

AGARITA GAZETTE



A Chronicle of the Plum Creek Shooting Society



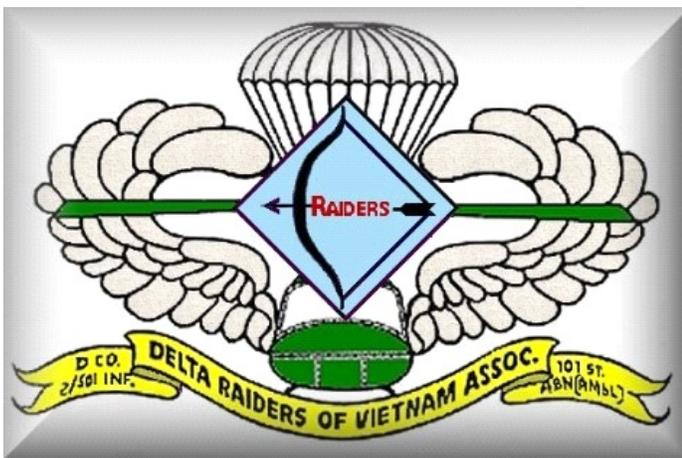
Agarita Ranch

September 2012

Lockhart, Texas

SPECIAL EDITION

Delta Raiders Reunite at Agarita Ranch



Mekong Delta in South Vietnam. I guessed Raider meant he was some sort of commando or ranger. It turns out the actual story is much more interesting.

In late 1967, on the parade fields of Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, a spirit was born that took roots in the founding of a Company name and insignia that matured in the rice fields of Vietnam. It was September. The 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 101st Airborne Division were being brought up to full combat strength in preparation for deployment to the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). Within the 2/501st (2nd Brigade, 501st Infantry Regiment), a fourth Airborne rifle Company was created from scratch. Within 90 days, that Company would be fully engaged in combat in the RVN.

In the beginning, the Company had virtually nothing – little equipment, few soldiers and only empty space. D Company was the "bastard child" of the Battalion. The other three Companies (Alpha, Bravo and Charlie) were each directed to provide 5 men to "help" get the new Company started. Several of the men sent to Delta Company came straight from the stockade. More men



Delta Raiders

2nd Brigade, 501st Infantry Regiment 101st Airborne Division

I've known Chuck Leshikar for more than 25 years. Our sons, T and Ted, played sports together at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Austin. After a few years of no contact, I hooked up with Chuck again when I decided to add Agarita Ranch to my list of cowboy action shooting venues. That's when I found out that he is owner of the Agarita Ranch, founder of the Plum Creek Shooting Society and is known as Delta Raider among his fellow shooters. I always knew Chuck's alias had nothing to do with the Red Raiders of Texas Tech. I also knew it had something to do with his service in Vietnam. For some reason, I thought the "Delta" was from the

(replacements) were due by the first of October. Until then, Delta Company "scrounged" any basic equipment it could find that wasn't nailed down. The talents of those assigned from the other Companies (remember the stockade) contributed significantly to early success.

During the first part of October Delta's "replacements" arrived - cooks, bakers, clerks, artillerymen, engineers, drivers and a few actual infantrymen. More than ninety percent of the Company was non-infantry. Manning was more suited for combat service support than



for a rifle Company. The only thing the men had in common was basic training and a pair of Jump Wings.

Sometime in October, during a discussion between the Company commander and the Battalion commander, the latter referred to the "raiding" of the other Companies' supply rooms, allegedly by members of Delta Company. The Company commander was told that such actions were "unbecoming." Neither the

Battalion commander, nor the rest of the Battalion realized they had just given Delta Company exactly what it needed, a unique sense of identification. The Delta Raiders!! In the following weeks, the Raiders came together as a smooth and aggressive fighting machine, most often showing up the older more experienced Companies in the Battalion. By the end of November, there was a long list of soldiers requesting transfer into the Raiders from other Companies, not only from the 2/501st, but from the entire Division.

By early December training was over. On a dark winter night, the Raiders moved out of the barracks, turned the lights off for the last time, assembled on the parade field and checked their individual weapons and equipment before moving to the airfield and boarding two C-141's. The Raiders were as ready as they would ever be. The training had been more demanding than many had ever known. They had

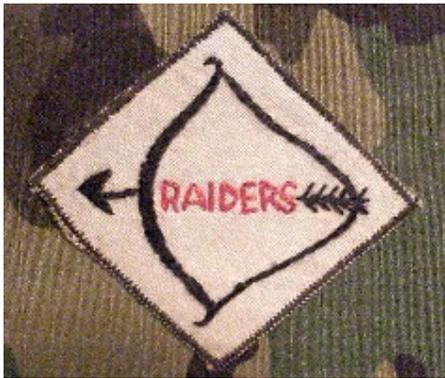
come a long way in a very short time. They had met the test. Next stop, Vietnam.

