

# **The Viet Nam Triple Deuce, Inc.**

**An Association of 2 Bn. (Mech)**

**22nd Infantry Regiment**

**Viet Nam Veterans**



**Together Then.....Together Again!.....**

**Thanks for Being There...&...Welcome Home**



**Editor: Dan & Vera Streit D 69 DMOR - HMOR**

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**Publisher Dan & Vera Streit D 69 DMOR - HMOR**

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**Vol. 31, No. 2 June 2025**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi from the stormy Midwest. Got in practice for Oklahoma this week dodging four tornados that came too close for comfort. Had some excitement for a while, but "It don't mean nothin'." At this age, it doesn't pay to stick your neck out too far as far as danger goes, but then again we have made it this far. Why worry when we don't really have any control over the immediate future? We learned a long time ago that we are not in charge of tomorrow.

The calendar points out that the countdown has started to the Oklahoma City reunion in May 2026. And the driver's license says that we old goats only have so many reunions left in us, so please use that motivation to get yourself to this one. You never know what is to come...

Hey, some of the boys have come up with a great idea. A book about the history of Vietnam Triple Deuce that we can give to our kids, grandkids and other halves to document and remember us by after we have joined our Brothers in the afterlife. Steve Irvine, Dave Allin, myself, and others are gathering every bit of info we can find about the early days of VN222 and since. We are scanning the old issues of the newsletter, entries onto the web site and in some cases asking for guys/gals to provide us info and guidance as to what should be included in this keepsake for our families. I had a long talk with one of our founders this week, Jon Eberwine. He was very enthused about writing an early history of just how this outfit came into being, and I look forward to his end result. If YOU have any ideas about this great project, take a look at the front of this newsletter for contact info to any or all of us listed there to send us those ideas. This book will be a major history of us in Vietnam and as VN222 and needs input from as many of us as possible...

**Dick Nash, DMOR**  
**A Co. & HHC, 69**

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

It has been a busy few months, but things are getting done. Steve Irvine forwarded me the article about Rome Plows, which I think you will find very interesting. It definitely brought back memories for me. Steve is also working on preserving all the information that is currently on our website in a more permanent manner. Bob Babcock may even be able to print everything into a book. That would be a great memento to leave our descendants and historians.

Jim Nelson forwarded me the two articles from Jesse Rivera, an FO with Charlie Company in 1968. Jesse gives us his perspective, which might conflict with the memories of others, but we all remember things differently now that we are, uh, mature.

Planning for the next reunion continues, and don't worry about the tornadoes. No tornado has ever hit downtown OKC that I know of, and there are nice tunnels under downtown that serve as tornado shelters, just in case. If you hear the tornado sirens and run out to video tape the funnel, you might be an Okie.

For those who are interested, I published my latest Viet Nam novel, OUTPOST, in May. It is sort of a sequel to GROUND ATTACK, and, as always, is available on Amazon.



**David Allin, DMOR**  
**A Co. & HHC, 69-70**

## DUES DUE

If you are reading this on a newsletter that was mailed to you, please check your name on the address label. If there is a 2024 after your name, you are not up to date with your dues, and you will no longer receive a paper newsletter. To continue receiving the paper newsletter, you must pay \$10 a year to Jim May, at the address below. If you are okay with receiving the newsletter only by email, you do not owe anything, but make sure I have your current email address.

