

GRAND MARSHALL of the 2012 MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

JAMES P BRINKER

Jim entered the US Army on a Regular Army enlistment. After Basic and Advanced Infantry training he studied Infantry Operations and Intelligence at the Infantry School Ft. Benning, Ga. The training was mostly for working in a map room and pushing papers, however the last word in his army job description was “reconnaissance”.

He arrived in Vietnam in December 1969 and was sent to the Reconnaissance Platoon of the Strike Force 2-502 Infantry BN, 101st Airborne Division. The First Sergeant told him that he was going into a great unit, and not to worry as they had only lost one man in the last 18 months and that was due to drowning.

He spent nine months in combat in the jungle covered mountains west of Hue. During this time 8 Recon Platoon comrades and a company commander were killed in action. In 1970 while the Cambodian Invasion, Kent State tragedy, and subsequent campus unrest was going on his battalion lost 30 men killed in action. Five were from the Recon platoon and many were from his comrades in Alpha Company with whom Recon was often attached. None of the battles for hills 714 and 882 were reported on by press back in the USA. During this time Jim was awarded a Combat Infantryman’s Badge, 4 Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart, and an Army Commendation Medal while involved in close jungle combat. Sometimes this was within touching distance of the enemy. His life was once saved by a German shepherd scout dog taking the full blast of a grenade.

The hardest part of this month was watching several comrades bravely die a slow death because the medevac helicopters could not get them out because of the pea soup thick fog.

He is most proud of the men he served with and how they looked out for each other in close combat with regular North Vietnamese army troops. His two Air-Medals were earned by being in 25 combat assault insertions and a hot landing zone attest to the novel “Airmobile” type of warfare that he was involved in. This type of warfare was the basis of what became “Air Assault” which is used today by the US Military.

Thirty years after his coming home he finally became involved in veterans organizations both locally and with his comrades from the Strike Force. He is past commander of the Webster-Dudley Veterans Council and a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars (past commander), Disabled American Veterans (present commander), American Legion, and an associate in Polish American Veterans.

Jim is blessed with his lovely wife of 40 years JoAnn, three adult sons, and five super-great grandchildren.