

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 2 ISSUE 3

JULY 2017

REUNION EVENTS

Tuesday, October 3
Arrival Day

WELCOME DINNER

Hospitality Suite Open

Wednesday, October 4
**PIMA AIR & SPACE
MUSEUM**

Hospitality Suite Open

Thursday, October 5
MEMORIAL SERVICE

**TUBAC GALLERY &
SHOPPING TRIP**

**ASSOCIATION
BUSINESS MEETING**

RECEPTION

BANQUET

Hospitality Suite Open

Friday, October 6
Departure Day

#1's Corner



Well. How about that! This fifth issue begins the second year of your newsletter, Delta is on

the verge of its second reunion, and your officers' second year of serving is nearly at an end! I know I speak for Vice President Bob March and Secretary Tom Kjos in telling you it's been a great privilege.

It's been five years since a few Delta Veterans who had trained together in the 187th Infantry Regiment (Airborne) got together at the 1st Cavalry Association Reunion in Portland, Oregon.

The hard work by many of you behind this newsletter, our website, the San Antonio reunion, Archives research, and finding and contacting Delta veterans has built that small BAND OF BROTHERS from a score to hundreds. We now include veterans from each of the seven years of Delta's Vietnam service

Now we have to forge ahead. We have to reach out and find more of our brothers.

When we see the growing list of those who have gone on to Fiddler's Green we know we can no longer say "next year." There may not be one.

Please join me and those with whom you served at Delta's October Reunion in Tucson. Don't miss this priceless opportunity to share with those who truly understand - and care.

"Boot to Boot"

Dwight D Edwards
President, AKA #1

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Delta Company Reunion in Detail

We set out to learn from other reunions – the 1st Cavalry, the 12th Regiment, our own Delta in '15 – and to borrow the best to make this a truly special gathering, a memorable experience to which the brothers of Delta will want to return.

We made it just three days in mid-week to keep the cost down, and got a great hotel deal. Delta's rate for most room types at *Desert Diamond Hotel* is just \$89 plus tax, with a \$5 daily meal voucher for each (up to two) occupants and complementary airport transportation. We've provided optional things to do, and arranged for a great *Hospitality Suite* to spend time with those we last saw a half-century ago.

Arrive on Tuesday, October 3. If you are staying at *Desert Diamond Hotel*, call 520-342-3000 after collecting your luggage for the complementary airport shuttle. Get settled before 6 PM and catch the bus in front of the resort for a *Welcome Dinner* and "mingle" at Tucson's *Am Vets* chapter. Delta's *Hospitality Suite* on the top floor of our hotel wing will be open before – and after – the welcome event.

On Wednesday, rest from your travel, try your luck at the casino, spend time in Delta's *Hospitality Suite*. The bus to the *Pima Air & Space Museum* departs at 10 AM; return is at 2:30 PM.

Thursday is a big day...in every way. First in morning at 9:30 AM is our traditional *Memorial Service* with the reading of the *Roll of Honor* of those who died in Vietnam.

After we see the ladies (and some gentlemen) off for a *Tubac Gallery & Shopping Adventure* at 10:30 AM, Delta's *Business Meeting* will deal with some important organizational needs, elect leadership, and consider the time and place for our next reunion. If you are thinking of proposing a site for our next reunion, it will be a good idea to research potential host hotels and evaluate transportation in and out of the proposed city.

After disposing of our business, we can relax in the *Hospitality Suite*, but should pause to get ourselves ready for the banquet before the ladies return from Tubac (we want to give them their space to get ready).

The *Reception* begins at 5:00 PM. The cash bar will remain open through the Banquet. (You'll want to get your wine or other libation for the toasts before going into the banquet, there will not be alcohol table service). As the time for the banquet approaches, look out the soaring glass windows of *Desert Diamond's Conference Center* foyer for the approaching cavalry riders delivering our flags (tentative).

