

Florida 24th IDA Vets

January — March 2013

24th Infantry Division Association



FIRST TO FIGHT

The Newsletter of the Florida 24th Infantry Division Association Members Group, initiated July 2009.

A Good Feb. 6 Luncheon Meeting



Twenty-five dedicated members of the Florida 24th IDA Group came together on Feb. 6 in Leesburg, FL to prove once again what Bill Stokes said in *Taro Leaf* 66(3) pg. 34,

“Old soldiers never die, they just meet to eat.”

Photo above, standing from left: Frank and Maxine Jennings of Melbourne, Shirley Miller and Dottie Wood, Ron York of Altamonte Springs, Bill Simunek of Mount Dora, Don Van Beck of Tavares, Paul Boulay and Nick Salakas both of The Villages, Becky Bradford, Harley and Sandra Joseph of Miami, Flossie Kespert and Paul Miller of Inverness, and Jim Hird of Ocala.

Seated also from left: Gil Miller, 45th Div, Ocala, Woodie Wood of Silver Springs, Tom Thiel of Eustis, Jim Bradford from Winter Haven, Carol Becker (front) of Clermont, Dorothy and Duane Hall of Leesburg and MI, and Ted Jansen of Leesburg. A couple of folks missed being in the photo.

But we do a bit more than meet to eat!

Comradeship is by far the primary reason we continue to get together. But we do other things as well.

Donations to Veterans

One of these has been distributing donated items to veteran's homes.

Paul Miller and Flossie Kespert have given a lot of their time and

effort to get this program off and going. Ted Jansen has agreed to take the program over now, with their continued assistance.

We have donated items on multiple occasions each to the VFW Veterans Home in Fort McCoy, and the Malcolm Randal Medical Center in Gainesville. Reports on some of these have appeared in previous newsletters and *Taro Leafs*.

We are now embarking on a "ditty bag" distribution program (see photos bottom of page 2).

Group members are either making or obtaining from mainly sewing groups small ditty bags that are being filled with toiletries and other such small items that will fit in

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the small bags.

Donors of items for this project were: the Women's Mission Sewing group of the First Presbyterian Church of Inverness donated 27 ditty bags and a pillow all delivered by Florence Kespert.

There also was a bag of assorted items contributed by TD Bank of Inverness.

And I know that Carol Becker brought about a dozen ditty bags.

Members are now asked to identify homes in their areas, and come to the May 1 meeting not only with items to put into the ditty bags, but also to then take filled ditty bags to these homes, and give them to residents, mainly veterans.

What we also need here is a means of identifying our Group as the donor, and to get good photos of the actual delivery for publicity and recruiting purposes.



Ditty bags (on box) and other items Flossie & Paul brought to meeting. At far right is a photo of one of Carol's ditty bags. (Thank you all very much!)

Future Luncheon Dates

Our future Dutch Treat luncheons will be May 1, Aug. 7, and Nov. 6. May 1 will be at 11:45 a.m. Golden Corral, 1720 Citrus Blvd, Leesburg, FL. Aug 7 is open to any other FL location offered to and approved by the group, and the Nov. 6 will be a sit down Holiday Dinner probably in Leesburg.

Financing

The FL 24th IDA Group has no dues; we rely on a fifty-fifty drawing to help offset mailing and other costs.

Photo above right is of Jim Bradford, winner of the Feb. 6 drawing of \$63.00 total, or \$32 to Jim, who promptly donated \$25 back to the group's funds. Thank you very much, Jim !

Tom Thiel showed his mini-Verbeck Bowl, and urged attendees to nominate their choice for the Association's Verbeck Award by July 15.

Thiel also called attention to several articles in last Taro Leaf [Vol 67(1)], including: Sho-ko Seina Shiraishi of Kokura Japan on the origin of the Peace Cross Memorial in that city; Don Perrin's book "13 Months of Glory;" Website News; the Louisville



Association Reunion in September; and other items.

