

Boot to Boot

COMPANY D
1ST BATTALION
12TH CAVALRY
VIETNAM, 1965-1972



FOR HE TODAY THAT SHEDS HIS BLOOD WITH ME SHALL BE MY BROTHER FROM THIS DAY TO THE ENDING OF THE WORLD

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 2

APRIL 2020

Death in 506 Valley - 17 December 1966 National Archives Documents and Interviews Tell a Heroic and Tragic Story By Bob March

After darkness fell, the Delta company dead and wounded lay in an open area between the North Vietnamese Army bunkers and the hedgerows. In the light of day it had been a place where anyone who moved was shot, a no-mans-land. Michael Noone had been shot three times, once in the leg, and twice in the torso, breaking his ribs and knocking his stomach out of the body cavity. Giant red and black biting ants crawled over him, feasting. He used his one good arm to slowly pick the ants off and bite them. In flare lit light, NVA soldiers crept out to execute the wounded and scavenge from the dead. One approached Noone and peered over him. A flare went off and the enemy soldier ducked down until the light began to recede, then got up and looked Michael directly in the eyes as he feigned death. He put his rifle down and picked Noone up by the pistol belt. Not being familiar with the hook attachment, the North Vietnamese soldier struggled to remove it. As he fiddled with the belt, the ants began biting, causing him to drop Michael to the ground, as if throwing back a fish. After searching Noone, he left him for dead. Michael Noone was one of the lucky ones.

Seven hours earlier Delta had been alerted to rush to a pickup zone (PZ) and be ready for an air assault. That began the worst of days for the best of men. Based on the number of US casualties, the Battle of the 506 Valley (located north and west of LZ Uplift in Binh Dinh Province, and named for the “highway” that runs along its bottom) ranks within the deadliest single-day battles of the entire Vietnam War. Yet it is strangely absent from the literature and is not well known except by those who survived. Official accounts are few. Discussions are few. Articles are few.

**1st Cavalry
Division Assn.
73rd Reunion
Rescheduled to
October 4-8, 2020
Still in
LOUISVILLE,
KENTUCKY
(See Page 2)**

The Battle of the 506 Valley involved all of the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, two companies of 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, a platoon of 2/8th Cavalry and elements of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, over twenty infantry platoons in total. Thirty-four Cavalrymen were killed and 81 wounded in the 506 Valley that day. Delta bore the brunt of the casualties; half of those killed were in the 2nd and 3rd platoons of Delta and most were hit within just a few terrible minutes.

(Continued on page 5)

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Crowne Plaza Airport Expo Center (Headquarters Hotel) Bookings in the June 1st Cavalry room block HAVE BEEN CANCELED. *You must do your own rebooking.* The new room block is finally ready. The hotel desk number is (502) 367-2251. You can book on-line at www.cplouisville.com
Use Group Code: ZC1

Alternate Lodging - Call to cancel and rebook new dates

Hampton Inn (502) 366-8100, Spring Hill Suites (502) 361-900, Tru by Hilton (502) 792-8800, Howard Johnson (502) 363-9952, Courtyard by Marriott (502) 368-5678, Residence Inn (502) 363-8800

Delta Hospitality Suite

We hope to re-book the 1165 sq. ft. *Crowne Plaza Presidential Suite* for the new October dates if enough D Company veterans let us know they will attend.

MAJOR EVENTS

Monday, 5 October Check into hotel, register. Welcome Reception - Churchill Downs Museum.

Tuesday, 6 October 50th Anniversary Cambodian Incursion Luncheon,
War Era Luncheons, Ladies Tea on the *Belle of Louisville*

Wednesday, 7 October Unit Luncheons, Reception, and Association Banquet.

Thursday, 9 October Memorial Service. Check out and depart.

1ST CAVALRY DIVISION REUNION REGISTRATION FORM ATTACHED

OTHER CAVALRY REUNIONS

The 12th Cavalry Regiment Association Reunion, 13-17 October 2020 at the Welk Resort in Branson, Missouri. Details Tom Crabtree at email mmctlc3@aol.com or call (432) 853-4851

Delta's 2021 Reunion is tentatively planned for Las Vegas, Nevada. Dates & Details TBA.

