

NATIONAL DUSTERS, QUADS & SEARCHLIGHTS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER # 2 – AUGUST 2020

2020 NDQSA 38th REUNION RESCHEDULED FOR NORFOLK VA, 2021

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

To My NDQSA family:

I hope this newsletter finds you all in good health and good spirits during these TRYING TIMES. Wear your masks!



Many of you receiving this newsletter have not had any contact with NDQSA in many, many years. Our historian made a personal effort to relocate you and if you got this, great! Welcome Home and Welcome Back to NDQSA. Read this newsletter and go to the website to read past newsletters and see what we have been up to. You will be amazed, we were quite busy!

The Board's decision to cancel the 2020 Reunion was the correct call given the conditions at that time in many of the states. Negotiations are ongoing with the hotel in Norfolk for the 2021 reunion. In the months to come, I want you all to exercise common sense take precautions and above all STAY SAFE. We missed you all this year, and we are looking forward to seeing all of your smiling faces in 2021.

FEATURED STORIES:

(Lightly edited for clarity and composition)

Lou Block – Camp Carroll Pt II
George Buck - Vietnam Memories

NEW MEMBERS/CONTACTS

[Jack Schaeffner, D-4/60 '70-71](#)

Jerry D. Snider, B-1/44 '68-69 OK

If the name is blue or underlined, you can click on it and send a message to the new member. Maybe he knows someone you served with? Send him an email!!

MEMBERS THAT HAVE PASSED

Luther Burnam Jr. B-5/2 '67-70 8Jul20 TX
Barry Stephenson, D-71 Quads '66-71 10Jul20, NC
Doug Francescon, G-29 67 3Jul20, WA
Kenneth Meyer, D-4/60 '69-70 11Apr20, IA
Rick Goforth, E-41 Quads '70-71 7Jun20, TX
Fred Stidham, SLT '67-68 27Feb17, IN
Clint Self, C-4/60 '67-68 1Sep19, AR
Tim Patton, H-6/65 HAWK '66-67 20Mar20, NC
Elmer Rice, C-1/44 '70 22Aug19, FL
Garvin Reese, D-1/44 '67-69 16Feb20, AL
Yosef Shimon, H-1/44 '67-68 8Apr19, NC
Robert Hart, A-5/s '66-67 26Dec13, IL
Robert Leggio, B-4/60 '70-71 Oct2017, CA/NY
Ed Colinsky, A-5/2 '66-67 20Jun19, TX
BG Victor Hugo, H-1/44 '69-70 11May20, VA
John Lambert, H-29 SLT '70 7Nov15, IN
Dwight Stevens, B-1/44 '68-69 29Jan20, MI
Donald Erwin, 5/2 '67-68 17Mar20, OH
Barry Mercer, B-5/2 '67-68 27Mar20, LA
Richard Toole, C-5/2 '66-67 3Mar20, OH
Robert Daniels, G-29 '69-70 7Sep19, PA
Larry Helwick, B-5/2 '68-69 3Mar19, OK
George Chapman, D-71 Quads '67-68 24Dec19 MI
Henry Frye, H-1/44 5Jun18, VA
Hoyt Hill, B-5/2 '67-68 6Aug12, AR
Merle Bennett, A-1/44 '66-67 2Dec13, GA
James McShane, G-39 '69-70 20Apr20 MN
Richard Papp, A-5/2 '66-67 14Jun15, IL
Klaus Karcher, H-6/56 '68 25Nov18, TX

They will be missed and we give honor to their service and their families. Many older passings were identified during the recent review of the NDQSA roster.

DO YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS?

Two pieces of contact information that frequently change are: cell phone numbers and email addresses. Typically there are about a half dozen emails sent out each year to every member with a valid (current) email address on record with the Historian. **If you (or a spouse) have an email address and you have not received any emails from the dqshistorian@cox.net, it is time for you to record your email address with him.** Simply [click here](#) and identify yourself clearly (full name). Please confirm your telephone numbers in the same email. When an email is sent to a bad email address, the Historian tries to contact the member by phone to determine their status. This is a time consuming effort, but it does give him a chance to talk to members.

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Minutes of NDQSA Board of Directors and Executive Officers Meeting March 25, 2020

Reports of Officers:

President, Bob Cuce: Bob Cuce opened this emergency meeting to discuss the organization's plans on possible postponement or rescheduling of this year's reunion.

First Vice President, Paul Kopsick: No comment

Second Vice-President, Dave McCray: No comment

Secretary, Garry Severin: A motion to accept the meeting minutes as written from the 3-06-2020 meeting was made by Dave McCray and was seconded by Joe Belardo. No dissention was noted.

Treasurer, Allan Penwell: No comment

Next are discussions to *Standing Committee Reports* (note they are not necessarily in order of discussion):

Heritage Committee: No comment

Membership Committee (Joe Belardo, Paul Kopsick): Paul stated that he is in the process of completing the newsletter pending the Board's decision on whether to proceed with or cancel the reunion until next year in Oklahoma.

Nominating Committee (John Huelsenbeck, Garry Severin, Bob Cuce and Paul Hanson): Joe Belardo noted that no new candidates for Board of Director positions have been filed. This will change if write-in votes show up. As of now the Board remains unchanged until all votes can be tallied. Joe Belardo and Paul Hanson will count votes and report the results.

Legislative Committee (Bruce Geiger, Bob Lauver): No comment

Good Works Committee (Sam Hopkins, Bob Cuce & Bruce Geiger): No comment

Publications/Historian Committee (Paul Kopsick): Paul Kopsick stated he is working on the spring newsletter which will contain a ballot with provisions for write-in candidates. for anyone wishing join the board. Any BOD member wishing a roster in alphabetical order, please contact Paul Kopsick to request one.

Reunion Committee (Bob Lauver, Bruce Geiger, Mary Severin, Paul Hanson): Bruce Geiger spoke to the implications of canceling the reunion. Bruce does not believe there will be a financial penalty involved because of the nature of the current COVID-19 national crisis and state and local mandates regarding large gatherings. A vote was called for to determine whether to postpone the reunion until later this year or cancel until next year in Oklahoma. A discussion on when the postponed date would be this year yielded no conclusion, and the location of next year's reunion in Oklahoma would be Oklahoma City, or Lawton Oklahoma. Bruce Geiger informed the board that he will not directly participate in any Oklahoma hotel negotiations. Bruce Geiger and Bob Lauver will handle the cancelations for the current reunion. Luke Clark and Dave McCray will take control of the search for a suitable venue. The vote went in favor of canceling the reunion until next year. A motion to accept the results of the BOD's vote on this issue was made by Luke Clark and seconded by Joe Belardo. No dissention was noted. The following year's reunion location would be left up to the membership at next year's reunion Business Meeting.

