

NDQSA ← New Address
PO Box 149
Savoy, IL 61874

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First to Fire...Last to Leave

March 2023 Newsletter

- Directors Election
- Reunion Registration
- Member stories
- Fire Dragons of Route 19 Express*

Annual Membership Meeting

9-11:00 am, July 1, 2023
Embassy Suites Cleveland
5800 Rockside Woods Blvd, N.
Independence, OH 44122

NDQSA Mission Statement

The National Dusters, Quads & Searchlights Association™ (NDQSA™) is the original, official representative, and holds the longest, continual and official annual reunion for ADA Veterans who served in Vietnam. NDQSA is the only organization of Vietnam ADA Veterans officially recognized by the Air Defense Artillery Association headquarters in Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. As a tribute to the memory of over 220 ADA Warriors who lost their lives during the war in Vietnam, NDQSA members have funded, constructed and dedicated a magnificent monument in the Memorial Park at Ft. Sill. NDQSA was founded in 1981 by John Huelsenbeck et al and has grown to about 600 active members with a directory of over 2200 ADA Vietnam Veterans and supporters.

NDQSA is an IRS 501(c)(19) non-profit veterans organization and is incorporated in the State of Indiana. We welcome and encourage all ADA Veterans who served in Vietnam to join NDQSA and to share the fellowship, mutual support, and continued service to our Nation on behalf of all military veterans and active duty personnel.



NATIONAL DUSTERS, QUADS & SEARCHLIGHTS ASSOCIATION Inc.

NEWSLETTER # 1 - March 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - David McCray

Greetings everyone,



I am sure everyone enjoyed the last newsletter. Joe and the Publication committee (Joe Belardo, Richard Burmood, Allan Penwell, George Walko and Roger Giza) continue to do a fantastic job.

The Reunion Committee has done an excellent job putting together the June 28-July 2 Operation Rock & Roll Reunion. I will not steal their thunder and it is all in the newsletter. I thank you Bruce Geiger, Garry, and Mary Severin. Fantastic job!!!

For those unaware, several of us are getting together and making a **special trip** to Hawaii.

I want to stress **this is not our annual reunion**. If you are interested contact me. In short, we are staying at Hale Koa September 17-23. You may book longer or earlier based on your preferences.

The *Fire Dragon* painting was signed March 3 after 4 weeks of delays. Prints can be purchased on the ADA Association web site, Firsttofire.net. It will have a button to purchase the print.

I want to thank the entire Board of Directors and all the advisors for stepping up and filling the massive work gap Paul Kopsick left. All the holes have been filled and operating smoothly.

A big thank you goes out the Board and to all of you that offered your support.

The web site is being finalized and will probably be finished by the time you receive the newsletter. Rick Liebendorfer, 2nd VP, and W03 Jeremy Hedlind, Secretary of the ADAA, deserve a big thank you. Again, another fantastic job gentlemen!

Finally, we have the Finance Committee filled with three members that are CPAs (Bill Sturgeon, Warren Pennington and Chuck Swank) and Board Director Paul Hanson. Paul will be the chairman for the Committee. Bill Sturgeon will be the lead CPA. This committee of qualified Certified Public Accountants will perform the independent task of inspecting our financial books, records, and processes instead of the Association having to hire CPA firm to conduct the annual Review. Right now, they are in Tax Season and the Review will probably be performed in late May and early June. Bill will make a presentation of the results at the Reunion Business Meeting July 1, 2023. Hopefully, we will have all three members at the Business meeting so they can be introduced and properly thanked.

Looking forward to seeing as many of you that can make it to the Reunion!

Dave McCray

RECORD YOUR MILITARY HISTORY AT TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

As you know, when you send in your stories about Vietnam, we send these newsletters to both the Army History Department at Fort Sill and to Texas Tech University.

Your history is stored for your families and future historians and individuals interested in Vietnam.

We are including the Texas Tech contact information. Call them and have your story verbally recorded forever. Please contact them and arrange a recording.

Kelly E. Crager, PhD ... Head of Oral History Project

Vietnam Center and Archive

Texas Tech University

Lubbock, TX 79409

Call: (806) 834-4834 or email Kelly.Crager@ttu.edu

Major Steve Denney in Vietnam 4th/60th & 1st/44th

An Old ADA Officer Remembers

The last publication of the newsletter inspired me to sit down and jot down a few of my experiences as an ADA officer's career. When the Artillery Branch split into Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery, I was selected for the ADA Branch. Upon being commissioned in 1961, I was assigned to the Battery B, 4th Missile Battalion (Nike Hercules) where I served as launcher platoon leader, executive officer, and commander of the unit. My assignments continued in command in RVN and Korea. I also served as staff officer at ARADCOM, FORSCOM and Assistant Secretary of Defense Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics (ASD MRA&L). I retired after 22 years of service and returned to my original hometown of San Antonio, Texas.

