



Depot Fallout

AFTAC Alumni Association - West Coast Chapter
AFTACAA-WCC, c/o 6605 Sweet Gum Ct., Citrus Heights, CA 95610
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www.AFTACWCC.org

A WORD FROM THE PREZ

by , WCC President Allan Pentecost

It is my pleasure to extend a hardy welcome to our newest member Francis Liberatori and his wife Ann. Francis served active duty from 1957 to 1983. He was part of AFTAC from 1965 to 1971, and was at McClellan in the 1155th Chemistry section. Along with all of the other officers and members, I welcome you to the West Coast Chapter of the AFTAC Alumni Association.

Unfortunately, the pandemic is still making its mark. We decided to postpone our Spring Picnic/BBQ until September 18 due to the restrictions that are still in place. Refer to our website "Events" page for any updates especially as we approach that date, to make sure there are no changes. I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy. I am really looking forward to when we can see each other again.

THE NEVER ENDING WAR COMES TO US!

By: Don King, Newsletter Editor

Class-against-class in the United States?! This nation is like no other in history. We were not a single ethnic people overthrowing another to become one. We are a "melting pot" of every nationality in the world! Since 1900, the overthrow of a nation has required a simple formula. First, there must be a clash between two classes. Second, this must escalate in violence to a high enough level to create the third element: revolution. Fourth, a strong leader must emerge to lead the revolution under the guise of bringing peace and prosperity. Fifth, the leader consolidates power and disposes of those who helped but are capable of taking over control. All the time, the people are giving up rights in exchange for the common good. But to make this all work, either two real classes must exist or they must be manufactured using deceit and false information and events. Half-stories of real events will work, like the burning of the Reichstag in Germany at Hitler's direction. We are facing this in the largely false narrative that all police are dangerous to all of us. Using this as a catalyst, mob violence is orchestrated in a moment's notice at any potentially useful event involving police. Apathy and empathy of everyone else are necessary for this to become successful.

Just as AFTAC has preemptively kept the lid on nuclear attacks for about 70 years, we must actively protect our rights and our constitution. One nation, under God! **We must win!**

IN MEMORIAM

JOSEPH M. "JOE" JOHNSON

b. 1930 in Jamestown, N.D. d. 14-Apr-2021 in Carmichael, CA

(As reported by Robert. "Bob" Johnson, son.)



Joseph Manley Johnson, born 1930, a native of Jamestown, North Dakota, passed away peacefully on April 14, 2021, in Carmichael, California. He is survived by his brother Jerome Johnson, son Robert Johnson, and daughter Carol Bowman, granddaughter Kristen Bowman, and grandson, James Bowman III. He was preceded in death in 2013 by his beloved wife, Gayle.

Joseph served 23 years in the U.S. Air Force during the Cold War era with the 1155th Technical Operations Squadron, service that took him across the United States and Pacific many, many times.

After Air Force retirement, he greatly enjoyed a second wind in retail management. Joseph was active with his Air Force unit's (**AFTAC**) alumnae association, serving as the California chapter president. His continuing friendships with these great people were a constant in his retirement years.

To his family, Grandpa Joe was always the iconic Sargent: get it done, get it done now, get it done right. Joe accrued so many great life experiences from the farm in ND, his travels in Asia, his and Gayle's trips across the U.S. to visit MLB baseball parks, family camping (especially in Hawaii and Trinity County), and his colleagues in the Air Force. The weekend before his death, he entertained all his family members with his great reminiscences.

Joseph was interred at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, joining Gayle.

Note: The photo you see was taken at the WCC Picnic held on 14May2016. The above obit is available with a different photo at: <https://www.forevermissed.com/joseph-manley-johnson/about>.

