang



Container ship SS Mayaguez.

After South Vietnam fell to communist forces, the US was again involved in combat in Southeast Asia. In May 1975, the Cambodian Khmer Rouge navy seized the American cargo ship SS Mayaguez and its crew of 39 in international waters.



President Gerald Ford acted decisively to rescue the crew. The Mayaguez was anchored at Koh Tang Island near the Cambodian coast, and military planners believed the crew was on the island. Air Force gunships sank three Cambodian control boats to prevent them taking the Mayaguez's crew from Koh Tang to the mainland. Soon after, Marines boarded the Mayaguez and found it abandoned.

Twenty-four USMC Marines in need to the Mayaguez died when their helicopter crashed due to a fire and found it abandoned.

Near Disaster Marines landed on Koh Tang in Air Force helicopters to rescue the crew, but incomplete intelligence made the operation a near disaster. Expecting only light opposition, the USMC helicopters instead found heavy fire from a large force. The Cambodians shot down four helicopters, damaged five more, and killed 14 Americans. Many US troops and aircraft quickly moved to reinforce the 131 Marines and five USMC aviators trapped on Koh Tang.

Unidentified US Marines on from a CH-53 helicopter during the SS Mayaguez operation.

As the assault unfolded, the Mayaguez crew appeared in a small boat, and were rescued unharmed. President Ford halted offensive action, and the operation shifted from assault to rescuing the trapped Marines.

Identified US Marines on from a CH-53 helicopter during the SS Mayaguez operation.

Only three USMC helicopters were left to extract more than 200 troops. They tried time and again, landing fierce, accurate fire, but were repeatedly driven off. Finally they reached the beach and recovered 123 Marines in multiple trips, landing them quickly on Navy ships and returning to the island for more. On the last trip to the beach, USMC paramechanic TSgt Wayne Fisk left his helicopter to find two missing Marines still lying there covering fire. He led them to the helicopter, and the 14-hour rescue ended as the aircraft left under fire.

Three Marines inadvertently left on the island in the darkness and confusion, were killed and buried there within a few days by the Khmer Rouge. Total US casualties included 15 dead and 50 wounded. Twenty-three more USMC personnel died in a support force helicopter crash in Thailand due to mechanical failure.

Quick, effective action at Koh Tang by USMC, Marine, and Navy forces prevented a bad situation from becoming much worse. In particular, the persistence, determination, and heroism of USMC helicopter crews saved many lives. The action at Koh Tang between May 12-15, 1975, was the last combat in Southeast Asia for US forces.

USMC paramechanic TSgt Wayne Fisk, from the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, guides Marines to a rescue helicopter. For his actions he was awarded the Silver Star.



**Staff Sergeant John D. Harston**  
Air Force Cross, 1975

John Harston was a flight mechanic aboard a CH-53 helicopter which was shot down during the Mayaguez rescue. Though wounded and dazed from the crash, he laid down effective covering fire with a rifle salvaged from the burning wreck. At great risk to himself, he also pulled a number of wounded Marines to safety.

In addition to Airman Pitsenbarger and Sergeant Harston, nineteen enlisted personnel received the Air Force Cross for their service in Southeast Asia.



### BOMB LIVE UNIT (BLU-82/B)



325-ND-026-7086  
 2X G0E7380-10  
 BUHR. BLU-82/B, FMPT  
 NONE-0 DON UNL  
 WT 2,100  
 EXPLOSIVE GSX-DBA-22M  
 EXPLOSIVE WT. 2,600  
 TOTAL WT. 15,000 LBS



HEY BROTHERS,

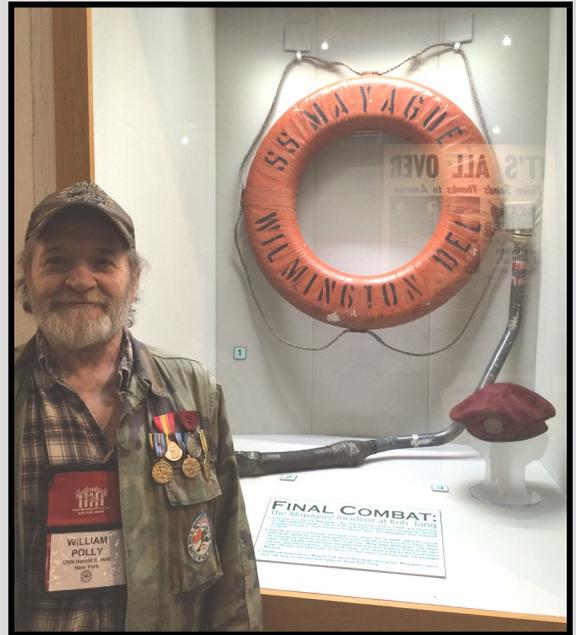
I WAS ASKED IF I WOULD WRITE A LETTER ON MY EXPERIENCE AT THE REUNION IN 2016. I THOUGHT IT WAS VERY NICE OF THE ORGANIZATION TO ASK ME. THANK YOU.