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## PRESERVING MEMORIES

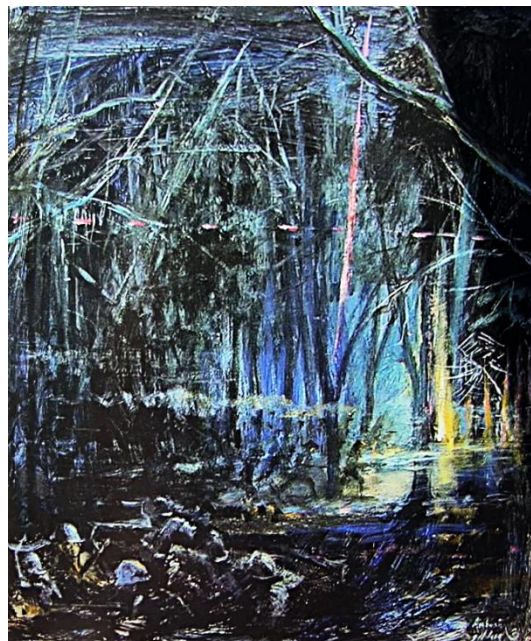
Steve Irvine, who is the webmaster of our Triple Deuce Vietnam website, is busy converting all the files on the website to PDF format. The unfortunate reality is that Steve, just like the rest of us, is getting old, and he's not sure how much longer he can continue maintaining the website. Since no one younger has come forward to take it over, he is working to preserve all the information for future generations. He had hoped that the University of Texas Archives would accept the electronic data for their files, but they only accept paper documents. He has asked 22<sup>nd</sup> IRS to consider developing a digital file archive for us and the other battalions, and they will consider that option. Meanwhile, Steve is converting the files to PDF, which will allow them to be printed out. Bob Babcock has now offered to take this data and print it into a book format, but since he is that same age as us, he can make no promises. I

think we all feel that our collective memories are worth saving, so if any of you have a son or daughter, or granddaughter or grandson, who is willing to take over the website or in some other way help preserve our history, please contact me or Steve Irvine.

**David Allin, DMOR**  
**A Co./HHC, 1969-70**

*Editor's Note: The following two articles were written by Jesse Rivera, an artillery Forward Observer who was attached to Charlie Company, 2/22, in 1968. He was part of the Tiger 1 ambush patrol that was surrounded by the enemy January 1-2. I am aware that there remains some controversy about what happened during the AP, and I apologize if anyone is offended by Jesse's account.*

## FIRE SUPPORT BASE BURT TIGER 1



**(Painting of Tiger 1 provided by the artist,  
Jim Nelson)**

On January 1, 1968, I was assigned as a Forward Observer for 81mm mortars to Company C, 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. My rank was Private First Class. Our location was approximately 1.5 miles from the Cambodian border. It was officially designated as Fire Support Base Burt. I was ordered to attend an ambush meeting which would be going out that evening. The patrol was made of twelve men. Our company commander, Captain Allison, took charge of the meeting, showing us where the patrol was to set up. Patrol leader SSG Mark Ridley and I were shown exactly on our maps where to set up our ambush, and we were told to be sure to set up at that location. Captain Allison made it a point to advise us that we were to take as much M-60 ammo as possible, as well as extra M-16 ammo and extra magazines, M-79 grenade launcher rounds, and extra frag grenades. We were to also take a shoulder-fired M-67 recoilless rifle and extra HE and canister rounds for it. Extra medical kits were also passed out. Captain Allison advised us that when we made contact, we were not to expect any relief until day break.

As dusk we assembled at the perimeter, checked our equipment, and when we headed out it was almost completely dark. I could barely make out my compass, the jungle and the vines made it impossible to keep a pace count, and there were hardly any landmarks visible to us. Finally Sergeant Ridley told us that we were where we were supposed to set up. I was sure that we stopped on the wrong trail, and that we needed to go one trail beyond. I took out my poncho and tucked it over and underneath me, checked my map, and I was convinced I was right. I told Sergeant Ridley that we

were not set up where we were supposed to be. He snarled back, "This is the spot and that's all." I told him artillery and mortars would be firing harassment rounds on pre-plotted areas and if we were in the wrong spot, those rounds could land on us. I asked if I could call my fire direction center and ask for artillery to send a 100-meter-high phosphorus round. He told me to make the call. I heard the round coming out, and when it exploded, I aimed my compass at it, noting the azimuth. I tried to guess the distance, and called it in to the fire direction center. FDC called back and said our position was plotted. Sergeant Ridley spaced nine men on the trail. Ridley, his RTO, and I set up about eight meters behind them. It was close to 9:30 pm and we began monitoring our radios, calling in situation reports, and listening in on the reports from the LPs which were positioned thirty to forty meters out in front of the perimeter. All of a sudden all the LPs started reporting movement. The LPs were ordered to pull back inside the perimeter. We also began hearing heavy movement around us, and we heard the VC and NVA screaming as they began their attack. Now the enemy was behind and in front of our position. About the same time, the 50-cals and small arms began firing, and we could hear explosions going off and the jungle was coming alive. The 50-cal tracers were coming right over our heads and chewing up trees and the jungle. I realized we were going to be overwhelmed. I screamed at Sergeant Ridley that we had to get off the trail and seek a better position in the jungle. He told me to lead the way. I crawled back about thirty meters and to my surprise I fell in a bomb crater. The Sergeant Ridley and the RTO fell in behind me, and we moved to a better position. I was trying to make radio contact, but the traffic was crazy. Then it

