

NATIONAL DUSTERS, QUADS & SEARCHLIGHTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER # 3 – OCTOBER 2020

38th Annual Reunion To Be Rescheduled For Norfolk, VA in 2021, dates T.B.D.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



To all of my Brothers and Sisters of the NDQSA. Hopefully the Highway renaming on October 28 went well and special kudos to Vincent Tedesco for making this happen. Otherwise, nothing much new to report on here. The plans for the reunion in 2021 are still in progress with great optimism. As we are moving into the Fall flu

season, we still need to maintain extreme caution with respect to the Covid-19 virus.

In some areas the numbers are coming down, restaurants and other businesses are opening up, schools are taking in students, and it looks like things are getting better. However, with all of these changes happening, we still need to practice safety measures. **WEAR YOUR MASKS!** Those who are medically able to, get your seasonal flu shots and be careful of large gatherings and be aware of your surroundings.

As we all have learned while supporting convoys and on the perimeter, **TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED.** Be safe, stay healthy and we will all get thru this.

FEATURED STORIES:

“Baby Saver” Artwork – LoCascio

“Combat Candlepower” - 1969

My first Day in Viet Nam – Bill Baker

Laos and Lam Son 719 – Bill Baker

This is the third newsletter this year and I will do one more in December to kind of make up some for the cancellation of the reunion this year. You will love Bill Baker’s stories! Nearly seven full pages worth! I want you to share your stories and photos. Do it!

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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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 plane.’ Also, NDQSA has several vehicle restoration projects we are still trying to complete: the Widow Maker 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. We continue to accept donations for the maintenance of the ADA Memorial at Ft. Sill (Project Eagle) and general “Good Works” projects.

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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 are 70 years old and see if there are any hits. If you have an old address look down the relevant info that pops up, and it might be there confirming that you located him. Try the phone numbers listed 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.

NEW PROJECT – NEED HELP

We recently got a very early roster of 111 full names of the original members of G-65th Quads. Bob Lauver has been given a copy in hopes of finding some of them. If you are interested in searching for contact info based on archived rosters of many units, contact the historian.

NDQSA CASUALTY RESEARCH

Those of you on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) know that I post The Wall rubbing of every ADA casualty on the date of their death. In many cases there is no first hand information on any of these incidents. I may find something in a quarterly ORLL or After Action Report, but having first- or even second-hand knowledge is very important.

If you know the circumstances of any ADA serviceman that died in Nam, I ask you to contact the Historian and have him take your statement for the record. If you have a photo in your albums of any ADA serviceman that perished in Viet Nam please send it to the historian.

One specific accident I am very anxious to resolve, is a March 24, 1967 incident involving a G-65 quad truck that slipped down a steep embankment on QL-9, 6 KM ESE of Khe Sanh along the Rao Quan River valley where the 11th Eng Bn was constructing a bridge between two steep hills. The 1/44th ORLL listed the event and said (after the fact) that there was a “casualty,” noting that they did not use the word “fatality.” When I looked in our list of ADA casualties I do not record any ADA fatality on that date. I then went to see if there was a fatality on that date that matches the information I have so far. Well, I found out that there was a non-combat fatality on that date related to an overturned vehicle. However, the location and his unit were not recorded, but he had the MOSs of 63B20 and 63C20: tracked or wheeled Vehicle Repairman.



Based on this we now know his name. It is SGT John Pena of Montezuma, NM. The year before, he was in Germany with the 1/2d Artillery. He transferred to serve in Viet Nam in June 1966 so he was there before G-65th arrived and is listed as a Wheeled Vehicle

Repairman with that USAD detachment.

My research led the Coffelt Group to update their database with the new information, BUT they were not ready to assign him to the G-65th as the only information of record on his DD214 was that he was on duty with HQ Det USAD, whatever that is.

The question now, is whether he formally got transferred to 1/44th or G-65th at some point in time. If he did, then he was unknown to us when we did our Project Eagle Memorial at Ft. Sill and his name needs to be added. This is a big deal!

So I need all the early 1/44th and G-65 motor pool guys to search their memories for a John Pena from NM. There were other Penas in the 1/44th so we need to be sure. If you were there that day and know anything of the incident, please let me know.

ITEM #2 Were you there, accidental drowning? Sept 22, 1969 C-1/44

I am also researching the tragic drowning of SP4 Shirk and PFC Henley while on water detail on the Cau Viet river near Camp Carroll.

If you were part of the response team or know of the circumstances of the event, please contact the historian.

"The Baby Saver"

A Painting in Oil and Acrylic

By Warren Lo Cascio D-1/44 '66-67



I thought about this subject through the years, many times. For Viet Nam veterans coming home to an ungrateful nation was one thing, but to be called one of the most hurtful things you could say to a soldier, especially one that may be dealing with all kinds of guilt and bad

memories from the war which were still "fresh" in his mind, "Baby Killer" A derogatory term used to identify Viet Nam-era veterans returning from the war in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Example: "Look what's getting off the plane. Friggin' baby killer!"

I think this term started being used because of the My Lai Massacre that occurred in December 1969. I came home in September 1967, so I didn't experience any negative remarks at all. But it still bothered me that the same people, we took an oath to protect, could turn against us so violently, grouping the over two million men who served in Viet Nam into one horrible category!

I did some research on the Internet about soldiers and children, not just in Viet Nam, but all wars. The iconic pictures of GI Joes giving chocolate bars to the young kids in WWII and Korea were in the many movies of that time.

The GI realized that the children were the true victims of war; some became orphans, losing their whole family. Some soldiers, having a family of their own, had a soft spot for these children.

