

NEWSLETTER

50 YEARS AGO RED WARRIORS ARRIVED IN VIETNAM

USNS General Nelson M. Walker drops anchor in Qui Nhon Harbor - August 1966



Red Warriors - the original "Boat People" await their first steps on Vietnam soil during August 1966

August marks the 50th anniversary of our battalion's arrival in Vietnam. The USNS General Nelson M. Walker, on its seventeen day journey, carried the majority of the battalion from Fort Lewis, Washington to Vietnam. On August 6, 1966 the naval landing craft, packed with Red Warriors, came ashore at Qui Nhon, Harbor, South Vietnam to a ceremonious greeting. Within days, the men were in the Central Highlands and building their perimeter on the southeastern edge of Dragon Mountain, an area later to be known as Camp Enari. They remember it as muddy!

A little over a week later, Specialist Fourth Class Gerald Mentzer of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, was killed during a hand grenade incident. He was the first Red Warrior to die in Vietnam. Four years later Specialist Fourth Class Francis Bunk, Headquarters Company mess section, was killed by an enemy mortar attack on Camp Radcliff. He became the last Red Warrior to die in Vietnam.



Gerald Mentzer



Francis Bunk

In all, 285 men died, from our battalion and our support units: B Battery 4/42nd Artillery, B Co., 4th Engineers, and the 704th Maintenance Battalion. Together, the units were called "Task Force Warrior". Through our Red Warriors website, reunions, and personal friendships, we remember and honor our fallen brothers.

Wanted - Stories from USNS Walker

In preparation for the October 2016 Reunion, stories and photos are being sought from the first contingent of Red Warriors from Fort Lewis, affectionately referred to as the "Boat People." If you were part of the first Red Warriors to arrive in Vietnam, we would like to hear your stories, recollections, and your general feeling during that time period.

Send your stories and pictures to: [Ed Northrop](#)



Day by Day History Pages

Our Website History Diaries give daily 1967-70 activity summaries

War Diaries 1966-1970 *		
1966	1967	1967 Hill 875
1968	1969	1970

By accessing the History/Diaries menu button on our website, you will access the diaries of our battalion daily missions and activities. The Diaries are listed by year. While the history diaries are fairly comprehensive for the period of 1966-68, they begin to thin out for 1969 and 70. Thus anyone with details about locations, dates, etc. of any period, but especially 1969 & 1970, we seek and encourage your input so that we can add to the historical nature of the pages.

Email [Jim Daniels](mailto:JimDaniels@redwarriors.com) to update pertinent information. The History/Diaries page also includes a listing of Battalion Commanders, Regimental History Lineage, and Campaigns. In addition, Unit awards are explained and there is section highlighting significant events that the battalion experienced during 1966-1970

Visit: [History/Diaries](#) page



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Reunion News - page 2
- Jim comes home - page 3
- History Diaries - page 3
- Col. Lay reflects - page 4
- Harry Dilks - page 5
- Unit Awards - page 7
- POWs - page 7
- 1969 Yearbooks - page 8
- PX Items - page 9
- Guestbook - page 9
- Deceased - page 9
- Contact us - page 9
- From the Prez - page 10

MIA/POW James Van Bendegom was missing for 47 years



On Veterans Day 2014, Jim Van Bendegom came home. Jim had been missing since being captured by the NVA on July 12, 1967. He died in captivity a short time later but hopes of finding his remains were always on

the mind of his family. Then in late 2013, word came that partial remains were positively linked to Van Bendegom. On February 11, 2014 his home town of Kenosha, Wisconsin came out by the thousands to pay their respects at his Military funeral. Current Warriors from Ft. Carson,

Colorado also travelled to Wisconsin to pay their respects, as did two dozen Vietnam era Red Warriors. The ceremony was recorded and edited. The video can be viewed at this link: [CEREMONY](#)



Jim's Van Bendegom's 89-year-old mother and three surviving brothers were graveside when Jim was finally laid to rest next to his father's plot. For Jim's full POW story, visit our website and view the [POW page](#).