The Delta Raiders arrived at Bien Hoa airbase near Saigon on December 13th. They spent the next several weeks getting a first taste of combat and the life of a "grunt." It was during that time that the Raider Patch came into being. U.S. troops in Vietnam had become dependent on base camp. Such dependence deprived soldiers of their self-confidence and self-esteem. Pride and esprit-de-corps were discarded, as evidenced by the increased use of subdued unit patches, all in the name of camouflage. The Raiders were different. They had worked hard. Their leaders felt they deserved better. Over a drink on Christmas Eve with the Company XO, the Company commander sketched a Company patch. It was intended to send a clear message to the enemy on the battlefield that the Raiders were a unit to be respected. It also sent a clear message



The Delta Raiders at Ft. Campbell shortly before deployment

to everyone else that the Raiders were a Company of special soldiers. It was a patch worn with pride. It

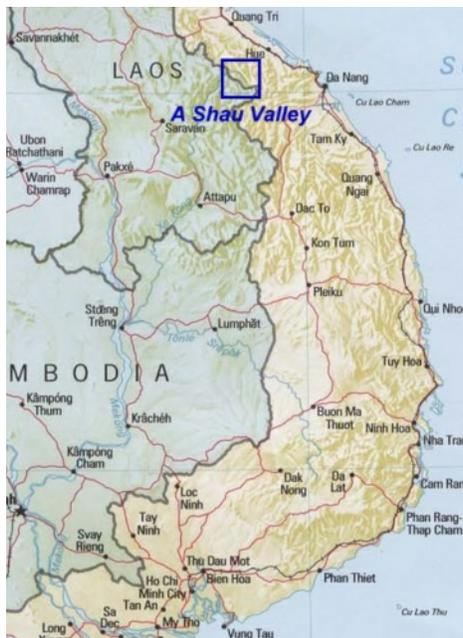


reminded them who and what they were, Raiders.

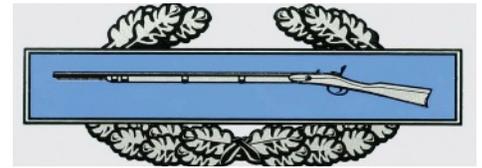
For the next four years, the Delta Raiders engaged in combat, mostly in and around Hue and the A Shau Valley, a key infiltration route for North Vietnamese forces. They fought near Hue during the Tet Offensive in early 1968. In 1969, they were part of the Battle of Hamburger Hill in the A Shau Valley. The apparently senseless frontal assault, the extensive casualties and the subsequent quick abandonment of Hill 937, as Hamburger Hill was officially designated, caused outrage both in the military and with the American public. The controversy over the conduct of the Battle of Hamburger Hill led to a reappraisal of U.S. strategy in South Vietnam and became a focal point for opposition to the war.

In July 1970, one of the last major battles between American and North

Vietnamese Army (“NVA”) ground forces took place in the A Shau Valley. The 101st Airborne Division had set up Fire Support Base Ripcord in the middle of a major NVA supply route. The NVA sent a reinforced Division into the area to move them out. The Raiders were sent in to take and hold Hill 805, which overlooked the firebase. More than half of the men in the Company were killed or wounded, but the Raiders held Hill 805 for



five days and nights. Because of political pressures to keep American casualties low, the 101st was forced to withdraw from the battle, but not until suffering more casualties than they had on Hamburger Hill. Because of the uproar over the battle for Hamburger Hill in 1969, reporters were kept out of the Ripcord area. Ripcord became a forgotten

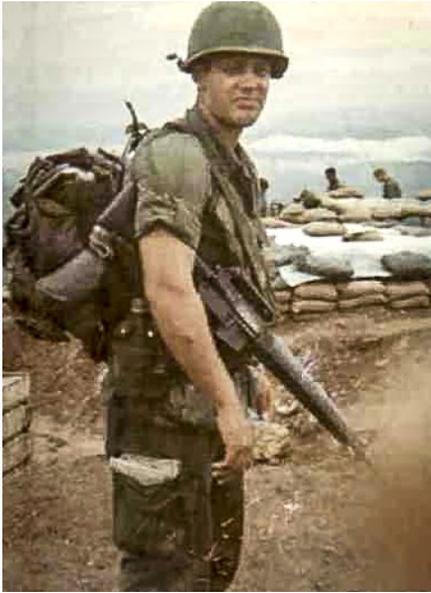


battle, forgotten by everyone except those who were there, including the Delta Raiders.

In 1971, the Delta Raiders engaged in heavy action in and around the village of Nam Hoa, not too far from Hue. While on routine patrol, the Raiders were engaged by a large enemy force in a tunnel complex. During the first few minutes of the battle, the Raiders found themselves cut-off and almost completely surrounded. Attempts to reinforce the Raiders were thwarted by heavy enemy fire that blanketed the area. Although suffering heavy initial losses, the Raiders kept the entrenched enemy force from making a successful assault. Nam Hoa would be the last major le for the Raiders in Vietnam and it was also one of their finest. The enemy suffered heavy



Medal of Honor



losses and was finally forced to withdraw.

The Delta Raiders were one of the most highly decorated units of the Vietnam War. Among the Raiders' awards were two Congressional Medals of Honor, two Distinguished Service Crosses, numerous Silver and Bronze Stars and, of course, many Purple Hearts.

Chuck served with the Delta Raiders, 1968-69, as 3rd Platoon Leader and Company XO. He was awarded one of the Silver

Stars and a Purple Heart. We owe all of the Delta Raiders, including our own Delta Raider, a serious debt of gratitude. The Delta Raiders of Vietnam Association holds a reunion every other year. This year, the reunion will be hosted by Chuck at the Agarita Ranch on the weekend of our October match. Be sure to tell them all how much you appreciate and respect their service to our country and to all Americans.



Photos
Chuck Leshikar
Delta Raider
Vietnam
circa 1968



The Silver Star is the third-highest combat military decoration that can be awarded to a member of any branch of the United States armed forces for valor in the face of the enemy.