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."
EPHESIANS 6:11

I served in Vietnam in 1966/1967 as a captain and again in 1970/1971 as a major. During both tours I was honored to serve in a duster/quad/searchlight battalion. In 1966 I was stationed in Germany working with the Belgian Artillery when I received orders to return to CONUS in two weeks and report to Ft. Bliss, Texas to Headquarters, 5th Battalion, 2nd Air Defense Artillery, (AW) (SP). Upon reporting for duty, I was told that I was to command Battery B. That began a whirl wind period of learning, training, and pure work to understand the M42 Duster maintenance, communications, and combat operations to include firing on the range and many hours of convoying and establishing tactical positions throughout the training area. We completed training and prepared equipment for shipment to RVN. I was part of the battalion advance party flying from Ft Bliss to Qui Nhon. While flying over the Pacific Ocean, the pilot saw an emergency light operate that indicated the rear cargo door was opening. He immediately depressurized and reduced our altitude. All of us felt as though someone had pierced our ear drums. After several hours we could hear once more without any pain. Once in Qui Nhon, we were attached to II Field Force and directed south to Long Binh area where the base camp was established for the Battalion HQ. Battery B was further assigned to the 25th Division Artillery, Cu Chi, where we built our base camp and began testing our equipment.



Major Steve Denney

We deployed from Cu Chi to support a multitude of base camps throughout 25th Division area as well as provide convoy escort. Normally each area had two Dusters and perhaps a Quad 50. I spent many hours literally jumping on a helicopter that was taking supplies and or mail to my troops. I always travelled with my weapon (45 Cal pistol and M16 rifle) as well as a toothbrush and tooth paste as I was never sure if I would get a return flight later in the day or even the next day. My greatest pride was in seeing the men applying their skills in setting up equipment and maintaining it through all kinds of weather. The men were always willing to go the extra mile to support the units to which they were attached, and their bravery under fire was never surpassed. We developed a system to air lift the quads by helicopter which allowed them to provide support to the artillery units being taken into various landing zones.

One major battle (Sui Tre) the artillery battery was part of an action where the infantry battalion, supported by a 105 Artillery Battery, was attacked by an NVA regiment of several hundred men. The NVA suffered over 600 casualties. One of the Quad 50s was hit by an RPG that penetrated the front shield and hit the support of the firing control. I talked with the gunner at the hospital in Cu Chi who stated that he spotted the soldier aiming the RPG but was swinging the turret around when the RPG was fired. He was seriously wounded in both thighs and was medically evacuated back to the states. All of the Quad 50s burned out all four barrels but kept firing throughout the NVA attack. On another mission, I was moving along a trail with two Dusters to join an infantry unit. We met several engineers who were "clearing the road of mines". It was an eerie feeling to see them coming towards us rather than "leading us down the trail." On one mission, Battery B was holding a blocking position on a river south of a rubber plantation. As I remember, elements of the 1st Infantry Division were moving through the plantation from the North to make contact with the NVA. I was flying out to check the deployment in an OH-13 when the chopper pilot said his radio went out. I made a command decision to return to Chu Chi for repairs. On the way back the chopper lost power and we were able to successfully autorotate in for a landing. After my command was over, I was reassigned to the Headquarters, 5/2 at Long Binh where I completed my first tour. In November 1970 I was assigned to 1st Battalion, 44th Artillery (AW) (SP) as battalion executive officer. The Battalion Headquarters was located at Red Beach, Da Nang and attached to 24th Corps Artillery. The battalion was scattered all over the I Corps Area of Operations. I had the opportunity to visit units ranging from the battery headquarters down to individual section deployments. Thankfully, I had a Light Observation Helicopter (OH58) I could use if the battalion commander did not need it. I visited units deployed at fire bases from indigenous native elements assisting both U.S. and the South Vietnam 1st Division as well as fire bases along the DMZ. Along the DMZ north of Dong Ha, the helicopter would fly nap of the earth and then pop up over the defensive wire and land and let me off only to return at a designated time. This tactic precluded the North Vietnamese from firing 122mm rockets from across the DMZ at the landing zone and destroy the helicopter.



