

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 8 ISSUE 2

OCTOBER 2023

Delta's 2024 Reunion Remembering our Fallen Brothers Reading the Roll of Honor at the Wall

2024 Delta Reunion

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

WESTIN WASHINGTON

DULLES AIRPORT

Herdon, VA

BOOK BY PHONE

866-932-7062

BOOKING CODE DCB

BOOK ON LINE

TINYURL.COM/

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

Delta returns to the East after a four year absence, in part the result of the COVID pandemic. In 2019 we returned to Fort Benning, the site of the 1st Cavalry Division's pioneering of vertical envelopment, the first revolution in Infantry tactics since it abandoned marching in formation while attacking in the 19th century. We celebrated those amongst us who served at Benning, then led the way to Vietnam. Now we will recognize, at the Nation's most hallowed sites, those of our number who did not return.

It is about time we return to the east, having been there just once in our previous six reunions, which have included: West, 3 (Tucson, Las Vegas), Central 2 (San Antonio), and of course Columbus/Fort Benning (now Fort Moore). Washington also provides us with a unique opportunity to Remember our Fallen Brothers on our Nation's most hallowed ground at Arlington and at "The Wall." It will be a solemn and sobering, yet uplifting, experience. We read our Roll of Honor at each of our reunions, but this will clearly be different, and fulfill our unspoken promise to remember those friends we lost over a half century past.

All our other events and traditions will be there as they have been in previous reunions: a Color Guard presenting our flags, a film focused on Delta's history, a banquet speaker, and our hospitality room open with complementary beverages and snacks afternoon and evening.

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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 detail)

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
- 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**

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.

BENNETT BROULETTE
FRANK HEIDEL

MICHAEL MACENKA

EDWARD MOON
ROY RUTHERFORD

Secretary's Report

I hope you and your family are doing well and enjoying the fall season.

Well Boys, the Washington Reunion is going to happen. It will give us an opportunity to pay our respect to our fallen Brothers.

If you have never attended one of our Reunions, I would strongly recommend you attend this one. We owe it to those of us who did not return.

Good Health

Fred Mac Kennan

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/>

United States Institute of Peace Annual Southeast Asia Conference

Recognizes the Assistance of 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Veterans in Locating Mass Graves at LZ Bird

Premiers *Fragments of Memory*, a film by Linh Hoang Le

In September, representatives from Delta and Charlie Company, 1/12th Cav were invited to the annual Southeast Asia Conference at the United States Institute of Peace¹, in Washington D.C., for the English-language version of the Vietnamese-produced film, *Fragments of Memory*, story of LZ Bird, and the search for the remains of the 22nd Regiment, Peoples Army of Vietnam, soldiers who died there, debut on September 12th. Those of you who attended the Delta Company Reunion at Las Vegas in 2022 will recall the video presentation by Linh Hoang Le, the director of *Fragments of Memory*. We featured the story of the The story of the Battle and the subsequent search for a mass grave at the site in Delta's April, 2022 newsletter (newsletter number 24 on the website newsletter index page). In July, 2022 four LZ Bird veterans were invited to Vietnam, airfare paid by the USIP all in-country expenses paid by the Vietnamese.

Those veterans (Steve Hassett, Ivory Whitaker, Spenser Matteson, and Kin Lo) assisted in the search for the remaining mass grave, located towards the north end of LZ Bird. They were treated very well by their hosts and even met some of the families in Vietnam who are still hoping to learn something about their missing soldiers. The story is told very well in the documentary *Fragments of Memory*, a link to which can be found on the index page of the Delta Company website (www.cattrack6india.com) or at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUM48_3ICEo



A few of the search and film team share a casual lunch in Washington DC



Author Bob March with *Fragments of Memory* editor Lina Pham

The conference at USIP, Washington D.C., was primarily concerned with mitigation of war legacies in Southeast Asia. The subjects involved three principle areas; the long term effects of Agent Orange, clean up of unexploded ordnance, and the search for the graves of missing soldiers.

