

# NATIONAL DUSTERS, QUADS & SEARCHLIGHTS ASSOCIATION, Inc.

## 2023 NEWSLETTER # 2 – September

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – David McCray



#### Greetings everyone!

We had a great time in Cleveland for our 40th annual reunion. I want to give special thanks to Bruce Geiger, and Mary and Garry Severen for the great accommodation, and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame tour. The hotel was especially nice with the huge visiting area with lots of individual spaces to congregate for breakfast. The hospitality room was nice as was the banquet room. Thanks again Bruce, and Mary and Garry. I want to thank Doug Hemphill for his introduction of our own lovable Vinnie Tedesco as our speaker. What a great combo these two made for the banquet. Vinnie and Suzann have been friends with Doug and Lanh for many years. What a fun night we had. Thank you, Doug and Vinnie!

I want to congratulate our secretary, Richard Burmood, for receiving the President's Award. Those in the Board of Directors (BOD) know how valuable Richard has become to the association. Thank you, Richard.

I also want to congratulate the Saint Barbara awardees: Ron Almon, Rick Liebendorfer, Al Martin, Ray Villanueva, and Jon Weers. Also, congratulations are in order for our Molly Pitcher awardees: Alice Thomas, Donna Clark, Janie Casas, Mary Gettler, and Peggy Penwell. Every one of these people greatly deserves their recognition and our gratitude for their service to the members.

Since the meeting minutes will be in this newsletter, I will only address one issue. Paul Kopsick has been a valuable member of this organization for years and has contributed immeasurably to both its management and historical efforts while serving as NDQSA historian. Unfortunately, he resigned from the association last year over disagreements with the board of directors. During his tenure as historian, he was entrusted with your information, memorabilia, documents, photographs, and similar items. It is our belief that these were a donation to NDQSA to be used to preserve the heritage of our Vietnam Duster, Quad, Searchlight, Hawk, and Vulcan Air Defense Artillery units and your individual soldier stories.

They were to be used to archive your story and service to our country, not enrich one individual. The BOD has initiated a legal suit against Mr. Kopsick, and I am working directly with the attorneys, to recover all digital copies as well as physical documents and memorabilia that are rightfully NDQSA property.

Our auction went great and raised significant funds. Thanks go to Paul Hanson, Mary S, Vickie, Mary Ann, Suzann, Sue, Vinnie, and others for making this such an enjoyable way to close out our reunion. Paul does a great job as an auctioneer and always makes it funny.

Until next time, love all you!

Dave

---

### NDQSA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes June 28, 2023

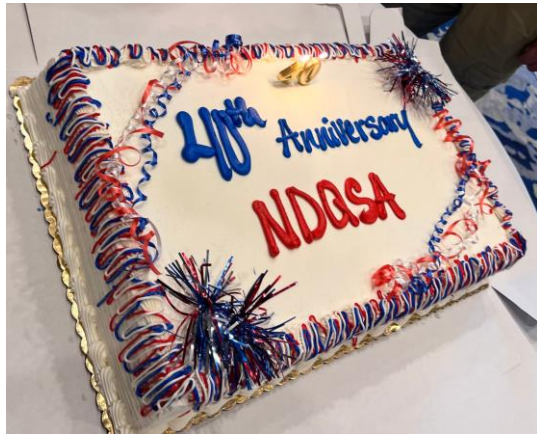
The NDQSA Board of Directors met in a two-hour session on June 28, 2023, during the annual reunion. The reunion notice put in veteran newsletters resulted in several new applicants. The board approved regular membership for these ten new members: Phil Barnhart, John Berry, Joshua Campbell, Carlo Dimidio, Frank Ozimek, Kenneth Sellers, Dale Holton, Rick Krueger, Franklin Maggard and Richard Cassady.

Over the past year there has been an effort to clean up the membership database. The board collectively reviewed each individual and made merit decisions about status, then retention or deletion. There are six who should be recognized as Associate Members because of their interest in the activities and history of the association. They are Jonathan Bernstein, USMC historian; Dave Christensen, Air Defense Artillery historian; Diane Carlson Evans, Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation; Chris Noel, Armed Forces Radio Vietnam; and Susan and Toby Tyler, sister and brother-in-law of Mitchell Stout.

# Cleveland 2023 "Operation Rock N Roll Reunion"



John Huelsenbeck cutting the 40th Anniversary cake supplied by Jackie Carver and Mary Severin



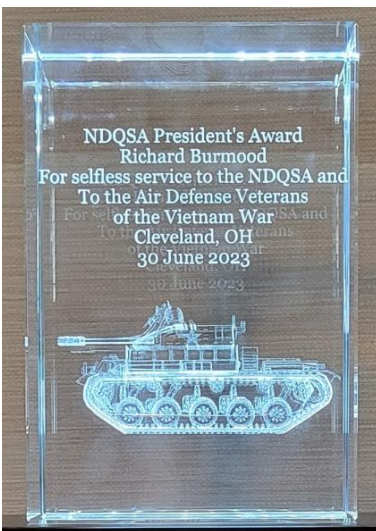
NDQSA Anniversary Cake



NDQSA Brothers and Sisters breaking bread



Jackie Carver – David McCray – Bruce Geiger



President's 2023 Award Presented to Richard Burmood



Peg and Allan Penwell presenting. NDQSA with their new Reunion Welcome Sign.



Paul Hanson and Bob Lauer at the new "This Was Vietnam Map."

