

# THE SPECIAL FORCES SOLDIER

*People sleep  
peaceably in their  
beds at night only  
because rough  
men stand ready  
to do violence on  
their behalf.*



**GREEN BERET**  
SYMBOL OF EXCELLENCE—BADGE OF COURAGE—  
MARK OF DISTINCTION IN THE FIGHT FOR  
FREEDOM—PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

by Eugene G. Piasecki

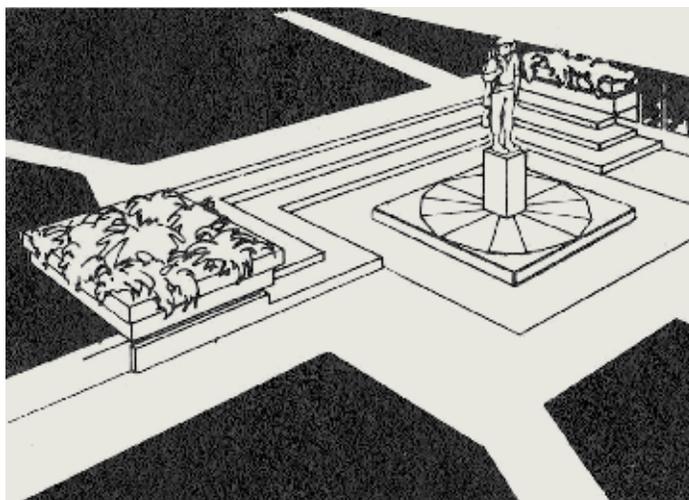
**O**n the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's (USASOC) Memorial Plaza at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, there is a statue that according to Major General (MG) Edward M. Flanagan, Jr. in 1969 symbolized "the things for which Special Forces stands."<sup>1</sup> Located atop a five-foot green granite pedestal, this twelve-foot tall bronze soldier maintains a silent vigil over the more than a thousand names of 'Special Warriors' who made the ultimate sacrifice and are immortalized on the Memorial Wall. The sculpture, simply inscribed with the words "GREEN BERET," symbolizes the past, present, and future of Army Special Forces. Unveiled at the height of the Vietnam War, the statue demonstrates the dual roles of Special Forces soldiers who "do many things for good and, only reluctantly, very few for evil."<sup>2</sup> This article provides a brief history of this statue. It all began in 1964.

On 20 March of that year, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara officiated at the ceremony that changed the name of the Army's Special Warfare Center to the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare (USAJFKCSW). Afterwards, Secretary McNamara challenged the Special Warfare community to erect a memorial for its soldiers who died in combat by personally donating \$1,000 to the CSW Command Sergeant Major (CSM), Francis J. Ruddy, to start the project. In 1964 this would not have been unusual. At that time, special warfare was defined as "the integrated application of the three major components of counterinsurgency (CI), psychological operations (PSYOP), and unconventional warfare (UW) by specially trained men to achieve their nation's objective—be it in cold, limited, or general warfare," and the best known soldiers engaged in that type of warfare were the Special Forces or Green Berets.<sup>3</sup> The result was that since the majority of the special warriors killed in action at that time were men

who had volunteered for Special Forces, the figure chosen to represent all special warriors was a 'Green Beret'.<sup>4</sup>

To maintain the project's momentum until it was completed, a non-profit fund raising trust committee was established and registered in North Carolina. Named the Special Warfare Memorial Committee, it was formed from the officers, non-commissioned officers, and civilians of special warfare's three major components of Counter Insurgency, PSYOP, and Unconventional Warfare (CI, PSYOP, and UW). Its chairman, Colonel (COL) Jesse G. Ugalde, Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne), was assisted by two additional subcommittees. The first was the Concepts and Construction Subcommittee, headed by Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) H. E. Brown, Jr., the CSW Engineer Officer. The second was the Fund Raising Subcommittee, chaired by COL Louis A. Waple, Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Psychological Operations Group. The formation of the memorial committee allowed the members the opportunity to turn their attention to resolve the three major issues that could have potentially stopped the entire project: site selection and layout, choice of a sculptor, and raising funds to pay for the project.<sup>5</sup>

