



volume 5 **ECHO 2/5 NEWSLETTER**



*Next Years Reunion Information !!
But first, let's see what the Echo 2/5 guys have been up to.*

Marine Corps Base 29 PALMS



*Gov. Schwarzenegger signing AB 717
Making every March 30th,
Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.*

*I hope the U.S. Congress will pass this
for the whole country!!*



*Gov. Schwarzenegger shaking the hand of Col. (ret.) Lewis Millet one of only four living
Medal Of Honor recipients from the Korean War. Col. Millet received the Medal Of Honor
for leading a bayonet charge up hill 180 in Korea. Col Millett was in WW11, Korea, Vietnam
He also has the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star and 4 Purple Hearts.*



*The Gov. and
Assemblyman
Paul Cook, Jon Voight,
and Veteran
Jose Ramos, all helped
in pushing this bill
through the CA.
Assembly.*



Present Colors (all stand please)



Major General Lehnert posing for a picture



Me and Jon Voight



The Media was there

Honoring One Of Our Own!

*Time to take a look at one of our own ,
Echo 2/5 Member Tom McLaughlin #26
Semper Fi Tom!!*



SMILES 5th Annual Block Party Friday, September 18th, 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM
 SMILES Electronic Recycling Event Friday and Saturday, September 18th & 19th
 Madison East Center, 1400 Madison Avenue, Mankato MN 56001
Disability Awareness—Don't Just Think About it, - Be About it!

Empowering People with Disabilities Since 1990!



July-Sept
2009

A Life Rebuilt

Just about any day of the week, you can find Tom McLaughlin in his garage, working on a motorcycle. Tom's the kind of man who likes to keep busy. As the Chairman of the Blue Earth County Board, recently opening the new Justice Center, and frequent speaker for veterans' groups, you'd think he'd have plenty to do, but it wasn't always so.

Tom was drafted in 1967 and went into the United States Marine Corps. He lost a leg in Viet Nam with permanent injuries to the other leg, too.

When he got back home, Tom didn't see how he could have a life. He had problems with standing and needed to recover strength.

He could only work for short periods of time while recovering from his injuries. Tom needed to find a hobby or interest to occupy the rest of his time.

Motorcycles had always been an interest of Tom's. Tom had built a scooter in high school, and enjoyed that, so he started tinkering again. His first project was fixing up a three-wheeler.

Then he got another one that was vintage and started working on it evenings. He liked it; riding and working on motorcycles. Tom stayed with it, and in the late '70's really got going, to where it was a full time interest.

Through the years Tom developed his interest and skill in motorcycle rebuilding. He started working on vintage motorcycles. The oldest one so far was a 1933 Harley. Tom's rebuild projects are usually motorcycles from the 1930's and 1940's.

His favorite is a 1947 Indian because of its sentimental age. While he couldn't ride all the motorcycles; side cars were an answer that made it possible to go, anyway.

And did he go! He even rode a home-made three-wheeler to Sturgis!

Motorcycle riding with a prosthetic leg has its challenges, though. His former prosthetic was built so the knee worked rather like a door hinge, and might give way when he was braking. It was also a problem when he bent over or stood up.



He had a lot of "neat things" to assist in his motorcycle rebuilding, but he found he was still limited in what he could do.

He found, too, there were limits to how long he could stand, explaining problems that occur when a leg is amputated above the knee.

All his weight rides on the hip bone, making it hard on his spine. Every jolt of every step goes into his back, making it very difficult to walk on uneven ground.

Then Tom contacted the Veteran's Administration and heard about SMILES Center for Independent Living through a

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Inserts:

- ◆ *Upcoming Activities/Courses*
- ◆ *Block Party Flyer*



A Life Rebuilt (cont')

Rehabilitation Counselor working with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

SMILES was contracted to conduct an independent living assessment to see if Tom needed some assistive technology to live more independently.

Tom had been using a wooden bench to rebuild his motorcycles. He needed assistance and a ramp to get the motorcycles on and off the bench and brace it so he could work at eye level.



Motorcycle workbench with tire stabilizers

SMILES found that there were new technologies that could assist Tom in his hobby of rebuilding motorcycles.



Hydraulic foot-pedal in use.

He got authorization to buy a bench with a hydraulic foot pedal. He also got an air compressor through the program that he can run his tools off the air drive.

Besides the screw driver, chisel and disc sander he uses to blow off body filler, he's got a brush grinder, too, using a mask and shield to protect himself from wire bits.

Not all the equipment is "high-tech," however; Tom uses a tennis ball attached to the motorcycle hand-grip to protect his forehead from bumps.

He also uses cushion mats to stand on, helping his back compensate for the weight distribution over his hip.

Tom's been in the Veterans Program for thirty five years; he sees the VA a lot and stays "tuned in." His current prosthetic has a high-tech knee that won't buckle and give way.

It has a micro chip and battery operated program for gait/stride and heel strike, controlling the knee. It even compensates for decreasing slope when he walks.

Tom credits SMILES staff member Michelle Malakowsky's persistence and patience working with him and Vocational Rehabilitation Services to make this happen.

He says Veterans should check into the Vocational Rehabilitation Program because the younger Veterans, now coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan don't know they are eligible for programs that can assist them to make the adjustments they may need or get equipment and support through organizations like SMILES. (cont' on page 10)

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United Way Funded Agency

Reunion 2010

The next reunion will be held in San Diego the 4th - 7th of November

We have setup tours of Camp Pendleton and MCRD.

More information will be coming after the new year!!

*I know times are bad for a lot of us but please remember to pay your dues.
Dues are due February 2010 and are good till February 2011 (\$ 30.00 per year)
If you are a new member you can go to the 2ndbn5thmarines.com site click on Echo Co.
and down load the membership application.*

Take Care & Semper Fi

Ochal Caudill

P.S. Write in and send in pictures of your events so we can post them in the next newsletter

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