SUCCESSFUL SANIBEL ISLAND OFFER RENEWED FOR 2020

The *Raymond E. Redalen Foundation* offered a furnished, gulfview condominium at one of America's premier vacation destinations free of charge to Delta Vietnam veterans last year.

It's on again for the 2020 season, and spaces are available. Return the form recently emailed from delta112cavalry@gmail.com or provide the following information in an email to that address: Name, address, phone and email address. Number in your party (maximum 4). 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice weeks for your stay. All stays begin and end on a Saturday for weeks beginning July through December.



First Commander's Corner

As we face the challenge of this virus, I am reminded that each of us alone—and together—have overcome challenges, sometimes against great odds, many times before.

So far, we are not aware of any ‘virus casualties’ among our Delta Brothers. God bless!

The postponement of our Louisville Kentucky Reunion to October provides the time needed for travel to become safe for us. We look forward to celebrating the brotherhood we forged a half-century ago, trading memories and sipping a bit of Fireball. Last October, we—all together—returned to Fort Benning to remember and honor those among us who were Delta’s first soldiers of the Vietnam War. This October we will—all of us—gather in Louisville to remember and honor our Delta Brothers who fought in Cambodia.

A special thank you to all of you who have stayed in touch during these trying times. Your efforts meant much to those who have received your calls, emails, and cheerful notes! Lest we ever forget!

‘Mother’s Day’ is upon us! Don’t forget to honor the ladies who tolerate us and do so much to support us. Appropriate of the day, our own Ms. Carolyn (Our late Brother Dieter) Arnold, has graciously volunteered to organize a Delta Veterans Ladies Auxiliary, the purpose of which will be to bring the women in our lives together so they can support us and each other. Thank you, Carolyn. You have our full support. Contact Carolyn at 4carnold@comcast.net if you would like to be part of this endeavor.

ONCE A SOLDIER, ALWAYS A SOLDIER...A SOLDIER FOR LIFE

Blessings & "But to But"

Johnny Sergulis

FIDDLER’S GREEN

We remember those we learned we have lost since our last issue of *But to But*. Your Board recently authorized a significant new search program. This list is a consequence of that., **not** of a virus.

DARRELL AUBE
JACKIE BENNETT
GEORGE BILLINGS
ROBERT BIRK
JOHN BROWN
SAM BURDETTE
JEFFERY CAHOON
GARY CARLQUIST
LLOYD CLAYTON
DAVID CORBY
MICHAEL CROOKS

JOSEPH CROSS
WILLIAM DOUGLAS
ARTHUR DUTY
MICHAEL GARVIN
JAMES GRANT
RICHARD JOHNSON
CARROLL KENNY
MIKE KOVACS
ROBERT MARTIN
CHARLES MASON
SALAVADOR MOSQUES

LEE MAXWELL
DENNIS NORDER
GARY POLAK
EDDIE RHODES
ARNOLD RODRIGUEZ
CHARLES SAUNDERS
DAVID J SCOTT
MICHAEL G SCOTT
WILLIAM SPENCER
RICKIE STEVENSON
GEORGE WRIGHT

If we have listed someone in error, please contact Delta’s webmaster at delta@cattrack6india.com Do the same if you know of a Delta Veteran who has gone on to Fiddler’s Green.

Web Site Update

There has been an increase of website visits lately—probably because we're all pretty much home all the time. It's always interesting seeing ourselves and our buddies as we were “back in the day.”

I'd like you to go through the website photos for the time you were “in-country.” If you recognize someone whose name is not next to the photo (particularly if he was KIA), let me know. It is very important in documenting our history, and adds a great deal to the value of the photos and videos. Naturally, I am still seeking any photos you may have. Even if you have just a few, that's great.

A new video in the renamed *Photo and Video Index*, the first of a three-part series, covers 1965-1966. Part two, now also ready, covers 1967 and 1968, and Part 3 1969 through 1972, is in production. These videos combine Delta combat films, photos, and the music of the times. Again, as for photographs, please send me the names (nicknames, too) of anyone you recognize. Here is a link directly to the Photo and Video Index. <http://www.cattrack6india.com/photoindex.html> The new videos are at the bottom of the page.

