

OVERVIEW, 35TH INFANTRY REGIMENT ASSOCIATION HISTORY

On September 26 1999 at the Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas, the first reunion of the modern Cacti Association took place. 111 veterans from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, and their 51 guests, attended. There were also five families of Cacti KIAs present. This representation from all three wars (four now), plus KIA families, has held true for all reunions.

At the business meeting in Las Vegas, the by-laws, ground rules, and annual dues were established and the following men were elected/appointed as the first group of Cacti Officers:

Don Johnson, E, 2/35th, President
Dick Arnold, A, 1/35th, Executive VP
Tim Peters, A 1/35th, 1/35th VP
Bill Burdick, E and B, 2/35th, 2/35th VP
Ben Youmans, C, 2/35th, Secretary/Treasurer
Jerry Guinn, Hvy Mrts Korea, Korean VP
Wiley Dodd, E 2/35th, Sergeant-at-Arms

Plans were also laid to start identifying all 35th KIAs and finding former Cacti.

The Banquet also set a standard for all following ones. Through the good offices of Ben Youmans' wife Valerie, Stormin' Norman Schwarzkopf sent us a welcoming telegram that was read aloud and help set the tone for a fine evening. Kellie Ash delivered a heart-stirring story about her journey to find someone who knew her Dad, William Stovall, B 2/35th, KIA 1968. Perhaps this gave us a first glimpse at the power we had to reach back decades to help bring closure. MG Bill Moore, HHC 2/35th 1968, was the keynote speaker and he delivered a crackerjack of a speech; stressing both the importance of organizations such as ours as well as the reasons the Vietnam guys in particular should be proud of their service. Though planned rather quickly, involving some flying-by-the-seats-of-the-pants, this first reunion resulted in unbridled joy among the attendees and gave all conviction and strength for future efforts.

The following years saw these locales used as reunion sites:

August 2000	Washington D.C.	157 vets plus 106 guests
August 2001	Kansas City	173 vets (30 Korea) plus 96 guests
July 2002	Seattle	144 vets plus 92 guests
July 2003	Buffalo	216 vets plus 162 guests

The D.C reunion included an emotional visit to The Wall and Korean Memorials that cemented our resolve and real reason for our organization. D.C. also saw the first attendance from the 2/35th active battalion representatives—another tradition that has continued on.

The Kansas City reunion surprised many with its high turnout; underscoring the Cacti themselves are the attraction, regardless of venue. It was also there that Don Johnson completed his two-year term as President and so turned the reins over to Dick Arnold.

Dick Arnold.