

NATIONAL DUSTERS, QUADS & SEARCHLIGHTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER # 1 – FEB/MAR 2021

38th Annual Reunion Tentatively Rescheduled For Norfolk, VA on Nov 9-11, 2021

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



To all of my Brothers and Sisters of the NDQSA, we seem to be in the home stretch. Vaccines are available and, the COVID19 numbers ARE DECREASING and states are starting to ease restrictions. We still need to wear our masks, social distance, and be smart about what we do. I urge all to get vaccinated. For some of us it is a daunting task while it is much easier for some depending upon where we live. Never the less, please get the shots. There is a reunion scheduled for Veterans Day week in November, and we are hoping that by then it will be safe to gather in brotherhood once again. If you get vaccinated and are capable of travelling, please come. We miss you all and are looking forward to seeing you again. Till then be safe, follow all safety guidelines. I would also encourage all who are interested to submit your names to the election committee as there are open director positions that need to be filled in the upcoming 2021 election.

- [Bob Cuce](#) President NDQSA

FEATURED STORIES:

HUELSENBECK HONORED
1971 - THE LAST DUSTER BATTLE - 2021

NEW MEMBERS/CONTACTS

Cephus Williams, E-41 '71
Carmen Caruso, C-4/60 '69
Vernard Hillesheim G-55 '69-70
Michael Szostak 6-55 '69-70
Steve Nunn C-4/60 '69-70
Henry Lebrun, B-4/60 '70-71

MEMBERS THAT HAVE PASSED

Larry LaPraire, C-1/44 '66-67 29Jan21, AZ
Clyde Larsen, G-29 '68-69 29Nov20, IL
Duane Gettler, B-5/2 '66-67 19Nov20, IA
George DeMott, D-71 '66-67 24Aug20, NY
Samuel Finnegan, H-29 '68-69 24Aug18, IN
James Ballow Jr., D-1/44 '69-70 3Aug20, GA
Dr. Daniel Koch, B-5/2 '69-70 May2020, TX
Frank Toland, G-65 '67-68 Jun19, NH
Caesar Cuspert, C-5/2 '68 25 Mar20, GA

They will be missed and we give honor to their service and their families. Special tributes to Duane Gettler and Clyde Lawson in this newsletter.

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2021 NDQSA Annual Reunion Update

Our board of directors hopes to reschedule our postponed annual reunion in Norfolk, VA for Veterans Day week from Tues 11/9/2021 to Sunday 11/14/2021. Because of the unusual circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, it is imperative that we survey our membership regarding their availability to attend on the above dates.

The health and safety of our membership is our highest priority, and to that end we will follow all guidelines and rules required by the State of Virginia and the CDC for hotel group gatherings in effect at the time of the reunion.

This is only a survey, for planning purposes only and not a guaranteed commitment on your part to attend the reunion.

If you have not already sent in your reply, please respond to Bruce Geiger by text/phone (914) 576-1050 or in an email (bmgeiger@aol.com). **Please do it now!**

Simply identify yourself **fully and clearly** and respond: Yes, I will attend. No, I will not attend, or I may attend.
Thank you!

PRODUCT SALES MANAGER NEEDED

With the passing of Duane Gettler, NDQSA is in dire need of locating someone to volunteer to take over his responsibilities in the storage, transport and distribution of NDQSA products. If no one steps up to assist we will likely be forced to stop providing these items to the membership in the very near future.

While Duane and Mary embraced this service to the group to a very high level, going forward NDQSA expects the demand for products to decrease in the coming years. Therefore we are open to creative adaptations to this position. There will certainly still be the need to store our stock of these items. We will also need to communicate and respond to orders for these items and to be able to package and mail out the orders. It would be optimal to have a new sales manager capable of doing all the storage, transport (to reunions) and mailing of the products to members. However, we can work around the transportation requirements so that it is NOT required that the products manager attend and transport product to each reunion. As we have done in the past, we can ship product to and from future reunion sites as needed. This can then open the position up to members wanting to support NDQSA but who cannot commit to travel to reunions on a regular basis.

Basic requirements - the new products manager will:

- 1) Need to have a safe and secure storage area at their residence to store the 20 or so large plastic totes.
- 2) Be able to communicate via email and phone to accept and follow-up on orders.
- 3) Be able to process, package and mail out orders in a timely manner.

NOTE: NDQSA is purchasing the large storage trailer that the Gettlers used, and it can be towed to a location if needed. If it is no longer necessary it will be sold.

This is a lot to ask of a member and hopefully someone is in a position to take on this task. If no one steps up, the board will discuss options that will have to include discontinuing NDQSA product sales entirely.

If you are a businessman and have any ideas to address this issue or if you are in a position to assist (in any way), please contact President [Bob Cuce](#).

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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 veterans 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 Quad 50 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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FIND & 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.

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Synopsis of relevant minutes of NDQSA Board of Directors and Executive Officers Meeting January 14, 2021

Reports of Officers:

President, Bob Cuce: Bob Cuce stated that he appreciates the efforts made by board members in the midst of the pandemic. Bob also encouraged all members to get their COVID shots and verification cards; this will be required to sign in to the reunion. Bob also requested that any obituary for Duane Gettler be cleared by Mary Getter before being posted in the upcoming newsletter or in any print or digital media.

First Vice President, Paul Kopsick; The upcoming newsletter will have the latest information on the reunion that is available to the board. "To be included in the newsletter is a survey request: If a reunion is scheduled in Norfolk, VA. for (Fall 2021 date TBD) This is for planning purposes only and not a firm commitment! I will attend (#) I may attend (#) I Will not attend. Please respond to reunion committee chairmen Bruce Geiger by E-Mail (bmgeiger@aol.com) or phone (914-575-1050)."

