



The Official Newsletter of the
Seventh United States Cavalry Association

2019 Issue 3

PRESIDENT
John Guillory

VICE PRESIDENT
Phill Zook

SCRIBE
Karl Swenson

TREASURER
Robert J. Anderson

"Troopers of the 7th Cavalry "

Greetings fellow friends and troopers. This is the start of a very busy time. The 1st Cavalry Division Association Reunion will be happening during the first full week in June. Summer will be starting, and folks will be traveling. Since several of us will be traveling to Killeen for the Reunion, this column contains news about our newest troopers – those on active duty today. We want to celebrate their accomplishments as well.

But, before we do that, I want to report that Jim Savage, our webmaster for the 7th US Cavalry website, has completed an ENORMOUS task, Jim has added a searchable roster of Korean War Troopers; the roster contains the names and units of 2553 men assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division between 1950 and 1953. If you are not familiar with the 7th Cavalry website, please visit! It is located at www.us7thcavalry.com. And, if you notice people who are missing from unit rosters, please notify me. Give me as much information as possible about those missing people, including copies of Unit Orders, if you have them. We would love to have a more complete record and you can help.

A while back, I spoke on the phone with Elfred Steiter, who served with D Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry in Japan from 1953 – 1954. Elfred started out in the heavy weapons platoon and was moved to the company communications center for his last six months allowing him to use the radio operator training he had received at Fort Gordon, GA. At the age of 90, Elfred is still spry and is currently living in the North Dakota Veterans Home. He reads each issue of the Saber and is very proud of the time he spent in the 7th Cavalry. If you are in North Dakota and want to visit Elfred, the address for the Veterans Home is 1600 Veterans Drive, Lisbon, ND 58054 and Elfred's phone number is 701-680-0547. Why don't you send him a card, or give him a call. Let him know that the 7th Cavalry still cares about all of our troopers.

This is from the Fort Hood Sentinel and was authored by Staff Sgt. Kelsey Miller, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs.

Team prepares for Gainey Cup The season of military competitions is here. Many have already taken place, such as the Army's Best Ranger competition, the Army's Best Sapper competition and the Army's Best Mortar competition.

This year, a team from 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team will represent the entire 1st Cavalry Division with expectations of securing the Gainey Cup at the Army-wide Best Scout Squad competition, beginning April 25, at Fort Benning, Georgia.

"For the past several weeks, we have been preparing mentally and physically to go and participate in the Gainey Cup Competition," Sgt. Samuel Hall, the dismount team leader for the competition, said. "This competition has been our priority. Our command team has supported that and supported us throughout our training, from platoon level all the way up to squadron level."

The Soldiers on the team were selected by their leadership after completing several unit-internal competitions starting at the troop level and finishing at brigade level. The Soldiers who earned a coveted spot on the team displayed above average competency levels as well as stellar physical capabilities.

"Each and every single member of this team has performed very well," Staff Sgt. Jermaul Sledge, the team's truck commander, said. "They were chosen not only because they are physically fit, but because they are mentally fit as well. Every single one of them has that drive to keep going, and that is so important."

The team began training while the brigade was deployed to Europe in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve and has not missed a beat since returning.

The physical train-up includes gym visits at least twice a day, distance running, extended ruck marches, general body conditioning in order to prevail during the intense competition and endurance building workouts. The mental train-up includes equipment familiarity, graphics and land navigation training, vehicle and small arms proficiency, among other things.

"We mentally and physically push ourselves every day, so we tend to get exhausted," Pfc. Benjamin Ortolan, the team's gunner, said. "We definitely keep in mind that we are representing something bigger than any of us could have ever imagined. Regardless of what happens in this competition, we will come back with lessons and skills that will set us apart from the rest of our daily platoon mates."

Although the train-up has been thorough and the team feels extremely confident in their abilities, the thought of such a big competition provides some apprehension.

"One of the biggest challenges for me has been to look at myself and determine what my weaknesses are," Spc. Sylvia Gielarowiec, the team's driver, said. "Continuing to push and make myself better in the areas I am lacking is a challenge."

Even though this team is about to culminate one of their toughest journeys, they have confidence in one another and acknowledge that teamwork is the key to success.

