

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 5 ISSUE 3

JULY 2020

Death in 506 Valley - 17 December 1966, Part II

National Archives Documents and Interviews Tell a Heroic and Tragic Story
(Part I was published in the April Issue of Boot-to-Boot)(1)
By Bob March

Delta's two platoons had air assaulted at 1540, securing the LZ for C Company, then moved off to the southeast, toward Thach Long (2), a village along Highway 506, in or beyond which the 18th NVA Regiment, 3rd NVA Division might be waiting. Confronted by the heavily overgrown hedgerows in and around villages common in Vietnam, Lieutenant Chester Cox deployed Delta on line, Lieutenant Timothy Feiner's third platoon on the company right and Lieutenant Paul Prindle's second platoon on the left. Moving forward Delta passed through the first hedgerows without incident. Suddenly there was that fatal first fusillade, by the end of which Jack Deaton and William Cook, Jr., lay dead, and, in spite of the best efforts of platoon medic Michael Anderson, Timothy Ewing would also soon die.



SP4 Jack Deaton was a married, 22 year-old airborne volunteer, who had arrived in Vietnam from Germany in September. Shortly before the battle, Jack confided to platoon medic Anderson, and others, that he had received a letter wishing he would be killed in Vietnam. He did not elaborate, but he was upset, and his friends were concerned. Now, in fulfillment of someone's wish, he may have been the first Delta Trooper claimed in the Battle of the 506 Valley. His buddies still wonder, would Jack have lived had he not carried that sad letter into battle.

1st Cavalry
Division Assn.
73rd Reunion
Cancelled
SEE PAGE 2

At the initial point of contact, PFC Roger Hattersley gallantly engaged the enemy. Delta company casualties continued to mount. Troopers were scattered; dead and wounded lay in the open. The chaos of battle reigned, explosions rent the battlefield, bullets cracked, men yelled and moaned. Time became distorted, as it does for those who are near death. Acts of valor abounded. (Continued on page 2)

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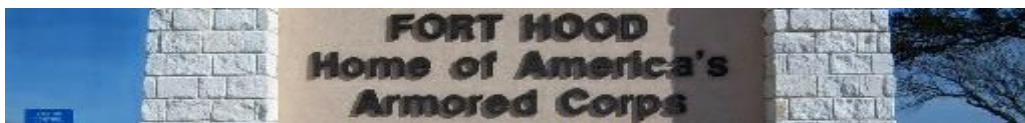


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The 1st Cavalry Division Association's 2021 Reunion at Fort Hood, Texas will mark the 100th Anniversary of the activation of the Division at Fort Bliss, Texas on 13 September 1921



MEANWHILE...DELTA'S MINUTEMEN ARE CHARGING AHEAD TO 2021 AND THEIR FIFTH REUNION!



The 12th Cavalry Regiment Association Reunion, 13-17 October 2020 at the Welk Resort (417) 337-9200 Branson, Missouri. Details Tom Crabtree at email mmctlc3@aol.com or call (432) 853-4851

(506 Valley continued from page 1) LT Feiner's third platoon was pinned down in the open, as close as 20 feet from the interlocking fire of the enemy' bunkers and spider holes, being picked off one by one. If they moved, they died. The NVA fighting positions were almost impossible to see. To the left of the line, as LT Prindle's second platoon approached the bunker line, "PFC Eleazar Trevino started through a small hole in the hedgerow." A sniper's bullet cut him down.

SP4 James Jeffers, close behind, could see him and started out to him, but Trevino motioned him back. Someone yelled, 'Stay back, there are snipers all over,'" according to Cav Staff Historian Steven Shopp(2). Platoon Sergeant Roque Perpetua, Jr. had come to Vietnam with Delta on the USNS Geiger in 1965, and extended his tour. According to Shopp, "Perpetua and PFC Angel Luna went through another hole. Perpetua spotted a machine gun bunker and charged for it. He was right on top of it when he was hit. His helmet had eleven bullet holes in it..." PFC Luna was killed by a sniper as Perpetua fell.

First Commander's Corner



As our beloved United States of America celebrated her 244th birthday, her great cities were beset by violence, looting, and arson. Delta veterans remember another time in which protests—some valid, some less so—slid

(and often were pushed) into lawlessness and destruction. Many of us experienced it, others were in foxholes or hacking our way through the bush; loved ones “lived it” even if we did not. But we had a positive attitude then, as we do now, so we know we’ll come out the other side just fine.

Speaking of tough times, the 1st Cavalry Division Association Reunion, previously rescheduled to October 4-8, has now been **CANCELLED!** The silver lining? We’ll now “lean forward” and focus on our own 2021 Reunion, planned for October in Las Vegas. That will be our **FIFTH** Company Reunion. Those of you who have attended know why Delta Reunions have a reputation as “the best”! These are the events at which you’re sure to see friends you made a half-century ago.

