



**Stars and Stripes
Association®**

An organization of past and present, military and civilian, staffers and employees, their families and friends of the U.S. Armed Forces daily newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*.

NEWS

Spring 2018

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE NEW CENTRAL OFFICE

Stars and Stripes Reunion comes to D.C.



Stars and Stripes headquarters will move to the Judiciary Square Federal Building, located at 633 Third St. NW, Washington, D.C. in November.

In October 2018 Stars and Stripes headquarters will move to its new location at 633 Third St. NW Washington, D.C. To mark the occasion, Stars and Stripes will host a reunion for the Stars and Stripes alumni, December 6 - 9, 2018.

It is anticipated that travelers from outside the D.C. metropolitan area will arrive Thursday, December 6th. On Friday there will be an open house at the new office on Third St. that will include a panel of Stripes alumni who will share their experiences at Stripes. We hope you will enjoy exploring these stories and will

join in! Additionally, the Stripes current commanders from Europe and the Middle East-Pacific operations will attend to talk about Stripes today.

On Friday evening there will be a dinner at the National Press Club, with a special panel, including author of *Black Hawk Down*, Mark Bowen. On Saturday there will be a visit to the Newseum in honor of Stripes alum, John Olson, whose work is being featured in the exhibit, "*The Marines and Tet: The Battle That Changed the Vietnam War*".

For pricing, event agenda and other reunion details, go to page 3.

History of the Central Office

1980

Stars and Stripes exists as two separately managed organizations: Europe Stars and Stripes and Pacific Stars and Stripes.

1989

The Subcommittee on Armed Services hears various testimonies from both Stars and Stripes editorial and management staff as well as members of the military.

1999

Consolidation is approved and a headquarters in Washington, D.C. is established. The location of the headquarters, The National Press Building, was chosen as a result of the censorship troubles in the 1980s.

1988

The Government Accountability Office publishes a report, stating allegations of censorship, news management and command influence.

1995

Reporter Joe Ungaro completes an independent study on whether or not consolidation of Stars and Stripes is a good idea.



Snippet from the European Stars and Stripes front page in 1999.

Stars and Stripes Association Inc. is a California non-profit corporation with more than 300 members worldwide. Address, 1510 West Nottingham, Anaheim, CA 92802

CHANGE OF ADDRESS NOTICES: Calvin Posner, membership manager, 4440 Strathmore Drive, Lake Wales, FL 33859 or calposner@aol.com

In memory of Maurice (Maury) Martin, Col., USAF (Ret.), whose efforts as co-founder made this association possible.

OFFICERS

President: Mike Mealey, 337 Applebrook Drive, Malvern, PA 19355, phone 610-722-0783, Fax 610-722-0784, e-mail michaelpmealey@aol.com

Vice President and Secretary: Lorrie Goben, P.O. Box 502, Camino, CA 95709, phone 530-647-0511, e-mail lorrieandrong@gmail.com

Membership Manager and Treasurer: Calvin Posner, 4440 Strathmore Drive, Lake Wales, FL 33859, phone 863-662-4410 or e-mail calposner@aol.com

DIRECTORS

Chairman Emeritus: Toshi Cooper, 15 Possum Hollow Road, Newark, DE 19711, phone 302-454-6488, e-mail tgmcooper@comcast.net

Jim Hummel, 3023 Delta Road, San Jose, CA 95135, phone 408-270-2349, e-mail k2it@pacbell.net

Max D. Lederer, Jr., Publisher, Stars and Stripes, 529 14th St., NW, Washington, DC 20045 lederer.max@stripes.com

Walt Trott, P.O. Box 477 Madison, TN 37116-0477, phone 615-868-3248, e-mail trottaboutmusic@aol.com

Bob Trounson, 446 Theresa Lane, Sierra Madre, CA 91024, phone 626-355-0570, e-mail mbtrounson@aol.com

Newsletter editor: Joe Schneider, 4053 Mount Brundage Ave., San Diego, CA 92111, phone 858-278-0394, e-mail aztecjoes@aol.com

ALLIED WITH

The Stars and Stripes Museum/Library Association Inc.®, P.O. Box 1861, Bloomfield, MO 63825. Phone/Fax 573-568-2055. Philip Tippen, President; Sue Mayo, Librarian, e-mail stripes@newwavecomm.net, website starsandstripesmuseum.com

Stars and Stripes Association News

Editorial matter about The Stars and Stripes and Stripers should be sent directly to the editor, who reserves the option to edit copy. Neither the association nor the editor attests to the accuracy of submitted articles published. Views expressed by authors are their own.