Second Vice-President, Dave McCray: Dave has volunteered to fill in on the election committee during upcoming election.

Secretary, Garry Severin: I was in error when I reported that the meeting minutes from the March 06, 2020 were accepted, I was looking at the previous BOD meeting minutes my mistake!

Treasurer, Allan Penwell: The latest financial report was not discussed at this meeting. When questioned by Bruce Geiger, Allan did report that three out of four trademark registrations were paid up to date and the fourth would come due later this year.

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

Nominating Committee (John Huelsenbeck, Garry Severin, Bob Cuce and Paul Hanson): A motion was made by Paul Kopsick and seconded by Joe Belardo with no dissention noted to look into our bylaws to investigate if a vote can be held if we don't have a reunion. (To amend the bylaws to cover this may require a vote by the membership). Bob Lauver was one of those on the board when the bylaws were written and will look to see if this situation is covered. A final date must be set for incoming ballots that are mailed to the mail clerk. In the event the reunion cannot be held a count by the election committee of votes received and tallied will be conveyed to the membership in the next newsletter. An appointed (unelected) board member (A. Hansen) will serve until next election of seven Board members. After the reunion the ballots will be destroyed as required by bylaws.

Legislative Committee (Bruce Geiger, Bob Lauver): Trademarks fees used for the organization's logo were paid in, 2020 with one exception which is due third quarter of 2021.

Reunion Committee (Bob Lauver, Bruce Geiger, Mary Severin, Paul Hanson): Bruce Geiger stated that the best possibility on having a reunion would be in late October. A vote was taken of BOD members in attendance, and of twelve members present, eight voted to go ahead with reunion planning. A motion was made by Bob Lauver and seconded by John Huelsenbeck with no dissention to have Bruce begin planning. A motion was made by John Huelsenbeck and seconded by Joe Belardo with no dissention to set up a Memorial Day 2022 reunion on OKC.

Products Committee Mary Gettler, Bruce Geiger, Paul Kopsick & Bob Lauver. The BOD is in contact with Mary Gettler to acquire the trailer that Duane used to transport the organization's product and support equipment. If this is achieved John Huelsenbeck has volunteered to go to Iowa and retrieve it and temporarily store at his home

Next Board of Directors Meeting: Bob Cuce will schedule a BOD Meeting and time and date, TBD.

A motion to close the meeting was made by Dave McCray and seconded by Joe Belardo.

Minutes compiled by Garry Severin, Secretary

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NDQSA founding member John Huelsenbeck to be nationally honored

AVILLA — Vietnam veteran John Huelsenbeck quickly deflects when he's asked about his heroism during his U.S. Army service.

"I lost a lot of friends there," he said. "They are the heroes."

Maybe so, but Huelsenbeck, the twice-wounded recipient of the Purple Heart, will have the honor of representing Indiana and his fellow Purple Heart heroes at a multi-day tribute to the courage and sacrifice of American's combat wounded.



The Purple Heart Patriot Project is a program of the National Purple Heart Honor Mission. The all-expense-paid trip includes visits to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, historic Washington's Headquarters, a special tour of the newly renovated National Purple Heart Hall of Honor and other tributes to service.

Huelsenbeck's trip is scheduled for April, depending on COVID-19 guidelines, according to Bob Driscoll, a spokesman for the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor in West Point, New York. Protocols will be in place so that honorees have an enjoyable experience.

Honorees are nominated for the Purple Heart Patriot Project by local chapters of the National Purple Heart Honor Mission, fellow service members, families or friends. Huelsenbeck was

nominated by a New Jersey state commander who served with him in Vietnam.

A graduate of Avilla High School, Huelsenbeck was drafted into the U.S. Army in July 1966, assigned to Battery C, 1st Battalion, 44th Artillery Regiment and sent to Vietnam. In July 1967, 20-year-old Huelsenbeck was operating a Duster, an armored open turret tank with twin-mounted 40-millimeter cannons, in support of U.S. Marine operations in the Vietnam. While operating near the Demilitarized Zone in South Vietnam, Huelsenbeck's unit was ambushed by the North Vietnamese Army.

In addition to his Purple Heart, Huelsenbeck received numerous commendations and awards, including the Bronze Star with V and the Army Commendation Medal.

Huelsenbeck said he graduated in 1965, in the second-to-last senior class of Avilla High School. He was drafted into the U.S. Army a year later and sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky, and later to Fort Bliss, for training. He arrived in Vietnam in April 1967. Huelsenbeck noted that eight or nine young men from Kendallville were also drafted at the same time he was. "We all made it back, I think," he said.

"I was wounded twice in Vietnam," Huelsenbeck said. "I was attached to ICORP and supported the 3rd Marine Division. I saw quite a bit of action up along the DMZ."



Indeed he did. Huelsenbeck has enlarged photo prints of two foggy Polaroid pictures of himself and two fellow soldiers, Billy Watson of Sherman, Texas, and Roger Lewis of Minnesota. Huelsenbeck is perched on top of his “Duster” between his two friends in one photo. The second Polaroid shows Huelsenbeck with Watson (not included here).

The photos were snapped just before the North Vietnamese army ambushed their unit. Watson and Lewis were both killed in action 20 minutes later. Huelsenbeck and another soldier, Pete Williams, were the only two survivors of the 11-man unit. “We’re not heroes,” Huelsenbeck repeated. “We’re the lucky ones.”