From its outset, the FL 24th IDA Group has sought to have its own FL mini-reunion emulating the one Dan Rickert and a few of his fellow Taro Leafers in California developed that is now known as the 24th IDA West Coast Reunion.

For varying reasons our Florida efforts have not been successful.

But it remains our goal!





What our FL 24th IDA is missing — a Reunion!

When we began the FL 24th IDA Group more than three years ago, our idea was to emulate the West Coast 24th Reunion held each March in Laughlin, NV.

We looked locally in Lake and surrounding counties for a good place to come together, but sadly, we could not find anything that even begins to approach Laughlin—their room rate is \$29.00/night! Of course they expect you to “pay” more via their in-house casino!

So, we accepted an invitation from the 5th RCT folks lead by Bill and Helen Kane and Tony Polemeni to join up with them for a mini-reunion at St. Augustine each November. Our room rate last reunion was \$79.00!

As was reported in the last newsletter, those that were at the St. Augustine mini-reunion last November decided to discontinue it because of lack of turnout. Only eight members attended the 5th RCT/FL 24th IDA Group business meeting (see photo).

At the last St. Augustine reunion’s Business Meeting, we decided to publish a “feeler” for a joint 5th/24th 2014 cruise from Port Canaveral, FL.

An article appeared in the last *Taro Leaf* asking 24th IDA members to contact me if they are interested; so far I have had one phone call! It seems now as though this idea will also die from lack of interest.



St. Augustine 2012 mini-reunion Business Meeting, from left: Tom Thiel, Heidi Edgar, Frank Jennings, Don Maggio, Tony Polemeni, Bill Kane, Frank White, and Carl Groth.

So, where does that leave us—to attempt to arrange for a FL mini-reunion, or not!

I like reunions. Well, mostly I like the hospitality room at reunions.

I talked to Dan Rickert, one of the original organizers of the West Coast Reunion. He said they started out with only a half-dozen or so members, and that it has grown ever since. I have never attended a West Coast Reunion, but a significant number of Association Officers do regularly.

Some of these same officers also say that mini-reunions have a negative impact on our yearly Association Reunion (this year in Louisville), and that may be true.

But travel for a lot of us is problematic. Many of us would be more happy with, say, a distance no more than one day’s drive.

So, I compared our area with the West Coast area.

There are about 250 members of the 24th IDA with addresses in CA, AZ, and NV (I did not determine the number of those that are actually one day’s drive from Laughlin).

At the same time, there are about 375 members in FL, GA, AL, SC, and NC. Most of these are a one day drive from Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Panama City, etc.

Additionally, if we were to have a SE area mini-reunion in the winter months there would be many more members residing in FL.

Even if we were to JUST concentrate on FL alone, we ought to have more than the 250 cited above for the West Coast.

What do you all think? Should we try to have a FL mini-reunion? Who is willing to help organize a FL 24th mini-reunion? Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando—or wherever? Let me know please, one way or the other.

TJT

"How the hell did we get out of there alive?"



By Herman V Critchfield, Jan. 2013. (Herman and Mary at Sep 2, 2009 luncheon, Leesburg.)

It was in May 1950, that this twenty five year old Army Corporal took a short discharge from an Artillery Battalion in Fort Carson, CO, and reenlisted for the Far East Command. I thought I was going to be in Japan. Our Division was going to start training AIT (Advance Individual training) and I did not think I would like that. I had heard stories about Japan duty and thought it might be interesting.

After a 30-day leave, I reported to Bremerton, WA, and boarded a ship for Japan. It was a nice trip across, smooth waters, good food and a good job on board ship. I was a pusher for the galley detail.

A few days out of Yokohama, we were told that the North Koreans had invaded the South. None of us knew where Korea was. After landing in Japan, we were separated, put on trains, and moved out. I was told I was going to the 24th Infantry Division. We moved south for hours and were unloaded in Kyu-

shu. It was late in the afternoon of 1 or 2 July 1950.

After arriving in the Battery area, I went to the supply room to draw linen. Supply instead handed me a 30 caliber carbine, and directed me to the Orderly Room where I met an Officer who told me stand by to go to Korea. After dark, we boarded a Japanese Ferryboat named "something Mani." After a short time, we arrived at what I found out later was Pusan, Korea.

