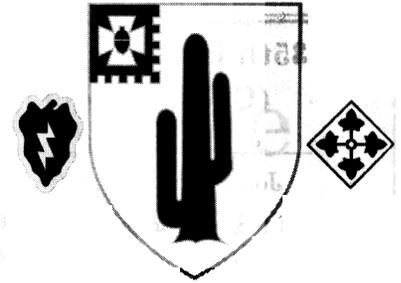


CACTI Times



Nogales • World War II • Korea • Vietnam • Afghanistan

Take Arms!

Spring 2005



Display the Flag proudly!

Active Cacti in Afghanistan, fighting the War on Terror, Building Schools and Making New Friends

Special points of interest:

- Reunion 2005 in Louisville
- Active Cacti in Afghanistan
- Supporting our troops
- Finding a buddy
- News from members
- Memories and Reflections
- Veteran's Information



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Afghanistan: 15 Oct, 2004
Major Joe Walsh, XO, 2/35th Infantry Regiment writes:

"I've seen a lot in my first six months in Afghanistan ... devastation from 25 years of war, fear, and death ... death of the enemy, death of my friends, death of civilians. I've also seen life renewed and re-born ... infrastructure is growing; children are back in school, smiling and playing, medical centers and governmental agencies are back in full swing and soon there will be a first Presidential inauguration ever in Afghanistan. Where there was death six months ago, there is life once more and a chance for a new beginning for so many. A chance your armed forces are proud to be a part of.



Captain James Moyes, B Company, 2/35 with friends.

I leave you with this ... the prescription. A light at the end of this trying time is visible and remains attainable and we remain committed to finishing the prescription the doctor has prescribed...if not for our future...for our children and their children's future.



2005 Cacti Reunion in Louisville promises to be the "best one yet". Make your plans now to attend. Get your buddies together for a time of Cacti "brotherhood", memories, tributes, laughs and stories. The Reunion Committee has been hard at work to ensure that you will have "the time of your life"! See you in sunny Louisville, city on the river. **July 28-31, 2005**

Searching for Kenneth R. Carter

Non-fiction by Kenneth Russell Carter

October 1999

I do not believe in chain letters. I do not believe in fate. I do not believe in psychics, séances, voices from the great beyond, or magic forces controlling our lives. They manifest non-reproducible results. They cannot be quantifiably measured, modeled, tested, proved, or disproved. I do not believe that God plays dice with the Universe.

However, I cannot scientifically explain how, in just two days, through a set of events linked by a tenuous daisy-chain of chance coincidences, my name helped a retired postal clerk, a total stranger to me, find the whereabouts of an army buddy he had not seen in nearly forty years. I am hard pressed to describe it in any way other than a "mystic experience."

Following the conclusion of the 27th Annual Telecommunication Policy Research Conference, I spent the afternoon of the last Monday in September on the Mall in Washington, DC. I was acting as a tour guide, showing the Capitol and the White House to a professor from Denmark and a policy advisor from the Japanese telecommunications ministry. After the long ride back to New York, I entered the lobby of my apartment building and emptied my mailbox of three days worth of accumulations.

In the elevator, I sifted through my mail. Among the magazines, bills, and junk mail, one letter stood out. Something seemed wrong. I did not recognize the sender or the return address in Michigan. I could not think of who in Michigan would write me a letter. The only persons who came to mind were some people I met on a dive trip two years earlier would have certainly sent me an e-mail. This document of unknown origin made me feel edgy until I got up to my apartment and opened the letter. Written on a greeting card adorned with a picture of a panda bear, the letter read:

"Dear Mr. Carter,

"First of all, I apologize for invading your privacy and your time.

"I am Larry Maleski from Michigan. I know that this is a 'shot in the dark' and a one in a million chance, but I have to try. "I am looking for and trying to locate a Kenneth Carter. I am trying to find him for no particular reason except for the fact that we served time in the military (Korea) together as close buddies. As one gets older you start to appreciate the friendships you made over the years and the experiences you shared. "The reason I am writing you is the last time I saw Ken was at Ft. Dix, New Jersey. At that time, he was making a career out of the military and could have eventually settled in New York. Ken would be about 60 years old now. At the time we were together, his residence was officially Japan, as he married a Japanese girl. We stayed in touch for a while, but Ken hated to write letters. "If he is any relation, or if you are the K. Carter I am looking for please get back to me. If you have a computer, you can send me e-mail.