Huelsenbeck was discharged May 20, 1968, from the U.S. Army and began to build a civilian life in Avilla. He worked at Dana Corp. in Fort Wayne for 32 years and was a farmer. He was involved in local politics. He and his wife, Sally, have been married for 51 years, raised three children, and have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Huelsenbeck is a member of the Kendallville VFW Post, Avilla American Legion Post 240 in Avilla, several other military organizations and his service unit’s association. He hosted the 1980 reunion for the unit association at his rural Avilla farm (it grew into one of the premier Vietnam Veterans organizations in the country, NDQSA, the National Dusters Quads and Searchlights Association).

He traveled back to Vietnam in 2000 with NDQSA’s “Operation Gold Star,” a project that made trips to Vietnam with mothers who lost sons in that war, so they can see the country where their sons died. “It’s still a poor country,” Huelsenbeck said.

Huelsenbeck’s looking forward to the April trip to the Hall of Honor, with the caveat that it may be postponed to September if the pandemic worsens. He seems a little surprised that the costs for a round-trip ticket, a five-day stay at West Point, and all meals are covered. But then, Huelsenbeck is surprised he was selected for this honor.

“It was a surprise to me. I’m no hero,” he said. “All the heroes are on the wall in Washington, D.C.”

We at NDQSA are proud to know John and Sally, and we would never become what we have become without their initial fidelity to his crew, the men he supported and the organization he help to found, nurture, and defend. I am proud to have him as a friend and mentor on so many levels. Thank you from all of NDQSA. Well done.

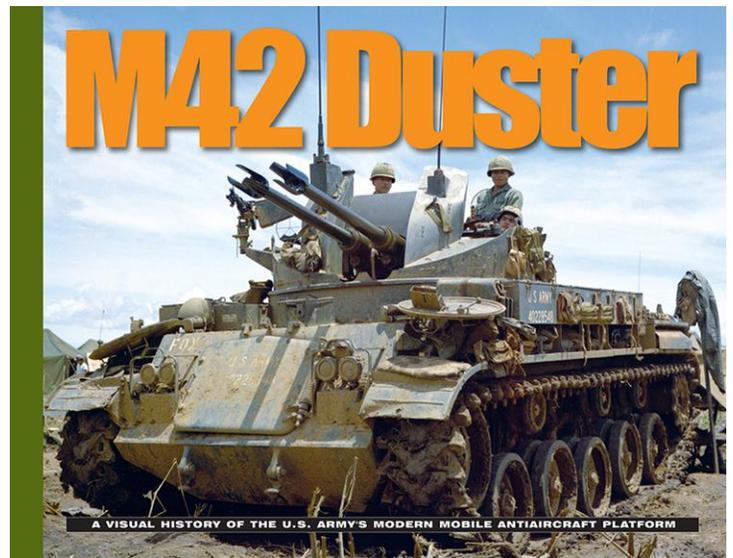
NDQSA RELATED PUBLICATIONS

My good friend David Doyle <https://daviddoylebooks.com/> has authored dozens of military vehicle books and I have worked with him, using our archived photos on several publications. He now has some copies of the M42 Duster book; a Gun Truck Book and a Mutt Jeep book that has SLT photos.

Here is the link to the page that shows the books available: <https://daviddoylebooks.us16.list-manage.com/track/click...>

The best Duster book is the M42 one, not the “Walk Around” one.

<https://daviddoylebooks.com/us-military.../m42-duster>



Feel free to order a book or two, David is a great author and ardent historian.

<https://daviddoylebooks.com/us-military.../gun-trucks>

<https://daviddoylebooks.com/us.../m151-mutt-in-action-6zgh7>

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SCAM ALERT!!! If anyone gets an email purported to be from someone in the NDQSA organization asking them to buy gift cards...it is a SCAM. DO NOT reply. Forward the email to me so I can try to track how this scam got started.



Duane Charles Gettler

was born on Feb. 3, 1946 to Walter and Elaine (Wedemeyer) Gettler. He passed on Nov. 19 at Unity Point hospital of complications of Covid-19. He graduated from Adair-Casey Schools in 1964, was drafted in the Army in 1965 and served in Vietnam from 1966-1967. Duane was very proud of his service to his country.

Duane was a 50-year member of the Adair Fire Dept. and served on the Conservation club as a trustee. His greatest loves were spending time with his kids and grandkids, going on our yearly family vacations, fishing excursions to local ponds with grandkids, playing the lottery and attending his yearly military NDQSA reunions, receiving the Saint Barbara medal.

Duane was married to Carolyn Huffman and to this union two sons were born, they later divorced, and he married Mary Kingery and she brought two children to this union, and they had two daughters.

Many who knew Duane, knows he has some favorite stories and would tell them over and over, this is one of his favorites- I have twin daughters, and one has identical twin boys and my son has identical twin boys; we have 3 sets of twins in our family.

He was preceded in death by his father, brother, Dennis; grandson, Cade Gettler. Duane is survived by his mother; his wife, Mary; sons Brandy (Paula) Kingery, Matthew (Brandy) Gettler; Michael Gettler. Daughters Heather (Tracey) Watson, Marcie (Dan) Stiles, Melanie (still available) Gettler. Grandchildren Corbin and Caden Kingery; Emily and Josh Wittrock, Madison, Wyatt and Walker Gettler; Garrison, Grayson, and Gatlin Gettler; Alissa, Ryan and Konnar Stiles; and Maddox and Myles Kunkel. Sister Karen (Jim) Grant, brothers Don (Derinda), Delmar (Marie), Dean (Sharon), Daryl (Sherry), Dave (Kristen), Walter Jr. (Valerie) and Jesse (Lisa) Gettler, many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends. A private family graveside service was held at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, Adel, on Monday, Nov. 23. There will have a celebration of life services for Duane at a later date.

