

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 3

JULY 2019

Delta Medal of Honor Recipient Honored in Home Town Fifty Years Later, "Remembering Rodney" in Florala, Alabama

2019 Delta Reunion

Fort Benning &
Columbus, GA
October 3-6

DOUBLETREE BY
HILTON

BOOK BY PHONE

(706) 327-6868

TELL THEM IT'S FOR

DELTA, 1/12TH CAV
(Code "C-A-V")

BOOK ON-LINE AT

[https://tinyurl.com/
D-1-12-Cav](https://tinyurl.com/D-1-12-Cav)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3

Arrive

Welcome Reception

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4

National Infantry
Museum

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

Memorial Service
Business Meeting
Banquet

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

Depart

On July 18, 1969, the day after his 21st birthday, Sergeant Rodney J. Evans, a Squad Leader in Delta Company's 3rd Platoon, sacrificed his life to protect his men from the blast of an NVA mine near LZ Grant in Tay Ninh Province. For his heroism Rod was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



Fifty years later, July 18, 2019, in a special service in the

Rodney J. Evans Civic Center in Florala, Alabama, former D Company Platoon Sergeants Basil B. Clark and Gary DeRigne, close friends of Rod's, memorialized his heroic sacrifice to an audience of over 120 people. The ceremony was organized by Kim

Williamson, wife of Florala's former mayor, with Army Chaplain Capt. Daniel Garnett as Master of Ceremonies.

SSG Clark, a retired university professor from Chattanooga, TN, author of

four books, used a visual presentation as he spoke of his memories of Rod as his friend, of the events of Rod's early life, and of his emotions as Rod's body was carried past him to a waiting Medevac helicopter. His emotional and philosophical focus left the audience without a dry eye.

SSG DeRigne, retired businessman from Kansas City, author of two novels about (continued on Page 4)



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Veterans of D Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry (Vietnam) Reunion at Fort Benning & Columbus, Georgia 3-6 October 2019

HOTEL – *Doubletree by Hilton*

Included Breakfast, Airport Shuttle, Hospitality Suite, On-site Restaurant, 172 Rooms, Room rate \$126 including all taxes and fees.

Thursday, 3 October

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



Friday, 4 October

Visit the *National Infantry Museum* where we will have a catered lunch. Enjoy combat simulations, dioramas of historic infantry events in America's wars through the centuries, and much more.

Saturday, 5 October

In the morning is our Memorial Service and Business Meeting. The *Benning Club*, Fort Benning's former Officer's Club, hosts a reception in *Fiddler's Green Pub*, the club's "salute to Cavalry Soldiers past and present," with our banquet following in the soaring *Regimental Room*, a vaulted gallery whose flags honor the Army's historic 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. 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.

OTHER CAVALRY REUNIONS

The 12th Cavalry Regiment Association Reunion, 11-15 September 2019 at the Welk Resort in Branson, Missouri. Details Tom Crabtree at email mmctlc3@aol.com or call 432-853-4851

FIDDLER'S GREEN

We remember those we have lost since our last issue of *But to But*.

LAFE SMITH

BASIL WOLFE

*If we have listed someone in error, please contact Delta's webmaster at delta@catrack6india.com
Do the same if you know of a Delta Veteran who has gone on to Fiddler's Green.*



First Commander's Corner

Preparations for our "Coming Home" Reunion at Fort Benning/Columbus, are fast wrapping-up. It's time to commit and register to attend.

For some of us, this Delta Reunion may be the last we are able to attend. Seemingly each week we learn that one of our Brothers is fighting the medical ravages of time; that yet another beloved Brother has been called home to Fiddlers Green.

We lost Brother Lafe Smith, who had registered for the reunion, a few days ago. Kurnis "Cajun" Saltzman died earlier this year. Frank Oxendine died in March. Basil Wolfe passed away just a few weeks ago. Since we returned from Vietnam we've lost over 350 of our brothers. Those are only the ones we've accounted for. Brother Dick Kent is valiantly fighting a recently diagnosed cancer. Don Oakley, Ed Johnson, Gary Downs, Richard Rock, and Oscar Rubio are among many of our brothers recently dealing with cancer or other health issues. We hope and pray that Dick – and all of them – can join us at Columbus.



