

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 9 ISSUE 2

APRIL 2024

Dak To 1967, Part 2: The Diary

Peter Returns to Vietnam

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

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[DELTA-REUNION-ROOMS](https://tinyurl.com/delta-reunion-rooms)

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[THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12](https://tinyurl.com/delta-reunion-rooms)

Welcome Reception

[FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13](https://tinyurl.com/delta-reunion-rooms)

Wreath Laying at the
Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
Memorial Service at the
Vietnam Memorial Wall

[SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14](https://tinyurl.com/delta-reunion-rooms)

Membership Meeting
Banquet

[SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15](https://tinyurl.com/delta-reunion-rooms)

Depart

On 12 November 1967, Delta joined companies of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division on Hill 724 near Dak To. Though it would incur only a few casualties over the next month in Vietnam's Central Highlands, Delta began this mission with a horrifying work detail—unloading dead American soldiers from incoming helicopters, then climbing into those same helicopters for the trip to Hill 724, from whence those dead soldiers had come. Over the next few days, they saw a helicopter destroyed behind them, lost a commander, and dealt with incoming fire. Ron Redalen, a squad RTO in the third platoon, described being out of the perimeter on a listening post as “terrifying.” Pedro Leos, Robert Flores, and Darrell Shellie, in the 1st platoon, were “frightened” as they crept out of Delta's lines in the dark a day later. Robert would be killed in action at Tam Quan a month later, and Darrell would die in an ambush during the Tet Offensive on 1 February 1968. Pedro would return to Texas, where he still resides. In the remaining days on 724 incoming fire gradually decreased as the NVA withdrew, and Delta began patrolling beyond its perimeter.



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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 details)

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, and 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**

Secretary's Report

Well boys, just 4 months until our Washington, DC Reunion. Plans are moving along nicely and the room block is filling up. (For those concerned about “issues” in the District, our Reunion hotel is in Herndon, Virginia, near Dulles International.)

I encourage those of you who have not yet booked your stay to do so as soon as possible. I need to have enough “lead time” if I need to add rooms to our block. Likewise, “knowing the numbers” is essential to other planning, like bus rental, the visit to Arlington, and our events at the hotel. Please send in the registration form included with this newsletter.

This could be our last reunion as a Company. Our reunions have always been special to those of us that have attended. The feeling of reuniting with the men that you served with in Vietnam is something that you need to experience. We always memorialize those who did not return. This year that tribute will be at the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

I have never visited the Vietnam Memorial. For years I have said I would only visit it with the guys that I served with. That time has come.

So, please join those you served with, pay tribute to our departed and hug a buddy still with us.

NOTE *Recently a few veterans have had difficulty booking our reunion hotel. If you do please contact me 347-853-1281. (866-932-7062 is the recommended method for booking.)*

GOD HEALTH

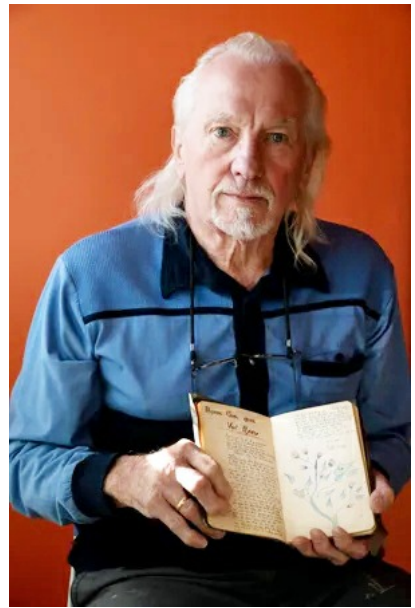
Fred Mac Lennan

OTHER CAVALRY REUNIONS

The 12th Cavalry Regiment Association, Branson, MO, 10-14 September, Branson Hillside Hotel, 417-751-0395, <https://www.bransonhillside.com/> Fred Wilson 740-331-1814 for more information.