Red Warrior reunion - Oct. 10-12 Event is first on the west coast

For several years the Midwest had been our dominant location for reunions. In 2014 we shifted east to Washington D.C. The 2016 reunion is our first to accommodate our west-coast brothers, and seven have signed up to date. We will meet in San Diego, California October 10-12. Registration is easy, and all the information about the reunion is listed on our [Registration Information page](#).

See who is attending
CLICK HERE
 Airlines are now taking October reservations.

2016 Reunion - Extra things to do and see!

[Registration Information](#) page.



Balboa Park



Old Town San Diego



Mission San Diego Alcala



San Diego Zoo



Mormon Battalion Museum



Maritime Museum

Plus These Venues - Are you registered to attend the reunion?

Cabrillo National Monument
 Heritage Park
 Presidio Park
 Model Railroad Museum
 Air & Space Museum
 Museum of Art
 Timkin Art Museum
 Natural History Museum

Veterans Museum
 Museum of Man
 Automotive Museum
 Hall of Champions
 Japanese Friendship Garden
 Spanish Village
 Old Globe Theatre
 Hotel Del Coronado

Gaslamp Quarter
 The Fish Market
 MORE
 And Restaurants Galore



“What a difference a Day Makes”— I mean, “What a difference 50 Years Makes” by James Lay



In June 1966, 50 years ago, I was on a C-141 aircraft headed for Vietnam. I don't remember too much of the flight, because I was curled up on some cargo and slept most of the way. I was a member of the Advance Party to select a Base Camp site in the vicinity of Pleiku for the 4th Infantry Division. We arrived just as the monsoon season started, and it was rain, rain, rain. Once we picked out a site, it was mud, mud, mud.

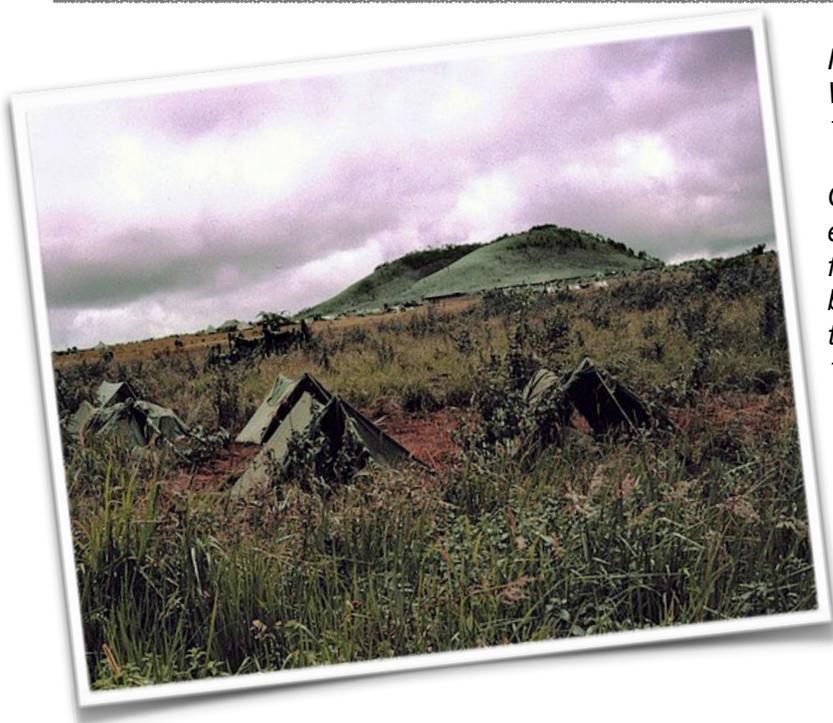
We knew the 4th Infantry Division was on a schedule to arrive in Vietnam and we had to be ready regardless of rain and mud. My thoughts were mostly about the arrival of the Red Warriors and getting them situated in the Division Base Camp. After many long hours of work and planning, the Advance Party “staked out” where the Division units would be located in the Base Camp.

I learned that the Red Warriors had departed Seattle on the USS Walker on July 21, and were scheduled to arrive in Qui Nhon on 6 August. Since we had trained so hard together at Fort Lewis, my anticipation for their arrival heightened. And on July 21, other members of the 2nd Brigade and I gathered on the sandy shores of Qui Nhon. When the landing craft with the Colors and Red Warriors aboard reached the beach and the Colors and Red warriors began to disembark, it made me immediately realize what a great responsibility I had: The command of an Infantry Battalion in combat, thousands of miles from home. It was war, and it was live or die.

