

# Boot to Boot

COMPANY D  
1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION  
12<sup>TH</sup> 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 8 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2023

## Patrolling in the Northern Provinces Summer and Fall 1968

### Tragedy on 21 May, Terror on 6 June

Our departure from the A Shau Valley in mid May of 1968 ended nearly a year of intense activity and movement for Delta. Since May of the previous year, we'd been in Kontum, Binh Dinh, Thua Thien, and Quang Tri Provinces. We had fought battles at Dak To, Tam Quan, Tet 1968, Khe Sanh, and in the A Shau Valley.

Returning to the 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry's home base at LZ Sharon just south of Quang Tri city, the battalion was given a "search and destroy" mission in an area of operations (AO) west-to-east from the Laotian border to the South China Sea and roughly bounded by the Marine's AO to the north, and in the south by a line from A Shau to Hue.

The enemy, hurt badly in the large

unit battles of 1967 and 1968, withdrew his regiments and battalions into Laotian and Cambodian sanctuaries, leaving behind squad-sized and smaller units to harass the allies with ambush and indirect fire tactics. Over the next six months for Delta it was sweaty, exhausting, back-breaking days hacking through jungle and humping over coastal dunes or the rolling hills of the piedmont in a mostly futile search for an elusive enemy. Occasionally the Hueys would show up to lift us to another place where we could start off again slogging and hacking.

Night after night we'd dig in a perimeter, coordinate platoon boundaries, assign sectors to machine guns; our artillery Forward Observer Team would plot defensive targets. Listening posts, usually of three men, would be put out within 50 meters or so of the perimeter, depending on terrain. Squads were sent further out to set up

ambushes. Battalion would call to tell our CO what we' be doing the next day. It was almost always more of the same. It's been said that "combat is long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror." This was that boring part—until it wasn't.

The tragic first break in that boredom came on 21 May. We were operating in the piedmont of Quang Tri Province. Our battalion commander, Lt Col. Robert Kerner, ordered that three infantrymen, one with a radio, were to be picked up by his command and control (C&C) helicopter. (Battalions were each assigned a helicopter, with multiple (continued on page 4)

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June 13-17, 2023  
1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division  
75<sup>th</sup> Reunion  
Louisville, Kentucky  
*Tell Your Delta Company  
Brothers to meet you there*



## *Crowne Plaza Airport Expo Center*



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Louisville, KY 40209

Included: Parking, Airport Shuttle, On-site & nearby Restaurants, 588 Rooms, near Churchill Downs. Room block rate, \$124 + tax.

Book: (502) 367-2251 reference code SAL or <https://book.passkey.com/e/49951844>

**THIS IS DELTA'S 2023 REUNION**

INFORMATION AT <https://1cda.org/annual-reunion/>

## **MAJOR EVENTS**

### *Wednesday, 14 June*

Check into hotel and register. Reunion Room, Souvenir Shop, Bus to Downtown (all are every day)

### *Thursday, 15 June*

Legacy Breakfast, Ladies Tea on the riverboat *Belle of Louisville*, President's Reception at Churchill Downs with night racing.

### *Friday, 16 June*

Purple Hear Breakfast, Unit Luncheons, Reception and Reunion Banquet

### *Saturday, 17 June*

Group Breakfast, Memorial Service, Check out of Hotel & Depart.

## **OTHER ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS**

Spring Hill Suites Louisville Airport (502) 361-9009

Tru by Hilton Louisville Airport (502) 792-8800

Hampton Inn Louisville Airport (502) 366-8100

Howard Johnson by Windham Louisville Airport (502) 363-9952

Courtyard by Marriott Louisville Airport (502) 368-5678

Derby Park Campgrounds & RV Parking (502) 636-3532

**1ST CAVALRY DIVISION REUNION REGISTRATION FORM ATTACHED**

## *First Commander's Corner*



Greetings and best wishes for a healthy and happy 2023! Though 2022 brought new challenges of aging for most of us, our Delta brotherhood continued to provide opportunities to share memories and friendships. We kept in touch through our website and newsletter, and in October we had another successful reunion at South Point Resort in Las Vegas. We're now looking forward to our next get-together at the Division's reunion June 13-17 in Louisville, Kentucky. Details are in this letter, and a registration is attached. Please plan to join us.