Lafe Z. Smith, 74, passed away July 5, 2019. He married Peggy Callahan in 1968 and the same day received his draft notice. Serving in Vietnam as platoon leader in D Company, he was awarded two Bronze Stars for Valor and a Purple Heart. Lafe renewed those foxhole friendships at recent Delta reunions. He was inducted into the OCS Hall of Fame at Fort Benning for military and community service.

Peggy, Lafe and their four children settled on a small sheep ranch on Klamath County Oregon in 1983, and established a linen business. A star wrestler until, in his words, "I discovered beer," he coached wrestling and supported the FFA and 4-H until his death. Lafe's life was dedicated to making opportunities for the youth of Klamath County.

I know I sound like a broken record, urging our Delta Brothers to stay in touch with each other, to call, to send a note of encouragement. We thank God each day for allowing us to have these friendships forged in foxholes. They are the little good that came out of a difficult time.

During our reunion we'll visit the National Infantry Museum, among the top military museums in the world. "Magnificent" does not do it justice! We'll share memories with our brothers. Our banquet will once again be a wonderful remembrance – of the friends we made and the friends we lost.

If you're thinking, "I'll attend the next one," please reconsider. The days of our lives are flying by. The frailty of advancing age may make it impossible to attend the "next one." Some will be called to report to Fiddlers Green, and there won't be a "next time." By the way, "the next one" is not next year, but in 2021.

God bless each of you! Have a safe and enjoyable summer. I'll see y'all in October!

THE GREATEST CASUALTY IS BEING FORGOTTEN
© Wounded Warrior Project

Blessings & "But to But"

Johnny Sergulis

(continued from page 1) Vietnam, shared memories of friend and squad leader Rod Evans, explained what day-to-day life was like for the Delta Company grunts in Vietnam, and took the audience step-by-step through the events of July 17 and 18, 1969, using the map of the battle site that had been included in Evans' Medal of Honor recommendation, as a visual aid. After the presentations, members of the audience thanked Clark and DeRigne for traveling to Florida to participate in the memorial, and for clarifying the events surrounding Rod's death. People were very emotional, and many tears were shed. The two authors held a book signing, donating the entire proceeds to the Covington Veterans' Foundation.



MOH Presentation, from left, President Nixon, John Evans, Annie Evans, (then, probable, ed.) Doris Alford or Patricia Evans, Wyman Evans

Web Site Update *Bob March*

Delta Company's web site (www.cattrack6india.com) continues to be very popular thanks to many of you who have provided data, stories, and photos. There have been over one million "hits" in the last calendar year. Keep coming back, because there is new content all the time. Here is some of the latest: *Frank de la Puente* sent us a write-up of the July 17, 1970 firefight, during which four Delta brothers were KIA. Click on [FIREFIGHTS AND HISTORICAL EVENTS](#)

Stephanie, daughter-in-law of James Thomas, submitted a nice collection of his photos from 1970 and 1971. They are now up on the web site. Thanks to Stephanie and James.

Dick "Pops" Wilkos sent many excellent photos from 1967 and 1968. So far over 150 are posted with more to go. For these collections and others, click on [PHOTO INDEX](#).

Again, if you have photos or videos hiding in your attic or garage, please dig them out and contact me. (Delta@cattrack6india.com). There are important events in our history that we haven't yet documented, the stories of which you may be carrying in your head. Let me know what they are and give me what you have. It is important.

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

SUCCESSFUL SANIBEL ISLAND OFFER RENEWED FOR 2020 EXCLUSIVE "FIRST CHANCE" SIGN-UP AT DELTA REUNION

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 this year. Twenty-one veterans signed up. One veteran writes, "My wife and I enjoyed the condo and we love Sanibel. We enjoyed our morning walks on the beach and the view from the lanai."

Delta Veterans who attend Delta's October reunion will have an exclusive "first chance" to reserve the week of their choice for the 2020 season. After that the offer will be open to the rest of our veterans. How can you thank the foundation? The only thanks wanted is to see you at the reunion!

New Years Day 1969

Basil Clark

PRE-NEW YEARS DAY FIREWORKS

December 27th. I was an FNG, having joined D Company earlier that month. We were told we were going to be air-lifted to the field, probably the next day. On December 28th, after a lot of waiting, we were told we wouldn't go out until the next day.

