

Swift Current

The official publication of the
Swift Boat Sailors Association

First Qtr 2011

Comments & suggestions to-
editor@swiftboats.org

SAN ANTONIO TWO-STEP Y'ALL: MAKE HOTEL RESERVATION AND SEND IN REUNION REGISTRATION FORM !!!!!

Who saved my life?

From the Guestbook on the SBSA web site: "May 9th 2010 10:07:12 PM Name: Senyint Chim Current Location: San Diego, CA Military/Location/Dates:20 km north of Tan Chau, VN into Cambodia on either PCF91 and PCF94 SBSA Member?Unknown Comments:I was a 20 years old boy who rescued from the Khmer Rouge, VC, and NVA from Peam Chor South of Neak Leung, Cambodia on May 10th, 1970 by the PCF 91 and PCF 94. I would like to find out who were the commanding officers, officers, and sailors on those two boats on the day "

Senyint Chin followed up with email to SBSA in October 2010 " Who saved my life? "

Virg Erwin met Senyint on 13 November 2010. He said there is a Swift Boat crew who are his heroes and he has spent years trying to find them. He asked for Virg 's help. Senyint is a Cambodian refugee and

now a US Citizen, a high school algebra teacher in San Diego. In 1970 the Viet Cong had dominate military control of Cambodia. " It was their safe haven during the day, " Senyint says. " At night they ferried their supplies and men on the Bassac River into South Vietnam. And they were recruiting Cambodians to serve their purposes. If asked, there was no choice. " To avoid being forced to join the Viet Cong, I told the local VC leader in my village that I could be of more use because of my English language ability than if they sent me to shoot Americans. He agreed. " In April of that year, Senyint witnessed the Viet Cong sink a Cambodian river patrol boat. " I don ' t know if the crew was killed, but that made me angry, " Senyint said. (Continued on the next page)



He got permission from the local VC leader to travel to Phnom Penh. "I made up a story, said I was going to visit my sister who was sick. He gave me permission, but told me I had to return within **seven days.**" **Senyint traveled to Phnom Penh, passing through many VC check points with a note from the VC leader. Senyint reported the patrol boat sinking to Cambodian government officials and military officers. It is hard to imagine Cambodia allowing VC checkpoints in their own country, but they did. The US Navy had evidence of this activity. The CIA**



didn't believe it was true. The VC discovered the real purpose of Senyint's visit from informants. Senyint's friends, even those working for the Khmer Rouge, told him that the VC had orders to kill him, to eliminate a witness. At constant urging from friends, Senyint was trying to escape. He was sleeping at friends homes, in a different home each night for a week. Senyint taught English and math. He knew the VC would only kill him in secret. The VC didn't want the villagers to know they were after a school teacher, but of course the villagers did. On 8 May he placed a slate from his school room on the thatched roof of his home which was on the bank of the Bassac River, and in chalk, spelled out, " I am Cambodian. I have SOMETHING for you. I WANT TO GO WITH YOU." He knew the VC would never see this message—they had no airplanes in that area. Senyint said Army Hueys were flying overhead all the time and hoped one would see his message. One did and reported it. But still no one came and there was no clearing nearby for a helicopter to land. On 10 May, 1970 he waved his chalkboard sign at two Swift Boats on the Bassac River. "And at just that time, a friend standing with me said, 'There are two VC standing about five meters behind you with guns. They want to talk to you.' I knew they were ready to take me into the woods. "But I didn't turn around, I didn't look back. If I had, I would have lost all my courage. And the VC didn't shoot me because there were these two Swift Boats with twin fifty-caliber machines guns pointed in our direction. I later learned the VC were afraid of shooting, afraid of starting a gunfight with the Swift Boats. Someone on one of the Swift Boats called over their loudspeaker and said, 'Swim out to us.' I jumped into the river. I was a weak swimmer. A sailor dove off a Swift Boat into the river to help me." "I was there," George Allen Nelson writes, a Quartermaster Second Class in 1970 aboard PCF 56. "I saw a man on the river bank with a chalk board. I asked my Vietnamese trainee what it said. He said, 'I don't know Nellie, it is in English.'" "I looked at it again. It said *Help me*. LT (jg) Howze, skipper of the Swift Boat, wanted to go in with the boat, but I said this looks like a trap as I had been involved in one before where an officer had been hurt bad, so I yelled for him to swim out. He gladly jumped in, but he couldn't swim, so I asked our best swimmer to help him to the [bow] net.

