

TEXAS BAR JOURNAL

November 2010 • Vol. 73, No. 10



Providing Legal Counsel To Those Who Served





A MARINE LAWYER LOOKS BACK

When San Angelo attorney **Don W. Griffis** was serving in Vietnam, it became second nature to write everything down. “I kept a journal where I recorded the events of interest that happened each day — the sights, the smells, the sounds,” he says. Now, that diary is a book called *Eagle Days: A Marine Legal/Infantry Officer in Vietnam*.

Griffis, a U.S. Marine Corps legal officer and platoon leader from 1968–69 in Vietnam, forgot about the journal, putting it away for almost 40 years. But when a good friend wrote a book about the Vietnam War, Griffis decided to dig out his old diary. “I guess enough time had passed,” he says. “I thought it would be worth my while to go back and reexamine what I wrote while in Vietnam.”

Griffis began to reread and edit his journal, and eventually sent it off to publishers. “I knew that the submission process can take a while,” he says. “After all, *Flags of Our Fathers* [by James Bradley] was sent to 26 publishers before being accepted!” Luckily, Griffis did not have to wait quite that long. The University of Alabama Press, one of four publishers he submitted to, accepted the manuscript. “I was very excited the day I learned the University of Alabama was going to print the book. From there, the opportunities to make connections with men I served with was very rewarding.”

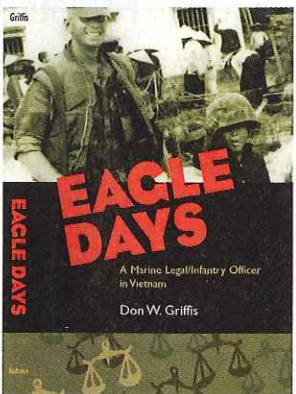
The book has garnered positive feedback from veterans — Griffis has received many letters and phone calls. “It meant a great deal that those veterans read the book,” he says. “And it was important to them because it validated a period in their lives and honored their service.”



Don Griffis, a San Angelo attorney and author of *Eagle Days*.

A sergeant that had been in Griffis’ rifle platoon contacted him, inviting him to a platoon reunion in Tampa.

“Once I began looking back at my writing, it occurred to me how many interesting people I’d met in the service and how proud I was to serve with them.”



Eagle Days is a memoir of a tour of duty in Vietnam.

“I got to see a lot of different aspects of human nature.” *Eagle Days* covers everything from the military legal process to combat missions against the Viet Cong. “It was incredible in the Marine Corps,” Griffis says. “We had so much leeway to do things — we would just climb on a cargo aircraft or a helicopter. I was just a tourist observing so much going on around.

At the time he was writing the journal, Griffis had no idea it would ever be published. “If anything, I thought the diary would be something that might be useful to my family in the future,” he says. “But once you come back from serving, you can marry, raise a family, find a job, and people don’t know what you’ve done or where you’ve been. I wanted to tell this story.”

TEXAS PEOPLE

James L. Gosdin, senior vice president, chief underwriting counsel, and chief reinsurance counsel for Stewart Title Guaranty Company in Houston, was appointed chair of the Title Insurance and Surveys Committee of the Commercial Real Estate Transactions Group of the American Bar Association Section of Real Property, Trust & Real Estate Law.



Teresa Villaseñor Harris, of the Fowler Law Firm, P.C. in Austin, was this year’s recipient of the Ohtli Medal, the highest honor bestowed by the Mexican government to those outside of Mexico. Harris was recognized for her work providing free legal services and assistance to Mexican immigrants and their children.



The National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers awarded **George P. Parker, Jr.**, of counsel to Bracewell & Giuliani, L.L.P. in San Antonio, its 2010 Champion of Justice Award for his humanitarian pro bono representation of Navajo World War II veterans in obtaining their VA benefits for wartime injuries, including Navajo Code Talker Teddy Draper Sr., who was injured at the Battle of Iwo Jima.



U.S. District Judge **Sam Sparks**, of Austin, received the Sandra Day O’Connor Jurist Award from the American College of Trial Lawyers. The award is given to a state or federal judge who has demonstrated exemplary judicial independence in the performance of his or her duties, sometimes in difficult or dangerous circumstances.

