

# In Memorium Michael D. Koehnen

Faithful Friend & Brother in Arms  
Outstanding Marine



March 13, 1952 - September 23, 2005



Gentlemen, I am so saddened by this that I will never be able to express it here in words.

Mike has taken a group of rough and tumble Marines from a remote jungle location, and has brought us all together here. We are from North, South, East and West, but right now, our hearts are in the Dakotas.

I keep remembering just how happy and excited he was in Angel Fire. He kept saying to me over and over "We did it"...We hell!!! MIKE DID IT! He was the one that put the whole thing together and by God I don't think anyone else could have pulled it off. I only met him there, but talked to and corresponded with him frequently about Nam Phong and the group.

His goal when he started this board and the website, was to ensure that remote piece of hot jungle would never be forgotten. He did so much behind the scenes without fanfare that most don't even know about. He contacted HQMC and they now have the Nam Phong site in Archive. He contacted Lynn, He contacted the author of the Vietnam series book that talks about Nam Phong. He did all of this for us and with no goals of self gratification. He was embarrassed when Lynn called him up for special recognition; that is just the way Mike was.

This Marine Top salutes him as I sit here typing with tears in my eyes.

He will always be a true leader in my mind. He has brought all of us together after 30+ years. I count him among my true friends.

I'll miss you brother,  
Semper Fidelis Mike,  
Ron

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Chris and I will keep your family and Mike in our prayers.....  
Godspeed Marine!

Dave

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Terrible news indeed, God be with him. Wish I'd been able to make it to the reunion, Mike and I were in the same tent in the Garden.

Dale Martin

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This is bad news. I for one shall drop many prayers his way.  
Paul

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All of us in the group owed Mike a debt of gratitude for starting the group. He will be missed.

Kriss

Truly this is news we did not ever want to see. One of ours,  
a brother whom we got to know is in need of our prayers, and his family  
our morale support.

With the grace of the good Lord, may Mike be held in God's loving hands  
as he is in the loving hearts of his family and dearest of friends

My heart is heavy this night as I will miss this friend. We only met  
the once but as with the rest at Angel Fire he became not just a member  
of my family, his personality was sewn into my heart and soul. Each  
member brought about a healing that cannot be expressed. I never felt  
closer to other men as I did that weekend. He, as the rest there,  
brought a fresh breeze of life that will burn within and  
shine with renewed strength.

Mike, God above has your immortal soul tonight and must know how  
special a person you are. You are one of those lights that will shine  
within my memory as a beacon leading the way. Guard those heavenly  
streets will the fervor and the loyalty you showed to us who would not  
admit it but were wandering without knowing we drifted.  
Until we meet again at the Gates of Heaven, stand tall with he who has  
no name and yet is supreme among the universe.

Amen and Semper Fidelis Marine  
Hutch

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"And when he gets to Heaven To St. Peter he will tell:  
"One more Marine reporting, Sir -- I've served my time in Hell."  
I am reminded of the last line of the Marine Corps Hymn:  
"If the Army and the Navy  
Ever look on Heaven's scenes;  
They will find the streets are guarded  
By United States Marines"

He will be sorely missed, my condolences to the family and his  
extended namphong family. I am stunned by this I did not know there  
was anything going on with him. Of course that is just like a Marine  
not to complain. May he rest in peace.

Chesty Puller's Three Marine Principles of NCO Leadership:  
First, be technically tactically proficient...  
Secondly, know your men and look out for their welfare...  
Thirdly, and most importantly, you must set the example.  
Mike, Chesty would have been proud.  
Semper Fi  
Dale W.

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I just read the news and am truly in a state of shock. Mike is the  
reason we're all together here. My prayers go to his family.  
Truly a sad day for us all.  
Semper Fi Mike and may God bless!  
Ralph Goff



Brother Nam Phongers, just got back from out of town. Mike K. was a Marine and friend he will be sadly missed. I talked to him last at Branson, MO only on the phone. He got bummed out and left before I got there. Talked to him two times after Branson. One more Nam Phonger I will not see until my time to go. My prayers go to his family because I know Mike K. will be taken care of as he will be "guarding the streets of Heaven".

Semper Fi  
Grub

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That's the only time I talked to him. I had forgotten about it. I called on Tuesday afternoon. He seemed to not know who I was, so my National Guard friend called him up on my behalf then gave the phone to me. Mike was on his way out that night or the next day, so we never met.

