

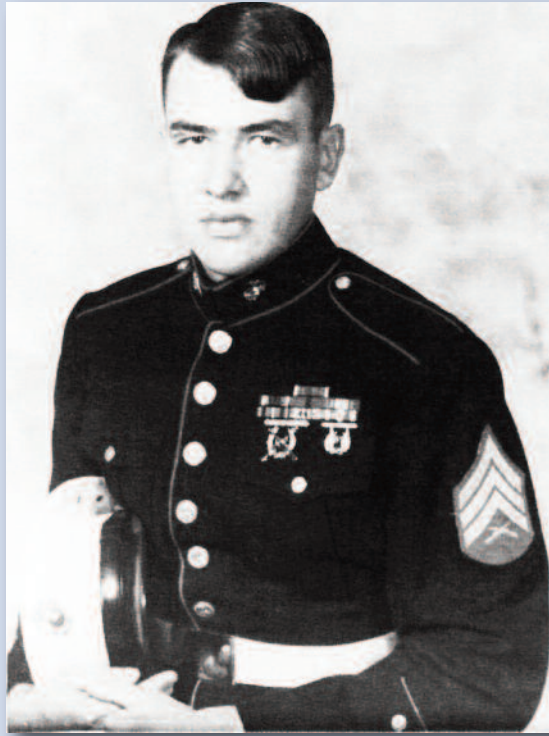
Profiles in Progress: Client Stories

John and Marlise Partilla

The U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant looked like a giant as he supervised the unloading of the busload of Marines coming from Basic Training at Parris Island, SC and debarking at Camp LeJeune, NC for their infantry training. And to PFC Robert Fragasso, who thought he was finally free of the fabled Drill Instructors of Parris Island, it was a very rude realization that this 6'3" shouting, growling, Vietnam War veteran Sergeant with the Fu Man Chou mustache was his training instructor for the next three months. That instructor, Sergeant John "Sonny" Partilla, quickly validated everyone's fears by commanding the busload of Marines to run the mile and a half to their new barracks while carrying their 60 pound sea bags across their shoulders.

While the training got harder, the relationship between Bob Fragasso and Sonny Partilla got friendlier. The two young men, coincidentally both from the Pittsburgh area, became fast friends and have remained so for 40 years.

John Partilla was born in Braddock, PA in 1946, the son and grandson of Edgar Thompson Works' steel workers. Granddad worked for Andrew Carnegie and his legendary works manager,



Sergeant John Partilla

Charles Schwab. Dad remains healthy and alert at age 94. Mom, now deceased, was a homemaker and, in her parlance, a "proud Slovak", who preserved her ethnic traditions and foods in the household. John was graduated from Scott High School in North Braddock and immediately entered the U.S. Marine Corps. After Parris Island and Infantry Training, he was sent to Santo Domingo to help with the evacuation of U.S. dependents during the insurrection there. At age 19, John was shipped to Vietnam immediately after the U.S.

invasion in 1965 as an Ontos Commander. He saw action in Chu Lai province and in the Da Nang area of operations. After thirteen months of combat operations, he rotated back to Camp LeJeune where he worked as an Infantry Instructor. The experience-based training that he provided to his troops undoubtedly saved American lives as those boys went into combat.

It was during this time in North Carolina that he met his future wife, Marlise, while on leave back home in Pittsburgh. Marlise was a student at Slippery Rock College (now University) majoring in Education. Fragasso remembers many conversations with Sonny over this beautiful girl that he had met.

Marlise was brought to the United States by her Swiss parents in 1951. Dad became a butcher at Ziegler Meats in Pittsburgh's Strip District and Mom a Practical Nurse at Whiteman Manor in Squirrel Hill.

After four years in the Marine Corps, John and Marlise married. Marlise

taught school in the McKeesport School District and at Westmoreland County Community College while John completed a draftsman's course at Triangle Tech and then earned a degree in Civil Engineering from Community College of Allegheny County. He began work with U.S. Steel in its railroad and bridge design department. Marlise went on to gain her Masters in Education with certifications in Mathematics from St. Vincent's College and Computer Information from California University of PA. Marlise spent most of her career teaching high school and college level math courses at Ft. Cherry High School and also ran the a support program at the school for troubled students.

During his career, John has been recruited by and held construction management positions with PNC Bank, WesBanco, Crown Castle International, and Overton Associates.

John and Marlise had two sons. Their younger son, Ian lives in Denver, CO and works in every young man's dream job, doing sports marketing for ESPN. He is married to Megan, a family practice attorney and they are expecting their first child.

Their older son, Jason, was killed during his senior year at West Virginia University by a drunk driver driving with a suspended license. Jason had been an avid outdoorsman and

environmentalist along with the rest of the family and had received recognition for his preservation work at Cooper's Rock in West Virginia. A bench plaque there commemorates his contributory work. John eventually found an outlet for his grief through



his photography and used his photographic skills in a book meant to comfort others in their loss. His work can be viewed at www.naturephotoscomfort.com. John wants those experiencing loss to understand that all of our experiences have been shared by others and feels that we can help each other to find the light at the end of the darkness.

John and Marlise are entering retirement this year. But that means a change in activities, not inactivity. John articulates it as sharing their time, experience and talents. A visit to Russia made them realize that much of the world still toils with antiquated

and inefficient tools. So John is creating a project to recycle modern hand tools to third world countries where they can contribute to a heightened quality of life. He will also remain involved in veterans' affairs and Marlise and John will continue to contribute time to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). They feel retirees must be active and grow.

John was kind in speaking of the trust he has in Christine Robinette, his Financial Advisor, and in our firm. He credited us with instilling confidence in them to weather the economic cycles and for our guidance. John

appreciated our assistance in broadening their horizons by sharing knowledge and for our personal touch. He concluded with thanks for assisting them in their financial affairs toward a more secure retirement.

We are grateful to Sonny and Marlise Partilla for their friendship and their confidence in us. We wish them a productive and happy retirement.