

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 9 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2024

Dak To 1967, Part 1: Something Completely Different

Delta Goes to Hill 724

2024 Delta Reunion

The Vietnam Veterans
Memorial & Arlington
National Cemetery
September 12-15

WESTIN WASHINGTON

DULLES AIRPORT

Herdon, VA

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DELTA-REUNION-ROOMS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

Welcome Reception

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

**Wreath Laying at the
Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
Memorial Service at the
Vietnam Memorial Wall**

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

**Membership Meeting
Banquet**

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Depart

For Ron Redalen, Dak To was a shattering revelation. “Dak To was the first time I thought I might not make it home.”

Kontum Province, along with Pleiku Province, make up most of the “Central Highlands” of South Vietnam. A high plateau with rugged hills that can reach as high as 2450 meters (8,000 feet), the highlands was the area of some of the most bitter battles in Vietnam, from the 1954 destruction of Mobile Group 100 in the Mang Yang Pass in the 1st Indochina War, to the Battle of Ban Me Thuot in 1975, in the death throes of the Republic of Vietnam. In between there was Ia Drang (1965) and Dak To (1967).

The 4th Infantry Division, faced in the spring of ‘67 by an NVA build-up near Dak To, in northwestern Kontum, was reinforced by the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which fought the bitter “Battle of the Slopes” June 20-22. After a lull that summer, by November the American and ARVN units were again heavily engaged. On November 11, the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry was sent as further reinforcement, followed by the rest of the 1st Cavalry Division’s 1st Brigade on November 15th. That first night on the Dak To

perimeter, PFC Pete McPhee, “in-country” for just three weeks, saw an ammo dump go up in spectacular fashion, a new, sobering, experience.

SP4 Redalen had arrived in country in May. Since then Delta had been patrolling and conducting “Cordon & Search” operations for dispersed and elusive Viet Cong (Continued on page 4)

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Veterans of D Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Calvary (Vietnam) Reunion in Washington, DC 12-15 September 2024

HOTEL – *Westin Dulles Airport*

Included: Airport Shuttle, Free Parking, Hospitality Suite, On-site Restaurant, 172 Rooms, Room rate \$149 including all taxes and fees. (See Page 3 for details)

Thursday, 12 September

Check into hotel and register. Welcome Reception with cash bar. Our Hospitality Suite opens after the reception.

Friday, 13 September



Visit *Arlington National Cemetery*, where we will lay a wreath at the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, to be arranged with the US Army's Office of National Cemeteries.



Following our visit to Arlington, we will travel to the *National Mall*, pausing near the *Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial* for a box lunch. From there, Delta will go on to the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* where, in coordination with the National Park Service,

we will have a short service highlighted by reading of our *Roll of Honor*, those names chisled into the Wall. Following our ceremony, Delta's veterans will be able to go forward to find the names of those special to them.



Saturday, 14 September

In the morning is our Membership Meeting. The remainder of the day will be "open" (our hospitality suite will be open as it will be every day except during scheduled events), until a *Reception* at 5 pm, followed by our *Banquet* at 6 in Westin's Rivanna Ballroom.

Sunday, 15 September

– Departure day, or stay additional days to enjoy other destinations in our Nation's Capital: the Smithsonian Institution, Capital building, or spend additional time at Arlington. Our room block rate is good for three more days and the Metro is nearby (the hotel's shuttle will take you there).

2024 Reunion - What You Need to Know

HOTEL - WESTIN WASHINGTON DULLES AIRPORT

2520 Wasser Terrace, Herndon Virginia 20171

- Room Block September 9 to September 18, 2024 (Event + 3 days before and after)
- \$129+tax = \$145.77 per night, King Bed or two Queen Beds
- *BOOK BY PHONE: 866-932-7062. BOOKING CODE DCB*
- *BOOK ON LINE: TINYURL.COM/DELTA-REUNION-ROOMS*
- Free shuttle from airport, runs on the 1/2 hour no reservation required, call **571-441-5058**
- Shuttle will take guests to local restaurants, shopping, and the Metro Station
- Free Parking in a garage, no parking for RVs; RV Park options include *The Meadows of Chatilly*, 6 miles; *Lake Fairfax Park*, 8 miles
- Free Internet, and On-site Restaurant & Bar
- Nearby Shopping and Restaurants, including the Westgate Center, 2 miles
- Innovation Center Metro Station, 1 mile
- **Check the box on the Registration Form if you will be using a wheelchair during the reunion**

Website Update

We have a new set of photos and a video from Brian Mooney, who transferred to Delta from the 2/12th Cavalry after Delta lost almost half the company in December 1966 at the Battle of the 506 Valley (see website **FIRE FIGHTS AND HISTORICAL EVENTS** page and April & July 2020 Newsletters in **Delta Company Newsletters**). Brian happened across the website and contacted me. He has photos and even some 8 MM film, a pleasant surprise since original film of Delta is rare. Brian's page is under **Photo Index**, first column. There's footage of the base camp at An Khe, as well as some Green Line deployment. Many faces are not identified. Let me know if you recognize someone. Lieutenant Keys, 1967-1968, was added to the middle roster with his contact information.