(continued on the next page)

He was cold so I gave him one of my shirts and we spoke. He said he had learned English from a European missionary and had information to help save his people from the VC who were taking their young men and would take him soon.” “They picked me up,” Senyint said, “and delivered me to a NILO (Naval Intelligence Liaison Officer).” “We took him to an Intel boat,” George wrote, “where we heard he gave information which helped greatly.” Senyint and George talked recently, for the first time in forty years. “I remember you had a bad eye,” George said. “That told me,” Senyint said, “this man is real. I do have a bad eye, a crossed eye. He was



there!” “Do you still have that shirt I gave you?” “Are you kidding? I wouldn’t save a shirt for forty years.” And then they both laughed. “An admiral promised to bring me to the US if I would work for them.” Senyint started working for naval intelligence and going back into Cambodia on covert missions to help his country and his village friends. His stories are like listening to Ian Fleming’s James Bond stories, but unlike fictional movies. Villagers so respected his mother, that they did not divulge his activity, for fear she would be harmed as a reprisal by the VC. One mission was just to take his mother out of the village. She didn’t want to go, but with pleading, she left her home. I have the impression that the two VC who were tasked with killing Senyint did not survive the war. Senyint’s story is confirmed by a retired NILO, Larry Serra, who was in Vietnam at the time, reporting to Admiral Zumwalt and to Captain Rex Rectanus. Earl F. “Rex” Rectanus retired as a Vice Admiral. Larry knew all the players in all these operations, and so much more. “We called him, ‘Sinjin,’ Larry said. Larry published his experience in a book titled *NILO Ha Tien*, but as a novel for obvious reasons. Sinjin talked about his covert work for naval intelligence. “They gave me old army jackets and lots of cigarettes and I pretended to be a “smuggler,” selling these items on the Cambodian black market which was my cover story. And from there collected information I was tasked to get.” After a year of this activity, his mother convinced him to leave Cambodia for good. She worried his luck was running out. “After I did that for year, the US Embassy said the admiral’s promise was illegal. So Jack, my NILO controller, personally sponsored my opportunity to become a US citizen by bringing me to Camp Pendleton with the excuse of putting me through special ops training. He even let me live in his home in San Diego. Fortunately, the Navy never asked me to go back to Cambodia during the war. “That Swift Boat crew saved my life,” Sinjin said. “I’ve spent years trying to find that Swift Boat crew, to thank them. I’m going to the Swift Boat reunion in San Antonio next May, to say thank you for saving my life.”

“We went for our Country,” George writes, “and our beliefs as Americans and this person [Senyint] is why we are still proud we did our job!” Senyint talked by phone a week ago to Clayton Howze, the skipper of PCF 56. “He’s coming to the reunion,” Senyint said with a smile, “to meet again.” Senyint is just barely five feet tall. He has round framed glasses for his crossed eye, soft features, a clear voice and a gentle smile. Senyint’s mother was killed by the VC in 1978.

Text and story by Virg Erwin. Pictures of Senyint with his family in Vietnam then and now in San Diego.

This picture was recently posted on My Family and the Swift Current editor was so impressed that he felt it should have a place of honor on the President's page.

Beautiful!!



Special announcement

Nominations needed for the SBSA Board of Directors. This is a great opportunity to serve your shipmates in the SBSA.

We need nominations for the upcoming SBSA Board of Directors election at the SBSA 2011 San Antonio Reunion.

A Director is a member in good standing in the SBSA, and is elected by SBSA Active Membership at the reunion. Directors serve for a 4 year term, must have a personal computer with 24 hour internet access for communication purposes, and attend the Board of Directors annual meeting.