# Cleveland 2023 "Operation Rock N Roll Reunion"



**Col. Vincent J. Tedesco (Ret.) - Keynote Speaker**



**NDQSA Board of Directors  
David McCray, Richard Burmood, Rick Liebendorfer, and  
Joe Belardo**



**Dan Ross, Larry Yarger, Pat McLaughlin, and  
John Klinger**



**Members attending annual board meeting.**



**Our Ladies enjoying a day at the Jelly Belly Factory  
MaryAnn Nugent, Nancy Belardo, Sue Tidwell, and  
Alice Cooper**



**Richard Burmood, Garry Severin, Mary Severin**



**Suzanne Tedesco Presenting Molly Pitcher Awardees:  
Peggy Penwell, Janie Casas, Mary Gettler, and Alice Cooper**



**Roger & Sue Giza and Bob & Sue Lauver enjoying our banquet.**

# Edwin Tidwell's Searchlight Story

No one ever compares being on a Searchlight during combat to being on a Duster or a Quad 50. Because Dusters and Quads had tremendous firepower and could shoot back. Searchlights could not shoot bullets and just had White-light or Infra-Red you would think there is no comparison. There is an old war time superstition goes that if three soldiers lit their cigarettes from the same match, one of the three would be killed or that the man who was third on the match would be shot. Since then, it has been considered bad luck for three people to share a light from the same match. So remember, never light your cigarette at night. The enemy sniper will drop you dead. Try lighting a Billion Candlepower Light and see what happens to you.

## **Combat Unit – Assignments**

I was a Crew Chief, Sergeant E-5, and assigned to "I" Battery 29<sup>th</sup> Artillery Searchlights. I-29<sup>th</sup> was part of and attached to 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Automatic Weapons) (Self-Propelled) 2<sup>nd</sup> Artillery, known as Dusters and "D" Battery (MG) Artillery, known as Quad 50's. Our base headquarters was in Cu Chi which was located in III Corps Vietnam. From this combat base, we rotated to other remote combat bases: An Loc, Ben Cat, Ben Hoa, Song Be, Katum, FSB Beauregard, and FSB Burt. I-29<sup>th</sup> became part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry "Wolfhounds" Division combat missions. The Searchlight is a lesser-known combat item compared to tanks, helicopters, and other well-known combat items. Yet, Searchlights and their combat crews played a very important role in the overall combat experience. Just think what it was like for the soldiers who manned these Searchlights and became the prime target for every NVA and VC soldier trying to penetrate the perimeters of US Combat Bases. No enemy soldier wanted to be spotted by white-light or infra-red.

## **Using The Searchlight**

The 23-inch Xenon Searchlight was mounted on the back of a jeep. The Searchlight produced a 1.2 billion peak-beam candlepower. The Searchlight was effective in providing white light in an area from 25,000 to 50,000 meters. It was also used as a night Infra-Red enemy observation device, spotting enemy troops and movement around base perimeters. During White-light use, three techniques of employment were used: direct illumination, indirect illumination, and illumination to enhance the use of night observation devices. Direct illumination was the most widely used employment of the searchlight during the evaluation. It consisted of orienting direct light upon the suspected target. Illumination of the target to a range of 16,000 meters was equivalent to daylight conditions. Indirect Illumination environmental factors limited employment of Searchlights for indirect illumination. At each location the Searchlight was positioned on the highest terrain within that immediate combat base area, making them primary enemy targets. The Searchlight was used to scan the perimeter of the base camp at unscheduled times.

Because of the unbelievable brightness of white-light operations, adjacent combat bases would be notified when Searchlights were used. The ambient light cast on other bases would look like there was a bright full moon. The Searchlight operator would then scan the entire perimeter with direct light from the Searchlight. Adjacent military bases within 20 kilometers of a Searchlight position frequently called for illumination during a suspected or actual probe of their perimeters.

Searchlights were used during Night Airmobile Operations. Helicopter pilots flying missions near the Cambodian border frequently called the Searchlight to turn on their light for position verification. The pilots would also request the Searchlight be beamed on a given azimuth for pilot orientation during flight. Pilots could fly within this beam without any disorientation effects. When flying parallel to the beam, pilots could identify the beam up to 25,000 meters from the light source.

The Searchlight was used to provide illumination for forward observers adjusting artillery fire. Most observers stated they preferred the Searchlight illumination over conventional artillery flare illumination because it provided greater illumination and did not produce wavering shadows encountered with artillery flare illumination. Searchlights supported MEDEVAC operations in two ways. Within ranges of 25,000 meters, the Searchlight provided night illumination for ground troops to perform pre-MEDEVAC first aid. When flying to a location of a MEDEVAC, the pilot would request the Searchlight to direct the light beam on an azimuth to that location. The pilot flew in, or parallel to, the beam in route to the MEDEVAC site. The light also assisted MEDEVAC personnel in performing their work. The Searchlights were even used after the helicopter was on the ground, enabling speedier pickups of wounded and dead personnel. Searchlights provided illumination and infra-red scanning for many combat bases in Vietnam from the southern tip of Vietnam to the infamous combat base Khe Sanh. Because of their great effectiveness, hundreds of enemy KIAs were amassed and thousands of American soldiers, airmen and Marines were saved.

## **Combat Duties of a Searchlight Crew**

The Searchlight crews were comprised of two jeeps with a four-man operating fighting team. The main crew consisted of the Crew Chief, two Drivers, and two Searchlight Operators. There was no adequate protection from the enemy ground forces for the soldiers who operated the Searchlight. At some positions a low layer of sandbags was on three sides of the jeep supporting the Searchlight. Our head, chest and arms were totally unprotected. Upper head and chest wounds were quite common. My crew's personal weapons consisted of M-16s rifles, 45 caliber pistols, and if lucky a M-60 Machinegun, and a few hand grenades. To operate the light, we had to stand and expose our entire body to enemy small arms, machine guns, and RPG's, mortar and artillery bombardments.

### **Searchlight Responsibility**

Because we provided great base perimeter security, we were in high demand. During enemy artillery attacks ("incoming"), our Searchlight crews had to man their weapon systems to ensure the enemy was not breaching the camp perimeter. On many occasions, we were forced to spend several days and nights in the jungles of Vietnam supporting Duster and Quad 50 crews and other Army units. The enemy was always trying to breach our positions, causing all of us stress and mental anguish.