It was there and then, 50 years ago, that I said to myself, “my mission is to get all of my soldiers home alive”. I also knew, having served in the Korean War in 1950-51 that it would be impossible, but I would do everything within my power to do it. I was 38 years old then and 50 years later at age 88, I would try to do the same.



LTC James Lay served as the Red Warriors first battalion commander in Vietnam. He served that role until February 1967. He remained in the U.S. Army and retired as a Colonel. “Six” refers to his radio call sign.



In the shadow of Dragon Mountain, the Red Warriors set up their tents shortly after their 1966 arrival in Vietnam.

Camp Enari wasn't built, in fact, it didn't even have a name yet. It was just open fields and mud. However, it would soon become a bustling mini city and base camp to the 4th Infantry Division and home to the 1/12th Red Warriors.





“Five Years to DEROS”

Harry Dilkes tells why he wrote five year history of our Red Warriors in Vietnam

To all my brothers of the 1st of the 12th, 4th Inf Div 1966-1970 - Theater of Operations South Vietnam.

I knew we were special when one day, looking at the math in America and realizing just what small percent of the population of the United States did or were able to do whether physically or mentally or emotionally what all of us did. And what I think of much of the time is what I mentioned to a couple of guys at our unit reunion in Washington DC. And that is "We were ready to die in order to allow the guy next to us to get home. Don't get me wrong. We were willing to fight to save ourselves first and foremost but in doing so we were also saving each other. Even those we may not have always gotten along with."

In early 1994 I had a desire to write of my Vietnam experience and the story of the Red Warriors in Vietnam. There were three reasons for this:

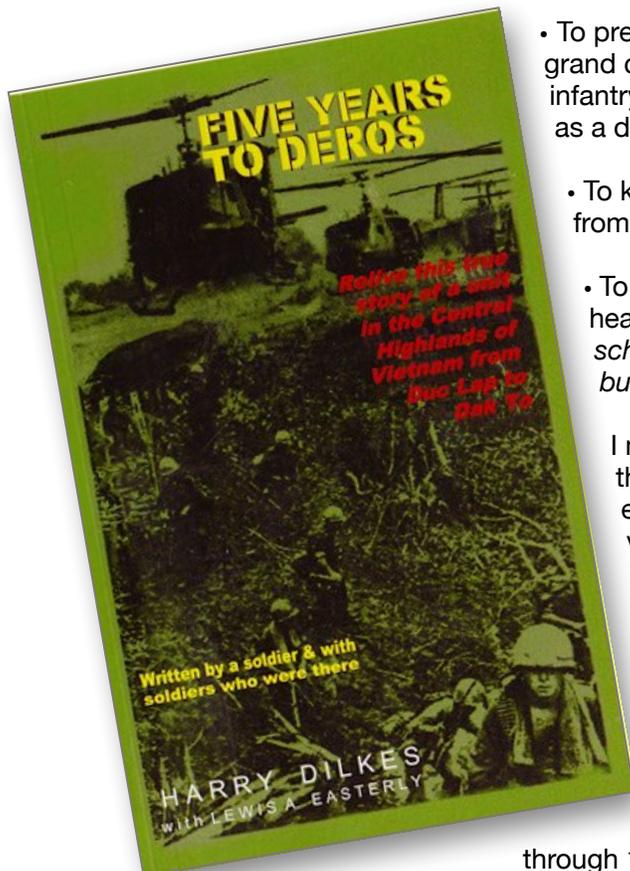


- To preserve and give to my children and grand children what it actually was like to be a combat infantryman in the Vietnam War in the Central Highlands as well as a depiction of what I personally did.
- To keep alive an educational epic what we taught everyone from lessons learned in Vietnam.
- To counter a lot of negative journalism I was seeing or hearing on the screen or in books (e.g. *In the 1990's, high school kids were all made aware in history class of My Lai, but nothing about what the NVA did in Hue*).