This year is the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of activation of 1st Battalion (Airborne), 187th Infantry (Rakkasans), 11th Air Assault Division (TEST) at Fort Benning, Georgia, in the old Harmony Church bivouac area! The 1st Cavalry Division Association is not planning anything in recognition of this historical—to us—event at Louisville, so a few Delta stalwarts of that time said “thank you,

(continued from page 1) radios, allowing the commander and one or two staff officers to “assist” the battalion’s often far-flung companies.) Grunts—including their officers—were almost universally resentful of this overhead interference. An enemy soldier had been seen from the air, and Kerner wanted to drop the Delta men in to capture him. Specialist 4 Brian Tierney had been in country since December, but was junior among the headquarters RTOs, so he was the one to go.

The helicopter picked up Tierney and two other troopers and deposited them near a small village the suspect was seen entering. As they approached, the point man saw the enemy crouching in a thicket and ordered him to surrender. The suspect started to stand as if to give himself up, but suddenly threw a grenade he had been concealing. Seeing the deadly missile land a few feet from himself and his companions, Specialist Tierney shouted a warning and lunged towards the grenade, which exploded, mortally wounding him. (continued on page 4)

we'll take it from here and keep ya'll posted.”

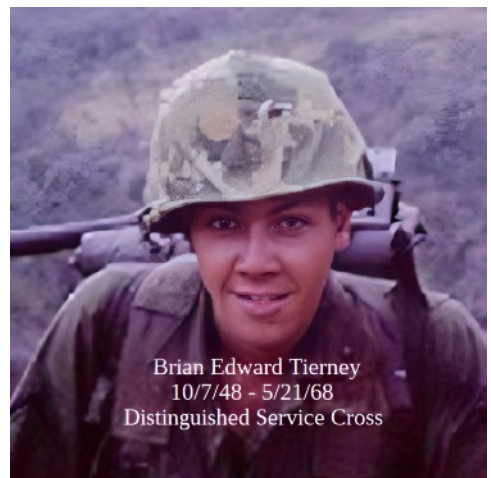
Coordination with the National Infantry Association (NIA) Foundation, Fort Benning, and the City of Columbus, is on-going. The NIA is in the process of confirming dates and venues for a three-day event sometime after our mid-June 1st Cavalry Reunion. We hope to include visits to the National Infantry Museum, the old Harmony Church bivouac area, the Airborne School Jump Towers, and to have a Celebration Dinner at the former Benning Officers Club.

Looking ahead to 2024, Board Secretary Fred MacLennan has begun working on our next Delta reunion, likely a summer event in Washington, DC. The Delta family continues to lose beloved Brothers, our friend Franklin Smith and Bennett Brulotte being the latest. Please keep in close touch with each other! Call or send a note to let a brother know that you're thinking of him! Blessings, cheers, hang-tough and Drive On!

AND NOW WE WELCOME THE NEW YEAR, FULL OF THINGS THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN Rainer Maria Rilke, 1907

*Blessings & Boot to Boot*

*Johnny Gergulis*



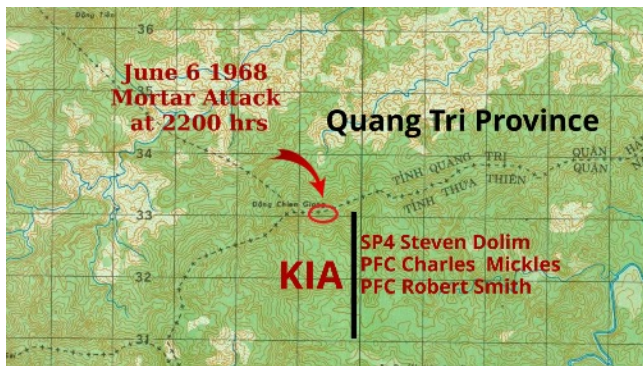
Brian Edward Tierney  
10/7/48 - 5/21/68  
Distinguished Service Cross

Brian Tierney

(Continued from page 3) Brian, who had served as third platoon RTO for much of his tour before joining the fourth, then the headquarters group, was well-liked in Delta. His death was deeply felt, but as ever for infantry, there was nothing to do but soldier on.

