

## **History of the 31st Regiment Association**

In the Spring of 1976, Ben Saccone (SGT, 194th Tank Battalion- Bataan), a past Commander of the Western States Chapter of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, was shopping at Fort Ord, California and noticed that an active duty battalion of the 31st Infantry was stationed at the post. Ben contacted the battalion commander to ask if he was interested in meeting some old Polar Bears. He invited Bill Sniezko (SGT, B Co) and Bill Garleb, (PVT, H Co), Bataan-era Polar Bears to attend the 2nd Battalion's celebration of Organization Day in August. In 1978 about 15 old Polar Bears and their wives were invited to attend Organization Day festivities. Wayne Lewis, (CPL, Co D), John Lyons (PFC HQ 2d Bn), and Bill Sniezko found that some regiments have associations comprised of former members but the 31st Infantry Regiment did not have an association. So these three men, with some wifely secretarial help and the Western States Chapter of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor mailing list started the 31st Infantry Regiment Association.

During Organizational Day festivities in 1979 a meeting was held by the old Polar Bears, officers of the Association were elected and business was begun in earnest. Wayne Lewis served as commander from 1979 to 1981. Bill Sniezko served from 1981 to 1983. John Lyons served from 1983 to 1985.

Over the years, the Association has been invited to visit the 31st Infantry's 2nd Battalion at Fort Ord, (later reflagged as the 2nd Battalion 9th Infantry); the 4th Battalion at Fort Sill, Oklahoma; the 6th Battalion at Fort Irwin, California (National Training Center), and the 4th Battalion when it was reactivated at Ft Drum, New York.

Through the generosity of our Association members and friends the 31st Infantry Regiment Association placed a plaque on the World War II Military Memorial at Mt. Samat in the Philippines saluting all 31st'ers who served in the Philippines from 7 December 1941 to 9 April 1942.

The Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization by the State of Arkansas on 24 November 1986, the administrative work accomplished by BG (Ret) Pat Ramey (W.O. - Philippines). We are very proud of the 31st Infantry and its heritage. We hope the American people and the new young Polar Bears on active duty will remember with pride the service past Polar Bears have rendered to our country. PRO PATRIA!