If you are personally interested, want to nominate someone in the SBSA, or have further questions, contact Mike Solhaug, solhaumj@evms.edu

PLAN OF THE DAY

- 1. Call the Holiday Inn Riverwalk San Antonio (210) 224-2500 and ask for Lisa or Lindsay**
- 2. Place your room reservation. They will honor the Special Reunion Room Rates**
- 3. Go to web <http://swiftboats.org/> Reunion Information section**
- 4. Download and send in your Reunion Registration Form ASAP**
- 5. Sign up for the tours!**

President's Corner

Shipmates:

Here's hoping that your end of year festivities found you with family and friends. Some of our members encountered sad times and our hearts and prayers go out to those families. I was touched by one Swifties' passing, EN1 Gene L. Herrera. I found him on the Crew Roster web site as I was perusing for Texas Swifties. His last name caught my attention. We were making plans to meet at the SBSA Reunion in May. He was all excited about making this gathering...his first. I know that he, like my crewmate, Ronald "Porky" Rinehart, and others, will be with us in spirit....We Remember!

Buses, Trains, Planes and Automobiles are gearing up to take our members to a place....Deep In The Heart of TEXAS! We're fast approaching two months and a wake up folks for our visit to San Antonio.

The response for early hotel registration went through the roof....to the extent that we've had to make arrangements for a reunion overflow crowd! That's right...OVERFLOW accommodations are required.

Special Reunion Hotel Room Rates are being honored by the Holiday Inn Riverwalk...BUT, you must act NOW!!! See details in this issue - Important Reunion Hotel News.

Highlighting our May gathering will be a tour to a working Texas Ranch where we will enjoy a Texas-style Bar-B-Que and numerous cowpoke activities that will be sure to tickle your fancy! Our other tour will take us to the beautiful Texas Hill Country town of Fredericksburg. There we will visit the Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Pacific War Museum. Upon arrival, there will be a brief unveiling ceremony of the SBSA's donated plaque honoring the brave sailors who served on sister PT Boats. NOTE: All tour buses are ADA compliant and can accommodate motorized wheel chairs.

Another reunion feature focuses on Oral History Interviews being conducted by our Banquet Keynote Speaker, Dr. John D. Sherwood, Navy Historian. Dr. Sherwood extends an invitation to all of our reunion attending Swifties to contact him in advance of the reunion to schedule your interview.

Team SATX has planned the reunion with you in mind. We've allowed for a good deal of "Open Time" for plenty of personalized activities – Hospitality Suite visits and touring the town. To make the best of your visit, I encourage everyone to check out the SBSA web site 2011 Reunion link at <http://swiftboats.org/reunion/11reunionpromo.htm>. The link is FILLED with important reunion related info.

Banquet seating is filling up fast, so don't delay – call in your hotel reservation and send in your reunion registration to Military Reunions To Remember NOW. Contact me with your questions at BeanPCF79@aol.com; or by phone at (832) 656-6494 (mobile).

Remember The Alamo!

Veterans' Medallion Available for Order

New Option for Marking Veterans' Graves in Private Cemeteries

WASHINGTON (June 29, 2010) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced today that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is offering bronze medallions to attach to existing, privately purchased headstones or markers, signifying a deceased's status as a Veteran.

"For Veterans not buried in a national or state Veterans cemetery, or those without a government grave marker, VA is pleased to offer this option that highlights their service and sacrifices for our country," said Secretary Shinseki.

The new item can be furnished instead of a traditional government headstone or marker for Veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or

Under federal law, eligible Veterans buried in a private cemetery are entitled to either a government-furnished grave marker or the new medallion, but not both. Veterans buried in a national or state Veterans cemetery will receive a government headstone or marker of the standard design authorized at that cemetery. The medallion is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches and 1 ½ inches in width. Each bronze medallion features the image of a folded burial flag adorned with laurels and is inscribed with the word "Veteran" at the top and the branch of service at the bottom. Next of kin will receive the medallion, along with a kit that will allow the family or the staff of a private cemetery to affix the medallion to a headstone, grave marker, mausoleum or columbarium niche cover. More information about VA-furnished headstones, markers and medallions can be found at <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm/hmtype.asp>. VA is currently developing an application form for ordering the medallion. Until it is available, applicants may use the form for ordering government headstones and markers, VA Form 40-1330. Instructions on how to apply for a medallion are found on the VA Web site at www.cem.va.gov/hm_hm.asp. Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or grave marker.