Another important reason was that the soldier didn't want to create a future enemy that hated the US and that the soldiers in the future would have to fight!

But, sadly, when you do research on this subject on the Internet, you tend to see only the children holding AK47s and burning our flag. We are hated anyway and the press likes to show this side of the story.

I tried to base my painting on a real photograph to give it real meaning. I wanted a powerful picture that would really bring the idea into focus.

Not being able to find just one picture, largely due to the fact that photographs taken during combat would generally not be framed perfectly or sharp and the lighting would not be exactly right. I put a painting together from a few different



photos but the main idea was from a photo taken in the November 26, 1995 issue of Life Magazine.

This photo gave the viewer more of the feeling that it was in combat!

Preparation of the Art Work

Initially, I sketched the work on a 12" x 18" canvas board. It was to be in landscape. But I realized that I had to go to a larger subject in order to get the facial detail I wanted, so I used 18" x 24" hardboard that I Gessoed, then toned the board to cut down on the whiteness to a more neutral tone. I also did the subject in portrait mode. The soldier and baby were covered in a clear vinyl, before starting to cover the background in an acrylic under-painting.



This photo shows the completed background in oil (lower left). There is some painting over the vinyl but when removed, it will give a sharp contrast to the subject.

The final painting is shown with my "Soldier" painting hanging in the background. I toned the background to look like smoke in order to bring the subject into a sharper focus. The child was repositioned to have her arm around the soldier and her other hand on the

soldier's neck, as if she were "touching him" and totally unaware of the chaos that was going on around her! The explosive fire in the background gives the urgency needed to make this scene more compelling!

June 13, 2020. I just received my awards in the mail. I entered the National Veterans Art Competition in Lyons, NJ.

I won First Place in Military Combat Experience category for the Painting called "The Baby Saver" a Viet Nam War Scene. It's nice to have the recognition for the many years as an artist! Unfortunately there was no art viewing of the works because of the Covid-19 this year. First place winners at state level go on to the National Competition. The results of that are not in yet. Here is the finished piece.



From the Archives:



B, G, H, I- Btrlys 29th Arty SLTs

B/29th's Searchlights – “Combat Candlepower”

By Sp4 Joseph J. Elia, Jr.

I FORCEV ARTILLERY IO

From “THE ARTILLERY REVIEW
N#4 - V1 - 11Feb69

LANDING ZONE UPLIFT--Night. The landing zone lies enshrouded in a pall of darkness occasionally ripped through with the flashing of a landing medevac chopper and the muzzle flashes of cannons firing into the surrounding jungles. The sounds of the area fluctuate with fire missions and exploding ordnance-“dusters” add their own peculiar low thumping as the rounds sear into the side of a wooded mountain.

On top of a nearby hill a team of men receives a cautious call on their radio set: "This is bunker 38. Have suspected movement directly to our front. Request some of your sunshine." Within seconds a white sliver of light pierces the darkness from the hilltop and searches the undergrowth in the valley below.

MOBILITY KEY TO RANGE, PURPOSE

The men operating this beacon are members of B- Battery (Searchlight), 29th Artillery, commanded by Captain Antonio G. Gonzales, El Paso, Texas., attached to and under operational control of the 4th Battalion 60th Artillery's well-known “Duster” Battalion” commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harry B. Stoudemire, Kilo, SC., Bravo of the 29th highly praised men operate from three separate platoon headquarters located at Pleiku, Tuy Hoa and LZ Uplift.

Mobility is the key to both the range and purpose of B/29th's mission in Viet Nam: “To furnish direct and indirect battlefield illumination in support of tactical night operations and to provide perimeter defense illumination to selected base camps and fire support bases.” The searchlights, whose reflectors measure 23 inches in diameter and project light from a xenon gas-filled bulb, are mounted on jeeps. The power supply for the 100 million candle power beam is located within the engine of the jeep making it a highly mobile piece of tactical equipment.



SEARCHLIGHTS MAINLY FOR DEFENSE

B-29th formed at Fort Carson, Colo. on June 25, 1965, for training and eventual deployment to Viet Nam, arriving in Qui Nhon on October 23 of the same year.

Although maintaining headquarters in the II Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ), elements of this unit have also been deployed in the three northernmost tactical zones. They have seen action in support of the First Cavalry Division's operations near the Demilitarized Zone and the A Shau Valley supported the Republic of Korea's famed “Tiger” Division in operations in II CTZ and are currently supporting the First Cavalry Division's operation in III Corps' Tay Ninh Province.

In spite of this record, it must be emphasized that the use of searchlights is primarily a defensive measure. B/29th's lights are employed mainly in perimeter defense and security. However, several lights have pinpointed targets for the guns of “Spooky,” guided medevac choppers to landing areas for picking up wounded, and pinned down would-be intruders into perimeter defenses until friendly-fire could be brought in on them.

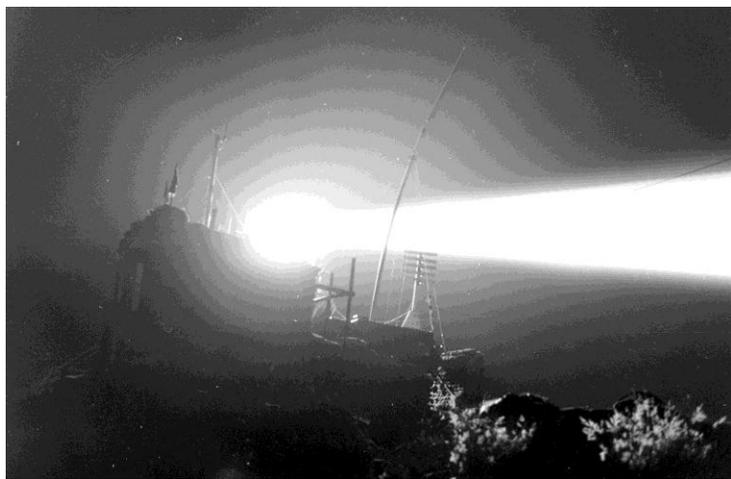
INFRARED VALUABLE AT NIGHT

Besides its brilliant white beam, the xenon light may also put out infra-red light which is invisible to the unaided eye located on the rear of the light housing is a selector switch which allows the operator to choose two beam widths-” narrow and wide, for each of the two types of light that can be emitted .