Banquet seating begins at 6:00 PM. Find your table and before you hear the mournful bagpipe strains of *Garry Owen* as the colors are posted. After the Invocation, watch a special musical salute to *Old Glory* by one of Delta's own.

The Fallen Comrade Table, and the *Traditional Toasts*, will be immediately before dinner is served. Following dinner our speaker is *Allen Lynch*, awarded the *Medal of Honor* for his actions in Delta at the Battle of Tam Quan in 1967. The *Hospitality Room* will re-open after this truly memorable event.

There are some of you for whom we have your Reunion Registration but have not yet made your hotel reservation. Please do so soon. As we pointed out above, when all things are considered, it's not likely that staying elsewhere will be less expensive.

In other cases, you have your *Desert Diamond* reservation, but we have not yet received your Reunion Registration. Please mail it. We need to know you are coming and what events you want so we can complete arrangements. Reserving event transportation (*Welcome Dinner*, *Pima Air & Space Museum*, *Tubac*) is critical, and needs to be done very soon.

The Hospital Firefight, November 1965

In 1965 the NVA decided to cut the South Vietnam in half at the Central highlands. The plan was to overrun the Provincial Headquarters at Pleiku. But first the Special Forces Camp at Plei Me had to be eliminated, and the RVN force stationed at Pleiku destroyed. An elaborate plan was hatched by Field Front (an NVA Division in size) to lay siege to the Special Forces Camp and draw in the ARVN from Pleiku to an ambush; much as they had done a decade before to the French. Books have been written about this. For brevity I'll just say their plan went awry. It was the NVA who were defeated, and were forced to flee in disarray 20 kilometers back to the Cambodian border area near the Chu Pong massif.

The NVA had set up a regimental field hospital about half way between the Plei Me Special Forces Camp and their Chu Pong Massif base. As the NVA fled west, the 1st Brigade of the 1st Cavalry division was given the task of finding and attacking the retreating NVA regiments, the first time the 1st Cavalry had engaged in this area. Delta's heroism on 1 November would directly lead to the famous Ia Drang battle.

On November 1, 1965 an Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Scout pilot spotted several NVA in a clearing 500 meters southwest of the hospital. Another 30 NVA were seen to the northeast, and 1/9th deployed its ground platoon. They patrolled to the northeast and walked straight into the regimental hospital, taking them by surprise, killing the security, and capturing 42 NVA and a large supply of hospital equipment. The first "haul" of its kind of the war, the excitement spread up the chain of command, bringing in a stream of VIP's to inspect the booty. Acting 1st Brigade Commander Lieutenant Colonel Harlow Clark and two generals were on the ground with just 19 infantrymen when an NVA battalion located about a kilometer to the northeast began a counterattack to retake the hospital. The brass called for their C&C birds and got the hell out of there.

But how to stop a battalion of NVA from sweeping back through the hospital area with only 19 infantry on the ground? Now mid-afternoon, the 1st Brigade urgently need any unit that was ready to move.

In 1965, Delta was a Combat Support Company, comprised of the battalion's Recon, Mortar, and Weapons Platoons, much like the Echo companies created later in the war. The Recon platoon was on "Eagle Flight" (Quick Reaction, or QRF) status at LZ Charger City and ready to go. 1/12th Battalion Commander Lt. Colonel (later General) Robert Shoemaker (RIP Sir), volunteered Recon, airborne within minutes headed to a tiny, one-ship LZ, with no briefing, - except "a battalion of NVA has to be stopped."

As Recon landed, they could see bodies - mostly NVA - strewn about the area. Lieutenant Arthur West, Recon Platoon Leader, and Platoon Sergeant Harvey McLaurin got everyone headed about 100 meters across the dry stream bed in which the hospital was located, then got the platoon on line at the base of the hill to the north. It was vital that this hill be secured, being the high ground directly above the hospital and in the path of the advancing NVA. Recon was supposed to be working in concert with two other platoons on its left flank. However, no one from Recon ever saw the other platoons. As they started to advance up the hill there was an immediate eruption of fire. The NVA had been attacking down the hill. Some took to the trees creating a three dimensional battle field.