Comments added Bob Fitzgerald, WCC Webmaster:

To say that **Joe** was an active and respected member of the AFTAC Alumni Association – West Coast Chapter (WCC) would be an understatement. Joe held the position as the first President of the WCC (1999-2001), then repeated in that position (2005-2007) and again as VP/Acting President (2015-2017). Joe also served terms on the WCC Board of Directors a number of terms as Vice President. In addition to all those positions, Joe also did an outstanding job as the Chairman of the AFTAC Worldwide Reunion committee for reunions sponsored by the WCC and held in Sacramento 13-15 May 2011 and again 15-18 Jun 2017.

Joe was also honored to be selected as the AFTAC Alumni Association "**Alumni Of The Year**" (AOY) for the year **2002**. The award was formally presented to Joe at the May 2003 Worldwide reunion held in Florida, and with an article on Joe in the March 2003 issue of the Florida Chapter's "**Post Monitor**" newsletter. (Ref: <http://www.aftacaa.us/>. Look for "Archived Post Monitors" and select March 2003.)

Joe was a good friend who will be greatly missed by all of us, especially those of us in the WCC who have served office and/or committee positions right along with him. May Joe rest in peace!

If you have comments/stories about your service/experience(s) with Joe, please send those by Email to our Depot Fallout Newsletter Editor, **Don King**: FalloutEditor@AFTACWCC.org.

Note: Joe's obit and this added information is also available on our www.AFTACWCC.org website "Departed" page.

STEEL STORM: A PIVOTAL BATTLE KEPT SECRET FOR 53 YEARS

CHAPTER 1 OF 3

*A young US Marine Corps corporal directs modern history's largest Naval bombardment in support of ground forces, wiping out an entire Viet Cong battalion augmented by Red Chinese regular soldiers.**

This is one story of fifteen that will shortly appear in his newest book; *Contrails*

William B. Scott
28-29 July 1965

"Where the hell are you, Charlie? You're out there. I feel it."

A rawboned, lanky U.S. Marine strained to detect movement in the inky darkness, a starless space made blacker by a rain squall that suppressed the sounds of soldiers creeping toward their objective. A few feet away, a South Vietnamese Ranger, Sergeant Thi, also patrolled, straining to spot a large Viet Cong force they knew was approaching. An attack was imminent.



As he scouted the area, Corporal Karl Lippard mentally took inventory of his dicey situation and limited assets. He was armed with an M14 rifle and four 20-round magazines. Sgt. Thi carried a .30-caliber M1 carbine, and a Colt 1911 semiautomatic pistol was tucked in his M9 shoulder holster. The Marine had stowed his map case, helmet, poncho and pack in an old French bunker near the Ca De River bridge's north approach. A telephone land line linked the abandoned bunker to roughly 20 other Marines dug-in on the south side. All were "Raiders", a company of U.S. Marines that had received specialized training—"rubber boat" operations and submarine insertion, for example. Raiders were elite forces, the handpicked best of each U. S. Marine Corps battalion. As the rain squall intensified, Lippard and Thi returned to the French bunker to retrieve their ponchos. A South Vietnamese army (ARVN) soldier was manning the concrete shelter, talking on a PRC-10

backpack radio...but to Viet Cong troops. Lippard pulled the pin on a grenade and placed a hand on the bunker wall, but before he could take out the VC infiltrator, Sgt. Thi tossed his own grenade. Its blast cut the enemy soldier in half, severed the phone line and drove debris into Lippard's knee.

"My grenade was live, still in my hand, when I got hit," Lippard recalled. "Had to replace the pin." The Marine stepped inside the bunker, confirmed the VC was a goner and checked the PRC-10 radio. It was covered in blood and raw flesh, but still functional. That radio would become his lifeline.

Positioned on the north side of the Ca De River, which emptied into nearby Bay of Da Nang, Lippard was acutely aware that he and his Vietnamese Ranger sidekick were mere tripwires, a flesh-and-blood early warning system. The 19-year-old Marine had orders to sound a warning, if anybody approached the bridge from the north. Nobody—friend or foe—would be permitted to cross.