Newsletter edited and designed by Addison O'Shea, Content Designer, Stars and Stripes, phone 202-761-0957, e-mail oshea.addison@stripes.com

TREASURER'S REPORT

As of May 31, we have a total of \$ 22, 449.00. This includes \$2,957.50 in our business checking account and \$ 19,491.50 in our money market account.

Your Board of Directors has instructed me to set aside not more than \$2,500 to support the upcoming Washington, D.C. Reunion. Essentially, current Stars and Stripes staffers will provide the manpower to support the reunion and your association will pay the fixed costs. This agreement was made to help keep the cost of attendance for association members to a minimum.

Calvin S. Posner, Ed.D.

Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Currently, the Association has 211 members, including foreign members, on record. However, 135 of them are delinquent in paying their dues. Remember that those members who are paid up through 2018 will not have to ever again pay dues. This offer expires on December 31, 2018. If you are a dues delinquent member, please remit your membership dues before the December reunion so we can distribute a current membership directory there.

Thank you to the 76 paid-up members who will never pay annual dues again.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Richard O. Strawder of Ober-Ramstadt, Germany, served with the ESS 1971-1998.

Jim Morrow of Beavercreek, OH who served with the PSS 1974-1981.

Arthur G. Sharp, Sun City Center, FL, editor of "The Graybeards," the Korean war veterans bi-monthly magazine who also edits the "Old Breed News," the First Marine Division's quarterly magazine.

Drew Schneider of Washington, D.C., former Director of Interactive Media at Stars and Stripes 2011-2018.

DETAILS: STARS AND STRIPES REUNION

Agenda

Thursday, December 6th

Arrive at hotel

Friday, December 7th

10:00 AM 633rd Third St. NW (Stripes new office)

Welcome by Publisher

Informal walk through of new space and engage with staff

11:30 AM Stripes Conference Room

General Membership Meeting (all former and current Stripes staff invited)

Noon

Light refreshments -- small sandwiches, soft drinks and a Stripes staff pot luck

1:00 PM

Staff panel to discuss experience with Stripes

3:00 PM

Depart from Central Office

6:00 PM National Press Club

Dinner at NPC and panel featuring:

Mark Bowden, author of Black Hawk Down

John Olson, former Stripes photographer

Nikki Wentling, current Stripes reporter

Terry Leonard, current Stripes Editor

See page 4 for panelist bios.

Saturday, December 8th

10:00 AM Newseum

View Stars and Stripes Newseum Vietnam Exhibit with John Olson

Explore the Newseum as long as desired until closing at 5:00 PM

Ticket Pricing

Hotel room prices are NOT included.

Attendees must register for rooms directly.

The Ultimate Package: \$115

This package (excluding hotel) includes the Open House and lunch at the new Stripes office, the dinner at the National Press Club with a filmed panel and the tour at the Newseum.

(Note: After November 1st the rate for this package increases to \$140).

Dinner at the NPC: \$120

This ticket is only for the dinner at the National Press Club. The dinner will include a cash bar, panel of speakers and the dinner (starter, entree and dessert).

Newseum Tour: \$20

This ticket allows entry only for the Newseum tour on Saturday. You may explore the Newseum as long as desired until closing at 5:00 pm.

Where to Stay

We're going to take a quick second to brag...we got you the deal of a lifetime on a hotel room in D.C. **\$109/night plus tax** at the combined Marriott Courtyard and Residence Inn (near the D.C. convention center). \$109 for a King single or Double room is unheard of in the District, especially for a brand-spanking new hotel close to all the locations included in the reunion weekend. Trust us when we say this is a deep discount off the regular rate. *Please read all the following information.*

To reserve your room contact the hotel directly, prior to **11/01/2018**. After that date there is no guarantee you will receive a room at the discounted rate. To reserve by phone call reservations at **(888) 236-2427** and identify yourself as a member of the **Stars and Stripes Group**. To reserve online visit **www.marriott.com/wasyv** and use the code **SS1SS1A**. You must use the corresponding group identification to receive the discounted rate.