The infra-red capability allows the search light crew to observe movement at night without giving away the fact that the area is under surveillance. However, the infra-red range of the light cannot illuminate objects at great distances since candlepower is lost as the light passes through a dark filter which changes white light to infra-red.

During daylight hours, suspicious areas are pinpointed with an ample but effective crosshair sight located on top of the light. Elevation and azimuth co-ordinates are then taken from scales built onto the frame. These suspicious areas can then be effectively checked during darkness without the need to adjust the light until it illuminates the desired area. Thus intruders are illuminated quickly, with no warning, and this has proven a successful method on several occasions. Besides illuminating enemy positions, the area covered by

the light beam provides an effective target in which the "quad 50" machine guns and "dusters" can place their ferocious firepower, obtaining maximum enemy casualties.



SEARCHLIGHT PLATOON WIDELY DISPERSED

Probably the most wide dispersed searchlight platoon in Viet Nam is commanded by First Lieutenant William D. Trecker, Huntington, New York. B/29th's second platoon has searchlights within the triangle formed by the cities of Bong Son, An Khe, and Qui Nhon. Besides this, some of the platoon's 13 light-jeps are located in III CTZ's Tay Ninh Province.

Lieutenant Trecker's determination to keep in personal contact with his men keeps both he and his platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Robert E. Brooks, Orlando, Florida, constantly on the roads and in the air terminals of II and III Corps. And the roads are not really superb. Pony Road, famous for its mines and endless potholes, stretches for ten lonely miles into the rice-abundant valleys and unfriendly rainforests west of Highway 1. At its end is the location of one of second platoon's searchlights. Specialist Four Robert Harvey, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is section chief here. He speaks of the times that the Viet Cong have come out of the surrounding hills to launch ground attacks against the isolated fire support base. In most instances it has been the target spotting abilities of the searchlight, enforced with the stopping power of the-4/60th's twin-40mm "Dusters" that have turned the attackers back.

'WE LIGHT 'EM, YOU FIGHT 'EM'

Private First Class Eleuterio Pena, Austin, Texas, whose moustache is famous among the Viet Nameese villagers here and gives him the ferocious aspect of a Mexican bandit, tells all new arrivals to the LZ, "We light 'em, you fight 'em!"

Whatever the implications of this slogan, it takes a certain courage to stand behind a shining beacon which has got to be the most obvious target during a "ground attack. At the same time, it is important that the crewmen stay on the job and direct illumination so that counter fire will be effective. Section Chief Sergeant Willie Branham, Hayden, Alabama, and his crewman Private First Class Richard Belmudez, Denver, Colorado, found themselves in such a position while providing illumination in support of the First Cavalry Division on Landing Zone Nancy in I CTZ. The isolated LZ came under attack by an estimated two-company element of North Viet Nameese troops. In spite of the intensity of the attack, both men remained behind their light providing illumination, even after the enemy had breached the perimeter fortifications. They were instrumental in thwarting the success of the attack.

TAKE NIGHT FROM CHARLIE

The men of B/29th have thus performed their assigned mission in Viet Nam consistently and with devotion. While much has been written late of sophisticated night vision devices, these men will be remembered by those whom they supported as men who helped take the cover of the night back from the Viet Cong.

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 NMAW.ORG

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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 (Viet Nam) (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 Viet Nam)

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 []. ←

Some members have made donations to assist you.

NDQSA PRODUCT ITEMS



Logo Patch \$5



Logo Decal \$5



New Products Size Chart	
Subject to stock on hand	
Give 1st & 2nd choice on color	
T-shirt:	Medium
Black	Large
Gray	XL
	XXL (Tall)
\$15	XXXL (Tall)
	XXXXL
Mens Polo:	Small
Black	Medium
Tan	Large
	XL
	XXL (Tall)
\$30	XXXL (Tall)
	XXXXL
	XL Tall
	XXL Tall



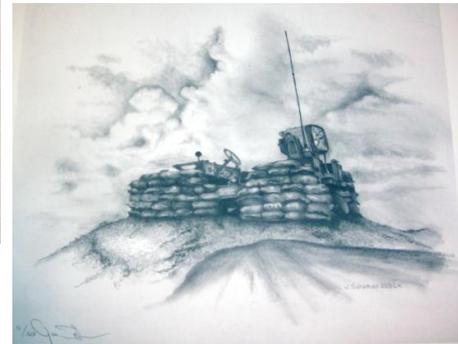
NDQSA Challenge Coin \$12 @
NDQSA Pin Set \$8 @



Lucite Coin \$25 50-cal bottle opener \$14



NDQSA Cap \$15 Made in the USA



Searchlight 50 Print (\$60 min)
Quad .50 print Sold Out



Brickmania's NDQSA Lego kits are sold out.



NDQSA BUMPER STICKERS
Duster- Quad-50-SLT-HAWK-Vulcan
\$10 each

My first 'day' In Viet Nam

- SP4 Bill Baker B-1/44th '70-71

Thinking back, my first 'day' in Viet Nam started a couple of days before I arrived in country. My last night at home I was with friends and we all went to the County Fair: rides, lights, noise, girls and some illicit drugs. It was a rough neighborhood from which I came, but for most, it was just another day on the block.