Y'all state that he is the reason you are here, and it holds true for me as well. He found my tribute to Ron and invited me here. It's been a crazy few years, but I will forever be thankful for the friends and acquaintances I made in here, all because of him.

It was a .. shock to check in this evening and learn that he is no longer with us. His is a great loss for sure ...

Stacey

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Expected to be hearing some bad news about the storm, not about the loss of our group's founder. I am with all of you in expressing deepest condolences to Mike's family and thanking him for everything he has done to help enrich all of our lives. After reading James' heartfelt words, I regret never having met Mike personally, but will most certainly think of him whenever I visit the group. My spirit is at half mast for a fine MARINE and a fine person. Hope he's got front row to the Bob Hope show.:(

John

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I am probably one of the few that has only met Mike via the Internet. As an academic I can normally write pages and pages but all I can think of right now is how I will miss him. It has been an honor.

Ron Beach

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Never is a good time to say goodbye to a friend even if he was one for only a couple of years sorry doesn't cover the loss if you need anything let me know - might take a bit but will be there.

Gary Wall - (somewhere in Afghanistan)

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If no one minds, I would like to post Mikes Obituary in Leatherneck

May he rest in peace

John Binfield

Gents and Ladies,

I am at a loss for words...My heart is heavy, and I am feeling sad. This is a huge loss for everyone. Without Mike's hard work this site would not be. I am glad I had the privilege, and honor to meet this fine man at Angel Fire. I will carry that with me all my days.

I feel like I have lost someone special, and I have!

Carry on my brother, my friend. You will be missed!!

Semper Fi Mike!!

Respectfully

Ed

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Although I have not spoken, I have enjoyed this site and I'm sorry for his families loss. I cant go farther. I don't do well with death.. puts me where I don't want to go.

maybe the reunion should be near mike this year

semper fi

terry

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I hate to post in such times, but I feel a need. If anything can be done (you guys know what I'm trying to say) please let me know. I'm reachable 24/7 at 903-276-8929.

Thanks to everyone who has brought me "on board" about this.

Semper Fi to all

Spence

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I've only known Mike for a short while and was able to meet him at Angel Fire. I am grateful for the opportunity he afforded me in membership in this fellowship. This fellowship that Mike brought together may have varied opinions and political beliefs but all are Rose Garden Marines and the bond that we share is special! I feel so very saddened by the loss of our friend and fellow marine. My deepest sympathies are with Sharon, Richard and Mike's family and friends. May

God bless them with His peace and comfort. And so Mike I salute and thank you my friend, brother, comrade! Semper Fidelis!

Dennis

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I just read the email. I don't know what to say except now I feel bad for not posting much for a good while.

When I first found this sight I was so happy. And I had the pleasure of talking to Mike on the phone a couple of times. One was when we were designing the patch and one when he sent me a cd with the pictures from his cruise book.

I sent him a check for the cd and he sends it back tore up.

We order the patches, I send him his and he sends me a check for the ones he ordered. Guess what he got back in the mail?

So sad to read about Mike passing. A great person, a great Marine.

Bob Noe

I did not know Mike personally, but I will always be grateful to him for bringing this group together. My condolences to his family.  
Roger Cooper

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Mike was a good man. When we met him at Angel Fire he was grinning from ear to ear. He was happy to be with so many Rose Garden Marines. He wanted everyone to have a good time and walk down memory lane. He made the ladies feel welcome to the reunion. I can never thank him enough for that as Ruth was a little apprehensive about coming with me. If it wasn't for Mike's efforts to get a website together for us Nam Phongers, we would never have gotten together for a reunion. It was the first time a lot of us got to talk about our experiences and feelings we've kept hidden for years. I will remember Mike for bringing us together and sharing our lives with each other, keeping up the tradition of Semper Fi. Our prayers and condolences are with Sharon, Richard and the family.  
Rock

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Was shocked to hear about Mikes' passing, and wish to send my deepest heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. Through this site, I found a few friends that I hadn't heard from for over thirty years. Mike also made it possible that I have the Units yearbook, which he was so kind to send it to me on disk. Mike did make a difference to all of us, by making the webpage and bringing us a little closer, and for this I thank him.  
Semper Fi  
Tony

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I never met Mike in person, but I too am in his debt. In the 30 years since the Rosegarden, I'd only met one other Marine who was there and no one else who even heard of the place. I'd put away most of the memories and given up even trying to communicate the vitality of the place and time. Mike's creation of this group that reunites Rosegarden Marines has been a service to fellow Marines he never met and is true testament to the meaning of Semper Fidelis.  
My most sincere condolences to Mike's family.  
Dan



In Oct. of 2003, almost 30 years to the day after a classified base we sardonically called the "Rosegarden" (MCAS Nam Phong) shut down, a web search for something military-related left me with a list that I started scanning, and about 6 or 7 down was an innocuous link:  
[www.namphong.com](http://www.namphong.com).