Recently a small group of Delta Brothers and AMVET friends got together in Tucson for an impromptu reunion. Click on **PHOTOS REUNION** then **Tucson Gathering**.

Delta Company videos (**Video Index**) are still attracting a large world-wide audience, a daily average of 5,000 views. **Delta Music Video Part 2, 1967-1968**, just surpassed 3.4 million views.

On our website are 65 photo albums, more than 4500 photos and twelve reunion pages, each with many photos, eleven **FIRE FIGHTS** stories authored by Delta Veterans, 28 Newsletters, 14 videos, and five stories authored by Vietnamese.

As always, we are still looking for any photo or story updates you 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. (see contact info on back of any newsletter.) Also, 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 let us know if your info needs to be updated.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Delta Company reunion in September this year.

TAKE CARE, DON'T WALK ON TRAILS, AND BRING PLENTY OF AMMO

Bob March

(Continued from page 1) cadres in the populated seaside plain of Binh Dinh Province, near Bong Son. Dak To would be decidedly different than his previous experience of occasional contacts with local guerrillas. “We flew into Dak To, where we were put into the perimeter. The next morning Hueys took us up to Hill 724 to reinforce two companies of the 3/8th Infantry. Since the helicopters were returning from the field loaded, we had to unload the bird we were getting on. We were shocked to find ourselves unloading bodies of American soldiers, some killed on Hill 724, where we were going, and others on Hill 823 (2/503rd Infantry, 173rd Abn), where another battle was raging. It didn’t get any better once we were landed on 724, where we dug in, with periodic “incoming” from the NVA around us. I was a squad RTO in the third platoon and we drew the short straw—a listening post—that night. Normally that would be two guys. On 724, Lieutenant Watkins, our third platoon leader, put out a 4-man LP.”

Captain Phillip Mallory had assumed command of D Company on 7 August. “The company was operating in Bong Son, doing cordon operations—pacification—when we were sent to provide security for Highway 19, in the vicinity of An Khe. After about a week, we were lifted to reinforce the 4th Infantry Division in Dak To, arriving there on 11 November. The next morning we were attached to a 4th division battalion, the 3/8th Infantry, which had been under attack by a regiment or more. The NVA had broken into the perimeter; in hand-to-hand combat, the Americans had ejected them, but with terrible losses. To give you an idea of how bad this fight had been, I had a foxhole strength of about a hundred twenty. For every live American I took in, they evacuated a dead American. In the meantime the enemy had ringed Hill 724 with artillery and mortars. I obtained enough sandbags to give every soldier in the company 12. With two-man positions, there were 24 sandbags, so it was possible to construct overhead cover. When we went out to establish observation posts, and to clear fields of fire, my soldiers came back, and said they found NVA soldiers, dead, stacked, over 400 in one stack.

When we got there, the two companies were out of ammunition and water. As soon as I heard that, we divided up our ammunition and our water and provided it to the companies with us. I was dealing with two battalion commanders; LTC Glen Belnap, commanding 3/8th and LTC Dan French, who was my commander in the 12th Cavalry. When French checked in via radio, we told him, ‘we really need ammunition and water. Send me a log bird, filled only with ammunition and water. Nothing else, but send gun ships’ to protect the unarmed logistic bird. While at a meeting with the 3/8th, I heard a helicopter landing, so I raced back to my company, got my soldiers back in their holes, and the ship landed. I went to the log bird to find out if it was really meant for me before exposing my unloading parties. I talked to the door gunner first. He didn’t know, so I was on my way up to see the pilot when a mortar round hit between me and the helicopter, blowing me on my back. I looked up and the helicopter was on fire, it had blown the skid out from the helicopter, so now the helicopter was rolling over on top of me. I was able to turn over and started crawling as fast as I could, not realizing that



Captain Phillip Mallory & First Sergeant John Simmons

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4) both arms and both legs were broken. But the Lord was watching over me and I got just far enough to get out from under the fuselage, but not far enough to get into the main rotor as it beat itself to death on the ground. My medics jumped up and pulled me into a foxhole. There was a lot of confusion; as the aircraft burned, there could be no more landings the LZ.

