



Chanhassen Post 580 Color Guard presents the colors during the opening ceremony of the Division I tourney. All the teams lined up in the infield.



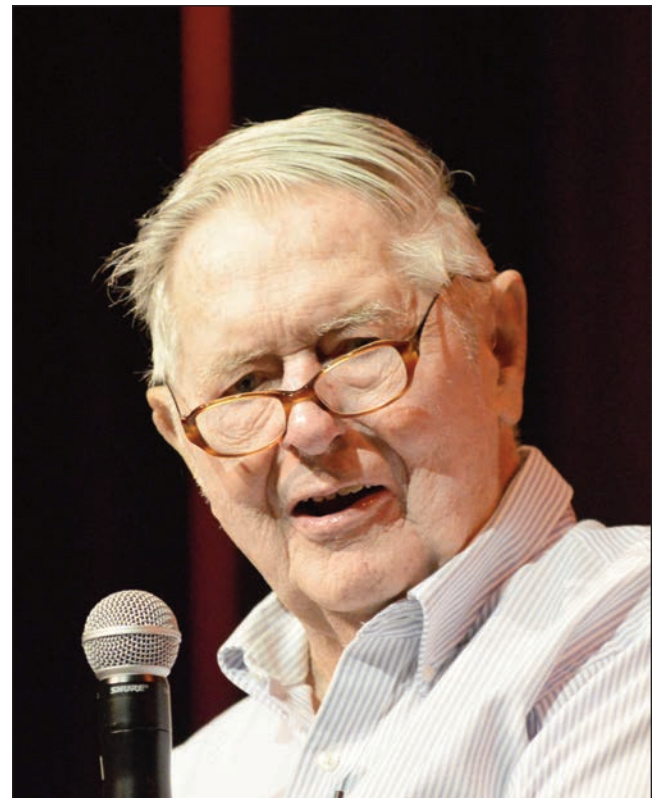
Bob Nistler worked the Division II Tournament at Morris. At the banquet, Nistler was presented with the American Legion Hall of Fame award.



Mike Perry's granddaughter Sophie helped with the presentations.



Eden Prairie's Jeff Athey launches his third homerun of the tournament in the championship game vs. Wayzata. Athey was the tourney's outstanding player.



Jim Donohue, Edina, spoke at the Division I banquet



Wayzata's Parker Hlavacek launches one toward left field.



A flyover was part of the opening day ceremony at Chanhassen High School Field.



Wade Adamson, Willmar, received the Graduate of the Year award from Mike Gort, Seventh District Director, and Mike Perry, State Director.

# Baseball 2015

Continued from Page 1  
 in the state, while New Ulm and Austin are two traditional rural baseball powers in the state. Among the unbeaten, Eden Prairie topped New Ulm 12-3 and Wayzata tipped Austin 5-2.

In the loser's bracket, New Ulm beat host Chanhassen 10-4 to advance, while Wayzata edged Eden Prairie 7-6 to enter the final day as the sole unbeaten team.

Eden Prairie in the semi-final game defeated New Ulm 16-4.

In the title game, Wayzata took an early lead, but Eden Prairie stormed back. The score was tied in regulation 4-4. In the 12th inning, Wayzata was able to push one more run across and take the state title.

Jeff Athey of Eden Prairie was named the Fred Wannamaker outstanding player of the tournament, and Jake Marsh was named the outstanding pitcher, winning the Robb Wassenaar Award. The sportsmanship trophy went to Princeton, and the third place award went to New Ulm.

Athey batted .654 in six games in the tournament with 17 hits, 14 runs, six doubles, three home runs, 12 runs batted in and a 1.231 slugging percentage. He hit a three-run homer in the championship game. He also led the tournament by being hit six times by pitches.

Marsh won three games for Wayzata, all in relief. Other teams in the tournament were Alexandria, Prior Lake, Sartell, Grand Rapids, Woodbury, North St. Paul, Maple Grove, Tri-City Red (New Brighton), Hutchinson and Champlin.

Both Wayzata and Eden Prairie went 1-1 in the first part of the regional tourney at Bismarck, and then met for the third time in a week in pool play. This time, Eden Prairie prevailed 7-6 in another one-run contest. Eden Prairie then lost to Rapid City 5-3 and was eliminated. Millard, Nebraska won the regional and advanced to Shelby.

The Division II Tournament kicked off with a banquet where Alberta Marth of New Ulm and Robert Nistler of Albert Lea were inducted into the Department's Baseball Hall of Fame.