Finally, on the 29th, we loaded onto Hueys and made a combat assault to a small village. I followed suit of the old-timer I was sitting next to on the side of the chopper, legs hanging out, and slid out onto the skids as we were landing. About seven to ten feet from the ground door gunners were hollering, "Jump! Jump!" I was glad for all prior physical training up to this time, while also aware of the impact on legs and back from the jump and landing with about 75 pounds on your back. I heard my first combat gunfire as 2nd platoon made contact. It didn't last long, and then we moved out and dug in for the night.

On December 31st VC fired at a resupply chopper; tensions were high.

One of the sergeants who had been there for awhile spoke, supposedly reassuringly, "Hey, FNGs, you got nothin' to worry about. It's New Years Eve. There's supposed to be fireworks. Now come on, let's get our asses dug in for the evening. If there is a show you all can watch it from the foxholes."

Later, after dark, we heard things from out front of our position. I asked the sergeant, "Doesn't that sound like people climbing trees?" "Yeah," he replied, sounding worried. "Hope our LPs are okay."

Throughout the night ominous sounds were reported from all around the perimeter. "Don't like this at all," the sergeant said, "Fucking New Years Day truce supposedly. Hope Charlie got the message."

NEW YEARS DAY, 1969. SO MUCH FOR TRUCES

Around 8 AM [Jackie] Tucker and I were heading out for an OP when all hell broke loose. We ran back to the perimeter and I saw a guy I knew as "Jose" [Isabelo Jimenez Gonzalez] leaning against a tree in a sitting position, dead. He was still holding a C-Ration can he had been opening. There was a look of shock registered on his face, and it looked like he never really knew what had happened.

Guys were coming to where he was so I went toward the foxhole where my squad leader, Sergeant Kenneth York, was. On the way I heard someone, I believe it was Ray Petway, screaming, "Jesus, Jesus, I'm hit. Someone help me, Jesus, Jesus!" He was running toward a medic so I focused again on getting to the foxhole. Sergeant York was wounded in his right hand, and so I asked what I could do. He told me to make sure all our men were in the positions they should be in order to counterattack.

A medic, Doc Hurley, had been hit. I was with Hurley for a few moments with another medic, Doc Gallagher. Leaving to go to check on another position, there was another volley of enemy gunfire; I dove for cover. After the gunfire subsided, Gallagher, with Doc Hurley, called for help, I went back.

Doc Hurley had taken a bullet to the heart and was dead. Could I have done things differently to have kept him alive? Could I have shielded him? Or helped get him to another location? There are no answers after the fact. Doc Gallagher, was cussing a storm of frustration. "Damn it, I treated him a few minutes ago he was fine, just some shrapnel. I come back a few minutes later, he's dead from a bullet in the heart. I can't take this shit anymore. People dying right under you!"

I checked, then redistributed some ammunition to some other positions, (continued on Page 7)

BOOKS

With many books about or set in the Vietnam War having been published, it's time (space permitting), to add a books section to our newsletter. Included will be reviews, announcements, commentary, and lists. We start with the list below of books by our own D Company veterans, along with a pair by 12th Cavalry friends of Delta. Send us your contributions and suggestions. Have we missed any?

BASIL B. CLARK AND MARK HUGLEN: *Poetic Healing: A Vietnam Veteran's Journey...* (2004)

A Vietnam Veteran's pain and the healing power of words. Clark's plays and poems are complemented by the insights of Mark E. Huglen and Bernard Brock's Afterword. The story of the word's power to transform pain, loss, and desperation into a journey that uplifts and inspires.

BASIL B. CLARK, RAJ SINGH, ET AL.: *War Wounded: let the healing begin* (2013)

A compendium of interviews and poetry examining paths of recovery for those affected by traumatic experiences, be they scars of war, loss, addiction, illness, or other tragic events.

BASIL B. CLARK: *Barabbas Son of a Father* (2015)

A fictional account of Barabbas, who was set free as Jesus Christ was crucified in his place.

BASIL B CLARK AND JAMES M RUDD: *Massacre at Hill 303* (2018)

James Rudd tells the author about his experiences growing up, during the Korean War, and the rest of his adult life, including the massacre at Hill 303 which he survived by feigning death.