Products Committee Duane & Mary Gettler, Bruce Geiger, Paul Kopsick & Bob Lauver : No Comment

Website Committee Bob Lauver, Paul Kopsick, Allan Penwell, Bob Cuce, Bruce Geiger; No comment

St. Barbara & Molly Pitcher Committee Vince & Suzanne

Tedesco, John Huelsenbeck: No comment

Special Projects – Restoration Notes – Other:

Next Board of Directors Meeting: Bob Cuce will schedule a BOD Meeting at a later date.

A motion to close the meeting was made by Dave McCray and seconded by Joe Belardo. No dissention was noted.

Minutes compiled by Garry Severin Secretary, NDQSA
Bob Cuce President, NDQSA

ADDENDUM: Reunion board decision on 2021 reunion location.

From Vincent J. Tedesco Jr April 2, 2020

Brothers,

Yesterday I was told that there is a major problem between the Army and the contractors building the ADA Museum at Ft Sill. This will more than likely delay the open until late 2021. My contact at Sill recommends we delay our reunion visit until 2022.

Sorry for the bad news. Stay safe!

From Bruce Geiger April 4, 2020

Gentlemen,

If there are no objections, I would like to contact the Norfolk Sheraton to let them know it is our intention to hold our reunion at their hotel in 2021 at a date to be decided. Bob Lauver can do the same with those we have cancelled contracts for this year. This should ease some of the pain and hopefully allow us to reinstate rather than renegotiate any contracts.

Bruce Geiger, Reunion Board

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**NDQSA 2020 Officer Elections
Administered as Closed**

The following is the certification of the nominating committee with respect to their decision on this year's election.

The 2020 nominating committee consisting of Joseph Belardo, John Huelsenbeck, and Paul Hanson have indicated that the nomination period is now closed (29Feb20), and there are no new nominations for any of the five executive board member positions for the 2020-2022 term. The existing five board members have indicated their willingness to run for their current offices. They are:

President: Robert Cuce
1st Vice President: Paul Kopsick
2nd vice President: David McCray
Secretary: Garry Severin
Treasurer: Allan Penwell

Whereas there are no nominations and the current board has agreed to serve again and because there will be no annual business meeting (reunion) this year, the entire board discussed and the nomination committee concluded that under the circumstances it is prudent to “call the election” in favor of the incumbent officers.

This means that at the next conference call of the board of directors, the chairman of the nomination committee (Joseph Belardo) will make a motion to elect the five incumbent executive officers for another 2-year term. The vote on the motion will be called, and the seven directors not running for these offices will vote for the membership. Their votes will be tallied and the results taken as fulfillment of the election process.

While this is a departure from our normal process, it will save administrative work (preparing ballots and mailing them out, etc.) and will save the association several hundred dollars in postage and mailing costs.

Certified by the NDQSA Nominating Committee:
Joseph Belardo, John Huelsenbeck, Paul Hanson.

**TANK FARM 2020 OPEN HOUSE
CANCELLED**

Due to state mandated COVID-19 restrictions, we are rescheduling our 2020 Tank Farm Open House to 2021. We will announce a new date early next year. This annual event in Nokesville, Virginia draws thousands of attendees each year to learn about history, honor our veterans, see demonstrations of historic military vehicles and equipment, and experience some of what will be in the future Americans in Wartime Museum.

In the interim, stay connected with our social media pages to view the collection of military vehicles,

hear the recorded interviews of those who served, and see our ongoing restorations of vehicles, equipment and other artifacts. www.nmaw.org

We look forward to seeing you in 2021!

Marc Sehring

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REMEMBER

NDQSA is an IRS 501(c) (19) non-profit veteran's organization so if you are of means and in a giving state of mind, know that you can put NDQSA in your estate plans for when you leave this mortal planet. Also, NDQSA has several vehicle restoration projects we are still trying to complete. The Widomaker gun-truck still needs to pay off the loan of the gun mount (20K) and we are still looking for an appropriate Mutt M151 jeep (10K) for the Xenon SLT we have at the Tank Farm.

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"THE REST OF THE STORY"

Battle for Camp J.J. Carroll - Part II

Lou Block, C-1/44 (emails of 3/31 & 4/1/2020)



PFC Louis Block
Charlie Battery 1st/44th
September 1967

First, let me say that I would follow Lt. L. Steve Moore into any battle, and we survived several together. He WAS a leader; he was out front on the battlefield. Steve became a friend. He was an American Hero and a Christian.

The only regret I have is that I could not get Steve to return to Vietnam and face the demons many of us Vietnam Veterans

have. We talked for hours about how to be well in spite of our actions as young men during combat in Nam. But, like many of us, he was afraid of the hate and anger that might arise meeting a man that tried to kill him in his youth, or, who killed one of his men.

As for myself, I found peace by returning to the old battle sites along Rt #9 in 1992 although the government there would not give me permission to go into that area of Vietnam during my 1989-91 visits. In June 1992 I drove Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh while in Northern California and provided security

for her during her stay on the West Coast for a week, we became friends. When I returned to Nam in 9/92 I was allowed to buy a motorcycle and travel anywhere in the country by myself-freedom. Standing alone on the exact site where I was severely wounded. Remembering. Crying.

But good things happened too, like meeting Mr. Chim (Bird) the Village Leader of CaLu, whom I took to several "dud pit sites" that I could remember around the Rock Pile AO. This would help the authorities clean the area and prevent further casualties from unexploded ordnance (UXO). Later, going to Khe Sanh, Khe Gio Bridge, Camp Carroll, and yes the site of our January 1968 Battle. I walked Hill 250 then around the site of the mass grave on the north side of Rt 9 that was dug after that battle. Then went to the Troung Son National Cemetery where many of those souls' bones were laid to rest.

Not much to add into Steve's story in the last newsletter. I was the first to see the NVA crossing the Song Cam Lo (Cam Lo River) from the tower on Hill 250. I was also driving one of the five Dusters firing on the north side of Camp Carroll until our barrels warped, and we had to go to the camp motor pool for new barrels. That is when I learned that Joe Belardo was wounded (left arm flesh wound) and could not drive his duster. He got into the commander's hatch, and I into the drivers hatch as he directed me into the battle site.

