

22 October 2005

Dear Colonel Thomas,

I recently was contacted by Pete Paffrath concerning the 1/4-K-Bay Reunion in 2006, and he mentioned that he had talked with you about the reunion and had reminisced with you about some of the wonderful times we had back then in what I maintain to this day, to anyone who will listen to me, was the greatest command any of us ever had the privilege to serve with, no matter what the length of our service.

For the record, sir, I want you to know that serving under your command in that magnificent battalion was one of the truly great experiences of my life. You provided me and every Marine in that battalion with the greatest example of outstanding leadership that any of us had ever seen—or were ever to see.

My memories of the many experiences we all had in those days before the Vietnam War changed our lives are among the most poignant I have. The many lessons you taught me by your example served me well over the years, and I owe whatever success I achieved when confronted with enormous challenges—especially in combat—to the outstanding examples of moral and physical courage and superb professional knowledge and skill you

demonstrated to us on every occasion where such attributes were demanded.

I recall fondly some of the “show me what you’ve got” experiences you threw at us: the 50-mile march back from Kahuku; the hike down the Summit Trail to Waikane—and then, when we thought the trucks would come, the hike the rest of the way back to the Battalion HQ; the “Tac Tests” at Pohakuloa, and assaulting all those damned “Puus--Puu Kapele stands out as one mean S.O.B. it took the battalion all day to secure. Many of us recall your telling us when some of us were bitching during the hike down the Summit Trail that when we got into combat, we’d say it wasn’t anywhere near as tough as being in 1/4. I’m here to tell you there was a lot of truth in that. I laughed about it many times when I was CO of Company D, 1/5, going from one world of shit to another against the NVA. I also remember your famous expression, “If you’re scared—say scared!” How many times I used that I can’t recall, but it always accomplished the intended purpose.

Pete mentioned that during his telephone conversation with you, you mentioned our experiences on Taiwan during Operation BACKPACK, and my stellar service as the Battalion Clubs Officer and, more often than not, bartender. What a time. I don’t know if you remember or not, but as a member of a so-called “Aggressor Hunter-Killer Team” formed from some steely-eyed killers from the Bn HQ S-2 staff, I ended up personally capturing MajGen Masters, the CG of 3<sup>rd</sup> MarDiv, in his tent inside the Div CP. I never heard too much about that afterwards, but I would guess the “Aw Shits” were numerous. I have no doubt you flew some big-time top cover for me over that incident. You may also recall that we pitched the “O” Club ledger over the side of the ship after I told you that everyone who had invested in the “Club” to start it up had

made over \$300 on a \$20 investment, and the chaplain—who had not invested—was complaining about not getting his share.

So many stories. Sorry to burden you, but I have so many times wanted to tell you how much you meant to me and to the Marines—particularly the officers—of that great battalion. I know I tried to convey it when you came to visit Camp Lejeune and Ort Steele and I had a chance to meet with you, but there wasn't the time nor the opportunity.

So, with the greatest respect Sir, please allow me to say, as we both move on to the final chapters of our lives, that serving under your command and having the privilege of knowing you has been one of the great experiences of my life. I shall always be grateful that I was granted the grace to be a part of that marvelous time in your esteemed company.

Pete advises that you have recently had hip surgery (me, too, in 1999) and some other health issues that will probably preclude your attendance at the reunion. Hopefully, something might work out that will permit you to attend. If so, please allow me to be at your service for whatever needs might have to be fulfilled. If you can't make it, please know that you are in my, and our, prayers, always.

God bless you, Sir. And thanks for everything, Marine.

With the greatest admiration and respect, I remain

Semper Fidelis,