hit me that the nine men on that trail were still out there, pinned down. I had to go back and try to locate them, and lead them back to the crater. I crawled out and tried to get my bearings as I made my way around the crater. The jungle was being chewed up by the rounds coming just over me. The I felt a bit slap on my chin and a burning sensation. I kept going in the direction that I thought the trail and the men might be on. Finally I came upon a small clearing with a trail. I crawled about thirty meters and came up on San Favata. I grabbed his leg and hollered, "Don't shoot, it's me, Jesse!" I told him to pass the word to follow me, single file, back to the bomb crater. I crawled back, still dodgi9ng the intense fire, trying to find the edge of the crater. I finally found it and everyone followed me in. I told them to get ready and to set up defensive positions. I was squatting down next to Sam, looking up at the tracers and illumination floating down to the jungle floor, when I noticed six or eight NVA coming our way. I slammed my elbow into Sam's ribs, and he raised the M-60 and I aimed my M-16. Sam opened up, and you could see the tracers going through them, and they all went down.

We knew there were mor coming, so I started throwing grenades in the direction the gooks had come from, hoping to direct the enemy away from us. The grenades went off, and we heard screams and coughing. I thought, "Damn, that will bring more gooks." I saw an explosion to my left and heard some of our guys creaming in pain. I got my gear and crawled that way. One of the men asked me what had just happened. I told him a gook must have thrown or fired something we had to see if he was still out there. I rose up slowly, knowing that I was probably going to get my head blown off, but saw that the gook

was slowly crawling away. I fired my M-16 three times and then it jammed. I pulled the pin on a grenade and rolled it between his legs, and blow him in half. I could see more gooks crawling around, so I asked the men around me to throw more grenades. Sam Favata came crawling by me. Now my only weapon was my radio, so I followed Sam.

As I approached the other men, I told them to try and keep their muzzle flashed below the rim of the hole, so as not to give themselves away. Also, to try and not fire when the gunships were close by. The jets were firing their 20mm cannons and tearing up the jungle. The gooks were so close. I got to where Sam was and I was about to cross over him when he shoved me aside. Six or seven gooks wee on the trail just above where Sergeant Ridley and the RTO were set up. Ame opened up and knocked all the gooks down. Some of the rounds had barely missed Sergeant Ridely, and he started cursing at Sam. I hollered back, "Shut the fuck up, he just saved your life!" Things were getting really bad, so I crawled out of the crater and started calling in fire missions. I could see the VC and NVA rushing across on their way to the perimeter and our company area. I called in fire to try and head them off, and then they started coming towards our position. Before we knew it, they were almost on top of us. I had to adjust my mortar fire to within ten meters of our position and try to bracket fire in and out to try and keep them off of us. The fire direction center (FDC) called me back and advised me that they had air strikes coming in, if we could use them. I told them the gooks were all over us, and for them to give us what they had. They said, "Okay, good luck."

I was still lying on the rim of the crater when the first jet came over us. It was so

low it blocked out the sky, but nothing happened. Then I remembered that it had to let go of his bombs ahead of its target. I screamed for everyone to get down, and just then the bombs hit. Shrapnel tore into my shoulder and slammed me back into the crater. My arm and shoulder were burning, and I couldn't move. Then I could hear moaning all around me. Thank God the jets had dropped anti-personnel bombs (cluster bombs) on our position, the only place they could. Contact was very minimal after that. It was coming up on daybreak, so we had to prepare for the gooks coming back from the perimeter. Sam and I made our way to where Norm Nishikubo was. Earlier a VC had crawled forward and fired an RPG down in the crater. It hit between Norm and the man next to him and exploded, sending the RPG's energy into the ground. The next morning they showed me the round, it was as flat as a pancake. Norm was sure blessed that night. Sam and I were sitting across from where Sergeant Ridley had been all night. Sam had put his M-60 on the ground between us. All of a sudden we heard automatic fire and rounds were kicking up dirt and gravel next to my feet. I saw who I believe was John Marts raise up and fire his M-16, killing a gook that was falling back and collecting weapons and bodies. I heard that a relief patrol was coming out to get us. A few minutes later I noticed them about twenty meters behind us. We hollered at them to look our way. It was Captain Allison and fourteen men that were sent out to take us back to safety.