So as best I know I was the only *Dusterman* that day to be involved in every location of the Battle at Mike Hill on Rt#9 and the first Duster Man to return to that site and reflect on the lives lost and saved that day back in January 1968.

Then in 2005 up in Anchorage, Alaska I met the retired NVA general who planned the assault on my OP the night I was wounded and who fought against us at the Mike Hill Battle. We stayed together for a week in Homer, Alaska. We became close, respecting each other as warriors that survived another time in our lives when we could not be friends because of where we were born. But we became friends when we could.

I never went to Nam for a medal or glory, as a matter of fact I did not accept my Purple Heart until 1980, twelve years after I was wounded only because many people said I was lying about Nam because if I was wounded there I would have a Purple Heart. Of course that is documented by my DD-214 & DD-215. To this very day I have severe PTSD, take no drugs, I am out of the wheel chair, living alone in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area on the Imnaha River (snowing right now). Very remote. I must drive two hours for cell phone service, my neighbors a half mile away has Wi-Fi and lets me get my e-mail.

One might say that I am back in my bunker, and in fact I am, at least I'm happy and content to be with bear, cougar, wolves, coyotes, rattlesnakes, elk, deer, wild turkey and the like. Once you know their habits and give them space they are easier to get along with than most people today.

To this very day everything is a matter of life or death for me. No in-between. Life or death.

So I live today, and my brother Steve is gone. I cried when I heard of his passing. I am still welled up inside. My prayers go out to Beverly and the kids.

I hope this helps you in some way although I don't know if I added anything to Steve's story. I do hope you are well. I had to take charge of my health, heck my VA doc said having diabetes was normal for guys like he and me. I call "BS". I no longer use insulin. I have lost over 125 lbs., work hard and walk up and down hill sides. The VA doc still needs insulin. I had to take charge of my health the VA has not worked well for me as I can't even have PTSD in their facilities; it threatens the milk toast wimps that work there. Be well and happy Paul. Let me know if this helped. - Lou Block

Follow-up (4/1/2020)

As for the time leading up to the Battle, it was relaxed, this was Tet, a cease fire for the Vietnamese Holiday was scheduled (we were told). We had our regular guard duties, etc. nothing amiss, I even had some free time which is why I was on Hill 250 that morning and up in the look-out tower. That is when I spotted the NVA crossing the Cam Lo River in boats and reported to SSgt Chester Sines, who reported to Lt. Moore. Lt. Hardin was not in our loop.

At about the same time the CP was getting info about an ambush on Rt #9, LT. Moore got up into the tower and confirmed my sightings and all hell broke loose. Steve had us mount the dusters and get down on the flat in front of Camp Carroll, five dusters, in a staggered formation. We drove back and forth along that flat area driving over our expended 40mm rounds so as not to have them clog the discharge chutes (I think we fired 10,000 +/- rounds). It was hard to believe the barrels could get so hot as to warp, but they did.

As far as time goes, I never had time to think, just act as trained. The motor pool it was a beehive of activity being the staging area for support operations. The new barrels were still backed in heavy grease and required cleaning before they could be installed on our dusters. That is when I learned that Joe (Belardo) was wounded. Their duster was working but now had no driver. Being a driver and Joe's friend, we drove into the 'kill zone' helping to clear the area and extract our

brothers. I don't need to or wish to go into the blood, guts, and gore I saw that day. It was nothing a twenty year old or anyone should see. As I reflect today I still get an uneasy stomach remembering the carnage of that day. Sometimes, I don't know if it was yesterday or fifty plus years ago. I feel like I died in Vietnam and can't live it down, it keeps coming into mind- like it or not. Oh! PTSD! Oh.

Of course we went to 100% security. Adrenaline was high. No sleep, everything had to be cleaned, restocked, and prepared for another attack. Fortunately, that attack never came, we crushed their spirit and their bodies littered the battlefield. We (the Dusters primarily) sent them back into their mountain hideouts in the DMZ. One NVA officer I met later on in life (Col. Quoc) said we killed 167 of his men and he had to stay hid for over three months in the DMZ until his new troops arrived from Hanoi. Officers survived mostly because they were in the rear area directing action. Another officer told me about the B-52's dropping bombs so heavy they buried him in several feet of dirt only to be dug out by his remaining men. We did not make life easy for the NVA. They were not expecting us Dusters to defend Carroll as we did. That was all LT. L. Steve Moore's doing. He ordered us to fire on every boat crossing the river and then to fire at their escape routes. I still have no idea what Capt. Easter or LT. Hardin were doing, my contact and orders were only with and from Steve.

Apparently, the NVA did not fear our small numbers at Camp Carroll, they felt like they could start early in the day coming across the river and be done with us by nightfall. The ambush was just an aside to their main plan; they did not want any more supplies going west so they tried to close the road. Their big plan was to capture all of Rt #9 and continue heading south. The Dusters and the other defenders at Camp J.J. Carroll ***would not let that happen!***

Now, about meeting the man that planed my demise.

Many years later, I was asked to represent ***Vietnam Veterans for Peace*** from the Northwest in a meeting with North Vietnamese Officers in Alaska. I complied. The locals in Homer, AK put us Veterans, from all across America, up in local B&B's with one large one being our hub.

There were about twenty-four American Vets listening to one Vietnamese officer tell stories of his forty years of military service and his numerous war wounds suffered from his fighting against us. Then he asked about any American wounded, all the guys called on me out to speak. I start to tell my story about how I was wounded in July '68 and half way into it this officer jumps up and finished MY story. He knew

details only someone who was there could know; he made hand gestures like the twin-40's firing pom-pom like. Then he also spoke of the Mike Hill Battle back in January and how much damage we Dusters did. He said that after the January battle the NVA were watching all the dusters on the DMZ, they knew it was the dusters that were stopping their advance and they had to be destroyed.

It seemed I was in Col. Quoc's (NVA officer) A.O. on OP Ben at the Rock Pile in July 1968. At that time we were pulling out of Khe Sanh. Track C-131, Joe Belardo's duster, blew its engine on the way to Khe Sanh and in order to save C-131 and Joe who had twelve days left in Nam, I offered my engine to get C-131 out of Khe Sanh. My OP was west of the Rock Pile Base Camp, off Rt #9 on the northeast end of "Ambush Alley" and I never wanted to go down that road again, so giving up my engine was a sure way to go nowhere. Unfortunately, I also lost all radio communication in the Duster, no engine = no power.