We hope to see y’all there, and together sip a bit of Fireball while remembering what we shared a

half-century ago!

In the meantime, if you need a “camaraderie fix” the 12th Cavalry Regiment Reunion is still on for mid-October this year. (See page 2 for information)

Thanks to Brother Fred Mac Lennan for his efforts in locating long-lost Delta Brothers, now over 900 accounted for! Welcome Home, Brothers, welcome Home!

Good friend of Delta, Staff Sergeant (ret) Doug Warden, C Company, 67-68, and past president of the 12th Cavalry Regiment Association, will be inducted into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame on October 17, in Norman, OK.

Your Delta Veterans President was pleased to accept a “Quilt of Valor” and dedicate it to all the Brothers who served.

On behalf of the Veterans of Delta, deepest condolences to Charlie Company’s Thomas Lon and Maggie Crabtree on the unexpected loss of son Dennis.

ONCE A SOLDIER, ALWAYS A SOLDIER...A SOLDIER FOR LIFE

Blessings & "Out to Out"

Johnny Bergulis

FIDDLER'S GREEN

We remember those we have learned we have lost since our last issue of *Out to Out*. This list is a consequence of an ongoing and nearly complete search project, *not* of a virus.

ROBERT GRIFFITH
ROGER HATTERSLEY
JOHN MARTIN
LEON MORAND
SAMUEL MOSES
DONALD NELSON
JAMES SWIMMER
LARRY THOMAS
SANTIAGO VARGAS

JESSE WASHINGTON
JAMES BROWN
TED COLLEDGE
MARION LANE
LEONARD MARTIN
JOSEPH MARTINEZ
MATTHEW STRONG
JOSE TORRES
DANIEL VIDALES

OTIS WATERMAN

For errors or additions, please contact Delta's webmaster at delta@cattrack6india.com

Secretary's Report

I hope you and your families are in good health and spirits in these trying times. During the past few months we've continued our search for Vietnam Veterans of Delta (summarized below). Go to the Roster pages on Delta's website for the most recent "finds" of "lost" (to us) D Company brothers. The table below summarizes search results as of the end of June.

When a veteran is marked FOUND (also represented by a yellow background), then marked DND, the veteran has spoken with but does not wish to publish his information on the website. When a veteran has the entry LTRNR, he was not reached via phone, so a letter was sent to him without a response.

If you would like to reach out to a brother who in one of these categories, please call me at 347-853-1281 and I will provide you with their information.

Let's face it, surviving Vietnam depended on those around us. It's time to thank those who got us through it. Pick up the phone.

GOOD HEALTH

Fred Mac Lennan

Veterans of Delta	65-66	67-68	69-72	Total	Percent
KIA	30	37	19	86	6
Died Since Vietnam	45	131	150	326	23
Found (Living)	71	125	296	492	34
Accounted for	146	293	465	904	63
Not Accounted For	186	192	163	541	37
Roster Total	332	485	628	1445	

This search is an ongoing process in which we all need to help. If you know someone we do not have as "found," please contact Fred or Bob. We believe we're already the most successful veterans group *ever* at finding our brothers. This table is already obsolete—we've since accounted for over 20 more.

(506 Valley continued from page 2) The Division's historical account of the battle continues, "LT Cox, the acting CO, had been shot, and Platoon Sergeant Donald Leemhis crawled over to help him. As Leemhis lifted up, a bullet found its mark in his neck and he fell dead next to Cox. PFC Alton Kennedy, a medic, was close by treating wounded and dragging them back out of the fire-swept field. Kennedy made two trips, braving the bullets in spite of pleas for him to stay back. He couldn't bring himself to ignore the pitiful plaintive cries of 'medic, help, Oh God, help!' Moving out again, Kennedy was wounded on his third trip. His fourth was his last. Kennedy gave his life to save others."(2)

The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry was Airborne when it deployed to Vietnam, part of the division's 1st Brigade (Airborne). The Brigade was removed from that status in mid-1966, and Delta began to receiving non-airborne infantry. Since the mildly pejorative term "Leg," was discouraged, PFC Richard Rock, the second "leg" to show up in his platoon, became known as "NAP2", for *non-airborne person number two*. Staff Sergeant Harry Forsythe, a senior NCO considered to be "tough," teased Rock about cowardice, telling him, "NAP2, if I see you run away in a firefight, I'm going to fill your back with holes."