My crewmen suffered or complained about hearing problems or ringing in their ears because of the constant enemy artillery barrages on and around our Searchlights. During our tour in Vietnam, we never left the front lines of the combat zone. If you were wounded and could be repaired, you were required to return to the unit to finish your tour. It was common for all of the Searchlight combat team members to earn one to three Purple Hearts. It was even more common for the crew not to report minor wounds.

### **Combat Experience**

In my first six months, I had engaged the enemy face-to-face many times. I experienced my friends being wounded and loss of not just Army Searchlight crewmen, but that of the fellow soldiers we were trying to protect. Helping operate the Searchlight, forced my crew to brazenly face the enemy eye-to-eye, with no place to hide, duck, or crawl into for protection. As a crew served weapon system it demanded that we expose ourselves to enemy fire during combat, constantly witnessing the death and destruction of the enemy and his fellow comrades. It was "kill or be killed." Throughout my entire tour in Vietnam, I was exposed to enemy small arms fire, automatic weapons, machine guns, land mines, RPGs, and recoilless rifles. Just like Duster and Quad crews we constantly suffered additional mental hardship from enemy artillery, mortar, rocket, and sniper attacks on a regular basis.

After the daily mortars and rocket attacks, we had to administer medical aid to the soldiers we supported and recovering wounded and killed Americans. We had to stack the wounded and dead on the back of trucks, then helped return them to the nearest base camp or to a waiting helicopter for extraction.

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, "TET" 1968, I was involved in my largest battle. We fought against the NVA's 320<sup>th</sup> Division who were attacking Fire Support Base Burt. During this battle I was wounded. I was hit by shrapnel in the head, back, arms, foot, ankle and hip and MEDEVACED to Katum, then to Tay Ninh and finally to the hospital at Long Binh. In just this one battle several Searchlight crewmembers were killed in action and twelve others wounded. The VC body count in front of our Searchlight was thirty-nine. I remained in the hospital until I returned to the stateside on January 26, 1968. Thirty-nine Searchlight crewmen were killed in action in Vietnam.

## ***Jim Anderson's Letter to His Mother.***

***The following is an unbelievable moving firsthand account letter written by Searchlight Crewman Jim Anderson about the Edwin Tidwell's January 8<sup>th</sup> Battle. Jim Anderson's mother sent a copy to Edwin Tidwell's mother. What you will read is Jim's original letter with no corrections or changes.***

Letter No. 5 postmarked Dec 25, probably written the 23rd.

Well, I'm dirty as hell, I mean dirt dirty. I've got a headache that I don't think will ever go away. I'm still skaken, and I was the most frightened I have ever been. But, I'm all in one piece, and so happy to see the light of day again!

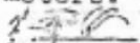
Its like this. I arrived in Tay Ninh Monday. I processed in, got some supplies, and stayed overnight there. Tuesday morning I ended up shotgun on one of the trucks in the convoy up to Cat Toun, the new base for 7/11. A four hour convoy. My truck didn't have a passenger side front window. I ate dust for 50 miles. A fairly eventful trip for me. We heard some gunfire off in the woods, just before we got to the base. Thought we were gonna see some action. No dice. Happy I am"! Got up here at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Met the survey crew (nice bunch of guys too) and found out we were going out in the field at a. Wow"! Also, the btry base we were going to survey in had just been mortored a half hour earlier. 1 KIA (killed in action) and 7 wounded. Nice! We choppered up about 3:30, and luckily no action. We survey in the btrys, and finished about night fall. Therefore we didn't have a bunker built for the night. Everybody knew we were gonna get mortored. So a bunker was a must.

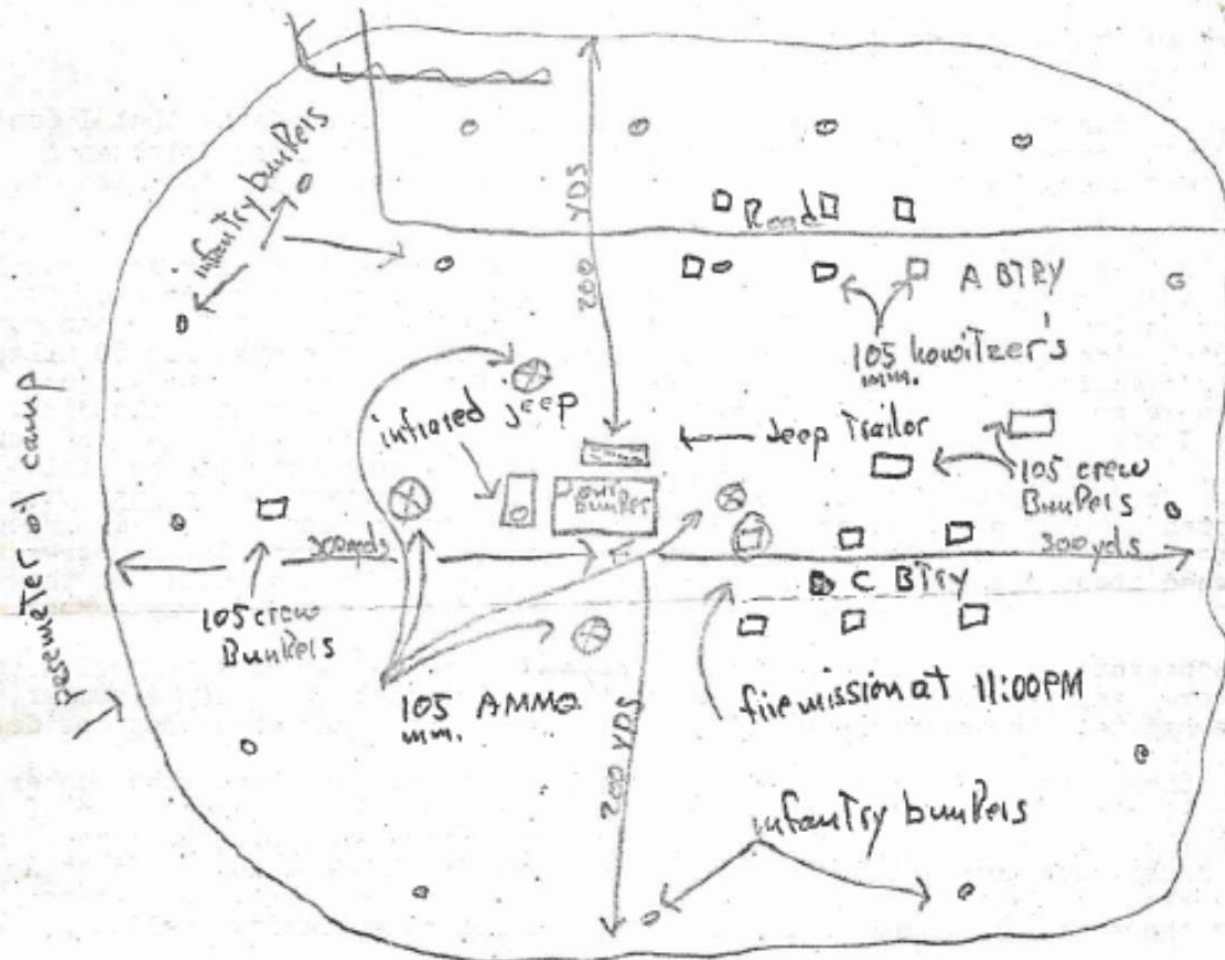
The Sergeant in charge of our Survey, ~~Sergeant~~ Jenking (young guy, real nice) went over and found out we could use the Infra-Red spotlight team's bunker, if we had to. We would sleep outside, and if anything happened, hop inside.