Setting up Duster in the Delta

As part of the 24th Corps Artillery, I coordinated the move of the Battalion Supporting element on the convoy back into Khe Sanh and deployment upon arrival on site. As Duster Battalions were being deactivated, I sent the S-4, South to scrounge Duster/Quad/SL parts that we could use up in I Corps area. He was able to retrieve some critical parts, he also found at the 5/2 Battalion an RCAT propeller that the supporting site at Ft. Bliss had given to the battalion that indicated the number of RCATs that we had actually shot down during our Air Defense training. I still have possession of the propeller and would be more than happy to donate it to our Association or to the ADA museum. The last six months of my deployment I was assigned to the 24th Corps Artillery Fire Support Coordination Element (FSCE). I was part of a team that deployed from Da Nang in support of the ARVN 1st Division Forward in Dong Ha. The team had consisted of me, a lieutenant colonel, and a couple of radio operators. While there, we were responsible for requesting and clearing ordnance from the Navy (point Allison), Air Force (B 52 bombers and close air) and Army field artillery fire missions. We had to verify the deployment of ARVN units, define the safety zones, and call in the grid strike location. We remained with the 1st ARVN Division

Forward when it moved south to Hue. Later, we returned to the FSCE at Dong Ha to coordinate fire support within the I Corps operational area.



Change in Command of 1st/44th in 1971 at Red Beach, Da Nang

One interesting facet of my military career was to have the honor to command the 1st Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery (Improved Hawk) deployed between Osan and Kunsan in 1976. The battalion was re-designated as an Improved Hawk Battalion 1 September 1971 and later inactivated 30 June 1980. The battalion had the dubious distinction of being the most dispersed Improved Hawk battalion in the US Army. The Sergeant Major and I were on the road visiting our batteries and supporting units weekly. We were the only Hawk battalion in Korea that still used tactical communications. I retired from the Army as a Colonel 1 July 1983 and am currently living in San Antonio, Texas. The proudest periods of my life were serving in Air Defense units - working with QUAD 50s, Dusters, Searchlights, Nike Hercules, and ABM (development). I was also part of a study conducted by HQDA to recommend the next generation of air defense missile that should be procured. The study lasted three months and our recommendation was that the Army procure the Surface to Air Missile Development, (SAMD). This became the Patriot Missile system now deployed. My heart goes out to our brave troops who served in RVN and were wounded, killed, or suffered exposure to Agent Orange.

TAPS
MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED

Harry (Red) Wade, 4/60-C, '70-'71, June 20, 2021, Texas

Richard T Rowe, 4/60-C, August 12, 2022, Ohio

His daughter requested we include him with our tributes.

Leland Carter, 1/44-H, '68-'69, April 14, 2021, Indiana

Condon Payne, 5/2-B, '67-'68, August 31, 2022, Tennessee

Fiore "RICO" DeClerico, 4/60-C, '70-71, August 5, 2022, New Jersey

Marvin (Ski) Klawikowski, 1/44-D, '66-'67, December 8, 2022, Wisconsin

Notified by Steve Owens that Ski was with the first of D/1/44 to land in RVN.


Guy Hackney, H-29 SLT, '69-'71, February 19, 2023, Oklahoma

Gerald Childress, 5/2-H, '69-'70, July 7, 2022, New Mexico

BG Childress' family notified us of his passing, requesting tribute with his men.

<https://www.lagronefuneralchapels.com/obituary/BrigadierGeneralGeraldJerry-Childress>

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



Fire Dragons of Route 19 Express Painting



Fire Dragons of Route 19 Express
painted by Jim Dietz



Paul Hanson, Jim Dietz (artist),
Luke Clark, David McCray, Jackie
Carver & Jenilee Torres.



Jackie Carver, David McCray
and Luke Clark signing
painting for ADA store to sell.

How to Order Your Fire Dragon Painting

Paintings can be purchased as follows:

Call: Jenilee Torres at: (915) 494-8474

or

Go on Line: <https://www.firsttofire.net/products/fire-dragons-of-route-19-print>

NDQSA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 9, 2023

NDQSA has its finance books and records reviewed annually by an independent accounting firm. They have withdrawn from our agreement and replacing them with a commercial firm will be too costly. An independent committee of association members, who are accountants and have the necessary skills to review our financial books, has been established to accomplish this annual requirement.

NDQSA has terminated its special projects donation arrangement with History Fanatics and with the Americans in Wartime Museum's Tank Farm. The remaining earmarked Quad 50 restoration funds and searchlight jeep acquisition funds are being released to the general fund so they can be better managed and committed toward the Fort Sill NDQSA memorial and other heritage related projects.

Significant improvements are going to be made in the ballot and election process to incorporate best practice procedures. The nominating/election committee and the publication committee will work together to set the standards and structure. Applicant qualifications will be published in the next newsletter as well as provided with the ballot package.

One of the important repositories of NDQSA member history is the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University. As part of our heritage preservation, members are encouraged to participate in their oral history program. Contact Kelly Crager, PhD Head, Oral History Project, at (806) 834-4834. Newsletters containing member's life stories and recollections from Vietnam are being donated with copyright release, so they are usable to the public for research.