Memorials may be directed to the Gettler family. Condolences or guestbook entries may be left at www.hockenberryfamilycare.com.

Clyde Douglas

Larsen, age 71, passed away on Sunday, November 29, 2020 in the comfort of his home, surrounded by family and under the care of hospice. Clyde was born in Chicago, IL on December 7, 1948 and was one of



three sons born to the late Arthur and Eleanor A. (nee Drury) Larsen. Clyde was a resident of the Carpentersville-Elgin areas all of his life and was a 1966 graduate of Irving Crown High School. Following high school Clyde served in the United States Army and was a proud Vietnam War Veteran. During his time in the Army, Clyde earned the rank of SSGT 1st Class. Following his time in the military, Clyde worked in the heating and cooling industry for many years before becoming a code enforcement officer for the City of Elgin until his retirement.

Survivors include his beloved wife of 28 years; Janet C. (nee Dein), his daughters; Amy and Amanda and a grandson; Maximillian Neel. Clyde is also survived by his nieces; Diana Oclon and Melissa (Zef) Sandoval and a nephew; Daniel (Christine) Dein along with several grand and great-nieces and nephews and countless good and faithful friends. In addition to his parents, Clyde was preceded in death by his brothers; Arthur and William.

A Gathering celebrating his life was held Saturday, December 19, 2020 from 2:00 P.M. until time of a Memorial Service at 5:00 P.M. at Miller Funeral Home, 504 W. Main St., West Dundee with Rev. Bruce W. Meissner, officiating..

Burial with military honors will be held in the spring at the Dundee Township East Cemetery, East Dundee. Please omit flowers. Memorial may be made to the Disabled American Veterans, 6951 30th St., Berwyn, IL 60402. To leave an online condolence, please visit www.millerfuneralhomedundee.com.

Clyde was active in the early years of NDQSA and was treasurer for many years. We are proud to have known him and grateful to him and Janet for their support and service to NDQSA over these many years.

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Q- S- E- GW- P

Mailing Label ->

Cut out and tape to envelope

NDQSA

PO BOX 596

Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706

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



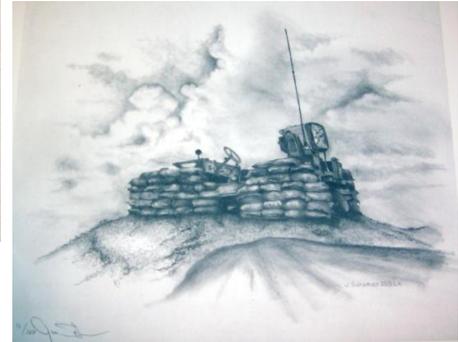
NDQSA Challenge Coin \$12 @
NDQSA Pin Set \$8 @



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

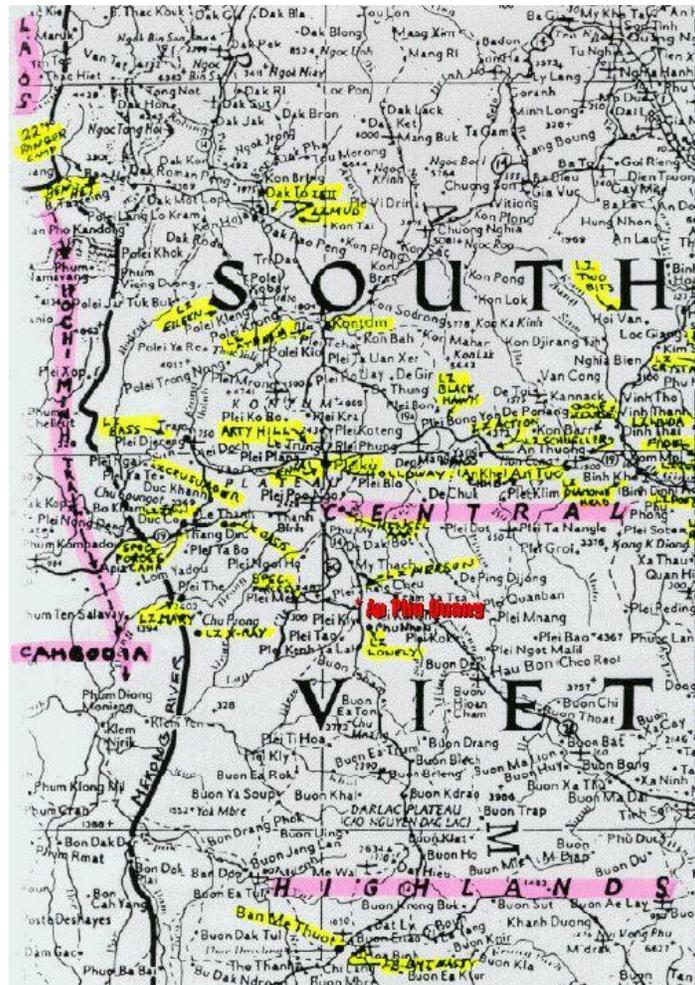
1971 – 50th Anniversary - 2021 The Last Duster Battle of Vietnam “Dusters Fight Alone”

Paul Kopsick , B-4/60 – NDQSA Historian

In previous newsletters I chronicled some of the early and consequential battles that US Army ADA units had participated in “from the Delta to the DMZ.” The last newsletter reported on Lam Son 719 which also was 50 years ago and took place along the DMZ in which those northerly deployed Duster, Quad, and Searchlight units participated.

