



The Official Newsletter of the
Seventh United States Cavalry Association

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"Troopers of the 7th Cavalry "

"GarryOwen"

The Ides of March are almost upon us as I start the 3rd column of this New Year. First up will be a short report on my visit to the National Archives on January 11-13. Quite a bit has changed since my last visit there in 2006 with Bob Arbasetti. Because of sensitive information security you can no longer access Individual Awards Files without a FOIA request. Same goes for Impact Awards files. I believe you can get your personal file but I didn't think to ask that question. Copying charges are now .25 per page for 8 by 11, which was the standard size for most Vietnam orders.

The staff is now much more user friendly too which is very helpful when trying to find documents. They also have 4 daily pull times which is way better than the first time I went there with Phil Zook in 1989. You can also now photograph or use a hand held scanner to process your own copies. Doing this might even pay for your device. I used Tiny Scanner on my iPad and scanned 250 pages during this trip. Thanks also to Rob Weeks from the 5th Battalion who gave me more additional and time saving tips. Additionally, anyone looking for information regarding unit awards can access the following link provided they have a DOD Logon (DOD self-service logon) or CAC card.

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After this visit I journeyed to Warrenton, Virginia for the Life Celebration for Bill Richardson on the 15th. There were many Stetsons in attendance along with Bob Arbasetti and Dennis Webster, who served as an Honorary Pallbearer. The service was well done and richly deserved for this fine man and exceptional leader of both the First Team and 7th Cav Associations. On 9 March Bill will be laid to rest at the Holy Shrine for America's Warriors – Arlington National Cemetery. I hope to have a picture of the Caisson for the next column. As a result of my last column a few questions have arisen from the reference to Phil Zook's review of DD-214's at our December PTSD claim filing seminar in Kentucky. Even though it was a cursory review, Phil did notice that several DD-214's were missing awards. Most likely your DD-214 is missing something as well, perhaps: unit awards; Campaign Stars on your Vietnam Service Ribbon; an Air Medal or two and the Bronze Arrowhead Device signifying air assault

missions. My own DD-214 is missing all of the unit awards, 1 Campaign Star and the Bronze Arrowhead. The primary reason for missing items is that several units awards were authorized after most of us left the Army. Bob Arbasetti in fact was the one who alerted me to the Bronze Arrowhead Device.

There are many publications that govern these additional awards and awards in general: Army Regulation 600-8-22; DA General Orders – Army Administrative Publications, lists DA General Orders by year from 1947 – 2011. DA Pamphlet 672-3 page 11 and 12 covers the 7th Cavalry specifically while other pages speak to every other unit that served in Vietnam. General Orders 42 (1972) and 43 (1974) and 54 (1974) cover some of the Unit Awards. You can find what you are authorized to wear by Googling these documents.

Another question that has arisen is ‘what is this mysterious code that appears on our DD-214?’ This is called a Spin Code or SPN and stands for Separation Program Number and is found in Box 11c on your DD-214. There are literally hundreds of these codes, most of which are harmless but unfortunately some can and may have caused unknown damage to your post military attempt at finding employment. Here are just a few examples of nefarious codes: 241 – Unsuitability; 245 – Disloyal; 262 – Bed Wetting and 264 – Character. Employers have used these codes to deny employment although they didn’t specify that as the reason. Look up your own SPN Code to satisfy any curiosity that you may have.

Rolando Salazar alerted me to an article that appeared in the April-June 2104 Infantry Magazine about LZ Albany. This article by CPT Dallas Henry appeared in the Professional Section of that issue. Multiple references were used and cited in this article: We Were Soldiers Once...And Young by General Moore and Joe Galloway and Larry Gwin’s excellent Baptism. Although not as in depth as Baptism and We Were Soldiers it does make use of elements of patrolling that were overlooked and raises another question as to why the 2nd Battalion continued on to LZ Albany instead of going to LZ Columbus. Worth the few minutes that it will take you to search it out and read. This article also led me to another that was cited – The Fog of War: The Vietnamese View of the La Drang Battle by Merle Pribbenow in the January 2001 issue of Military Review. This article references the NVA side of both battles and tells of the multiple mistakes that the NVA made including serious command and control issues. They completely underestimated the response times for US units because of our helicopter assets. This too is an excellent article to search out and read – especially so for the veterans of those two battles.