The 1st Cavalry Division Association will return to Louisville, KY 19-23 June 2024 for its ***76th Reunion*** <https://1cda.org/annual-reunion/information/>

(Continued from page 1) Delta company veteran Sergeant Peter Schwartz, a native of the Netherlands, had come to the United States in 1963. He'd finally gotten his green card, in 1966, when just a few months later, he was drafted. In Vietnam, Mathews was a machine gunner. After five months he became a squad leader. Peter (now Peter Mathews), landed with the company on Hill 724. After those first days, they moved down the hill to count the bodies and retrieve anything of intelligence value. He found a diary, wrapped in plastic, in abandoned backpack of an NVA soldier who had likely perished in the battle. In a split-second decision, he decided to keep it. "Maybe I should have turned it in, but I just couldn't part with it," Mathews says, many years later. "It didn't look to me like military or secret information. I didn't show it to anyone, I just put it in my pocket." Peter was "short," so his focus was getting home in one piece.



In its pages were poetry, songs and journal entries, lavishly illustrated with drawings of flowers and scenes. Not likely to be of intelligence value, he reasoned, so why give up this thing of beauty? It took him 56 years and 87 days to return the diary left behind after a bloody battle in Dak To. This is the story.

When Mathews returned, like so many of us, tried to put those experiences behind him. "I got very mad about [not being granted citizenship], to put it mildly, so I put, I had a couple of medals, I put my uniform, I put everything in a box," he says, "I had hangover from Vietnam. I was drinking a lot. After that, I was actually homeless for about six weeks. Shortly after that, I met my wife, Christine."



He married, became a U.S. citizen, raised a family and built a business. The diary was set aside in that box in his Bergenfield, New Jersey home. But he didn't forget that beautiful diary. Occasionally he took the diary out. It was something to be admired. He wondered if he should have it published. Andrew Pham, who translated the wartime diary of Dang Thuy Tram, and Frances Fitzgerald, author of "Fire in the Lake," both gave publishing advice.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4) But he knew what he wanted to do: Find the author and return the diary. As a first step, he got some of the pages translated, and luckily, on one of them was soldier's name, Cao Xuan Tuat, and his address in a district of Ha Tinh Province on Vietnam's north central coast. A poem read, "It's a beautiful country. Mountains, birds, singing, waiting for spring but sleeping with a gun." Another entry is about a girlfriend, how he loved her and how he was going to ask for hand when he returned. That girlfriend is now 80 years old. She never married.



With that information the story spread in print articles and on-line. Eventually the story got the attention of the Vietnamese government. Within days, the soldier's family learned of the news, and soon Peter and Christine were on a plane to Vietnam. News of the diary's return made headlines. Arriving in Hanoi, the attention surprised Mathews. Cao Van Tuat joined the army in 1963 and fought many battles in the Central [Highlands] region in 1966-67. Tuat was just 21 years old when he died on Hill 724. His body was never recovered. He was confirmed dead on December 10, 1967, around the same time that Mathews found the notebook, but his family did not receive the news until 1972. His family had nothing to remember him. Mathews' gift of the diary gave the family something precious.

Over the years, Mathews, had become attached to this thing of beauty. He made copies of the pages, and occasionally looks at them. "My children are happy because they have read and heard about things they didn't know anything about because of me not [previously] talking about it," Mathews said. He still has dreams about the war and memories he hasn't yet shared, but there are new memories of his return, and holding hands with the sister of a soldier once considered the enemy. But after all of this, he has found some peace, "It's a fairy tale ending after all these years. That's the crazy thing. You fight up there, people kill each other and then we leave, and they leave."



NOTES

- 1- Pedro Leos, D/1/12 Cavalry, Interview
- 2- Burrow, Megan, Bergen Record (northjersey.com) January 27, 2023
- 3-Johnson, Kristine, CBS News New York, May 13, 2023
- 4-Susong, Josh, USA Today March 31, 2023



First Commander's Corner

Following more than a year in hospice care, and with our Brother Chuck, her husband of more than 60 years by her side, our beloved Jai

Rose was called home to her Lord on March 31. Ya'll know that Charles has been my very close friend since our service in Delta, so the loss of his lovely wife hits very hard. Sadly, such will likely be the lot of all of us as our twilight years unfold. Rest in peace Jai.

I took command of Delta at Fort Benning, then was its first commander "in country." (That's where we get the title for this column.) I remind you of that because, like you (and perhaps more so) I know I am "getting along in years." With that in mind I'm looking forward to our September reunion, during which we'll visit the Vietnam Memorial to remember our Brothers who did not return.