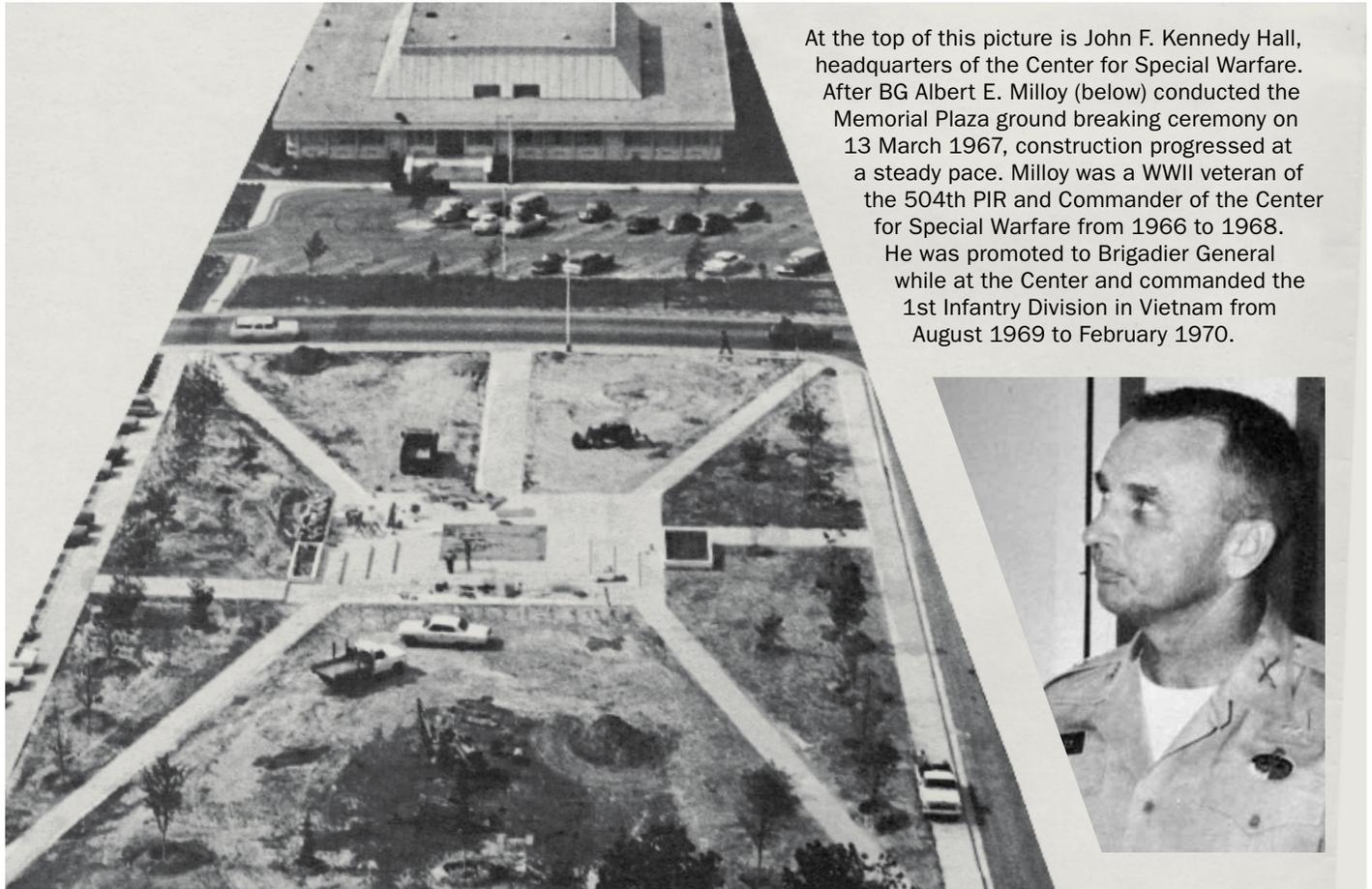
Robert S. McNamara was the Secretary of Defense for Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson during America's Vietnam involvement from 1961 through 1968. From 1968 through 1981 he was President of the World Bank.



