

GENE BOWEN

USCGC POINT ELLIS (WPB-82330) – Sep67 to Jul68 – Relieved by Williams

USCGC POINT WELCOME (WPB-82329) – Aug68 to Sep68 – Relieved Williams

October 23, 2018- Gene Bowen E-mail to Tom Livingston

I am somewhat embarrassed by my lack of recall re VN experience; even in respect to classmates with whom I served there. Time in country was Sept '67 - Sept '68. Great majority of that time was as CO of POINT ELLIS. Also, served as CO on POINT WELCOME for short time frame near end of my tour.

Kent Williams relieved me on POINT ELLIS, and Gerry McGill had been previous CO of POINT WELCOME. Bob Christiansen, Bill Carr, and Ron Fritz also flash thru my "memory bank."

Truthfully, my strongest remembrances/continuing connections were with LTJG Scott McGeorge, OCS, OPS Officer on the barge, with whom I still remain close friends and see routinely. We also went thru San Diego together and certainly bonded thru that training. Scott was deathly afraid of flying and when we flew into VN he practically held my hand. Since then he has taken flying lessons, received license and bought and flies his own plane.

My other "bond" with VN was CPO Sang, our liaison on POINT ELLIS. Probably best liaison at any level in VN. He married and had his first child, a son, during my tour. Fran and I sent clothing gifts to his son and, believe it or not, also sent him a cuckoo wall clock from our home wall for his "home". Attempted to keep in contact with him after I left VN but he eventually became a very wanted person by the North VN and had to send his family back to Saigon and he was always on the move. My daughter and son-in-law (knowing my story and history with Sang) even attempted to track him down years later - of course without any success.

Golden Journeys Booklet – 2015

The Vietnam War was in full swing and of course it was natural and logical that a military officer would be inclined to do his duty to his country and to follow a career pattern leading to a tour in Vietnam. There was no thought to the fact that it was a REAL war and could result in a major life change - like injury or death! So, after a year as commanding officer of CGC CAPE FALCON (WPB-95330) out of Norfolk, VA, Gene found himself reporting to Da Nang, Vietnam as commanding officer of CGC POINT ELLIS (WPB-95330), an 82-foot patrol boat.

The year in Vietnam was not too much to speak of. Routine patrols along the coast searching local fishing boats and small commercial vessels for possible infiltration of arms and personnel.

After a while, it did not seem to be much different than patrolling the Chesapeake Bay on CGC CAPE FALCON for lost or disabled small boats. Except occasionally, Gene would realize that some of these people, smiling up at him, might want to cause him personal harm. But no noticeable attempt to do so was ever made. In that respect his year of war was completed successfully. He survived and returned unscathed.

Coast Guard Awards and Medals Board – List of CG Units Coming Under Hostile Fire

August 30, 2004

Encl. (16) to COMDTINST 650.25b MEDALS AND AWARDS MANUAL

POINT ELLIS – 26 Jun 68

Coast Guard Action In Vietnam (2003 p. 198) – Paul C. Scotti

A close bond developed between many Coast Guardsmen and the South Vietnamese officers and petty officers who served in liaison capacity aboard the cutters. When the crew of the POINT ELLIS (WPB-82330 – Bowen) learned that Chief Boatswain's Mate Tran Van Sang needed to leave Danang for Saigon to be with his critically ill father and his expectant wife, they reached into their wallets to come up with the round trip air fare. The cutter's skipper, LTJG Gene Bowen, praised his liaison sailor:

"If they were all like him, we wouldn't have to be over here. He's fantastic."

Hardworking and unselfish, Tran Van Sang on one occasion dived off the POINT ELLIS to rescue an unconscious man who had fallen off a U.S. Navy ship.

May 1967 – WIKIPEDIA - The POINT ELLIS Vietnamese liaison officer and a crewman went into the water to rescue a sailor lost overboard from the USS PRINCETON.

VIETNAM FRIENDSHIPS

Gene Bowen

"I was fortunate to have two longstanding and cherished friend ships evolve from my year (9/67-9/68) in Vietnam: Scott McGeorge, an OCS graduate from Arkansas and Chief Sang - the Vietnamese liaison assigned to my boat.

Scott and I went through the training period in California together and eventually reconnected in Da Nang for the majority of our year's tour in Vietnam. Scott has been able to attend two of my children's weddings; we have spoken by phone at least yearly at New Years; and he just recently dropped by our home on his way to a conference in Baltimore.

Bowen 68



The boys had not one bit of trouble
adjusting to Gene. As soon as he
stepped off the plane they yelled
"Daddy." Of course he was the only one
in uniform, thank goodness!