Meet the Panel



Mark Bowden

Mark Bowden is the bestselling author of *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*, as well as *The Best Game Ever*, *Bringing the Heat*, *Killing Pablo*, and *Guests of the Ayatollah*. He was a reporter with *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for 20 years and now writes for *Vanity Fair*, *The Atlantic*, and other magazines. He lives in Oxford, PA.



Nikki Wentling

Nikki Wentling reports on the Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans issues for *Stars and Stripes* in Washington, D.C. Since taking the position in 2016, Wentling has tracked political maneuverings in the halls of Congress, uncovered malfeasance at VA medical centers and traveled across the country reporting on issues of importance to veterans, including suicide prevention, medical marijuana research and access to health care.

Wentling previously covered local government for the *Lawrence Journal-World* in Lawrence, Kan., and veterans and military affairs for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* in Little Rock, Ark. She graduated with a bachelor of science in news and information from the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. She's a native of McPherson, Kan., and a lifelong Jayhawk.



Terry Leonard

Terry Leonard joined *Stars and Stripes* in December 2007 as the editor, responsible for all editions of *Stars and Stripes* daily and for its digital platforms. In his current position he supervises the senior editorial leadership, who direct the newsroom in Washing-

ton, D.C., and the European, Mideast and Pacific news operations. He sets the philosophy for the newspapers and manages the news operation. Leonard is responsible for the content, design and production of the newspaper and editorial electronic operations. As editorial director he also serves as a member of the publisher's advisory staff.

Prior to joining *Stars and Stripes*, Leonard spent 28 years with *The Associated Press*, the last 20 years as a foreign correspondent. His last posting for the AP was as bureau chief for Southern Africa, directing coverage in 11 countries.

As a foreign correspondent for *The AP*, Leonard traveled to more than 60 countries and covered stories that ranged from wars, revolutions and superpower summits, to the Vatican and the Pope, Olympic Games and World Cup soccer. He was among the first group of Western journalists allowed into Baghdad ahead of the first war with Iraq. He also covered the famine and subsequent American and allied military efforts in Somalia, civil war in Afghanistan, the siege of Sarajevo, the genocide in Rwanda, the revolution in Romania and helped direct the agency's coverage of the war in Kosovo.

Prior to his posting overseas, Leonard had been a supervising editor on the agency's international desk in New York and before that a supervisory editor in Dallas.

Leonard has a BBA in marketing and a BA in journalism from Texas Tech University. He was a U.S. Army Special Forces medic, assigned to the 10th Special Forces Group until his discharge in 1970.



John Olson

John Olson was born in Evanston, Illinois, and grew up in Minnesota, and from as young as he can remember, he knew that he wanted to be a photographer. At the age of 12, he received his

first camera, an Ansco Flash, from his grandfather and taught himself how to use it.

At the age of 14, he started working for the local newspaper, *The Minnetonka Herald*. Olson attended the University of Minnesota for six weeks but did not graduate. He was more interested in getting himself out on the front line of photography. He wanted to photograph the war in Vietnam.

Influenced by the famous Vietnam War photographer Larry Burrows, Olson tried to be sent to Vietnam to photograph the war, but his employer at the time, *United Press International*, would not send him. As fate would have it, in 1966 he was drafted and sent to Vietnam at the age of 19. There, Olson was assigned to *Stars and Stripes*.

During the Tet Offensive in 1968, Olson spent five days photographing the Battle of Hue. His most powerful image of dead and dying Marines being evacuated on a tank was published in *LIFE* magazine and won the prestigious Robert Capa Award for "Superlative Photography requiring courage and enterprise abroad." Shortly thereafter, at the age of 21, Olson became the youngest staff photographer ever hired by *LIFE* magazine.

From 1969 – 1970, Olson was assigned to cover the White House, and traveled with President Richard Nixon. In 1972, when *LIFE* ceased publication as a weekly, Olson formed his own company, shooting advertising campaigns and annual reports for large companies such as General Motors, Procter and Gamble, General Electric and Pfizer, to name a few.