I spent some time with my Grandmother and Mom till she had to go to work. I walked to my friend's home who lived on a nearby main street but he wasn't home. I spoke with his mom for a while. I was in uniform and had my duffle bag. She asked where I was going and I replied Viet Nam. I could tell from the look in her eyes that she understood. I had asked to be sent to Viet Nam and now I was on my way. We said goodbye and I walked out to the street in front of the house and put out my thumb to hitch a ride to the bus station. My journey and adventure had started.

After a Greyhound bus to Phoenix and a flight to Seattle Tacoma I got processed in and got my new stuff, fatigues, etc. It wasn't long before I was aboard a jet plane even though I had no idea where I was specifically going. It was "get on and go." The first leg was Hawaii where we got off the plane to refuel. Oh yeah, this was a "Tiger Airline" aircraft. We next landed at Wake Island to refuel again. Interesting place, there was a room full of clocks with the times of everywhere else in the world. It was the 'intersection' to someplace else in the world, but with just a few palm trees. You land on one end of the island, stop on the other end, turn around and next stop Viet Nam. I wonder how the fishing was there?

They told us we landed in Cam Ranh Bay but I had no idea where that really was. When they opened the door we were quickly welcomed to the heat and smell of Viet Nam. How such a large area could smell so lousy? Much like being at the landfill. They put us on a bus with wire cages on the windows so they couldn't blow us up with a grenade we were told. Ok, works for me. We arrived at a processing center not far away. Lots of noises with planes and helicopters going in all directions. We were given some time to toilet etc. I really needed to do a big one and was directed to this 'out house'. DAMN, it was the biggest outhouse I've ever seen! It had to have been 15 seats maybe more. I take my seat and next thing I know someone is handing me a lit joint and said "Welcome to Viet Nam". Okay, I processed that and finished my business. When out to the area again a siren goes off and people are scurrying into bunkers around the area. Okay, into

the bunker. I'm told were receiving incoming rockets and mortars. Okay, processed that... Welcome to Viet Nam.

The formal processing continued a short time later. We were instructed to listen for our names and fall out behind the 'staked sign' with that location on it. I was one of the last called and they said "Dong Ha." I looked around but there was no stake with the name Dong Ha on it. I approached the 'pulpit' with the guy calling names and told him that there was no Dong Ha sign. His comment was "Oh that's way up north, 5th Mech is getting their ass kicked up there." Great news?! I still have no idea where I am, where I'm going, or how I will get there. Welcome to Viet Nam.

I asked that man "What do I do now?" He handed me a piece of paper with my name, and other information on it (my orders) and said "See all those airplanes and choppers over there? (pointing at a busy area of activity near a runway location) "Yup, I do." "Well go over there and tell someone where you're going, ask them for a ride." So I started my original journey hitch hiking on 22nd street in Tucson, Arizona and I'm now 10,000 miles down the road and I'm still hitch-hiking. Go figure!

With a post-Viet Nam line of thought, no one knew who I was, where I was going, or what I was doing. There were airplanes going in all directions and places all at the same time. I could have hitched a ride to anywhere in the world; Hawaii, Thailand, Australia if I had the right orders. I'm sure there were those at that time who would have looked at me, probably with a grin on their face, knowing my situation and said, "Sure get on. Come back in a year and go home" – plausible? Not!

So I'm on the tarmac in Cam Ranh Bay looking for a ride. I find a C-130 crew getting ready for takeoff, I tell the guy I have to go to Dong Ha. He said sure, get on and seconds later I'm the only guy in the back of a freaking C-130 taxing for takeoff. I'm told we're going to Quang Tri (OK, where's that... who knows). I'm told to strap in to a sling seat from the side of the plane. The back door closes up as we are moving along down the tarmac. With a turn and a roar of engine noise, the whirl and whoosh of overhead hydraulics operating and we're flying. I can't see anything and I'm alone. About an hour or so goes by and we're turning again and then at a very steep angle we are dropping down fast. Quite the ride. We are quickly leveling out and bouncing along the runway with a lot of rumbling to the bottom of the aircraft. I couldn't tell if we were landing or crashing. We are still rolling along and the door is coming down again as we roll into a quick turn. I'm looking around at the steel plate landing material on the runway. There are bunkers and barbed

wire close by. I see helicopters landing in a sea of dust when the airman comes hurriedly back and say's "GET OUT NOW!" He points me to the back ramp and with the aircraft still rolling, tossed my duffle bag out the back. As I get near, he points at a bunker and says "GO THERE" and bang, I'm off the back of the plane. They have the door going up the moment I'm off and they are turned and powering up and gone. I never even got a moist towelette.



I gather up my duffle bag and walk over to the bunker (air terminal) which I was pointed to. I enter and there's a guy with his feet up on the desk looking at me who says "What do you want?" I pulled my piece of paper out and said I'm Baker, supposed to go to 24th Corp in Dong Ha. I'm a radio teletype operator so I figured that's where I'm going to do what I do (MOS-wise). The guy pulls out a phone handle from a bag, winds up the side little wheels and I guess someone answers because he says "Have a guy here, says he's supposed to go to you." "Ok" he says, then looks back at me and says "They don't want to come and get you."

I've already come quite a way for 'no thanks' so I said "What am I supposed to do?" He looked at me and said "Go stand by the road, when someone comes by going 'that way' (pointing north), stick out your thumb." Damn...hitch-hiking again.

