

WAYNE LAESSIG NOTE 6-14-2016: WE NEVER FOLLOWED UP ON THIS.

From: Corbett, Richard **Sent:** Thurs, Aug 25, 2005 4:09 AM **To:** Wayne Laessig; Bill Petrie; Rogers Stevens; Jim Alvis **Subject:** RE: Marcus Rhinelanders: Ho Chi Minh Trail project

Wayne, Good point of view that I completely overlooked. C2

From: Wayne Laessig **Sent:** Thurs, Aug 25, 2005 12:35 AM **To:** Bill Petrie; Rogers Stevens; Jim Alvis; Craig Corbett **Subject:** RE: Ho Chi Minh Trail project

Bill, I investigated a little bit to see if this is something we can quickly label one way or the other, but I still don't know enough.

I visited both his & his buddy's websites. His pictures of Laos do show a lot of used bomb casings that the locals use for various things like house stilts, boats, water carriers, etc, plus one picture of kids who were affected by Agent Orange. Nothing overtly anti-war or anti-warrior.

In one sense, this is exactly what we want to do – find younger folks who can tell the story. This might be two sincere guys who were born during the late 60s or early 70s & are interested in what happened over there but who don't have a really compelling reason they chose the Ho Chi Minh Trail to "record". I guess I don't want to turn off younger folks who can help provide insights to our part of history over there, but I also don't want to open ourselves to any vulnerability.

Documentary-type things usually have a "focus" & while these guys seem to be guys I'd love to talk to, I'm not sure they'd understand us. I wouldn't mind calling him but I don't have time to get involved right now. Rogers, do you want to give it a try?

For now, my input is to just let him know we're glad he's interested but we're cautious about media-related investigators – period. Not him, just the media & what it often does with "facts".

We could draft a message that asks the questions like Gene did - where they're coming from, their philosophy or take on war or warriors, why they're doing this, where they expect to go with this, etc - but that's a really defensive & narrow position, especially if they're really sincere & want to do this for some compelling reason – which is what I keep coming back to as my bottom line: "Why the Ho Chi Minh Trail?"

For now I still think a phone call is the best bet, & I can't invest the time right now. I wish I could. Maybe after the Reunion. Thanks! Wayne

From: Bill Petrie **Sent:** Wed, Aug 24, 2005 7:38 PM **To:** Wayne Laessig **Subject:** Fwd: Ho Chi Minh Trail project

What do you think about Gene's request? I don't have time to deal with it for sure. Bill

From: Eugene D. Rossel [aircommando1@earthlink.net] **Sent:** Wed, Aug 24, 2005 7:35 PM **To:** Bill Petrie **Subject:** Re: Ho Chi Minh Trail project

We got to find out because I have a number of critical people asking questions. Who is sponsoring him, what is his philosophy, what has he done in the past & is he anti-military/Government etc? Gene Rossel 6083 Rosa Ct Chino, CA 91710 Tel 909-930-5700 work, Tel/Fax 909-591-7342 home Email aircommando1@earthlink.net

At 05:32 PM 8/24/2005, Bill Petrie wrote:

You make a good point Gene. I don't know anything other than what he sent me & I passed on to you & my other gunship association officers. Bill

From: Eugene D. Rossel **Sent:** Tues, Aug 23, 2005 8:12 PM **To:** Bill Petrie **Subject:** Ho Chi Minh Trail project

I have a number of people are concerned about this guy. We don't know too much about their project. The TV program on CBS really created problems. What do you know about their effort & where do they come from & what is their philosophy on the military. We don't want another Sarin gas story etc. Gene Rossel

At 03:59 PM 8/23/2005, Bill Petrie wrote:

I understand Marcus is in contact with you. This is just FYI in case you want to forward it to other groups or individuals. Cheers! **Bill Petrie**, CMSgt, USAF, Ret. **Webmaster:** www.ac-119gunships.com

From: Bill Petrie **Sent:** Mon, Aug 22, 2005 5:16 PM **To:** Craig Corbett; Wayne Laessig; Rogers Stevens; Jim Alvis; Ron Julian; Eugene Rossel **Subject:** Fwd: Marcus Rhinelanders: Ho Chi Minh Trail project

Guys, I'm forwarding a request I think you might find very interesting. I am also copying in Gene Rossel of the air Commando Association for their interest in this project/request & the request to Contact General Aderholt. I am including my replies to Marcus but **I think this project should be passed to Wayne & Craig for consideration/action in reference to our reunion.**

I'm always looking for ways to get our story out to people. i.e. after much prodding by me, the Oklahoman (our daily & weekly newspaper) did a nice piece on our artist Darby Perrin. They quoted me in the article as a founding member of the AC-119 Gunship Association & mentioned the work he did for us. So we get a little name exposure there.