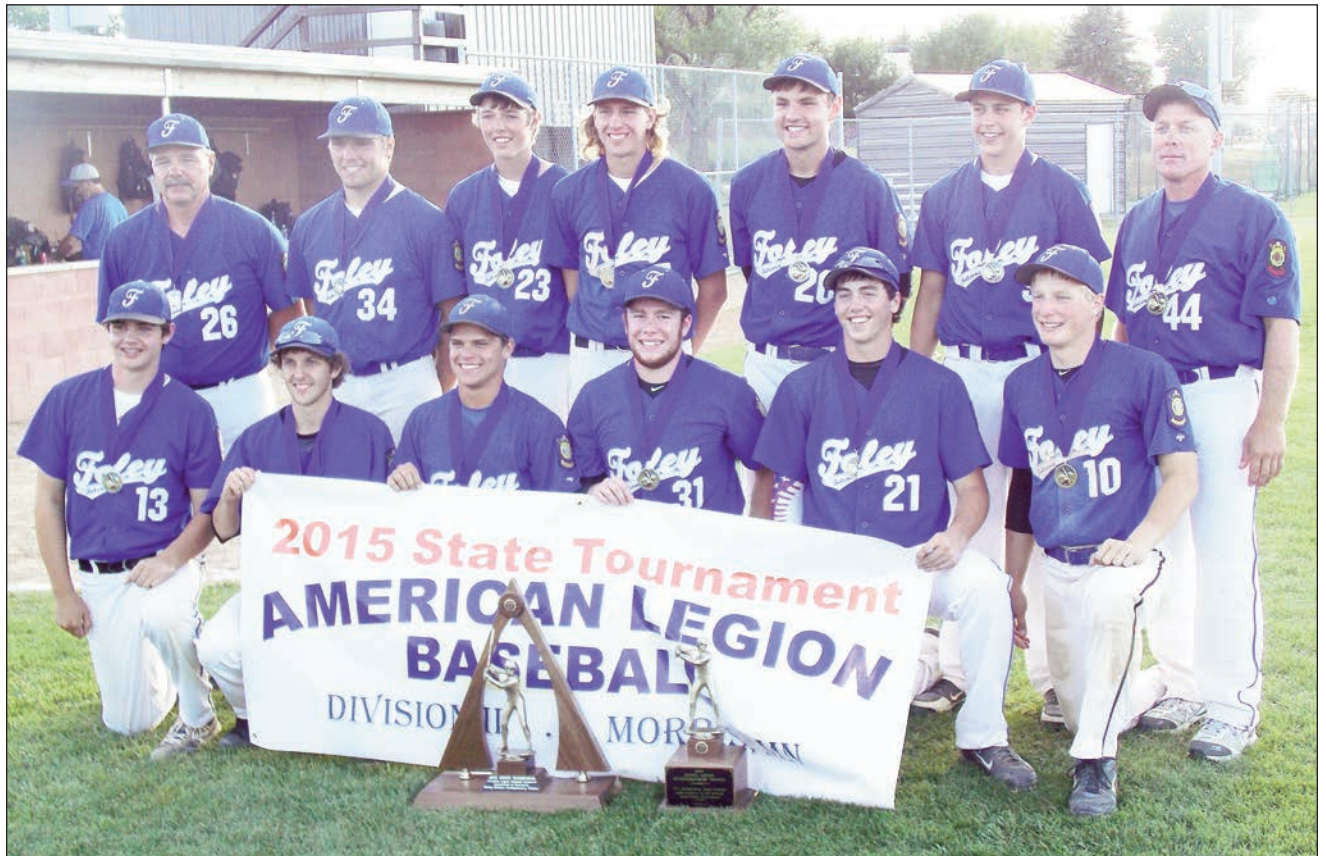
In the semi-final action, Moose Lake topped LaCrescent 6-5 in nine innings and Foley defeated Minneapolis Giantvalley 1-0.

Other teams in the tournament were host Morris, Dilworth, Wells, Jordan and BOLD.

Tyler Midas of Foley won the Tony Sipe Outstanding Player Award. He hit three homeruns in four games and also had a double, two singles, five walks including three intentional and five runs batted in. He was also outstanding in the field as a catcher.

Foley won the Rocky Wedin Sportsmanship Trophy. The two tournaments capped a season where again the Minnesota Legion Baseball Program had the most teams in the nation with 310.

Next year's Division I Tournament will be held in Delano while the Division II tourney will be held in LeSueur-Henderson.



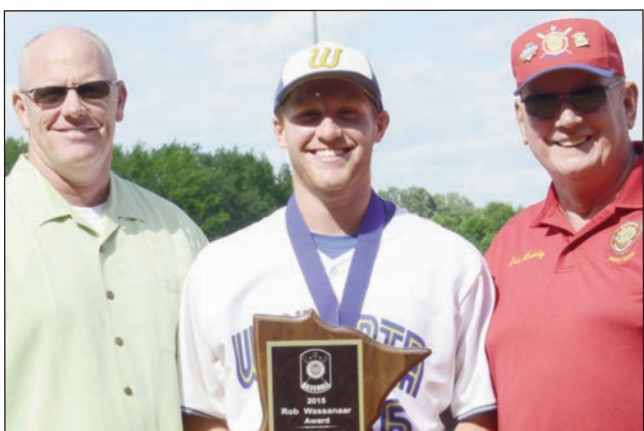
**DIVISION II CHAMPIONS** -- Foley won the Minnesota American Legion Division II State Tournament and also went on to win the national regional tournament at LeSueur-Henderson. **Front Row, left to right:** Noah Winkleman, Nick Corrigan, Ean VonWald, Taylor Hanson, Cameron Jurek, Kyle Kipka. **Back Row:** Coach Larry Midas, Tyler Midas, Tyler Brosh, Joseph Ziwicki, Andrew Klucas, Hunter Hammers, Coach Terry Kipka.



