

April 2018

# Marine Corps League



**Marine Corps  
League #790  
Detachment  
Newsletter**

**Next Meeting:**

**May 7, 2018 19:00 hours in  
the Coffee Shop**

**Happy Hour 20:00 to 22:00  
hours at the Firehouse**

## Commandants Message

(In my best Daffy Duck Voice: "Letssss try thiss again...")

Greetings.

My message this month is a simple one....

**Bring someone with you to the next meeting.**

Bring a prospect. Bring another member that just does not come out. Bring tht Marine you met in the Home Depot. Bring your own sorry butt if you haven't been to a meeting in a while.

**Bring someone to the next meeting.**

The only way to grow is for every member to get involved.

See you there.

Semper Fi!

Glenn Meyers  
(217) 506-2490  
2017 Commandant  
Gem City Detachment #790  
Marine Corps League  
Quincy, Illinois

# From Website [www.vietnamwar50th.com](http://www.vietnamwar50th.com)

Publisher's notes: We continue with excerpts from the website listed above. Though past articles selected were of major events of the Vietnam War, there are many smaller actions like this one to cover. Visit their website to see all.

## WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 7, 1967

During this week in the history of the Vietnam War, United States Marines launched Operation SWIFT to defend the Que Son Basin, a strategically-important river valley located in I Corps, South Vietnam's northernmost tactical zone. During the summer months of 1967, allied forces enjoyed success at dislodging Communist forces which had infiltrated I Corps, forcing the enemy to retreat to mountain enclaves. Still, troops from the 2d NVA Division and local Viet Cong detachments carried out sporadic attacks against specific sites, such as the Nong Son coal mine, the only mine in the region, and the Da Nang airbase, a major staging area for allied forces. One of the most daring attacks targeted the Hoi An advisers' compound and provincial jail on 14 July, when insurgents liberated nearly a thousand suspected Viet Cong cadres. These attacks, while unable to make headway against the buildup of allied forces in I Corps, served as symbolic victories in the Communists' effort to demonstrate their determination and persistence to the 300,000 South Vietnamese civilians who lived in the area.

Marines and ARVN rangers launched Operation COCHISE in August in hopes of interdicting North Vietnamese forces in the area. This operation resulted in considerable losses for the North Vietnamese, but the Que Son Basin remained unpacified at the end of the month. As September neared, allied forces devised plans for additional operations to prevent Communist attacks from disturbing the upcoming rice harvest and national elections in the Que Son District. Operation SWIFT developed as an outgrowth of election-day sweeps near Dong Son village, located eight miles southwest of Thang Binh on Route 534. In the hours before dawn on 4 September, the enemy attacked Captain Robert F. Morgan's Company D, 5th Marine Regiment, First Marine Division. Morgan lost his life in the ensuing firefight, and First Lieutenant William P. Vacca assumed command and called in airstrikes, which compelled the assailants to break off the attack. Around 8 AM, Company B arrived to reinforce Company D, but enemy fire downed a UH-1 helicopter and damaged two UH-34 helicopters during a mission to evacuate casualties and deliver ammunition. As a result of this contact, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Webster committed two additional companies to Dong Son, and the commander on the ground, Lieutenant Colonel Peter L. Hilgartner, discovered clues that a large contingent of enemy forces was present in the area. As dusk fell, one company of Marines became surrounded and requested airstrikes and artillery support. That evening, A-6 bombers targeted enemy anti-aircraft defenses and mortar positions, enabling Marine helicopters to deliver supplies and evacuate the wounded. Still, North Vietnamese forces continued to attack Marine positions around Dong Son over the next four nights.

During the assault on 4 September, Lieutenant Vincent R. Capodanno, a Roman Catholic priest serving as the chaplain of 3d Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, lost his life while assisting the wounded. For his selfless acts of heroism, Lieutenant Capodanno posthumously received the Congressional Medal of Honor. Recently, a movement has begun within the Catholic Church to canonize Capodanno as a saint. In an incident two days later, Marine Sergeant Rodney M. Davis saved his companions and gave his life by jumping on a live grenade. Davis received the Medal of Honor for his sacrifice.

The North Vietnamese attempts to dislodge the Marines from the Que Son Basin failed, and Operation SWIFT concluded on 15 September. Allied assessments estimated that four months of operations in the Que Son Basin resulted in the deaths of 4,000 enemy soldiers, leaving the attacking North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units unfit for further combat. The United States paid a costly price for this victory: During SWIFT, 127 Marines and Navy Corpsmen were killed and 362 wounded. The autumn of 1967 saw General William Westmoreland commit additional troops from Task Force Oregon to I Corps in Operation WHEELER/WALLOWA. The escalating violence in I Corps displaced large numbers of civilians as refugees, making pacification efforts in these provinces, as the Marine Corps' official history of the Vietnam War summarized, "tough, unrewarding, tedious assignment[s]."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gary L. Telfer, Lane Rogers, and V. Keith Fleming, Jr., *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese, 1967* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museum Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1984), 107-24.