It was back to humping a load, and soon after, a move into the thickly forested mountains adjoining the A Shau Valley in southwestern Quang Tri Province. Just eleven days later, on June 5, Lieutenant George Davey's first platoon was in the lead as the company made a tough climb "up a mountain," where the company would set up that night. Staff Sergeant Ed Johnson, third platoon's platoon sergeant, recalls that "after setting up for the night the company sent a recon into the area we would move through the next day." Davey describes his platoon's recon, "Captain Kent sent us off one side toward a saddle which had been roughed up by a jet strike and was rather clear." Lieut. Davey decided to recon by fire. His grenadier fired across the open area and in reply the NVA blew a Chinese claymore type mine. "That raised our concerns for what would happen on the 6th when we were to go through that area," said Johnson. "The following morning we—third platoon—were in the lead with Ken York on point, Charlie Mason in support, then myself, with Bellamy, who had just returned to the company, on my left, when the enemy opened up and Bellamy was hit." Johnson yelled to lay down a base of fire. Third platoon's point was pinned down, Bellamy wounded, and the platoon's medic was not responding. Johnson called back for a runner get Specialist Ken Goff, formerly the third platoon medic and now the company's head medic.

Goff did what he always did: he headed toward the wounded. "When I got there, we were still receiving fire. I said 'cover me' as I crawled out. Bellamy was shot several times; he told me to leave him. I ignored that and was attempting to pull him back when Sergeant Marshall Crowder and PFC Jamie Swidecki came up, and together we brought him back," said Goff. "Medevac, with firing in the area, was reluctant to come in," recalls Davey. "finally the Huey hovered and ran out a cable with a 'jungle penetrator' and basket. As the wounded man was hoisted up, he waved."



"The company command post ('CP,' we called it), set up that night on the top of the hill, an area of stumps and downed trees, in which it was impossible to dig a foxhole," remembers Goff. Echo Company was nearby, assigned to work with Delta. Lieutenant Richard Parker, previously Delta's 2nd Platoon Leader, was Echo's commander. Sergeant Pete McPhee, also a Delta veteran, was the senior sergeant. Earlier the same day, the company had encountered two enemy soldiers, who

quickly ran and weren't engaged. "The climb that afternoon was exhausting. (Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4) “We set up a perimeter in the saddle off the side of the mountain. Since we were only about 18 men strong, we just covered a perimeter, no listening posts. I remember being concerned that some in Delta might not know we were the ones downhill from them,” said McPhee.

At the top of the hill, Goff laid down and “was asleep immediately. But not for long. I don’t know how many mortars hit, but the CP was a target. One or more hit us right in the middle. I heard the cry ‘Doc!’ My night’s work began. Fifteen to twenty feet from me, Steve Dolim was seriously wounded. I began working on him with the assistance of Doug Christ. He was badly wounded in the chest, blood everywhere; we did the best we in the dark of night to stop the bleeding. We were unable to give blood, we could not see to find the veins.” There were many others wounded that night and three killed: Dolim, Robert Smith, who died in a foxhole he shared with Gary Pezzutti, and Charles Mickles. Eleven were evacuated that night., the rest the next morning.



Steve Dolim

Donald Burns was one of those wounded. “I was in a foxhole next to on of our RTO’s. I remember hearing Bobby Kennedy had died [it was after 2 AM, June 6 in California], then, feeling the ground shake with incoming mortar rounds. I woke up from a coma eight weeks later, on the hospital ship “Sanctuary,” off the coast. I’d been hit in the head by shrapnel, leaving my left side paralyzed.”



Charles Mickles

“Captain Kent, although himself wounded, called the platoon leaders to him. Sitting leaning against a big tree, he was calmly decisive as he gave orders for the LP’s to be called in and go on 100% alert. He remained with his command all that night,” recalls Davey. “Gene Gallagher, 1st Platoon medic, took care of our one man hit and then went to the CP to help with the others. Gene was and is a good man. When we met at a Delta reunion years later was still troubled by that night.”



Robert Smith



Ken Goff–The Next Morning

Down the slope, with Echo Company, Pete McPhee heard the barrage of mortars hitting the top of the mountain. “Soon a stray mortar round hit down by my feet. I took shrapnel across my body and a bad one in my foot. It hurt like hell, but I knew my wounds were not life threatening. I said I’d rather stay with my trouper than be evacuated. The next morning I was helped up the mountain, evacuated and spent three weeks in the hospital.” Pete was the only casualty in Echo.

(Continued on page 7)

## WEBSITE UPDATE

Hello Brother Troopers,

The Delta Company website continues to be the most popular website of any Delta Company that served in Vietnam. Keep checking it out from time to time. The website has had over 10 million views since its inception. Delta Company videos continue to rack up views of about 3000 per day. That total now is 2.1 million views.