FOR MANY YEARS, AL BAILEY CALLED ME UP AND ASKED IF I COULD MAKE IT TO THE REUNION. I ALWAYS GAVE THE ANSWER, "SORRY I CANNOT. I DO NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO GO." THEN, IN JANUARY 2016, I GOT HIS CALL LIKE MANY TIMES BEFORE, BUT THIS CALL WAS DIFFERENT. I GAVE HIM THE SAME ANSWER I GAVE BEFORE, BECAUSE I REALLY DID NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO ATTEND. WE TALKED FOR A WHILE. A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER HE CALLED ME UP AGAIN. THIS TIME HE SAID THAT THE ORGANIZATION WANTED ME TO COME BECAUSE THERE WOULD BE MANY THERE WHO WOULD LIKE TO MEET ME. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE KTMV ORGANIZATION WOULD HELP IN ANY WAY THEY COULD TO GET ME THERE. WELL, I TALKED TO MY WIFE AND SHE SAID, "GO. YOU GOT TO GO TO HEAL AND DO NOT WORRY ABOUT THE MONEY; WE WILL FIND A CHEAP FLIGHT." SO, I CALLED AL UP AND TOLD HIM I WOULD BE THERE.

I GOT TO CINCINNATI EARLY AND WENT TO THE HOTEL. NO ONE WAS THERE; CHECK-IN WAS 4 HOURS AWAY. I WALKED AROUND WONDERING HOW I WOULD BE ACCEPTED. IT DID NOT TAKE LONG BEFORE A KTMV MEMBER CAME UP TO ME AND ASKED IF I WAS THERE FOR THE REUNION. I SAID, "YES, MY FIRST ONE." HE ASKED ME MY NAME AND WHEN I TOLD HIM, HE SAID, "YOU MADE IT! I GOT SOMEONE HERE THAT HAS BEEN WANTING TO MEET YOU FOR A LONG TIME." IT TURNED OUT TO BE AL BAILEY. HE WELCOMED ME WITH FULL ARMS AND SAID THANK YOU TO ME FOR LANDING BOB BLOUGH'S HELO ON THE HOLT SO HE COULD GO BACK TO PICK UP MORE MARINES. HE SAID IF IT WASN'T FOR ME, HE FEELS THAT HE WOULD NOT BE HERE TODAY. HE TOOK ME AROUND TO MEET THE REST WHO WERE THERE. THEY ALL THANKED ME AND WELCOMED ME. FOR MANY YEARS, I THOUGHT WHAT I DID DIDN'T MATTER. I JUST HELP LAND A HELO ON THE DECK AS I WAS TRAINED TO DO, BUT TO THESE GUYS IT WAS MORE THAN THAT. I MET BOB BLOUGH AND HE GAVE ME A HOLTS BALL CAP WITH TWO GREEN FEET ON THEM. HE ALSO THANKED ME FOR KNOWING WHAT TO DO BECAUSE HE NEVER LANDED ON A SHIP BEFORE. BUT, HE KNEW I WAS NOT GOING TO LET HIM CRASH. EVERYONE I MET THERE GAVE ME THE SAME FEELING OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE. IT WAS LIKE I WAS IN SCHOOL AGAIN BUT THIS TIME I WAS THE POPULAR GUY. I REALLY CANNOT TELL YOU HOW I FELT BECAUSE I CANNOT FIND THE RIGHT WORDS. BUT I CAN SAY I FELT LIKE I WAS WANTED AND LOVED MORE THAN I EVER KNEW.

TIME FLEW SO FAST. THE NEXT THING I KNEW IT WAS THE FINAL DINNER WITH EVERYONE. THIS WAS A MOVING DINNER AND ONE THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET. IT WAS AN HONOR DINNER FOR THOSE WHO WERE THERE AND MOST OF ALL FOR THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR ALL THAT DAY. IT CHANGED MY LIFE. I WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU. I GOT THINGS OUT THAT I KEPT IN FOR MANY YEARS. I MET GUYS WHO BECAME BROTHERS, FRIENDS, AND NOW FAMILY. I TALK TO THEM OFTEN ON THE PHONE AND ON FACEBOOK.