We unloaded; I do not know how many people came with me, where they were from, or if we were in the same unit. I next remember getting on a train that had 105mm howitzers on flat cars and must have been A Battery, 52nd Field Artillery.

After a period of time we moved out. I was in a passenger car with other soldiers. We traveled for a period of time and came to a small railhead, where we off loaded and sat around waiting.

Probably at this time I was assigned a gun section. Overhead we saw airplanes in a dogfight. We commented that this was appropriate, as it was the 4th of July.

We loaded on the prime movers and moved out. Sometime during the night we stopped and went into firing positions. During the night on our move forward we lost one of the howitzers. He missed a turn. We were traveling black out.

There wasn't enough room for all the howitzers so the Chief of Fire asks if anyone had direct fire experience. I had served in the Marines during WWII, and we were taught direct fire in preparation for the invasion of Japan. I raised my hand and was immediately made Chief of Section for the forward howitzer, known as the anti-tank gun.

I was the ranking man in the section, and was to be the Chief of Section/Gunner of the Section. I believe we had five cannoneers and the prime mover driver.

We set up forward of the main firing position just beyond a hill. I do not remember who picked the position out but I assume it was Chief of Fire. We did not dig the howitzer in; we just made spade holes and shot from there. The prime mover was parked immediately to our right rear with a little cover of hanging tree branches.

There was a stucco telephone exchange building to our immediate rear, and you could hear the relays clicking. There was an elderly man working in the building. I don't remember seeing him but once. He just disappeared.

We had wire communication with the main battery and sometime later after we had bore sighted the howitzer in, off loaded the five rounds of HEAT ammo, and had improved the position, we were no-

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tified tanks were coming.

I had previously asked if we could knock the small bridge out just to our right and about 50-75 yards to our front. This was denied. I was thinking I would have a much better shot at the tanks if I could see their belly. There was no sense of anyone being afraid. As I look back, this point amazed me.

How could these people, me included, have reasoned that we would get out of this situation alive?

We just went about our job as we were trained. No one questioned the way I had set it up. All the men were good soldiers and we were just lucky to get out of that alive.

We saw three tanks come around the bend about four hundred yards up the road. They were buttoned up and slowly moving along. The morning was damp and misty with rain.

I explained to the crew that I would get the first tank just short of the bridge, and block it. I thought this might make the others pass him and go into the streambed and climb out.

When he was in range we fired and he spun out off the road and stopped.

We reloaded and fired on the second tank. I am sure he was also hit as he also spun out.

We loaded and fired at the third

tank but I don't know the results of that round. The smoke made from firing at that elevation made so much smoke out in front of the howitzer that it was impossible to see.

I remember us trying to load the next round but it jammed, the brass shell casing crimping in the tube. This happens sometimes if the projectile is not properly seated in the brass casing.

About this time I heard small arms popping around us. I do not think the tanks saw us but they knew we were in the vicinity.

I thought it too dangerous to have someone go out in front of the howitzer and with the bell rammer knock the round back out of the tube.

It was at this time that I ordered everyone back to the main battery.

We went across the hill behind us following a path that was slick and wet. When we arrived at the main firing position we saw the battery was busy turning the howitzers to the right towards the road getting ready for the tanks coming down the road. They could not see the tanks as yet because of the hill in front of the guns.

I stayed on a little knoll to the rear and slightly behind the howitzers. The fire direction center was located here.

From this time on for this day things are a blur and I remember

very little else of what happened in the battery area.

I do remember LTC Perry our Battalion Commander arriving in his jeep and someone said he had been wounded in the leg.

We moved out later in the afternoon with a few 2-1/2 ton trucks; jeeps and maybe a 1/4 ton.

The Korean Captain assigned to us for training acted as our interpreter; he got us out past the tanks by using cow paths. This Captain is now a retired Major General Seung Kook Yoon from the Korean Army.