In 1994, frustrated with the digital photographic services he was using, he and his wife co-founded *NancyScans Corporation*, a nationwide digital imagery service provider to professional photographers.

"I have questions about the reunion!"

Call or email Ji Rodgers.

(202) 761-0900

Rogers.Ji@stripes.com

NEWS FROM THE STARS AND STRIPES MUSEUM/LIBRARY

By Sue Mayo, Stars and Stripes Museum Librarian

Thanks to all of you who renewed your Stars and Stripes Museum/Library memberships. As you probably know, the museum does not receive government funding, we depend on memberships, donations, merchandise sales and fundraisers to operate.

The second annual Stars and Stripes Trivia Night was held at the Dexter Elks Club on Saturday January 27 with 19 tables participating. In addition to the money raised from the sale of Trivia tables, guests made donations for food and took part in a silent auction. About \$2,500 was raised from this event.

The Wake Foundation hosted their annual Valentine for Veterans on Friday, February 9. Two Stars and Stripes staff members, Charlotte Vandiver and Jim Mayo, were among the 13 individuals recognized at a luncheon at the John J. Pershing Medical Center in Poplar Bluff. That evening, the band Shenandoah entertained veterans and their guests at the Black River Coliseum, where the museum/library had a display.

Some of the staff members have been working with the Wake foundation

to raise money for the museum through the sale of "Remember Those Deployed" T-shirts and other gift shop items as well as raffle tickets for three guns at area gun shows.

The museum staff prepared a display focusing on the 50 year anniversary of the TET Offensive for the Vietnam War Veterans Day celebration at the Tinnin Fine Arts Center on the Three Rivers College campus in Poplar Bluff. The event was held on Friday, March 23 and was hosted by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1056.

The newest exhibit at the Stars and Stripes Museum/Library is "The Cost of Covering the News." Three Stripers lost their lives while on assignment during World War II: SSgt Gregor K Duncan, SSgt. Alfred M. Kohn, and SSgt. Paul V Conners. In January 1949, Stars and Stripes photographer Cpl. Carrol Sprague died when he was sent to report on a C-47 plane crash, but the B-17 search plane he was aboard also crashed killing nine of the ten aboard. Cpl. Ernie Peeler died during the Korea War and Specialist Paul D. Savanuck lost his life during Vietnam. Four Stripers, Pvt. Carl D. McIntosh, Sgt. 1st Class David R Bawden, Cpl. Homer

G. Roland and 1st Lt. William F Miltenberger, died during the flu epidemic of World War I.

On Saturday, May 19 Bud Shell Ford dealership held a "Drive 4 UR Community Fundraiser" for the museum/library. The agency provided five different Lincoln models to be test driven by one person over the age of 18 per household. If a person drove one car, the museum earned \$20 and if he/she tested two vehicles, the museum earned an additional \$10. The project raised \$1,410.

Memorial Day was a busy time at the museum. Many parents brought their children to teach them the meaning of this special day; others attended the annual services at the Missouri Veterans Cemetery next to the museum and stopped by for a tour.

Meetings for the upcoming Liberty Days event in October have started. Liberty Days is our annual living history event from the 18th century to present. We have re-enactors covering the Revolutionary War, mountain men, the Civil War, WWI, WWII, the Korean, Vietnam, Cold Wars, Bosnia and more. Over 1,000 8th and 9th graders from the area come to this event.

Striper Spotlight: Phil "Skip" Schlaeger

By Addison O'Shea (CSS 2018)

Growing up in the Fifties, Philip "Skip" Schlaeger was an avid reader of the sports pages in the papers, but he never pictured himself as a sports writer.

Fast-forward to 1970 when Skip, newly arrived at an Army replacement battalion in Frankfurt, Germany, met someone who would give him a chance to finally put the journalism skills he'd learned at the Defense Information School (DINFOS) to use.

"I had just been levied to Germany and I had heard that the sergeant major from Stars and Stripes was coming in

the following week. I thought Stripes was all these people with civilian experience. 'Well, just talk to him,' said this sergeant in Personnel. 'It can't hurt.'"