The story of LZ Bird and the cooperative work on the part of our veterans fit very well into the mix of subjects addressed at the conference. It was attended by high level dignitaries, including ambassadors from the United States and Vietnam. Also there were representatives from organizations which are involved with war mitigation efforts, Texas Tech University, Harvard-Kennedy school, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), US Army, and the US Marine Corps, among others. The film director of *Fragments of Memory*, Linh Hoang Le, was there as was his editor, Lina Pham. (Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4) So too, were architect Thang and engineer Tien who played a key role in the data analysis of the gravesite at LZ Bird and at many other sites in Vietnam. There for the 12th Cavalry were retired CSM Kin Lo from Charlie Company 1/12th, who has attended Delta Reunions and who was one of the veterans who returned to LZ Bird last summer, and Richard Magner, a 1st Cav Cobra pilot, was part of the group. Richard has been working for several years on locating mass graves in Vietnam. After viewing the film, together we did a presentation about the process of finding the mass grave at LZ Bird, with emphasis on continuing efforts to find other mass graves in Vietnam. More than 120 sites have been identified, with on-going data collection and attempts to find American veterans who might remember something about the mass graves.

The day after the premier of the film at the USIP conference, *Fragments of Memory* was presented on the giant screen at Alamo theater in Crystal City. Short introductory presentations to that audience were made by the DPAA, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Vietnam Veterans of America prior to the viewing of the film. After the presentation, those who participated in locating the LZ Bird gravesite, American and Vietnamese, again did presentations, which quickly became a Question & Answer session about finding the mass graves. It was well received by all except the head of the VVA who fell asleep, seemingly more interested in the free popcorn.



The Vietnamese-American Team at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington

All in all, the entire experience was a fascinating spectacle of genuine efforts on the part of many to further the relationship between the US and Southeast Asia by mitigating some of the after-effects of the war. At the USIP conference emphasis was definitely placed on efforts to find all missing from the Vietnam War; American and those of its allies, and Vietnamese, both PAVN and ARVN. The film *Fragments of Memory* was well received. I encourage all veterans to spend an hour viewing it. (On the Delta Company website at <https://www.cattrack6india.com/> there is a prominent link.)

More and more veterans are signing up to help with this effort. If you feel so inclined, please contact me and I will explain the details.

(This article appears in lieu of the Website Update, which will return in the next issue of [Back to Back](#).)

Bob March

1-Founded by Congress in 1984, the United States Institute of Peace is a national, nonpartisan, independent institute, dedicated to the proposition that a world without violent conflict is possible, practical and essential for U.S. and global security.

2-Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Defense whose mission is to recover American military personnel listed as prisoners of war (POW) or missing in action (MIA) from designated past conflicts, from countries around the world.



First Commander's Corner

Though 2023 was a most tragic year for much of the world community, the Delta Brothers can look forward to Thanksgiving with much to be thankful for!

Since June's 75th 1st Cavalry Division reunion, members of Delta's board, led by Fred MacLennan, been busy planning our 2024 Reunion in Washington, D. C., 12-15 September. We'll be visiting and laying wreaths at the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* and at the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Details are elsewhere in this newsletter, and a registration form is attached. Many thanks to our Delta Secretary, Brother Fred MacLennan, for his stellar efforts in making it happen.

In February 1963, at Fort Benning, Georgia, soldiers from around the world began arriving at Ft Benning, assigned to the 11th Air Assault Division (TEST), in the old Harmony Church bivouac area. In October, the 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry (Rakkasans), was officially designated an Airborne unit. The summer of 1965, the colors of the 1st Cavalry Division, then in Korea, were swapped with those of the 2nd Infantry Division at Ft. Benning, and the new Airmobile Division was created from the 2nd Infantry and the 11th Air Assault (TEST). The Rakkasans were re-flagged as the 12th Cavalry Regiment, and our own Delta Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 12th Cavalry, was "born" as we then would know in Vietnam from September 1965 to June 1972

To celebrate the 60th Anniversary (1963-2023) of the founding of the 11th Air Assault Division (TEST), (and our own contribution to that bold

new concept of tactical mobility), a few of the "old hands" of that summer 1963 gathered informally at the National Infantry Association & Museum at Benning (now Ft. Moore). This "old soldier" was moved by the opportunity and extends a special thank you to each of the more than two dozen who joined me for a wonderful, relaxed and most enjoyable experience. As was remarked, "Let's plan on doing this kind of informal get-together again! So yes, we are planning to get together very informally again at Fort Hal Moore and the National Infantry Association & Museum Foundation complex.