When Sergeant Ridley saw them up close, he grabbed Sam's M-60 by the barrel and slammed on the ground, trying to help himself out of the crater. The M-60 discharged and burned his hand, so a medic bandaged him up. When we arrived back at

the perimeter, I was taken to where the dust-off choppers were loading up the wounded. I was flown to Dau Tieng and then to Vung Tau hospital.

I later learned that Lieutenant Gordon Kelley had been coordinating artillery fire to coincide with where I was adjusting my 81-mm fire missions. He surely saved our lives that night. I also learned that he was the one who called in our air strikes. FDC had to patch him in since my radio wasn't capable of artillery or air support communications.

When I was released from the hospital and returned to my unit, the men that were on the patrol told me that they were all asked to make out statements of facts as to what had taken place during the ambush patrol. I was never asked what had taken place, or to make a statement. I wish I could locate those statements.

**Jesse (Jesus) A. Rivera**  
**13 May 2025**

## **Rivera Medal**

I was wounded on May 13, 1968, and I was evacuated from Cu Chi to Saigon, and then to Yokohama, Japan, Army Hospital, where I had surgery to repair damage to my upper right arm caused by a gunshot. I remained there until I was transported by medical flight to California, and then to the 250<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, 1<sup>st</sup> Medical Group, 4<sup>th</sup> Army Hospital, Sam Houston Army Base in San Antonio, Texas.

In September 1968 I was placed on convalescent leave and allowed to go home (in San Antonio) and report weekly so they could monitor my progress and evaluations. About two months later I was given orders to report to Fort Lewis, Washington, and



was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment.

In December I was advised that Major General William W. Beverly was going to retire and during his ceremony I would be awarded the Silver Star for action in which I was involved on January 1 and 2, 1968, during the battle of Fire Support Base Burt, Republic of Vietnam. About a week later I was given orders to report back to Fort Sam Houston and 250<sup>th</sup> General Hospital. There I fulfilled my military obligation and was released from service on April 6, 1969. I question why I wasn't awarded the Silver Star in San Antonio, Texas, my home town. Was it because Sergeant Mark Ridley's home town was also San Antonio? I would have liked for my family to have been allowed to be present when I received the medal, but instead they shipped me to Fort Lewis, Washington and back. The Social Security number and service number on my citation and certificates are clearly incorrect, and it took me four years to get them corrected.

**Jesse (Jesus) A. Rivera**

*The following article is reprinted with the permission of the author*

## **How to Clear a Jungle: The 62d Engineer Battalion (Land Clearing) in Vietnam**

*written by COL William R. Licht (USA, Ret)*



*The 62d Engineer Battalion carved the Alaska-Canadian Highway out of the Yukon in World War II and built bridges in the Korean War. In Vietnam, it took on a new and unique mission: clearing jungles. William Licht served with the battalion in Vietnam and describes its operations here.*

Land Clearing in Vietnam meant cutting down jungles used by the enemy as sanctuaries. Tropical rain forests were major obstacles to US and ARVN military movement and operations. The Viet Cong used the jungle to hide bases, operations, and supply lines. The defoliation program, using Agent Orange, of the early 1960s had the weakness of only killing off the tops of trees in the triple canopy jungle, leaving the bottom canopy that covers the jungle floor intact.

After experimenting with several methods of jungle clearing, the Army settled on using the Caterpillar D7E tractor (standard Army tractor) equipped with the "Rome Plow" kit, manufactured by the Rome Plow Company in Georgia and already in use in the US for commercial land clearing.

The Rome Plow kit consists primarily of a cab to protect the tractor and Operator, and a special angled blade with a "Stinger" on the left for felling trees. The 2.5 ton blade

was mounted at a 30-degree angle to cast debris to the right.



A few additional items were included in the Rome Plow kit to protect the tractor and the operator from both jungle hazards and enemy activity, such as a radiator guard, hydraulic ram protector, and some armor plating.