"Thanks very much for your time, Larry Maleski"

I was astounded by this letter. Instantly, I thought of an experience which happened nearly seven years ago to the day. On a Sunday evening, I received a phone call from my parents who were distraught, as only parents can be. My mother, who holds a Ph.D. in microbiology and teaches the scientific method, thought that she had witnessed a bad omen. While visiting my younger sister at American University in Washington, they had gone to see the Viet Nam War Memorial. It was their first chance to see the Maya Lin masterpiece, even though it had opened six or seven years previously. They, alongside veterans and mourners, had milled around, parading past the 53,000 names of dead soldiers inscribed on the Wall. These names formed a list with no predictable pattern other than the chronological order in which these soldiers were taken from their friends and their families. My mother was on the verge of tears when she told me of having seen, just by chance, something all too familiar on the black marble wet with rain. It was my name, "Kenneth R. Carter." Without thinking that I might be revealing personal information over the Internet, I sat down at the computer and immediately began to compose an e-mail responding to Mr. Maleski's frank and unexpected appeal. "Dear Mr. Maleski: "I have just received your letter and am quite touched by it. Let me start by saying that I am not the Kenneth Carter for whom you are looking. My full name is Kenneth Russell Carter and I was born in 1970. I have no relatives who have had that name. However, I was astounded by the coincidences between me and your friend. "I am not quite sure where to start. My father, Lt. Maurice C. Carter,

(Continued top of next page)

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served in the 1st. Cavalry during Korea. During his tour of duty, he was stationed primarily in Hokkaido, Japan. I too have lived in Japan, where I went to college. I now speak Japanese and work extensively with many Japanese universities, telecommunications carriers, and their telecommunications ministry. I was once heavily involved with a Japanese woman, whom I nearly married. (I also have a close friend who is now stationed at Ft. Dix)."

"There are other similarities which are macabre," I continued. I told him about being on the Mall in Washington earlier that day and about the name, my name inscribed on the Wall. "What I find an even odder coincidence," I explained, "is that I although we did not visit the Memorial, today was the first time in several years that I mentioned that story. I hope, for you, that there are three Kenneth Carters."

That night as I lay falling asleep, I felt as if were playing a part in something larger than I could perceive. My eyes welled up with tears as I thought of Mr. Maleski reading my letter. I wished him luck in his search and I hoped that he would find his long-lost friend. Before dozing off, I wondered about meeting someone else with my name. The next day, in the late morning, I received an e-mail from Mr. Maleski.

"Dear Mr. Carter,

"Thank you so very much for getting back with me. It means that there are still people in this world that care, which I guess there is still hope for humanity. I also want to thank you for sharing your personal life with me, which proves my theory all you Carter are good people.

"My very good friend (Ken) was closer to family with me and as I get older appreciate more each day the Special Ones I have met over the years. That is what prompted me to try and find him, so I could tell him.

"I am 57 years old and presently retired from the Post Office in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In the military, I was a postal clerk and when sent to Korea was green as grass and Ken who was already in the military, was making it a career, and was already in the unit I was assigned. Ken, who was a sergeant at the time, took me under his wing and it turned out, he would be the closest friend I had while serving. The stories are endless as you can imagine. When we parted for the last time we young adults cried like babies as we both knew we would not see one another ever again. Ken related he would not write, as it would be too hard for him as he had a rough childhood and the military was the only family he knew. I kept writing Ken but never got any response, which he told me I wouldn't. He hated to write and it was hard for him to believe somebody cared about him because he told me I was the only true brother he never had. Well, Kenneth, I'm sitting here all choked up with tears in my eyes, and I'm usually not an emotional person. I want to thank you again for taking the time to get back with me as you really made my day.

"When I get a minute, I will go through some old war pictures and send you a couple. "Just a closing note. I pray that the K. R. Carter your family saw on the Wall was not my friend Ken, but it could have very possibly been because he wanted to serve our country. "I'm rather new at this Internet thing but my young son, who incidentally was an airborne Ranger, has talked me into selling on EBay to keep me active during my retirement.