At the same time there were enemy actions occurring throughout the country and specifically in the western Central Highlands. Ironically one was in the same area that another famous battle was fought in 1965...the Ia Drang Valley.

For several weeks in early 1971, the NVA were probing and attacking firebases in Vietnam along the border with Laos and Cambodia. Several were discussed previously like LZ Oasis and Phu Nhon (ref. Dan Ross).

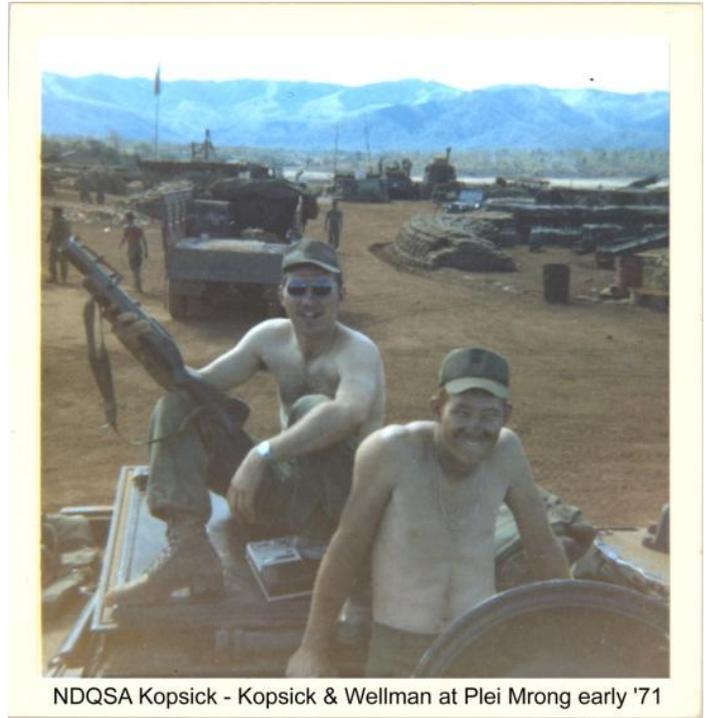


(generalized map not all locations are accurate)

Bravo Battery 4th/60th was headquartered at Artillery Hill just WNW of the city of Pleiku. That base had been there for several years, and B-4/60th was charged with protecting

the roads, cities and firebases: as far north as Ben Het; eastwards thru the Mang Yang Pass; south towards Ban Me Thuot; and westward to the Cambodian border. The main E-W road was QL-19 and the main N-S road was QL-14. All the cities and bases there had seen attacks over the years especially the N-S bases as they were just across the border from the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

I was new in-country and was just assigned to B-4/60th in January 1971. Drafted, still not old enough to vote, I was the proverbial “stranger in a strange land”...and in an unpopular war that was already 6 years old. I remember riding in the Btry’s APC to Plei Mung during Tet with my bunkmate PFC Wellman. It was my first foray into the field.



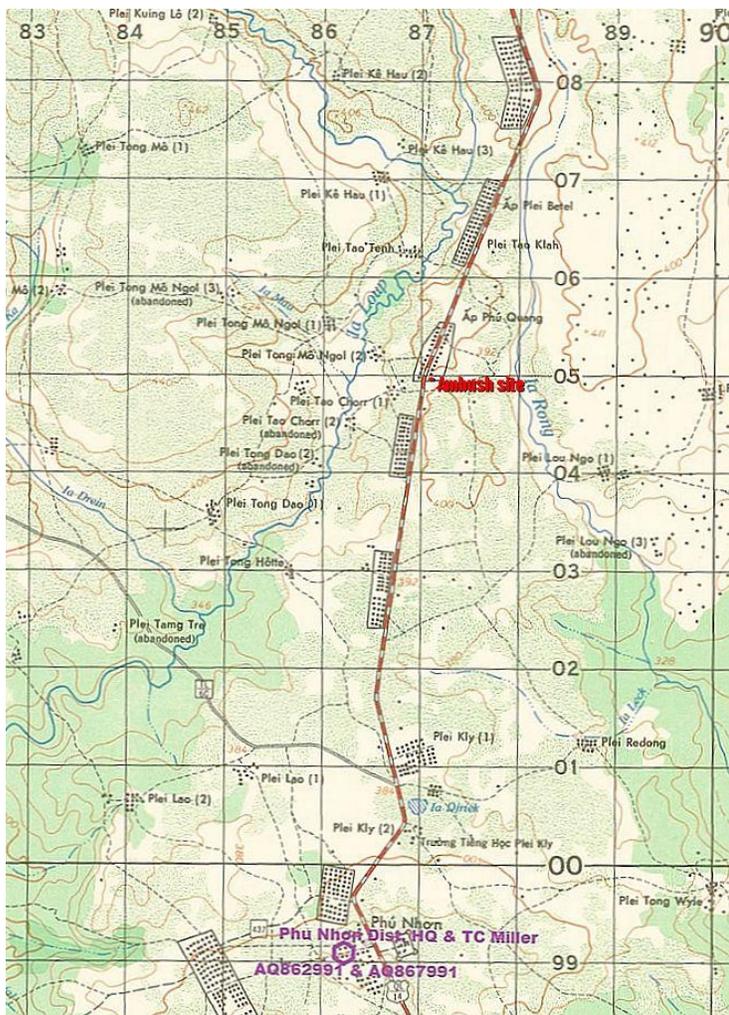
NDQSA Kopsick - Kopsick & Wellman at Plei Mung early '71

Meanwhile, further south the firebase near Phu Nhon was under attack. The artillery unit (1/92d) and the Dusters (1-B-4/60) defended it but suffered many WIA and the death of one artilleryman PFC Tom C. Miller (for whom the base would be renamed). For a thrilling account of that night's actions follow this link ([TC MILLER](#)) For the next few weeks all the villages and bases along QL-14 were being attacked and access by road and even by choppers was either halted or severely curtailed.