As I stepped outside, the day had been pretty long already. More helicopters rolling in and out and I see a sign for 173rd Field Med-Evac. If memory serves me correctly those choppers were bringing people to the hospital. I watched for a while waiting, sitting on my duffle bag. A truck comes by going in the right direction so I put out my thumb. They asked where are you going and I said Dong Ha. They said get on, so I did. I was sitting on the connection hitch of a flat-bed truck. I put my bag against it and sat back. As I looked at the two guys up front they had helmets, vests, M-16's pointed out the

window on one side...hmmm. In moments we are through some rows of barbed wire, out the gate and on the road. Next thing I'm seeing open fields, water buffalo (didn't know what they were right then), rice paddies and lines of palms trees and bushes. Some 15 miles or so down the road we come through a gate and enter what I'm told is Dong Ha. It was a dusty place with a dirt road and all I'm seeing is mostly ARVN troops. There is a fork in the road, they said "Get off here and walk that way." I did and I eventually found the 24 Corp sign. I walked in but no one knew who I was or what to do with me. I was just a guy with orders. They called around and finally found someone who said they'd take me... Dusters B-Btry 1-44th ADA. Great! I guess?

I actually get a jeep ride... Yeah! not hitch-hiking anymore! I arrive, walk in and meet the 1st Sgt. As I'm walking in I hear "Hello Baker, put your stuff here, go with (don't remember) and go get your gear." I go with him and I'm issued my M-16 with a bandolier, 7 clips of ammo, a helmet and vest and told to go to a specific hooch where I meet two other guys and a 1LT Joseph. Hello, you are on guard duty! It's now getting pretty late in the day, near sundown. Our instructions: "Remember the road you came in on 'Yes' you are now on guard duty. 'Lock and load', walk up and down that road and come back in the morning. If you see anyone (who might that be?) shoot them. Be careful and see you in the morning." Welcome to Viet Nam.

Sun went down, and it is getting dark. There was an artillery unit next to the battery area, I later found out they were the 5th MECH with self-propelled 155's and they were firing a lot. It continued for some time as I started my walk and was just looking around where I was as the sun set. I could see wire and some bunker positions of what I later learned were Dusters and Quad 50 positions. So I'm walking along, doing my thing, it's been a long, long day and now is gonna be a long night. A few hours later its really DARK and all hell breaks loose!!! HOLY SHIT!!! Cannons firing, machine guns bullets flying, tracers going everywhere. I thought the entire North Viet Nameese Army must be coming! SHIT!



There was a little hill along the side of this dirt road I was walking along where a road grader had pushed some dirt as they graded a road. So I laid down behind the berm, pointed my rifle over the top in the direction everyone else was shooting and waited – HOLY SHIT! Extreme dread crossed my mind several times when just as quickly as it started – it stopped. WTF! What just happened? My heart was still racing.

There was still some time until sun up, but I had no problem staying awake, I was just watching and waiting! Long night, but FINALLY the sun came up! YAY! I walked back to where I started. WTF was that was my first question regarding all the firing. Oh that was just a MAD MINUTE they said. Would have been nice had someone said they do this. No F'ing idea what was happening. From there went to the same hooch again to get further instructions and unload our rifles. The three of us were waiting as Lt Joseph walked in and told us we needed to clear the rounds from our rifles. We all pulled the clip out and pulled back the bolt to remove the chambered round. One of the guys pulled back the bolt but and it slipped from his fingers, slammed forward and fired the round! HOLY SHIT! The bullet hit the cement floor in this hooch and ricocheted upward hitting the LT in the gut just below his heart. I at first thought this was some kind of demonstration or joke but I then saw the blood coming out from between his fingers. I ran out of the hooch yelling for a medic, this is the first time I met Shorty, he came running with bag and they evacuated him to the aid station? He survived but had a pension for injuries and hitting mines. After three incidents, no one wanted to ride with him anymore so they sent him home and I hope he is well.

I was then assigned to garbage duty? They gave me a jeep with a small trailer load of garbage and told to take it to a dump 'down that road'. I knew the road already (it was my road now), so I got in and went as told. On arrival I turned the jeep and backed up the tiny trailer to the pile. All of a sudden here comes a group of children, maybe five 8 or 9 years old and they were all pushing and shoving to get first grab at the garbage I'm dumping! WTF! Welcome to Viet Nam.

It was that moment that experience, watching this, when I realized I was in a war and that this was indeed a FUCKED UP PLACE and it was going to be some year. This still remains one of the more vivid memories of my year in country. So that is it, the end of my quite long "first day in Viet Nam"... and thus started my time in country.

I'd never seen or heard the name "Duster" before joining B-Battery 1/44th, I had no idea what it was and I was OJT as the gunner on "Tin Rabbit" at FSB Barbara. The guy who trained

me was a Puerto Rican from New York and he was gone in about 4 days. Sgt. Suggs was the track commander. There was also a black guy they called "Slim." This dude was crazy and funny. He played the bongos man, like Sly from the Family Stone. This dude could play! I remember him banging on the bongos at night in the dark. The NVA must have had an RR center close by to come hear him going on the bongos. Wild nights in the jungle!



One last bit one last bit of irony, on my last day in combat area from Operation Lam Son 719 (see the next story), I rode a convoy in as far as Khe Shan and hitched a ride aboard a C-130 from that location to Da Nang to go home. I asked the load master for a ride as they were about to depart and he pulled me in. Again I was the only guy in back, again in a sling seat but with a rolling loose loading platform on the floor. I sat on my helmet and vest to prevent (as best I could) getting my private parts blown off on takeoff. I now have C-130's attached at a nearby airbase to my home and work. I like 'em, good airplanes, they are assigned with USAF Green Feet group DMAFB. And NOW!!!