This was Clark's plaza concept sketch that was submitted to the Special Warfare Memorial Committee and unanimously adopted in October 1966.

Private First Class Brian H. Clark had already earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, before entering the Army. He was assigned to Headquarters Company, 13th Psychological Operations Battalion when he designed the memorial.





At the top of this picture is John F. Kennedy Hall, headquarters of the Center for Special Warfare. After BG Albert E. Milloy (below) conducted the Memorial Plaza ground breaking ceremony on 13 March 1967, construction progressed at a steady pace. Milloy was a WWII veteran of the 504th PIR and Commander of the Center for Special Warfare from 1966 to 1968. He was promoted to Brigadier General while at the Center and commanded the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam from August 1969 to February 1970.

The first challenge that faced the committee was to select a location and design for the memorial plaza. This was finalized by 1966 when the Special Warfare Memorial committee unanimously agreed on a 51,000 square foot plot directly across Ardennes Street from Kennedy Hall. The landscape design was created by Private First Class (PFC) Brian H. Clark of Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 13th Psychological Operations Battalion.<sup>6</sup> Clark's concept reflected both a harmony with the surrounding landscape and special warfare statue, as well as a 170 foot by 300 foot plaza of white cement and stone that contrasted with its surroundings at the same time it blended with Kennedy Hall. Although a commercial firm was awarded the construction contract, much of the preparatory labor was performed either by the men of the Center's engineer units as training or by other Special Warfare soldiers on a volunteer basis.<sup>7</sup> This effort alone involved moving more than 600 tons of dirt so that the plaza's steps, planters, and southern magnolia, pink and white dogwood, and live oak trees would be on a distinctively horizontal plane.<sup>8</sup>

On 13 March 1967 the official memorial ground breaking ceremony was conducted at the John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare. Moving the first shovels of dirt were Brigadier General (BG) Albert E. Milloy, Commanding

General of the Center; Mayor Monroe Evans of Fayetteville, NC; and Mayor Wilton C. Jones of Spring Lake, NC. Also participating in the ceremony were BG Gordon T. Kimbrell, Deputy Post Commander of Fort Bragg; BG James M. Shepherd, Assistant Division Commander (Operations), 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division; Mr. Ernie L. Massei, Jr., Vice President of Cape Fear Railways, Inc.; Captain (CPT) Charles Q. Williams, Special Forces Medal of Honor awardee; and CSM Charles R. Ferguson, the Center Sergeant Major.<sup>9</sup> In his remarks, BG Milloy also recognized the significance of this particular monument when he stated that, "This memorial is more than a tribute to the men alone. It is also a tribute to their loved ones who wait at home, not knowing if their Special Warfare soldiers will return home... Let us all dedicate ourselves to the successful, early completion of this worthy project."<sup>10</sup> With this phase on its way to completion, it was time to find a sculptor.

Sculptor selection was perhaps the committee's most challenging task and was only accomplished after carefully examining all the requirements and potential candidates. Assisted by the New York City National Sculpture Society, COL Ugalde and the Special Warfare Committee received advice on procedures for choosing an artist, suggestions on several sculptors to consider, and how best to comply with

the committee's 1964 trust agreement under North Carolina law. This last element soon became a priority over sculptor selection when the Special Warfare Committee realized that approval of the memorial first had to be obtained by the National Fine Arts Commission before the plaza could be conveyed to the National Battle Commission. The National Battle Commission would then assume the responsibility from the JFK Center for providing permanent site maintenance. Having initiated the action to meet these administrative and regulatory requirements, the committee's attention turned toward selecting a sculptor.<sup>11</sup>

