

-Good Morning

-Commodore Goodman,

-Captain O'Keefe

-Distinguished Guests,

-Ladies and Gentlemen,

-Members of the Special Warfare Community,

-Honored Game-warden Members and families

-I'm glad that you were able to join us today at the Naval Amphibious Base Special Warfare Compound for the Re-dedication of our Gamewardens Memorial and the dedication of the MK-1, one of the Original River Patrol Boats. I can tell you that these boats are becoming an antique collectors dream.

-First I would like to recognize a few people for their superb and outstanding efforts to make all this become a reality.

-Lee Whaler who worked at the MSC Headquarters in the Navy Yard Washington DC, who found this Mk1 River Patrol Boat, and worked so diligently with the Naval Historical Society and Mr. Mark Werthiemer to obtain authorization for the transfer of the boat to Little Creek. Additionally, he made the arrangements to get this boat as an opportune lift to the Naval Amphibious Base with the help of the former Master of the USNS Mohawk, Captain Keith Walzak. I would also like to recognize VADM Brewer the Admiral in charge of MSC, who allowed this to happen.

-Captain Gilfaus, present Master of USNS Mohawk, please pass on our sincere appreciation to Captain Walzak and your crew for their efforts to accomplish this lift.

-Captain Pullar, former Commodore of Special Warfare Group Four, who was gracious enough to give our memorial and the boat a resting place, hopefully a final resting space. Commodore Goodman thank-you for your continued support and please pass on our thanks to Captain Pullar. As well as your staff, who have been so helpful in making this event happen, especially LCDR Tolbert, Warrant Officer Soper and Chief Jones. It is only through their combined coordination efforts that we are here today.

-As a Past Commanding Officer of NAB, I thank-you Captain O'Keefe for allowing this to transpire on your real estate

-The Sea Bee crew that moved the Game Warden memorial

-And lastly, on my thank-you list are two of our life members of the Game wardens of Vietnam Larry Weatherall and David Wilkinson both were MK1 PBR River Rats who served in RIVDIV 531 in Vietnam. They did an absolutely outstanding job refurbishing this boat and keeping things moving to make this day possible. Larry worked tirelessly on the monumental task of refurbishing the MK1 and David Wilkinson traveled all the way from California on a couple occasions to assist in this endeavor. This is true dedication to a task.

-My remarks today will be brief because so much has been said over the years and said so well about the loyalty and the valor of those who served us in Vietnam.

-It's been over 30 years since the U.S. military involvement in Vietnam came to a close. In 1982 our government dedicated the Vietnam memorial in Washington D.C. called "The Wall" bearing the names of those who died or are still missing from the Vietnam war, but we the Game wardens of Vietnam recognized our fallen heroes before the wall was even considered. Our memorial stands before you here today. There is an identical Memorial at NAB Coronado. Everyday, the families and friends of those brave men come to the memorial and seek out a name, touch it and reflect on their loved ones lives.

-Those of us that patrolled the waterways and fought in Vietnam recognize our comrades as part of us, part of our history. They reflect the best in us. No

number of wreaths, no amount of music and memorializing will ever do them justice but it is fitting for us to honor them and their sacrifice.

-The men of Vietnam in Task Force 116 answered the call of their country. Some of them died in the arms of some here today, asking you to look after a newly born child or care for a loved one. They died uncomplaining. The tears staining their faces were not tears of self-pity but for the sorrow they knew the news of their death would cause their loved ones.

-Today we pay homage not only to those who gave their lives but also to their comrades present here today and all across the country. You didn't forget. You kept the faith. You walked from the litter, wiped away your tears and returned to the battle. You fought on, sustained by one another and deaf to those who didn't comprehend. You performed with a steadfastness and valor that veterans of wars salute, and you are forever in the ranks of that special number of Americans in every generation that the Nation records as true patriots.

-What also needs to be recognized today is the service men whose fate is still unknown who are missing in Southeast Asia missing from our Nation and missing from their families.

-It's been said that memorials reflect a hunger for healing. Well, I don't know if perfect healing ever occurs, but I know that sometimes when a bone is broken, if it is knit together well, it will in the end be stronger than if it had not been broken. I believe that in the decades since Vietnam the healing process continues and our Nation will be stronger when the healing is complete.

-I am here for this special occasion to join you in Re-dedicating this memorial, which will forever stand as a monument to those who served their nation. We will never forget them. We will never forget their devotion and ultimate sacrifice. They stand before us, marching into time and into shared memory, forever.

-In closing I would like to give you a brief history of the River Patrol Boats. Game wardens of Vietnam was the operational code name for Task Force 116, which patrolled the canals, rivers and small tributaries in Vietnam. The Mark 1 was the initial boat constructed for this purpose. It is 31 feet long fiberglass

construction, it contained two souped up 220 Horsepower diesel engines and two Jacuzzi jet water pumps acting as a rudder, two radios, radar, three 50 caliber machine guns, two 60 machine guns, a grenade launcher and personal weapons. As you can see the PBR had very little armor protection. It depended instead on speed, maneuverability, and firepower for survival.

-Each River Section or Division was assigned 10 boats with about 60 personnel attached for their operations.