**DIVISION I CHAMPIONS** -- Wayzata won the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Division I Tournament this year. **From left, front:** Connor Trygstad, Ryan Fox, Jake Marsh, Connor Olson, Cameron Keenan and Jamin Hesby. **Back row:** Coach Ryan Haskamp, Michael Bohlke, Griffin Schneider, Thomas Skoro, Cody Goedderz, Parker Hlavacek, Brendan Broddy, Eric Stolt, Reece Smith, Coach Adam Goethke.



The Division II Legion tournament team posed at Morris. From left: Rocky Wedin, Al Davis, Bob Nistler and Joe Bares. Wedin announced this will be his last tournament.



Jake Marsh of Wayzata was presented with the Robb Wassenaar Award as the outstanding pitcher by Dan Ludwig and Wassenaar himself.



**DIVISION I RUNNERS UP** -- Eden Prairie finished second in the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Division I Tournament in Chanhassen. **From left, front:** Jack Zigan, Jake Halvarson, Josh Liberko, Spenser Larson, Charlie Sheehan. **Middle row:** Josh Miller, Tyler Safgren, Ryan Christensen, George Fontenot, Wesley Young, Grant Kaufman, Joe Fahning. **Back row:** Coach Andrew Phillips, Coach John Buteyn, Mark Ehresman, Jeff Athey, Colton Simmer, Trevor Divinski, Ryan Swanson, Kal Lunde, and Coach Scott Hackett.



**JIM KELLOGG**  
Taopi  
COMMANDER



# Minnesota's 2015 - 2016 Leadership Team



**JOHN MILBRATH**  
Elysian  
VICE COMMANDER



**DON AMUNDSON**  
Blue Earth  
VICE COMMANDER



**CARROLL PARTRIDGE**  
Oakdale  
VICE COMMANDER



**ART TOBKIN**  
Bagley  
VICE COMMANDER



**DARREL REDEPENNING**  
Fridley  
VICE COMMANDER



**JIM LUCAS**  
Pine River  
MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR



**DENNIS DELONG**  
Bloomington  
HISTORIAN



**RICHARD WOG**  
Willmar  
CHAPLAIN



**MARK DVORAK**  
LeCenter  
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS



**ROLAND HANSON**  
Austin  
DIST. 1 COMMANDER



**RYAN HILL**  
Brewster  
DIST. 2 COMMANDER



**DONALD SKOW**  
Lindstrom  
DIST. 3 COMMANDER



**DAN WILLIAMS**  
Vadnais Heights  
DIST. 4 COMMANDER



**GARY MARTIN**  
Minneapolis  
DIST. 5 COMMANDER



**DEWAYNE COLLINS**  
Brainerd  
DIST. 6 COMMANDER



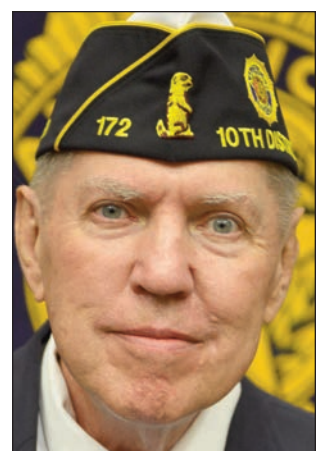
**KAREN WELANDER**  
Sunburg  
DIST. 7 COMMANDER



**JENNIFER HAVLICK**  
Two Harbors  
DIST. 8 COMMANDER



**DENISE MILTON**  
Bagley  
DIST. 9 COMMANDER



**WILLIAM JOHNSON**  
Maple Grove  
DIST. 10 COMMANDER

# Jim Kellogg

## Department Commander

### 2015-2016

Jim Kellogg, Taopi, was elected Commander of the Department of Minnesota at the annual state convention in July, 2015.

He has been a member of the organization for 39 years, holding most of the officer positions at Adams Post 146, his home post.

Kellogg, 65, has been president of the Brain Science Foundation for several years and has held many other state-level offices in the Legion including Department Historian, Department Vice Commander, and Department Sergeant-at-Arms. He has also served on the board of the Minnesota American Legion Family Hospital Association.

At the national level, he has served on the National Security and Foreign Relations Commission and ANAVICUS.

Kellogg is a graduate of Adams High School in 1967 and attended Mankato State University. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1969. He was a radio equipment repairman who served in Michigan and Thailand. He took over the family farm after his service.