In the spring of 1968, this task was finally completed when the Special Warfare Committee awarded the sculptor's commission to Mr. Donald Harcourt De Lue of Leonardo, New Jersey. A member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the National Sculpture Society and the National Academy of Design, De Lue's specialty was creating large-scale sculptures "intended to last for thousands of years."<sup>12</sup> Among his other works that reflected this philosophy were a memorial figure at the U.S. Military Cemetery at Normandy, France; George Washington Kneeling at Prayer at Valley Forge, PA; and The Rocket Thrower done for the 1964-65 New York Worlds' Fair.<sup>13</sup> A stickler for detail, De Lue meticulously planned his program of preparation. This



Mr. Donald H. De Lue, the Green Beret statue sculptor, was past president of the National Sculpture Society, member of the Allied Artists of America, and the Royal Society of Arts, London. Among his many awards were the Architectural League of New York Gold Medal, the Allied Artists of America Gold Medal, and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

included reading numerous articles about the JFK Center and its mission, receiving Special Forces briefings at Fort Bragg and in his studio, attending classes and training events, reviewing a number of slides and pictures of Special Forces soldiers in action, and having actual uniform and equipment items in his studio to use as references as he began his task.

Starting almost from the moment he was commissioned, De Lue produced a clay prototype of his concept for how the statue should look. Incorporating mannerist proportions with highly articulated musculature, De Lue's statue, per committee request, represented a Special Forces Sergeant First Class, dressed in jungle fatigues and boots, wearing a pistol belt and beret, and clutching an M-16 rifle in his right hand.<sup>14</sup> Finished in June 1969, and reviewed and approved by members of the memorial committee, the statue was duplicated in a plaster-of-paris mold and boxed and shipped to Viareggio, Italy. There, the mold became the prototype used to cast the statue in a material known as golden bronze. Unique in its tolerance to nature's elements, golden bronze would result in the statue only darkening and not tarnishing with the passage of time. With the site selected and prepared, and a design finalized, the next step was to raise money to pay for it.

Realizing that it would cost more to complete the memorial than Secretary of Defense McNamara's personal donation, Sergeant Major (SGM) James A. Tryon of the 6th Special Forces Group came to the rescue. An eighteen-year Special Forces veteran, SGM Tryon established a trust fund into which all subsequent donations would be deposited. He then instituted a vigorous public-relations campaign which netted support for the project from active and reserve special warfare soldiers, as well as many of the Center's Department of the Army civilian employees. This was augmented by additional fund-raisers such as the Oktoberfest carnival and circus in 1968 and other direct personal donations. Among the most noteworthy of these were donations in excess of \$1,000 given by John Wayne;