Skip described the sergeant major from Stripes as looking like a college professor with a tweed jacket and glasses. "He drove me down the autobahn to Stars and Stripes and on the way was telling me all about it," said Skip. "He took me to meet the managing editor, Mert Proctor. All Mert said was, 'Hmm, but he hasn't got much civilian experience.'

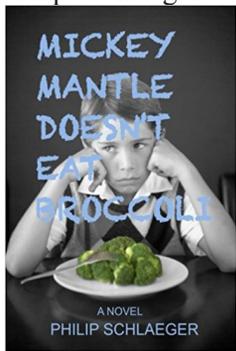
Then he asked me if I could write sports. I told him, 'I can write anything.'"

From 1970 to 1973 Skip served as

an ESS sports writer. He fondly remembers tagging along with fellow reporter Mike Korcek to interview baseball Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson. It's been Skip's lifelong love of baseball that eventually led him to a more recent endeavor, writing a novel.

In 2015, Philip Schlaeger's *Mickey Mantle Doesn't Eat Broccoli* was self-published and received readers' acclaim. While the book isn't autobiographical, this witty and relatable tale follows a boy named Skip in 1957 as he achieves his dream of meeting his baseball idol, Mickey Mantle.

Last month, *Mickey Mantle Doesn't Eat Broccoli* was produced as a musical comedy in Henderson, Nevada. The dialogue and hilarious parody musical numbers were all written and directed by Skip. So, there is certainly no doubt that Skip was right almost 50 years ago when he told Stars and Stripes "I can write anything."



SKIP SCHLAEGER

The end of illusions and the hope of victory in Vietnam

By Robert H. Reid, *Stars and Stripes*

For years the American brass had dreamed of finding a way to draw Viet Cong guerrillas and the North Vietnamese regulars into big head-on fights, where overwhelming U.S. firepower could decimate their ranks and force the Communists into peace talks on U.S. terms.

The generals got what they wanted in late January 1968. As Vietnamese north and south began to celebrate their lunar New Year, or Tet, tens of thousands of Viet Cong guerrillas and North Vietnamese regulars launched their biggest offensive of the war, striking military and civilian targets — the capital Saigon, 36 provincial capitals, 64 district headquarters — from the Mekong Delta in the south to the Demilitarized Zone in the north.

The two-month offensive was the first phase of a multistage Communist escalation of violence across South Vietnam that made 1968 the deadliest year of the conflict for the Americans.

The Tet Offensive transformed the Vietnam War — and America itself.

By nearly every military metric, Tet and a series of “mini-Tets” that followed were huge defeats for the Communists. They failed to hold any of their major objectives. They failed to trigger a popular uprising against U.S.-backed South Vietnamese government.

Their underground network of civilian cadres and Viet Cong irregulars was nearly destroyed, weakening Communist control in many southern areas and forcing the North Vietnamese to assume a greater burden in the fighting.

Nevertheless, Tet proved to be a decisive strategic victory for the Communists, paving the way for their final victory seven years later. Tet ripped away the façade of optimism carefully crafted by President Lyndon Johnson’s administration and destroyed Americans’ confidence in their government — never fully restored to this day.

It destroyed Johnson’s presidency, opening the door for his successor, President Richard Nixon, who himself resigned years later in the Watergate scandal.

Tet forced the U.S. political establish-



U.S. Marines cross Perfume River for an assault on the imperial capital of Hue.

John Olson/Stars and Stripes

ment to confront basic questions it had avoided throughout the country’s long descent into war — how long will it take to win in Vietnam, how much will it cost and is victory worth the price?

Over time the answer became “no.”

SURPRISE ATTACK

Three weeks before Tet, the U.S. military press office in Saigon briefed reporters on the contents of a Viet Cong notebook found by U.S. intelligence months earlier: “The central headquarters has ordered the entire army and people of South Vietnam to implement a general offensive” with “very strong attacks” to “flood the lowlands” and “rally (South Vietnamese) brigades and regiments to our side one by one.”

The brass didn’t believe it. The notebook had been found near the DMZ, where the Communists were massing for a major assault on the U.S. Marine base at Khe Sanh.