NDQSA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes March 2, 2023

The finance committee has been formed from members with the certified public accountant skills to review NDQSA financial books and records. A board member chairman organizes and coordinates the work of these volunteer independent accountants who are qualified as CPAs to perform the actual independent records review. They will inspect our financial books, records, and processes and then report their findings to the board at least annually. This committee satisfies our Bylaws requirements, saves the cost of an external CPA firm, provides a checks and balances review to assure the association that our finance process remains honest, and may even uncover possible accounting mistakes.

The board reviewed its secret ballot procedures and reaffirmed the association's commitment to fair and equitable elections. The Bylaws are very specific that members must be in active status (current dues paid for the fiscal year) for their vote to be valid. The ballot packet will consist of an outer envelope containing a self-addressed stamped return envelope, instructions, abbreviated bios, and the ballot itself. Only active members will be mailed a ballot packet. Voting can take place either by mail or in person at the annual business meeting.

The website committee is working very closely with the Air Defense Artillery Association webmasters in rebuilding the old NDQSA.com website. Meetings with them are finalizing our design and content requirements. The new webpage will soon be online with the familiar feel of modern sites, using drop down menus and easy to find information. It will be a public website for viewing, but content will be controlled by our own webmasters. The new NDQSA.com will share current and past association information as well as be a record storage location for member's Vietnam stories, experiences, and pictures. Eventually when we are no longer able to maintain it, our website will be permanently archived and continue to be accessible through the ADAA website to family members and those with an interest in the men who served with Dusters, Quad-50s, Searchlights, Vulcans, or Hawks in Vietnam.

Story by Rev. Dr. Ronald Sparks – 4th/60th



I left McGregor Range on January 1, 1967 to join up with the 4/60th Headquarters at Qui Nhon Base Camp. When I arrived, a soldier who I did not know asked me what I had been doing prior to arriving in Nam. I mentioned that I was covering morning reports and other administrative duties. The First Sergeant overheard the conversation and informed me that they had just lost their battalion clerk because his tour of duty was over, and he went home. I wound up becoming his replacement. This position afforded me the wonderful opportunity to interact with Chaplain Samuel Hopkins. Sam knew that I was in the Salvation Army and had intended on becoming a Salvation Army Officer – an ordained minister within that denominational group. He graciously allowed me to assist him whenever he could. When Sam was in the field visiting the troops, I would endeavor to "hold the fort down" in his absence. The highpoint of this was the

honor of delivering a message on Thanksgiving at the Base Chapel, which so many soldiers assisted in constructing. The night of that service was eventful as the generators went out and I could not read my notes. I had to deliver the message from memory.



Newly constructed Chapel at Qui Nhon



The newly constructed shelter at Qui Nhon (the original had been only sandbags and a sheet metal top). We welded 50-gallon drums together to form this much safer shelter.



Ronald standing in front of The "Sector Sign" At Van Loc.



Only alters are left of a Vietnamese Catholic church after an NVA attack.

I want to relate one of the funny incidents. That incident has become infamous as Sam has included it in his book, "A Chaplain Remembers Vietnam." While Sam was away visiting the troops, a Jewish soldier came by the chapel. I wanted to assist him and tender something to enhance his faith while in Nam. I noticed a Jewish Flag with The Magen David embroidered on it. I didn't know at the time that it was a "non-expendable item" and Sam would have been asked to account for its absence. When Sam returned, he told me to fetch the item back from the soldier, which I did. He was gracious to extend absolution for my misguided deed and never mentioned it again.



This photo of Ronald Sparks with six Vietnamese children was taken shortly after an NVA attack. They were hiding in the jungle and had come out when things were safe.

I left Nam on January 1, 1968, as a Specialist 4 for Boston and left for seminary in New York City a few months later. The experience of being with Sam and watching him care for the soldiers in so many ways inspired me later to come back into the Army as a Reserve Chaplain. I retired in 2009 at age 63 (after 3 extensions). I also retired on January 1, 2022, after 55 years in ministry. Sam and I still communicate, and he is my "Special Battle Buddy." During my chaplaincy, I never again gave away a "Non-Expendable Item." Thank you all for your service.

Rev. Dr. Ronald A. Sparks. Chaplain (Col) USAR, Retired.

NDQSA
PO Box 149
Savoy, IL 61874

NDQSA Mail Address Have You Confused?

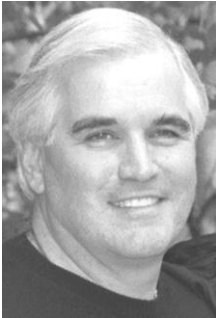
For years, there were two mailing addresses, one for the mail clerk, Dave McCray, in Oklahoma City and one for me, the treasurer, in Champaign, Illinois. In 2021 Dave turned over the mail clerk job to Al Hansen in New York, and he was on the job for a year before unfortunately passing away. I took over as mail clerk as a second job which efficiently consolidated the duties. In the beginning, my personal residence was used as our mailing address, but for many reasons it made sense to use a post office box. We now use the post office in Savoy, Illinois which is only a five-minute drive from my home. Mail consists of roster updates, membership dues checks, and reunion registration. The bank deposit is worked up weekly. Roster updates, etc. are scanned and sent to Richard Burmood for posting to the association's data base.