In early 1967, the first Rome Plow kits arrived in Vietnam for use by engineer units. It was found that converting just a few D7Es to Rome Plows in an Engineer Combat Battalion was ineffective in clearing the massive jungle areas encountered.

In mid-1967, the first Land Clearing Team was born, with one officer, one warrant officer, 62 enlisted men and 30 Rome Plows. These teams were attached to Combat Engineer Battalions, but it soon became clear that the enormous logistical support required by the teams exceeded the capabilities of these battalions. Command and control of the teams was difficult, and it diluted the other staff functions of the battalion. In addition, these battalions did not have the required maintenance capability to support the Rome Plows.

In January 1969, the concept changed. The 62d Engineer Battalion (Construction), which had deployed to Vietnam in August 1965, was directed to deactivate its B, C, and D Construction Companies. They were replaced by three new Land Clearing Companies (60<sup>th</sup>, 501<sup>st</sup>, and 984<sup>th</sup>) that were activated using the resources of the Land Clearing Teams.

To complete the reorganization, A Co was tailored to provide the substantial maintenance and transportation capability required to support the new Land Clearing Companies. The only change to Headquarters Company was to increase the Battalion Maintenance Section from two men to one officer, one warrant officer, two NCOs and a clerk.

Tactical commanders determined the areas to be cleared. Commanders would recommend the type of cut and location up their chain of command to II Field Forces, which made the final decision.

The tactical commander, in whose area the cut was performed, was responsible for providing security for the operation and a light observation helicopter (LOH) for use by the Land Clearing Company.

It turned out that the best security arrangement was to assign a troop of armored cavalry to the operation. The armored cavalry had the mobility to keep up with the Rome Plows and the fire power to meet any challenge by the enemy.

A typical operation involved one Land Clearing Company working in a general area for 45 days. It was found that after about 45 days the efficiency of the unit fell off due to the need for higher level of maintenance on



the tractors than could be performed in the field and the need to repair enemy damage.

The first day of the operation was to convoy to the initial location, where bulldozers would make a circular night defensive position (NDP) by plowing up an earth berm perimeter about 40 or 50 yards in diameter. Each morning after a hot breakfast, the plows' operators would drive single file to the starting position of the day's cut. Lunch was C-rations in the cut. At the end of the work day, the plows would return to the NDP for hot dinner and to perform repairs and maintenance to the plows.

As the operation continued, the cut became farther away from the NDP, so a new NDP would be created closer to the cutting operation.



**Rome Plow on display at the Engineer Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, MO  
(William Licht)**

On a typical day the lieutenant in charge of the cut would be in a LOH in radio communication with the operator of the first plow in the queue. He would guide the lead plow in tracing a rectangle to outline the area to be cut that day. It was important to have an experienced lieutenant, because the area that a

company could cut that day depended upon the type and density of the jungle, the terrain involved, and the number of plows available.

The remaining plows lined up in echelon to the left rear of the plow ahead. This was because the Rome Plow blade was angled such that cut trees fell to the right. Once the initial traced has been made, the column of plows continued to go around the trace counter-clockwise until the entire area was cleared.

It was important to ensure that at the entire rectangle of jungle initially traced was cut that day. It was not prudent to come back the next day, since the enemy might booby trap the uncut area overnight.

At the end of the 45-day operation the company would be convoyed back to the Battalion area in Long Binh for a 15-day standdown for rest of the operators and repair and maintenance of their plows. The 45-day operations and 15-day standdowns were staggered such that only one Land Clearing Company was in standdown at a time. A Company did not have the capacity to service more than one Land Clearing Company at a time.

Jungle clearing was a difficult and dangerous task. The courageous land clearers earned high praise and recognition for their efforts. The hours were long and the work was hard. The plow operator had to be tough and dedicated. He operated in a cab that could routinely be over 110 degrees, as he got bounced around over rough jungle floor and was continually in danger of being bitten by scorpions or stung by bees.

Other hazards involved tumbling into bomb craters, detonating boobytraps or unexploded ordnance, or receiving enemy fire. A total of twenty-seven land clearers were killed-in-action and over 700 were wounded-in-action in Vietnam.

During the Vietnam War, over 300,000 acres of jungle were cleared. Regarding the 62nd Engineer Battalion, LTG Julian J Ewell, Commanding General of II Field Forces stated: "I regard this battalion as the single most powerful tool we have in frustrating and defeating the communists."

