

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 4 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2019

Delta Veterans to Return to Benning in October 2019

Where the Delta Devils Began their Great and Terrible Adventure

Thursday, 3 October Check into the *Doubletree by Hilton* and pick up your reunion information packet at Delta's Registration table in the lobby. Attend a Welcome Reception with complementary hors d'oeuvres and cash bar from 5-7 PM in the Doubletree's *Azalea Room*. Following a dinner break our Hospitality Suite, included in your registration, will open, then be open each day of the reunion. (See page 5 for more hotel information)



Friday, 4 October Use today's coupons for breakfast on-site in *Houlihan's*, then depart by bus for the *National Infantry Museum*, among the nation's premier history destinations, with monuments, interactive exhibits, video presentations, and thousands of artifacts from nearly 250 years of American military history.

The Last 100 Yards is the Museum's signature exhibit. Walk through life-size dioramas of battles in American infantry history. At Yorktown in the *American Revolution*, charge Redoubt #10 with Alexander Hamilton. Cross the Burnside Bridge at Antietam on the *Civil War's* "bloodiest day in American history." In *World War I*, break the German lines at Soissons. Land on *World War II's* Normandy beaches while Rangers scale Pointe du Hoc. Look up to see a troop-carrying glider. Recapture Corregidor with Paratroopers in the Philippines. See Lewis Millett's bayonet attack at Soam-Ni, *Korea*. 1st Cav troopers scramble from a Huey at Landing Zone X-Ray in *Vietnam*. In *Iraq*, a Bradley Fighting Vehicle lies damaged by a roadside bomb. (continued on page 4)

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"Fort Benning: Where it all began"
Delta Company's 2019 Reunion
October 3-6

DoubleTree by Hilton, Columbus, Georgia
Events at the **National Infantry Museum** and
The Benning Club

First Commander's Corner



I was at Kimpo Air Base, Korea, waiting to board a rickety National Guard Constellation, when first told that my orders had been changed. I'd now be going to Fort Benning to some new

"Test" outfit being organized!

Met at the airport by my anxious bride of less than three years, we drove home to South Carolina to get re-aquainted. A week later, I was at Benning to sign in with the 11th Air Assault Division (Test).

The Harmony Church area, where the division had its headquarters, had been abandoned for years. The WWII barracks were uninhabitable, boarded up and neglected. A cardboard sign pointed the way to the 11th AAD in a palmetto-bug-varmint-infested building where I found a young Staff Sergeant who sent me down a gravel street to "the first building on your right. They'll tell you where to go from there."

I wandered down the hall of the seemingly deserted building. In a side office I saw a Lt. Col. sitting behind a desk. I knocked.

"Come in."

"Sir, I've been assigned to 3rd Batta...." I didn't finish.

The Lt. Col. didn't look up. "You want to be airborne?"

"Yes, Sir!"

The Lt. Col. still hadn't looked up, welcomed me, shook my hand, or returned my salute. "Report down the street to the CO of B Company, and see if he'll have you." The Benning adventure that would lead directly to Southeast Asia had begun.

Those were great times, jumping out of C-119s; Camps Stewart and Mackall; flying and tramping

and all over Georgia and western North and South Carolina. Fun times for airborne soldiers.

After being promoted to Captain, I was hiding in the S-2/S-3 office one quiet morning in late May 1964 drinking damned good coffee, when in came the Bn. Exec. "John, report to the Bn. Cmdr."

Oh shit! I ran downstairs. Knock. Enter. Report. Stood there holding my salute. He still hasn't looked up. We were now the 1st battalion. The rest was apparently the same.

Bn. Cmdr. says, "Get your butt down to Delta Company and straighten out that damned mess!"

"But Sir, Delta Company already has a Company Commander."

"God damn it, do you want to command again?"

"Yes, Sir!"

"Then get your ass out of here and go to work!"

I survived the Delta Company experience (including a still in the barracks, Chuck Rose's 6x6 hole, Cochran stealing Dwight's air, dying shirts and underwear Army green, and just before deploying - naked women in the barracks). Finally accepted by the Brothers, I led Delta to Vietnam (en route, Dwight's shock in Hawaii, an officer returns to the Geiger in nothing but his boots, B Company going to war with blanks, and more stories).

After combat command of Delta and a stint as S-4 of the "Chargers," I left the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry via medical evacuation from Qui Nhon on July 4, 1966 to Japan where I spent a month recuperating before returning to Fort Benning.