—Allan Penwell

2023 MEMBERS RUNNING FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Election Ballots will be mailed out to all members who have paid their dues.

Bruce Geiger A-1/44th



I served as a 1Lt with A & B Batteries, 1st Bn/44th Artillery supporting 3rd Marine Div units at firebases along the DMZ. Upon discharge I began a 25-year career as a corporate sales and marketing executive, after which I became an elementary school teacher for 11 years in the NYC public school system. I am an NDQSA Past President, current Board member and Chairman of the Reunion Committee for many years. I participated in our Operation Gold Star in 2000 and 2004, escorting Gold Star Mothers to Vietnam, to the area of operations in which their sons served and died. I am the primary contact for coordinating the preservation of our photographic and literary heritage at the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University.

Alphonse Martin G-55th, D-71st



I was drafted in 1966 and sent to Panama with Dusters. In August 1967 I got orders to Vietnam and was assigned to D-71 Quad 50's out of Song Be. Later I was sent to Chu Lai with G-55 Quads supporting the Americal Division. After my time in the Army, I became a police officer and served a full career in police services. For several years I counseled returning veterans, helping them transition to civilian life and making sure they knew what resources were available to them. I am active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars and other local community service organizations. I have been an active NDQSA member and faithful reunion attendee for many years. I am a current NDQSA board member and seek reelection so that I can continue to serve the membership.

Roger Giza A & B Battery 4th/60th



I have been a member of NDQSA since 2010 and have attended every reunion but one since 2011. I was a union mason for 36 years in Michigan, Ten years were with my tools on job sites. Three years were as a foreman. For the remaining twenty-three years, I was an estimator with a large commercial masonry company. I have been married to my lovely wife, Suzanne, for 49 years. I have 3 children and 8 grandchildren. I am currently on the board of directors and publications committee. I will do whatever it takes to help this great organization. I seek to retain that position with your vote.

Garry Severin D-71st



I was in Vietnam from 1970-1971 with D-71 Quads; primarily at fire base Warrior with the 11th ACR in the Ho Bo Woods and at FSB Haymaker. I have been a member of NDQSA since 2006. I currently serve on the board of directors and am seeking reelection. Prior to this I served as secretary under two different presidents. I am retired from the Ford Motor Co. where I was a production coordinator and final assembly mechanic. I attended Lorain County Community College, and I am married to Mary Severin whom you will find at the registration desk during reunions. As long as I am physically able, I will continue to support the organization in any way that is needed.

Paul Hanson E-41st



I was in the last NCOCS class in early '71. When I arrived in the Republic of Vietnam in July 1971, I was assigned to E-41st Arty Quad-50s. We ran roads and provided convoy escort from Nha Trang to Qui Nhon, to Pleiku and Kontum. I closed out E battery in Dec '71 and was reassigned to F-Co, 50th Inf. I stayed in the Army after returning to the United States and completed a 21-year military career in armored reconnaissance, retiring as a Sergeant Major. While completing my advanced degree education in Pennsylvania, I volunteered as a docent on the Battleship New Jersey and served on the board of directors for a local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans Association. I have a doctorate of educational leadership and history and continue to

teach early and current American history at Neumann University as an on-line adjunct professor. I have served a variety of leadership positions with NDQSA. I was president during the planning and then installation of the Fort Sill NDQSA Memorial Eagle in 2013. I am also a past vice president and continue to serve as a long-time board member. I am the reunion auctioneer and have helped to raise considerable money over the years for our organization. I just took on the duties of finance committee chairman which will perform independent records reviews of our financial books.

George J. Walko B/29th



I joined NDQSA in 2013 and have participated in every reunion since 2014. I was with B/29th January 1967 to January 1968, as a Searchlight Repairman/ Operator. Most of my time was with the R.O.K. White Horse Div., but I also supported the 1st Cav., the 4th ID, and the R.O.K. Tiger Div. I returned to the banking industry and completed my banking, finance, and investments degree at Hofstra University; later earning my finance MBA at the University of North Florida. My career includes nearly 20 years with bank holding companies until I left as vice president of commercial loan operations to start a software company. After selling it, I joined a small communications startup as controller before I retired. Currently, I serve as a member of the publications committee and the website committee. I plan to use my experience to continue serving the

NDQSA organization as long as possible.