Well, there were six of us on the survey team, and two of them. The bunker was a little hole about 3 feet deep, 6 feet long, and 3 feet across. 8 of us in that??? It was covered by PSP (bridge beam metal, sort of like steel siding on a house, but corrugated. About 1 1/2 feet wide and 12 feet long) and then sand bags (one layer, while we usually use two) covering that. Sand bags along the side, and a hole left in one corner for an entrance. Well!!

It got dark about 7:00. We talked for while, me and Pete (PFC with 3 weeks in the survey unit) worked a bit on the survey, couldn't work it out, what with a flashlight for a light and all, so we called it quits.

Well, everybody finally drifted off to bed. I stayed up a while cause I wanted to see how the infra-red worked. The infra-red light was mounted on a Jeep which was right in front of the bunker, about 3 feet from the entrance hole. I'll draw you a map of everything in the area and how it looked, next page. We were pretty near the middle of everything. Anyway, to get on with the story, I started talking with the spotlight Sergeant and lo and behold, I knew him. I hadn't seen his face yet cause it was dark. He was Ed Tidwell, he graduated from El Camino in '64. Look his picture up in the year book. Anyway, we shot the bull for an hour or so, and I finally got tired, and decided to hit the hay. 9:30 PM.

Next thing I know, KaWAM. KaWAM. I mean LOUD. Mortors, I thought. But it was only the 105 crew on a fire mission. This was at 11 PM. They fired for about 45 minutes. Really earsplitting. Finally they stopped. I went to sleep. 1:45 AM Dec 20, 1967. "Hit it" !!!!!!! Thump, thump, thump. Like about 20 at one time. Almost like a machine gun. MORTORS! I was sleeping right along side the jeep between the jeep and bunker. The other guys were scattered close by and on top of the bunker. Nobody in it. We all dove for the hole at once. It was a real hassle getting in. Everybody for themselves. All the time, the mortors were going off left and right. Scared I was. A mortor has a killing radius of 35 meters. They were hitting within 10 or 15 meters. When they hit, they go like  so if you stayed low, you were fairly safe. Anyway, I w th third one in. We started to survey any damages to anybody. Sgt. Jenki was hit on the ear and a couple of small nicks on his cheek. The ear was bleed bad, but it was only on the top part, and a nick. Everybody else seemed to be all right. I cowered down as low as I could make myself and shook like a leaf.



All of a sudden, Sgt Tidwell and Sgt Jenkins ( the last two in and nearest the door) saw a fire somewhere. It was in the jeep trailer. We had to put it out, or the Viet Cong would use it for an aiming point. Sgt. Tidwell got out--- in the middle of mortar shells and a sudden barrage of automatic weapon fire. He took a blanket and covered the trailer. Just as he was climbing back in, BOOM. He said "Ohhhh". I thought "Oh my God". He said he was hit in the hip and foot. Not real bad, but painful. He'd live all right. The mortar slacked up a little, but the machine gunning grew worse. Snap, snap, snappy snap! You could hear the shells going right over us, hitting the jeep and trailer and bunker, which was well on fire by now. The whole area was on fire. Sgt. Jenkins saw somebody outside running to the ammo pile in front of us. He thought it was a VC, but he couldn't tell for sure. He didn't want to open up on him ( we had one M-16 with 17 rounds in the bunker with us) cause that would give our position away. Also, it might be a RVN (a South Vietnamese soldier). We couldn't take a chance. I was really scared now. I was praying fast and furious. The area was really blazing more, lighting up the whole area. Oh good for us!! Somebody ran right over our bunker. The mortars were still coming in, and the machine gun, and M-16's were really going to town. We wondered how long it would be before the choppers and jets would start coming in to help us. 2:30 A.M. All of a sudden, Ka-Woom. Not a thump like a mortar. "Oh my God, they have artillery too". No, that's our artillery, and not from the guns. The ammo dump was on fire. The fire was raging all around us now. Burning the jeep and all our equipment, everything. We didn't take time to bring anything in the hole with us. The 105 mm shells were exploding within 10 meters of us. I mean I was scared shitless. The jeep was blazing, and we thought it would blow. It was right in front of the hole. I could see us getting burned alive with the gas and all. The smoke was terrible. The gunpowder was real thick. The 105 shells were going off all around us. All the ammo dumps