The new medallions will be available only to Veterans buried in private cemeteries without a government headstone or marker. Families of eligible decedents may also order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment.

VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than 3 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict -- from the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan -- are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 19,000 acres. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the VA Web site on the Internet at www.cem.va.gov or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.



New Medallion

Deceased Swifties 2009 forward

Vincent J. Feuerborn	Galveston, TX	2009
Fred Cooper		2009
Larry Kuentzel	Virginia Beach, VA	2009
Ron Henderson	Sioux City, IA	2009
Edwin B. West		2009
Seward "Nub" Ketterman	Lowry City, MO	2009
Ronald M. "Porky" Rinehart	Dayton, Texas	2010
Ronald B. Gagnon	Cape Coral, FL	2010
Albert W. Porter	Port Hadlock, WA	2010
Virgil E. Tayler	Lynn, MA	2010
William P. Dodd	Springfield, MO	2010
Dan Field	Hinsdale, NH	2010
Joseph R. Clements	Tulsa, OK	2010
Gene L Herrera		2010

New Swift Challenge Coin (at right)

The SBSA Ship's Store is open and now takes credit cards at:

<http://swiftboats.org/shipstore/catalog.html>

Change of Address? Need new membership card?

Stay in touch with your shipmates!

Membership card replacement fee \$5.00.





Three original members of the Viet Nam Unit Memorial Monument in Coronado pose for the camera: Carl Hanker (left), Neil Geis (center) and John Branca (right). Neil celebrated turning 80 this year. Carl and John passed on in recent years and are remembered by a plaque on a Memorial bench overlooking the grounds.

Mission Statement of the Viet Nam Unit Memorial Monument:

To establish a monument that brings honor and remembrance to those U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard sailors who gave their lives at sea, in the air, and on coastal and inland waters during the Vietnam War (1960-1975).

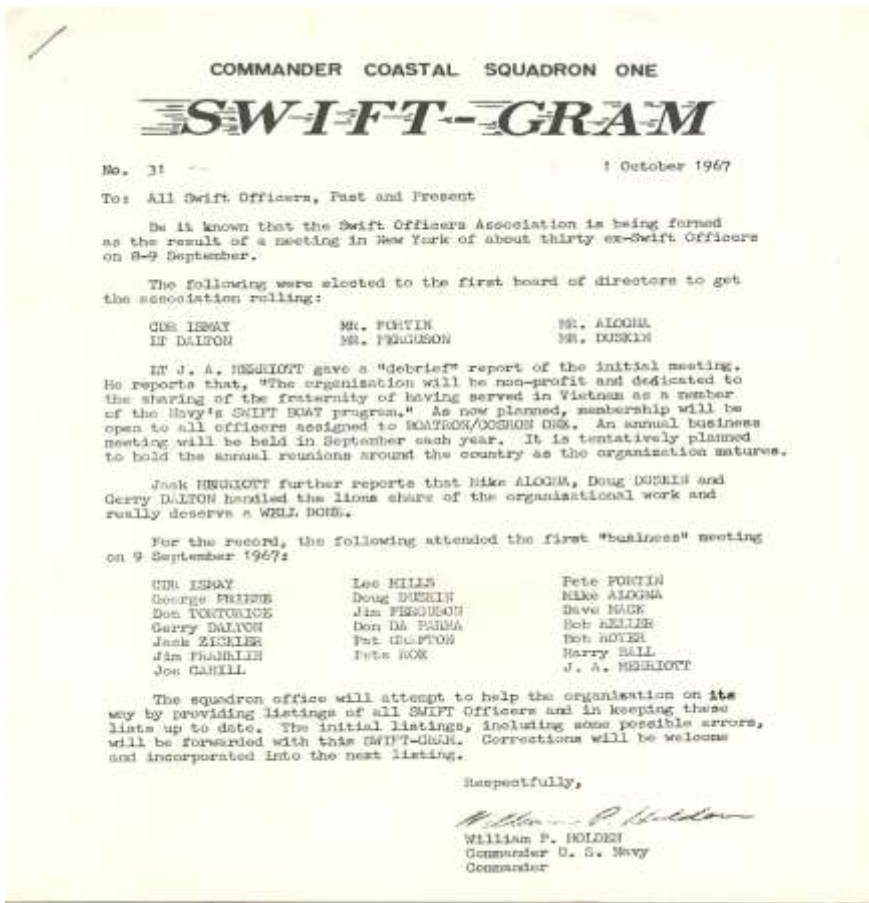
To respectfully maintain the hallowed monument and grounds for thoughtful reflection on the sacrifices made by our military men and women during all wars, past and future, while protecting the freedoms we enjoy.