Phillip Hosey NCOCS and E-41 Quads



I am fully committed to NDQSA and its mission. My college degree is from the University of Southern Mississippi. I recently retired as branch director of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security where we not only helped the unemployed with benefits and job-training, but also provided services to employers in posting jobs, recruitment, and matching qualified individuals to employer needs. In addition, I worked in human resources management at Chevron Corporation for 26 years. I am telling you this to introduce my experience in coordinating action in often complex environments. I currently serve NDQSA as a member of the annual meeting minute's approval committee and am ready for more responsibility. We are all aware

that the time has come to shift our focus from finding our brothers and welcoming them home to preserving our heritage. I have the skills to help make that a smooth transition and request your vote.

NDQSA Bylaws Section 3.3-Voting:

a. All Regular Members of the Association shall have voting privileges, and each shall have one vote in the affairs of the Association. The vote may be in person at the annual reunion or by absentee ballot, properly completed and received by the designated individual prior to the opening of the reunion. Members must be in active status (current dues paid for the fiscal year) for their vote to be valid.

Story by 1LT Jon M. Corey Btry. G/55th ADA [Quad .50] 69-70

Legacy of Courage

Crisis/Leadership Moment

The scene: An isolated Tra Bong Mountaintop OP in a remote valley in the Republic of Viet Nam.

The situation: Two young American Quad .50 soldiers and one 1st Lieutenant, who was given the option—if not the direct order—to abandon the isolated OP, resulting in them holding off an onslaught of 300 Viet Cong troops headed their way.

The date: August 17, 1969

The question: Was this a script for yet another war hero flick? Or, for those standing on that hilltop, a “modern day Alamo” just waiting to happen....?

As the commanding officer of these men, I'd been ordered to pick them up and ferry them off that mountain OP. We were supposed to abandon and destroy the OP and all equipment. After six long months alone on sentinel, reconnaissance, and target acquisition duty, I knew my men would gladly leave their position for the relative safety of the rear area in Chu Lai.

But I was torn. At 26, and an experienced combat arms officer, I now faced a life and death decision affecting three men—the soldiers and myself. This moment held all the components that would be called into play later in my life, when I had to make decisions during crises on different battlefields, at different times, with different antagonists.

Back on that hilltop OP, my team was awaiting evacuation to our main base in the face of the impending attack by a large NVA force. I managed to persuade a DIVARTY chopper pilot to fly me up into the Tra Bong Valley Mountain top OP — as it was a restricted flight zone due to all of the AA fire. My dilemma unfolded during my helicopter ride to pick them up. Gazing out the chopper window, I saw the approaching enemy activity on the ground, and I knew that our military personnel in the valley below the hilltop position would soon be in real danger, and that nearby villagers would most likely be killed.

The wholly isolated OP was only about 20 meters by 20 meters at the top of a mountain, surrounded by steep, jungled hillsides; the only way to get to it was via helicopter. We had two EM there who manned a searchlight, a Jeep with a mounted .50 Cal MG, an M-60 MG, and various 40mm grenade launchers, hand grenades, Claymores, flares, etc. One of their primary duties was to use the searchlight at night in its infrared mode to illuminate NVA/VC troops in the dark – where my QUAD .50 crew (equipped with IR goggles) could engage the enemy troops. Also, at night the searchlight could use its 250,000 candle-powered white light to illuminate the area and use it to mark a geographical location for any American units that might be lost and need a fix. Of course, using the white light was most dangerous. It was very effective!

As the pilot hovered his helicopter over the OP and I waved to my two EM to board the aircraft and, to my surprise, they yelled “...Sir, if you'll stay, we'll stay...!” What more could be said! I jumped off the helicopter and told the pilot to take off—much to his amazement and chagrin! Challenge the enemy now?



Lt. Corey and his men getting, airlifted off mountain.

Our chopper pilot was stunned. Then, obviously the only sane person on the mountain, the pilot promptly “pulled power” and left the hilltop as quickly as possible. Since we were supposed to destroy all the equipment on the OP, we hastily removed all the detonation charges. My mind was filled with thoughts of doom and valor as I stood with my ad hoc “Three-Man Command,” each of us looking at each other, mentally debating whether to give up our tenuous hilltop position—despite the distinct probability that it would become our “last stand” in every sense of the word.



LZ Cindy

The Mountain Hill Top OP was separated by the Tra Bong River and overlooked Fire Support Base (FSB)/Landing Zone (LZ) Cindy, a Special Forces Detachment, RVN Regional Forces militia, a Duster unit; an 81mm mortar detachment, and an 8" SP/175mm Howitzer Battery. It was the most strategic point in the area; command of the hilltop OP by the NVA would have been a real threat to that combat base. The NVA could mount a heavy piece of artillery, or even a recoilless rifle, which would have caused devastation to the area below the mountain and surrounding American forces.

