

SPECIAL EDITION

February 2006

A Memorial to the American Experience

In

Vietnam

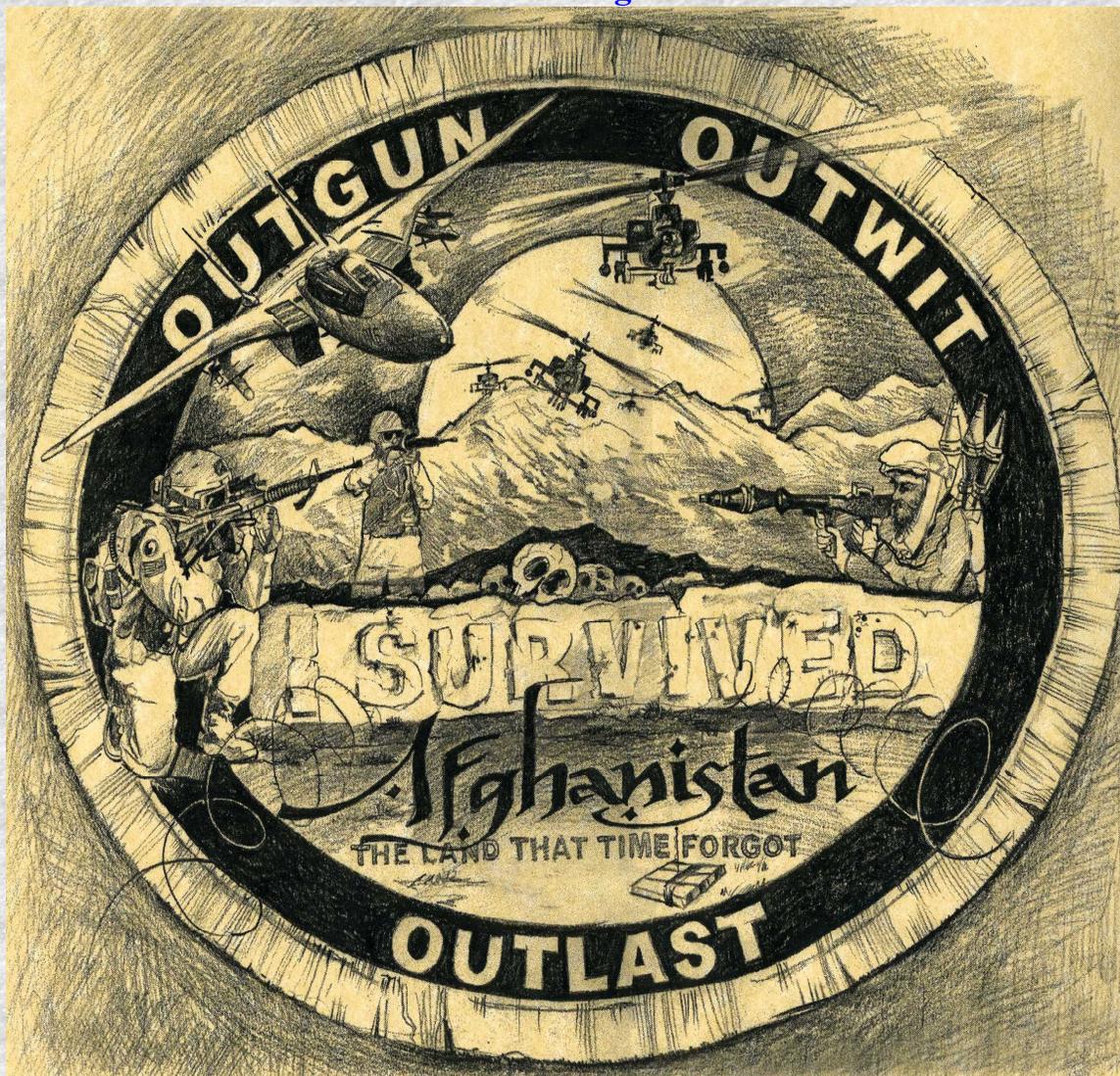


Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

We Honor The Army 29th Infantry Division

From The Western Front in France in 1918, to the shores of Normandy in 1944, to the sands and mountains of Afghanistan in 2004



Artwork By SSgt. Jay Kincanon, Army National Guard, Roanoke, Virginia

At War

Jim Garrison gathered up his gear to report to the Security Police armorer to check out his weapon. It was still dark outside, and according to the weather report it was going to be another hot day. But his mind wasn't on how uncomfortable the heat would be; there were more important things to be concerned about. He was marking the FIGMO calendar every morning – a quick check indicated he had 49 days to go on his deployment. There had been minor skirmishes since he arrived, but they never amounted to more than a mortar or rocket slamming into the base. There was never more than a half dozen at a time, but they were a constant worry.