(Continued on page 5)

(506 Valley continued from page 4) As Rock emerged from the hedgerow he saw Perpetua shot in the head. Troopers on all sides of him were getting hit and falling. Running to a clump of bushes in front of him, bullets were hitting around him that could only have been coming from the trees. Rock shrugged off his radio, rolled over and fired three round bursts into the trees, emptying 12 magazines. He then ran to the nearest dead trooper and took his ammo. Seeing the many wounded, he thought “somebody has to do something to help these poor guys.” With all the NCO's likely dead or wounded he decided “that 'somebody' is me.” Bullets were still snapping around him. He patched up two troopers who were badly wounded, then fired his M-16 at a bunker to no effect. Seeing an M-79 and ammo on the ground, he ran out and retrieved it. He stood up to shoot over the bush in front of him. The hurried first “blooper” round sailed about four feet high. The machine gun chattered on. His next shot hit the corner of the bunker opening. On the third try he stood up, again exposing himself. Now he took his time, carefully aiming, controlling his breathing and trigger pull, and sent a round through the bunker opening. The machine gun fell silent.

SSG Forsythe and LT Feiner attempted to bring in artillery; all around they could see nothing but hedgerows, and neither was certain of their location. They made a guess and called a smoke round to confirm; no one saw it. It didn't matter much. Not only were the Delta troopers too close to the NVA, the air over the battlefield was now filled with Cav helicopters: gunships, command and control, medevac—too many “friendlies” to safely fire artillery. Helicopter ARA (Aerial Rocket Artillery) came roaring in but had only momentary effect on the bunkers and wounded some of the GI's. So it was called off. Two helicopters would be shot down and seven severely damaged.

PFC Rock continued to patch up the wounded. He retrieved weapons for those who could hold one, gave them a sector to watch and told them to “kill anything that moves.” Rock made multiple trips under fire into the killing zone, grabbing the wounded by the collar and pulling them back to safety.

Lieutenant Paul Prindle was near the left side of the Delta Company line. In front of him was a barbed wire fence which blocked his path towards a bunker. As he reached out to cut the barbed wire, PFC Rock saw his watch casing disappear from his left wrist. A bullet had neatly clipped it off, leaving the base of the watch and the band intact. Undeterred, Prindle again reached out to cut the wire when a bullet penetrated the front of his helmet, followed its inside curve and blew a hole exiting the back, briefly knocking him unconscious. Like a prize fighter recovering from a knock-down, Prindle jumped up and grabbed a machine gun. He, Rock and SP4 Calvin Brown headed towards the next bunker to rescue those lying in the open. Prindle fired the machine gun directly into the bunker until it overheated and jammed, while Rock and Brown grabbed the wounded troopers, Trevino and a medic, likely SP4 Beancamp.

Later, PFC Rock heard SSG Forsythe call out from some distance away, “Heey Rock, are you still alive?” Rock yelled back “Yeah, why?” “Are you gonna run away?” asked Forsythe. Rock: “Why?” Forsythe: “If you do, I wanna go with you.” Despite the circumstances Rock had to laugh.

After dark, with the NVA still around, First Sergeant Gene Helgeson formed a medical team to search the battlefield for wounded troopers. According to the Division's history of the battle, “For several hours Helgeson's team crept around, looking for American wounded, treating them and pulling them back for evacuation. There can be no doubt that Helgeson and crew put life back into men who otherwise would have surely died from their wounds.”

(Continued on page 7)

Website Update

There are new photos from Dale Felder (69-70), James Kamper (67-68), Kurt Baird (70-71), Paul Marling (71-72), and Richard Lee (71-72). Marling and Lee have great photos of FSB Pace. Lieutenant Lee's are of exceptional quality, given to him by a news photographer acquaintance. (www.cattrack6india.com, then Photo Index.)

Please continue to contribute to the website; photos, and ID of faces in photos, and stories. Every time I speak to someone, they have a story that is worth sharing. Tell me your stories.

Check out the Part 1 (65-66) and Part 2 (67-68) music/history videos that are linked from the Photo Index page. I am gathering information for Part 3 (1969-72). Coming soon. Look for it!

Thanks again to all for their inputs on the Battle of the 506 Valley (Richard Rock, Ed Waltz, Reggie Anderson, Paul Prindle, Michael Anderson, Roger Hattersley, Stephen Chestnut, and William Inhat). Part 2 is in this issue of the Newsletter. Look for an expanded version on the Firefigths page.

DON'T WALK ON TRAILS. BRING PLENTY OF AMMO. GET YOUR 30 ROUND MAGAZINES WHILE YOU CAN. CATTRACK6INDIA...OUT *Bob March* (360) 627-0918

BOOK REVIEW

DISPATCHES

Michael Herr

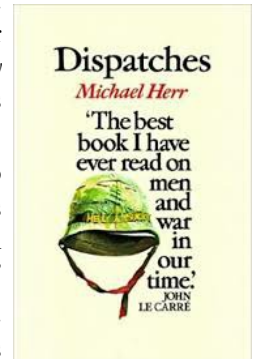
Arriving in Vietnam in 1967, Michael Herr joined photographer Tim Page and Errol Flynn's son, Sean, who would go missing in 1970 in Cambodia, and went hopping round the war zone. He came home in 1968 with a heap of notes and a bat cave of toxic memories. Hunter S. Thompson described Herr's 1977 masterpiece—only Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* even vaguely compares—for his generation of writers: "Michael Herr's *Dispatches* puts all the rest of us in the shade."