gone, but would pop up every now and then. Some of the guys wanted to get out and run for another bunker. But, the 105 shells were going off right and left, terribly loud. The whole ground shook when they went off. We were choking on the smoke, and all scared we would burn if we stayed there, but knew we couldn't get out with all the ammo dumps going off. We really thought we were gonners. It hit me, too. I didn't give much of a chance for our lives. The machine gunning was still going on. The choppers still hadn't come. We were worried that the VC had overran the infantry and were coming in to get us. The ammo was still going off. The fire was still blazing. The jeep still hadn't blown. The smoke was really bad. No chance, I thought. The odds were definitely against us. We sat and prayed. The 8 of us in the 2-man bunker was getting to the bones and muscles. Some of the guys were just about ready to panic. They couldn't move yet wanted to get out. I knew we didn't stand a chance outside, though, and me and a couple of the others talked them into hanging on, just don't panic. I was scared, no doubt about that. I was really expecting to die. But, I thought I was really being brave under the circumstances. I never really thought I had it in me. I'll know better for the rest of my life. I'M NOT A CHICKEN! I'm not bragging or anything, that's just the way I felt. I keep my head, and tried to even the odds out a little. We decided to pull one of the side sand bags in, so we could get some air. My God, My God. There was a 105 shell, unexploded, not more than 6 inches from the bag, pointing right at us. What are the odds of taking that one sandbag, out of 40 or 50, from the wall? We took the M-16, and very gently nudged the shell over a little rise about two feet away, and behind a tree stump. The shell went off 3 minutes later. That was an act of God if there ever was one. I'm going to do a lot more thinkin on that.

The jeep finally fizzed out, without exploding. Everything was still on fire, and the 105 shells were still going off around us. The muscles were really getting to some of the guys in the back. We tried to move around to make it better, but only succeeded in making it worse. I was o.k. My legs were wrapped around the guy in front of me, and were not cramped or anything. One guy, Mike (PFC with only 40 days to go) was in the back, and got sick. He puked up. One guy (Al, came in with me. A 24 year old guy, Specialist 4 - my next rank-) was gagging on the smoke. Dirt and dust had literally covered us, being shook down from the walls and sandbags above us. I was black, and it was so hot down there too. I must have lost 5 lbs of sweat, from being scared and so hot. I wiped off my sweat with the collar of my shirt, and rubbed dirt onto the outside, and covered my mouth with it. It worked ok as a sort of gas mask. I could get by anyway. I told everybody else to do it, and they did, making things a little better. Al panicked, he was going to get out or else. Sgt. Tidwell hit him hard and seemed to knock some sense into him. All this time, Sgt Jenkins and especially Sgt. Tidwell, were taking all the shock-waves from the blasts. Sometimes, when the shells went off in front of us, we in the back even got blasted with the wave. Our ears were aching. We jumped like frogs everytime a shell went off.

The machine gun fire finally quieted down. 5:AM. One more hour to daylight, and we'd make it. We had to stay quiet or Charlie might hear us. We thought he had overran the infantry bunkers. The rifle fire was just too close.

We sat, prayed, and thought about living and dying. I thought about Peg and you'all, and got awfully scared and upset inside. I tried to not let it show. All this time I kept thinking, I have to make a good impression on Sgt. Jenkins. Why, I don't know. I just did.

6:00 The sun finally showed. Everything was smoky and black. The jets had come about 3:30 or so and really gave Sir Charles hell.



I forgot one thing. The jeep was filled with ammo for the two guys of the spotlight crew. Also the trailer had several grenades in it. They were going off left and right back when everything was blazing. Also, all the rifles were outside, and all our ammo for them, about 500 rounds of M-16 shells, they all went.

Finally it got light enough to see. We didn't see anybody running around. We decided to get the Sgts. outside and give everybody some room. All the shooting and 105's had stopped. Every once in awhile one would go off. The Sgts. were lying low, and nothing hit them.

At long last, it was over. About 6:30 an officer came around and told us to get out and carefully walk over 50 meters to another bunker.

You wouldn't believe what our area looked like. For a 20 or 30 meter radius around our bunker, everything was black. There was shell casings, and unexploded shells all over the place. About 6 right near us. The jeep was nothing but a skeleton. The trailer was nothing. All our equipment was destroyed except one guys, whose stuff was hardly touched. All my stuff was melted or gone. It had been right beside the jeep. Including my camera and all the film I've taken so far. Oh well, I really didn't mind. I was far too surprised at being alive. There were several grenades around the bunker. Unexploded, but with the pins pulled. Duds, and they were Charlies. He had been close. The infantry had fallen back during the morning, and were almost even with us and the gun battery. We went over to the medic tent. Sgt. Tidwell had to be air evacuated. Dust off, we call it. He would be all right. He had a piece of shrapnel go through the base of his boot and lodge in his ankle. His hip was just a glancing blow the medic thought. He really couldn't tell. Sgt. Jenkins had some mercurochrome put on his ear and cheek and was allright. A real surprise was that out of the whole bunch, we had only one KIA, and about 12 wounded. Several were badly wounded though. Body count on the V.C. rose to 39 before we left. Just before we choppered out, back to Cat Toun, one guy was shot by a sniper. Don't know how bad.

We really were lucky. This was the worse any of the other guys had ever had it, and probably will be the worse. We were just at the wrong place at the wrong time, and didn't use our heads and dig a bunker for ourselves.

But, I'm very much alive. My first day was a bitch, but it will be the worse I'll ever have. You wouldn't know how scared I was, or how happy I am to be still here. I'm really stupid for telling you all this, but I've decided not to hold anything back, let you know there is something happening over here. America is sure gonna look good when I get back. 350 days or so. Won't be as long as it seems now. Just wait!

There are several things I would like you to do. One, write more. Two, get those subscriptions going. 3, send me my hunting knife, hanging in my closet, I believe. The big one in the leather case. It used to be Mr. Keatings.