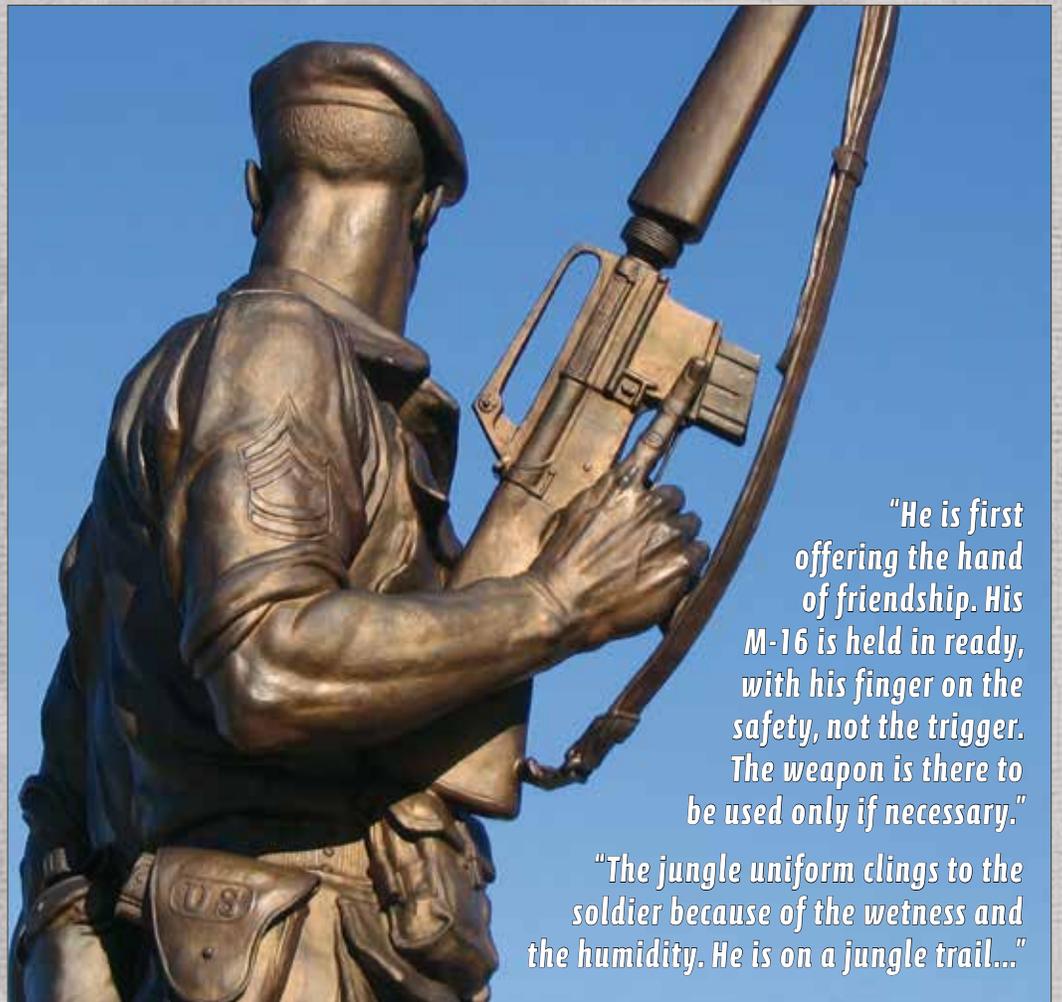
## John Wayne

John Wayne's admiration of Special Forces soldiers and their operations started when he visited several A-Camps on a visit he made to South Vietnam in 1965. A staunch supporter of American involvement in Southeast Asia, he requested and received full military cooperation and support from President Lyndon B. Johnson to make author Robin Moore's book, *The Green Berets* into a movie with the same title. Although heavily criticized for glorifying the Vietnam War, the movie was a commercial success and presented a positive view of the South Vietnamese military.

John Wayne produced, co-directed, and starred in the 1968 movie *The Green Berets*. As a token of his admiration and support for Special Forces, he donated \$5,000 toward building the Green Beret Statue. He additionally placed a memorial stone at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Chapel at Fort Bragg.