He checked out his M-16, and 10 ammo clips. His post this early morning would be a sandbagged bunker that was located adjacent to the main gate. He'd be accompanied by a fellow security policeman, who would man an M-60. It wasn't the first time he was assigned this particular post, but he was always leery of being close to the main gate. A vehicle driven by the enemy could easily drive up and raise havoc.

It was a fearful life he was leading – he was never complacent or relaxed. You could trust no one. A national citizen could be just a base worker driving up to park in the lot near the main gate. Or the vehicle might be driven by an individual with evil on his mind. Alertness was the key. His mind kept going back to the calendar hanging on the wall of his hootch. Only 49 days to go.

On the way to the bunker a vehicle passed that contained half dozen sentry dogs and their handlers. Most would be on patrol that morning – sniffing the air, hunting for someone that shouldn't be in the area. Most were German Sheppard's.

Same type of weapons; same sandbag bunkers; same FIGMO calendar, and the same fear that every security policeman felt in Vietnam.

Welcome To Afghanistan



The Coffee Pot

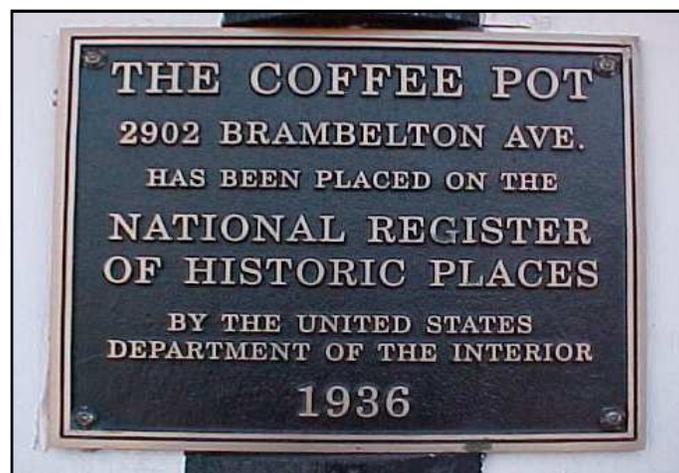
The *Coffee Pot* has been around for well over a half century. It's on the National Register of Historical buildings in Roanoke, Virginia. Nothing fancy, just a great place to have a beer with friends, and on Wednesday night a place where you can enjoy the best short pork ribs found anywhere around. But Wednesday night is not only known for its pork ribs, it's known for *The Guard*, a Bluegrass band that plays the foot-stomping song *Rocky Top* as good as any band. A pile of ribs on your plate and *Rocky Top* ringing in your ears – a great combination.

Bill King is a friend from way back. On most Wednesdays you'll find him at a table in front of the band with more pork ribs on his plate than the law should allow. Bill retired from the 29th Infantry Division (Light), Virginia Army National Guard, as are most members of band. Patriotism and the gusto of Gung Ho flows from one end of the stage to the other, and it ripples through the audience as well.

On a recent Wednesday night I joined Bill King and his wife Juanita to listen to the band. Bill introduced me to Jay Kincahon, a current member of the 29th Infantry Division, who had recently served in Afghanistan. I shook his hand and thanked him for his service to our country. He returned the gesture when Bill told him I was retired Air Force.

Jay has spent over 34 years in the Army National Guard and Army Reserves. After asking about his Afghanistan service I knew his story had to be told.

Over three decades have passed between the two wars, Vietnam and Afghanistan; but there is a solid connection between the two.





A Brief History

Original Organization Date: 25 August 1917 at Camp McClellan, Alabama

Official Nickname: "Blue and Gray" draws upon the combining in the division of units which had fought each other during the Civil War.

Organized of National Guard units from Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia, Delaware and New Jersey were combined for World War I service. Elements of the division entered combat on the Western Front in France in July 1918. The 29th took part in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive from 8 to 30 October 1918, They gained seven kilometers and captured 2,148 prisoners. The 29th Division had more than 6,000 casualties, killed and wounded. Three members of the division were awarded the Medal of Honor.

The division was demobilized in 1919. It was reorganized with National Guard units from Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia and Pennsylvania on 31 July 1923 with headquarters at Washington, D.C.