The top U.S. commander, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, believed the notebook was planted by the Communists to trick the U.S. into diverting resources and attention from Khe Sanh. In fact, the Communist plan was the reverse — attack isolated rural positions to draw U.S. forces away from major population centers.

The Communist plan unfolded soon after midnight Jan. 30 when Viet Cong guerrillas backed by North Vietnamese soldiers struck six provincial capitals in northern and central South Vietnam with rockets, mortars and ground assaults.

Guided by local cadres, the Communists focused on South Vietnamese army headquarters and the provincial radio stations. However, the early assaults were poorly coordinated. By sunrise nearly all the attacks had been beaten back.

U.S. military intelligence warned the top command to expect similar attacks across the country over the next 48 hours, and all American and South Vietnamese units were placed on full alert.

However, the warning came after many South Vietnamese soldiers had been given leave for the Tet holiday, and their units were not at full strength.

As predicted the Communists launched a massive attack at 3 a.m. Jan. 31, striking Saigon, nearby Cholon, American bases at Phi Bai and Chu Lai in the north, the old imperial capital of Hue as well as other major towns and bases in the central and south of the country.

More assaults followed the next day. In all about 84,000 Communists — southern Viet Cong guerrillas and well-equipped North Vietnamese regulars — joined the fight. Within hours, the whole country was aflame.

Faced with an unprecedented enemy offensive, Westmoreland sought to convey an image of calm and confidence. Months before, the general had toured the United States on a presidential-directed “charm offensive” to convince a skeptical American public that the U.S. was gaining the upper hand in South Vietnam and that victory was in sight.

Despite a public face of calm, aides have said Westmoreland was shocked that the Communists had been able to mount such an operation in secret. Some have described Westmoreland as “dispirited and deeply shaken.” He clung to the belief that Khe Sanh was the real target, even as fighting was raging in Saigon.

Initially, most of the attention was focused on Saigon, home to the South Vietnamese government, the U.S. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, or MACV, the American Embassy and the large American media corps.

The Communists focused on six major targets, including the South Vietnamese General Staff at Tan Son Nhut Air Base; the presidential palace; the U.S. Embassy; South Vietnamese naval headquarters; and the main government radio-TV station.

The plan was for small teams to seize those locations and hold out until reinforcements arrived or until the South Viet-

namese people rose up against the Americans and the South Vietnamese leadership.

Events didn't go according to plan.

Attackers seized the national broadcast center, where they intended to air a tape of North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh calling for a popular uprising. But South Vietnamese workers cut the cable from the studio to the broadcast tower. Communist attackers held out for six hours until they ran out of ammunition, then blew up the station and themselves.

At the U.S. Embassy, a 19-member team blasted a hole in the compound wall and raced inside the four-acre grounds. Marine guards kept them out of the main building, but attackers held out on the grounds for hours until American reinforcements arrived.

All the attackers were killed or captured and five Americans died before the grounds were secured – but not before photos and video of the embassy fighting were transmitted to a stunned American public unprepared for scenes of chaos.

Elsewhere, small teams of guerrillas roamed the city looking for South Vietnamese military officers, police, government employees and their families – many of whom were shot on the spot.

On Feb. 1, the chief of the South Vietnamese National Police captured one of the team – a Viet Cong officer – in civilian clothes and shot him in front of an American news photographer and cameraman. Their graphic images captured the VC officer's grimacing face at the very moment of death.

Years later, the photographer, Eddie Adams of The Associated Press, said he sympathized with the killing because the VC officer was part of an assassination squad. But the stunning photo, which won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for spot news photography, elicited a different reaction in the United States, where it came to be known as "the picture that lost the war" because of its negative effect on American public opinion.

Some of the fiercest fighting raged in the densely packed, ramshackle Chinese suburb of Cholon, where the Communists established a command center at a race-track. House-to-house fighting was so intense that the area was declared a free-fire zone until South Vietnamese Rangers de-

feated the last Communist holdouts March 7.

As U.S. and South Vietnamese forces contained the fighting in the Saigon area, the spotlight shifted to Hue, the former royal capital that had been under attack since Day 2 of the offensive.