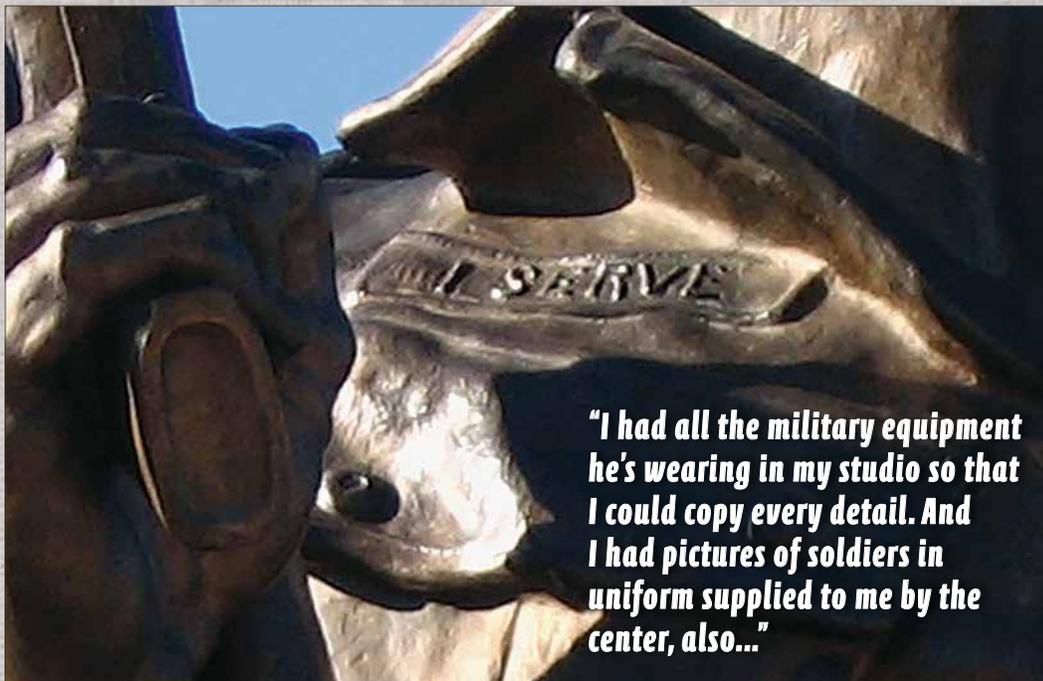
# Donald De Lue on the Statue

*“This soldier symbolizes all the good things a soldier does—combat or advising or whatever. He is not a merciless killer. He can go into a village and heal the sick and make friends...”*

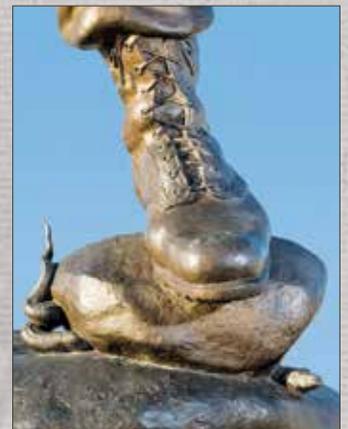


*“He is first offering the hand of friendship. His M-16 is held in ready, with his finger on the safety, not the trigger. The weapon is there to be used only if necessary.”*

*“The jungle uniform clings to the soldier because of the wetness and the humidity. He is on a jungle trail...”*



*“I had all the military equipment he’s wearing in my studio so that I could copy every detail. And I had pictures of soldiers in uniform supplied to me by the center, also...”*



*“The snake beneath his feet is a symbol of evil. He has thrown a rock on the snake and stepped on it. He is out to destroy evil if he must...”*



## SSG Barry A. Sadler

SSG Barry A. Sadler, a Special Forces medic, composed and performed the song "The Ballad of The Green Berets" while recovering from a *punji* stick wound he suffered in Vietnam in 1965. Recording the song for RCA Victor Records in early 1966, it became number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for five consecutive weeks between 5 March and 2 April 1966. Sadler also sang the song on his television debut as a guest on The Jimmy Dean Show.



This boat and trailer and car were used as raffle ticket prizes to raise the final amounts needed to complete financing the memorial statue and plaza project.

Staff Sergeant (SSG) Barry Sadler (composer and performer of the “Ballad of the Green Berets”); Mrs. Billie Sapp, widow of CPT Stanley Sapp; the officers and men of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Groups; and Mrs. Lois A. Reno, whose husband, Master Sergeant Ralph J. Reno, had been listed as killed/body not recovered since July 1966.<sup>15</sup>