Lieutenant Vincent R. Capodanno was the first Navy chaplain to lose his life during the Vietnam War. He received the Medal of Honor for assisting wounded soldiers during Operation SWIFT on the evening of 4 September 1967. Recently, a movement has begun within the Roman Catholic Church to canonize Capodanno as a saint. (U.S. Navy)

Lance Corporal P. J. Ferguson, a member of the forward air control team attached to Second Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment, First Marine Division takes a break during Operation SWIFT, a search and destroy operation conducted south of Da Nang. (National Archives and Records Administration)



# Coming Events

**April 21**— St. Louis Cardinals game—Pregame ceremony honoring Illinois Marines 12:30 Hours.

**April 28th** — Dance at the Veteran’s home. Starts 1800 hours. Setup 1730.

**May 5th**— Dogwood Parade

**May 7th** — Detachment Meeting—Coffee Shop at the Veteran’s home 19:00 Hours.

**May 26th** — Dance at the Veteran’s home.

**May 28th** - Memorial Day.

**June 1, 2, and 3thd**— Fishing for Freedom event.

**June 4th** — Detachment Meeting—Coffee Shop at the Veteran’s home 19:00 Hours.

**June 13-17** — Department of Illinois Convention will be held at the Crystal Lake Holiday Inn. More to come as received.

Upcoming events TBD: Veteran’s Day Parade, Fishing for Freedom, State Fair security detail.

Steve Hamann reports there is a group that is purchasing the National Guard facility on 36th and Broadway. They plan on building mini homes on that site that will enable homeless veterans a temporary place to live. Steve is trying to see if a rep of that group would come by one of our meetings to give us more info.

NOTE: Membership annual dues are \$35.00. (Membership sign up cards have not been updated yet.)

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| <b>Jr. Vice Commandant</b> | <b>JANSEN, JEFFERY</b>   | <b>(217) 316-0219</b> |
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| <b>Judge Advocate</b>      | <b>DELGADO, JESUS</b>    | <b>(217) 740-1207</b> |
| <b>Sergeant-At-Arms</b>    | <b>CRABTREE, STEVEN</b>  | <b>(217) 242-8715</b> |
| <b>Chaplin</b>             | <b>SPIPKER, DAN L.</b>   | <b>(217) 228-3262</b> |
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| <b>Trustee 2017</b>        | <b>HAMANN, STEVEN L.</b> | <b>(217) 577-1507</b> |
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# Marine Corps League #790-Oohrah!

Continued from page 2 , Operation Swift, Vietnam War, week of September 7, 1967



The Que Son Basin was a strategically-important rice producing region in I Corps. This river valley saw vicious fighting throughout 1967. (The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University)

By 1966, there were nearly 70,000 Marines in Vietnam carrying out large scale ground operations against the Viet Cong. In addition to ground combat, the Marines Corps provided air support from helicopter squadrons and fixed-wing aircrafts striking targets in South and North Vietnam. In 1967, the Army leadership in Saigon advocated that the Marines concentrate their efforts on large unit search and destroy operations. The Marines' mission was split, with fighting against the North Vietnamese Army along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) toward the north, and a counterinsurgency operation waged against the Viet Cong in the villages in the south.

In the north, the Marines engaged in heavy fighting between Khe Sanh in the West and Leatherneck Square in the Eastern DMZ. They also began to create the McNamara line, a series of strong points, sensors and obstacles meant to detect communist forces crossing the DMZ. The North Vietnamese focused much of their firepower on destroying the McNamara line in its early stages, resulting in many conflicts, most notably Con Thien. The McNamara line ultimately failed to materialize, but the Marines were largely successful in stemming the flow of communist forces across the DMZ, although at a large price. 3,461 Marines were killed in action in 1967 and another 25,525 were wounded. Despite the fewer numbers, it was clear that more troops would not guarantee more success.

**The Vietnam War was costly to the U.S. Marine Corps. From 1965 to 1975, nearly 500,000 Marines served in Southeast Asia. Of these, more than 13,000 were killed and 88,000 wounded, nearly a third of all American casualties sustained during the war.**

Source: United States Marine Corps History Division

Visit us on our websites:

[www.gemcity790.org](http://www.gemcity790.org)

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

[www.marinecorpstimes.com](http://www.marinecorpstimes.com)

[www.theillinoismarine.com](http://www.theillinoismarine.com)

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