You want to hear more about the still? Naked women? Hawaii shore leave? The hospitality room at our Benning reunion in October will be the place.

THE GREATEST CASUALTY IS BEING FORGOTTEN

© Wounded Warrior Project

Blessings & "But to But"

Johnny Gergulis

FORT BENNING AND THE BIRTH OF THE AIRMOBILE DIVISION

In 1963 airborne soldiers from across the Army converged on Fort Benning to participate in a mission that would define the US Army's combat operations for the next dozen years in Vietnam.

Upon recommendation of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's *Howze Board*, the Army had created a special unit, the 11th Air Assault Division (Test), commanded by Brigadier General Harry Kinnard, to determine whether airmobility was practical and flexible enough to succeed in combat. To give himself the best odds for success, Kinnard wanted his officers and enlisted men to be aggressive, mentally flexible, risk-takers: airborne-qualified soldiers, of course. To Kinnard, parachutists had “a certain mentality, admirably adapted to the kind of thing we ought to be doing with helicopters.” With their “airmobile state of mind,” soldiers could think about ground combat in new ways.

It was to Company D (Combat Support), 3d Battalion (Airborne), 187th Infantry Regiment (Rakkasans), that our first soldiers reported. Over the next two years, Delta participated in training and maneuvers with the 11th Air Assault to validate and develop the airmobile concept.

Troopers would need to think of distance not in miles but in minutes of flight; of routes not as roads or bridges or mountains and rivers, but as three dimensional corridors. Planning now included nap-of-the-earth approaches, landing zones, weather and wind direction, coordination of airspace with artillery and air, best aircraft formations, gunship escort, and friendly fires in the objective area. New combat and combat-related techniques and tactics were integrated into the division's standard operating procedures, after which all units practiced and practiced and then practiced more to perfect their execution. In September 1963, *Air Assault I* exercises at Fort Stewart in Georgia, saw the Airmobility Concept put through its paces on the battalion level of operations.

In February 1964, the battalion was reflagged as the 1st Battalion of the 187th. By Fall the division was ready to be evaluated under field conditions. *Air Assault II* launched in October with 35,000 troops maneuvering across four million acres of rugged North and South Carolina countryside.

The 11th Air Assault squared off against the 82nd Airborne Division, which engaged it both as an enemy conventional force and an insurgent opposition. The first of four weeks was conducted in the rain and high winds of Hurricane Isabel. Flying conditions were abysmal. A swirling vortex of wind, rain and fog left aviators peering through windscreens as opaque as the mud through which the infantry was slogging. Regardless, 120 helicopters maneuvered through the storm to deliver an infantry brigade to the battlefield well before ground transport could have.

The 11th Air Assault was able “with startling suddenness to disgorge sky troopers at all points of the compass.” Its helicopters also allowed it to simply slip away, compelling the 82nd Airborne to stretch resources thin as it attempted to engage. Then, with startling speed, the 11th aggressively attacked the open and poorly defended flanks of the “enemy.” Kinnard's men demonstrated that the helicopter gave them the ability to leapfrog over enemy units, attacking their rear and flanks. As *Air Assault II* reached its end, the the 82nd Airborne was in disarray, and the contest's outcome was obvious.(continued on page 7)

CHUCK DOOLE INTERMENT IN COLORADO SPRINGS MARCH 15

Please join Linda Doole and a contingent of Delta Brothers to say good bye to distinguished Brother-in-Arms Chuck Doole. Full Military Honors will given at the burial service Friday, March 15th 2019, 12 noon at Pikes Peak National Cemetary, 10545 Drennan Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Friday, 4 October (continued from page 1)

The museum's *Hall of Valor* pays tribute to recipients of the *Medal of Honor*. Glass walls enclose the gallery, inside which are the names of the heroes who displayed "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity," often sacrificing their own lives. Among readable citations are those of Delta's three Vietnam recipients.

On the museum grounds, the *Vietnam Memorial Plaza* features a replica of *The Wall* in Washington, on which is etched the more than 58,000 names of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The Plaza has three other memorials to honor Vietnam veterans and their families.

We'll break during our tour for a catered luncheon in the museum. Our bus will return us to our hotel. Since the museum is outside the Benning perimeter, special access information is not required and our veterans are welcome to drive their personal vehicles.