Well, best go write Peg now. The way she's feeling now, I don't think I'll tell her, So don't you say anything either.

Sure hope I get some mail soon. At least before Christmas. Only 5 days left. Some year this is going to be.

They have some real good tape systems over here. Home reel type. I could get you a \$500 one for about \$250. Think about it.

Well gotta go now. Love to all. Say Hi to everybody. Write soon.

Love Jim

5  
P.S. That was a VC we say, he hit the ammo and then got shot by the guys in the bunker right over the other side of the jeep. They said he was over by our jeep, and we think it was his grenade that got Sgt. Tidwell. They (the VC) had overrun one bunker (the RIA) but the others fell back in time. A night to remember. Go back and get Dec 20 on up in the papers. It should be in there. It was a major battle of operation Yellowstone. Biggest operation the the Vietnam War, and, we're not in the IRON TRIANGLE, but just about 30 mile due North of Tay Ninh, Tay Ninh Province. So. Thats that.  
Love Jim



Mike Labato and Ed Tidwell



Edwin Tidwell's searchlight jeep blown to pieces. His helmet is next to the right front tire.



The debris field created when the NVA rocket hit Tidwell's searchlight and trailer along with the 105-howitzer ammo dump.



Destroyed jeep prepared for airlift evacuation.

# From the Publications Committee and the NDQSA Historian

## **We want your “Vietnam Story” to preserve your heritage.**

You are part of ADA history because you served with Dusters, Quads, Searchlights, Hawks, or Vulcans in Vietnam. We all recognize we are getting older, and time is not our friend, so preserving our ADA heritage and your personal stories has become a priority of NDQSA. The publication committee is chaired by Joe Belardo, who is also our historian. He is assisted by Richard Burmood, Allan Penwell, George Walko and Roger Giza who will review your story and lightly edit it for publication in our newsletter for our members to enjoy. Printing newsletters is expensive and labor intensive so there are only two or three printed newsletters a year. Right now, we only have a couple stories ready in the queue.

Hopefully, you will participate and become part of history. Don't worry about spelling or grammar, our committee will help make your story come to life. If you submit paper photographs, after publication they will be returned. Any questions, please give Joe Belardo a call. Be part of the military and personal history preservation process. Share your stories and photographs with our members. If you have a lot of Vietnam photo paper photographs, that you want archived by NDQSA, Joe will gladly scan your photos and return them with a “Flash Drive” for your own personal storage and preservation.

Please mail or email your personal Vietnam stories with accompanying photographs to:

**NDQSA**  
c/o Joe Belardo  
527 O'Donohue Avenue  
South Plainfield, NJ 07080  
Email: [josephbelardo@yahoo.com](mailto:josephbelardo@yahoo.com)  
Cell #: 908-510-4349

## **NDQSA is Electing New Executive Officers**

This election cycle is for the five officer positions that include the president, 1st vice-president, 2nd vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Those elected will serve a two-year term: 2024 – 2026.

Any active regular member of NDQSA (current dues paid for the fiscal year) may submit their own names or the names of other eligible members in good standing for one of these open positions. If the nominee consents to being listed on the ballot, their names will be submitted for election to the voting membership. Each nominee is required to submit their photo and a brief introductory biography to the nominating committee. The photo and bio will be presented to help the membership become familiar with the nominee's qualifications. The ballots will also allow write-in voting for any qualified member. Furthermore, last minute nominations may be made during the annual membership business meeting at the 2024 NDQSA reunion in Washington, DC.

**The deadline for any officers' nominations including photos, and bios is December 18, 2023.**

If you fail to meet this deadline there is no assurance that the nominee will be on the official ballot. Send all nominees names, photos, and bios to the below chairman of the nominating committee: Contact chairman with any questions about running for office or submitting your nomination.

**Paul Hanson**  
3741 Holiday Drive  
Island Park, ID 83429  
Cell Number: 610-909-0632  
Email: [pdhanson1@comcast.net](mailto:pdhanson1@comcast.net)

# NDQSA Annual Business Meeting Minutes

July 1, 2023 Cleveland, Ohio

President Dave McCray opened the 2023 Annual Business Meeting of the National Dusters, Quads & Searchlights Association, Inc. at 9:08 a.m. EDT on Saturday, July 1, 2023, in the Embassy Suites by Hilton Cleveland Rockside, Independence, Ohio. The meeting began with The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The Secretary conducted a membership roll call. Fifty-one (51) members were present for the meeting.

**Secretary's Minutes:** Last year the membership approved using a committee to review and approve the meeting minutes. There were no membership objections or recommended corrections to the minutes as recorded. After soliciting for member volunteers, the minutes approval committee for 2023 will be Joe Belardo (chairman), Bruce Geiger, Mike Dunkerly, Barry Willever, and Ed Tidwell.

**Treasurer's report:** Allan Penwell gave the treasurer's report. NDQSA remains in good financial health with available cash of \$75,000. There were unexpected expenses due to the publication of four newsletters in 2022 compared to the usual three. Conference calls were also \$1,500 higher due to more board meetings. Declining dues are an expected trend and are considered in financial decisions by the board. There was a floor question about the cost of producing and mailing printed newsletters. Allan reported it is about \$3000 per issue.

**Membership Committee:** Following discussion about the cost of mailing the membership rosters, the floor approved making it a biannual report instead of annual. The old format was based on unit of assignment and year in Vietnam. The membership debated and approved changing that to alphabetical. If an active member desires a special report, by content and structure, contact the secretary for support.

**Web Site Committee:** Dave McCray explained the decision to create a new NDQSA.COM website as part of preserving the heritage of our members and the units they served with in Vietnam. It also serves as an association operations site where members can go to get current information about ongoing activities as well as archiving past activities and newsletters. The webmasters are Rick Liebendorfer and George Walko assisted by Allan Penwell and Richard Burmood.