He is involved in the local community and serves on the Mower County Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Northern Country Co-op Board, and the Mower County Corn and Soybean Growers. He is a member of Sacred Heart Church and the Knights of Columbus. He and his wife, Brenda, have four children, and 10 grandchildren.

His project for the year is the Brain Science Foundation and its research studies aimed at learning more about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in veterans.



# Sandy Fredrickson

## Department President

### 2015-2016

Sandy Fredrickson is a 36 year member of Unit 264, American Legion Auxiliary, Glenville. She is eligible through her husband Dennis, who served in Viet Nam and her deceased father, Arlington Hillman, who served in WWII. Sandy has many family members who have been involved in the military.

Sandy has two grown sons, Scott and Tom, daughter-in-law Sarah and 4 grandchildren, Brendan, Lauren, Drew and Braylon. Knowing she will miss many things and she wants them to know, she loves them and asks for their forgiveness for one year.

Sandy's outside interests are gardening, both vegetable and flowers. She loves to craft. Sandy's grandchildren keep her involved in all sporting activities and music/concerts.

She is a lifelong member of First Lutheran Church, Glenville. She believes strongly that without faith, we would not have the free America we all experience today and everyday. She chairs the annual Soup and Pie supper, serving 600-700 people. She plans on chairing it again this year.

She is a member of the Albert Eagles, serving as a trustee and a member of the Moose Auxiliary. She works full time as a RN, nurse case manager, for Mayo Clinic, Albert Lea.

The symbol for this year is the American Bald Eagle and the theme is "Serving those who Served."



# HAMBURGER HILL

*In 1967, Tony Bresina was making cars for Chrysler Corporation. A year later he was a point man as U.S. forces tried to dislodge elite North Vietnamese Army forces from Hill 937 in the A Shau Valley. American troops renamed the place Hamburger Hill.*

By Al Zdon

**T**ony Bresina was in the 101st Airmobile Division, 187th Infantry Regiment, Third Battalion, Bravo Company in 1969.

Historians of the Vietnam War might know that Bravo Company was the main assault unit in the famed Battle of Hamburger Hill from May 10-20 that year.

The unit incurred 65 percent casualties in a brutal attempt to dislodge elite North Vietnamese Army soldiers deeply entrenched on Hill 937, dubbed by the soldiers as Hamburger Hill.

Bresina has a clear memory of all the events leading up to the battle. He remembers most of the battle.

At one point at the height of the battle, people later told him, he came down the trail from the attack carrying the arm of a comrade.

He doesn't remember that at all.

**A**nthony Bresina was born and raised in Tilden, Wisconsin, a small farming community not far from Chippewa Falls.

He went to St. Peter's Catholic School for eight grades in Tilden, and graduated from Chippewa Falls High School. His dad worked in excavation and later dairy trucking, and the young Bresina worked for him through high school.

He was the oldest of eight children, and spent much of his childhood working on various farms for relatives and others.

He has many good memories of growing up in rural Wisconsin. "We'd go into the fields and pick a few bushels of sweet corn, and then we'd stuff them into these large 10-gallon milk pails. My dad would take them into the creamery in Tilden and put the steam hose on them for 10 or 15 minutes. We'd get a pound of butter and go home and gorge on sweet corn."

After graduating from high school in 1967, he moved to Belvidere, Illinois, to work at the Chrysler Corporation plant. It was good money.

"We were making \$5 an hour, but the plant was really busy so we usually worked 60 hours a week. We were hauling in the dough."

Weekends usually meant a trip back to Chippewa Falls with his buddies. In Wisconsin, they were old enough to drink in the bars, but not old enough to buy beer off-sale.

"There was this little place at the edge of town called Dutch's Bar, and after drinking there one Sunday night, we asked Dutch to sell us beer. He told us he couldn't because we were too young.

"We took all of his bumper pool balls outside the bar and told Dutch that we were going to roll them all down the hill one at a time until he sold us some beer. After we rolled the first one down the hill, Dutch relented and sold us the beer.

"That ball had rolled about two blocks, and, of course, I was the one who had to go get it. But we told Dutch we'd buy more beer from him than he would sell the rest of the week to everybody else. We'd get a barrel and a half barrel and several cases and that would last us all week."

He was drafted about a year after he left high school, and was inducted in June of 1968. "I didn't know much about the Vietnam War. There was a lot on TV, but we were busy drinking and raising heck."

Basic training was at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Advanced Infantry Training was at Fort Lewis, Washington. "We already knew we were going to Nam. About 95 percent of us went to Nam, and the others went to Germany."

He said the training was okay, but not suited for Vietnam. "They taught us conventional warfare, and, of course, everything in Vietnam was guerrilla warfare. Our training was not very realistic."

Bresina left out of Travis Air Force Base as part of the 101st Airmobile Division. "In the airplane it was like 72

degrees, we were watching movies, and there were pretty stewardesses. The pilot announced we were over Vietnam, and from the air it looked very beautiful. I said to the guy next to me, 'Look at all those little lakes down there.' I didn't know they were bomb craters filled with water."