We got to a small village and occupied a school. We awaited orders and new howitzers and other equipment.

When we left the forward position I lost all of my personal belongings because all of our gear was on the truck left at the position. I had just purchased a new "Ike Jacket" that I was forced to buy when I shipped out of California. The jacket cost me \$17.00. I will always remember that loss.

This is the way I remember the first day of combat in Korea, 5 Jun 1950. I am sure that it is fairly accurate as I have reminisced this day many times with others who were there.

And yes, I asked "How the hell did we get out of there alive?"

Herman V. Critchfield, 5900 Paradise Lane, Orlando FL 32808,
Ph: 305-295-0785,
critchfieldh@gmail.com



Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

Christmas in Japan テレジア・コッセキ・キタコ

Christmas Mass Bulletin
December 1946
Kokura, Japan
Bill Simunek

A THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

As we kneel in spirit at the Crib on Christmas Day, let us put a question to ourselves and answer it honestly. A greater than Joseph knocks at the door of our hearts. Do we open to Him? Are we so absorbed with the world that we do not even hear Him? Day by day, perhaps hour after hour, He stands at the door and knocks. He Who was born for us at Bethlehem, Who died for us on Calvary, Who rose in glory from the tomb, so loves us that He wishes to take entire possession of our hearts. He alone can sustain us in the trials of life and give us peace. Let us open our hearts today and bid Him enter and abide in them forever.

CATHOLIC CHRISTMAS SERVICES
24TH INFANTRY DIVISION
KOKURA, KYUSHU

MONDAY, 23 December:

Confessions 1850 - 1950

CHRISTMAS EVE, 24 December:

Confessions 1500 - 1700
1830 - 2200

High Mass at Midnight in Division Chapel

CHRISTMAS DAY, 25 December:

Mass - 21st Sig Co - 0900
Mass - Division Chapel - 1100

Please note:

Confessions will not be heard after 2200 on Christmas Eve.

Those intending to receive Holy Communion at the Midnight Mass should be fasting for six hours.

Mark Your Calendars

Mar. 24-27, 2013, West Coast Reunion, Laughlin, NV. (see TL)

Apr. 22-24, 2013, 19th & 34th Inf. Reg. 20th Reunion, Pigeon Forge, TN. (see TL)

May 1, 2013, FL 24th IDA Dutch Treat Luncheon, Leesburg,

May 1-5, 2013, L Co. 21st Reunion, Branson, MO. (see TL)

Aug. 7, 2013, FL 24th IDA Dutch Treat Luncheon, Leesburg, or alternative location TBD.

Sept. 22-25, 2013, 24th IDA Reunion, Louisville, KY. (see TL)

Nov. 6, 2013, FL 24th IDA Holiday and Christmas Sit Down Luncheon, Leesburg.

Wanted— we still would like someone consider leading the Florida 24th Group. It does not require that much time, but I still have more hay down than I can get into the barn. Call me at 352-357-3943 or 352-408-6612. TJT

List of attendees at the February 6, 2013, Dutch Treat Luncheon.