We are still looking for any photo or story updates you may have. Please let me know if you have anything to share with your Brothers-in-Arms and posterity. The plan is to continue the website on the internet long after we all are gone. Now's your chance. Call me at 360-627-0918.

Lately, unfortunately, we've had more brothers whose status has been moved to fiddler's green than new "finds." But one significant new addition to our Roster, is retired Major General Phillip Mallory who was the Delta Company Commander at Dak To in 1967, and who was wounded there. Chuck Rose met with him in San Antonio in December, and we all spoke on the phone. So if you knew him drop him a note and say hello. His email is on the roster, middle period. Here is the web address:  
<http://www.cattrack6india.com/roster1b.html>

Please go to the roster on the website and verify your telephone and email address. As time goes by phone numbers and emails tend to change, so please let us know if your info needs to be updated.

**TAKE CARE. DON'T WALK ON TRAILS AND BRING PLENTY OF AMMO.  
HAVE A GOOD EASTER.**

**CATTRACK6INDIA...OUT**

**(360) 627-0918**

*Bob March*

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Well boys, it's now just four months until the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Association Reunion in Louisville, Kentucky, the next opportunity hang out with men that I admire and respect.

Efforts are underway to identify a host hotel for Delta Company's next Reunion, in Washington, DC in the summer of 2024. We hope to be able to provide details sometime this summer.

**GOOD HEALTH**

*Fred Mac Kennan*

## FIDDLER'S GREEN

Sadly, we report another who has joined his brothers in  
*That shady meadow green, the eternal resting place known as Fiddler's Green.*

**BENNETT BRULOTTE**

**FRANKLIN SMITH**

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

**REGULAR FEATURES:** First Commander's Column; Web Update; Secretary's Report; Book Review; Fiddler's Green

**HISTORY FEATURE:** TBD

**OTHER:** Update on Delta's Reunion with the 1st Cavalry Division in Louisville; Update on the President's Anniversary event for those who served at Fort Benning in the 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

(Continued from page 5) The next day, after the wounded were extracted, Lieutenant Davey's first platoon was reinforced and left in place when Delta was lifted out. "Moving along the ridge line, we found stumps that had been packed with mud, a clue that something was nearby. By searching in a clover leaf pattern one squad came upon several big camouflaged hooches. At about the same time our machine gun team, set up on the ridge trail, killed two NVA walking toward us. Battalion ordered us to break contact and we were flown out." -*TWK*-

## BOOK REVIEW

### DUSTOFF

Michael J. Novosel

I picked up this book at a Goodwill with no particular expectations. It has turned out to be something rare--a book title that understates its contents. This is a memoir, the author's own story, written with significantly better style than most, and without the often-found self-congratulations. This is the story of a life that needs none of that.

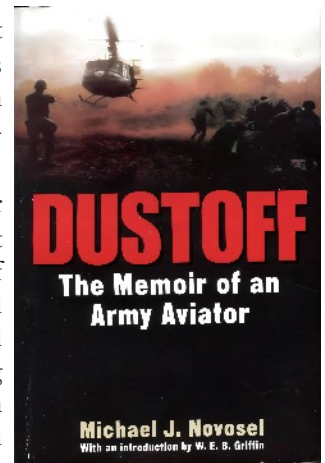
Before Pearl Harbor, when Mike Novosel enlisted in the Army Air Corps, he was trained to be a clerk. Though too short to qualify, he got himself into the aviation cadet program, earned his wings, spent much of WWII as a heavy bomber instructor pilot before finally being transferred to the Pacific theater. As a B-29 Super-fortress command pilot and squadron commander, he led bombing missions over Tokyo. He was on Tinian when the Enola Gay took off to end World War II in the skies over Hiroshima.

Following the war, he combined careers as an airline pilot and Air Force Reserve officer, becoming rotary wing qualified, and an H-13 instructor.

Mike applied for active duty in 1964 when Vietnam was heating up, but the air force had no flying jobs for 41-year-old reserve lieutenant colonels. The army, however, could use an experienced instructor pilot

who was rotary-wing qualified to train young soldiers to fly.

Or so it seemed, until the army—being the army—decided that flying dustoffs in Vietnam was the job for which he was needed. On a second Vietnam tour, he and his son flew combat missions in the same medevac unit. After 2,038 hours of combat flight, 2,345 aerial missions that evacuated 5,589 wounded, and a Congressional Medal of Honor, this is Mike Novosel's amazing and very readable story. *TWK*-



Mike & Mike Junior flew in Vietnam

*Boot to Boot*

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