Entrance to *The Infantry Owns the Last 100 Yards*



Full-scale Diorama of 1st Cavalry Vietnam Air Assault

Saturday, 5 October The second day of Delta's reunion will begin, as it always has, with a Memorial Service honoring those who did not return with us from Vietnam, and remembering also those we have since passed on to Fiddler's Green.

Immediately following the Memorial Service, D Company veterans will hold our annual business meeting. Two items of business are of particular importance: (1) identify

(Continued on page 5)

FIDDLER'S GREEN

Sadly, as we account for our Brothers, we find more who have passed on to *That shady meadow green, the eternal resting place known as Fiddler's Green.*

BRIAN ANDERSON
TIMOTHY BOESCH
WALTER BOWERS
WILLIAM BROADY
RONALD BURKLE
WILLIAM CARLISLE
CARL CROW

ROBERT FLINN
RUDOLPH FORD
DENNIS HASSEMER
ALLEN MARTIN
RONALD MARTINEZ
THOMAS MCGARRIGLE
MICHAEL METCHNIK

TERRY MILLER
MARK MINOR
ALEXANDER PACZKOWSKI
ALBERT PERRY
ROY STAPLEFORD
CHARLES SWANSON
JAMES TYSON

Saturday, 5 October (continued from page 4) leadership for our “off year” “small” reunion, a hospitality suite to be hosted in conjunction with the 1st Cavalry Division Association Reunion in Louisville, Kentucky in 2010, and (2) determine the location and leadership for our next “full” reunion in 2021. The Delta Executive Board needs your proposals for these events.

Possible “on-your-own” Saturday destinations for the ladies (and others) include *Warm Springs* and *FDR's Little White House* just 40 miles north of Columbus, and *Callaway Gardens* just 32, both an easy trip. The *Columbus Historic District* is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Visit the 22 acre *Columbus Botanical Gardens*; or *Westville*, the re-creation of a antebellum village with over 30 authentically restored and furnished buildings; the *Columbus Riverwalk*; or the *Confederate Naval Museum* which hosts events like the “Port Columbus Ghost Tour,” “Ladies Victorian Tea,” and “Death by Chocolate-a Museum Masquerade.” Columbus is a destination for antebellum antiques, with scores of stores and museums including *Junque' Yard Antiques*, *Treasures Antique Mall*, and *River Market Antiques*.



Be back in time to catch the 4:30 PM charter bus for our banquet “on post” at the *Benning Club*, the Spanish Colonial style former Officer’s Club, built in 1934. Given the restricted

access to post (along with the possibility you might “imbibe”), we strongly recommend you take the bus. (Please provide the information requested at the bottom of the Reunion Registration Form.) After a reception in *Fiddler’s Green Pub*, the pagentry of our banquet will unfold in the soaring *Regimental Room*, a vaulted gallery whose flags honor the Army’s Cavalry and Infantry Regiments.

Sunday, 6 October Departure day.

Delta’s success in finding its Brothers-in-Arms has made its reunions bigger and better every time.

72 veterans gathered in Tucson in 2017, then 84 at San Antonio in 2018. Our Columbus/Fort Benning Reunion will be a spectacular military celebration and a homecoming for many of our brothers who served there before and after Vietnam.



HOTEL One of the few “event hotels” that met Delta’s needs, our rooms at *The Doubletree by Hilton* include breakfast, airport shuttle, accommodation for our open-bar Hospitality Suite, and *Houlihan’s* on-site restaurant. Room rate is \$104 (\$126 after taxes), is good from 1-8 October 2019, and is cancellable until 1 day before. Book as soon a possible, but by 20 September to get this rate. Book on line at Delta’s room block link (<https://tinyurl.com/D-1-12-Cav>) or by phone at (866) 238-4218. Identify your group as Delta, 1/12th Cav (Group Code is CAV).

SECRETARY'S REPORT

I hope everyone had a joyous Holiday Season and was able to enjoy it with family and friends. As you know, our next Reunion is at Fort Benning, Georgia from October 3rd thru the 6th, 2019. I suggest you look through the roster on the website and give some old buddies a call to encourage them to attend.

Those of you that have attended previous reunions can attest to the joy and comraderie that is experienced at these events, but I always walk away felling that they could be even better if more of our Brothers were there.

We strive to make this the best Reunion to date and we need your help to achieve it.

Good Health

Fred Mac Kennan

WEBSITE UPDATE

BOB MARCH

Happy 2019 to all the Delta Brothers. Hope the holiday season treated you well.

