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Page: 1B

Members of 'Geronimo' reunite after 42 years

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Forty-two years and seven days after leaving Fort Campbell for Vietnam, more than 200 original members of the "Geronimo" battalion reunited Friday at the Riverview Inn.

Many of the men came from across the country to reunite with their comrades after decades apart.

"There's a lot of these guys I haven't seen in 35 years," said Dayton Herrington, the battalion's retired sergeant major and Clarksville resident. "There's lots and lots of stories here."

And stories there were.

The battalion produced three posthumous Medal of Honor winners and was led by retired Maj. Gen. "Iron Mike" Healy, who later led the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam.

More than 200 members of the battalion shared their tales, laughs and memories about their time in Vietnam. Some were surprised by who they saw.

"All of a sudden they're bald and gray," said Dennis Elwell, who is the mayor of Secaucus, N.J. "It's unbelievable." He noted that many were the same as they were 42 years ago.

"We were tight — a very, very tight group of men," he said.

The group concludes its three-day reunion today after visiting Fort Campbell, where they say some things were the same as when they left.

The group toured the division headquarters, the Air Assault school and watched a parachute demonstration by the 101st Airborne Division Parachute Demonstration Team.

In addition to the Medal of Honor winners, the battalion also was the first Army unit to earn a Navy Presidential Unit Citation for its service with the 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam.

"We really showed those Marines how to dance," said Chuck Huller, a medic and three-time Purple Heart recipient who came to the reunion from New York City.

According to the citation, the unit "successfully executed 80 major combat operations, carrying the battle to the enemy, destroying many of his forces and capturing thousands of tons of weapons and material."

Memories, stories and friends aside, Huller said he came to the reunion for one reason.

"That's why I come to these reunions, to meet and see true American heroes," he said.

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