

Gus Tomuschat

Subject: FW: LOOKING FOR A HERO

From: Paul C Burton [<mailto:paulcburton@comcast.net>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 27, 2010 12:07 AM

To: 'Bob West'; 'Bill Kerakos'; 'Bill Selling (SgtMaj)'; 'Bink Anglin'; 'Bob Taylor'; 'Fred and Donna'; 'Gary West'; 'Gus Tomuschat'; 'Jerry Hale'; 'Judy Chidester'; 'Keith Birkhofer'; 'Ken & Karin Jones'; 'Lois Atkinson'; 'Roy Vestal'; 'Scott West'; 'Tom Mollick'; 'Wayne and Dee Maupin'; 'William (Bill) Rapp'

Subject: RE: LOOKING FOR A HERO

Hi Bob:

Thanks for sharing! I would add a few comments and recommended reading.

Comment: Westmoreland was a product of Eagle Scouts and WWII artillery. Like Harry Truman (WWI artillery) he was not only jealous of the achievements of the Marine Corps, but incapable of understanding the Marine Air/Ground team concept. Westmoreland's consolidation of all air assets under Air Force Command prior to 1968 cost many Marines their lives after the fact.

Comment: Neil Sheehan's book was a good read, but fundamentally flawed by his regard of Ho Chi Minh as a Communist only because he was rejected by the Allies after WWII. That premise was, and is, absurd. Ho Chi Minh was a Communist before, during and after WWII. The premise that the arming of the PDF resulted in the entire RVN mess is also absurd.

Comment: For those who did not serve there but wish to develop a feel for what Marine's encountered in I Corps, there is no better book than Matterhorn by Karl Marlantes. Karl is a Navy Cross recipient among other personal decorations, including two purple hearts. He served in ¼ in 1968. Though the book is fiction, I can testify to its authenticity based on my year in I Corps Feb 4, 68 – 14 Jan 69. Keith Birkhofer also did a combat tour in I Corps and has read the book and might offer relevant observations. It is available at Costco for \$14.95.

Comment: I am always struck by the comment made by Commandant David M Shoup (MOH recipient and Commandant when I joined the Corps in '63) after his retirement in 1964 and before the landing of 1/9 on the beaches of Da Nang in March, 1965; "The whole of Southeast Asia is not worth one American life."

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in New Mexico in 2011!

Paul

Gus Tomuschat

From: Bob West [lifeboy64@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, October 24, 2010 3:27 PM
To: Bill Kerakos; Bill Selling (SgtMaj); Bink Anglin; Bob Taylor; Fred and Donna; Gary West; Gus Tomuschat; Jerry Hale; Judy Chidester; Keith Birkhofer; Ken & Karin Jones; Lois Atkinson; Paul Burton; Roy Vestal; Scott West; Tom Mollick; Wayne and Dee Maupin; William (Bill) Rapp
Subject: LOOKING FOR A HERO
Attachments: An excerpt from LOOKING FOR A HERO.doc

To a few Vietnam Marines of my acquaintance and selected others - greetings. Recently I've been reading a fascinating book - **LOOKING FOR A HERO: Staff Sergeant Joe Ronnie Hooper and the Vietnam War**, written by Peter Maslowski and Don Winslow and published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2004. SSgt Hooper is America's most decorated military veteran with 30 individual awards including the Medal of Honor and 5 unit awards. Most interesting to me is that he's from Moses Lake, and was a year ahead of me in high school. Maslowski is a history professor and Winslow a novelist, both with a definite view of the historical significance of the Vietnam War and the people who ran it and the people who fought it. As such it's pretty good reading, though not as well done as Neil Sheehan's **A BRIGHT SHINING LIE**. I've known for years that there was a huge chasm between the commanders of MACV (Westmoreland's cadre) and the Marine commanders, particularly around the time of the 1968 Tet Offensive. What I wanted to share with all of you was a couple of passages that indicate how little the top-dog general of that little fracas thought about us jarheads. I found it quite enlightening and wanted to share. It's the attachment in Microsoft Word. Good reading and Semper Fi. Bob

An excerpt from the book **LOOKING FOR A HERO**; *Staff Sergeant Joe Ronnie Hooper and the Vietnam War* by Peter Maslowski and Don Winslow, published by the University of Nebraska in 2004:

Chapter 5, page 149: (April, 1967)

“Initially the III Marine Amphibious Force, headquartered at Da Nang, had responsibility for I Corps, but the Marines were spread thinly across five provinces. Moreover, Westmoreland doubted they were up to the task of protecting such vital terrain. ‘The military professionalism of the Marines falls far short of the standards that should be demanded of our armed forces,’ he wrote. Although brave, ‘their standards, tactics, and lack of command supervision throughout their ranks requires improvement in the national interest...many lives would be saved if their tactical professionalism were enhanced.’”

SOURCES CITED: *Gravel*, PENTAGON PAPERS, VOL IV, page 426; *Specter*, AFTER TET, page 118; and *Zaffiri*, WESTMORELAND, page 268.

Chapter 6, page 183: (April, 1967)

“Marine Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, Commanding General of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, initially supported (MACV’s & Westmoreland’s commitment to *body counts* and a war of) attrition but quickly perceived Westy’s strategy as misguided because ‘the Vietnamese people are the prize.’ The MACV commander’s self-declared victories in search and destroy operations were irrelevant since the big unit war ‘could move to another planet today, but we would still not have won the war.’ Marines fought enemy units if they ventured from the mountains into the ricelands, but saw no purpose in sending ‘battalions thrashing around in the green hills against vanishing targets.’ Every Marine chasing the NVA, Krulak declared, was wasted. Commandant Wallace Greene and Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt, the III Marine Amphibious Force commander from 1965 to 1967, shared Krulak’s views.

SOURCES CITED: *Sorley*, HONORABLE WARRIOR, page 240; *Sheehan*, A BRIGHT SHINING LIE, pages 630-636; *Zaffiri*, WESTMORELAND, page 169; *Buzzanco*, MASTERS OF WAR, pages 250-251; and *Gravel*, PENTAGON PAPERS, Vol II, pages 517 & 533-535.