With the full support from the John F. Kennedy Center commanding generals, MG William P. Yarborough, BG Joseph W. Stilwell, Jr., BG (later MG) Albert E. Milloy, and MG Edward M. Flanagan, the committee achieved its goal by the Fall of 1969. Having raised almost \$100,000 as well as donated material and labor, the project was rapidly nearing completion with only a few details remaining to complete before the official dedication ceremony. One of these was placing a time capsule in the statue’s base. On 22 November 1969, exactly six years after President John F. Kennedy’s assassination, MG Edward M. Flanagan, Jr. placed a bust of President John F. Kennedy, a copy of the speech Kennedy gave authorizing the wear of the Green Beret by Special Forces, and a book of quotations from his other speeches inside the memorial’s cement pedestal. In addition to these, a Vietnam-era Special Forces uniform, flashes of all other active, U.S. Army Reserve (USAR), and U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) Special Forces units were also

added along with either green berets or distinctive unit headgear and unit insignias from each of the Center’s sergeants major. The Center Command Sergeant Major, CSM Carlos E. Leal, completed the donations by adding the capsule’s last item, a green beret complete with the flash of the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam.<sup>16</sup>

On 26 November 1969, an idea that began as a way to honor the memories of special warfare soldiers killed in combat became a reality. First Lieutenant (1LT) Drew D. Dix, a former enlisted Special Forces soldier awarded the Medal of Honor in Vietnam, and SGM James A. Tryon unveiled Donald De Lue’s statue on the plaza designed by PFC Brian H. Clark. In his remarks, MG Flanagan also recognized the more than 550 men who had been trained at the John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance and Institute for Military Assistance who had lost their lives in Laos and Vietnam since 1960 by noting that the name of each of these men and those who died after the dedication was inscribed on a plaque to the rear of the statue. Concluding, MG Flanagan said that, “It is for these valiant sons, husbands, and fathers that so many relatives and friends joined in the raising of this memorial. The statue in Memorial Plaza symbolizes their pride in the accomplishments of those fallen soldiers whose memories they hold so dear.”<sup>17</sup>



Into the Memorial Statue’s time capsule MG Edward M. Flanagan, Jr. placed a bust of President John F. Kennedy and a copy of Kennedy’s speech authorizing the wear of the Green Beret by Special Forces.



Command Sergeant Major Carlos E. Leal was Command Sergeant Major of the Center when the Green Beret Statue was dedicated. A combat veteran of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, he was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge in each of these conflicts.



First Lieutenant Drew D. Dix was among the first enlisted Special Forces soldiers to be awarded the Medal of Honor. He received a direct commission to First Lieutenant and retired as a Major in 1982.



Military personnel attending the ceremony render Honors in memory of the 550 Special Warfare soldiers who had been killed in action in Southeast Asia since 1960.

### *Postscript*

The story of the Special Warfare Memorial Statue and the men and women who made it possible did not end at the dedication ceremony. Soon after the plaza was completed, Specialist Fifth Class (SP5) Brian H. Clark was discharged from the U. S. Army and returned to civilian life. SGM James A. Tryon retired after twenty-eight years of service on 1 October 1969. John Wayne continued his



MG Edward M. Flanagan, Jr. delivered the address at the dedication of the Special Warfare Memorial Statue at the newly re-named John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare, Ft. Bragg, N.C., on 26 November 1969.



Sergeant Major James A. Tryon (on the left of the statue) and First Lieutenant Drew D. Dix (on the right) unveil the Special Forces Soldier Statue on 26 November 1969.



MG Flanagan presented SGM Tryon his retirement certificate on 1 October 1969. SGM Tryon was a 28-year Army veteran with 18 of those years spent as a member of Special Forces.

Hollywood acting career until his death from cancer on 11 June 1979. Barry Sadler left the Army in 1966 and after several unsuccessful attempts at other careers, was shot in Guatemala City and died later from complications of his wound in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on 5 November 1989.

Mrs. Lois A. Reno died in Fayetteville, NC, in 1989 without knowing that the remains of MSG Ralph J. Reno, a member of Reconnaissance Team (RT) Nevada, MACV-



Master Sergeant Ralph J. Reno was initially listed as missing-in-action in 1966 and pronounced killed-in-action in 1967. He was officially buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery in 2011 after his remains were recovered in Vietnam and positively identified in 2010.