LastName	FirstMI	Spouse	Address	City	State	Zip4	Phone	email	Unit1	CoBat1
Becker	Carol		17741 W Apsdawa Rd	Clermont	FL	34714	352-394-5451	carolbecker@juno.com	GSS	
Boulay	Paul A	Mary J	921 Bristol Ter	The Villages	FL	32162-3390	352-751-2388		34th Inf	
Bradford	Jim	Becky	1776 6th Street NW, Unit 308	Winter Haven	FL	33881-2178	863-293-3055	jbradford15@tampabay.rr.com	21st Inf	C
Hall	Duane L.	Eleanor	1637 Blackfoot Court	Leesburg	FL	34748-9066	734-878-1189	dihall22@comcast.net	26th AAA	B
Hird	Jim	Dorothy	10620 SW 27th Ave #A-31	Ocala	FL	34476-8014	352-291-2028	jimmydavis63@yahoo.com	26th AAA	C
Jansen	Ted	Marilyn L.	1507 W Lancaster Ave	Leesburg	FL	34748-6936	352-787-7818	tedj29@aol.com	19th Inf	
Jennings	Frank	Maxine	PO Box 410337	Melbourne	FL	32941-0337	321-751-9103	frank-jennings@cfl.rr.com	5th RCT	
Joseph	Harley	Sandy	10644 Kendale Blvd.	Miami	FL	33176-2771	305-274-2840	hjchym94@bellsouth.net	34th Inf	Svc
Miller	Gil	Shirley	13771 SW 1st Lane	Ocala	FL	34481	352-854-5183		45th Div	
Miller	Paul	Flossie Kespert	828 Lanark Dr	Inverness	FL	34453-4415	352-344-8277	pmiller151@tampabay.rr.com	21st Inf	
Salakas	Nick	Karen	1520 Abercrombie Way	The Villages	FL	32162	352-561-4949		21st Inf	B
Simunek	Bill	Janet	5024 Greenbriar Trail	Mt. Dora	FL	32757-9102	352-385-0205	SIMJB@comcast.net	3rd Eng	HQ
Stokes	Bill	Whitney	304 Balsam Circle	Lady Lake	FL	32159-3201	352-750-6741	wsswriter@centurylink.net	34th Inf	HHC
Thiel	Tom	Jean Singer	19147 Park Place Blvd.	Eustis	FL	32736-7262	352-357-3943	fl24thida@gmail.com	19th Inf	E
Van Beck	Don	Julia	32004 Harris Rd	Tavares	FL	32778-4630	352-343-1529	seafari.vb@juno.com	34th Inf	HHC
Wood, Jr.	Woodie	Dottie	2201 NE 125th Terrace Rd.	Silver Springs	FL	34488-2581	352-625-3305	ChuckWendy3@hotmail.com	19th Inf	
York	Ron		822 Lindenwald Lane	Altamonte Spr	FL	32701	407-830-6460	ronyork@cfl.rr.com	5th RCT	Tank



THE 24TH INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



I desire to be: Enrolled (or) Reinstated ; as a Member (or) Associate Member
(please check the proper two boxes)

of the
24th "Victory Division" Association
The Greatest Combat Division the United States Army has ever known.

Annual Dues - \$15.00 (1) Year From date of joining in The Association.

Life Member - \$200.00 Payable in one sum or 5 yearly payments of \$40.00 each.



NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE+4 _____ - _____

PHONE _____ - _____ EMAIL _____ @ _____

OCCUPATION _____ SPOUSE'S NAME _____

Served IN the 24th Division, OR was Member of Any Unit Ever Attached TO the 24th at any time.

Unit: _____ Squad _____ Plt/Bat _____ Co _____ Bn _____
(e.g., 5th, 19th, 21st, 3rd Eng, etc.)

Location Served: _____ From (Yr.) _____ To (Yr.) _____
(e.g., Pearl H., WWII, Japan, Korea, Germany, Ft. Stewart, Lebanon, Somalia, Desert Storm, Ft. Riley, etc.)

POW: From (Yr.) _____ To (Yr.) _____

Other Unit Served With: _____ From (Yr.) _____ To (Yr.) _____

Sponsor (not necessary): _____

Comment: _____

Please make checks in above amount payable to the "24th Infantry Division Association"
And mail with this completed application to:

John A. Dunn, Secretary/Treasurer
24th Infantry Division Association
9150 Hwy. 51

Westover, AL 35147-9527

FLORIDA 24TH IDA
January 2012, 24th IDA WEB

Korean-American Church seeks to honor Korea Vets at April 6 Luncheon — Medallions?

FL 24th IDA Invited!! (Fr. why this is here. KWVA 169's Scuttlebutt)

For more than a few years we have unsuccessfully tried to establish a relationship with a Korean-American Community in our area. Other Chapters report that Korean-American Communities go all-out in welcoming and honoring Korean Veterans.

On Dec. 26, I received a call from **Joseph Ryu** inviting Chapter 169 members, spouses and guests to a Luncheon at the Korean Baptist Church at 7710 SW 38th Avenue, Ocala, on Saturday, Apr. 6.