As we go forward with hope and renewed spirit to close out 2023, let us be reminded that each of us is indeed very blessed! Our entire Delta 'family' is not only viable, but looking to the future, and contributing to our Country in meaningful ways. We trust that the Delta Brothers are always there for each other!

May your hearts, your home, and your family feel HIS LOVE at your Thanksgiving gathering, at Christmas, and in the New Year. May HE BLESS You and Yours and, may 2024 be a happy and peaceful year for all of our Delta Brothers! That is our fondest prayer and wish!

Once again, a heartfelt thank you the veterans of the 8th and 12th Cavalry and their guests who joined this old soldier at Ft. Moore I hope to see each of you in our Nation's capitol in September.

"OUR BROTHERS WILL BE FOREVER IN OUR MEMORIES"

THE GREATEST CASUALTY IS BEING FORGOTTEN
© Wounded Warrior Project

Blessings & "But to But"

Johnny Sergulis

BOOK REVIEW

YEAR OF THE HORSE

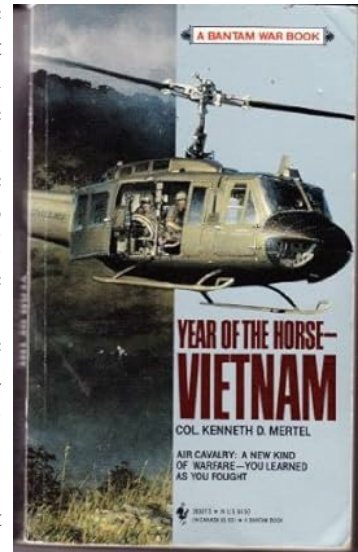
Col. Kenneth D. Mertel

Colonel Mertel is what some Cav Vets call an “Original.” He commanded the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 8th Cavalry (Airmobile) at Fort Benning, then took it to Vietnam in September 1965 and continued in command well in 1966, the Year of the Horse in the Chinese Zodiac, hence the book’s title. First published in 1968, it was reprinted as a “trade paperback” by Bantam in 1990. It didn’t take me many pages in to begin to wonder what it was that got this book into print the first time, say nothing of a second printing 22 years later. I finally settled on two possibilities: (1) its 1968 printing was at the height of the war and of the 1st Cavalry Division’s (and the war’s) notariety, or (2) there were a hell of a lot of “Jumping Mustangs” (the battalion’s self- chosen nickname) out there willing to put up with a genuine “literary slog” to read about themselves. I suspect it’s probably both.

Most of us have encountered “legalese,” the nearly-English (but not) language that lawyers use in documents and sometimes in speech. It adds nothing to understanding, but given their education and experience, they simply don’t notice that their writing is not only inaccessible, but just plain bad. Well, many of us who served know there is also an “Armyese” (“militarese”?), equally incomprehensible and tedious to the reader, whether a military professional or civilian. It’s easy to recognize; “closed” replaces “arrived,” “designated” rather than “named.” And on and on.

There are, of course some things to be learned from the book. Evidently the “Chinook ladder insertion” (which largely disappeared by 1967 as dangerous and impractical) was pioneered and developed by the Jumping Mustangs. There was a routine use of US Air Force-delivered strikes as a standard “LZ Prep,” another wasteful practice quickly abandoned. One can also understand how “school solutions” like the kind that resulted in Delta Company’s tragic decimation in the 506 Valley in December of that same Year of the Horse, were accepted and used, until mercifully abandoned as units ultimately gained real combat experience. Still there is redeeming value in Mertel’s overall picture of the officers and men of his battalion as fighters worthy of standing shoulder-to-shoulder with any soldiers throughout the history of the United State Army.

There’s a story buried in this minimally edited hodge-podge of personal and battalion journal entries and official after-action reports, but most readers will give up long before digging it out. Unless, of course you are a “Jumping Mustang” who was there with LTC Mertel. For you, I can most highly recommend “The Year of the Horse.”



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