Had the VC mole alerted nearby enemy troops that the bridge was defended by a pitifully small force? No way of knowing, but the grenade blast that had silenced him surely would attract Charlie's attention to the old bunker.

In fact, Lippard wasn't "officially" in that bunker on the Ca De River's north bank. Then-Major General Lewis W. Walt's Tactical Area of Responsibility ended on the south end of a five-span, quarter-mile steel structure.

With a set of railroad tracks down the center and pedestrian walkway along the west side, the bridge was a critical north-south artery. "Highway One" and a railroad converged at that crossing, a gateway to the main route linking "Da Nang to places north, such as Phu Bai and Hue," according to the record of a ship soon to be anchored nearby, in the bay.

Holding that junction was absolutely vital. Regimental commander Colonel Edwin B. Wheeler had told 2nd Lt. James Reeder, Lippard's immediate commander, "Lieutenant, if you lose this bridge, you and I are both going to be fired." But holding it from only the south end was tactically near-impossible.

"There was no room to support Marines on the south side," Lippard recalls. "The available space [there] could only hold about 20 Marines. Besides, that's about all that could be spared. We were spread real thin in July 1965."

To have any serious hope of preventing enemy troops from taking the bridge, a full company of Marines, backed by artillery, should have been firmly entrenched on the north side. But bizarre rules of engagement in mid-1965 placed responsibility for defending that important span's northerly approach in the hands of a South Vietnamese army battalion located about a half mile farther north, close to the beach. Comprising two understrength platoons, these "Popular Force" troops were a battalion in name only, a reserve unit commanded by a schoolteacher. They were volunteers, designated the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) 2nd Regional Force.

A USMC battalion would be composed of 1,000 Marines. In contrast, "a Vietnamese 'battalion' would indicate 600 or more men," Lippard explained. "Years later, we found documents [proving] the ARVN 2nd was only a couple of platoons, mostly farmers. Weekend warriors, often with families in tow. But two platoons of drop-and-run farmers wouldn't cut it, if hit. That 'battalion' would be wiped out."

Lippard and Thi knew little about Viet Cong movements in the area or the unit set to attack the bridge that night. They had been given no intelligence, even though 3rd Marine headquarters was well-aware that the 7th Viet Cong Battalion had slipped between the Bay of Da Nang and a ridge of mountains the day before. Two Marine companies had been dispatched to engage that force, but they never encountered the 7th VC. It had already passed through, pushing to the north.

Records indicate that Navy ships positioned offshore had "tried to interdict this battalion, shelling its [potential] positions, as it moved," Lippard said. A combat action report noted the 7th VC was still on the march 28 July, arriving in a valley a few miles north of the Ca De River bridge late that day.

Well after sunset, two separate formations, each comprising two companies of Viet Cong and Red Chinese regulars, started maneuvering to the south. Their apparent plan was to sweep across the Ca De River bridge, overrun a 3rd Marine Division command post and capture the huge Da Nang airbase 4.5 miles west of the city.

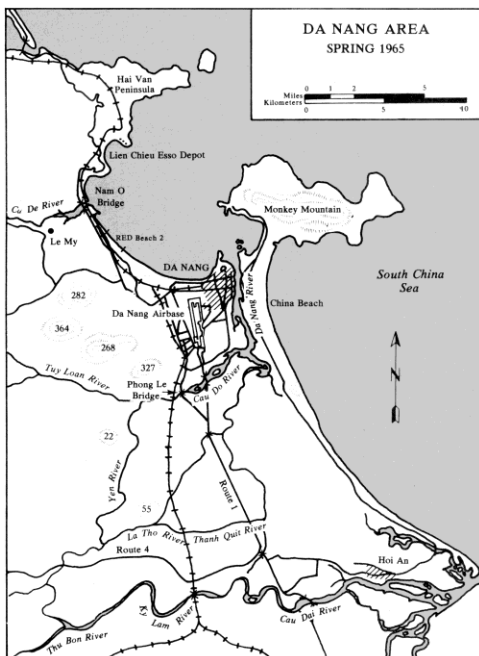
"Confirmed," Lippard asserted. "There were [a total of] 16,516 Viet Cong against 1,140 men of 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, in open, fixed positions. They'd be overwhelmed, with no support," if squeezed by enemy troops from the north and south. The enemy would have destroyed innumerable aircraft, including helicopters slated to support a major battle shaping up at Chu Lai, well to the south.