Look at the *Firefights and Historical Events* page. We need your help to fill in the gaps there. There are some important dates which have no information at all, and others with only minimal inputs. Your stories are very important and mean a lot to us all. If you have any stories—they don't have to be long—that can be added, send them (address on newsletter page 8) or call me. You don't have to be a writer, just call and tell me the story. I'll do the rest. We don't have “forever” to tell our stories. Think about that.

Thanks to all who provided their memories of the Battle of the 506 Valley: Richard Rock, Ed Waltz, Reggie Anderson, Paul Prindle, Michael Anderson, Roger Hattersley, and Stephen Chestnut. (Part 1 heads the front page of this newsletter.)

DON'T WALK ON TRAILS. BRING PLENTY OF AMMO. CONSERVE TOILET PAPER.

CATTRACK6INDIA...OUT *Bob March* (360) 627-0918

Streamers Added to Guidon

D Company will display an upgraded unit flag at the 1st Cavalry Reunion in October. Delta's Board directed the acquisition of the streamers awarded the company during the Vietnam War, including those representing two Presidential Unit Citations and two Valorous Unit Citations.

Given cost considerations, it was decided to acquire a single VIETNAM CAMPAIGN streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1969-1972 in place of the 16 earned.

In adding the streamers, we were also able to develop a “flight portability kit,” that will allow the guidon to be displayed at many more events.



(Continued from page 1) D Company was initially the battalion's Combat Support Company (recon, mortars, and weapons). Delta had been reorganized into a line infantry company before October's Battle of Hoa Hoi, its 1st platoon continued to be used as the battalion's reconnaissance unit.

At 1145 Larry Nolan was concealed in an observation position behind thick bamboo and elephant grass. Sweat dripped down Larry's nose as he sat motionless, waiting. He was part of a six man Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) team (designated "Team 2,") from the 1st Platoon of D Company, 1/12th, sent to identify NVA activity in the Valley. Eighteen NVA soldiers approached the team, carrying mortar tubes and base plates. LRRP 2 watched the enemy soldiers moving slowly, cautiously across their front. On the enemy unit's flank, a scout walked parallel to its line of march. He hoped not to find trouble as he neared the hidden Delta team. Pushing the bamboo concealment back with the barrel of his AK-47, looked Larry Nolan right in the eye, three feet away, pretended not to see him, and let the grass spring back into place. Larry shot him dead. The team's position had been blown, triggering a running fire fight. Steven Chestnut remembers the NVA heading for the cover of nearby tree line and the LRRP team heading down-slope towards a possible pick-up zone near a small village. Unfortunately, before they could get there, the team was surrounded by the larger enemy force. One Cav trooper was shot in the elbow and bone fragments wounded SGT Smith, the team leader, in the lower leg. The team was in trouble. Fortunately, at 1315 two "Guns-a-Go-Go" (heavily armed black Chinook helicopters) came to the rescue and hosed down the NVA, driving them away. Those 18 NVA would be the most seen by anyone in Delta all day, despite the fact that the rest of D was about to engage a much larger force. The early afternoon encounter was the first of the day for D Company on a day that would ultimately cost Delta 17 KIA, its highest one day death toll of the entire war.

A few kilometers away the rest of Delta was moving through the steeply forested terrain of Vietnam's Central Highlands. The company's second and third platoons would shortly be committed; a total of 62 men, only 35 of whom would be left at days end.

The opening round of the 506 Valley battle had begun at 1003 when C Company 1/8th, using an XM-2/E63 personnel detector "people sniffer," made contact with an estimated platoon size NVA force in the hills above the 506 Valley (BR 802803). The NVA fled down the hill towards a village, leaving behind equipment, including a switchboard, which implied the presence of a much larger force. They had been "found", but needed to be "fixed." For this, the 1/9th aerial scouts were deployed; at 1334 scouts reported that the NVA were dug-in around the village. The squadron's ground platoon (known as the "Blue Team") was inserted and immediately ran into a buzz saw. Taking casualties, and having accomplished its mission to "develop" the contact, the Blue Team pulled back.

