



SFA Indian Nations Chapter 32/50
1715 Spoke Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73108

MINUTES 13 AUGUST 2022

SFA Chapter 32-50 met at the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Headquarters, 2101 NE 36th Street, Oklahoma City, OK, on Saturday, 13 Aug 2022, at 1200 hours.

Officers Present

President: Jack Farr
Vice President: Ray Williams
Secretary: Charles Watts
Quartermaster: Rick Cacini
Assistant Treasurer/Chaplain: Dick Goodman
Assistant Secretary: Pat Carr

Officers Absent

Treasurer: Jerry Cooper
Website/Medals Administrator: Jerry Cooper
Assistant Treasurer: Ron Siegman

President Jack Farr called the meeting to order at 1200 hours.
Chaplain Dick Goodman led the Special Forces Prayer.
Vice President Ray Williams led the Pledge of Allegiance.
Rafael Elias played, and the members sang the Ballad of the Green Beret.

Guests

Our Chapter was greatly honored by the presence of SP/5 Dwight W. Birdwell, Oklahoma's newest Medal of Honor winner. This resulted in an excellent turnout, including several members whom we have not seen in a while. Present were Col Kelly Zachgo and husband "Ranger" John Farris, retired SF Col Bill Coultrup, Roger Routh and wife Sylvia, James Vaughn and wife Linda, Frank Rickard, Nokie Klutts, Charlie O'leary, Russ Higbie and last but not least, SARGE CRONIC!

Ladies Auxiliary Report

Although the Ladies Auxiliary now meets only once a quarter, with their next meeting the Thanksgiving luncheon, Ladies Auxiliary President Shirley Williams brought us up to date on Auxiliary activities.

Medals Report

In Jerry Cooper's absence, there was no medals report.

SP/5 Dwight W. Birdwell, Oklahoma's Newest Medal of Honor Winner



So far as we know, SP/5 Dwight W. Birdwell is the first Medal of Honor winner to speak to our Chapter, or even attend a meeting. As if he did not honor us enough by accepting our invitation to speak, SP/5 Birdwell has requested to affiliate with SFA Chapter 32-50 as an honorary member!

Dwight Birdwell was born in Amarillo, Texas, on January 19, 1948. A member of the Cherokee Tribe, he grew up in the small, Cherokee community of Bell, Oklahoma, right on the Arkansas border. In 1966, after graduating from high school in nearby Stilwell, Birdwell enlisted in the Army as a tanker. Following service in Korea, he was assigned to Troop C, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division, in the Republic of Vietnam.

Dwight wanted to be an Airborne soldier, the natural desire of every red-blooded fighting man (and woman), but, at the time of his only opportunity to sign up for Airborne School, the mess sergeant refused to excuse him from KP, and he did not get to apply. Even though SP/5 Birdwell lacked the pride of having Airborne wings on his chest, his bravery under fire earned him the Medal of Honor!

On January 31, 1968, the date of the lunar new year, or "Tet", Communist forces in Vietnam launched an all-out offensive, and they came dangerously close to capturing the whole country. Birdwell's unit was tasked with defending the critically important Tan Son Nhut Air Base, where the enemy had breached the defenses.

Dwight Birdwell's actions are stated in his Medal of Honor Citation, as follows:

Specialist Five Dwight W. Birdwell distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with C Troop,