"The Fourth Marines would have been doomed," Lippard declared. "Another 1,121 Marines—the First of the Fourth—on the beach to the northeast at Ky Ha would have been next. General Walt could see it coming. His [planned] strike at Chu Lai...would be preempted by that VC offensive [launched] at the Ca De River bridge. He had no real protection. No one to come to his aid. Therefore, he sent what he had to the bridge and hoped for the best."

Conceivably, the 7th VC—about 600 strong—would race down to Chu Lai, attacking from behind and wiping out an assembling American force of some 1,140 men.

The only speed bumps were a Marine and ARVN Ranger holed up near a bunker on the north end of the bridge, backed by 20 lightly armed Marines on the south side. It's safe to assume that 7th VC commanders fully expected to swat that handful of Marines aside and be in control of Da Nang air base before dawn on 29 July.

Clearly, U.S. commanders were anticipating an attack from the northwest by a massive VC force in the Da Nang operations area. On 1 July, Marine Division headquarters had issued an order warning of precisely that possibility. A subsequent missive on 17 July approved naval gunfire support (NGS) for in-country employment, albeit with constraints. Supporting fire had to be “observed and controlled,” called in by only U.S. forces, and independent fire from any ship offshore was banned.



Da Nang operations area. Battle of the Ca De River bridge occurred in the upper left.

Something big was about to happen, but Lippard had no idea what. Around 2100 (9:00 p.m. local), “we began to receive enemy fire from several directions [near] the bunker, increasing in intensity as I tried to raise somebody on the radio,” he said. Only one faint response was received—a patrol some five miles up-river. It was unable to relay a message.

“A Mayday call went out to any station on the net,” Lippard recounted. “Division headquarters came up, and I quickly gave them positions of attacking forces, while I could.” He noted that the enemy was “Danger close!” No artillery was available, so aircraft were dispatched. Soon, USMC F-4B Phantoms from Da Nang air base arrived and made three strikes on coordinates Lippard provided, pounding rear elements of the 7th VC Battalion.

“Division never identified themselves. Never said what if anything they were sending,” Lippard said. He was told to identify himself, “but I declined to give my position. Evidently satisfied, they sent everything they had—aircraft and ships.” One U.S. Navy ship steamed for several hours to get on-station. “So division knew they were in trouble. They also knew somebody on the other end of that radio [link] could read a map and was under fire. A heavy firefight was in progress. (To be continued)

www.AFTACWCC.org

Website Quarterly Activity Report for the period 1 Jan 2021 – 31 Mar 2021
Submitted 24-Apr-2021 by Bob Fitzgerald, WCC Webmaster

Visitors <u>This Quarter</u>	Highest <u>Visitors Week</u>	Total <u>Sessions</u>	Most Popular* <u>Page (#Sessions)</u>	Next Most Popular* <u>Page (#Sessions)</u>
3,678	01/18-01/24 (303)	3,886	Departed (668)	Links (331)

Notes: * Does not include our ‘Home’ page, which almost always is the most popular page.