From official records:

On the evening of 15 March at 2355 Hours, A North Vietnamese force of regimental size, initiated a sustained attack against Phu Nhon District HQ ([Phu Nhon Summary](#)). FSB T.C. MILLER, Attached Regional Forces, co-located U.S. Artillery forces 2nd Platoon, Battery C 1st 92nd Artillery and supporting Dusters of 1st Platoon section from Battery B, 4th Battalion, 60th Artillery. During the course of the initial

evening attack, the North Vietnamese forces attempted to overrun the position by utilizing sapper attacks, assaults by fire with 62 mm mortars, 120 mm mortars, B-40 rockets and ground assaults. The initial attack came from the southeast against the U.S. artillery sector of the perimeter held by the Dusters from 4th BN, 60th Artillery and C Battery, 1st BN, 92nd Artillery. The enemy was unable to penetrate this area due to the heavy volume of fire and the aggressiveness of the U.S. Soldiers in defense of the artillery sector. The main attack then moved to the east side, in the vicinity of the ARVN artillery. The enemy penetrated the wire inflicting damage to the facilities and causing casualties to the South Vietnamese defenders.



FSB T.C. Miller at Phu Nhon had been effectively cut off for weeks and successfully staved off a major ground assault on March 15-16 in large part due to the two B/4/60th Duster crews and the 1/92d Artillerymen defenders. At that time one Duster had a dead-lined engine and could not be moved and one of the guns on the other could not be fired. Enemy sappers entered the ARVN part of the compound but were stopped in the wire outside the US portion.

On March 16th or 17th the ARVN forces tried to open the road to Phu Nhon from the north. They fought their way south to the village of Ap Phu Quang a small village just

north of Phu Nhon. This village was one of several villages along the roadway, but this one spanned both sides of the road, and was capable of creating a deadly cross-fire if occupied by the enemy. Which it was!



On March 16-17th an ARVN Cav and infantry unit, relief column trying to open the roadway to Phu Nhon was attacked at the south end of the village. They lost two APCs to RPGs and possibly recoilless rifle fire and a number of men were killed and wounded. Following command level discussions, a Duster lead strike force was given permission to try and rout the VC/NVA in an effort to bring much needed ammo and gun parts to the beleaguered southern bases. A convoy of four Dusters, five ammo trucks and three Quad 50s trucks from E-41st tried to reach them.



On March 18th, 1971, under the command of Bravo Battery Commander Captain Herbert J. Trexler Jr., and 1st Platoon Leader 1LT John D Bailey IV, four Dusters and an APC from 1st Platoon, B Battery 4th/60th cautiously entered the village of Ap Phu Quang (near the Ia Drang Valley) south of Pleiku along QL-14.

Ap Phu Quang was a small village on QL-14, and the road ran right through the town so there were huts on both side of the road. The NVA had barricaded the road on both ends making the village a defensive roadblock, even raising the VC/NVA flag in defiance. 1st Platoon Leader, 1LT John Bailey IV, took the lead Duster into the village and the APC was in third position between the four Dusters. The Quad 50s were sent back at the last moment since they were less armored. The ARVN troops, most following on foot, were supposed to follow on their flanks but could not keep up and barely made it into the village. So it was just some 30 men on four Dusters and an APC and a village full of entrenched and heavily armed NVA.



At the south end of the village right next to the burnt-out ARVN APC, the column was attacked. First by small arms fire from both sides of the road and then by whatever else they had; recoilless rifle, RPGs, machine guns and rifles. Within seconds B-141 "The Kind Murph" the second track in the column was in flames and the two men up front severely burned when a RPG pierced the internal 40-mm ammo well. The remaining vehicles returned fire with everything they had and in the frenzy had to breach the barricade on the southern end of the road and extract themselves and their wounded from the middle of the kill zone.



Within minutes the southern half of the village was destroyed and one Duster lay burning. All told 11 men would receive wounds with five being very severe requiring a DUSTOFF call to go to the 71st Evac hospital in Pleiku.

As a direct result of the actions of the Duster strike force, the VC/NVA forces were either destroyed or routed from the village and the local region further westward in the Ia Drang Valley. These actions effectively ended the month-long siege of Phu Nhon and the enemy's offensive.

I know of no other Duster battle that involved only four Dusters and no other supporting units. I do not know of any other instance when a Duster unit's battery commander led his troops in an actual ground battle. Both Trexler and Bailey were awarded Silver Stars while several Bronze Star and other valor medals we awarded to the participants.



This image is of the B-4/60th "impact awards" ceremony held at Weigt-Davis. Hanging from the foot locker is my cassette recorder, and I still have an audio recording of the awards ceremony. Who knew I would be the historian 50 years later??