To serve as a bridge between sailors of the Vietnam War era and those on current active duty, such that the courage, dedication, and the sacrifices made by all are honorably and perpetually linked by the spirit of naval service.

The Viet Nam Unit Memorial at the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado continues to be a desirable and fitting location for many different types of military and memorial ceremonies. The Special Warfare Combat Crew classes (SWCC) hold their graduations at the Memorial. Change of Commands, retirements and special Memorial ceremonies are also held. A dedicated team of veterans continue to improve the grounds and provide support for the many uses of the area.

Some of you may wonder where your generous contributions to the VUMMF go. In the past 18 months, we have spent \$2400 to plant hedges which provide a better demarcation for the Memorial grounds. Government contracts have been cut back in scope, so we have stepped forward to make sure the Memorial continues to provide a fitting backdrop for these events. We spend \$1100 per year to replace the flags atop the Memorial Wall. The salt water environment and winds wear the flags rapidly. The Navy requires a one million dollar liability policy to be carried by the VUMMF at a cost of \$1050 annually. A post office box, fertilizer for the lawn and replacement of grounds equipment (lawnmower) are among other expenditures. Last year we spent over \$4000 to upgrade the web site. Please visit our web site at www.vummf.org and come visit when next in San Diego.

Submitted by Ken McGhee



Five years ago I resigned as president of the Swift Boat Veteran's Motorcycle Club. No one responded to my request for someone to take my place, so I just stopped all communication. I still paid the monthly fee to keep the website up and going so the club would survive in my absence. So, with time comes healing and I'd like to give this another shot. If anyone wants to become a member, e-mail me at snesko@aol.com. My e-mail on the website is now corrected.

<http://swiftboatveterans.com>



New SBSA Members in 2010

Rand I. Bartlett	Marblehead, MA	USCGC Campbell & Owasco	1966-1970
S, Daniel Cannode	Waterville, OH	Cat Lo (USCG)	1969-1970
Larry W. Hoffmaster	Sugar Land, TX	Cat Lo	1968-1969
Michael Kovanen	Green Valley, AZ	Cat Lo	1968-1969
William S. Mann, Jr.	Chocowinity, NC	Cat Lo	1967-1968
Gerald L. Mayes	Boise, ID	Cat Lo	1967-1968
Thomas R. Terfehr	Minneapolis, MN	Sea Float	1969
Raymond R. Nelson	Pahrump, NV	Cat Lo	1966-1967
Robert L. Barnett	Tucson, AZ	Cam Ranh Bay	1966-1967
Jack R. Revard	Queens Creek, AZ	Da Nang, Chu Lai	1966-1967
John E. Ball	Apple Grove WV	An Thoi	1967-1968
Lucian G. Jewell	Dawson Spring, KY	Cam Ranh Bay	1966-1967
Theodore W. Roelig	Massillon, OH	Qui Nhon, An Thoi, Cat Lo	1966-1967
William A. Sullivan	Morganton, NC	Cat Lo	1966-1967