Mallory was right; the delivery was not for Delta. Crew Chief Joe Harrilla wrote later, "The crew of 539 was Aircraft Commander Al Harris, Pilot Larus Roland, Gunner George Paradise, and me. We were flying C&C that day for Lieut. Col. Belnap. CO of 3/8th. Company A, 3/8th, on hill 724 radioed that they had broken contact and were in dire need of water. Everyone knew there was no such thing as breaking contact the NVA at Dak to. We took LTC Belnap back to hill 1335, stripped the radios out, and loaded up with water. Al Harris was one day from going home, but did not hesitate. Hill 724 was a one ship LZ, almost a vertical decent through the trees. You could not land there because of stumps and debris. [As we dropped in] the next thing I knew I heard the engine screaming with an over speed. Flames were rolling through the middle of the ship and the ship was rolling over. After the ship came to rest I crawled out. We were medevaced out to the battalion aid at Dak To, then to the 71st Evac. Pilot Larus Roland died of his injuries the next day."

"It was about 45 minutes before LTC French was able come in, pick me up, and take me back to the aid station, saving my life in the process."remembered Mallory. "French sent in a lieutenant, the Exec. from A Company [Lt. John Kirby], who took temporary command of Delta. The company was extracted, and went on to fight in the dark days of '68, Tet, Khe Sanh and the rest. Some of the guys came back to see me in the hospital, they said, 'that company was like moles. As soon as you put them on the ground, they were underground.' I spent 9 months in Walter Reed before I got out in the summer of '8. They wanted to medically retire me from the army. I wanted to remain, and was able to convince the medical evaluation board that I could serve."



George Osborne, Jr.

On November 22, the day before Thanksgiving, still in Kontum Province, Delta was on LZ Becky after having patrolled in the surrounding area. Two soldiers of the company' mortar platoon were moving a dud mortar round when it exploded, killing both. Sp4 George Osborne Jr., 19 Gary, Indiana, and PFC Stephen Thomas, 21, Raleigh, North Carolina, were the only soldiers killed in D Company' 27 days in Dak To. Delta returned to LZ English, near Bong Son, on December 9. There were many days of higher casualties in Delta's seven years in Vietnam,



Stephen Thomas

Dak To would remain a searing experience.

(*Dak To, Part 2: The Diary*, in the next issue of "*Bark to Bark*")

NOTES

- 1- Ron Redalen, and Peter McPhee. D/1/12 Cavalry, Interviews
- 2- Major General Philip Halm Mallory Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, Library of Congress, Collection Number: AFC/2001/001/99207 (Paraphrased and Edited for Length)
- 3- Daily Journals of the 1st Cavalry Division and 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry
- 4- Defense Intelligence Agency Helicopter Loss database; Joe Harrilla, 170th Assault Helicopter Company
- 5- After Action Reports of 4th Infantry Division and 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division
- 6- Photo credit, Mallory & Simmons: Captain Phil Lucid, 1/12th Cavalry Chaplain
- 7- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund



First Commander's Corner

Greetings, from San Antonio, Texas, where we are visiting Delta Brother Chuck Rose, and our dear Jai in hospice care.

Extended travel took us to Phoenix and Tucson, where we were able to visit with Delta Brothers Tom Kjos, Mike & Joyce Van Kirk, Dusty & Sandy Crary, Doug Warden & Son Rob, Ron Redalen, and our Tucson AMVET friends.

In 2023 we were once again reminded of the reality that on this side, life is much too short and so very precious! Nothing was more tragic than the loss of more of our Delta Brothers, including our friends Colonel Jon Dodson, Command Sergeant Major Luther Nixon, Jr., and Trooper Edward Moon. Their legacy, and that of all our departed brothers, is left for us until we are able to join them in His Legions in Heaven! Each of these were extraordinary American Soldiers, the very best Our great Country ever produced. Rest in peace, Beloved Friends, until we gather on

Fiddlers Green for the final bugle call!

Final preparations are on-going for an epic 2024 Reunion, September, in Washington, DC, including visits to Arlington National Cemetery and The Vietnam Memorial (“The Wall”). Early registration is very important! We can’t really properly provide the resources for our banquet and other events without early knowledge of attendance! Please send in your Delta Registration, and reserve your hotel room, now! (See information elsewhere, and the Reunion Registration Form)

Our guest speaker has been confirmed, and several notable guests will be joining us. This Delta Reunion is not to be missed! Unfortunately, age and infirmity are catching up to us; we don’t know how many more opportunities there will be to share time with those with whom we served.