By this time it was apparent to Lieutenant Colonel George D. Edgers, Jr., commanding the 1/12th, and responsible for this AO, that the enemy force was much larger than had been earlier estimated. At 1338, Eggers had Major Leon D. Bieri, Battalion S-3, order all 1/12th companies to consolidate, move to the nearest PZ, and prepare to join the fight. The plan: move A, B, and D companies to attack from the north and insert B company to the east to cut off escape. Elements of 1/8th and 1/9th were already deployed from West to South. Major Bieri said over the radio "It looks like another Hoa Hoi," a successful 1st Cav battle fought just two months earlier in which the battalion had a major role. The strategy was simple and classic: find, fix, surround, and attack. It had even worked as planned at Hoa Hoi. No less than Tennyson's "six hundred" a century before, Delta's fate that day would once again prove the Vicissitudes of War.

(Continued on page 7)

Secretary's Report

I didn't believe the coronavirus would be such a big deal until I read the headline TOILET PAPER SHORTAGE. Imagine my horror at the thought that Ultra Soft Charmin Bathroom Tissue might not be available. Fifty years ago after a year of using C ration 40 grit sandpaper I made a vow that I would never subject my body to that abuse again. After trips to BJ's, Cosco's and Sam's Club, I was able to commandeer enough product to get me through this pandemic.

On a serious note, I hope and pray you and your loved ones are isolated and well.

The hunt for unaccounted Veterans continues. Unfortunately, we are finding many that are now in Fiddler's Green. Since you're sitting at home in isolation, why not visit Delta's website at <http://www.cattrack6india.com/> Find a buddy on the roster. Give him a call. It'll be good for the soul.

Good Health

Fred Mac Kennan

BOOK REVIEW

ZERO TO HERO

From Bullied Kid to Warrior

Allen J. Lynch with Richard Ernsberger, Jr.

Medal of Honor recipient Allen Lynch, who served his entire Vietnam tour with Delta Company, has written an engrossing memoir, not just of Vietnam, but of growing up in the Fifties and Sixties in America's industrial Midwest. Though the subtitle emphasizes the bullying Allen experienced in his school years, his descriptions of family life and family characters are compelling—as vivid and real as any I have read. He writes “My dad was a factory man...” LeRoy Lynch, we learn, was a laborer, a welder, later a machinist, and a union man, “one of the many men who helped build America's formidable industrial sector during and after World War II.” Growing up in the Lynch family will be familiar to all of us. LeRoy was a WWII veteran and a child of the Depression, “he woke me up by whistling Reveille...he lectured me on morals, individual responsibility, women, work and study habits, education...Dad had traditional ideas about marriage and the roles of men and women...” But, “Mom, when she was determined, could get her way...” It's a delightful first third of the book.

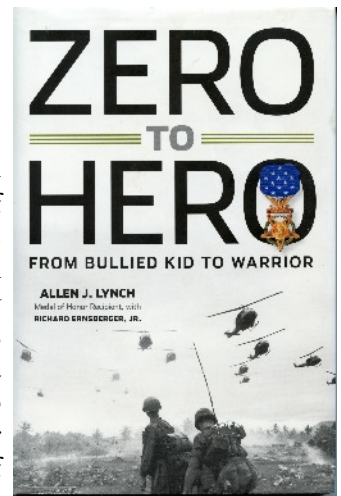
Allen tells a story of growing up, of the Army and Vietnam, of “coming home,” and the years after.

Those who served with Allen will want to get to that middle third. To be sure, it's not military history, because it's first person, but Allen has added research to recollection, so an accurate narrative accompanies his memories and views of places, comrades, and events. If you were in foxholes anytime, anywhere, you'll recognize the reflections and feelings shared by infantrymen in combat.

After that searing experience, there's the coming home, welcomed by a few, ignored or disdained by many. Lynch doesn't end there, as many do, and we're grateful for it, because Allen's “life after” is one of responsibility, education, and service.

Whether one served with Allen, served at all, or never served, **ZERO TO HERO** is a satisfying read that deepens the understanding not just of war, but of American life in the latter half of the 20th Century.

April 6



(Continued from page 5) Delta company, commanded by its Executive Officer, Lieutenant Chester Cox, acting for the CO, who was absent on R&R, hurried to a PZ, then waited. Finally, at 1540, with its second and third platoons led, respectively, by Lieutenants Paul Prindle and Timothy Feiner, air assaulted into an LZ near Thach Long (2) a village in the 506 Valley.