**D**eparting the plane was a shock. "The air was so hot. It was about 110 degrees and really humid. But the stench was the worst. We were gagging from the smell. We didn't know how we'd ever get used to it.

"We were going somewhere in a bus, and I asked the bus driver why the bus didn't have windows, only wire mesh. He said that was so the kids wouldn't throw hand grenades in the windows."

The group was transported to Long Bin and then to Bien Hoa, about 20 miles outside of Saigon. They reported to the Screaming Eagles Replacement Center, and went through lots of physical testing, shots, and dental checks.

"They had a training course that simulated being out in the jungle. You'd go along a trail and explosives would be going off around you. They wanted to acclimate us to what was coming."

Next it was up to Da Nang and then on to Phu Bai just south of Hue in central Vietnam. "They put five of us on a Huey and we were taken to Camp Evans, which was our base camp."

Bravo Company had just come in from the field and was standing down when Bresina arrived. "There were supposed to be 140 guys in the company, but there never were. There were the killed and wounded and guys going home."

Bresina was assigned to a gruff old sergeant. "He told me to go down to the supply area and get my shit. So I went down there and got my rucksack, cases of C-rations, M-16, three bandoliers of ammo, 500 rounds of machine gun ammo, claymore mines, medical kit, gas mask, frag grenades, web belt, canteens, Ka-Bar knife, machete, rope, poncho and liner, and then whatever personal stuff you wanted to carry."

It took two trips for Bresina to lug his gear back to the sleeping quarters. When he got there, he also got his nickname for the duration of his tour. "One of the guys said,



'Look, we've got a celebrity. It's Wally Cox.' I didn't even know who Wally Cox was."

Bresina did bear a striking resemblance to the comedian, and thereafter was known to his comrades as "Cox Junior" or "Wally."

He managed, after several tries, to get all his gear into his rucksack. "I'm not a big guy and I think it weighed



**TONY BRESINA**  
At home in Buffalo



**TONY BRESINA**  
In Army training in 1968

about 75 pounds.”

Meanwhile, his new mates were getting cold showers and new uniforms and socks and getting ready to head back out. The forays into the mountainous jungle often went six weeks or longer. “When you’re out there, personal hygiene becomes a very big problem. The water you carry is only for drinking.”

Training from that point on was on the job. “When you first report, the other soldiers call you ‘cherry boy’ or ‘virgin.’ Until you could function in a fire fight, you were just a cherry boy.”

The 101st Airmobile was assigned to I Corps, the northernmost of the four fighting zones in Vietnam. The area was rugged and mountainous.

Bresina’s company was soon back in the jungle, brought in five or six at a time by the Huey helicopters. Cox Junior had much to learn.

“My first trauma came my first week in the bush. We were at Firebase Helen. My platoon was set up on this little knob. A chopper came in and several guys were sent down to get the supplies. The tips of the helicopter blade were colored white and yellow so you could see them. Anyway, this kid just walked right into the blade and it ripped his head off. There was blood and brains and bones flying all over. It just blew my mind. The guy just made a dumb mistake, or maybe he was tired of being in Vietnam.”

Besides death and dismemberment, there were other challenges.

“In the dry season, water was precious. I was lucky because I never got that thirsty. I’d take one swallow to get the dust out of my mouth and spit it out. Then I’d have a drink. In the meantime, the guy next to me would have drained his entire canteen.”

When all the canteens were dry, a group of 30 or so soldiers carrying over a hundred canteens were sent out to find more. A flowing stream was best, but the search often ended at a bomb crater. “You could only drink the water on the top. It was probably saturated with Agent Orange. You could use iodine to kill the stuff in the water, but then, of course, it tasted like iodine. My mom sent me some pre-sweetened Kool-Aid and that helped.”

Bresina became a hero of sorts with his squad mates because he would carry a collapsible extra canteen in the bottom of his rucksack. “When all the water was gone, I’d get out that canteen and everybody got a cupful. I was a life saver.”

The men ate C-Rations. “I think most of them were from World War II. I don’t know how it could stay preserved all that time. I liked all the fruit that was in them, except for the fruit cocktail. I’d trade that. I think the varieties on the side of the box were turkey and noodle, beef and potato, chile con carne and chicken noodle. I couldn’t stand the chile.

“At first I was eating a lot, but pretty soon I was like the other guys and just eating what you could. Your stomach shrinks. They would resupply us in the field every five or seven days, so you learned to just carry enough to make it. C rations weigh a lot.” Bresina lost about 20 pounds during his tour.

Once inserted into an area, the company leader would plot a course. When nighttime came, the troops would set up a Night Defensive Position or NDP.

The company was divided into four platoons, and each platoon had four squads, and each squad had two four-man teams. A team usually had a machine gunner, two M-16 riflemen, and a soldier armed with an M-79 grenade launcher. Bresina was a rifleman.