As usual, we'll close our "official" activities with our banquet on Saturday, September 14—and it's about that I want to chat with you. You see, this time I'll have with me family with whom to share these memories.

I know you'll say: "I go to these to be with my Brothers." OF course, we all do. Or, you say, "they

[my family] don't understand." Or "they don't care." (that last is probably quite unfair).

How often have loved ones said (usually after the veteran has gone to Fiddler's Green), "He never talked about the war." Yet, we know we talk about the war when we are with other veterans, and not just those with whom we served. Perhaps those others in our lives can never fully understand, but they can appreciate us for who we are, and who we are is very much wrapped up with our history, including that time in Vietnam.

That line, "He never talked about the war," is usually expressed with regret. Whether they can understand or not they want to know. They lived with us; some lived through the loneliness and fear of separation of our tour(s). Others lived with who we were when we returned; that wasn't always a picnic, was it?

So, consider sharing this special event with loved ones. Or choose to keep it between the Brothers. Either way, (as the Tempos sang in 1959), we want to "See You in September."

"OUR BROTHERS WILL BE FOREVER IN OUR MEMORIES"

God bless you All & God bless America

"Boot to Boot"

Johnny Sergulis

PS: Please book your hotel and send in your registration as soon as possible. We really need to know who (and how many) are coming! See Fred's Secretary's Report in this issue.

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.

**ALLEN MILLER
LARRY BURKHEAD**

**MICHAEL H CRAWLEY
DONALD RANDALL**

**TODD REUDISILI
RONALD WASZKIELEWACZ**

BOOK REVIEW

VIETNAM NURSE Lou Eisenbrandt

This is the short (146 pages including 25 of photographs) memoir of a nurse who served in Vietnam. In it, Lou Eisenbrandt tells us much more than the story of her service at the 91st Evacuation Hospital in Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam. She takes us on a personal journey from rural Mascoutah, Illinois to Saint Joseph School of Nursing in nearby Alton, and into the United States Army as a Lieutenant, Registered Nurse. Instead of leaping from there to Vietnam, Eisenbrandt takes us through her training, her first assignment to Walson Army Hospital at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and only after that do we follow her to Vietnam, her return, and her life since, including four returns to Vietnam and struggles with Parkinson's Disease, a likely consequence of Agent Orange exposure.

We don't get the graphic, bloody descriptions we've gotten from others, but we gain the whole context of a life well lived. Writing 45 years after she left Vietnam, Ms. Eisenbrandt describes her experiences in a thoughtful, yet sensitive way.

Given the lingering devastation of Agent Orange, she could be expected, as others have been, to be bitter. She is not. Some may feel there is less passion in her prose than there should be, but for that you need to look no further than the four poems she has included. This is an excerpt from REMEMBER, ahead of the first chapter:

Remember the sounds of death

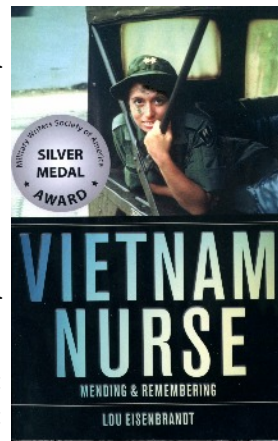
The gurgle of a last breath

Remember helicopter blades: whop, whop, whop

Bringing bloodied and broken bodies

We remember.

(Paperback, \$19.95 on Amazon)



Website Update

Delta Company Videos are still attracting a wide audience from all over the world. There are an average of 7000 video "views" every day. One video, Delta Company Music Video 1967-1968, just surpassed 4.1 million views. And total views of all videos is over 5 million. The Delta videos are some of the most popular Vietnam War videos on YouTube

Please go to the roster on the website and verify your telephone and email address. As time goes by phone numbers and emails tend to change, so please let us know if your info needs to be updated.

As always we are still looking for any photo or story updates you may have. Please let me know if you have anything to share with your Brothers-in-Arms and posterity. The plan is to continue the website on the internet long after we all are gone. Now's your chance. Call me. (Contact info on page 8.)

Looking forward to seeing you at the Delta Company reunion in September.

TAKE CARE, DON'T WALK ON TRAILS, AND BRING PLENTY OF AMMO

Bob March

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