Dispatches is neither an easy book to summarize nor one from which to draw cheap lessons. Published as nonfiction, Herr thought of it as a novel. "I don't think that it's any secret that there is talk in the book that's invented," he said. "But it is invented out of that voice that I heard so often and that made such penetration into my head."

Herr plunges readers into the war zone before they can take up defensive positions. Every line is set down as if it's about to be interrupted by incoming. Some of Herr's best passages read like hallucinations; some are just that: of being stoned in a war zone, like a character in *Apocalypse Now*, a script for which he wrote the narration: *Just lying there tracking the rotations of the ceiling fan, reaching for the fat roach that sat on my Zippo... Dear Mom, stoned again.* Herr was nominated for an Oscar for the script of *Full Metal Jacket*.

Dispatches is beyond politics, pacification, body counts and Saigon press briefings. "It's as if Dante had gone to hell with a cassette recording of Jimi Hendrix and a pocketful of pills: our first rock and roll war, stoned murder," wrote *Times* critic John Leonard.

As Herr's writes, "...somewhere all the mythic tracks intersected, from the lowest John Wayne wet dream to the most aggravated soldier-poet fantasy. Not that you didn't hear some overripe bull: Hearts and Minds, Peoples of the Republic, tumbling dominoes, maintaining the equilibrium of the Dingdong by containing the ever encroaching Doodah; you could also hear the other, some young soldier speaking in all bloody innocence, saying, 'All that's just a load, man. We're here to kill gooks. Period.'" -*TWK*



(506 Valley continued from page 5) Having spent hours wounded and alone, Michael Noone was near despair when someone quietly approached him in the dark. He dreaded that it might be yet another NVA, but the shadowy figure grabbed his wrist and whispered “This one's still alive.” Helgeson's team pulled him out. That was the beginning of Micheal Noone's return to the living. He was brought back to a nearby Medevac LZ. All was dark and the flying conditions were terrible with poor visibility, a low ceiling, and hostile ground fire. LT Feiner, exposed in the open, pointed two flashlights in the air, and while the enemy’s green tracers converged on him, stood his ground to guide in the medevac.

Noone, his stomach still hanging out of this torso, was quickly loaded on the medevac and put in the top stretcher. As the pilot maneuvered to dodge ground fire, he was rolled off the stretcher, landing with his arm around a startled pilot's neck. The medevac Huey sped to the hospital at max power where the staff immediately brought him into surgery. There, the giant “blood ants” still infested his body and clothing. The surgeons sprayed anesthetic gas to knock out and disperse the ants before they could work on him.

By the end of the day Delta Company had been reduced to half its size. The acting CO was KIA, as were all of the Platoon Sergeants and most of the NCO's. The remnant of Delta was attached to Charlie Company where they spent the night being tormented by snipers, many in the trees. B Company had joined the battalion perimeter, and Bravo’s SP4 Carlisle Mahto shot ten snipers out of the trees using a starlight scope. That night, according to their usual routine, the enemy dispersed in small groups, heading into the mountains.

The next morning Lieutenant Prindle was told to report to a helicopter that had just landed. A Major wearing clean, starched fatigues told him to get in the chopper. “(A high ranking officer) wants to see you,” the Major said. Prindle told him: “Fuck off, I'm not leaving my men. They've just been through hell,” and walked away.

Eighteen Troopers who served with Delta at the Battle of 506 Valley were awarded for their heroism:

Private First Class Roger Hattersley, Distinguished Service Cross

Private First Class Alton Kennedy, Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumous)

Private First Class Richard Rock, Silver Star

Platoon Sergeant Roque Perpetua, Silver Star (Posthumous)

First Sergeant Gene Helgeson, Silver Star

Lieutenant Chester Cox, Silver Star (Posthumous)

Lieutenant Timothy Feiner, Silver Star

Lieutenant Paul Prindle, Silver Star

Ten other D Company soldiers were awarded Bronze Stars with “V” Device for Valor. Five of those were posthumous. Seventeen in Delta were Killed in Action on 17 December, 1966—half of all those KIA in the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

Notes

1- Back issues of Boot-to-Boot may be found at <http://www.cattrack6india.com/NewsLetters.html>

2- A Staff Historian for the First Cavalry Division Office of Information and History, Lieutenant Steven M. Schopp, prepared a comprehensive historical document describing these events that included all the units involved. This story is based on his document, which is frequently quoted, as well as recent interviews of surviving Delta Brothers.



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