Karl Haartz reports that the 5th Battalion Association is well on their way in the planning for their 13th reunion. They had a working session during the week of 25 January in Colorado Springs with the hotel. More information will be provided at a later date. They also had a California Mini Reunion – Saturday, February 27, 2016 – Aboard the Charter Yacht Mauretania. He also reports that the 5/7 Regimental (Warpaint) Ball celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the formation of the 7th Cavalry Regiment and Warpaint Squadron achievements over the past year was also held in February. Lastly he reports that the Crossed Sabers Gift Shop has the best pricing for a real Cavalry Stetson by almost half. The prices of most hat sites that he checked were real scary, between \$200 and \$300. If you’re going to get a Stetson you should do it soon and Crossed Sabers benefits the 1st Cavalry Division Association.

Doc Hackett recalls an especially difficult day from January of 1966. On the 25th of that month (January) another sad day for Alpha Company of the 2/7 occurred when we lost the 3rd platoon and one squad of the mortar platoon in the plane crash shortly after takeoff headed for the Bong Son I Operation. Most of these guys were survivors of the hell of LZ Albany. To this day, I can remember that

the pilots could not keep the right engine running smoothly on the silver plane, so they put the 1st and 2nd platoon on another plane. When we landed at the Special Forces landing strip, we were called into formation and told that the 2nd plane had crashed on takeoff. We were all shocked beyond belief. Joel Sugdinis, Braveboy 6, also responded to Doc's email with the following: Thank you so much for remembering. Considering the loss of life at Albany and then at the pass after takeoff from An Khe, Alpha Company did indeed suffer greatly and today is truly a sad day. But, those same Alpha Company survivors continue to make me proud as they remain today, as they were then - a family. GARRY OWEN to all. I love you guys! Jack Wagner writes as well about that experience and LZ4. Doc remembering today 50 years ago like it was yesterday. Being pulled off that doomed C-123 with you and the others

On our first attempt into that Special Forces landing strip on the next C-123 we took a .50 caliber round through the fuselage luckily hitting no hydraulics on the aircraft. The pilot feeling the impact and pulling the aircraft up and to the right immediately. A time I am sure we all wish we had diapers on. Landing on the second attempt and it seemed like a long wait until finding out the C-123 crash killed 42 from our 3rd platoon and some of the mortar platoon and 4 from the crew of the C-123. Not knowing at that time our next battle and losses would happen at the Graveyard (LZ 4) on January 28th. The greatest gift though is that of still enjoying that special camaraderie with all of you. Thanks Doc, again another 50 year milestone, today January 28th in the Bong Son Plains. Gerry (Legs) Skelly, Skip Fesmire's RTO, and "C" Company were dropped into a hornets nest and needed help. There were only 78 of us from "A" Company left, after 42 were killed in the C-123 crash 3 days earlier that made our way toward LZ 4. Crossing that rice paddy that I recall was so large I could not see from end to end. It also seemed as wide as the length of a football field. I was told to hang back and cover our 1st platoon from enemy fire while they crossed. Ross then yelled for me to come across and they would cover me even though they were taking enemy fire. Hugging the side of the paddy dike with my M-16 laying on top, it took me 3 attempts to make it across. The enemy rounds were hitting the dike in front of and behind me. I would lay silent in the rice paddy until the fire stopped and then get up and start running again through the rice paddy until the rounds were again knocking out pieces of the paddy in front and behind me. After my 3rd time of playing hit I was pulled out of the paddy by Ross and others. LT Kelly then mounted an assault into the tree line where we were being hit the hardest. Fighting our way into the trench at the Graveyard I was looking for Ross. Later I was told he was killed during our fight to the trench. I was hit early that day and laid in the trench with the other wounded. Now it was your turn 'Doc' to take care of the wounded while NVA and VC kept pounding both "A and C" Companies which were separated by the Graveyard. The mounded graves served as cover as the NVA and VC were in the tree line. I recall later that day a Huey was hovering over the paddy to our left to kick out ammo and was hit and came down on its skids. Still later I heard all six Huey's trying to bring in help were hit and could not get in. All day and all night, the rain, the enemy fire and the fear of being overrun in the trench kept the wounded alert and ready for what good we could do. Our pain began to take a second place to our fear of being overrun. The next afternoon brought the Napalm and we could feel the heat on our face. Then the 12th Cav coming across the rice paddy to get us out with Hal Moore, I finally felt maybe we would survive. Loaded those wounded on the medevacs as well as our dead and they were taken back to aid stations and then hospitals while the fight continued. Then to the 85th Evac, 8th Field Hospital where I was first operated on and then air evac'd to Clark to Kadena and then Japan where I was reunited with guys from our company. Finally many years later with my golf partners 'Doc' Hackett and Gerry Skelly, two of my heroes, I would ask "Doc, where was my morphine while lying in the trench?' Doc's' comeback being," every time I heard one of you guys yell, I gave myself another shot." I still have the original February 11, 1966 Life Magazine saved by my Mom depicting The Battle at the Graveyard at LZ4. Tommy Cole on the front with Harrison Pell and Steve Young's melted down M-60 machine gun barrel in the background. Doc your pretty face sticks out on page 22 and 24b.