The company secured the LZ for the battalion's C Company then moved southeast. Within 15 minutes they made contact.

As described by Lieutenant Steven Schopp, 1st Cavalry Division Staff Historian,* "They [Delta Company] had been on an assault line facing a hedge row, LT Feiner's third platoon on the right, or south end, and LT Prindle's second platoon on the left or north end...each squad on line facing the hedges. The NVA lay just beyond the second hedge row, but no one was aware of that. The enemy positions were of the cleverest camouflage, impossible to detect." Delta passed the first hedge row, then once again out in the open, not ten feet from the second hedge, "the enemy at last revealed their presence with a fusillade of bullets. The surprise was effective. Delta was now in the open with no place to turn except over more open ground."

"The first burst knocked down PFC Timothy Ewing and Corporal Jack Deaton. The NVA, realizing that Deaton was still alive, put another burst in him. The squad leader, SGT Cook was hit and fell fatally wounded. SP4 Michael Anderson, the medic, moved forward immediately to Ewing. A lung had been punctured and Ewing was having trouble breathing, so Anderson tried mouth to mouth resuscitation. Just then an enemy bullet hit across his hand. Anderson continued to treat the wounded all afternoon and into the night. It was nearly one o'clock the next morning when he stopped to patch his own wounded hand."

"Close to the first squad, machine gunner PFC Roger Hattersley was pinned down in the open, apparently in a blind spot because enemy bullets kept churning the dirt on both sides of him. He fired all his ammo from there, then he ran out where Deaton was laying, picked up 200 rounds and ran back. Hattersley shot up three fourths of this, then he got up and charged the bunker, killing at least one. A bullet hit him in the right shoulder. Somehow he made it back and was later medevac'd. The next day his machine gun was found right next to the bunker." The killing continued unabated.

(To be continued in Part 2, July issue of Boot-to-Boot)

*A Staff Historian for the First Cavalry Division Office of Information and History, Lieutenant Schopp prepared *Unit Historical Report No. 15 - 506 Valley*, a comprehensive document based on interviews with the participants of all the units involved. This story relies in part on his document, which is frequently quoted, and on multiple recent interviews of surviving Delta Brothers.

THOUGHTS ON THE 1ST CAVALRY REUNION

The Association was late to postpone, then its response was confused and incomplete. But it's getting better; there's a room block code for booking the Crowne Plaza on-line or by telephone. The Association's website is mostly consistent and correct. Flights can be changed without penalty.

You might throw up your hands in frustration, but please, hang in there with us. Call the hotel and book or rebook. Change your flights. If you haven't already, register on-line or via mail.

Delta made big plans for this one, including a hospitality room of our own, because we decided at Benning last year that this would be "our event" in 2020, before we go to Las Vegas in 2021. It's the 50th Anniversary of the Cambodian Incursion. We already have a larger turnout than ever before for a Division-level reunion, but we want a few more to justify our own hospitality.



Postage

Veterans of Delta Company
1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry (Vietnam)
9817 W Mockingbird Drive
Sun City, AZ 85373-2136

Delta Company Contacts and Addresses

President

John Gergulis

(803) 727-2832 gergulis@yahoo.com

Vice President

Mike Van Kirk

(623) 937-0577 mijoy65@cox.net

Mail for the Website

Bob March

1509 Sawdust Hill Road NE

Poulsbo, WA 98370-9127

Treasurer/

Newsletter Editor

Tom Kjos

(480) 352-2583 tomwkjos03@gmail.com

Mail for Veterans of Delta

(Including Newsletter)

Secretary/Outreach

Fred Mac Lennan

(347) 853-1281 fredmacl66@outlook.com

Tom Kjos

9817 W Mockingbird Drive

Sun City, AZ 85373-2136

Webmaster/Historian

Bob March

(360) 627-0918 delta@cattrack6india.com

65-66 Era Representative

Jerry Fell

(512) 923-4232 hometoo@sbcglobal.net

Website Address

67-68 Era Representative

Doug Christ

(714) 865-3467 dfchrist3@gmail.com

<http://www.cattrack6india.com/>

69-72 Era Representative

Paul Marling

(518) 789-4648 paultmarling@aol.com