I must mention that in writing this extremely brutal story of the emotions of fear, life, combat, deprivation of all sorts, etc. which can manifest symptoms of PTSD into any veteran, I got to reconnect to a great group of men who served before, with, and after me - which, by the way, without their contributions, **Five Years to DEROS** would not have been produced.

I can also tell you of the times I would be on the brink of insanity, or craving for a bottle of alcohol, or drowning in a wet face, or drifting off and getting lost in space. If someone thinks you can experience it and then talk to the guys who experienced it - living through 1966, July 12, 1967, 1968-1969, Cambodia 1970 - and not feel complete alienation, then that individual does not know Jack S__t. But there is also the satisfaction and good feelings that came from a number of people like the Red Warrior from C Company who was there on July 12th, and who called and said to me upon receiving a copy of **Five Years to DEROS**, "Not a lot of positive things have happened to me in my life recently but as soon as I opened the package, I knew this was going to be good."

Continued Next Page





“Dilkes Five Years to DEROS” - A must read for all Red Warriors

Continued from previous page

Or the son to whom I was asked to write a note to about whose father died on top of Hill 875.

Or the son who asked me what kind of man his father was in Vietnam. You see his father had recently passed away and what I could gather was his father may have been a little strict with his sons.

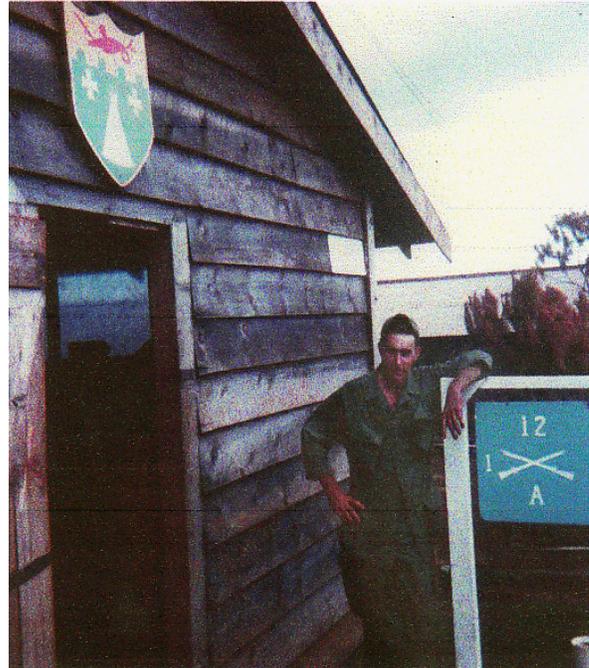
There was also the Red Warrior trying to determine if I was a real McCoy. So in doing so asked about one of my company commanders being from Guam or the Philippines. I told him I think he was from Hawaii, which he was.

And lastly sitting in a hotel lobby in St Louis and talking a little about **Five Years to DEROS**, the Red Warrior responded, " I read it three times".

I am always grateful for Lewis Easterly and Harold Birch, both of whom allowed me the strength to soldier on with this true story of the men of the Red Warriors.

As for me personally, I was able to share small part of my life with such men like Norman Goodin, Charles Pitts, et el, true heroes of men before me, with me, and after me, who risked their lives in trying to save others.

*Harry Harry Dilkes - Alpha Company 1967/68
March 2016*

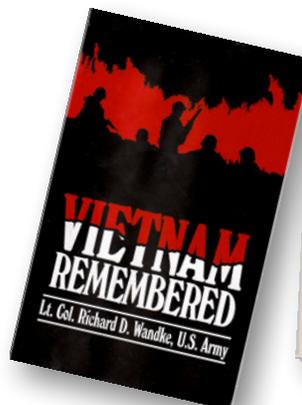
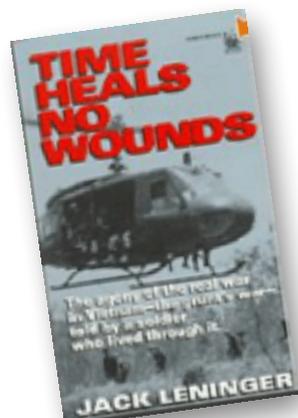


Harry Dilkes back at Camp Enari 1968



Editors Note: Five years to DEROS can be purchased for \$20.00 check or money order payable to DPG Ltd. Mail to PO Box 10655, New Brunswick, NJ 08906. Visit RW PX Pages for more RW Written books.

