

## Reunion Update

The 2/94<sup>th</sup> Artillery hosted their annual reunion at the Rivera Hotel, Las Vegas from October 6<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup>. The attendees included both Veterans and family members. Approximately 75 attended the final dinner on Saturday night. The 1/83 had 22 attendees, 13 Veterans and 9 family members. 13 may not seem like a lot but it is a good start. It is also the largest group of 1/83rd Vets ever assembled since Vietnam and I see no reason why we can't grow on that number in the future.

Those attending from the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> were:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Battery</b>	<b>Years with 1/83rd</b>
Aliffi, Otto	SVC	66 - 67
Blank, Kenneth	B	69 - 70
Castona, Craig	A	66 - 67
Dugan, Bernie	A	66 - 67
Eikenberry, Don	SVC	66 - 67
Gerrald, Ken	A	66 - 67
Hatcher, Roger	C	66 - 67
Hommel, Mark	B	69 - 70
Koopman, Roger	HQ	68 - 69
Mack, Dennis	HQ	66 - 67
Reetz, Mike	HQ	66 - 69
Schwartz, Neal	B	68 - 69
Taggart, Bill	HQ	66 - 67

The Reunion agenda was:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Start Time</b>	<b>End Time</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Hospitality Suite</b>	<b>8:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Midnight</b>
	<b>Meet and Greet</b>	<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>9:00 p.m.</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Hospitality Suite</b>	<b>8:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Midnight</b>
	<b>1/83 Meeting</b>	<b>12:00 p.m.</b>	<b>6:00 p.m.</b>
	<b>Wives Meeting</b>	<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	<b>2:00 p.m.</b>
	<b>AO/VA Meeting</b>	<b>2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>4:00 p.m.</b>
	<b>Meeting and Auction</b>	<b>4:00 p.m.</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Hospitality Suite</b>	<b>8:00 a.m.</b>	<b>10:00 p.m.</b>
	<b>Cocktails</b>	<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>10:00 p.m.</b>
	<b>Buffet Dinner and post dinner remarks</b>	<b>6:30 p.m.</b>	<b>10:00 p.m.</b>

## Reunion Update

The agenda was very informal. Time was available for reconnecting and meeting all those that attended. Open time for the three days was also available for exploring the area in and around Las Vegas.

Thursday evening was the official Meet and Greet. It was the first time for all attendees to get acquainted or re-acquainted. The evening was relaxing with good conversation and companionship.

Friday was a very busy day highlighted for most of us with our first and only 1/83<sup>rd</sup> (only) meeting. This meeting, which was also attended by some of our family members, was, for many of us, one of the best parts of the reunion.

A special thanks to Mark Hommel for his suggestion that we go around the table at this meeting and talk about our experiences, before, during and after Vietnam. We also talked about several Veterans issues. Going forward I think it would be appropriate to schedule a longer time for this type of interaction as it appeared that most wanted the meeting to continue. Family members that attended stated that they found it very enlightening, interesting and helpful. Our meeting ended so that we could attend the 2/94<sup>th</sup> discussion on Agent Orange and Veterans Affairs.

The 2/94<sup>th</sup> conducted an Auction of items that were either military, or 2/94<sup>th</sup> specific, that afternoon. The auction is the main fundraiser for the 2/94<sup>th</sup>. It helps with the cost of the reunion. The auction lasted about 2 ½ hours and raised about \$3,500.

The next business addressed after the Auction was the voting on the site for the next reunion that will most likely be in October 2012. Tunica, Mississippi was chosen for their next reunion.

Saturday evening started with cocktails at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. Dinner was a buffet with a variety of meal choices and was very good. A cash bar was available for the entire event. The price of the dinner was \$48 per person, which covered the cost of the evening.

Three tables were provided for the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> attendees in the dining room. The conversations were lively with many stories, big and small, being told. We had many good laughs. Pictures were taken and I will soon be adding them to the website.

The “*Missing Man Table & Honors Ceremony*” was conducted for those of the 2/94<sup>th</sup> and 1/83<sup>rd</sup> who never made it home. Charley Kelley of the 2/94<sup>th</sup> was the master of ceremonies. It was very moving. Charley then read the names of those from the 2/94<sup>th</sup> and 1/83<sup>rd</sup> who did not make it home. We were very grateful that he included our guys in this ceremony.

Randy Hollifield of the 2/94<sup>th</sup> spoke after dinner about his efforts to bring the Traveling Vietnam Wall to his town in North Carolina and challenged others to do the same if the Wall has not yet visited their area.

## Reunion Update

Randy also told us of an effort by the American Legion Post in his town to erect a memorial for Veterans of all branches and all eras of service. They were asking people to “buy a brick” for this memorial. Those of us there decided to buy 2 bricks in remembrance of the 1/83<sup>rd</sup>. One brick will be to honor those of the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> who did not make it home from Vietnam and one is for all Vietnam Veterans of the 1/83<sup>rd</sup>. These bricks cost \$100 each and if any of you have a service member they would like to honor in this way, let me know and I will send you the necessary form.

The reunion concluded Saturday night and the sentiments that I heard from the 83<sup>rd</sup> group were all very positive, it seemed that everyone enjoyed themselves.

It was very generous of the 2/94<sup>th</sup> to include us in their reunion but many of us think that it would be great if we could have our own reunion. I am sure we can get it done but we need to get more of you interested.

I think one of the things holding some of you back from attending is that you think that if your old buddies will not be there, you won't enjoy yourself, etc. I think that this reunion proved that this isn't the case. We all served with the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> at some time or another and we have that as common ground. I spoke to everyone, and it seemed like I knew them for a long time. It was amazing to see how easily everyone of our group just fell into conversation, and others felt the same. I have never before attended any type of reunion and I was a bit apprehensive how this would be. I can honestly say this was a good experience.

I am very sensitive to the cost issue of having a reunion. When I sent out my reunion questionnaire in 2009, one of the questions I asked was about what would be considered a reasonable cost. I got answers all over the place from "price is no object" to suggesting we stay at an army base. It is impossible to please everyone but keeping it as economical as possible is an important goal if we want more to attend.

No one location will be ideal for everyone. Of the 13 of us that attended, 4 were from the West, 3 from the Midwest, 5 from the East and 1 from the South so, geographically we had a good cross section and that just shows that we are willing to travel.

I think that if we had a modest charge to attend, that would allow us to cover the expenses of a reunion and we may not need to have an auction to raise funds. Start up cost is the main issue with a reunion. Deposits have to be made to secure meeting spaces etc., just one of many things to be considered.

Several of those who attended have offered to help in the planning of a reunion. My wife Ronnie and I have begun to explore options. All thoughts and suggestions will be welcomed. Early fall seemed to be agreed upon as the best time since we are from a cross section of the country and weather does play a big role. Our aim is to present to you some facts and figures by early in the New Year for your review so we can move forward with a reunion for the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> in the future.

## **Reunion Update**

I hope after reading this you will take some time and seriously consider attending. It was a worthwhile, rewarding, therapeutic and enjoyable trip. I would appreciate your thoughts and comments regarding this update.

Thank you.