Inducted into federal service on 3 February 1941 for World War II. Stationed at Fort Meade, Maryland. Reorganized and redesignated 12 March 1942 as the 29th Infantry Division with units from Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Deployed to Great Britain October 1942. The 29th was the only National Guard division in the first assault waves on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Despite high losses on Omaha Beach, the division succeeded in securing most of its objectives. Took part in battles through Normandy culminating at St. Lo and Vire. Assisted in the capture of the port city of Brest. Moved into Germany in October 1944 and captured the Ruhr cities of Jülich and Munchen-Gladbach. Reached the Elbe River on 24 April, two weeks before the end of the war. The division suffered 20,327 casualties. Two members of the division were awarded the Medal of Honor. The 29th was demobilized at Fort Dix, New Jersey, in January 1946.

Reorganized on 23 October 1946 with National Guard units from Maryland, Virginia and District of Columbia with headquarters at Norfolk, Virginia. Not mobilized during Korean or Vietnam wars. Inactivated 1 February 1968.

Reorganized and redesignated as 29th Infantry Division (Light) on 30 September 1985 with National Guard units from Maryland and Virginia with headquarters at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

One unit mobilized for Gulf War 1990-1991 but not deployed overseas. Volunteers drawn from division for duty in Sinai Battalion in 1992. Elements drawn from division for active federal service in Bosnia, 1996-1998.

Reorganized 1 October 1996 with the addition of units from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

29th Leads The Way

By SSgt. Jay Kincanon

Over the centuries there have been hundreds of wars and thousands of battles fought. The lingering memories of June 6, 1944; March 29, 1973 and most recently September 11, 2001, are deeply etched in the minds of our proud veterans and American people.

Shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. military invaded Afghanistan to hunt down the prime suspects: Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida network.

Once again, on March 1, 2004 over 560 citizen soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Division, answered their roll-call for active Army duty. Like their predecessors, these soldiers joined the ranks of our combined armed forces to help fight the global war against terrorism and aggression.

The soldiers were able to hone their infantry skills during their four month stateside training, for their part in Operation Enduring Freedom. The training included: vehicle searches for explosives and prohibited items; reacting to possible improvised explosive devices; tactical combat casualty care; and conducting presence patrols, to name a few. The intensity of training was designed to create and maintain a high level of stress and physical endurance, that gave these soldiers invaluable lessons learned, and insight into which combat skills needed improvement. These tasks became second nature to the soldiers, after their long vigorous training.

As soon as their boots hit the dirt in the impoverished war-torn country of Afghanistan, the legacy of the 116th. Infantry Regiment, 29th Division, continued to "lead the way", in their commitment to world freedom. Soon after arriving, most of the 3rd Battalion soldiers transitioned to the mountainous, south-eastern province of Ghazni. There, they patrolled villages, gathered intelligence, supported reconstruction efforts, and other essential tasks. The Taliban and other Islamic extremists were known to operate near their forward operating base.

The soldiers soon found out that Afghanistan is a vast, undeveloped country which had become a safe haven for terrorists, as well as one of the worlds leading producers of illegal narcotics over the years. Territorial warlords control this barren landscape of rock and mud-brick homes, as well as the starkly beautiful, jagged mountains of the Hindu Kush. The 3rd Battalion soldiers covered a large geographical area that included many remote villages in the treacherous mountain terrain. Most of these were never seen by coalition forces.

The country is in desperate need of an infrastructure overhaul, caused by many years of civil unrest. Provisional Reconstruction Teams, which are small military units, help support the local authorities by providing civic action projects, such as building much needed wells, roads, schools and clinics.

On October 9, 2004 the eyes of the world were focused on Afghanistan. The 3rd Battalion soldiers were in Ghazni Province to support Afghanistan's first democratic election. While Afghans cast their ballots for the first time ever, soldiers of the 116th. Infantry Regiment conducted security patrols to ensure overall safety in the area. Hamid Karzai was elected Afghanistan's first president, with 55 percent of the nationwide vote. This landmark election, along with parliamentary elections held later, are crucial to the U.S. led coalition's war on terrorism and the rebuilding of Afghanistan

The soldiers recognized the need for establishing good relationships with the civilians to gain their trust. They did this through humanitarian missions, as well as constant presence patrols through-out the villages. The human intelligence that was gained from cooperative civilians proved invaluable in locating numerous weapons caches and neutralizing the enemy.

We are trained to be polite, professional, culturally aware, but ready to kill at any moment. It was an uneasy feeling not knowing

if the Afghans liked us being there. Most smiled and waved, and some gave hard stares as we passed by. You couldn't let your guard down for a second.