Other Red Warrior Authored books - [Visit PX Book page](#)



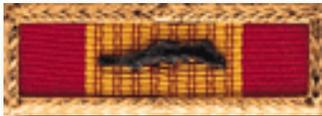


Every Red Warrior deserves at least two of these awards



Valorous Unit Award

Do you have any of these awards? If not, you deserve at least two of them, and if you served from during the period of 11 Nov - 13 Nov 1966 and 01 Jan - 05 April 1967, then you probably deserve all three awards.



*Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry
with Palm Award*

The RVN Gallantry Cross was awarded to Red Warriors who served 01 Oct 1966 to 17 Nov 1970. And if you served from 01 Oct - 31 Oct 1969, you have been awarded the Vietnamese Civil Action Honor ribbon.

How do you get these awards? Information is detailed on our History/Diaries web page, with links to the actual orders showing proof that you deserve these awards. Print the orders, then go to your county VA Representative and present him or her with the orders. They will fill out the proper paper work and then all you have to do is wait for them in the mail. Of course, that may take a while, but they will eventually arrive.



*Vietnamese Civil Action Honor
Ribbon with Palm*

Many Red Warriors are unaware that these awards are deserved and were awarded. If you don't have yours, we urge you to make the effort to obtain them. Visit our History/Diaries webpage. Scroll down to the Task Force Warrior Vietnam Unit Awards, go to the "Orders" link, and copy your orders. Visit the [VA State Links site](#) to find your nearest state/county VA office.

POWS

On July 12, 1967, the 1/12th sustained its costliest number of casualties in a single battle. Bravo Company took a major hit. In the aftermath, seven Red Warriors were taken as prisoners by the NVA and taken across the Cambodian border. Two died in captivity and the remaining five were released on March of 1973.

Frank Martin, Nathan Henry, Cordine McMurray, Richard Perricone and Stanley Newell made it home, While James Van Bendegom and James Schiele were listed as MIA after the war. Van Bendegom's remains were identified in 2014. [Read Article](#) : Schiele is still listed as MIA.

Visit our [POW page](#) for their complete stories and a narrative of that fateful July day in 1967.



Our Red Warriors in captivity - shown with ropes around their necks being led by female NVA Soldiers.



1969 Yearbooks available



During February and November of 1969 photographers entered the field and took pictures for the purpose of creating Red Warrior Yearbooks. The only year that such an undertaking was done was 1969. The result was two historical references for the men who served during this period.

Because of tour rotations, men who served from late 1968 to early 1970 have a good chance that their picture are also in the yearbooks. The exceptions were those who were on R&R or on patrol the day the photographers came into the field.

The early 1969 yearbook has a black cover and the late 1969 yearbook has a blue cover. Both of these yearbooks can be viewed in their entirety on our Red Warrior website. Go to the [Yearbook page](#) located in our Shop the PX section. At the bottom of the page, you can view the different categories in either yearbook. Each company is represented as well as men and activities back at basecamp.

The 1969 yearbooks have been restored and put on a CD that is available on the PX. Cost is \$20 for one CD containing both books. The great feature is that you can view the entire book on-line before deciding if you wish to purchase. The 1969 yearbooks are the only recorded visual history of the unit for a particular year. It really is a Red Warrior historical treasure.

Right, the 92 page early 1969 yearbook.



Left, the 98 page late 1969 yearbook.



Thanks to Maj. William Coffey/Roger Hill & Jim Irving of C. Co. 2nd platoon 1969/70, for loaning their yearbooks for the production of these new yearbook editions.



Our web guest book - Many Red Warriors & families leave messages



Have you visited our Red Warrior Guest Book/Post a Message page yet? Many Red Warriors leave messages looking for long lost buddies, We urge you visit the page often and respond if you can help in any of the inquiries. You'll discover some interesting comments! Add your request and comments too. Visit:

[GUESTBOOK](#)

Our PX Shopping web page has interesting items

Have you visited our [PX Shopping page](#)? If you haven't, you may be surprised by what you find.

Books, Red Warrior caps, DVD's, Video's, Year books, Unit coin, Iron-on unit patch, 4th Div patches and more. Check it out.