Communist forces had overrun most of the city, defended by South Vietnamese troops, before MACV in Saigon grasped the severity of the situation. U.S. Marines from the 1st Marine Division and South Vietnamese soldiers were dispatched into the city while the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and the 101st Airborne Division sealed off routes used by the Communists to reinforce and resupply their forces there.

Inside Hue, Marines fought house-to-house in the bloodiest urban combat faced by the Americans since the Battle of Seoul in the Korean War. The city was not recaptured until Feb. 25. Troops found mass graves of up to 2,800 South Vietnamese civilians – men, women and children – who had been massacred by the Communists.

BACK HOME

With the recapture of Hue, the worst of the Tet Offensive was over, although serious fighting raged over much of the country through the spring and summer. In the north, the U.S. broke the siege of the Marines at Khe Sanh when three brigades of the 1st Cavalry Division reached the outpost April 8.

In the United States, however, the effects of Tet were roiling the American political establishment and the population at large. The American public, told for years that the war was on track, were unprepared for the intense media coverage, including TV scenes of Americans slaughtered in a distant, poorly understood war.

In mid-February, CBS News Anchorman Walter Cronkite visited Vietnam and returned with a grim report that he delivered on the most widely watched news show in America. "It is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victims, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy and do the best they could," Cronkite said.

The Wall Street Journal warned in a Feb. 23 editorial that "we think the American people should be getting ready to accept, if they haven't already, the prospect the

whole Vietnam effort may be doomed..."

The U.S. military saw the situation differently. MACV estimated that the Communists had suffered severe casualties — by some estimates up to 17,000 dead and about 20,000 wounded in the initial phase alone.

With the Communists on their heels, Westmoreland believed it was time for a major counterstrike, with attacks on sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia and across the DMZ into North Vietnam.

He asked for more than 100,000 reinforcements to pursue his plan.

"If I could execute those moves fairly rapidly following the heavy losses the enemy had incurred in the Tet Offensive, I saw the possibility of destroying the enemy's will to continue the war," Westmoreland wrote in his 1976 memoirs.

But Johnson and his inner circle would have none of it.

They feared that meeting Westmoreland's request would have forced a huge increase in the unpopular draft and bankrupted the Treasury if the U.S. were to maintain its Cold War commitments elsewhere, including Europe.

The American public, Johnson believed, would not stand for it.

"The American people were never involved," Barry Zorthian, an ex-Marine and former chief U.S. spokesman in Vietnam, told National Public Radio. "They were told to go about their normal, prosperous lives while we were fighting this nasty little war in Southeast Asia. Suddenly you turn around and we've got a half million out there and more on the way. No limit to it."

In early March, anti-war Sen. Eugene McCarthy nearly tied Johnson in the New Hampshire Democratic presidential primary. Four days later, a far more popular candidate, Sen. Robert Kennedy, entered the race. And two World War II icons, Gen. Omar Bradley and Gen. Maxwell Taylor, told Johnson the war was lost.

On March 31, Johnson went on national television to announce a near halt in the bombing of North Vietnam, an offer to the North for negotiations — and that he would not seek the Democratic nomination for president.

Gone was the hope of victory. But the war — and the dying — would drag on for years.

Reunion Registration Form

Below is the form needed to register for the 2018 Stars and Stripes Alumni Association Reunion. The fees for this registration DO NOT include a hotel room. Please see page 3 for information on booking a hotel room at the discounted rate.

Name _____ Second Attendee's Name (if applicable) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Years with Stars and Stripes (CSS, ESS, PSS) _____

Please indicate the number of attendees for package selection.

***All packages are priced per person.**

Checks may be made payable to: Stars and Stripes Finance Department

Return form and checks to:

Stars and Stripes Central
529 14th St. NW, Suite 350
Washington, DC 20045

The Ultimate Package --includes dinner at NPC & Newseum Tour (\$115)

Dinner at the NPC (\$120) Dietary Restrictions:

Newseum Tour (\$20) _____

Questions? Please call or email Ji Rogers at **202-761-0900** or email **rogers.ji@stripes.com**.

First Class Mail

Change Services Requested

Ji Rogers
Stars and Stripes Central
529 14th St. NW, Suite 350
Washington, DC 20045