"Respectfully and in friendship, Larry"

I felt I had a newfound friend, or may be just an old one missing since before I was born. I thought of other ways I might help Larry find Kenneth R. Carter. A close college friend suggested that we try finding Kenneth R. Carter through army service records. I jettied off an e-mail to Chris, my friend, the Army Ranger stationed at Ft. Dix, asking him to look up my name. Chris was out of his office that week so he did not get my message in time to help us. However, my telling Larry about the Wall and the suggestion about service records was sufficient to send him in the right direction. That day, Larry continued his search with a trip to the VFW home in Grand Rapids. By another remarkable coincidence, a traveling version of the Viet Nam War Memorial was there touring VFW clubs around the country. Larry inquired about Ken with the touring Memorial's honor guards. Later that same day, he wrote me with great relief and the satisfaction that comes from the answer to an old question: "*Dear Ken, "I owe you a debt of gratitude and one big THANK YOU for putting closure on something that was very important to me. It has ended a search that I have been thinking about for years. Without your input I may have never known. Words cannot express the concerned help you gave me. It was like fate that you pointed me in the right direction. "What ended the*

(See "Carter", page 26)

Carter (cont. from page 25)

search was when you told me about the wall. Isn't it ironic the movable Vietnam Memorial just happen to be at the Vets home today. I just now got back from visiting it and Ken and I have finally been reunited. I had his serial number and the Vets at the Wall were able to verify that this was the same Ken. Ken was killed in action in Viet Nam by small arms fire.

"My heart rests easy with him now because I know he has family along his side. Everything developed as if Ken wanted me to know so I could stop searching. Thanks, Ken for all your effort and I won't forget what you done. God Bless.

"Very sincerely, Larry (SKI as Ken called me)"

On the last day of July 1966, Sgt. Kenneth Robert Carter was on patrol in the Southeast Asian jungle. His platoon was ambushed by North Vietnamese Regulars. A firefight ensued. "I know Ken went down very hard," Larry wrote me describing the battle. Sgt. Carter was 31, about a year older than I am now. It was nearly four years before I was born. He went to Viet Nam early on, having changed his MOS from the Honor Guard to the Infantry, because he believed in the war effort and in serving his country in every possible way.

Larry (or Ski, as I have come to address him) and I continue to correspond and, as per his promise, he has sent me pictures of him and Sgt. Carter. I still wonder what force enabled me to unwittingly help heal a small part of the Viet Nam War. This nearly incredible experience has not reaffirmed my faith in God so much as it has reaffirmed my faith in man and the strange, strange world in which we live. □

Veteran's Affairs Corner



Washington, D.C. - "This report confirms my concerns about VA's capacity and ability to meet the rising demand of returning service members and veterans seeking mental health care services," said Rep. Lane Evans.

In a report issued today the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has failed to implement key recommendations offered by its own Special Advisory Committee on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to improve mental health care for service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as other veterans.

Evans, the ranking Democratic member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and senior member of the House Armed Services Committee, requested that GAO determine the extent to which VA has met the Special Advisory Committee's recommendations and its time frames for implementation.

GAO determined that VA has not fully met any of the Special Advisory Committee's 24 recommendations regarding clinical care and education, though it has partially met some. Moreover, GAO reported that the VA does not plan to fully implement 23 out of the 24 recommendations until fiscal year 2007 or later. Many of the recommendations are long-standing and were first raised by the Special Advisory Committee nearly two decades ago.

"We cannot afford to wait any longer to fully address this critical issue. I plan to reintroduce my comprehensive veterans' mental health bill that focuses on enhanced education and outreach efforts, improved screening and diagnosis practices, as well as effective treatment and follow-up counseling for veterans and family members. I also have requested a congressional hearing to examine the efforts and policies of both the VA and Defense Department," Evans continued.

(Rep. Lane Evans represents the 17th Congressional District of Illinois)

Helpful government web sites concerning veteran's health care: My HealthVet at: www.myhealth.va.gov

For a copy of the 2005 Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents publication, go to: www.valaw.org/vetben05.htm

The Cacti Association Service Officer is: James Cooke. For questions regarding Veteran's benefits and rights, contact him at: jmcooke@swbell.net