Sergeant Ralph Onana sprinted ahead of the advancing Recon line and ducked behind a large rock. There he was shot through the head. Lieutenant West was severely wounded; SP4 Dieter Arnold slung the 220 pound former football player over his shoulder and carried him back safely. Fire was heavy. Tree limbs were being shot off, brush mowed down. Recon had little to no fire support. Artillery had not yet been placed and Delta's mortar platoon was too far away. ARA became impossible because of the tree canopy.

(Continued on Page 7)

Delta Company Website Update

Greetings Delta Brothers,

The Delta Web Site [www.cattrack6india.com] continues to be updated, modified and refined. It takes inputs from everyone to keep things up to date. All of us appreciate the new info pouring in from many quarters.

Once again Fred MacLennan has been keeping me busy with the changes that are being sent in by him. As a result of his many phone calls there are now 96 Delta Troopers "Found" for the period late 1969 to June 1972. From 1st Cavalry Division General Orders (see National Archives report, page 6) 546 troopers have been identified as members of Delta during the same period. For all of the Vietnam War there are now 1277 Troopers on the roster, and we haven't yet loaded all those identified during our recent National Archives trip. The total number of Delta Company members "found," (contacted and for whom we have contact information) is 220. I will conjecture that there few, if any, Companies that operated in Vietnam that have such a complete picture of its history and composition.

Since there are over 300 new names added to the Roster, a lot of work is need to "find" these men. If any of you can "volunteer" to make phone calls or do computer searches to help track down some of your buddies, please get in touch with me. (Now that we're out of the Army it's OK to volunteer.)

We added a new page to our website on *The Legacy Project*, a project conceived and designed by 12th Cavalry Association newsletter editor Thomas Crabtree (C Co. 1/12th). The objective is to produce a documentary of the 1/12th in Vietnam. See "Legacy Project" on Delta's homepage. Contact Thomas [mmctlc3@aol.com] if you have questions.

I continue to be amazed at the level of usage of the Delta Company web site. During the months of May and June there were on average 4050 visits to the web site each month. During May alone, a total of 61,185 files were downloaded, a record. This level of activity shows that many are interested in the story of Delta in Vietnam. Delta Company website usage has doubled since last year.

UPDATES OF INTEREST

Due to its length the Late period Roster has now been split into two sections alphabetically to allow easier loading on some computers, as was previously the Mid-period Roster.

Last but by no means least. Check out the photos sent in by Basil Clark. Basil spent a year with Delta and then went to Recon Platoon in Echo Company, until he was medivac'd back to the states. He has provided a very interesting set of photos. Some of the individuals shown need to be identified, so please do so if you know their names. Turn on your sound.

That's all for now Brothers. See you in October at what will be an excellent Delta Reunion in Tucson.

"Boot to Boot"

Bob March

WHAT WE DO IN LIFE ECHOES IN ETERNITY

Fiddler's Green

We memorialized by a *Reading of the Roll of Honor* the Delta Brothers we lost in Vietnam at our 2015 San Antonio reunion, and will do so again in October in Tucson.

Since launching your newsletter last year, we've realized it's also important to remember those who have passed away after they were "back in the World." In the April issue of Boot-to-Boot we listed in this space 73 of these brothers gone from among us. In the three months since that list, we can unfortunately add these sixteen.

STEVEN ADAIR
ROOSEVELT CAGE
LAWRENCE CZUBEK
EDWARD DILLHUNT
PATRICK DUGAN

JAMES HOLLINGSWORTH
ERIC JOHNSTONE
JAMES KING
GERALD LEVESQUE
FRANK NOELL
DUANE OKLAND

JOHN PRATT
FREDERICK SHIMMELL
HENRY SONES
BRUCE WILSON
ROGER YAKOTA

Unfortunately, this is a list that will grow longer through time. It is possible that we have listed someone in error. If you see your name here, please contact Delta's webmaster at recondelta@embarqmail.com. Do the same if you know of a Delta Veteran who has gone on to Fiddler's Green.