**Finance Committee:** Paul Hanson, as chairman, organizes and coordinates the work of the volunteer independent accountants Bill Sturgeon (Lead CPA), Warren Pennington and Chuck Swank. They perform the actual independent records review by inspecting our financial books, records, and processes and then report their findings to the board at least annually. Bill Sturgeon was introduced and provided a report to the membership stating that NDQSA keeps good records and has excellent internal controls.

**Nominating and Election Committee:** Rick Liebendorfer stepped in to head up the director's election count due to the absence of Bob Cuce, the committee chairman. He read the teller's report to the membership.

It is entered into the minutes as follows:

Number of votes cast - 286; Necessary for election (Bylaws requires 10% of active membership) - 40.

Votes received: Phil Hosey - 273, Garry Severin - 271, Bruce Geiger - 271, George Walko - 270, Roger Giza - 270, Paul Hanson - 267, and Al Martin - 272. There were four write-in votes with one vote each: Jackie Carver, David Thompson, Phillip Pettice, and Patrick Johnson. There were no discrepancies or rejected votes this year.

- President Dave McCray announced the results of the election. The seven directors for 2023-2025 are Bruce Geiger, Paul Hanson, Al Martin, George Walko, Garry Severin, Roger Giza, and Phil Hosey.
- Dave McCray announced that the next election will be for the officer positions. Anyone who is interested should submit their names to Bob Cuce. Dave informed the membership that he will not run for reelection next year so that the organization can benefit from new leadership.

**Historian:** Joe Belardo is going back to the old newsletters and extracting the member stories. Then he will associate them to their Battalion unit as well as location and time. This will provide searchable personal histories that will be shared with the Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University and with Dave Christenson the ADA Branch Historian at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

**Good Works Committee:** Bruce Geiger reported that NDQSA often makes its charitable donations to a Fisher House near the reunion location. When we disband, any residual money we have in the treasury will go to the Fisher House Foundation.

## **Future Reunions:**

- The proposed 2025 reunion choices put forward by the Board of Directors are Denver Colorado, San Antonio Texas, San Diego California, and Savannah Georgia. Ranked choice voting was used to determine the most preferred location. The results of the first count were: Denver - 0, San Antonio - 7, San Diego - 12, and Savannah - 31. Because Denver received zero votes and neither San Antonio nor San Diego could gain enough votes to overcome the

popularity of Savannah, the run-off was terminated. Vince Tedesco moved, and Mike Wise seconded that the 2025 reunion be in Savannah, Georgia. The motion passed by a raised hand majority.

- Joe Belardo will lead the reunion committee efforts for next year's reunion in Washington DC and has done this venue previously. Dates from late April to early June will be negotiated. There will be two trips. One to go to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that will include some sort of ceremony. The other will be to the new Army Museum at Fort Belvoir.

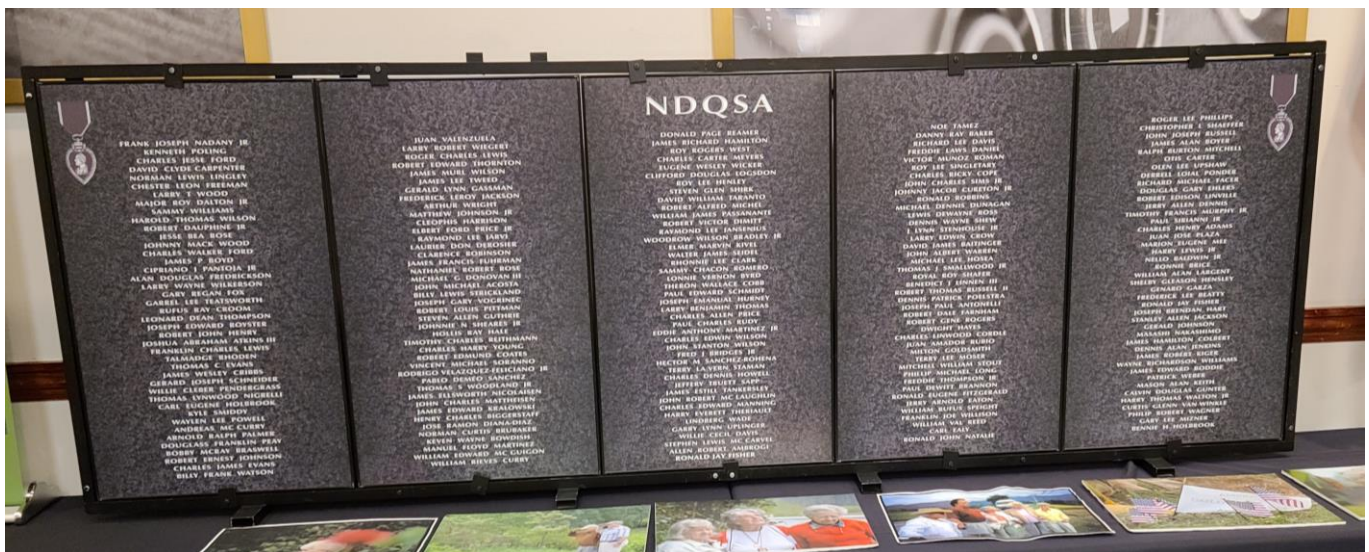
**Old Business:** Dave McCray gave an update on the Memorial Brick Project at Fort Sill. A special oversized brick has been ordered for Mitchell Stout, our Medal of Honor recipient. We are also purchasing a stone bench honoring him that will draw attention to the whole memorial area. Members who are interested in personal legacy bricks can contact the ADAA at (580) 919-2174.

**New Business:**

- Barry Willever informed the membership about The Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255) and updates on VA presumptive Agent Orange health conditions.
- Dave McCray informed the membership that the association was bringing legal action against Paul Kopsick. Mr. Kopsick resigned from the association last year over disagreements with the board of directors but did not return all the NDQSA property he had in his possession.
- Dave McCray informed the membership that the panels honoring the Vietnam fallen have become a storage and transport problem. The curator of the ADA museum wants them and will place them prominently near the equipment displays. This is exactly the kind of heritage preservation we are working to achieve over the next few years before we disband.