The remaining soldiers of the 3rd Battalion provided base perimeter security at Bagram Air Field, pulling around-the-clock shifts in watchtowers and roving patrols. The perimeter security mission is a vital element to the overall base security, and requires vigilance against both insurgents and complacency. The words of an old French proverb come to mind : " The enemy never sleeps ". Bagram was considered among the safest areas in the country. However, insurgents occasionally fired badly aimed rockets and sporadic rifle fire, which broke the monotony. A Quick Reaction Force was manned by 3rd Battalion soldiers who were called upon on numerous occasions.

A change of the surrounding environment was very critical to the overall security of the battalion. The rotation of troops from Bagram to Ghazni afforded the soldiers a new environment, and kept them alert.

Bagram served as the hub for all the resupply of equipment and mail, which was provided by ground assault convoys and air assets. It was a logistical nightmare getting the troop's mail to them because they were constantly on the move. However, it was "like Christmas" when they finally received it.

The 3rd Battalion left Afghanistan at a time when escalating violence threatened to sabotage three years of progress toward peace after the U.S. led forces ousted the Taliban government in October 2001. Hopefully in time, the people of Afghanistan will find healing and recovery from our shared sacrifices .

The battalion's soldiers saw duty in Bagram Air Field and in Ghazni province. They endured the deaths of two soldiers in a bombing, and one in a non-combat related incident.

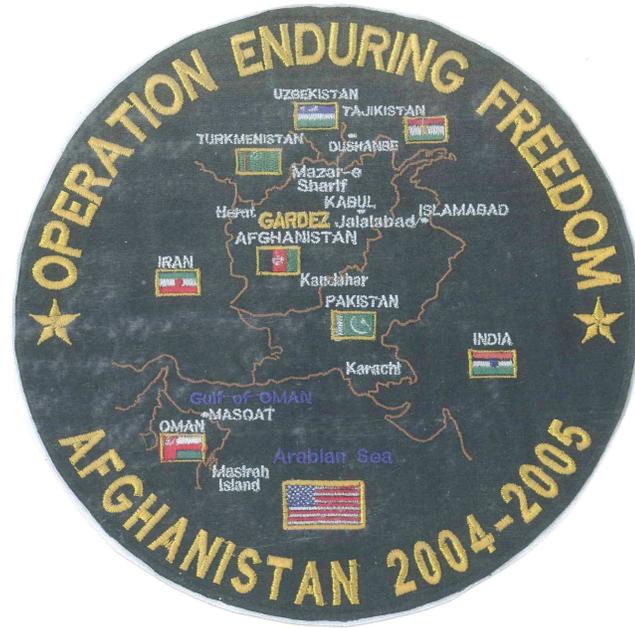
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The soldiers experienced a harsh Afghan winter and renewed combat last spring and summer. They also helped with the reconstruction of the country, from guarding the polling locations, resupplying the schools and orphanages, and arranging for medical supplies and other assistance for the villages. Over time, these will be lingering memories for the soldiers, but not forgotten.

More than 500 soldiers in the Winchester, Virginia based 3rd Battalion, 29th Division, their families and their center of influence were recently honored during a Freedom Salute ceremony, for their personal sacrifices and duty in Afghanistan. Sadly, there were soldiers for whom there will be no homecoming, ever. But with pride and a lasting debt of gratitude, these soldiers will always be remembered for the supreme sacrifice they made.

The 116th Infantry Regiment's representation exemplifies the fact that Army Guard members are indeed citizen soldiers dedicated to the service of their country and their fellow man. Our flag remains unfurled in the wind because our soldiers have always chosen to defend the values it symbolizes .

I learned a great deal about myself, the warrior spirit, what it means to make a difference in a life, and the strength of my faith in God. Many of these lessons I will always remember, and I will always volunteer to serve my country.



This Story Is Dedicated To The Memory of:

SSgt. Craig W. Cherry

Sgt. Bobby E. Beasley

Spc Kyle M. Hemauer





29TH INFANTRY DIVISION
(LIGHT)



Perimeter of Bagram Air Base



Jay Kincanon's Hootch



29TH INFANTRY DIVISION
(LIGHT)



Afghan children lining up for school supplies provided by US citizens



Distribution of school supplies



Jay Kincanon - July 2005 - departing Bagram Air Base for home



29TH INFANTRY DIVISION
(LIGHT)



Boarding the FREEDOM BIRD in Germany



Welcome Home Parade

Winchester, Virginia

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