Return to Vietnam Tour

Once again Military Historical Tours, Inc. is trying to engender interest in a Swift Boat tour of Vietnam. The tentative dates are 7-20 March, 2011. The itinerary includes Saigon, Cu Chi, Phu Quoc, Cua Viet, Cat Lo, Nha Trang, Dong Ha, Vung Tau, Hue City, Pha Thuan An, Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang, Hoa An, China Beach, the Hai Van Pass, and many, many more. Pricing at \$3,495 based on double occupancy (\$595 for a single supplement) may differ but only slightly especially if they can line up a group of 20 plus. MHT is very flexible in planning itineraries and can adapt them to fit the specific requirements of the group. Please contact David Wall at dfw Irish@metrocast.net

2011 SBSA Reunion News

The 2011 SBSA Reunion will be held in San Antonio, Texas. The reunion dates are as follows: Check-in on Wednesday, May 4th and check-out on Sunday, May 8th. The Crowne Plaza Riverwalk will be our host hotel, overflow at the Holiday Inn Riverwalk. Follow up mail outs will include tour information, San Antonio attractions, as well as a Reunion Registration Form.

In an effort to encourage more membership reunion participation, we are offering a special reduced room rate of \$107 for all SBSA members in good standing. There are two conditions: **You must register with Military Reunions To Remember AND make hotel reservations at the Crowne Plaza Riverwalk or Holiday Inn Riverwalk in San Antonio, both not later than 4 April 2011.**

Holiday Inn reservations can be made now by calling 1-888-615-0726 or direct at (210) 224-2500. You must announce that your reservation is for the Swift Boat Sailors Association 2011 Reunion. The MRTR Reunion Registration Form is now available via our web site <http://swiftboats.org/>.

San Antonio is a vacation destination draw on its own. We expect that the rooms are going to be booked at record pace. Therefore, due to the number of rooms reserved for our members, you don't want to be caught calling in your reservation and sending in your registration late....you may find yourself scrambling for accommodations, or paying the high regular hotel room rates at other hotels with no discount available from the SBSA.

Therefore, call in your hotel reservation now! All it takes is a credit card and you requesting the SBSA Reunion Room Rate reserved for SBSA members. Your credit card WILL NOT be charged a single cent until you check out. The Holiday Inn Riverwalk San Antonio is our official overflow hotel at this time as we have used up our reserved space at the Crowne Plaza Riverwalk Hotel. Check the SBSA web site <http://swiftboats.org/> for details.

Dr. John Darrell Sherwood of the Naval History & Heritage Command will be our Banquet Keynote Speaker. He will present a talk on Operation Market Time and will include a slide presentation. Sherwood is a military historian and author of five books, including Afterburner: Naval Aviators and the Vietnam War and Nixon's Trident: Naval Power in Southeast Asia, 1968-1972. He's currently working on an official history of Navy coastal and riverine operations in Vietnam. During the reunion, he wishes to conduct Oral History Interviews with Swift Boat Sailors who served in Vietnam from 1967 until the end of the war, especially those involved in major junk and trawler intercepts, the Tet Offensive, and SEALORDS. Those interested in being interviewed should contact him at John.Sherwood@navy.mil and he will schedule a time and place for the interview.

Also, check the SBSA web site now for 2011 Reunion News. Reunion information will also be released via the Swift-L and through the MyFamily web site. **San Antonio....here we come!!!**



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**Alamo
A Piece
of
History**

**Mission
San
Jose**

Swift Boat Sailors Association
3941 Laurelwood Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32257-8926



SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK

The San Antonio River winds through downtown San Antonio and the city has created a beautiful and entertaining environment for activities that provide for daytime and evening enjoyment for all. We are all looking forward to seeing old friends and celebrating another SBSA reunion May 4-8, 2011

Don't Even Think of Moving Without Telling Us!

Email - Letter - Telephone - Just DO IT!

Gene Hart - (904) 234-4278- ghart@unf.edu - 3941 Laurelwood Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32257