Stunned. Nam Phong. I completely forgot what I was looking for.. I hadn't seen those 8 letters in that order since I hit Cubi Point in Sept of 73. I had long ago given up even the idea of ever encountering that phase of my Marine Corps days again, and there, yes, still there, it was. I moved the mouse over, clicked, and opened a floodgate of long-lost memories. I scanned the guest list, spent an hour at least going through every entry, saw a few names I remembered, looking desperately for a couple I didn't see. Still in disbelief, I posted up. It wasn't long before I got an email from Mike telling me it had been added, and an invite to join the discussion group. (Please don't hold that against him, he couldn't have known...)  
Soon after, I called Mike and we chatted on the phone, about the web site, the discussion group, the Garden, I must have burned up an hour and a half of prime-time phone charges from the west coast but that didn't matter - I found a brother, and was welcomed as a brother.

There are no words to describe the change in my life since that day. I have heard so many of us try to explain it and fail miserably, but not really - because we all know exactly what was being said.  
2 months later I'm chatting with Dan Hanson on the phone in Spokane about our shared interest in Washington Wine.  
5 months later Kriss "Scrapiron" Richards is sitting in my motorhome in Provo, the first Garden Marine I've seen in person in decades.  
8 months later, Mike and Rich saunter up to me as get my motorhome parked next to Rich's in Angle Fire, and tell me I better have brought some beer as they were out. I proudly handed each an Old Corps Gunner's Stout, and we toast, and hug. I'd already met Gyro and Norm earlier that evening down in Taos, along with Lynn Anderson and Mentor Williams, and then Ron and .. well it was all becoming a blur. Four days later a whole lot of lives had changed once again, forever. I can't go anywhere anymore without hooking up with Garden brothers along the way somewhere .. Rock, Terry, Tim, Ed, Snake. And Mike. Stopped in early March on my way to Michigan. I think Mike took off work early, met me at the freeway exit and guided me in to his place. The afternoon and evening was comfortable, like chums from grade school are comfortable. Good cigars, good sippin, good conversation between 'lifelong friends'. From what I hear others say as well, that was Mike. That's been all us 'Garden Marines.

Mike set up and ran the web site, hosted the discussion group, and made it all possible.. without Mike there would have been no AF Reunion, no Lynn and Mentor, and the Rosegarden Marines going through life with our story untold, or mistold, and never knowing how much we all really meant to each other. We frustrated him at times, as only Marines can. But the lives he made better number into the many hundreds. I can only hope, but doubt, he knew how many, and how much he meant to all of us.

Sgt. Koehnen, stand tall before God with pride, you earned it, and we all got your back on that. Semper Fi, Brother.

Steeley



**Michael D. Koehnen, 53, of Jamestown, ND passed away on Friday September 23, 2005 at MeritCare Hospital in Fargo North Dakota.**

**Michael was born March 13, 1952, in Jamestown, the son of Aloyis and Jeanette (Balcken) Koehnen.**

**He grew up in Jamestown and attended Saint John's Academy and Jamestown High School. He married**

**Sharon Lien of Jamestown on June 21, 1973**

**A Vietnam Veteran; Michael proudly and honorably served in the United States Marine Corps from 1970 to 1974.**

**He later attended Jamestown College. Michael then served with the Jamestown Fire Department for 18 years, and became City Fire Marshall.**

**Michael was working for the United States Postal Service at the time of his passing.**

**Michael was a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.**

**Michael made many good friends through his mastery of computers, technology, and the Internet.**

**Michael is survived by his wife Sharon (Lien) Koehnen of Jamestown, ND, father Aloyis Koehnen of Peoria, AZ, sister Vicki Novak of Durango, CO, sister Nancy Mosley of Pembroke GA, brother Richard of Chula Vista, CA, sister Andrea Carper of Pueblo CO, and hundreds of heartbroken Marine Veterans.**

**He was preceded by his mother Jeanette (Balcken) Koehnen.**

**230 Years of US Marines are calling out**

**"Welcome Home"**

**We will sorely miss you Brother  
Rest in Peace**