SOG, would be found in Vietnam in 2010 and buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery on 8 September 2011. Donald H. De Lue continued to produce large-scale sculptures throughout the remainder of his career and died in Leonardo, New Jersey, at the age of 90 on 26 August 1988. The statue of the Special Forces Soldier remained across from Kennedy Hall until it and the undisturbed time capsule still in the base were moved to its new location on Desert Storm Drive on Fort Bragg, NC. On 9 December 1994, Lieutenant General (LTG) James T. Scott, then USASOC commanding general, dedicated a new

memorial plaza containing the re-located Green Beret Soldier statue as part of the new USASOC Headquarters building complex.<sup>18</sup> ▲

### EUGENE G. PIASECKI

Eugene G. Piasecki is a retired Special Forces officer who has been with the USASOC History Office since 2006. A USMA graduate, he earned his Masters Degree in military history from Norwich University and is currently pursuing a PhD. His current research interests include the history of Army Special Forces, Special Forces since its beginning in 1952, and the History of Camp Mackall, NC.

### Endnotes

- 1 Specialist 4 Jerry Boatner, "Statue Memorializes Special Warriors," *Veritas*, Volume VIII, Number 16, 26 November 1969, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, 2.
- 2 Program of Events, Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, 26 November 1969, "Statue dedicated to memory of fallen soldiers," USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, 11.
- 3 Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Ceremony Culminates Five-Year Effort," 9.
- 4 Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Ceremony Culminates Five-Year Effort," 9.
- 5 Unclassified Message, CG, USAJFKCENMA, Fort Bragg, NC to DA (CINPO), *Memorial Dedication*, DTG 242151Z November 1969, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, 3.
- 6 Boatner, "Statue Memorializes Special Warriors," 3.
- 7 Special Warfare News Release number 213, Office of Information, United States Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare (Airborne), 13 March 1967, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, 2.
- 8 Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Clark's Plaza Design Complements Centerpiece," 6.
- 9 Special Warfare News Release number 213, 1.
- 10 Boatner, "Statue Memorializes Special Warriors," 2. This was also part of BG Milloy's "Special Warfare Memorial Ground Breaking Ceremony Commanding General's Remarks, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 11 Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Ceremony Culminates Five-Year Effort," 9.
- 12 "Donald DeLue, 90, Sculptor of Monuments," *New York Times*, 27 August 1988, Obituaries, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 13 Boatner, "Both Heart and Mind of Sculptor Donald De Lue Part of Bronze Artwork," 3.
- 14 Boatner, "Statue Memorializes Special Warriors," 2. Mannerism is an artistic style characterized by the distortion of elements such as proportion and space to heighten tension, power, emotion, or elegance. "Mannerism." Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001. Accessed on 1 December 2011.
- 15 Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Ceremony Culminates Five-Year Effort," 9. SSG Barry Sadler wrote the lyrics and was the first to record the song, "The Ballad of the Green Beret." CPT Stanley Louis Sapp was an Air Defense Artillery officer and veteran of the Korean War and deployment with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Group to Nigeria from August 1964 to February 1965. While commanding Detachment A-103 near the village of Gia Vuc, South Vietnam, CPT Sapp was killed by machine gun fire while leading a patrol across the Song Re River.
- 16 USASOC Public Affairs Office (PAO), "Special Operations Memorials: Past Present and Future," *Paraglide*, 19 November 2009, [http://paraglideonline.net/111909\\_focus1.html](http://paraglideonline.net/111909_focus1.html). (Accessed on 7 November 2011); Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Statue dedicated to memory of fallen soldiers, 13. USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, 13.
- 17 Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Foreword by MG Edward M. Flanagan, Jr," 5.
- 18 USASOC PAO, "Special Operations Memorials: Past, Present and Future."