12 July 1968- that night was normal for me. I had four duster men and eight Marines on the OP. At dusk I led the LRRPS out my north perimeter then setting up my three rows of trip flairs and claymore mines across the road. As I started back to my bunker, a trip flair went off to the west. On a steep hillside I saw NVA rushing toward me. I ordered my men to arms, went down into my bunker to use the land-line calling for support and medivac. Running to my duster I mounted her and told my men I would load the guns because they were all new and not combat experienced enough at this time. After firing all the ammo that had been checked, one of my men opened new cans of 40mm and handed up clips of bad rounds (1943 surplus), I had one bad round in the left gun so I jumped over to the right gun and we resumed firing as AK-47 rounds are cracking when they flew by my head, many hitting the turret. There were so many just whizzing by and just missing us. We tried to pick out our targets; there are so many running up the hill yelling, blowing whistles, shooting at us. After firing about 450 rounds I had another dud round. I had my men elevate the guns and dismount so I might perform a hand extraction on one of the guns. I was successful in the extraction but as I went to toss it into the dud pit it exploded in my hands sending me into the air and fifty feet from my Duster.

While flying through the air I saw all the evil in my life. As I hit the ground I screamed "Oh, my God, please help me". At that moment I was up on my feet running back to my duster to get my M-16. I only put 17 rounds in a 20 round magazine (because of the spring). Now with my rifle I start to fire at muzzle flashes, not even realizing I was injured. I start calling

to pull back and form a perimeter around the wounded then as I try to release the magazine and reload, I could not grasp it. I didn't realize it but all my fingers except my index on my right hand were ripped open. Again I called to pull back as I continued trying to reload. A Marine grabbed my M-16 and said "Sarge, it's you, you're all fucked up" and with that he led me back to the road where the 90 mm tanks of the Third Marines were coming with more troops.

The first tank flew by blasting their shotgun-like barbed rounds quelling the sound of the enemy AK-47's. As the second tank arrived numerous Marines jump off running toward the NVA. With that, three Marines pick me up by my belt lifting me to Marines on the rear deck of the tank. When I felt the heat from the tanks exhaust fan that was the first time I realized I was wasted. They took me to C-Med at the Rock Pile Base Camp where they gave me whole blood (Hep-C contaminated) and laid me on a stretcher, put me on the back of a Jeep, while one drove and the other fired the M-60 machine gun all the way to the helo pad. As the chopper was coming in he was firing also, and the NVA were firing at us.

I was transferred to Dong Ha where the news was I needed more help than they had there, or in Da Nang. One of the Navy Corpsmen said the USS Sanctuary had turned about off the coast of Dong Ha heading south, so they took me onto another chopper and headed out to sea. When the chopper touched down on ship five Navy Corpsmen were there, four grabbed the litter I laid on and the fifth grabbed the bottle of blood and they ran, yes ran. The Corpsmen with the bottle was inserting a needle into the tube slowly injecting, as we crashed through the doors of the surgery room I saw the word surgery over the door and no less than six people with masks, gloves and gowns on and I was out.

I awoke the next day with the bottle Corpsmen by my side he told me I had second and third degree burns from my belly to the top of my head, traumatic amputation of the little finger right hand, with nerve and artery damaged to both hands, multiple fragment wounds of the face, neck, chest, arms, and hands, perforated ear drums, and wounds to both eyes with the orbit of my left eye broke. My eyes were bandaged and both hands had to be tied up over my head to stop the bleeding (the skin was gone with bone, nerves and arteries exposed).

I was transferred to an Army hospital in Japan, then onto Walter Reed Medical Center in DC where I was retained in service 74 days for the convenience of the Government. I was discharged on 7 January 1969 with 50% Disability Rating.

That's that for my Army career.

In my later service between countries after the war, I sometimes get depressed when I think of all the Gold Star Moms I could have helped with the plan I had worked out with the Vietnamese Authorities, for the American Mothers to meet with Mothers who lost sons or daughters during the same battles.

The night I conceived the idea of Operation Gold Star with Gold Star Mom Valerie May she told me she wanted to see, smell and hear the place her son died. I escorted her at midnight to her sons name on the wall and we cried and I told her I could make that happen, I could get her and all the Moms to Vietnam and the exact location of every one of their sons battlefields.

See, in 1991 I spoke with the NVA and the VC Generals that we're in charge of the Fall of Saigon, we spoke of having open relations to address any and all questions about the "American War" in Viet Nam, this was at the headquarters of the Vietnam War Veterans Association in Ho Chi Minh City. They assured to provide me any help I needed.

Case in point- I read a book by a Nam Vet who spoke of a man in Nam that saved his life. With the brief profile and the name of the village I was able to locate and causes a reunion with these two men. When we arrived in Hanoi the Marine Vet asked me if I knew any NVA Officers he could speak with, I had four come to the Guest House within an hour. Also in Ha Noi, I know and have been to the home of the NVA Tank driver that burst through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon, another great guy that really did not like the war; he has a beautiful wife and two very nice children. I could go on with the wonderful people I met in Vietnam that wanted to help put the war behind us. One day I received a call from a Vet that said he had a daughter born in Vietnam but when he was transferred out he was told she was not GI. I found her, with the help of many friends, and today she is a US Citizen.

Sadly, some DQS brothers did not think I was qualified to lead Operation Gold Star. They hired a man who could not get into Vietnam until he met me in Bangkok; I got him into Vietnam to go see his daughter. They started their travel company a few years later. But I only want to go forward today, looking back can be painful. Some things are beautiful in my past but it's always the crap that comes out strongest.

Paul, I was so proud to lead my brothers in the parade down Constitution Ave at the 2014 NDQSA Reunion in WDC. I hope they fixed the bumps by now. I do not need the chair anymore; I am reborn in the canyons of Oregon.