Your Delta Vietnam Veterans Association Executive Board remains dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Delta Brothers. We are here for y’all.

“OUR BROTHERS WILL BE FOREVER IN OUR MEMORIES”

God bless you All & God bless America

“Boot to Boot”

Johnny Bergulis

FIDDLER’S GREEN

We remember the Delta Brothers we lost in Vietnam and those who have passed away since our return. Since our last newsletter we have identified the loss of these Delta veterans.

JONATHAN DODSON

LUTHER NIXON

AUGUSTINE VALDEZ

OTHER CAVALRY REUNIONS

The 12th Cavalry Regiment Association No date or location for the 2024 Reunion is yet available.

The 1st Cavalry Division Association will return to Louisville, KY 19-23 June 2024 for its **76th Reunion** <https://1cda.org/annual-reunion/information/>

BOOK REVIEW

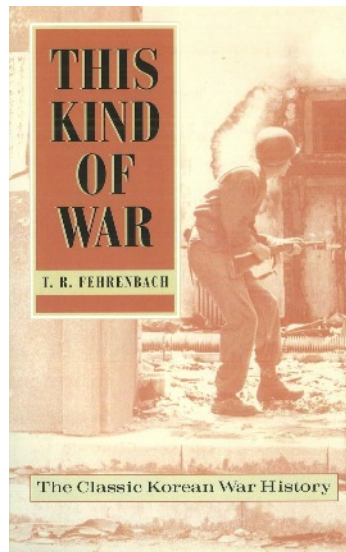
THIS KIND OF WAR

T.R. Fehrenbach

Not only one of the best histories of the Korean War, but a book that significantly contributes to understanding the American wars that have followed. Published in 1963, "This Kind of War" identifies the inherent problems of the American military and political leadership in the Korean War and its era that were later repeated in Vietnam. TR Fehrenbach brings together the world politics of the era in which Korea was fought with platoon combat.

A veteran of World War II and of Korea, Fehrenbach gives us disturbing descriptions of the horror of battle. Also given clarity is the uniquely American conflict between the social liberalism valued by society, and the Spartan, totalitarian world of the military. Following WWII public pressure made the US Army "kindler and gentler," (and much smaller) to the detriment of its discipline and ultimately, its effectiveness. Soldiers can't afford the luxury of the easy-going existence of their civilian contemporaries. War isn't a game and it isn't easy-going.

Korea was the first war where public and world opinion held determined how it was fought and perhaps, whether it was won. The author points out the risks that are entailed in letting this occur; a lesson that we Americans seem to forget. Written before Lyndon Johnson sent the 1st Cavalry Division into Vietnam, this book, more than any other I have read, makes clear the "why" of Vietnam and, just as in Korea, why we did not "win." The concept of "limited war" or "war of containment" began with the Korean War. Vietnam became a "limited war" and later, the 1st Gulf War was another "war of containment." The Afghanistan War, a "limited war," was with us for 20 years! The American public wanted, in the Korean War, to "win or get out." We heard that refrain—repeated it ourselves—during and since our service in Vietnam.



Secretary's Report

I hope everyone enjoyed the Holidays and were able to spend time with family and friends.

Plans are moving forward with the Washington, DC Reunion. We have reserved 70 rooms at our Reunion hotel. I suggest that you book your rooms as soon as possible, because there appears to be a lot of interest in this reunion. We can increase the number of rooms, but we need to know months in advance.

This reunion is about paying homage to those of us who did not return from the war, but it is also about thanking those we served with and got us home safely. So come to the reunion and hug a buddy. I will be reaching out to our Delta veterans in February and urging you to attend. It's good for the soul.

Good Health

Fred Mac Kennan

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

Walter Wilczak

(201) 317-0546 wwilczak@msn.com

Treasurer/

Newsletter Editor

Tom Kjos

(480) 352-2583 tomwkjos03@gmail.com

Secretary/Outreach

Fred Mac Lennan

(347) 853-1281 fredmacl66@outlook.com

Webmaster/Historian

Bob March

(360) 627-0918 delta@cattrack6india.com

65-66 Era Representative

Jerry Fell

(512) 923-4232 hometoo@sbcglobal.net

67-68 Era Representative

Doug Christ

(714) 865-3467 dfchrist3@gmail.com

69-72 Era Representative

Paul Marling

(845) 444-0517 paullmarling@aol.com

Mail for the Website

Bob March

1509 Sawdust Hill Road NE
Poulsbo, WA 98370-9127

Mail for Veterans of Delta

(Including Newsletter)

Tom Kjos

9817 W Mockingbird Drive
Sun City, AZ 85373-2136

Website Address

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