FOR EVERYONE WHO THINKS THEY ARE NOT WELCOME TO THE REUNION BECAUSE THEY WERE ON SHIPS, FLYING ABOVE, OR IN THE ENGINE ROOMS--YOU ARE WRONG! YOU WERE THERE AND HAD A JOB TO DO JUST AS MUCH AS THOSE ON THE BEACH. THE MARINES ARE GRATEFUL TO ALL OF US. IF WE WERE NOT DOING WHAT WE WERE TRAINED TO DO, THEY WOULD NOT BE HERE TODAY. FROM THOSE ON THE HOLT WHO TOWED THE MAYAGUEZ AND CAME BACK TO HELP AND LAND BOB'S HELO TO THOSE ON THE WILSON WHO PROTECTED THE AREA AND PULLED GUYS OUT OF THE WATER, AND TO THOSE INVOLVED WITH THE CORAL SEA LANDING AND THE ONES WHO MADE QUICK REPAIRS TO THE DAMAGED HELO, ALL HAD AN IMPORTANT JOB. IF IT WAS NOT FOR ALL OF US, THE MARINES BELIEVE THAT THEY MAY NOT BE HERE TODAY. SO, IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU WOULD NOT BE WELCOME, PLEASE GET THAT OUT OF YOUR HEAD! WE ALL DID A PART THAT DAY. WE ALL HAVE NIGHTMARES OF THAT DAY. SO, GET YOUR HEADS OUT OF YOUR BUTTS AND MAKE IT TO ONE OF THESE REUNIONS. I PROMISE YOU WILL NEVER WANT TO MISS ANOTHER ONE. TAKE IT FROM ME; I WILL NEVER MISS ANOTHER IF I CAN HELP IT, BECAUSE THESE MEN ARE MY BROTHERS AND MOST OF ALL THEY ARE MY FAMILY. I NEVER FELT MORE AT PEACE THAN I DID AT THE REUNION. PLEASE TRY TO MAKE IT TO AT LEAST ONE. WE ARE ALL GETTING OLD AND WE ALL NEED CLOSURE.



WILLIAM A. POLLY, SN HELO DECK

USS HAROLD E. HOLT FF(DE) 1074

KOH TANG MAYAQUEZ VET

## **“X” IF INTERESTED – During the Fort Walton Beach 2018 Reunion**

### **FISHING**

Sunday, May 13

Dave Fowler (251) 463-9000 promises you a great time catching fish for the first ever KTMV Organizations Fish Fry Social later that same evening back at the resort. Sign-up NOW. Pay at the boat!



### **GOLFING**

Monday, May 14

**GATOR LAKES GOLF COURSE**  
91300 Walkup Way, Hurlburt Field, FL

### **MUSEUMS AND GROUP PHOTO**

Monday, May 14

**Naval Aviation Museum**  
Pensacola, Florida  
Call Dan DeLeuw (831) 254-7788

**Hurlburt Field Air Force Base**  
At 1530 meet for a Group photo  
in front of the HH-53 Knife 22

Museum trips will be (for now) car pool

In anticipation of our 2018 reunion,  
Martin Madert would like to interview any interested veterans who may like to participate.

Martin will be travelling across the country to different reunions to work with different veterans' groups. If you would like to schedule an interview when he is near your home, please contact him at [Martin@WitnessToWar.org](mailto:Martin@WitnessToWar.org) or [770-628-0024](tel:770-628-0024). (Leave a message: he is often in interviews or driving.) Please check the Witness to War website to see a list of upcoming locations. If you know of multiple veterans in your area who may also like to participate, contact Martin to help arrange interviews in your hometown.

The Witness to War Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Atlanta, GA that is dedicated to preserving the oral histories of veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the Global War on Terror by conducting free video interviews that honor your service, preserve your story, and promote the education of military history for future generations. They publish clips of these interviews on their website, [www.WitnessToWar.org](http://www.WitnessToWar.org), where the public can easily access over 4,000 firsthand accounts of military service from the veterans themselves. Each veteran receives three DVD copies of their full interview in addition to having a copy donated to the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project. To date, the Witness to War Foundation has preserved the oral histories of over 2,000 veterans across the country.



KOH TANG / MAYAGUEZ VETERANS ORGANIZATION



**Reunion Registration Form**

**13 - 17 MAY 2018**

**Mail Registration Form & Check To**

KTMV c/o Al Bailey  
16236 Pine Tree Lane, Ridge, MD 20680  
(240) 876-9717

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address City State Zip

Cell Number \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration Fee** Member/Spouse/Guest(s) - \$50 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Includes challenge coin/patch, hooch, meeting & banquet rooms, fish fry social, lady's pin, beverages, snacks and more.*

**Banquet Dinner** Member/Spouse/Guest(s) - \$50 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Includes dinner, tax and gratuity*

**Thank you** for your generous tax deductible donation. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Bring memorabilia, comfortable clothes and shoes, and bathing suits.  
Banquet attire is business casual to semi-formal.

**"X" IF INTERESTED- During the Fort Walton Beach 2018 Reunion**

\_\_\_\_\_ Fishing \_\_\_\_\_ Golfing \_\_\_\_\_ Witness to War Interview

\_\_\_\_\_ Naval Aviation Museum \_\_\_\_\_ Hurlburt Field AFB Museum

**REGISTER EARLY.  
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.**

***YOU MUST MAKE YOUR OWN RESERVATION***



Standard \$159.

Courtyard \$169.

Tower Pool Side \$179. Tower Gulf Side \$199.

Use group name KOH TANG/MAYAGUEZ VETERANS

Group room rates available until 12 April 2018

Call 1-(800) 874-8962 or (850) 243-9161

1500 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

## **DESTIN WEST RV RESORT**

1510 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL

Call 1-(800) 947-0701 or (850) 200-4533

Space is limited - Make your reservations ASAP.

**Access to all the amenities of the Ramada Plaza Beach Resort**