AMBUSH DETAILS

One of the best descriptions of the battle can be seen in the Silver Star citation for 1LT John Bailey:

"For gallantry in action while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam; First Lieutenant John D. Bailey IV distinguished himself while serving as (First) platoon leader for Battery B 4th Battalion, 60th Artillery. Four of his eight dusters were the main part of a combat assault force given the mission of routing a reinforced North Vietnamese Battalion occupying fortified bunkers in the southern portion of the village of Ap Phu Quang. In order to accomplish this, First Lieutenant Bailey rode in the lead element directing the destructive fires of his elements both by radio and hand signals thus exposing his body countless times to blistering enemy fire. He also used his M-79 and was

credited with killing two enemy snipers. In an attempt to get his dusters out of the kill zone he ordered the lead element to break down a potentially mined barrier at the south end of the village and then to direct suppressive fire for the other elements. As the last duster of his pulled by his position, First Lieutenant Bailey left the comparative safety of his duster and on foot completely exposed to enemy fire, placed his guns in position, to bring maximum fire on the enemy. Although wounded he pointed out enemy positions to his men and not until these positions were silenced did he move back to the safety of the dusters First Lieutenant Bailey's actions in the face of the enemy are in keeping with the highest military traditions and reflect great credit upon himself, his men and the United States Army." Note: I actually typed this citation as I was a battery clerk at the time.



The fourth vehicle in the reaction force, was track B-141, it was the first to be hit by enemy fire and was quickly disabled. On the track were the squad leader SGT Robert Kube as left cannoneer, SP4 Gerald Timothy as right cannoneer. The gunner/elevation tracker was John Cooke from MA. The right side azimuth tracker was Anthony Squadrito, a 17 year-old kid from NY called "Mr. Chips". The driver was Robert Doyle and the TC was SSG Charles R. Carey. "The Kind Murph" was named for SGT Murphy who was a prior squad leader on B-141, a black Sgt from Baton Rouge LA who rotated out after Christmas 1970. SP4 Dale Stiebritz was the original driver of B-141 but was switched to track B-132 shortly before the battle.

When the column stopped they immediately came under fire from both sides of the road. Gerald Timothy remembers the 50-cal (manned by Trexler) from the APC returning fire immediately. B-141 only

fired about 12 rounds (the shells in the loaders) because as right cannoneer Gerald Timothy was putting the next clips into the loaders he was hit in the arm and then took another round through the back that came out the front. Left cannoneer, six-foot three inch tall Robert Kube was also wounded at this time. Loaders were largely exposed an unprotected and were prime targets of the enemy.

The track was then hit point blank by RPG fire that pierced the right side of the hull and exploded the ammo cans in the storage area. The driver Doyle and TC SSG Carey were severely burned when the ammo inside exploded. The track was dead on the road and almost all of the crew wounded. The remaining crew (Cooke, Squadrito) and wounded (Carey, Timothy, Kube and Doyle) were relocated under extreme enemy fire to the crowded APC with the assistance of one of the APC occupants (see next story). The remaining Dusters continued to return fire even after leaving the village to the south. The column then relocated to the staging area north of the village. There were two DUSTOFFs for the most severely wounded who were sent to the 71st Evac hospital in Pleiku. Doyle was the most severely of the wounded and was sent to Japan within 48 hours. Carey remained in Pleiku a few days still in excruciating pain from his burns. In the medical ward was Army nurse Leslie Taylor from CT who tended to the wounded. Timothy says that he would later meet her stateside.



Timothy has some diminished lung capacity but is otherwise well.

SSG Charles R. Carey, in command of B-141 was severely burned when the internal ammo was ignited by an RPG round going through the track. He did have his flak jacket and commo helmet on but was burned over the rest of his body. He remembers falling to the black pavement after someone got him and the

driver out of the front of the track. Even severely burned he clearly remembers he had to clear a jammed M-60 for either Schroder or Norsweather in the APC. He stayed a few days at the 71st Evac in Pleiku before being sent stateside. Many years later he met up with another participant, SFC Hershel Brown, at Ft. Sill, OK.

The following is another account of the battle aftermath from PFC Bert Wellman Jr. who was the driver on the lead ammo truck I rode in that was staged north of the village. When the tracks and APC returned with the wounded, he retrieved SP4 Timothy from the APC. He had a sucking chest wound and Wellman put the initial bandages on Timothy. Wellman said that this guy did not look very good at all. "I could hear the air exiting his wounds. I did not think he was going to make it."

For some reason I personally do not have any memory of the events after the battle specifically when the wounded were brought back to the staging area, even though I was there. There are other things I remember but not this one which might be some sort of mental defense mechanism.

Timothy did survive and Wellman did visit him in the hospital in Pleiku, before he was shipped home. Wellman and Schroder were later sent as crew replacements to LZ Lonely after the battle.

All the wounded recovered eventually and were glad to reconnect with others from the battle years later.



At the Charleston Reunion in 2006, there was a reunion of some of the participants including (l to r): Cpt. H.J. Trexler; Lt John Bailey; Dan Ross (who was at Phu Nhon); Robert Doyle, Paul Kopsick and Charles Cary.

The 'Phantom' Combatant

When I started to do the research on this battle two decades ago I was trying to identify all the men involved and

which vehicles they were on. I had interviewed several men and acquired a lot of photos (many used in this article).

One big question was trying to identify the other black NCO that rode in the APC. I had interviewed Cpt. Trexler along with SSG Fred Norsweather and PFC Jerry Schroder who were in the APC. They confirmed that there was a black SGT in the APC with them but they did not know (remember) who he was. My AIT buddy PFC Jerry Schroder (d.'06) did give me an important description about him that would later prove critical in identifying him.



In 2005, a black vet came up to me at The Wall on Veterans Day and says that he once "pulled some guys out of a burning Duster." It did not mean anything to me at the moment until he mentioned the words "Ap Phu Quang." Bingo! For years I had been trying to locate a specific black

SGT that rode in the APC in the battle. No one knew who he was but from Schroder and Norsweather's comments they did remember that he was packing a unique handgun, a chrome-plated Colt .357 Magnum. If this person was for real, he had to answer only one question.