-These River Patrol Boats were operated throughout South Vietnam by U.S. forces from 1966 to 1972 at that point they were turned over to the South Vietnamese.

-When the MK-II was introduced to Vietnam it was called the Cadillac. The MK-I was the Volkswagen.

-“Our Volkswagen’s” Speed depended on the depth of the water and extra weight. The more shallow the water, down to a couple inches beneath the keel, it would really get up and go. If memory serves me right 30 Knots or better, but whatever you did with a couple of inches of water beneath your boat, you did not want to stop, or you would be sitting forever, unclogging your engine. At maximum speed the wake of the PBR would leave a 30-foot rooster tail. The boat at max speed could be stopped in it’s own length and also do a 180 degree turn in it’s own length. Many firefights and grenade incidents happened because the enemy figured out that the PBR’s were riding close to the bank to get the best speed or to head out to a patrol station or back to the operational base.

-Some of the primary missions for the River Patrol Boats were to prevent the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong from using the waterways to strengthen their forces, to stage equipment or re-supply. We were also used extensively for inserting and extracting SEAL teams, Marine RECON teams, Army Long Range Reconnaissance patrols (LRRP’s) and South Vietnamese Pru’s which usually had one or two SEAL advisors embedded with this force. We also acted as a blocking force to prevent the enemy from escaping, and conducted humanitarian and psychological warfare missions.

-The average patrol would be 12 to 16 hours. Night or day patrols as they say today 24/7, always consisted of at least two boats (primary boat and a cover boat). Each boat had 4 personnel (boat captain, gunners mate, engineman and seaman) and one boat would carry the patrol officer.

-Many of the tactics used today by the special boat squadrons resulted from our lessons learned in country.

-Seeing this boat brings back memories, some good and some heart wrenching. It brings back memories of friendships made, some are still important people in my life, and some never made it home. Memories of patrolling or drifting on these quiet canals, rivers and waterways, where we would settle into our patrol area, open up the issued C-rations, dump them in a helmet add some spices to make a stew (actually preparing the rations this way it was not bad, tolerable), and then put the helmet on the engine cover to cook. I think the Enemy could smell our yummy C-ration concoctions because the minute we started to eat the sky would light up like the Fourth of July. It never failed to happen.

-I'd like to tell you about the resilience of these special boats. A [MK-1 PBR Boat 130](#) was on patrol on the Bassac River near the city of Chou Doc on May 5th 1968 when it came under heavy fire by an enemy force. The boat was repeatedly hit with 75 MM recoilless, RPG-7 rockets and automatic weapons fire, which killed two of the crew and wounded the others. The boat was 80% destroyed (most of the hull destroyed by fire or the fiberglass melted, engines frozen solid and weapons lost once the boat overturned), the boat remained capsized but still afloat (the boats were built with Styrofoam inserted into the interior of the hull to prevent the boats from sinking). This boat was towed back to the support base repair facility in Binh Thuy and rebuilt and made fully operational in less than 3 months. It then went on to patrol and fight another day. Almost all the boats that were moderately damaged were rebuilt. The main reason this particular boat was rebuilt/refurbished was to honor the memory of the crewmembers lost. I managed to locate some of my old archives when I was asked to speak today and made some copies for those who are interested in [reading about Boat 130](#) and seeing the before and after pictures.

- My last story is of an operation called Giant Slingshot. It will make the Iraqi weapons find seem like peanuts. In December 1968 with the fear of another

TET Offensive by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong an Operation called Giant Slingshot was put into action, The operation was named for the small rivers West of Saigon named the Vam Co Dong and Vam Co Tay, which flow into two larger rivers South of Saigon called the Vam Co and Soi Rap. Looking at these rivers on a map it looked like a “Y” resembling a Slingshot. This operation took us all the way to the Cambodian border. There was an intelligence report, that there had been a lot of activity in these areas. The operation included 30 to 40 River Patrol Boats (4 Divisions, a River Assault Group Heavy, Armored Troop Carriers, Monitors (M-8 boats), Helicopter Gun ships and low flying aircraft as spotters. This operational group found various types of rockets, weapons, ammunition, sophisticated mines, part supplies and food by the tons either in man made tunnels, under ground bunkers or buried in 55 Gallon drums along the banks of those rivers. This enormous cache was all mule hauled down the Ho Chi Min trail that was being bombed by B-52’s daily. They found so much that the LCM boats supporting this operation couldn’t keep up with the items that needed to be loaded and hauled away. In the first couple weeks alone over 61 Firefights had erupted between the enemy and the PBR’s, I know at least three PBR sailors who were killed during this time frame. The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong fought fiercely and extremely hard to retain their treasure but to no avail. Giant Slingshot prevented another TET Offensive in 1969 by the enemy and saved many American lives.

- There were over 2,600 Navy Personnel killed during the Vietnam War and many of those were our River Patrol Boat Sailors.

-I’ve noticed that this compound has at least two buildings named for PBR sailors. Both were MK-I sailors. I’d like to think that those two free spirits will enjoy reminiscing on this MK-I boat.

-In closing I would like to take this opportunity, once again to Thank-you Commodore Goodman for the crucial support that you gave to this memorial and to all who have contributed so much time and energy to this cause.