Joe asked me to also contact other Korean War Veterans in our area to ask them to come. That's

Korea Peace Medallions

I also decided to write to the Korean Consulate in Atlanta, to ask them to come to support this Korean Community effort to honor Korean Veterans by sending a representative and Korean Peace Medallions (photo below left).

So, this may be an opportunity for those of you who do not yet have Medallions to obtain one.

Notice the "May Be" as the letter has only just gone out. I have received a copy of Joe Ryu's email to the Atlanta Consulate; unfortunately I cannot read it as it is in Korean, but I was able to read Thiel and Medallions.



Korean Baptist Church, 7710 SW 38th Avenue, Ocala

FL 24th IDA Korean War Vets Needed

Obviously, I enthusiastically support our full participation.

And I also invite any of our 24th IDA members from this area who are not KWVA Chapter 169 members, to join with us for this event.

Please let me know immediately if you wish to participate in this Saturday luncheon sponsored by the Korean Church in Ocala. You are most welcome! Tom Thiel.

Eagle Canes

The bad news is that the Lake County Carvers Club no longer has funds for making Eagle Canes gratis for veterans.



The good news is that one of the Club members is still making Eagle Canes! But they are no longer free; he charges \$35 each. Please contact: Ralph Rossignol, 8001 Arcadian Court, Mt Dora, FL 32757, 352-385-0482, rossignolrpp@comcast.net for information.

"Korean Conflict Veteran" FL Auto License Plate

On the next page is a blank form letter that I would like you to reproduce, address, and send to your State of Florida Senator and Legislator.

Reasons for the letter are fully addressed in the blank letter.

It is vital that you join me, and all the members of the Korean War and Service Veterans Chapter 169, in urging Florida to properly address our contributions 60 years ago, more or less.

Dear

In 2012, Florida Statutes created a Florida Auto License plate bearing the words “Korean Conflict Veteran.”

I served in Korea, and wish to advise you that I, and all the fellow Korean Vets I know, abhor the word “Conflict” to describe our sacrifices in Korea, and ask that you to extend whatever effort is necessary to change the “2012 Florida Statutes, Title XXXII, Motor Vehicle Licenses, 320.089,” to replace “Korean Conflict Veteran” with simply “Korea Veteran.”

We ask this wording because the war has never officially ended, and there has continuously been approximately 30,000 U.S. service men and women always present in South Korea since the 1953 Armistice some 60 years ago this coming July 27.

A Florida License plate with simply “Korea Veteran” will address the desires of all who have served to enable South Korea to rebuild to be a symbol of freedom in Asia, and they can proudly support the plate because it truly represents all their contributions.

We are aware that “Korean Conflict,” and other such unflattering terms, were used to describe our contributions in the 1950’s. But we are also aware that Public Law 105-261, of the 105th U.S. Congress (page 112 STAT. 1920) states in reference to the Korean War Commemoration “... with language striking out ‘korean conflict’ and inserting in lieu thereof ‘korean war’ each place it occurs ...”

Hence we feel justified in making this request.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Florida 24th IDA Group 2013 Dutch Treat Luncheons

May 1; Aug. 7; Nov. 6 (to be a sit down Holiday Dinner)

11:45 a.m. Golden Corral

1720 Citrus Blvd, Leesburg, FL 34748

Space limited to about 50—please contact: Tom Thiel, 352-408-6612 or fl24thida@gmail.com
or Bill Stokes, 352-750-6741 wsswriter@centurylink.net to reserve.



Golden Corral
1720 Citrus Blvd
Leesburg, FL 34748-3424
(352) 728-3911

This newsletter produced and delivered with only the financial support realized from the 50:50 drawings held at the Luncheons.

Please help us cut mailing costs.
If you have email, please send me an email at fl24thida@gmail.com

FL 24th IDA Web Page

www.24thida.com — click on Florida 24th IDA



The Florida 24th Vets
Tom J. Thiel, Editor
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