I asked him, "What type of weapon were you carrying that day?" "What was I carrying?" He thought about it for a second and then said, "A chrome-plated .357 that my buddy threw to me as we pulled out of Weigt-Davis."

This man, SGT Daniel J. Goode, was with the 20th Engineers and had volunteered to ride shotgun in the APC as it headed out the front gate. EUREKA! I have finally found the missing man and to my surprise he was not a Dusterman.

Under enemy fire Daniel left the APC and ran to the burning B-141. Using his hat to protect his hands, he opened the front hatch and pulled SSG Charles Cary and SP4 Robert Doyle from the burning front compartment.



BATTLE FLAG

I personally remember still seeing a part of SSG Cary's burned flesh on the rim of the TC's hatch days later.

It turned out that a few days after the battle Daniel Goode was injured at Weigt-Davis base camp and got sent home before knowing what had happened to the men and before any awards were handed out. In my interview with him years later he said that several months later back at home he received a Bronze Star in the mail for his actions.

For years he had been trying to find out about the event and after 34 years he just happened to locate the one and only guy who understood the details of his story in a crowd of thousands of Veterans at The Wall. Sure glad I wore my Duster jacket that day. That was the same day that LT Steve Moore made his first trip to The Wall to view the names of the men he lost that were under his command.



SGT Dan Goode, 20th Eng, SP4 Jerry Schroder and Lt John Bailey

Ironically on this very same day at The Wall, I met with another friend, Dennis Murphy (B-4/60) and he told me he came down from NY with his buddy, John Cooke .

I was to meet with them after the ceremony but when I went to look for them, they had already left. A month later I tried and contacted Dennis Murphy and he told me that John Cooke had passed away suddenly. What I did not know at the time, was that this John Cooke was the gunner on B-141 that fateful day. Had I met with them and learned that John was on B-141, I would have found Daniel in the crowd and reunited them after 34 years ...at The Wall!

Fate is a very fickle thing, so many coincidences, yet so many missed opportunities.

Thank you again, SGT Daniel Goode of the 20th Engineers. We protected your unit and you fought side-by-side with us. This is what true brotherhood is.



After the battle, the enemy's battle flag was presented to Cpt. Trexler and LT Bailey along with other items recovered from the battle. Each surviving track took a photo of the men with the captured flag.



The flag remained in the battery commander's office for the rest of the year above a table with all the other "war trophies." I always wondered what happened to it. Was it sent back to Ft. Bliss or returned with the 4/60th colors? I asked Trexler and Bailey but they did not know. They said it was still there when they left in mid-1971. Where could it be?

The battle and the flag were often discussed among B-4/60th veterans at many of our reunions but no one had any idea where it was or what happened to it.



Fast-forward 40 years to 2011 and the Boston reunion. I am sitting at my station doing historian stuff and one of the ladies from the front table comes over and hands me a plain manila envelope that someone dropped of that was for the historian. I was real busy so I put it in one of my many piles on my tables. It was not until the last night of the reunion that, as I was packing up things, I found the envelope again and I opened it. Cool, another Viet Cong flag being donated to my archives. It was the second one left with me this trip along with an original Duster yellow triangular “kill-flag”. I have observed that some guys are uneasy about having these types of items and just want to pass them on anonymously.



As I opened the flag from the unmarked envelope, a small piece of paper falls out. I pick it up and it is a small crude drawing of a Duster that was covered with clear tape. In the center of the Duster is written “B-141.” I immediately freeze...I am only one of a handful of people that had any chance of knowing the significance of this scrap of paper and this specific flag. If you look at the top photo on this page you can see a small white speck in the center of the yellow star. I remember seeing



it in 1971 when I was in the BC’s office. It was the sticker representing B-141 that the captain used to show the position the Dusters on his big wall mosaic of topographic maps. Captain Trexler took it off the wall and put it on the flag. He also had commemorative black flags made up with the words “B-141” in white letters. Every track flew one for the rest of the year.

I also recognized the VC flag as being from the battle by several distinctive tears, holes and bloodstains. **This was the long lost Ap Phu Quang battle flag!** How did it get here? Who dropped it off? How and where did it survive? I scrambled around trying to identify who dropped it off, but no one at the reunion took credit or responsibility for the anonymous donation. In the chaos, I actually lost the tiny Duster scrap of paper and I was besides myself. I tore everything I had with me apart (which was a lot) but could not find it (until I got home). Whew!

It would be several weeks before I would finally identify the person that had it, LT Wayne Brzezinski. Wayne took over first platoon from LT Bailey and was still around when the battery deactivated in December 1971. Cpt Fejfar (who replaced Trexler), like Brzezinski, were not around for the March battle and were not tied to this trophy in any way. It was just an enemy flag. It turned out that since Wayne was the last Platoon Leader of 1-B-4/60th, he was given possession of the flag.

He kept the envelope in a drawer in a chest in his basement. When his basement got flooded, he was cleaning out the chest of drawers he found the envelope and upon opening it, just then, realized what it was. I had been talking about the flag for years and when he saw the little B-141 Duster, he now knew what it was. Wayne was a little embarrassed that he did not know that he had it all this time. I am sure he knew I would not rest until I figured out what happened, so when, by process of elimination I asked him again, he came clean.

I am so glad that this final piece of the research puzzle has been found and can be put into its proper place in history.

So as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the last Duster battle in Vietnam we have much to be thankful for. All the B-4/60th men survived the battle and the enemy was dealt a critical defeat that they would not recover from... while we were there.

“First to Fire...Last to Leave...Brothers Forever!”

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