Then, all Hell broke loose! The three of us ended up defending the pinnacle against a myriad of assaults for three long days and two very long nights. We were

able to inflict heavy casualties on a large number of combat-seasoned enemy troops. For us, there was no retreat. The intense fighting had become more than a stubborn, almost suicidal, “Beau Geste” – attempt just to “save the outpost!” We had taken a stand and there was no way out. Coincidentally, I had begun to identify with General Custer at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. But rather than embellish my account with the typical “lies and war stories gusto” inherent to one telling of one’s past glories, escapades, and firefights, I offer the following document to summarize the results of our decision to stay and fight it out—and “lessons learned” for later in life. On that day, having no place to which we could withdraw and facing an overwhelming force determined to kill us and take the hilltop, I learned a lesson that helped to mold me and hone me as a military, business, organizational, and academic leader from that point forward – and for the rest of my life. It was based on a John Wayne quote I recalled from my childhood: “...Courage is being scared to death... and saddling up anyway...!”

Decisive Factors and Actions

Although it was strong emotion that led to my decision to stay on the hill, I had also weighed the risks and outcomes and recognized that my emotions had to be set aside in favor of logic, tactics, leadership, and “guts.” I took into account all available resources, including vital water, ammunition, and communications gear, as well as the positioning of our small cache of weapons and mines; the efficacy and viability of our deteriorating tactical situation; and a myriad of other vulnerabilities. I topped my “To Do” list with the specter of us becoming a very salient target for hundreds of highly motivated and aggressive enemy gunners. Moreover, I had to let our own combat forces know we



4th/60th Duster at LZ Cindy

were still on the hilltop, contrary to what had been earlier directed, as I did not wish to endure a brutal “friendly” artillery barrage. I fully appreciated the wisdom of the sayings: “...’friendly fire’ isn’t...!” –and “...if the enemy is in range, so are you...!”

Most importantly, I had to ensure that the morale of my two soldiers, and my own, was as high as possible. So, under such circumstances, how does one pull that off? I’ve always found that “...in Humor there is Truth...,” both for the leader who embraces it as well as for his comrades. More significantly, the three of us worked together as one to overcome what logic would call “insurmountable odds.” Ability, luck, guts, and camaraderie were far more important than rank, position, or title. Consequently, from that point of making a conscious, life-and-death decision for my soldiers and myself, I gained degrees of élan, assurance, and pride that have been genuine assets to every major endeavor that I have attempted since that heady time in the Tra Bong Valley.

- 1. When one has to make difficult, yet effective, decisions under less than optimum circumstances, make sure your allies know your “position” and expectations.***
- 2. Know that, generally, “emotion will win out over logic.” Therefore, dispassionately evaluate your opposition and risks, and don’t expect any leeway or concessions.***
- 3. Focus on what you can do without dwelling on what you cannot do.***
- 4. “Go for it!” – despite the chaos.***

Most importantly, regarding “positioning,” I had to determine whether I had a truly viable life and death danger to my men and to myself before deciding to continue defending the hill—recognizing our only escape route was via helicopter in a restricted air corridor. Similarly, in the organizational world, I often had to decide if a significant problem existed or not, without allowing fear, emotion, or uncertainty to cloud my judgment. In every case, I had to decide.

- 1. What might be any distinctly different options or reasonable courses of conduct.***
- 2. What personal or organizational interests would be affected, one way or the other.***
- 3. Whether some measure of relative controls existed.***
- 4. Whether the goal could be achieved with minimal—or reasonable—risk.***
- 5. What personal experience or information could assist me with my decisions.***
- 6. Who was my audience and what its position was.***
- 7. What it would take to be convincing, effective, and successful.***

All the above were battlefield considerations that helped us survive, and ultimately served as the foundation for my future courses of action and ultimate success.

After three days of fighting, the only way we got out of there and lived was that I ended up calling in artillery fire from the 8” SP Howitzer below us and I requested “Beehive” rounds be fired into the hillsides while I and my two troopers took cover in our single bunker. I could not call in any airstrikes as it would have been way to close to do so, given the OP’s very, very small area.

The battle was finally over, and we were airlifted to the safety of LZ Cindy. We had done what most would call “The Impossible.” I was more than honored and proud to be their Lieutenant—I never saw them afterward—but I remember them to this day....



40th Annual NDQSA Reunion
OPERATION ROCK 'N ROLL
Cleveland, OH
June 28th – July 2nd, 2023



40th Annual Reunion will be in Cleveland, OH
Embassy Suites Cleveland/Rockside Hotel
5800 Rockside Woods Blvd. N.
Independence, OH 44122
(216) 986-9900

<https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/cleines-embassy-suites-cleveland-rockside/>



Room Rates: King Bed Suite \$124 + tax;
2 Double Beds Suite \$134 + tax

Rates Include: Hot Buffet Breakfast (Made to order)
Complimentary Self Parking

NDQSA Group Rate 3 days pre/3 days post above dates
(6/28/23-7/2/23) Based on hotel room availability!!!