“Each team had a fighting position in the NDP. At about four or five in the afternoon, we’d look for a site to set up, usually on top of a hill. Two guys would be digging in while the other guys would be setting the Claymores (directional mines). They would be connected by trip flares, wire about 10 feet long. The Claymores were designed to explode toward the enemy, but, sometimes at night, the enemy would sneak up and turn them around.”

One technique to discourage nighttime attacks was called the “mad minute.”

“Everybody had watches, and at some point in the evening we would synchronize every watch. There would be a set time, say 1:30 in the morning, when everybody would open up. We had beaucoup ammo. Everybody would fire at once, and it was quite a show. If the NVA was sneaking up the hill, they’d think twice. But they still did it.”

During the day, the company would move down the trails or make their own. “It was a three-tier canopy forest. It was almost dark on the ground, with just beams of light coming through here and there. We would stay five meters apart so if somebody caught a trip wire, they would only blow themselves up.”

“We were hunting them, but they had these tunnels. All of sudden, five or six guys would pop up, spray us with their AKs, and then disappear. We couldn’t even find the tunnels. About halfway through my tour, we got a German shepherd and that really helped. He could find those tunnels.”

The goal for the soldiers was not glory. It was body count.

“Everything we did over there hinged on body count. The soldiers with the best body count got first pick at the supplies. They got to get on the choppers first when we were leaving the zone. You wanted to be the ones with the



Bresina and a comrade are geared up and ready to go.



A soldier’s “hootch” was home sweet home. An M-16 rifle and M-79 grenade launcher lean against the doorway of the shelter.



A chowhall was an advantage of coming in from the field.



Bresina leans on a machine gun atop a sandbag wall at a fire base.

highest body count.”

Getting in or out of a fighting zone was done by helicopter. “Five of us would go at a time. Two guys would sit with their legs dangling out the door, because there were no doors. Your pack and gravity would hold you in there. The guy in the middle had the worst place. We called it the hell-hole because the enemy liked to shoot at the helicopters and



Bresina, right, and two friends pose for a photo.



With the Vietnam War statue in Washington D.C. in the background, Bresina posed with his brother, also a Vietnam veteran, and his father, a World War II veteran.



In the jungle, nourishment came from C-rations.



After the war, Bresina dealt with his PTSD with heavy drinking and a year of homelessness.

they aimed at the bottom. The guy in the middle was most vulnerable.”

“We would seek the high ground, but some of those ridges were a thousand meters high. It was everything you could do to carry your gear straight up like that. I remember once I tripped over a branch and slid down the trail. I took about 20 guys with me. There were times when I’d rather be

in a firefight than do all that climbing.”

Bresina's sergeant was an excellent map reader. "He always knew exactly where we were. That really helped when we had to call in the artillery. We got all kinds of support in the field. We had artillery if we were close enough to a fire base. Otherwise we had mortars. Then there were the jets, which we called the fast-movers. And there were the Cobra helicopter gunships."

The strategy was to be on the offensive. "We were the hunters. We were looking for them. We wanted to make contact with the enemy and destroy them if we could. In the year I was in Vietnam, we never lost a battle."

There were problems with being aggressive. One of them was that most of the troops Bravo Company encountered were North Vietnamese regulars, well-trained and well-equipped. "They were good soldiers, and very disciplined. They were more disciplined than we were."

The NVA generally knew exactly where the American troops were at any given time, and often tried to set up ambushes. "If you heard one AK (the AK-47, the Russian-made automatic rifle used by the North Vietnamese) you could be sure there were three. If you heard two, you knew there were six. They operated in three-man teams."

"Once you were attacked, you never knew how many you were up against, ever."

If there were lots of enemy soldiers, and artillery was needed, there was a way. "We'd find the highest point around and blow an LZ (use explosives to clear a landing zone for the helicopters.) They'd send in a sky-crane and it would lower a little Caterpillar. The Cat would doze off the top of the mountain, and then they would bring in the 105s and 155s (types of cannon.) There would be at least four cannon so they could aim in every direction. We could have a fire base in 24 hours."

The Airmobile units, Bresina said, were somewhat more effective against the enemy than Marine or other Army units simply because of their mobility and the ability to resupply them in the field.

**T**he Third Battalion had a history going back to World War II when they were dubbed the "Rakkasans" by the Japanese. The term means "umbrella men" coming down from the sky.

The 101st, "The Screaming Eagles," also had a strong reputation as a parachute infantry division going back to the big war. But, Bresina said, only about half of the Airmobile soldiers in Vietnam had gone to jump school.

"If you could make six months into a tour, your chances of making it improved a lot. Your survival skills just improved that much. The old timers didn't want anything to do with the young guys because those were the guys who were going to get killed."

Bresina said he did take one newbie under his wing at one point. "I told him to stick with me and do exactly what I told him to do. We were humping along when I heard an RPG (a rocket-propelled grenade) coming at us from behind. I grabbed him and pushed him into the dirt. The RPG hit a tree right in front of us, but instead of exploding, it just went 'boooooiiiiiiiiingggg.' It stuck in the tree and just vibrated there. If it had gone off, it probably would have blown us both up. The new guy got his nickname right then. We called him 'Short Rounds.'"

