

WHY ARE THE RED WARRIORS RED?

By Jim Daniels - C Company 1969

WELCOME TO THE RED WARRIORS

When I first entered the 1/12th headquarters area at Camp Enari in June of 1969, the first thing greeting all FNG's was a large 4x8 Sheet of plywood with a large Indian Chief painted upon its surface. It welcomed us to the "Home of the Red Warriors." A duplicate of this sign often was found on a Firebase or two, and squads of men through the years proudly had their picture taken against its dusty red surface.

Thus began over 45 years ago the belief that the Red Warriors were in some way connected to the Regiments Indian Campaigns after the civil war. After all, our 1/12th unit crest has a small teepee etched in its very center. Then I thought, perhaps we're called the Red Warriors because we were fighting Communism, those "Red" hordes trying to take over the world. In either case, the "Red" worked for me. I was proud to be a Red Warrior.

Then in 2008 I got to know Red Warrior Roger Hill, Reunion Coordinator at that time, and in a brief conversation with him I know he mentioned that the Red Warriors had nothing to do with an Indian connection. Well that

was news to me, but he didn't elaborate further. It wasn't until this past reunion in Washington, DC that first time attendee Joseph Yazzie, a member of Charlie Company in 1966/67, showed everyone some of his artwork. (He's quite talented) I remembered seeing a piece he had created called "Forever Brothers." It contained the Red Warrior banner, the Vietnam colors, and dominated by a large image of an Indian Chief. Yazzie, by the way, is a Navajo Indian.

The image stuck in my mind and after a few months I contacted Joe and asked if we might be able to use his art piece as our Red Warriors Association logo. He was honored, and in our conversation he said, that for him in Vietnam, the image of the Red Warrior was an inspiration that he was willing to sacrifice for. Well his approval was just what I needed. It further reinforced my belief that the RED in Red Warriors was indeed connected to Native Americans. After all, didn't the first Red Warriors who came over on the USNS Walker shave their heads into a Mohawk haircut? Didn't an Indian Chief



The Teepee on our Crest

The battalion was reorganized and redesignated as the 12th Infantry Regiment on 7 December 1866. In the 1870s, the regiment took part in three campaigns of the Indian Wars; against the [Modoc](#) tribe in California during 1872-1873, against the [Bannocks](#) in the Northwest in 1878, and against the [Sioux](#) at [Pine Ridge, South Dakota](#) from 1890-91. During these campaigns, six soldiers performed acts deemed worthy of the [Medal of Honor](#).



For many FNG's

The Red Warrior Indian Chief welcomed us to the unit

PATRIOTIC BATTALION COLORS

greet us at Headquarters? Didn't everyone in my unit naturally assume it had something to do with Native Americans, and didn't a Native American himself, Joe Yazzie, declare he was proud and approved of the connection?

A New Story Emerges

Well as the image of Yazzie's work passed through the Red Warrior Association board, new information came to light. I was contacted by Tim Swan, one of the original Boat People guys, who said that the Red had nothing to do with Native Americans. His recollection was that at Ft Lewis, prior to heading to Vietnam, it was decided to give the battalions a patriotic tag, something to distinguish them apart. What's more patriotic than the good old Red, White, and Blue designation. According to Swan, the 1/12th was given Red, The 2/12th White, and the 3/12th Blue. Humm, the Indian connection seemed doomed. To verify Tim's story I contacted Col. Lay, our first Battalion Commander in Vietnam to get his version. He said he knew nothing of why we were called the Red Warriors. A dead end. But still curious I contacted the 2/12th's webmaster Arnold Krause. His response drew this quote:

"On 1 October 1963, the First Battle Group was reorganized

under the ROAD concept. From the Battle Group, the First Battalion, Twelfth Infantry was designated the "RED WARRIOR" Battalion by its Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel John W Callaghan."

He further added that there was a document to that effect in the National Archives. Then added that while the 2/12th was indeed referred to as the "White Warriors", the 3/12th were not Blue Warriors, they were called the Brave Warriors.

A day or so later I heard from the 2/12th's historian Bill Comeau, and he differed with Krause.

*"Because of the 12th's involvement in the Battle of Baltimore, it was determined that the regiment would adopt the WARRIOR preceded by the colors of the flag as our *nom de guerre* for the Vietnam Conflict. The 1/12th adopted 'Red Warriors', the 2/12th was called the 'White Warriors' and the 3/12th was known as the 'Blue Warriors'.*

So, where does that leave us? What is known is that the Regiment has been simply the "Warriors" for a long time. The current 1/12th out of Ft.

Carson and deployed in Afghanistan, are indeed known as the "Warriors." As to our RED Warrior name, will the real story come forward? Perhaps one of our readers will shed new light on the issue of a Native American connection. As of now it looks like our Red came from the color of the flag. There's certainly nothing wrong with that.

However, this Red Warrior is proud to continue on to hold on to the belief that there's still a connection to our Native American brothers, whether real or imagined. And just as each succeeding FNG replacement in 1967,68,69 and 1970 were distanced from the true origin of our name, it's certainly has now melded into most Red Warrior's minds that there's a Native American connection. I for one, and that of Red Warrior Joe Yazzie, are proud of that thought.

Perhaps we all should.

