

Discovery Channel series “Battle Zone” to tell the story of Dave Larsen

Showing expected in March

The story will about Dave Larsen GMG3 River Division 593 and the battle on August 2 1969 in which he was awarded the Navy Cross. The show will include the story of PBR's on patrol and is scheduled for March 2007.

Navy Cross Recipient - GMG3 David R. Larsen

Citation: For extraordinary heroism on 2 August 1969 while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in armed conflict against North Vietnamese and Viet Cong communist aggressor forces in the Republic of Vietnam.

GMG3 Larsen was serving as a gunner's mater mate aboard PBR 775 which was part of a two-boat night waterborne guard post stationed on the upper Saigon River. Operating in conjunction with the patrol, a six-man ambush team, which was providing bank security for the guard post, engaged four enemy soldiers who were part of an estimated 35 to 50-man force that returned the contact with accurate rocker fire, killing or critically wounding all but one member of the six-man ambush team. One man from the team managed to call for the PBR crewmen's help. Armed with a machine gun and several ammunition belts, *GMG3 Larsen* hastened to the assistance of the ambush team. As he led his small force ashore, he saw three enemy soldiers about to overrun the friendly position. He immediately rushed toward them, firing his machine gun, and single-handedly turned back the enemy assault, killing at least one of the enemy. *GMG3 Larsen* then maintained a one-man perimeter defensive position and, although under continuous enemy fire, succeeded in discouraging further enemy attacks until additional help arrived. Later, armed with three different weapons, *GMG3 Larsen* was the first man to take his post on the perimeter established to provide security for the medical evacuation helicopter. By his extremely courageous one-man assault in the face of direct enemy fire, *GMG3 Larsen* was responsible for saving the lives of three fellow servicemen, and for protecting his shipmates as they administered aid to the wounded. His valiant and inspiring efforts reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Naval Service.



The 24th of October Reception and Wake

I call it a reception and wake because of the many men present that could not be part of the filming and those that could were present – but when would a sailor miss a party where they can tell sea stories.

The production Crew with Larry and Tom in the back ground



XO NS Everett with Carl talking of the Vietnam war



"The Re-Enactment occurred on 25 and 26 October 2006 in Everett, WA. It honors Navy Cross winner Dave Larsen and several Bronze Star winners: Carl Fletcher, TM1 Walt Thomas, EN2 Charlie Vance, GMG3 Hayes Dunn, EN3 Bob Tipton, SN Terry Shorts, FN Phillips and one PFC Jesse James, US Army during the same action from River Division 593. Patrol Officers were BMC Carl Fletcher, QMC Howard Johnson, and SMC Bob Monzingo. The Discovery TV Show is scheduled to be shown in March 2007."

Dave Larsen cutting the cake in his honor with a Navy Cross and 593 patch in the frosting as his proud parents stand by. All of the wine bottles on the table also had Navy Crosses on them.



Tom Restemayer with his Black Beret next to the PBR beer in the tub. You can also see BM1 A. Billy Rat and our Pabst Blue Ribbon Banner in the back ground.

Dale at the table with some of our lady guests many others are in the back ground. we had approximately 50 guests most were from River Division 593

The youngest women at the reception our own Ensign Andrea Istre



L to R with ranks in 1969 and medal award on 2 august 1969 if any: BMC Carl Fletcher (Bronze Star), TM1 Walt Thomas (Bronze Star), MT1 Scott Rhodes, EN2 Jim Davy, LT Larry Bissonnette, GMG3 Dave Larsen (Navy Cross), GMG3 Hayes Dunn (Bronze Star), SN Donald Dennis (River Section 531), EN2 Charlie Vance (Bronze Star). All others are River Division 993



Battle hardened Vietnam Veterans and Battle Re-enactors meet for a picture

P.S. the Veterans are the old guys



When you read the story on the next page, keep in mind that we had FULL SUPPORT from the local navy CHINFO was the "Navy" that withdrew the support for use of navy re-enactors.

We must thank the USS Ford, NS Everett, USS Lincoln for their support of our group even though they could not be in the re-enactment. Most importantly IBU Eleven for providing their tuck to move the PBR.



Tom Moffatt on his boat has a conference with Dale Duffield captain of the boat on his stern before leaving for the Slough. Tom Restemayer in his Black Beret waits to get underway



QMC Glenn Hoffman from IBU 11 an enginemen (His other Job) in the hole and Tom Moore a civilian engineer working to make our boat well.

Al Johnson, GMG2 River Division 593, Mike Perin, SK2 NSA Binh Thuy, Walt Thomas, TM1 River Division 593, CDR Taylor, CO of the USS Ford. The PBR was at the reception so that all the old PBR sailors could go aboard and reminisce.





Walt Thomas, Al DeRoco, former CO River Division 593 (Dec 1969-June 1970), Debra DeRoco and Larry Bissonnette watching the Re-enactment.



Here is the PBR in the dark. Being out in the dark with the PBR bought back a lot of memories. I am also glad there were no spot lights at our ambush sites in Vietnam. The people you see near the PBR are on a small police boat next to the PBR

Does it look a little scary and surreal "Normal"? It's a good thing none of the people in the foreground had weapons.



For two people this the Re-enactment was a Family affair TM1 Walt Thomas Boat Captain and Bronze Star winner was played by his son Walter (Tommy) Thomas, IV. It doesn't get any better than this!



Walt had two sons with him at the re-enactment, Walter (Tommy) Thomas, IV and Shawn Thomas but there was only one Walt in Vietnam so Shawn had to watch.