**Meeting Closure:**

- There was a moment of silence for those who passed away this last year.
- A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Pat McLaughlin, seconded by John Huelsenbeck, and approved by the membership.
- The NDQSA 2023 annual business meeting ended at 11:45 a.m.



The Cleveland Reunion was the last time our Memorial Wall will be displayed by NDQSA at a reunion. As one of your most cherished heritage items, it has been donated to the Air Defense Artillery Training Support Facility at Fort Sill.

It will be placed in a prominent location with the Vietnam era museum display, in honor of our 212 brothers who lost their lives and educating visitors about the role of ADA in ground defense combat.

## TAPS MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED

George Brauer III, G-29 SLT, 1968, 8 Mar 23 PA  
Kurtis Kuiper, 4/60-D, '68-'69, 20 May 22 OR  
<https://www.sandyfuneralhome.com/obituary/kurtis-kuiper>

Richard Whitaker, 1/44-A, '66-'67, 3 Mar 23 CA  
Terry Sell, B-29 SLT, '66-'69, 23 Jan 23 WI  
Charles Reitzel, 1'44-D, '66-'67, 17 Dec 22 OH

Loren Coppenger, 1/44-A, '69-'70, 18 Nov 22 IL

Donald McCarty, 5/2-C, '68-69, 12 May 23 OH

Peter Riedy, 1/44-B, '66-'67, 5 Feb 23 FL

Earl Verhasselt, 1/44-B, '66-'67, 21 May 23 WI

Frank Zimmerman, 5/2-B, '67-'68, 26 Apr 23 NC

Garth Aegerter, 4/60-A, '67-'68, 19 Jul 22 TX

Edmond McGill Jr, 6/71-A Hawk, 1967, 15 Feb 23 VA

Freddie Wheeler, D-71, '70-'71, 8 Nov 21 OK

<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/26980071/fred-alec-wheeler>

David Tincer, 4/60-C, '67-'69, 4 Jul 23 FL

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/david-tincer-obituary?id=52361930>

Jan Goodman, 1/44-Hq, '66-'67, 18 Jun 23 TX

Marvin Cornelius, 1/44-A, '66-'67, 7 Jul 23 AL

<https://www.morrisonfuneralhomes.com/obituaries/Marvin-Thomas-Cornelius#!/Obituary>

Dalton Tibbetts 5/2-D, '66-'67, 6Sep23, ME



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

## Membership Dues

It's that time of year to pay your membership dues. Our NDQSA bylaws state that dues should be hopefully paid at the beginning of the year and run from January 1st to December 31st. Yearly dues have remained at \$25 even though the cost of mailing newsletters and other membership benefits have continued to climb. The payment of your yearly dues or our new "Lifetime Membership Dues" is greatly appreciated. Please fill out the Dues and Roster Update Form at the end of this newsletter

## Lifetime Membership

The NDQSA board of directors has listened to its members and has established a Lifetime membership option for all members of our association.

The lifetime membership fee is set at \$250. As lifetime members, you are showing your commitment to our association and the work its board of directors and members are accomplishing. If this is a good option for you, there is a space on the Dues and Roster Update form to fill out. Please make a note on your check that it is for "Lifetime Membership."

## Washington, DC 2024 Reunion – Update

We have asked the hotel for a preferred date from Wednesday, May 22nd to Sunday, May 26th, 2024. If those dates are unavailable our alternate dates are Wednesday, May 29th – Sunday, June 2nd. Hopefully these dates get us out of the summer heat and will encourage a great attendance. We will have visits to the new Army Museum and the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

**National Dusters, Quads & Searchlights Association, Inc.**

**Dues and Roster Updates**

Roster Contact Information:

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Spouse or Significant other: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Vietnam Service Information:

Dates of 1<sup>st</sup> Tour: (m/yr.): \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour: (m/yr.): \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of 3<sup>rd</sup> Tour: (m/yr.): \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Primary MOS: \_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Battery and Unit: \_\_\_\_\_  
Attached to: \_\_\_\_\_  
Additional Units if transferred or reassigned: \_\_\_\_\_  
Names of Combat Bases or OP's:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rank (highest grade while in Vietnam) - Officer: \_\_\_\_\_ NCO: \_\_\_\_\_ EM: \_\_\_\_\_

Valor Awards:

PH ( ) DSC ( ) SS ( ) BS ( ) BS/V ( ) ACM/V ( ) OTHER:  
\_\_\_\_\_

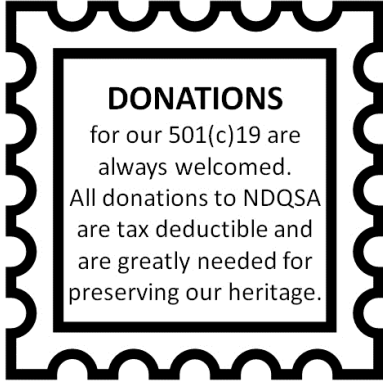
Dues \$25.00 per Year - Enclosed: 1 Year \_\_\_\_\_ 2 Years \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Years \_\_\_\_\_ 4 Years \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Years \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime Membership Dues \$250.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to NDQSA: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\* Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*How would you like to receive your NDQSA Newsletter – Check One: Email \_\_\_\_\_ USPS \_\_\_\_\_



**Mail Check to:** NDQSA  
PO Box 149  
Savoy, IL 61874

National Dusters, Quads &  
Searchlights Association, Inc.  
PO Box 149  
Savoy, IL 61874

**Forward Service Requested**



“First to Fire...Last to Leave”

- September 2023 Newsletter
- Membership Registration Form
- Annual Meeting Minutes
- Reunion Memories
- Member stories

**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 Huelisenbeck 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.

