

OC24-69, 50th Company, February, 2023 – AT EASE!

Hello 50th Company:

Over the last month, a number of you have sent me news to pass along: some good; some sad; some inspirational; and just some news.

Bill Yacola wrote that classmate, Lawrence (Sandy) Kirkland, had passed away on August 12, 2021 after a twenty-year battle with Parkinson's Disease. The COVID pandemic probably prevented us from learning earlier about this, but our Comrades in Distress Committee has already conveyed our deepest sympathy to the family.

Sandy's passing is a story that reflects the moral fiber of our class. During my pharmacy practice days, I got to know two Parkinson's patients very well. They told me that one of the most difficult things about the disease is being walled off from social contact because not everyone, including some family members, is comfortable interacting with people who are suffering. Sandy suffered from this terrible disease for nearly twenty years and passed away in a nursing home. Read what Sandy wrote for our class book, *The Men of 50th Company*, and note his positive attitude and bravery under debilitating circumstances. Our second example of heroism was shown by two of our classmates, Bill Yacola and Clark Yokley, who visited Sandy several times at his nursing home before COVID made that impossible.

To quote Clark in an email to me and Brian: "I will tell you this, he was a brave man and a fighter under the conditions of his health. He always greeted us with a smile, very talkative, interested in all subjects of conversations. And he was always interested in joining us for lunch. It wasn't easy for him to make it down to the car and into restaurants. I admired his pluck and determination. I am not sure I would be so strong in his situation. He loved his family, his sports, and his dogs. But most of all, he loved his wife and couldn't wait for the weekend which allowed him time at home with her. Bill and I enjoyed our visits with Sandy. The last one was tough, though. Sandy tried to make it down to the car, but physically could not make it. We brought lunch back to his unit.

Not everyone is suited or strong enough to interact with friends and loved ones in so much suffering and incapacitation. In my ledger, this is another example of personal courage and character displayed by two classmates. I salute them both.

Sandy's obituary can be found on the "*In Memorium*" page of the Website, or at:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/newberryobserver/name/lawrence-kirkland-obituary?id=16954714>.

Rest In Peace, Sandy.

I also received an email from Steve Porter about one of our deceased classmates, Vernon Hartline, who passed away shortly after our 2019 reunion in Washington, D.C. (For his obituary check the Website's "*In Memorium*" page.) Even after his death, Vern continued his tradition of selfless service to his community. His firm recently donated \$30,500 to an organization that provides legal services for people at the poverty level. Vern had a 30-year history of providing pro bono services to those in need. The Dallas Bar Association, in a recent newsletter, mentions that "as a veteran, Vern lived by seven core values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity; and Courage." Even in death Vern sets the example for us by not just learning the core values that we were taught, but by following them throughout his life, and beyond. I stand a little taller having known him.

Now, for the good news. Our very own Meister-Author, Brian Walrath, has done it again in a newly published book entitled *Poppies in the Wind*. This excellent book includes over 100 pages of pictures from the precious family album, showing life in Latvia before the war, scenes from the refugee camp in Germany, and their arrival in America. *Amazon* pretty much describes Brian's book, as follows: " Brian's story of his wife Dace's parents and siblings, who became refugees during the Second World War. They twice fled the advancing Russian army, giving up almost everything they owned both times. Enduring bombing, near-starvation, separation and despair, the family was finally reunited in a refugee camp in western Germany at the end of the war. After a three-year wait, they were permitted to emigrate to America, where they started a new life."

I just received my copy from Amazon and have started it. It is a great read and captivating. Five years ago I didn't know any published authors. Now I am rapidly filling up a bookshelf with books written by classmates – Kochis, Walrath, Fulton, Eberhardt, Porter... Keep up the good work, guys. We are proud of you.

Of potential interest to our Vietnam vets, I received an email from Don Crammer telling me that he saw an article from the Veteran's Administration that they are now accepting hypertension and ischemic heart disease as "presumptively caused

by Agent Orange.” Don goes on to say that you can file a claim electronically by going to the [VA.Gov](https://www.va.gov) website and finding a box in the upper right hand quadrant. Click on the question that asks if you want to file a new claim. Supposedly, all you need is proof of service in Vietnam and where you were diagnosed and VA takes it from there. Thanks for the information, Don.

In a very positive note, our 2023 Kansas City, MO, reunion is on track. So far, we have 51 people planning to attend our **September 24-27, 2023** event. It will be held at The Intercontinental Hotel and promises to be another memorable reunion for old friends. Our Reunion Planning Group will be providing hotel registration information during the coming months as well as other useful information about things to do while in Kansas City. We will be sending out another survey asking who plans to attend. Even if you do not plan on attending or are physically incapable of attending, we would appreciate you letting us know to assist in our planning. I do hope you all can make it to Kansas City. Even if you haven't been to any of our other reunions, please consider this one. As always, **I guarantee** that you will come away warm and fuzzy good feeling. You won't be disappointed .

Finally, I want to give special recognition to a special classmate to whom we owe a lot. For these past couple years, I have been highlighting accomplishments from classmates in these newsletters. This month's special recognition goes to... *Excited Drumbeat*: **Webmeister Bob Hines**. Ever since the class began getting back together, Bob has been one of our leaders. Single-handedly, he created 50th Company's Website and Facebook page and continues to maintain them despite Scott Davis constant harassment. He, largely under the radar screen, learned how to do this high-tech stuff and made it work! He spends many hours maintaining our website, while we keep piling on taskings. He does this without ever complaining, except when he pokes back at Scott. Without his work on the website, we would not be where we are today as probably the most active, organized, and united OCS Company around. Thanks, Bob, for all that you have done for our class. We are in your debt!

Once again, special thanks go to my co-conspirator and editor, Brian Flora.

Until next month, stay healthy, stay well and above all else stay Positive.

Lou Lallo