"We work really well as a team," Spc. Alan Garcia, the team's point man, said. "We definitely care for each other, help each other out and encourage each other." The team's M240B gunner, Pfc. Ryan Murphy, said he looks forward to what being a part of this team means for him in the future, as far as career progression and promotion board knowledge. Attached to the team are Spc. Robert McInteer and Spc. Kevin Romero, both alternate dismounts. They have trained with the team every step of the way and will fill in if a team member cannot make it to the competition.

New Orleans native Specialist Four Michael Arthur Fontaine, affectionately called "Doc" by his fellow soldiers was killed in action while serving in Vietnam with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. As a medic, his actual assignment was to HHC, 2nd of the 7th, however he was attached to Charlie Company's 2nd platoon, commanded by 1LT John Guillory, our current 7th Cavalry Regiment Association president.

Spc. Michael Arthur Fontaine, born on Sept. 4, 1950, served as an Army medic during the Vietnam War. While assigned to Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Fontaine took part in a search and clear mission northeast of Quan Loi on Jan. 10, 1969. Charlie Company made contact with the enemy, who were reinforced and armed with rockets, mortars and automatic and semiautomatic weapons. Repeatedly exposing himself to hostile fire, Fontaine treated members of his platoon who were wounded and brought them to a central area where they could be evacuated.

During his final attempt to aid the wounded, Fontaine managed to bandage two men and was in route to a third when the enemy's fire suddenly intensified. He threw himself onto the man to protect him and was mortally wounded by the enemy but he saved the life of his stricken comrade. Fontaine was 18 years old when he died. For his extraordinary heroism, Spc. Fontaine was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. His other awards include the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Air Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, and the Combat Medical Badge. He was also inducted into the State of Louisiana Military Hall of Fame in Abbeville.

On March 29, 2019, the Troop Medical Clinic at Fort Polk was renamed the Fontaine Troop Medical Clinic as a memorial to the sacrifice displayed by Michael on January 10, 1969. During the building dedication ceremony held March 29, members of Fontaine's family and one of the members of his unit were there to help cut the ribbon.

David and Rene Fontaine are Michael Fontaine's brothers, and they attended the ceremony with their wives, both named Linda. Another Michael Fontaine was also there — Michael's nephew, son of David and Linda.

"The greatest thing my parents ever did was name me after my uncle," he said. "I never knew him, but I try to live up to what he was. Being named for him is the greatest honor, and I wouldn't have missed this event today for the world."

Michael traveled from Oklahoma City to attend the dedication. David and Linda came in from the Houston area to take part in the ceremony. David said the family is honored that his brother's name is being memorialized in this way. "I think this dedication is not just in honor of my brother, but for all the combat medics — they save countless lives." His spouse, Linda, said the building is a legacy for the family. "We are grateful to the Army for doing this," she said. Rene and Linda live in the New Orleans area, and Rene said while the building dedication is important, he'd gladly trade it all to have his brother back. "It's certainly an honor that the Army is doing this for him, but to be honest, I would trade this for him any day," he said. "That's just the way it is."

Butch Watkins served with Fontaine in Vietnam. He attended as a representative of Charlie Company, 2nd Bn, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and said everyone in the unit who met Fontaine fondly remembered "Doc Trip," as he was called. "He was a good guy and always looked out for all of us."

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commanding general, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, pointed out a group photo that was printed in the ceremony program. Fontaine and Watkins are in the photo along with a few other Soldiers in Vietnam. "That's a pretty awesome photo. It really captures the essence of what Michael Fontaine meant to his unit, to his Family, his Army and his nation," said Frank. "It is amazing when you see a hero like Michael in that picture. You can imagine what kind of hero it takes to respond, under enemy fire, to Soldiers in his formation."

Frank also said it was fitting that the facility that now bears Fontaine's name is at Fort Polk — the Home of Heroes.

"A combat infantry or cavalry unit will often refer to their medic as 'Doc.' That's a term of endearment," said Frank. "They're not medical doctors. But they are going to respond under fire, when you are injured, when you are pinned down — they are there, not the doctor in a white coat and stethoscope, but the medic, and that's what Michael Fontaine was. As Soldiers come through these doors, I think they'll feel his spirit and everything he meant to his cavalry unit."

New Publications and Requests. From Richard Magner, a Cobra pilot with Delta Company, 229th Smiling Tigers. I am seeking veterans of the 5th Bn, 7th Cav that came to the aid of LZ Dot in the 13-Nov-1968 battle. In the book "Incursion", J.D. Coleman references 3 companies of the 5th Battalion that 23 did the sweep directly after the battle. Eventually 287 NVA KIAs were buried at Dot-Sróc Con Tráng according to after-action reports. Which companies of the 5th were involved, I have not been able to identify. It is my desire to locate veterans of those companies involved in the 14-Nov-68 sweep of the area surrounding LZ Dot that may have any knowledge or recollections of the resulting grave.