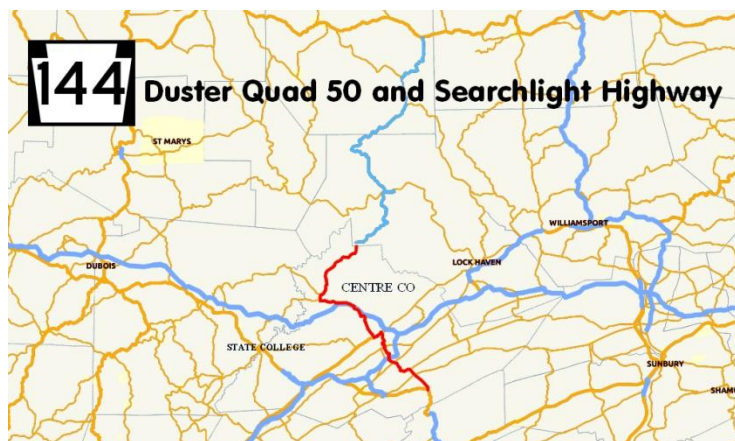
I hope your life is good, let me know what you're up to. How did you know I howl at the moon? We had a beautiful half moon last night, cold 24⁰f, but clear with millions of stars. Yes, I did howl last night and if it hits me again tonight I'll do it. Louis Block, 59611 River Canyon Rd. Imnaha, OR, 97842

PHONE A FRIEND!

If you remember the name and home town of a buddy, there is now a real web site that will let you search for him with a good chance of locating him if he is still alive. Go to truepeoplesearch.com and type in the full name and his home town. Look for guys that at 70 years old and see if there are any hits. Try the phone numbers and see if you found him. If not, no harm done. If yes...well you got a lot to talk about. Be sure to let me know how it turns out.

...UPDATE...

**1/44th Highway Naming in Penn. Postponed
To Be Rescheduled for later in 2020 or TBD?**



D-

/ /20 # \$

Q- S- E- GW- P

Mailing Label ->

Cut out and tape to envelope

NDQSA

PO Box 890130

Oklahoma City, OK 73189

NDQSA- MEMBERSHIP INVOICE / ROSTER UPDATE / PRODUCT ORDER FORM

(Tear off this page and mail it in with your up to date contact information and unit history)

This version supersedes any previous forms as certain options are not available.

Roster Contact Information (Please Print)

Are you a new or existing NDQSA contact?

(New) (Existing) circle one

First Name: _____

Middle Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Nickname: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email(s): _____

Home Phone: () -

Cell Phone: () -

Service Information (Vietnam) (fill out even if on file)

Dates of 1st tour (m/yr): ____/____ to ____/____

Addtn'l tour (m/yr): ____/____ to ____/____

Primary MOS: _____

Primary Battery/Unit: _____

Attached To: _____

Names of bases: _____

Names/hometowns of buddies you knew: _____

Rank (highest grade while in Vietnam)

Grade: Officer: _____ NCO: _____ EM: _____

Valor Awards

PH () DSC () SS () BS/V () ACM/V ()

If you want to get the newsletter only by email and forego the paper mailed copy, please check this box. () ←

If you want to switch back from email to paper mail, please check this box. () ←

DUES - DONATIONS – PRODUCT ORDERS

Make check/MO payable to NDQSA

Shipping is included in the price of all items.

Dues: circle payment(s) for (2020) (2021) (2022) (2023)

DUES ARE \$25 PER YEAR \$ _____

Donations:

Quad 50 restoration \$ _____

Searchlight restoration \$ _____

Searchlight Print (\$60 min) \$ _____

Operation Eagle Repair \$ _____

Good Works \$ _____

Product: NDQSA Emb. Patch ____ @ \$5 = \$ _____

NDQSA Logo Decal ____ @ \$5 = \$ _____

Bumper Sticker ____ @ \$10 = \$ _____

Circle (Duster)(Quad)(SLT)(HAWK)(Vulcan)

Challenge Coin: ____ coin **@ \$12** = \$ _____

Lucite Challenge Coin: ____ **@ \$25** = \$ _____

NDQSA Pin Set: ____ sets @ \$8 = \$ _____

.50-cal bottle opener **@ \$14** = \$ _____

NEW NDQSA HAT ____ @ \$15 = \$ _____

NDQSA T-shirt (black)(grey)

Size: ____ # ____ @ \$15 = \$ _____

NDQSA Polo Shirt (black)(tan)

Size: ____ # ____ @ \$30 = \$ _____

(regular) (tall)

No more jackets being produced

TOTAL \$ _____

If paying dues presents a hardship for you but you still want to be an Active Member, check this box []. ←

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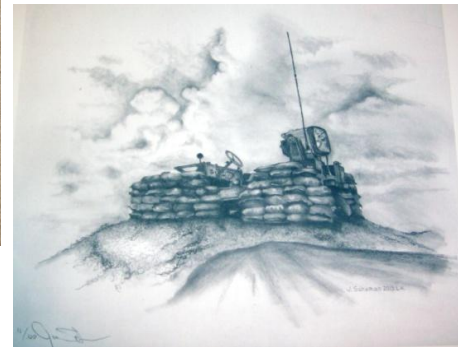
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My Vietnam Memories

LT George Buck, B-4/60 '67-68

Coelis Imperamus – We Rule the Heavens

Motto of the 60th Duster Regiment



In December, 1967 I was a 2nd LT on leave for the holidays when I got orders for Vietnam, telling me to report to Oakland, California on January 1. From there I flew to the Philippines and then to Saigon where I was under the control of USARPAC (*US Army Pacific*

Command) RVN. I was a single assignee, not travelling with any unit, so I was not sure where I would end up.

Dusters

Eventually I was assigned to the First Field Forces and spent a week waiting for my unit orders. When they finally came I was surprised that I was assigned as an assistant platoon leader to B Battery, 4th/60th Air Defense battalion, which was a Duster unit and not field artillery. This was an entirely different MOS (*military occupational specialty*): 1174 MOS and not the 1193 MOS I was trained in as a field artillery officer.

I had no clue what a Duster was all about? My only idea of a Duster configuration was the naval guns on destroyers and the other big ships that had exposed tubs on their sides with twin 40 mm Bofor's guns mounted in them for air defense. If you were a fan of the old *Victory at Sea* shows, these "Duster" tubs were the final defense against Japanese suicide planes.

A Duster was an Army Air Defense weapon that became obsolete once the era of jet fighters became the norm. But it still was effective as a ground defense weapon for strong point security, convoy escorts, and perimeter defense requiring heavy direct fire support. The gun tub was mounted on an old model tank, so it basically was a tank with a tub on top and two 40 mm guns that could fire either automatically or in semi-automatic mode (*one shot at a time*). We also had attached Quad-50 machine gun units, so combined these platoons of Dusters and Quads were extremely effective in providing fire power superiority and eliminating large enemy assaults and concentrations in a very short time.