My Last Days in Viet Nam

- Laos and Lam Son 719 -

FSB "DILLIGAF"

SP4 Bill Baker, B-1/44 '70-71

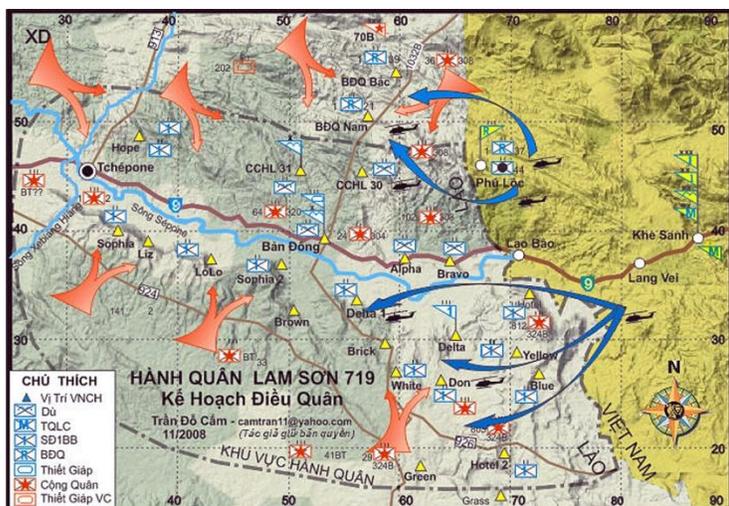


Ok – here's a recounting of events that occurred in February 1971 on the QL-9 during Operation Lam Son 719. The location would have been north of Lang Vei, not far from the location of the old Special Forces Camp. These events

occurred in the early days of Operation Lam Son 719 / Dewey

Canyon II and the invasion of Laos which was the last major US operation of the Viet Nam war. Our position was at the forward-most base location of Lao Bao (translated Laos Border) on the QL-9 / Laos Border. We arrived after days on the road from our previous location. It was a very long road trip from southwest of Da Nang and the Que Son Valley (Arizona Territory) specifically Hill 52 where we had been assigned to B-Co 1st Marine Recon and local militia forces. We travelled over the Hai Van pass, through Hue, Quang Tri, Dong Ha (looked like nothing of the Dong Ha I knew from before) which was the earlier location their B-Btry 1/44th and G-29. Dong Ha had become a substantial operational base for the invasion. Helicopters by the hundreds with American flight crews and aircraft. Thousands of troops and equipment massing to move out. Over 10,000 RVN troops were there, destination unknown to us. Then north to the QL-9 and west to the Laos border. On QL-9 we went past many of the locations so well known to many of our DMZ DQS members of the earlier times of the war. Most bases were still open and operational.

Our convoy reopened the old base at Khe Sanh where we were their attached to the 175s and 8 inch artillery of A- and B- Btry 8th/4th with whom we were assigned for the remainder of the operation. My group B-Btry 1/44th consisted of two Second Platoon Dusters (named Star Flower and Puzzle People) along with the Battery's M-113 APC. I drove a 'deuce & half' at that particular time, loaded with 40mm ammo cans and pulling a trailer also loaded with more 40mm ammo.



Our convoy arrived at Lao Bao but our real location was unknown to us, as for that matter what country we were in? I do remember seeing a road sign that said "Welcome to Laos – courtesy of 1st Cav combat engineers." We circled the wagons and started preparing to fire, digging fox holes, filling sand bags, moving ammo into position and making a perimeter.

There wasn't any protective wire so it was just 'circled the wagons' and dug in. We were our own infantry force.



Lao Bao was a pretty small location and as soon as we stopped and positioned, firing operations started. There were perhaps four 175's and a similar number of 8 inch guns in behind us, and this included some supporting Dusters from A-Btry. We were not really sure who we were in terms of the size of our group. Additional units just kept pulling in and digging in as another convoy came in behind us. It looked like the entire Lam Son invasion force was behind us.

It was mid day from our departure from Khe Sanh and at about 1730 hours we started taking incoming. At first off to our west we could hear and see the rounds coming in. They were 'walking them in' to our location. The incoming remained steady and was of heavy artillery size. This went on for some time, day and night, and the casualties were mounting up. Between all the artillery fire, both theirs and ours, convoys of tens of thousands of ARVN were rolling into Laos bound for Tcehepone Laos and operational bases along the QL-9 in Laos.

The incoming remained heavy. Tensions were high. Even getting food from the deuce and a half was a challenge. You go see if the truck is still there and grab a case of C-rats and scurry back to the fox hole. During this time the 175's were firing so much they were quickly burning out barrels. Somehow I and a guy named Vanover (?) got the job to go back to Lang Vei and pick up a self-propelled 175 that had just gotten a new barrel and also pick up a Duster Sgt who was being treated at an aid station for wounds. On the road trip I was the 50 cal gunner and Vanover the driver. We took off down QL9 'thunder run' style... go-like-hell and don't stop till you get there!

We made it about 2 or 3 miles and come upon a deuce and a half in a small creek off the side of the road. There was a small abandon set of fox holes to one side close by and we stopped to investigate. WTF is this?

What we found seemed like it had all just happened. Were we in an ambush? The M-16's were still hanging in the truck windows. Where were these guys? Were they captured? I looked in the back of the truck and there lying on his back was a Black trooper, very near death. His core body parts were scattered about the bed of the truck. There was nothing we could do for him as he was too dismembered to even pick up. We jumped into one of the fox holes for a moment wondering if we were next. Perhaps we are about to be captured or killed? We decided to "di di mau" and get to our destination to get assistance. There were only two of us and we were alone, in the wrong place and far from any support.