Advanced Party - Deceased page remembers those who are gone

As an organization of brotherhood our main goal is to foster reconnection with fellow Red Warriors. We know many have left us since returning home. The [Deceased menu button](#) on our website links to a page of those who have gone before us, our "Advanced Party." But we need your help. If you know of a fellow Red Warrior who has passed away and who is not on our list, please email [Jim Daniels](#).



NEED HELP? - CONTACT US

IF YOU NEED TO CONTACT US, PLEASE REFERENCE THE VOLUNTEERS BELOW

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Association President - Herb Taylor - herbandjan@gmail.com

Association Secretary - Frank Wise - jmhwiseshentel.net

Association Treasure - Tim Swan - tpswan@charter.net

WEB RELATED

Web Master - Del Wellenbecher - del@RedWarriors.US

Web Updates - Jim Daniels - JimDaniels1410@gmail.com

Contact Info. Updates - Wilfred Plá - wilfred.pla@gmail.com

COMPANY COORDINATORS

HHC - Ed Williams Phone: 479-967-8250

A CO. - John Riley Phone: 563-514-3388

B CO. - Bob Pearson Phone: 843-322-0508

C CO. - Dennis Witt Phone: 262-646-8518

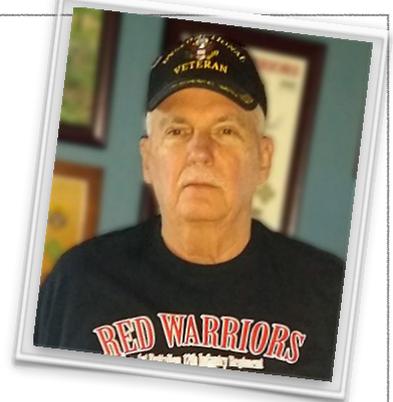
D CO. - Peter Mills Phone: 312-804-2812

E CO. - Dennis Heape Phone: 618-559-8454

Message from the Prez - Herb Taylor

To all Vietnam Red Warriors,

Our 2016 Battalion Reunion is only seven months away and I am very excited as I begin thinking ahead of getting the opportunity to once again meet up with old friends and reminisce about the events of nearly 50 years ago. Those of you that have gone to the past reunions always seem to have a great time and those that have not attended do not know what a great time is to be had and there is a tremendous cathartic affect that you will feel when meeting with men you bonded with many years ago.



So now I have a question for those of you that have never attended a reunion, are you willing to perhaps miss what could be one of the highlights of your life? I personally stayed away from the reunions for many years and attended my first reunion in St. Louis in 2008 and I realized at that time that I had penalized myself by not attending. From that time on I decided I would never miss another reunion as long as I was physically able to do so.

Every subsequent reunion that I have attended and met someone attending for the first time I ask them how much they are enjoying their time there, I almost always get a big smile and their saying they wish they had come to them sooner.

For the record, as of early March we have 61 Red Warriors along with 62 guests registered for San Diego in October of 2016. Now we need registrations from the rest of you so you will not miss the fun that can be had as well as by going on the Midway tour or the Hornblower Harbor Cruise. You will not want to miss out on the fun activities that have been arranged by our San Diego hosts, Jayne and Robert Sams.

During our time in San Diego we will also take time to visit the nearby Rosecrans Cemetery to lay wreaths at the graves of our Red Warrior Medal of Honor recipient, Sgt. Anund Charles Roark as well as on the grave of another fallen Red Warrior, SSG Julio Kaneko. It is only fitting that we make the time to honor these two fellow Red Warriors.

Last summer several of our fellow Red Warriors spent much of their personal time attempting to reach our fellow Red Warriors by phone that we had lost touch with over the past 40+ years. We had success reaching many of them and in March we sent out a mass postcard mailing with the intent to at least get them into our Battalion Roster as well to hopefully get them to San Diego.

I am sincerely looking forward to seeing all of you in San Diego this coming October, I am hyped up and ready to go now! We also would like for those of you that have attended past reunions to contact your fellow Red Warriors and help us get them registered for a great time. What can we do to get many more of you in the same frame of mind?

Sincerely,

Herb Taylor.



President - Red