Reservation Cutoff Date: June 7, 2023

Phone & Online Reservations Must Mention:
'National Dusters, Quads & Searchlight Association
Reunion'

Online NDQSA Reservation Link:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/nationaldustersquadssearchlightsassociation/>

Embassy Suites Reservations Direct: (216) 986-9900
Problems Ask for Group Sales (Office hours only:
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm Eastern)

Book Your Hotel Reservations ASAP!

Submit Registration Form for Reunion Events ASAP!

Cleveland Hopkins Airport (12 miles) Rentals, Taxi & Uber



2023 NDQSA REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

40th ANNUAL NDQSA REUNION, Cleveland, OH June 28th – July 2nd 2023 OPERATION ROCK 'N ROLL
PLEASE READ EVERYTHING CAREFULLY AND MAIL THIS FORM TO THE TREASURER – SEE ADDRESS LABEL BELOW

Embassy Suites Cleveland/Rockside Hotel
5800 Rockside Woods Blvd. N.
Independence, OH 44122
(216) 986-9900
<https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/cleines-embassy-suites-cleveland-rockside/>

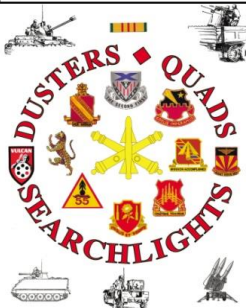
Book Your Reservations ASAP!

Room Rates: King Bed Suite \$124 +tax; 2 Double Beds Suite \$134 +tax

Rates Include: Hot Buffet Breakfast & Complimentary Self-Parking
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Embassy Suites Reservations Direct: (216) 986-9900 Problems Ask for Group Sales (Office hours only: Monday-Friday 9am-5pm Eastern)



Name(print): _____
Spouse or Guests names: _____
Cell Phone Number: _____

Which days are you planning to attend the reunion? (circle)

June 25 26 27 28 29 30 1 2 3 4 5 **July**

Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa Su Mo Tu We

Remember to make your hotel reservations ASAP to insure room availability.

If you have already made your reservations, check this box [].

If you are local or not staying at the reunion hotel, check this box [].



To help planning reunion activities including buses & meals, please pre-register now and send fees for the following activities.
As always, should unforeseen circumstances occur and you are unable to attend the reunion, you will receive a full refund.
Activity times are tentative and subject to change as plans are finalized.

ACTIVITIES

Wednesday June 28 th	Thursday June 29 th	Friday June 30 th	Saturday July 1 st	Sunday July 2 nd
Setup/Registration 10am-12pm Hospitality Room Afternoon Sightseeing On Your Own NDQSA Board Of Directors Mtg. 4pm-6pm Evening Activities Hospitality Room closes at ~12 midnight	9:30am - 10:30am board shuttle buses Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame (est. 2-3 hrs) \$45 pp Lunch & Afternoon Area Sightseeing On Your Own 3pm board buses to Embassy Suites Hotel Evening Activities Hospitality Room closes at ~12 midnight	Open Day Sightseeing On Your Own 4:30 PM NDQSA Memorial Hotel Ballroom 5:00 PM-10:30 PM Annual NDQSA Dinner Banquet Guest Speaker, Awards & Presentations President's Party DJ Music & Dancing Cash Bar \$65 pp Hospitality Room closes at ~12 midnight	9:00am to 11:00am Annual Membership Business Mtg. *Members required to attend 9:00am to 11:00am Ladies Continental Breakfast in Hospitality Room Afternoon Area Sightseeing On Your Own 7pm Evening Activities, Auctions & Raffles Hospitality Room closes at ~11:00pm	9:00am Chaplain's Farewell Svc. <u>Safe Travel Home</u> Hope to See You Next Year at Our 41 st Annual Reunion!

Select & Pay for Activities

	No. of Persons	Amount
Thursday, June 29 th 9:30am-10:30am Shuttle Bus Trip to Rock & Roll Hall of Fame	(\$45) x <input style="width: 20px;" type="text"/>	= \$ _____
Friday, June 30 th 4:30pm-10:30pm NDQSA Dinner Banquet & President's Party DJ & Dancing	(\$65) x <input style="width: 20px;" type="text"/>	= \$ _____
Voluntary donation 2023 NDQSA Good Works Project: Cleveland VA Fisher House (any amount welcome)		\$ _____
Reunion Registration Fee: Make sure you add it into your total. (\$25 individual / \$30 per family)		\$ _____
Total >>>>		\$ _____

NDQSA
PO Box 149
Savoy, IL 61874

Make your pre-registration check payable to NDQSA
and mail to NDQSA Treasurer:
← Cut out this address label and tape it to your envelope.

Tear off this page, fill it out and mail it in.