GARY M. DERIGNE: *One Young Soldier* (2007)

Hell, If It Exists, Can't Be Much Worse Than This... Former infantry rifleman and platoon sergeant Gary DeRigne's novel of the Vietnam War is brutal, honest, heartrending, tragic, and hopeful in turns.

GARY M DERIGNE: *Angie's War* (2019)

The sequel to DeRigne's *One Young Soldier* is a gripping tale of love and loss, fear and courage, desperation and hope, from the jungles of Vietnam to the battlefields of Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, while loved ones at home wait, worry, and pray in an America callous to the human cost of war.

MICHAEL O. GREGORY: *Shiny Bayonet* (2005)

One of those stories "that needs to be told," of young men going in harm's way for the first time. Michael Gregory's history recounts the 12th Cavalry's first combat operation in Vietnam.

DON GRIGG: *The Feast of the Tigers: A Memoir* (2017)

Published posthumously, "The Feast of the Tigers" is an honest, searing account of a Delta Recon platoon leader in love and war. Part memoir, part history, and part novel, Grigg takes us back to Vietnam with the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

ALLEN J. LYNCH AND RICHARD ERNSBERGER JR.: *Zero to Hero* (2019)

The life story of Delta's Al Lynch in his own words. One of three Vietnam Medal of Honor recipients who served in D Company, Al Lynch's story speaks to us all.

DOUG WARDEN: *Boy Sergeant: A Young Soldier's Story of Vietnam* (2010)

Barely 20 years old when he arrived in Vietnam in 1967 as a private first class, Warden recounts the year in C Company 1/12th Cavalry from which he came home a staff sergeant.

(continued on Page 7) and was with a man who took shrapnel in the back and it came out his front pulling some intestines with it. I helped bandage him up. He was in a lot of pain, and asked how Doc Hurley was. I was afraid he could go into shock if he knew Doc was dead, so I told him Doc was fine, that he would see him at the hospital. I figured if he found out there, that there would be access to immediate care if he went into shock.

I went back to the foxhole where my squad leader was and updated him on what all had happened so far. There was more shooting going on, and then we saw out to our front one of our squad members, Paul Ebol, lying in some bushes facing our direction, pale as a sheet; we thought he was dead. Sergeant York said he was going out for him and I replied, "Fuck you, you're already hit; I'm going!"

I low crawled to where Paul was and he moved. He had gotten caught in crossfire early in the attack and just lay there. When we got back in he said he had heard gunfire right behind him so he had feigned dead hoping to trick the shooters. After the firefight was over, before we moved out, Paul and I went out and found several spent AK-47 casings no more than ten feet behind where he had been lying.

In the third platoon we had almost 20 WIA and two KIA. We had about 25 men that morning. I began to think my chances for survival over the next year weren't looking so good.

HOMESICKNESS

For whatever reasons, I had never experienced homesickness in my life. Even when I choked up watching my mother through the airplane window I wasn't feeling homesick, I was overwhelmed by what she must have been thinking. Later the evening of January 1st, fixing a C-Ration meal, I pulled a heat tab out of the box. Stamped on package was "Van Brode's Milling Company, Clinton, Massachusetts." It was about a mile from home; my father walked to work there every day. I was never homesick as a child, but there reading that heat tab package I felt like I had been sucker punched in the stomach. Welcome to 1969!

Following up on the idea that my chances for survival weren't looking so good over the next year, I pretty much adopted a new motto, "Hell, I ain't gonna live to be 21 anyway."

Basil B. Clark retired from the University of Pikeville (Kentucky), where he was an Associate Professor; he is the author of four books. Basil and his wife Cora reside near Chattanooga, Tennessee. Baz Clark (Crazy Horse, Hazel) served 14 months with D Company in Vietnam. He received the Combat Infantry Badge, the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart.

Secretary's Report

I hope everyone had a good 4th of July.

Well, boys it's about 2 months until our next reunion at Fort Benning. If you are planning to attend, please take the time to look over the Roster on Delta's website and encourage someone that you served with to spend time with us in Columbus. As a courtesy please submit your registration as soon as you can, and for sure before September 1st. There is a lot of work to be done to arrange transportation, meals, and security requirements at Fort Benning.

As always, I look forward to handshakes, hugs and beers with my brothers.

Good Health

Fred Mac Kennan



Postage

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