I found myself thinking about the Battle of the 506 Valley on December 17, the anniversary of the day in 1966 on which more Delta troopers were KIA than at any other day of the war. It has been difficult to get enough information to understand what happened that day. Until now. Out of the blue, the daughter-in-law of Michael Noone, (who was badly wounded) contacted me and sent a history with extensive interviews (184 pages) of many of the participants conducted immediately after the battle. I plan an article on the 506 Valley in a future newsletter.

Website additions:

- A photo of Michael Noone recovering in a hospital in Japan after the 506 Valley, plus the history and interview document mentioned above.
- A photo page by Nolan Broussard. Great photos. Check them out.
- Added more photos to the San Antonio reunion page. A.J. Rancatore send in some good ones.
- Photos from Delta President John Gergulis of early Delta History and of his second tour.
- Photos from Mike Mitchell, including the "Steel Pot Cover" series, a valuable historical document.
- The Delta Website now has over 2500 photos. Those of you who may have some send them in for others to see. IF YOU HAVE ANY OLD 8MM MOVIES, SEND THEM IN TOO.

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW. BRING PLENTY OF AMMO. CATTRACK6INDIA...OUT

Another Veterans of Delta visit to the National Archives in College Park, MD, where post-1912 military records are kept, is tentatively set for 8-13 April 2019. The research we do there is essential to finding our fellow veterans and telling our story. We'd like you to join us. If you'd like to help, contact Tom Kjos (408) 352-2583 or [tomwkjos03@gmail.com].

Due to the partial Federal shutdown, National Archives facilities are closed with the exception of the Federal Records Centers (including the National Personnel Records Center). We are making "cancellable" reservations where we can, and will finalize plans as soon as the shutdown is resolved.

BENNING - BIRTH OF AIRMOBILITY (continued from page 3) On 1 July 1965, simultaneously with the creation of the world's first Airmobile Division, 1st Battalion (Airborne) 187th Infantry became 1st Battalion, (Airborne) 12th Cavalry Regiment. Twenty-seven days later, President Lyndon Johnson, in a speech to the nation, announced "*I have today ordered to Vietnam the Airmobile Division.*"

Preparations for the arrival in Vietnam of the "1st Air Cav" were already well advanced. In June C-123s had landed over 200 tons of airstrip construction materials at the site of the division's base camp-to-be near An Khe, 36 miles west of the port of Qui Nhon. In late July, South Vietnamese and American battalions cleared Highway 19, linking Qui Nhon with An Khe. The Division's advance party, secured by the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, was airlifted to An Khe on 25 August 1965.



Private Rose, Air Assault II 1964

The Military Sea Transport Service employed six troop ships, four aircraft carriers and seven cargo vessels in the sea lift of 15,000 troops, 3,100 vehicles, 470 aircraft, and 19,000 tons of cargo. *USNS Buckler*, carrying the 2nd Brigade, was the first ship to leave the Port of Charleston, followed by the 1st Brigade on *USNS Geiger*, and the 3rd Brigade on *USNS Rose*. Training, preparation for jungle warfare, and physical fitness drills filled the days during four weeks at sea. The *USNS Darby*, *Patch*, and *Upshure* carried the rest of the division's troops. Aircraft were loaded on the Escort Carriers *USNS Kula Gulf*, *Croatan*, and *Card*, and the Essex Class Carrier *USS Boxer*.



Division Artillery sailed into Qui Nhon on 5 September, followed on the 9th by *USS Boxer* with the CH-47 Chinooks of the 228th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion. Over the next week and a half, supplemented by Air Force C-130's and truck convoys on Highway 19, 21 Chinooks flew over 1,100 hours moving the Cav to An Khe.

On 20 September, after brief stopovers at Hawaii and Guam, the 1st Brigade, consisting of three airborne infantry battalions (1st and 2nd Battalions, 8th Cavalry, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry) and the 2nd Battalion, 19th Artillery, disembarked from the *USNS Geiger* at Qui Nhon, and was airlifted to the base camp at An Khe. The 3rd Brigade was the last of the division to set foot in the Republic of Vietnam.

The First Cavalry assumed responsibility for An Khe and the surrounding tactical area of operations on 28 September 1965.

With the "Year of the Horse" looming, mounted soldiers had returned to war wearing the famous and feared patch of the 1st Cavalry Division. The First Team had entered its third war - and what would become the longest tour of duty in combat history. Now, fifty-six years later, veterans from across the nation converge on Fort Benning where the Delta Devils began their great and terrible adventure.

Boot to Boot

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