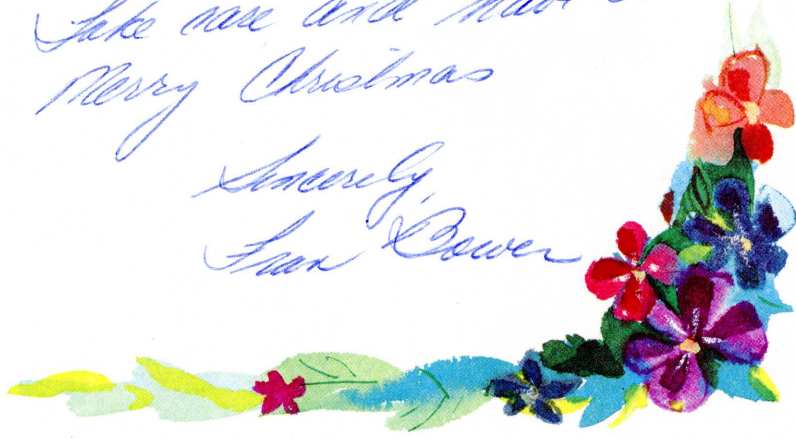
We didn't go to homecoming because
we were in Maryland visiting Gene's
family, but we'll be there next year
and I hope we can see you.

Again thank you for writing. I can't
tell you how much it makes us both
feel!

Take care and have a
very Merry Christmas

Sincerely,

Sam Bowen



Bowen 67

Dear Dad & Mrs. High,

Just a short note to say hello and let you know we are fine. Gene left Aug 5 for Calif. and Sept 30 for Vietnam. He writes almost every day, and he doesn't seem so far away. After all, of course I have a bad day every now and then, but I'm too happy to let it get me down.

The boys are adorable and keep me busy at work one day a week, and sew and belong to the Wives Club, so I have very little free time.

Gene is fine. He has a fine crew and his letters are filled with "goings on" as you can imagine. He is still the same, except he seems far more confident in himself. Hope we can get together some day soon. Always,
Lan

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May every happiness
be yours at this
Christmas Season

The Bowens

Lara, Gene, John & Steven

24
Sept. 68
Navy Times

CGd Crew Aids Vietnam CPO

DA NANG — Vietnamese Navy Chief Boatswain's Mate Tran Van Sang is home with his expectant wife and his critically ill father thanks to the crew of the cutter Point Ellis.

Sang is assigned to the Point Ellis as liaison petty officer. When the crew of the 82-foot Coast Guard patrol boat learned that the chief would have to pay his own way to and from Saigon, they chipped in for the plane fare. Lt. (jg) Gene E. Bowen, the boat's commanding officer, made the presentation.

The chief, who assists the crew in boardings and examinations of identification and fishing papers, is a popular member of the crew. Bowen says of him, "If they were all like him, we wouldn't have to be over here. He's fantastic." In May 1967 Sang dived off the Ellis to rescue an unconscious Navy man who had fallen overboard from the USS Princeton. This act of heroism earned him the Navy Commendation Medal.

December 01 – '68

Dear. Mr Bowen,

I received your letter last week.

Thank you very much for the gift.

I guess it fit my Son. My wife say the baby is in good condition.

We are not together yet. She will come to Danang in a couple more months (after VN new year).

Here I send a humble present with all the best wishes for a merry christmas and a happy new year to you and your family.

Chief, Sang



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Documents

1 message

Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Fri, Mar 12, 2021 at 4:06 PM

To: Gene Bowen <genebowen@charter.net>

Hey Gene - I received your envelope with the material you said you would send me. Thank you very much.

I thought you might be interested in part of a letter I wrote to Judy regarding my interpreter. Shame on me but I never wrote his name down and used the common term at the time.

Embarrassing how disrespectful that was on my part....looking back.

Take care...hopefully the reunion will work out for us to spend some time together...Bill

3rd April 1968 – Bill Letter to Judy - ...Was talking to Dink yesterday; he has spent 6 months in the United States. He went over with a crew to claim an old frigate now in use in the Vietnamese Navy – the one that almost ran me down. He has been to San Francisco, San Diego (2 months of training), Mexico (girls are unclean there), Panama (beaucoup girls and very nice to him), Puerto Rico (number 10 girls), Norfolk (18 months for training, New York for two days and Philadelphia where they reactivated the ship from the mothball fleet. He visited the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center and Radio City Music Hall "Rockettes" and rode the Staten Island ferry. He saw a lot of Subway action too. While in San Diego he visited Disneyland and had a ball. Also visited Honolulu, Guam, Philippines (girls number 10 there too) and then home to Saigon where he then was married. The most number 10 girls of all though were the American girls! He wouldn't admit it at first but I suspected that right off.

We talked mostly in sign language – can you imagine me getting the "Rockettes" across?

Dink said he would like to go to Japan but no money. He almost fell down when I told him I was only 25; you should have seen his eyes bulge out. He wasn't much more than that himself. His wife died of a heart attack at 22 after four years of marriage and his baby boy and girl live with his mother in Da Nang. He has sisters in Hoi An, Da Nang, Hue and Saigon.

This patrol he brought me a pocket Vietnamese-English dictionary as a present. I had asked him to buy me one and I would pay him back but he refused reimbursement. He hasn't lost on that deal as we are keeping him in good supply of chow, cooking utensils and I gave him a full set of five volumes of books to help him with his English.

I believe some day he will be a rich businessman. He is very sharp and clean cut, handsome and seems of a very good character. He was reading "The Power and the Glory" by Graham Greene yesterday and has started another novel. Possibly I will keep in touch with him after I leave. He is my best friend here.