The PBR at Dagmar Landing after the re-enaction on the bow are Heinz Hickethier, John Woody and Ralph Christopher.

Vietnam comes alive on river



JANIS FRETZ / The Herald

Actors wait for their scenes in the Discovery Channel's "Battle Zone" documentary during filming early Thursday near the sloughs around Ebey Island.

Snohomish River plays role in documentary

By JIM HALEY
Herald Writer

David Larsen was tossed an M-60 machine gun and several belts of ammunition before jumping, almost falling, from his U.S. Navy river patrol boat into the pitch-black jungle next to the North Saigon River.

Seconds before, a rocket exploded among six U.S. Army soldiers who had been deposited by sailors on land to ambush Vietcong.

It was Aug. 2, 1969, and the enemy turned the tables. Vietcong zeroed in on the ambush team, killing three outright and seriously wounding the others with rocket fire.

"I kind of think they waited until we pulled in," Larsen said Thursday.



Bob Tipton



David Larsen

Nearly four decades ago, he was a 21-year-old petty officer when he dashed into the jungle.

He got ahead of the dead and the wounded and laid down protective fire. Another young sailor, Bob Tipton, soon joined him while others evacu-

ated the dead and the wounded.

The brief but fierce battle earned Larsen the highest Navy citation, the Navy Cross, and Tipton a Bronze Star.

The exploit was chosen by a Los Angeles production company as one of 13 episodes to be featured in a Discovery Channel series dubbed "Battle Zone," a depiction of exploits stretching from Korea to Iraq.

Interviews of participants will be interspersed with action scenes that were re-enacted and filmed Wednesday and Thursday nights near the sloughs on the north end of Ebey Island.



JUDY STANLEY / The Herald

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River: Navy pulls out of film

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Larsen, from Parsons, Kan., and Tipton, of Jacksonville, Fla., joined about two dozen river patrol boat veterans from Vietnam to witness the taping.

The Snohomish River sloughs were picked for the documentary because local veterans, who affectionately call themselves river rats, restored one of the few shallow-water jet boats. Designated PBR for "patrol boat, river," the local boat was used for the documentary.

The Northwest veterans group, called Gamewardens NW, is headed by Heinz Hicke-thier, who lives near Bremerton. He has worked the last two months to set up logistics for the production company and the PBR-veteran visitors.

"It means a lot to us," Hicke-thier said. "We'd like to see a true story told about PBR sailors."

That doesn't mean the production went off without a hitch.

First, the Snohomish County Council had to change regulations that prohibit shooting in the area. For documentaries, blanks can be used to portray the fire-fight scenes.

The company thought it had full cooperation of the Navy, producer Arthur Maturro said. The restored PBR was going to be



Jason Fertz / The Herald

Bob Brower VP NWC GWVN and other Gamewardens volunteers set the boat on the shore for static display. It was disappointing that re-enactors could not be on the boat.

Vietnam War jet boats offered maneuverability

HERALD STAFF

The 31-foot river patrol boats with a fiberglass hulls were a military mainstay in the U.S. conflict in Vietnam for halting movement of Vietcong troops and supplies.

- They were called PBR or, "patrol boat, river" by the Navy.
- They were jet boats capable of great maneuverability and could operate in shallow water.
- The squadrons attracted more than 4,200 volunteers for the four-person vessels, which were armed with machine guns and sometimes mortars.
- There are estimates that nearly a third of the volunteers were wounded or killed, according to PBR veteran Tom

Restemayer of Lynnwood. Restemayer is one of 30 members of Gamewardens NW, the Northwest organization of survivors of the river war.

■ The organization refurbished a Mark II version of the PBR as a memorial to those who served on the vessels.

■ The refurbished boat, which was made in Bellingham, was used this week in a re-enactment in the Snohomish River sloughs of a battle that will be featured in a series of documentaries on war battles.

■ The Discovery Channel documentary series, "Battle Zone," is expected to start in January. The episode filmed in the Snohomish River sloughs should air in March.

used by the actors and the actors were to be members of an Everett-based frigate, the USS Ford.

But a Department of Defense

regulation prevented the use of active duty personnel and Navy equipment from being used in documentaries.

Maturro, from North Point

Productions, switched gears quickly and hired actors to play the parts of Larsen, Tipton and numerous others involved in the firefight.

Maturro said he intends to make do "through smoke and mirrors and editing."

The last glitch was a long delay in the arrival of the PBR boat, which was being towed to the production site opposite Otter Island after its engine failed. The boat was about four hours late when the boat towing it missed a turn in the windy sloughs and wound up almost in Marysville. Shooting the first night didn't stop until about 4 a.m. Thursday.

The glitches turned out to be an "emotional upheaval," Maturro said.

No production problems dampened the spirits of the Vietnam vets, however.

They gathered on the riverbank, ate sandwiches and watched the filming late into the night.

Larsen, recalling that night in 1969, said he just happened to be in a place where he could do some good, and many others really should share a part of his Navy Cross.

Besides Larsen's Navy Cross, eight of them earned Bronze Stars that night, and many came to watch the re-enactment.

Tipton was on a boat not far from Larsen's.

"We heard the rocket and heard (a cry for help on) the radio," Tipton said.

He also grabbed a machine gun and plunged into the foliage.

"We got between the bodies and (Vietcong) and kept them away," he said. He, Larsen and others broke the rules by leaving the boat.

"Rules don't mean a damn thing," Tipton said. "Everybody did what they were trained to do. It just came natural."

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Jason Fertz / The Herald

Jerome Jackson, who portrays sailor Bob Tipton in the documentary, enjoys a break in filming early Thursday.