Bob March, Fred MacLennan & Tom Kjos



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The designer/originator of the original air assault badge would have veterans of the 11th Air Assault and later combat veterans of the 1st Cavalry Division simply "wear the badge proudly," sidestepping any question of DA "approval." He told veterans of 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, *"I wear my original Air Assault Badge proudly as may anyone in the first shift of the Jumping Mustangs and as far as the rest of you, I personally authorize it. I doubt if anyone will question you."*

GENERAL HARRY KINNARD, first Commanding General of the 1st Cavalry Division, to the "Jumping Mustangs," at their 2001 reunion.

email your thoughts to [delta112cavalry@gmail.com]

In the Next Issue of *Boot-to-Boot*

Coverage of our Tucson reunion - which won't be anything like being there. Fiddler's Green, Web Site Update, President's message and other news. Another story of Delta in Vietnam. Your submissions are wanted.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES REPORT

Following up on our visit of last September, a Delta team comprised of Tom Kjos, Fred McLennan, Ron Redalen, and Paul Marling spent June 23-30 researching Delta's history at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Five of us made 11 trips comprised of 50 man-days of research since 2012.

Archives II at College Park possesses a nearly-complete set of 1st Cavalry Division *General Orders*. Also archived are *After Action Reports* for major operations and battles, *Daily Staff Journals* kept by Division, Brigade and Battalion Operations (G3/S3) Sections, the *Daily Intelligence Summary* prepared by the Division G2, and some *Daily Journals* of Brigade and Battalion S2 Sections.

Our intent is to identify all who served with Delta in Vietnam, and to tell Delta's story.

We were able to get through all the 1st Cavalry Division General Orders. Our "library" of General Orders relevant to Delta (and some of interest to other 1/12th companies) is now 2,286. Though we are still reviewing those orders, we now have the names of about 1,300 brothers with whom we served. The final total will be about 1,350. Forty-seven of 82 months of the battalion's Daily Staff Journals made it into the archives. Delta has complete copies of every one of those 47 months. We've supplemented those with copies of the Journals of the Division G3 and of the Division's Daily Intelligence Summary. With organizing yet to do there are now more than 8,000 of those "History Pages" in our library. With the General Orders, over 10,000 pages in total.

VIETNAM RETURN UPDATE

We're still developing the details of our trip with Dave Macedonia, the 101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veteran who will lead our trip. Dave is back from a month in Vietnam with back-to-back tours and headed for the annual meeting of *Vietnam Battlefield Tours*. Getting adequate "downtime" in Hoi An and Hue has been an issue, but a new afternoon flight to Pleiku may help. Dave will take that flight on an August visit and let us know how it goes. Field visits include FSB's like Pace, Snapper, and English; battle sites like Hoa Hoi, Tam Quan, campaign terrain like Dak To and A Shau. Since most of the countryside is now available to visit we are submitting coordinates for early approval. So far more than a dozen Delta veterans have expressed interest. No deposit is due until September. Look for more information soon.

DELTA REUNION UPDATE

With three months to go, those who have registered and/or who have hotel/RV park reservations as of July 12 include: **53 DELTA VETERANS PLUS 4 VETERANS OF OTHER UNITS: (65-66 = 14) (67-68 = 24) (69-72 = 19) 34 SPOUSES, SIGNIFICANT OTHERS & FRIENDS, 91 TOTAL ATTENDEES**

With still three months to go, many more Delta Veterans are telling us they will attend. Let's "pull out the stops." Don't delay. Our room block is filling fast.