We arrived at the Lang Vei aid station and immediately asked for help for the trooper in the truck and asked WTF had happened. I was told that there were two other troopers from A-Btry 1/44th that were found on the road and were picked up by a chopper. I didn't know who they were or what happen to them. We later learned they had decided to 'quit the war.' The incoming at our Lao Bao location was so relentless and so deadly that the next whistling sound you hear could be the last thing you hear. It was near the end of the war; they knew it and didn't want to be one of the last to die in war. Reportedly, they took a thermo grenade and melted their gun barrels. Maybe their track became inoperable and they had to abandon it. Maybe someone else knows for sure. Anyway they took the truck and took off down the road knowing they would have to face whatever the consequence of quitting under fire brought. I never heard any more about it, or about the trooper in the back of the truck. I've looked but was never able to put a name to that face. *Historian Note: He was PFC Gerald Johnson of NY, NY and was killed on 2/25/71.*

Another odd thing that happened at Lao Bao was that one of the 8th/4th guys shot himself in the leg with his M-16 to get sent back. He was very close to me when this happened. I thought we were getting shot at by a sniper. It turned out he wanted drugs because of his addiction habit. Idiot nearly took his calf off.

I did find an after action report of Lam Son from the 8th/4th archives with just a few lines regarding these specific events. Just a few lines and comments on this operation that was a mess from the start. In 1988, author Keith William Nolan wrote an excellent book of this entire undertaking Lam Son 719 called "Into Laos." He surmised that the NVA knew we were coming and prepared long before we arrived. Over 900

helicopters were downed in Laos in approximately 120 days. American troops were the specific target of the NVA for our supporting the ARVN invasion into Laos.

Years later I acquired a video report from CBS Evening News of myself (first guy talking) and others of A-Btry 8th/4th during the initial days at Lao Bao. It shows the intensity of incoming being directed on target into our battery position.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm4PHqM_YQw

As I reread this story guess there's a lot more that went on in those days of constant in the field combat. Hey even I was a bit scared to see that film of myself the first time, and I was there! As I remember those days I never wanted to take off my flak jacket. I remember the Sgt looking at me with a knowing eye saying yeah 'combat is hell' in recognition of the scared look on my face. His response, 'just do it.' We were simply a tiny FB with nothing but a grid number location. We did however give our little deathtrap an unofficial name: FSB DILLIGAF (Does It Look Like I Give A Fuck). Good name, eh, we were young then but alas, many of us never grew any older.

This was my last combat action in country. I was already "short" as I had about 20 days left. Tragically, Sgt Masashi Nakashimo "Shorty" our B-Btry medic had less; he was KIA 2/27/71 with a few days left on his two year tour in country.



Shorty just got a mail package the day of his death. It was the first mail from his sisters and family in some time. They were not happy about his extending for another year. We ate some Japanese food items that were sent, we also got some hot Black Label and we drank a beer. As the sun went down a ground attack started: mortars, RPG's, .51 cal NVA machine gun drawing in close on our position. Chaos and constant firing. There were wounded everywhere and Shorty went to work.

Years later, I was able to speak with his brother in California and he had questions about his brother's death. He was mistakenly told it might have been a friendly fire incident. I told him that was the farthest from the truth. I told him he had no pain as he was hit in the chest by shrapnel from an enemy rocket, instantly killing him. He died assisting 8th/4th wounded on the west side of the QL-9 in the middle of our small position which was no more than a dirt trail in the jungle next to a blown out bridge north of a small creek. Welcome to Laos.

The 8th/4th also had some 4 or 5 serious WIA that night, some of which passed; I think the total KIA from that night was 4 or 5 including Shorty. There was no air medevac available in the dark jungle that night and there was a thick fog. The 8th/4th did dispatch a medic truck which did a 'thunder road' all out run to our position up the QL-9 at night. Later, his remains were escorted by someone from the battery. Because of his oriental name and ethnicity they wanted to make sure his remains were treated with respect as a US ARMY TROOPER and a COMBAT MEDIC and so as not to be confused with an ARVN or NVA KIA.

That night, B-1/44 Duster "Star Flower" was credited with taking out that machine gun. I had mounted the track, of which I was not a crewmember, to see if they needed help. Months later I received in the mail, an ARCOM with "V" for that action. Thank you for remembering me guys.

So much more still to say about that night. The crew of the 175 nearest to me at Lao Bao was KIA days later. It had been a constant shuffle of guns: shooting and scooting. They were killed by a direct hit from a huge 156 round. One guy named Felton was also interviewed in this same CBS set of in-field interviews. He is the kid to the right with the helmet on near the dog named "Beer-Man." The gist of this was that I looked for these guys for a number of years to say hey I've got film of you guys that I want to get to you. It turns out I couldn't find them because they were all KIA. The YouTube video is a portion from about 20 minutes of film from that location and around the area which I obtained from CBS / BBC news.

Lao Bao was my last combat base in Viet Nam. I caught a convoy back several days later, being 'short' down to about 7 days. I caught a C-130 from Khe Sanh to Da Nang and B-Btry area then home a few days later. It was interesting that this very interview was on Walter Cronkite's CBS Evening News just days before I came home. So there were my relatives and friends who had just seen me on TV and poof, there I was home (and not in a body bag). My mom would never watch that video again.

And that's how it was at the end of the war for me. Same places... same roads... whether 1967 or 1971. Another war ...another location, someplace else... same same....