So now you know about my Vietnamese buddy. ...



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Fwd: VN event

1 message

dtlivingstoniii@aol.com <dtlivingstoniii@aol.com>

Tue, Oct 23, 2018 at 4:35 PM

To: Bill@getrain.com

Bill - put this in the Bowen file. Thanks

-----Original Message-----

From: genebowen <genebowen@charter.net>

To: 'dtlivingstoniii@aol.com' <dtlivingstoniii@aol.com>

Sent: Tue, Oct 23, 2018 5:19 pm

Subject: RE: VN event

Hi Tom,

Fran and I are doing well; and working at trying to stay healthy. Busy enough without really having to try.

I am somewhat embarrassed by my lack of recall re VN experience; even in respect to classmates with whom I served there. Time in country was Sept '67 -Sept '68. Great majority of that time was as CO of Pt Ellis; which you have stated. Also, served as CO on Pt Welcome for short time frame near end of my tour. Kent Williams relieved me on Pt Ellis; and Gerry McGill had been previous CO of Welcome. So there are two names which I recall! :)

Bob Christiansen, Bill Carr, and Ron Fritz also flash thru my "memory bank". Ron, I believe, was there, Div 12, temporarily/short time frame. But don't quote me on that. The guys I mentioned can more than likely expand/confirm my presence better than I.

Truthfully my strongest remembrances/continuing connections were with LTJG Scott McGeorge, OCS, OPS Officer on the barge, with whom I still remain close friends with and see routinely. We also went thru San Diego together and certainly bonded thru that training. Scott was deathly afraid of flying and when we flew into VN he practically held my hand. Since then he has taken flying lessons, received license and bought and flies his own plane.

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Attempted to keep in contact with him after I left VN but he eventually became a very wanted person by the North VN and had to send his family back to Saigon and he was always on the move. My daughter and son-in-law (knowing my story and history with Sang) even attempted to track him down years later; of course without any success.

Sorry I could not share any more historical info or experiences with you. If anything else comes to mind I will send it along; but right now that's it.

Hello to all who attend the VN event.

I'm just crazy enough to possibly try another "fun run"; although I haven't done much running recently.

Nice hearing from you Tom.

See ya, Gene :)

From: dtlivingstoniii@aol.com

To: "Gene Bowen"

Cc:

Sent: Sunday October 21 2018 9:02:55PM

Subject: VN event

Hello Gene,

Hope you and Fran are doing well. At the VN event in Charleston in a couple of weeks we plan to say something about each of our classmates who served as a VNCO. We know that you were in Danang as CO of the Point Ellis but I don't know anything else. Could you tell me when you were there and what other classmates you remember serving with in VN. Any other information or pictures of your time in country would be appreciated.

If I make another class reunion you can bet I will not be talked into another "fun" run.

Take care,

Tom



VIETNAM FRIENDSHIPS

Gene Bowen

I was fortunate to have two longstanding and cherished friendships evolve from my year (9/67—9/68) in Vietnam: Scott McGeorge, an OCS graduate from Arkansas and Chief Sang—the Vietnamese liaison assigned to my boat. Scott and I went through the training period in California together and eventually reconnected in Da Nang for the majority of our year's tour in Vietnam. Scott has been able to attend two of my children's weddings; we have spoken by phone at least yearly at New Years; and he just recently dropped by our home on his way to a conference in Baltimore. Chief Sang was "head and shoulders" above all other boat liaisons. We quickly became not only mutually respected shipmates but also very close personally. His first child, a son, was born that year. Fran shipped over some baby clothing/supplies and items of use in their home. Although we attempted to stay connected, I last heard from Sang in December 1968, but the memories of a special friend remain and will continue.

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3 March 2021

Hi Bill,

Here are copies of my last communication with (from) Sang. All efforts to remain connected after this date, Dec 1, 1968, were unsuccessful.

I had met Sang's wife early on during my time in Danang and had visited them once or twice in their "family quarters" near the VN military base. If I recall correctly, his wife became pregnant in Danang but she left the area and returned to be nearer family (and safer area) before she gave birth. She eventually had a son. The phrase, "for the gift", in Sang's letter, I believe, refers to the fact that Fran and I gifted their baby a piece of clothing when he was born.

Please feel free to use Sang's letter and/or any of the above info as you deem appropriate/useful to your project.

Good hearing your voice. Maybe will be able to see you in the Fall at CGA.

Gene
Gene and Fran ☺

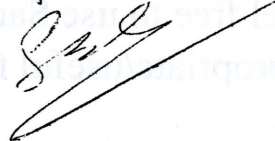
December 01 - 68

Dear Mr Bowen.

I received your letter last week
thank you very much for the gift
I guess it fit my Son. My wife say
the baby is in good condition. We are
not together yet she will come to
Dandong in a couple more months
(after new year)

Here I send a humble present
with all the best wishes for a merry-
christmas and a happy new year to
you and your family

Chief. Sang

A handwritten signature, likely of the same person as the text above, consisting of stylized cursive letters.