Visitors: This evaluation shows how many visitors accessed our website. Visitors are uniquely identified on the basis of the IP address and the browser ID. **If a visitor goes to our website more than once a day, only one visitor is counted.**

Sessions: This evaluation shows the number of sessions. A session starts when a visitor accesses our website and ends when he or she leaves it. A session ends automatically after 30 minutes without activity. **If a visitor goes to our website more than once a day, multiple sessions are counted.**

EVENTS CALENDAR

(By Bob Fitzgerald, WCC Webmaster)

QUARTERLY MEETINGS:

Our quarterly WCC General Business Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of March, June, September & December at 4:00pm PDT. *(Please note the time change.)* Due to CA government & Sacramento County orders regarding the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, our next meeting **June 14th will be held online using "Zoom Meetings"**. All WCC members are welcome to join us online. *If you are interested in participating in the meeting, contact Bob Fitzgerald, Webmaster@AFTACWCC.org for instructions at least a week or so prior to the meeting date for access instructions.* Always check our www.AFTACWCC.org website "Events" page to confirm the details in case of lastminute changes.

UPCOMING SOCIAL EVENTS:

Our annual **WCC BBQ & POTLUCK PICNIC**, originally planned for Sat., 5/15/21, **HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED** and is now planned for **Saturday, September 18th**. Please watch our website "Events" page a few weeks prior to that date for details and sign-up requirements.

Our annual November "**FALL SOCIAL**" event is tentatively scheduled for **Saturday, November 13, 2021**. Watch for updates on our website "Events" page. ***Stay well & safe, and keep the faith. ... b***

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

By Dave Price, Membership Chairman

AS OF APRIL 3, 2021

Total Active Members = 143 Life Members = 139.

Annual membership fee of \$10 is due by 01 Jan each year. Check your mailing label, or check the "**WCC Roster**" from our website "**Forms**" page. **Life memberships are available for \$75.** You can use the "Membership Application/Roster Update" form on the last page of this newsletter or the one from our web site "**Forms**" page to send with your dues. Don't let your membership lapse. **Those alumni who are not current with their membership dues will be dropped from the "active" roster along with our newsletter distribution & email notification lists.** *(See our web site "Forms" page, "WCC Roster" link to check your status.*

WORST FLIGHT EVER

By Charlie Penn, SEO and WCC Past-President

In 1969 I was stationed at Yokota AB and was scheduled to fly a Robin Alpha (round-robin) sortie with a 0530 departure time. Yes, that meant a 0330 show time; that was the common description of zero dark thirty. The 56 WRS crew and I showed up at our scheduled aircraft to start our preflight and were met by the crew chief who informed us his plane was not in commission and we had to transfer the mission to the backup WC-135B aircraft #671. We hauled our gear to the new mission aircraft and started to work. Our new plane had been scheduled to fly another mission later in the day so it had more fuel uploaded for mission requirements and we had 20,000 pounds of JP-4 that wasn't required for our sortie. The copilot radioed the pilot who was at Base Ops and asked him if he wanted to offload the excess fuel and the pilot opted to offload even though this process would delay the takeoff time.

We completed the offload and preflight and started engines almost on time and started taxiing. Arriving at the departure end of runway 36, tower radioed the barrier was up at the far end of the runway and did we want it lowered. The barrier is an arresting gear for smaller aircraft that looks like a giant tennis court net that spans across the end of the runway. The copilot radioed back to the

tower and said that it wouldn't be necessary, but a short discussion between the pilots changed that, and the copilot requested the barrier to be lowered. Tower radioed back the barrier was down and we were cleared for takeoff.

Power was advanced to Takeoff Rated Thrust and we started rolling. Everything was normal, 80 knot call, decision speed, rotate and then the pilot, on the interphone said: "Help me, help me get this SOB up!!" We were glued to the runway and accelerating. I could look out the over-wing hatch and see the hash marks that define the overrun we were on as I felt the nose of #671 start to rise. The thump of the struts let me know we were airborne and then felt a hard yaw to the right. We continue to climb, and after leveling off at 2,500 feet, the pilot calmly notified the crew and departure control that we were experiencing serious control problems and declared a dire emergency. Our plane had no elevator control and altitude control was only maintained by the horizontal stabilizer trim motor.