A short round was a friendly artillery or rocket attack where the rounds fell short, sometimes on American soldiers.

One incident Bresina recalls was when a unit of the Americal Division was pinned down on the mountainside and Bravo Company was flown in to relieve them.

"There was no place to land, but we blew a hole in the forest and sent in a few birds. It turned out to be a hot LZ (a landing zone under enemy fire). Well, two or three of the choppers got shot down. Now, we've got 15 or 18 of our own guys on the ground and no landing zone."

"We had to blow another LZ to get the rest of our guys in. And then we had to go help these guys on the mountainside. It took us a couple of days to get their dead and wounded out."

"I remember our company commander chewing out the officers in that other unit. He told them they hadn't established their perimeter correctly. I remember him saying, 'You're not doing it right, and if you screw up again, we won't be back.'"

**B**ack at base camp after one foray, the Rakkasans were treated to steak, beer, ice cream and hot showers. "They wine and dined us. We knew something big was coming."

The operation was called Apache Snow, and was part of a U.S. effort to clear out entrenched NVA positions in the rugged A Chau Valley. The enemy was sending supplies south through the valley. The U.S. Army massed a large force for the operation.

"We were told that Bravo Company would be the security force for Lt. Col. Honeycutt, the regimental commander. We liked that. We knew the Army wasn't going to put him in harm's way."

The company left out of Firebase Blaze. "There must have been over a hundred helicopters there. We said, 'Holy balls, what's going on here?'"

Artillery pounded the area where the enemy had been located. The center of attraction was Hill 937, named in

Army parlance for how many meters high it was. It was known locally as Dong Ap Bia, or Mountain of the Crouching Beast.

All four companies were deployed. Honeycutt received permission to release his security company for action, and instead of being in the rear-guard, Bravo Company found itself at the point of the fighting.

"We got on our birds, and it took us 25 minutes to get there. That's about the longest I can remember. And we flew very high."

The mountain was occupied in part by the 29th NVA Regiment, called "The Pride of Ho Chi Minh," perhaps the most elite unit in the North Vietnamese Army.

"We just had to hump up the mountain. The NVA had a bunker complex built right into the mountain. It was so camouflaged that you couldn't see them until you were on top of them. We had five guys killed right away, and they all had muzzle flash burns. They took it right in the forehead. That means they were only a few feet away when they got it. That got everybody's attention."

The company got plenty of support from artillery and the Air Force, but the bunkers were well-designed. "The problem was to get close enough to shoot into them."

Bresina's First Platoon was on point, leading the way up the trail. The pathway dropped off precipitously on both sides. The going was tough. Meanwhile, Col. Honeycutt, who was not well-appreciated by the troops, was in a helicopter and urging the company to "get moving."

"We were taking so many casualties, and we were only a third of the way up the mountain. I thought it was just a matter of time and I'm going to get it."

At one point, two Cobra gunships got their instructions wrong and attacked the American forces, killing two and wounding 35 others.

Bresina was later interviewed about the battle by National Geographic, and he told them, "It was chaotic. I was scared shitless. We were shooting M-16s, machine guns, M-79 grenade launchers, whatever we could. At the same time, we had to get our wounded out."

"We just kept assaulting and assaulting and assaulting up that hill. I didn't think I'd ever get off that hill."

Still, they proceeded upwards. "We found these holes in the side of the mountain about two-thirds of the way up. We couldn't figure out what they were. It turned out they were air holes for the complex built into the mountain. They had a whole field hospital in there. And they had printing presses where they would make pamphlets to throw down on us at night."

When the unit was about three-fourths of the way up, the Air Force was called in to deliver 1,000 pound bombs on the bunkers. "It was so close that we could see the shock waves from the bombs in the air. It would actually lift us up and throw us off our feet. One guy next to me had his head ripped off by shrapnel."

Despite months in the jungle, this type of close range fighting was difficult. "I'll admit I was scared. I think every man up there was scared. But you just had to function. You had to do your job."

"To be honest, I've blocked a lot of what happened up there out of my head."

## New Vietnam book tells of Bresina on Hill 937

These excerpts are from *The Crouching Beast, A United States Army Lieutenant's Account of the Battle for Hamburger Hill, May 1969* by Frank Boccia. They describe an incident involving Tony Bresina that Bresina doesn't remember. Boccia was Bresina's platoon leader.

The account is from May 11 when Bravo Company advanced up the hill and ran into a brutal response from the North Vietnamese forces dug into Hill 937. The Americans tried to bring back their dead from the ambush.

"Someone from first platoon... hoisted what was left of Rosenstreich onto his back and ran down the trail until he placed what was left of him on a poncho. Denholm saw a young pale-faced soldier reach out, pick up something, and then retreat with it. Only when the trooper had moved by him did the item register in Deholm's mind. It was Rosenstreich's left arm, dull green with Army-issue still strapped to its wrist."