So one of the unique aspects of my year in Vietnam is that I was a combat commander in two different MOS categories with three entirely different weapons systems (*Dusters, Quad-50s and howitzers*). Fortunately the crews on these assignments knew precisely what their duties and missions were, and could function independent of any kind of direct supervision. It is why

for the Duster and Quad-50 crews it was a "Sergeants' War".

Lay of the Land



My platoon was located along Highway 19 about in the middle between Pleiku (*Battery B headquarters, 4/60th*) and the Mang Yang Pass near An Khe. We were at a bridge site with defensive positions on all four corners, a Military Police shack, and an ARVN (*South Vietnamese*) Regional Force unit. There was also one tank from the 4th Division commanded by 2nd Lieutenant John Abrams, the son of General Creighton Abrams, who had taken over for General Westmoreland, and ran everything in Vietnam. Lieutenant Abrams' tank was my main defense against a frontal attack on my Duster, and I reciprocated with my Duster providing cover for his tank and defensive position.



On the day Lieutenant Abrams became a 1st Lieutenant his father flew in and pinned his silver bars on him. Our Platoon Leader was a 1st lieutenant from the west coast who was really laid back and a nice guy, what you would describe today as a "surfer dude". We got along, but I had some very definitive security issues that concerned me, though I was careful not to rock the boat too much. I didn't believe that we had enough wire out on our perimeter, and I didn't like the Montagnards

(mountain tribe people) coming into our garbage pit rummaging around for scraps. Too much could be salvaged for land mines and other things. A major issue was that every morning we were the first on the highway, because we had to go up to a 4th Division base camp to get our hot food for the day, which was put in mermite cans (*insulated food containers*) to keep it warm. Highway 19 had been paved at one point but now it was full of pot holes, so the convoys rode on the side of the highway which was all dirt and easy to lay mines in by the enemy. I wanted our tracks and vehicles to stay on the paved portion since it could not be mined easily, but unfortunately I was not making much of an impact being only the assistant platoon leader.

Acosta and Donovan

Two weeks into my tour my first major tragedy and setback occurred. Two of our men driving my jeep up to the base camp for our daily chow were riding along the side of the road and ran over a mine, killing both instantly. It is something that I will never forget. Names and people from my tour escape me, but I remember Acosta and Donovan. It was such a sobering event, the loss of two men, the failure of leadership on my part, something I would live with for the rest of my life, and I was only 22 years old.

Our Association participates in nearly all Memorial Day and Veterans Day events in our nation's capitol. But this year was special. There are 211 of our men on the Wall. We took rubbings of each man's name and every one of those men's rubbings was carried by a veteran in the parade. We had nearly 300 people marching plus the wall rubbings of 211 of our fallen veterans.



John Acosta and his buddy Michael Donovan were killed when they drove over a land mine while heading to another base camp to get our daily hot meal. This was on highway 19 outside of Pleiku in the Central

Highlands. I carried John's rubbing and a good friend carried his buddy Michael's. I was their Platoon Leader. - May 2014

Kill at a Distance

My two Dusters covered a lot of territory. We traveled from near the Mang Yang Pass on Highway 19 down towards An Khe all the way up to Pleiku, then up Highway 14 to Kontum, out to a Special Forces camp near the border on an old dirt road, then to the base at Dak To. On Highway 19 near a Montagnard village is where I lost Acosta and Donovan when they drove over a land mine in my jeep. After this tragedy the platoon leader went to another assignment, and now the platoon was mine. It was an exercise in isolation. I was fifty miles from the battery commander. The battalion headquarters was down on the coast somewhere; I was never there, never ever met the battalion commander, and never saw anyone from the battalion other than the chaplain who came to our bridge site to run a memorial service for Acosta and Donovan.

I wrote letters to the families of both of our lost men, and each of the crew signed too. We got replies back from the families that helped with our sense of loss, but I swore that I would never lose another man in Vietnam, and for the rest of the year I lost no one in either Heavy Automatic Weapons or my Field Artillery assignments. Probably dumb luck but I would like to think the attention to detail on every job made a difference. First I did not replace my jeep (*a quarter ton utility vehicle*). All personnel were to ride in a three quarter ton truck or preferably the two and a half ton trucks we used for hauling ammo. Every vehicle was sandbagged as much as possible, and they all carried either M-60 or 50-caliber machine guns.

I had a unique advantage in the fact I was also a Field Artillery officer, giving me the capability of fire from any artillery unit within range. Whenever possible I made contact with these artillery batteries and got preclearance from Fire Direction Control to call in artillery. Now when we got mortared I could respond with indirect fire from artillery as well as direct fire from the Dusters and Quads themselves, which was an enormous amount of firepower. (*Indirect fire: heavy shells lobbed from afar. Direct fire: directly at a target.*) The mission became: Kill at a Distance, which meant don't let the enemy get in close, go around villages if there are open fields, and don't let anyone get close to the Dusters and Quads. This seemed to work. The platoon became much more cautious, and the only battle

damage we had after that were just little bumps and bruises.

War Zone Democracy

My platoon was two Duster units, and often Quad-50 machine guns and a searchlight unit. These crews were extremely competent and only needed a mission plan to execute on their own. We operated at the “food and shelter” level of existence. That’s all they needed to move, shoot and communicate on their own.

This was critical because they would deploy individually in the field, often at bridge sites to keep them from getting blown up at night. A Duster crew might be the only defense at that bridge and for miles on either side. It was not unusual to find them sleeping by day and working all night. Who could sleep when all you had was one Duster and a half dozen crew if you were lucky?



I maintained my platoon headquarters with one Duster at a bridge site where most of the convoy ambushes occurred. I had a second Duster crew at another bridge site closer to Pleiku where there was not as much action. I had to travel every other day or so to this other bridge site, and sometimes I would stay over.

I had a problem there that was very troubling. The crew chief had a substance abuse problem of some kind. I started finding him spaced out and asleep when I would arrive. After three of these incidents within ten days, and discussions with him and the crew, I relieved him of his crew chief job. I simply told him he was being reassigned to battery headquarters.

The battery commander agreed to take him even though he did not know what he was going to do with him. At the same time he told me there were no candidates to replace him and I had to do with what I had. I said send

me a fresh body and I will choose a new crew chief from the crew. I told the crew to think about who would be the best crew chief from among them. The guy had to be the best possible leader among them, nothing more.

After I got the old chief on a Military Police truck and off to Pleiku the crew said they handled things and had picked a new crew chief.