Jim Brigham told me (editor) about that doomed flight as well. He too was on that C-123 and was pulled off because one of his guys couldn't get a Mule started. Those pulled off watched helplessly as that aircraft crashed in the pass at An Khe and were left wondering why they were spared.

Glen Allen, Jr has written about his experiences in A 2/7 from 1965-1966 in his book, Storm in the Jungle. Like many, Glen went over on the U.S.S. Patch and he tells of the back breaking job of clearing the area around the Golf Course. He came down with a serious case of malaria and missed the heartache of Albany but fought in the Graveyard. His book is another in the long line of memoirs from the gallant warriors of the 2nd Battalion. Glen can be reached at sophiesgrandma@yahoo.com for information about ordering.

I was again reminded that the Coffelt Data Base contains a wealth of information on our honored Vietnam dead. This is a user friendly, searchable treasure trove of information. It contains: Personal Data; Military Data; Casualty Data and location as well as the location on The Wall. It also contains the DA Form 2496 which notified the Correspondence Branch of the Army Chief of Staff in the Pentagon as well as the last known address of the next of kin. One that I reviewed also had the Form 20 listing various assignments, schools and orders that the Trooper had received. Sometimes the death certificate is listed too. This DA Form was usually processed within 4 days of the soldier's death. The web address is: . All of these pages can be printed as well. But I caution you that it can be very difficult reading especially so the death certificates, as it's possible the actual cause might not jive with what the Army told the families.

Like many of you I have viewed, posted and effected changes to the Virtual Vietnam Wall. A few days ago Ron Migut sent out a link that had been sorted for the 7th Cavalry. It is a sobering reminder that the 1/7, 2/7 and 5/7 had 1,408 Sky Troopers fall in battle during the almost 7 full years of Cav combat. Because of space limitations I'll save the full analysis for the next column but in the meantime here is the link <http://www.virtualwall.org/u-army/7thcavrgt.htm> Thanks Ron for this great find.

On my recent trip to Erlanger, Kentucky as reported in the last Saber I visited the gravesite of my OCS Classmate – Michael Eugene Dewan. Mike served with distinction in the 4th Infantry Division and we went through Basic, AIT and OCS together. After Vietnam we were both stationed at Fort Knox and roomed together there as well. After Vietnam he went on to receive his PhD in Education and continued in that field until coming down with cancer as a result of exposure to the scourge of Agent Orange. I had been searching for his final resting place for over 20 years and consider this another mission accomplished. Deaths like my good friend Mike sadly are not listed as Battle Casualties. Maybe we need a Memorial in DC to that affect as well. Something to ponder as I'm sure most of you know someone who died from what the Air Force called 'Ranch Hand' missions.

Mark your calendar for the upcoming First Team reunion to be held in the 'City That Never Sleeps' aka Las Vegas. Spring must be coming as I'm starting to see robins flitting around the tundra that we call Michigan.

Garryowen and First Team! From Michigan.