And a few pages later, Boccia describes the scene that day:

"The stolid hammering of the .51 caliber; the metallic slam! of the RPGs; the hollow blow of an exploding claymore; the screams and cries; the black blood forming on McCarrell's torn head; Bresina walking blank-faced down the trail, holding Rosenstreich's dismembered arm."

*The Crouching Beast*, Frank Boccia, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, North Carolina, 2013. Pages 306 and 310.

Bravo Company and other units made it to the top of 937, known to the troops as "Hamburger Hill," but had so many casualties, it couldn't hold it. U.S. forces finally took and controlled the mountain. In all, it took 10 assaults to get to the top of the hill.

There were 320 casualties in the four Rakkasan companies, over 60 percent were wounded or killed in Bravo Company. The enemy lost over 600 soldiers killed in action.

Bresina recalls sitting on a hillside after the battle with a comrade when they were approached by a reporter from Stars and Stripes newspaper. "We had been told that anyone who talked to the press would be busted. We were supposed to tell them to go see Blackjack (Col. Honeycutt). My buddy took off, and this reporter sat down next to me. I told him to just look like we were just talking and to keep his tape recorder between his legs." The interview appeared in Stars and Stripes.

Two weeks later, the Army abandoned the mountain, and the North Vietnamese moved back in. Hamburger Hill was considered a tactical victory for the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces.

"It was a bad 10 days, but there were 350 other days in the bush, just not as intense," Bresina said. "We'd just hump that trail until somebody got hurt, and then we'd get busy."

"I was one of the lucky ones, I guess." Bresina recalled others who were not. One friend nicknamed "Jugs," died slowly on a mountainside. "I went through his address book and then wrote his mother. I told her he had died instantly."

**B**resina got his Purple Heart when he was hit on the Fourth of July, 1969. "We had declared a cease fire for Independence Day. Generally we never stayed at a NDP for more than one night because the enemy can focus in on you. But we stayed an extra day because of the holiday."

"At exactly 12:01 a.m. on the Fourth of July, we had our mad minute. We had been saving up tracers and we had flares and all kinds of stuff. So at one minute after midnight, we opened up, and at the same time they opened up."

A piece of shrapnel entered in one side of Bresina's helmet, spun around for a split second, and then lodged in Bresina's skull. "It went right into my noggin."

The piece was sticking out and Bresina was taken to a field hospital. But once the doctors saw the wound, they sent him to the USS Sanctuary, a hospital ship off the coast. The shrapnel had penetrated the bone.

Bresina said he lobbied to stay on the ship, but he was healed up enough in three or four weeks to rejoin Bravo Company.

In another incident, he was riding an armored personnel carrier and he jumped off and landed awkwardly. He had to go to Cam Rahn Bay hospital for hernia surgery. "I remember this medic with a big razor and he was going to shave me down below. He said, 'Be very still because I've never done this before.' I'm sure he said it to all his patients. But I stayed very still."

Bresina said he recalls little of his last two months in Vietnam. "After Hamburger Hill, I was kind of numb. I just hated the gooks, and I wanted to kill as many as I could."

And then his year-long tour was up and he was sent home. "I know that one week after leaving Vietnam, I was walking the streets of San Francisco."

Bresina earned an Air Medal, two Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart. The 187th Regiment, Third Battalion, earned a Presidential Unit Citation for its work at Hamburger Hill.

**T**hough the war was over for Bresina, he still deals with the aftermath and the trauma in his brain.

"I had a lot of anger to deal with," he says simply. His PTSD led to excessive drinking and many fights. Sometimes he would climb to the top of a local water tower just for the adrenaline rush. "But then I'd sober up and it was a problem getting down."

He couldn't hold a job, and he spent one year as a homeless person. He considered suicide.

With help from family, he quit drinking in 1983, making a world of difference in his life. "I had been self-medicating." He also got into a VA plan to deal with the PTSD that involved group sessions with other veterans and telling his story to school children.

He credits his wife, Barb, and Dr. Jim Tuorila, a doctor at the St. Cloud VA Hospital, for saving his life.

In 2006, he went with his family to the Vietnam Wall in Washington. "They told me to go at night so there wouldn't be so many people around. I was looking for one name, but they're listed by when people died. I was looking at the time of Hamburger Hill. All kinds of names were jumping out at me. I lost it."

"When I started crying, my whole family started crying."

These days, it's a little better. He receives 100 percent disability from the VA. He retired after 34 years as a maintenance person at St. Michael Public Schools. He and Barb live in Buffalo. They have two grown children.

Life is good for the 66-year-old Vietnam veteran although the fireworks on the Fourth of July can still be troublesome.

(Several of Bresina's quotes on Hamburger Hill are from a National Geographic documentary, *Inside the Vietnam War*, 2008, )