I was a Cobra pilot with D/229th/1st Cav in 68 & 69. I have put a lot of effort into locating the mass grave from the Battle of Dau Tieng, Feb 22/23, 69 where I was based. The main focus of my research is to assist the Vietnamese locate mass graves near the perimeters of FSBs & LZs where battles were fought. The Vietnamese are presently performing an exploratory dig at Dau Tieng. Hopefully, they will be successful and complete the excavating so the spirits may rest and the families will finally find solace.

I have read all the Battle of LZ Dot-Sróc Con Tráng after-action reports. Fellow Cav pilot Robert F. Hartley, with whom I have conversed, describes his support of LZ Dot in his book "Gunship Pilot", chapter 20 for which he received the DFC. It is his memory from flying cover the next morning that a grave was dug less than 200 meters to the southeast. In some of my previous efforts, I have found the grave to be located outside the perimeter near the direction from where the main NVA/VC assaults originated.

In all my research, I have yet to discover a drawing or aerial photo of LZ Dot. Lat & Long of LZ Dot: 11.620947, 106.432696. The fire support base was manned by the 36th ARVN Rangers with an American advisor, Army Captain Frederick L. Kuhns. The artillery unit was D Battery, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery, 1st Division under operational control of the 1st Cav's 2nd Brigade. I have been unsuccessful searching for any records of the Battery D, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery from the Vietnam War, after many inquires through Ft. Riley and the First Division Museum.

Additional battles that involved the 7th Cav I am researching for mass graves are:

25-Nov-1968, LZ Ann, BC 130	13-May-1969, LZ Jamie, BC 82
12-Jun-1969, LZ Joy, BC 36	12-Aug-1969, LZ Andy-Quan Loi, BC 54
29-Mar-1970, LZ Jay, BC 74	

Any assistance you may offer in helping me locate veterans from the above battles, especially LZ Dot, will be greatly appreciated.

(Scribe's note: As you may have read elsewhere in this issue of The Saber, we lost COL Lyman "Chan" Duryea in April to an aggressive form of cancer. His obituary contains much more information about this hero. The book review listed below was written before COL Duryea passed to Fiddler's Green.)

Two 7th Cav Vietnam veterans have collaborated on a definitive book about the problems many of us experienced in Vietnam with the troubled M16 rifle. Their book, "Misfire: The Tragic Failure of the M16 Rifle in Vietnam," analyzes the "black rifle's" flawed history, such as being rushed into combat with the 1st Cav and other units while it was still in an experimental mode and with an ammunition with which it was incompatible and lacking an adequate maintenance package.

The book is being published by Stackpole Books on July 1 and is already available for advance sale in hardback format from Amazon for \$29.95.

One of the book's co-authors, Lyman "Chan" Duryea, commanded Co. C, 2/7 Cav in 1966-67, while co-author Bob Orkand was XO/S-3 of the 1/7 Cav in 1967-68, holding down both jobs simultaneously because of casualties.

The authors present the numerous M16 shortcomings as a microcosm of the overall faulty decision-making by America's civilian and military leadership that resulted in the tragedy of the Vietnam War.

Congratulations to Staff Sgt. Gary Stewart, Cpl. Ty Frame, Spc. Kyle Bunnell and Pfc. Jonathan Schweinhaupt of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. This team finished in second place at the Best Mortar Crew Competition held in early April at Fort Benning, GA. At Benning, four-man infantry mortar sections braved three days of events to test their general combat fitness, as well as their expertise with 60mm, 81mm, and 120mm rounds. Twenty-one four-man teams competed for the title of "Best Mortar." Participating teams completed a gauntlet of rigorous physical and mental events that tested the range of mortar skills, both technically and tactically, that included mortar technical gunnery skills, fire direction center tasks, call-for-fire tasks, and more. Way to go, team, way to go!

And, with that so passes another issue of this column. Please remember that I cannot know and write about your stories if you do not share them with me. If you have already done so and you did not see them here, then they will be in the next issue. Keep them coming, brothers and sisters, keep them coming! Until next time, Karl Swenson, Garryowen!