PRE-LAM SON 719 STORY

When we were riding the Duster from Hill 52 south of Da Nang to Dong Ha when another funny thing (sort of) happened. Our Duster was assigned to a convoy and on that ride we noticed these were nice trucks we were taking with

us. All the trucks and anything going towards Laos had unit numbers and insignias painted or taped over to make them unidentifiable. So while we stopped on the road, cooking our C-rats on the track's exhausts, we decided to 'break into' the truck in front of us. Must be something GOOD! eh? We got into the truck and it was FULL OF BODY BAGS! It was a morgue unit we were taking up... that was a holy shit moment, WTF are we getting into? We soon found out.

One more tidbit: at Lam Son, I believe that "Butch Cassidy" would have preferred that I had been the KIA and not Shorty. Butch was driving the M113 during that operation while I was on it as a gunner. During the operation I got there driving an ammo truck. I don't know that it was a 'karma' thing, I asked to go and they gave me a truck to drive. I'd never been that truck's driver before, in fact I don't think I drove a 2 1/2 - ton truck much at all before that. That was quite a ride from Dong Ha along QL-9 with all that ammo on board.



Personally I believe everything worked out like it was supposed to, but that is 'well above my pay grade.' I guess like "Pvt. Ryan", you want to have had your life to be worth the way it worked out. I have nice kids; a great wife and we try and do for others in our business. I'll have my judgment day just like everyone else.

If you have anything else to add to the stories contact me and the historian. "Per Ardua ad Astra" motto of 1/44th.

-SP4 [Bill Baker](#), B-Btry 1/44th 70-71

A FEW MORE STORIES FROM BILL...

On September 30, 1970 a DC-3 airline plane crashed in bad weather on the mountain across from us at Hai Van Pass. Most of the 38 passengers got out but three were killed. The NVA later tried to take parts and fuel from the plane. 'Shorty' our medic was with us and had a telescope for star gazing. When he saw the NVA crawling on the plane it became a valid fire mission for us. Each of our tracks firing about 1000 rounds! OH MAN!

I finally hit the plane at the junction of the wing and the fuselage. It caught fire and slid down the mountain on the tops of the trees from which it was hanging! Man, this was exciting! Later, when a patrol was sent there to investigate they found a huge NVA hospital with recovery rooms and a surgical suite underground on the hillside WOW!

Did anyone else ever 'shoot down' a plane in Nam?

There was another time when we were hit by a typhoon, about a CAT 2 level with 135 mile per hour winds. We still did guard duty and were firing flares into the wind, for fun! We would fire the flares into the clouds of the oncoming hurricane at about 90 degrees. You could see the trail of sparks outgoing, then the huge cloud glow as the flare burns. It would get brighter and brighter as its coming right back at you. The parachute leading the flare went just overhead us at 135 miles per hour or so. Yeehaaa!!!! Let's do that again! So even being in Viet Nam at 18 you can still have some fun moments!

Some days I would to go down the hill on the south side of Hai Van Pass, hitchhiking (my habit I suppose) down to the bridge. I'd get off the truck or whatever, stay on the north side of the bridge and follow it to the coast along the river bank. I was alone on the beach and the ocean had a nice break there. I'd take off my clothes and go body surfing, great place. Probably a resort now?



View of the coast from Hai Van Pass Duster position '69.

I remember I would watch the guys in the little round fishing things, would toss seine fishing nets. They probably thought I was one crazy American, "boocoo dinky dow." When done I'd get dressed, go back to the road and hitchhike back up to the outpost. Then climb back to the gun position and rejoin my crew. Sweet! "South Seas Surfer Dude!" Cowabunga!

HISTORIAN'S SIDEBAR: Bill was only 19 years old when he left Viet Nam. It is rare that we get to see actual broadcast video of any of our men in action while in the field. Be sure to hit the active video link to view it. Seeing the video of those men scrambling to dig their fox holes and now knowing of their final outcome was chilling for me. Never forget... Brothers forever!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm4PHqM_YQw

NEW MEMBERS/CONTACTS

[James Shreffler, C-1/44, '68-69](#)

[Floyd Meeks, C-1/44, '58-69](#)

[John Nidiffer, C-1/44, '68-69](#)

[Gerald Looney, D-71, '67-68](#)

[James King, C-4/60, '70-71](#)

[Michael Roberts, C-4/60 '70-71](#)

Jerry Snider, B-1/44 '68-69

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

Stan Carnright, D-1/44 '69-70 3Jun11, NC

Chris Jamison A-1/44, '70-71 3Aug20, NY

They will be missed and we give honor to their service and their families.

= = = = = = = =

On August 22nd 1970 around 2200 hrs, my track B242 was at Lang Co bridge North of Da Nang. An ARVN Captain came into our bunker all excited with his map. They had spotted the VC setting up a mortar. We got on the track and started firing up the area. I loved to shoot so I took over firing that night. After about 20 or 30 rounds we had a misfire. I had the cannoneer go through the misfire procedure of recocking. After he finished I hit the fire pedal and both of us were instantly blown out of the tub. The force of the explosion blew me out of the gunners seat and I ended up hanging over the tub over the top of the commander's hatch. When I came too a few seconds later I saw I had burns on my right side and face and could not hear. I could tell the crew was shell shocked just like me. I checked the men and other then me and the cannoneer the other two guys seemed ok, just dazed. Myself and the cannoneer were medevac'd to the Da Nang hospital. He was released a day or so later for duty. I was stabilized and in a day or so was flown to the Far East Burn center in Japan. Altogether I was in different hospitals from Aug, 22nd till Oct. 20th when I was discharged. I ended up going over my discharge date of Sept. 20 by a month. They put on my DD214 that I *voluntarily extended for 30 days*. Ha Ha I got a good laugh from that.

- Carl Dorsey B-1/44 '69-70

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Issue 3 October 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 about 600 active members with a directory of over 2200 ADA Viet Nam Veterans and supporters.

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