MG Williamson, CG, 35th Infantry Division, stated: "For every operation I conduct in an area not cleared I lose 10 men as opposed to only one man in an area you've cleared."

## **I REMEMBER ROME PLOW**

It was August 4, 1969, and Alpha Company was working in the Boi Loi Woods. We had a new Company Commander, Captain Zonne, and I was now the platoon RTO for third platoon, under 1LT Guitierrez. After a hard day doing a dismounted sweep through the woods, we set up a night laager in the middle of a Rome Plow strip. During the sweep, a branch had caught on the handset cord of my PRC-25 and pulled the wires out of the connector on the radio. Our platoon was operating independently, and we needed the radio. Using my pocket knife and a pair of pliers, I did a field-expedient repair that returned the cord to its original condition, and I was justifiably proud of myself. I was trying to be the best

RTO possible, in the hope of eventually being selected to operate the radios in the Battalion TOC. That night, Chuck Blair led the platoon's ambush patrol out into the surrounding woods. Shortly after they left, a gook popped up out of a tunnel entrance in the Rome Plow and fired an RPG that hit the track parked next to mine. It hit the right rear corner and penetrated the battery box, spraying the interior with shrapnel and battery acid. It injured two GIs, an ARVN, and a Kit Carson Scout. Because we had APs and LPs out, we couldn't return fire.

Shortly afterward, our AP came back in, because the radio had malfunctioned. According to Chuck, my repair of the handset cord had failed, and the cord had come loose again. Commo Ed, our company radio mech, gave me a severe dressing down, reminding me I was not authorized to make those sort of radio repairs myself. I was worried that he might block my selection to work at the TOC, should I ever be considered for that position. As it happened, that was never a problem, because a few weeks later I was pulled from the field and assigned to S-2. Fast forward to my last month in country. I was stationed at a small compound near Cu Chi, where I met up with Chuck Blair again, who was assigned there as perimeter defense. We were talking about some shared experiences, and he admitted that my radio repair had not actually failed that night in the Rome Plow. He and the other guys, tired from the day's sweep, decided they didn't want to be out on AP all night, so Chuck decided to sabotage the radio. He told me he had to lay the radio on the ground and step on it while he jerked on the handset cord several times until it pulled loosed again. He apologized, but I wasn't angry. I understood why he had

done it, and it hadn't impacted my career anyway. More importantly, neither of us was back in the Rome Plow areas.

**David Allin, DMOR  
A Co./HHC 1969-70**

## **BRICKTOWN, OKLAHOMA CITY**



When you come to Oklahoma City for our next reunion, you will definitely want to visit Bricktown. Only three blocks from the hotel, Bricktown was originally a warehouse district providing storage space for cargo brought in on the railroad. When the railroads changed their procedures, and trucks became more important for moving cargo, the warehouse buildings were mostly abandoned. In the 1990's the mayor of OKC spearheaded a project to rejuvenate the downtown area and make it more inviting for visitors. The warehouses were

converted to restaurants, clubs, bars, and museums, and a canal was built that connects the entertainment district to a beautiful park. Water taxis go up and down the canal, with the operators providing an enjoyable guided tour of the area and the history.

There are dozens of restaurants and bars in Bricktown, ranging from Fuzzy's Taco Shack to the Bourbon St. Café, the Old Spaghetti Factory, Toby Keith's I Love This Bar and Grill, and Mickey Mantle's steakhouse. If you go to Mickey Mantle's, bring lots of money. Or you can sit along the canal riverwalk and have a drink at several different bars to watch the water taxis go by.



Included in Bricktown is the Chickasaw Ball Park, a beautiful baseball venue where the OKC Comets play. On either side of the canal is Brickopolis, with one side featuring a multistory video game arcade, and on the other side an 18-hole miniature golf course. The park at the south end of the canal

features life-size statues replicating the first Land Run in 1889.



Bricktown also houses the National Banjo Museum, which is much more interesting than it sounds, and is worth a visit. There is also a 16-screen movie theatre. And all of this is within easy walking distance of the hotel, or you can ride the OKC Trolley which

runs right by the hotel and can drop you anywhere in Bricktown.

**David Allin, DMOR  
A Co./HHC 1969-70**