He was young like all of the crew, Hispanic like most of the crew, and not someone who tried to stand out. This was my remote crew who I saw only three or four times a week. Duster crews were well oiled operations and worked best with crew chiefs who lead by example versus a strong personality. Competence was more important over charisma. This crew never missed a beat and I felt much more comfortable now that they did not have to worry about a crew chief spaced out on drugs or alcohol.

Because of the heavy casualties suffered in the heavy automatic weapons battalions they were always understaffed, and I’ll add: under-equipped. There were occasions where infantry and marines filled out crews. I was a prime example of someone plucked from another MOS to head a platoon. Picking a trained Duster man for a crew chief was preferable to me, and the crew knew more about itself than I did so I went with their input. I don’t recall any training on how to handle a situation like this. Further, I was out there by myself. It is not like I had a battalion staff to help me or even the battery commander or first sergeant. The typical answer a lieutenant would get in a situation like this was simply, “Do the best you can, make it work, and don’t rock the boat too much.”

Combat Cuisine

Appetizer

We get assigned to this village and bridge site. The Ruff Puffs come out to guard the bridge and they have a dog with them. One of my guys is talking about how they are just like us: they have pets, come to our barbeques, give us bananas, and have nice villages. A shot rings out from the bridge and everyone is on the gun ready to go. Then we see poor Fido thrown on the fire. Now it is clear their pet was really their dinner.

Main Course

Two weeks after the crew chief change there is movement and noise outside the perimeter wire, which we had just reinforced as one of our security initiatives. The crew immediately opens fire with the Duster and everything goes still. The next morning what lies dead on the perimeter is an enormous water buffalo. The new crew chief calls me at my headquarters and tells me they have this problem. We weren’t supposed to shoot water

buffalo, but who knew that was what it was? All they heard was noise and they opened fire. That is how you stayed alive.

I have no problem with the events, but now I have to go down there to the Montagnard village up the road and tell them what happened. We go there with the Duster so no one gets upset that they lost a water buffalo. Through sign language we tell them that they have a dead animal on the wire and please go get it. Somehow we get through to them but I have a sense they already know. Disgusting, but they hung it all out to dry at their village and I guess they ate it.

Dessert

On my trips between Duster sites I notice wild pigs feeding on new grasses that grow up after bulldozers push the forest back from the road. The dozers do this regularly to make it tougher to ambush convoys. We have a gunner on the crew at my headquarters the guys call Country, who is a hog farmer from Missouri. Country says these wild pigs would taste good. The problem is you can't drop them on the spot with the light round from an M16, and no one is going into the jungle to follow blood trails. You need a bigger rifle.

So back at the Headquarters bridge where the Ruff Puffs (Regional and Popular Forces) hang out I go over and speak with their lieutenant who knows English, and tell him I need an M14 or an M1 (larger cartridge weapons replaced by the M16).

They have carbines (ancient French rifles) so he can't help me right away, but if we get him something to trade he can get one. We arrange the trade for an M14 and Country becomes our pig-sniper. Within a week he makes a kill, a nice young wild pig of maybe fifty pounds.

The crew gets the pig back and hangs it from the 40 mm gun barrels and Country skins it out and starts to cut it up. Here come the Montagnards and the Ruff Puffs. One of the crew throws the hide and head into the river and before it hits the water the Montagnards and the Vietnamese are fighting over it. This is not good; typically they don't like each other and don't associate. So we stop the fight and declare that everyone will get something. We take the back-straps, one hindquarter and the filets for ourselves. The rest we cut up and portion out to our new friends.

We use a metal drum cut in half for a barbecue pit and have a community cookout. The Montagnards give us the charcoal, which is their main industry, and the Vietnamese provide rice wine.

Again, I remember thinking none of this was in any of my training manuals.

So a day goes by. Then another. This carcass on our wire blows up to the size of hot air balloon, and its legs look like little dots. Finally, after five days here comes a long line of Montagnard men with fleshing knives on long poles, like on old whaling expeditions. They carve up this rotting animal so there is nothing left but the skeleton, like what you would see in a museum.

Coelis Imperamus

After Acosta and Donovan died we headed up to Pleiku to the battery headquarters for a few days of rest, maintenance, the PX, a shower and decent hot food. Then it was off to Kontum on Highway 14. We spent a week in Kontum guarding a bridge over a large river. There were compounds housing other units and I think they even had an Officer's Club, but we were far too busy to allow any time for recreational activities. Then we moved down a remote road near Kontum to a Special Forces camp that had a small airstrip and firebase. It was seeing heavy action every night as NVA (*North Vietnamese Army*) units kept probing and attacking. We were there for perimeter security. I had both Duster crews with me now, and for whatever reason I was given orders separate from my crew to go to Dak To or back to Pleiku, I can't remember where or why I went, but I know that I did not go with the convoy into the fire base. A day or two later I came in on a chopper.

When I got there I found both Dusters well positioned and able to fire with interlocking fields of fire. Every angle of the firebase was covered by at least one of the Dusters. This is another example that Duster crews operated on their own without a lot of instruction, especially when they had good crew chiefs.

At the first briefing with the Special Forces staff the battalion commander wanted to know what our capabilities were. I gave him the details of what the guns could do and recommended a mad minute sometime after midnight when the enemy was most likely to probe the perimeter. I said to him, "We will either catch the enemy and kill dozens of them, or once they see what we have they won't bother you until we leave. Either way we'll be a winner."

The mad minute went off as planned and it was awesome. The two Duster crews aimed to their outside and slowly brought the guns into their interlocking fire zone. All Duster rounds are tracers and when the two Dusters interlocked one shower of tracer rounds hung over the other. All Duster rounds are also timed, so that when the tracer burns out the round explodes in the air and creates flak.

The crossing tracers and air explosions made for an impressive display. Remember, these are air defense

weapons designed to shoot at planes, point detonating if they hit the plane, or self-detonating in the air. Dusters were even more effective against ground forces which had no protection against 40 mm shells exploding over their heads.

Epilogue: The next day, a constant stream of infantry “11 Bravos” came over wanting to transfer into Dusters.

Mysterious Dak To

From Kontum our next stop was Dak To twenty-five miles north, to the site of brutal battles six months earlier when the 173rd Airborne Brigade tried to take a hill occupied by an entrenched and very large unit of NVA regulars. The 173rd took major casualties. The NVA were dug in on high ground and shot from reinforced bunkers, while our infantry crawled up the hill. For me it was a good example of why our “Kill at a Distance” was so important. I would have bombed them, hit them repeatedly all night long with artillery, napalmed them, and kept it up until they died or starved to death. Why risk U.S. soldiers to take a hill that we would abandon a few weeks later just to dig out some NVA?