I hope my replies to Marcus don't put you guys in a bind but it seemed a respectful target of opportunity. If you feel I overstepped my bounds please let me know. We are certainly not obligated to anything.

Here is my first reply to Marcus: Why just pilots? I flew on gunships & we had a 10 man crew in various positions. All could give a different perspective of flying combat missions against the Trail.

My second response: Marcus, you'd have a great opportunity September 30th through the 2nd of October. We (The AC-119 Gunship Association) are reuniting in Ft Walton Beach at the Sheraton Four Points & during the weekend will be placing (if all goes well) an AC-119K Gunship monument in the Hurlburt AFB Commando Air Park. You would probably have around 60 guys from the 18th SOS (pilots, Navs, NOS operators, Gunners, IO's & flight engineers) you could interview. The AC-119K Stinger gunship is the one that flew against the Trail. Others in attendance will be guys that flew the AC-119G Shadow gunship which flew Vietnam & Cambodia. The Ho Chi Minh Trail & the Sihanouk Trail came into these areas so you might have interviews/stories there as well. Visit this link to see a schedule of reunion events:

<http://www.ac-119gunships.com/association/reunion/reunioninfo.htm>

My Third response: Marcus, we have a guy who is coordinating gathering our own video history. I want to put him in the loop on this. Unfortunately your very first e-mail to me with your initial request has gone into the ozone. Can you resend that so I may forward all to him? Much appreciated. Bill

I asked for more information about who they were & who sanctioned the project & this was the reply:

Hi Bill-We'd love to come to your guys' reunion. I'm not sure if we'll still be on the road then, but if not, we'll plan on flying down. It's great to hear that Gen. Aderholt will be the guest speaker. Could you send me his e-mail (or vice versa) so we can get in touch beforehand?

To give you a little background, I'm a freelance photographer & the guy I'm doing this project with is a writer. You can check out our websites at www.mqrphoto.com & www.natstone.net for more on what we have done recently. Most of the work that we've both done recently is on rivers- we got interested in the Ho Chi Minh Trail more or less by accident. Last year we literally stumbled on old cobblestone roads in the Lao jungle while documenting ethnic villages that are going to be flooded by hydroelectric dams Vietnamese companies plan to build on the Se Kong river. We were both born during the war & didn't know much more about the trail than most people. But we realized that this was a big part of American history that's still unappreciated. So this past winter we spent six months in Southeast Asia interviewing anyone who could tell us stories about the Trail, from Nge villagers to NVA colonels. Now we're back in the States & we want to get the American side of the story. What we're aiming for isn't specifically a military history, but a collection of oral history from as many different viewpoints as possible. The thing that made us do this now is that the life expectancy in SE Laos is 44 years- most of these stories are disappearing forever. But several Americans on our interview list have died recently too, so it's none too soon. We would like to talk to any of your guys who feel like talking. We'll be on the road in September interviewing SOG guys, helicopter pilots, POWs, etc. Your reunion would be a great ending. As for how we do it, it's nothing fancy; just set up a video camera & talk. We want to let the stories speak for themselves & can promise to present everything we get in as objective & comprehensive a form as possible.

I hope that this helps, but please feel free to ask us anything else.

See you in Florida, Marcus Q. Rhinelander mqrhinelander@yahoo.com www.mqrphoto.com

From: Marcus Rhinelander [mqrhinelander@yahoo.com] Sent: Wed, Aug 17, 2005 10:41 AM To: Bill Petrie Subj: Ho Chi Minh Trail project

Hello-I'm an American photographer working on a project on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. My research partner, Nat Stone, & I spent this past winter in southeast Asia, first walking through southeast Laos & eastern Cambodia, & then spending a month in Vietnam interviewing people who'd lived & served along the trail network.

The main focus of the trip was to record the stories of the trail & the war while those who remember both are still alive. These interviews were primarily with ethnic minority groups along the way, but included Lao, Khmer, Vietnamese, & Americans.

We are now back in the U.S. & planning a trip across the country to interview American vets whose service related to the Trail, & will return to Southeast Asia this winter for more work there. We will publish what we record in article, book, photo, & video formats. Our plan this fall is to start in Washington, D.C. on Sept 12 & spend two to three weeks on the road covering the east, south, & midwest, & possibly the far west as well.

We are very interested in interviewing veterans who served in, around, or over the Trail. As part of that, I am contacting pilots who flew missions over southeast Laos & eastern Cambodia. I hope that you may know gunship pilots or pilots' associations of Vietnam vets who might be willing to talk about their service.

If you could suggest people or associations for us to contact, I would appreciate it. We would hope to interview people on camera (as we have done in Asia), but would be willing to talk to anyone off camera or even off the record if they would prefer.

Thank you for your help,

Marcus Rhinelander