OTHER CAVALRY REUNIONS

The 12th Annual 12th Cavalry Regiment Association Reunion, September 12-17, 2017 at the Welk Resort in Branson, Missouri. Details at <http://www.12thcav.us/pdf/CrossedSabers2017.pdf>

The 1st Cavalry Division's 70th Reunion was hosted by the active division at Ft. Hood, always the case in odd-numbered years. The 2018 Reunion is in Charleston, West Virginia, 20-24 June.

(Continued from Page 3) Communications were almost non-existent. Specialist Four Chuck Rose, carrying the battalion radio for Lieutenant West, was headed up the hill when his radio was destroyed by three NVA rounds. Now NVA the platoon thought they had killed a Recon Recon in the back after they advanced past them.

Sergeant Mike Van Kirk saw PFC Rodney Harris get hit and went to help him. Van Kirk hit the ground just as an explosion went off between his legs. He was in bad trouble, shrapnel wounds from head to toe. Two medics from another unit showed up and attempted to carry him down the hill, but NVA mortars forced the medics to drop Mike and leave him.

Meanwhile Private First Class Chuck Doole, who was on the far left flank of the advancing Recon platoon was receiving heavy fire from his left. Many of the NVA were in the trees sniping at anyone that moved. Chuck saw Sergeant Onana get hit in the head. Then about one quarter the way up the hill he saw PFC James Pottkotter get hit. He ran over to check on him, as did PFC Carl Duvall. Pottkotter was dead. They continued advancing up the hill. Spotting an NVA flinging grenades down the hill from behind a tree, Duvall shot him. Fire continued to be heavy. Doole was hit in the leg, knocking him down. He lost his weapon in the process and crawled to some cover. Sergeant Harry Lute ran over through hail of bullets and carried Chuck back down the hill to safety.

Recon continued to advance up the hill until they were pinned down by machine gun fire. M-79 fire was directed at the position to no avail. Finally, SP4 Louis Sloan got up, ran towards the machine gun position and neutralized it with a hand grenade, allowed Recon to continue the assault. Later, according to eye witness reports, Sloan took out several NVA bunkers with hand grenades while singing "My Girl".

As it was starting to get dark, Chuck Rose, SP4 Phil Byron and one other -- probably SP4 Larry Burkhead -- made it to an NVA bunker at the top of the hill. They had no communications and were not aware of any other friendlies at the top of the hill. In fact they believed that the rest of Recon was likely dead. Later, SSG Oscar Rubio crawled up to the bunker with a shrapnel wound in his arm. He told the others that he had seen no other friendlies and was lucky to have found them and not the NVA. They spent the night on top of the bunker hearing movement all around them. The 1st Brigade finally flew artillery into support range and started firing. They had no idea whether the artillery might be targeting their position, but it was landing close, making for a truly a harrowing night.

During that night hundreds of NVA continued to move west, trying to get across the Cambodian border to sanctuary. They never took back the hospital. Recon Delta suffered three KIA (Ralph Onana, James Pottkotter, Rodney Harris) and seven seriously wounded, which was more than a third of the platoon.

It would all happen to Recon Delta again in April 1966, not far from the hospital, in the same Chu Pong Massif/Ja Drang Valley area. Half the platoon would be killed or wounded.

A decade later, after the U.S. Congress had cut off all funds to the South Vietnamese, the NVA finally did cut the country in half at the Central Highlands. But they did not have to fight Delta to do it. They won politically what they could not win fighting the 1st Cavalry.

COL Harlow Clark was KIA in Vietnam 7 March 66, Harry Lute was KIA in Vietnam 7 April 66, LTC (later GENERAL) Robert Shoemaker died June 21, 2017. Harvey McLaurin died in 1985, Arthur West in 1987, Phil Byron in 2005, Dieter Arnold in 2016. Larry Burkhead lives in Omega, GA., Delta is looking for Carl Duvall and Louis Sloan. Chuck Rose, Charles Doole, Mike Van Kirk, and Oscar Rubio will be at Delta's Reunion in Tucson.

Bob March

Boot to Boot

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