Our base camp at Dak To was big, with multiple units, plenty of majors and colonels, and a CIA unit running LRRP teams into who knows where (*Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols*). The same time every afternoon the NVA shot huge 122 mm rockets into the base camp. The camp was big enough that they only had to point the rockets in our direction and they’d hit something.

After we arrived the first time they launched a rocket at us our gun crews were on the guns, all guns blazing 40 mm cannon fire back at the rocket site. Meanwhile everyone else in the base camp was hunkered in their bunkers. Later that afternoon at the camp briefing I was asked what we thought we were doing. I said,

**“When a Duster gets shot at, it shoots back.
We are the First to Fire, and the Last to Leave.”**

I went a step further. “Sirs, these are FU (Fuck You) Rockets. They shoot from the same spot every day at the same time saying, ‘FU. You can’t do anything about it and until you do the rockets will keep coming.’”

There was artillery at the Dak To camp but they never returned fire. I offered to target for them but nothing came of it. I was there a few more weeks with nothing much to challenge us beyond the rocket activity, which declined over time, maybe because of our return fire. Or maybe they ran out of rockets. That and the senseless casualties of the 173rd made Dak To a mystery to me.

“Home”

After three months I was called back to battery headquarters in Pleiku, promoted to 1st lieutenant, and appointed the battery XO (executive officer). This was a surprise since I was out of my field artillery specialty and now second in command of the entire battery (sixteen Dusters). I wore Field Artillery insignia, not the Air Defense insignia the other battalion officers wore. At some point I think a battalion visitor noticed this and spilled the beans to the battalion commander. I am in this job hardly long enough for a cup of coffee when the battery commander comes to me and says, “We got a problem. You have to go back to Field Artillery.” On reflection I think they put me in the XO slot until they figured out what to do with me. It was likely never intended as a permanent position.

I very much enjoyed being a Duster platoon leader and I considered it to be an honor to have served with them. In many respects it was an easy job because all of the crews were self sufficient, fearless in the tub, knew the mission cold, and were truly the first to fire and the last to leave when the action was hot. Every day they put the safety of their fellow soldiers and marines before their own. As a result Duster battalions took the largest number of casualties within the artillery battalions in the Vietnam War. We had a man awarded the Medal of Honor (Sergeant Mitchell Stout held an enemy grenade to his stomach inside a bunker, shielding fellow soldiers). Still I was an outsider. It was time to go home to Field Artillery and the howitzers for which I was trained.

+ + + + + + + + +

Silver Star Serindipity

Recently as I was looking through an archived folder of photos in the 1/44th, when I saw the name James W. Cribbs on the sign of a base camp of 1/44th (Dong Ha?).



As I am curious, I found out he was KIA on 8May67. I went to the Faces on the Wall website and looked at his page. I decided to send the photo of the sign with his name on it for possible inclusion on his page. I then found posted (by a Marine) his posthumous Silver Star Citation. You are not going to believe it!

Silver Star Citation

SP4 James Wesley Cribbs

DATE OF BIRTH: 5-May-46

HOME OF RECORD: Dallas, Texas



Silver Star

AWARDED FOR ACTIONS

DURING Vietnam War

Service: Army

Rank: Specialist Fourth Class

Battalion: 1st Battalion 44th Artillery(AW) (SP)

GENERAL ORDERS:

CITATION:

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 8, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Specialist Fourth Class James Wesley Cribbs (ASN: 54375052), United States Army, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force while serving as gunner of the First Squad, Third Section, Second Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion (Automatic Weapons) (Self Propelled), 44th Artillery Regiment, 108th Artillery Group, in action on 8 May 1967, in the Republic of Vietnam. During the early morning hours of 8 May 1967, a large enemy force attacked the perimeter at Con Thien, Republic of Vietnam, and overran a portion of the friendly positions. As Specialist Cribbs' self-propelled, twin 40-mm. gun drove forward with a U.S. Marine Corp counterattacking force, the intense enemy fire drove the crew from the open turret of the gun, wounding Specialist Cribbs. As the crew took refuge under the vehicle, an enemy threw a satchel charge in front of the vehicle. Although wounded, Specialist Cribbs, with complete disregard for his own safety, crawled through the intense enemy fire and threw the satchel charge away, saving the lives of his fellow crew members. As the crew made a dash for safety to a nearby trench, Specialist Cribbs, again with complete disregard for his own safety and his wound, mounted the

turret and fired the machine-gun to provide protection for the crew. *Specialist Cribbs then dismounted from the vehicle, and instead of seeking safety, assisted wounded U.S. Marines to safety from a nearby burning and destroyed amphibious personnel carrier. As Specialist Cribbs was assisting a wounded U.S. Marine to safety, an enemy mortar round landed next to him, mortally wounding him.* Specialist Fourth Class Cribbs' gallant actions and selfless devotion to duty, without regard for his own life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

After reading the citation I remembered that in early August Bill Sturgeon posted the photo on the Face Book page and we tried to figure out what the track and circumstances were. We can see a Duster and a burning Marine ACV meaning that the Duster was from some battery of the 1/44th.

Could this be the actual photo of the unknown 1/44th Duster and the burning Marine ACV from the aftermath of that battle? INCREDIBLE!!! What do you think?



NDQSA member Larry Williams also posted on Cribbs' memorial page that he was Track Commander on B-242 at the time and said he knew Cribbs and he was on another track. He remembered Jerry to be a real funny guy. He was also a hero.

Is there anyone from B-1/44th that remembers Cribbs and the battle in which he perished?

Remember: Share your stories, share your photos, enrich the history of our service and our sacrifices!

Till next time....

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Issue 2 Summer 2020

Face Book : [Dqs historian](#)

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NDQSA was founded in 1981 by John Huelsenbeck et al, holds annual reunions and has grown to over 600 active members with a directory of over 2200 ADA Vietnam Veterans and supporters.

NDQSA is an IRS 501(c) (19) non-profit veteran's organization and is incorporated in the State of Indiana.

We welcome and encourage all ADA Veterans who served in Vietnam to join NDQSA and to share the fellowship, mutual support, and continued service to our nation on behalf of all military veterans and active duty personnel.