For the next 2 hours we flew in a holding pattern over Yokota while numerous phone patches were made to Boeing in Seattle, 9th WRW at McClellan AFB, and Military Airlift Command at Scott AFB. No one had a solution to our problem as it had never been experienced before. Finally, the commander of the 9th WRW simply stated that our lives depended on the trim motor and all efforts should be made to limit the motor's usage because that was the only device which allowed aircraft controllability. All further decisions were the aircraft commander's responsibility. There is no tomorrow if the trim motor fails.

We prepared the plane for landing, everything secured and I turned my seat around to face the rear of the aircraft and donned my hard hat and oxygen mask in case of fire. The pilot requested a long final approach and gentle glide slope. The first approach we were too fast and had to make a missed approach. The second approach the plane was too high and had to be aborted. As we lined up for the third attempt the pilot on the interphone said he would get it on the ground this time

Everything went smoothly until we were 50 feet in the air and the pilot chopped the power and the plane stalled and we made hard contact with the runway, bounced back in the air porposing and then really hit hard. The nose gear failed and the plane skidded down the runway on its nose and left the runway to come to rest in the grass. The Weather Officer, while the plane was still moving, came running back to the cargo compartment and yelled "We are on fire!"

I unstrapped and went to the left overwing emergency hatch, pulled down on the release lever and threw the hatch behind me as the Weather Officer did the same with the right hatch. I egressed out the left hatch and jumped to ground just inboard of the #2 engine. I then started running in an upwind direction and made sure I didn't turn to look at the plane in case of an explosion. After reaching a safe distance I turned to make sure everyone had successfully escaped; they did. The fire was mostly extinguished and was limited to the area around the nose gear area.

A few hours after this flight the crew got together for an informal debriefing at the NCO Club stag bar. I asked how did we get airborne in the first place. The copilot said that after the pilot yelled "Help Me", I just held the trim button on the yoke in the nose-up detent. He said he had recently read an article in a flight safety magazine that a 135 tanker had set the wrong nose trim setting (nose down instead of nose up). Someone asked, "Why the hard yaw right after takeoff?" The pilot had used full rudder to miss an obstacle that we didn't have enough altitude to clear.

After the stag bar, I went home and tried to get some sleep. Two hours of tossing and turning I finally got up and told the wife I was going to the flight surgeon and get something to calm me down. She asked me why I didn't go sooner and I told her I was worried if anyone found out I would be looked at as a pansy. When I arrived at the hospital there sat the rest of the crew!



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Annual membership fee of \$10.⁰⁰ is due by 01 January each year. Check your mailing label for expiration date. Your last newsletter will be the one following your expiration date. Life memberships are available for \$75.⁰⁰.

PLEASE PRINT

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Last, First MI Last Rank Held Nickname Name of Spouse

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Street, Apt #, etc. City State Zip Code

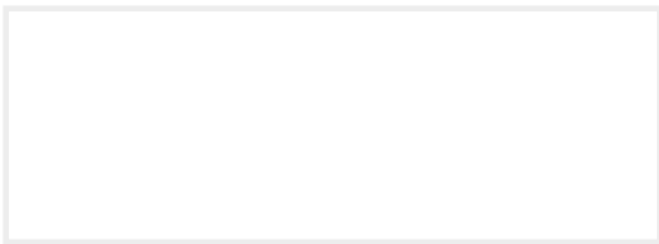
(____) _____ - (____) _____
Home Phone Work Phone E-mail Address

Active Duty: _____

AFTAC Dates: _____
From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy

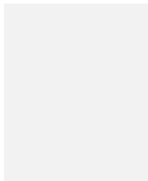
Support your West Coast Chapter: Please pass a copy of this form to your AFTAC Alumni friends. *[From the Depot Fallout]*

CHECK OUR WEBSITE AT www.AFTACWCC.org FOR THE LATEST WCC NEWS & PHOTOS
(updated 9/24/2020 ..bf)



To:

== FIRST CLASS MAIL ==



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