3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division in the Republic of Vietnam on 31 January 1968. On this date, C Troop was ordered to move south to help repel an enemy attack on Tan Son Nhut Airbase. As the C Troop column of tanks and armored personnel carriers approached the west gate of Tan Son Nhut Airbase, it came under intense enemy fire from a building to its right. Unbeknown to C Troop, it had driven directly into an enemy force consisting of three battalions. The column tried to push through the initial attack but the lead tank, crippled by a rocket-propelled grenade explosion, was blocking the way forward. C Troop immediately came under heavy enemy fire from both sides of the road. Specialist Five Birdwell, upon seeing that his tank commander was wounded by enemy fire, immediately went to his aid. Under intense enemy fire, he lowered the injured tank commander to the ground, and moved him to safety. Specialist Five Birdwell then, with complete disregard for his own safety, mounted the tank and assumed the tank commander's position. Standing in the tank commander's hatch with the upper half of his body exposed to heavy enemy fire, Specialist Five Birdwell used the tank's .50 caliber machine gun and 90mm main gun to suppress the enemy attack. With the ammunition for the 90mm main gun exhausted, he continued to fire the .50 caliber machine gun until it overheated. At this point, Specialist Five Birdwell, rather than abandoning his position, continued to engage the enemy with his M-16 rifle, sometimes exposing his entire body to enemy fire in order to engage the enemy from a better vantage point. When a U.S. helicopter crashed nearby, Specialist Five Birdwell, under withering enemy fire, dismounted and moved to the helicopter where he retrieved two M-60 machine guns and ammunition. After giving one M-60 and ammunition to a fellow soldier, he remounted his tank and used the other M-60 to again engage the enemy. Specialist Five Birdwell continued to engage the enemy with complete disregard for his own safety until the M-60 he was firing was hit by enemy fire. Specialist Five Birdwell, now wounded in the face, neck, chest, and arms, dismounted the tank but refused to be medically evacuated. Instead, Specialist Five Birdwell, under enemy fire, rallied fellow soldiers to advance toward the front of the armored column where they set up a defensive position by a large tree. From this position, he and the other soldiers engaged the enemy with M-16 fire and grenades. As the enemy fire lessened, Specialist Five Birdwell gathered ammunition from disabled vehicles and helped wounded soldiers move to safer positions. His leadership and tenacity under fire inspired the other C Troop soldiers to continue fighting against the superior enemy force, and directly contributed to the enemy's ultimate defeat. Specialist Five Birdwell's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Months later, on the fourth of July, 1968, Dwight Birdwell again risked his life to rescue more American soldiers, some wounded, who were stranded in an enemy-occupied village. Birdwell exposed himself to heavy enemy fire to reach a damaged armored personnel carrier, where he loaded his wounded comrades and evacuated them to safety. In addition to the Medal of Honor, Birdwell was also awarded two (2) Purple Hearts and two (2) Silver Stars for Bravery for his courageous action and leadership. In

1997, Birdwell co-authored a book about his Vietnam experiences entitled [A Hundred Miles of Bad Road](#).

Birdwell returned home in December 1968. He attended Northeastern State University, graduating with academic distinction in 1972. He earned a law degree, Juris Doctor, from the University of Oklahoma School of Law, graduating with honors in 1976. Birdwell, a highly respected attorney, has practiced law in Oklahoma City for forty-six years, in the areas of energy, natural resources and Indian law. From 1987 to 1999, Birdwell was a member of the Cherokee Nation's Judicial Appeals Tribunal (Supreme Court). He served as its Chief Justice from 1995–1996, and again from 1998–1999. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame, in 2017. Dwight Birdwell remains an active attorney in Oklahoma City. He and his wife, Virginia, have been married fifty-three years. They have two children and two grandchildren.

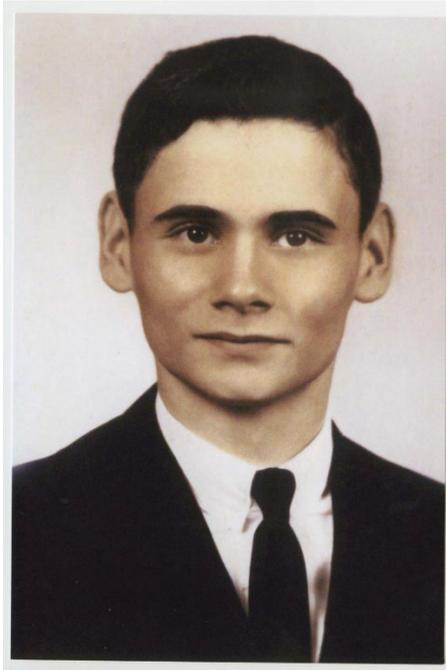
A shy man, Birdwell commented on his awards, "I'm just not used to all this. I did my duty . . . I served with pride. And I might not have done enough, but I did as much as I could." Each of us owes Dwight Birdwell a debt of gratitude and respect.



Bell Grade School, Adair County, Oak, 1st Grade Mid-1950's, second row from wall, five seats back. This building was the first modern school in Adair County.



1949



Stillwell High School senior photo, 1966



Korea, July, 1967



Korea, N of Imjin River, just S of DMZ



C Troop Tank, Vietnam, late 67-early 68. Note RPG plate protection on side



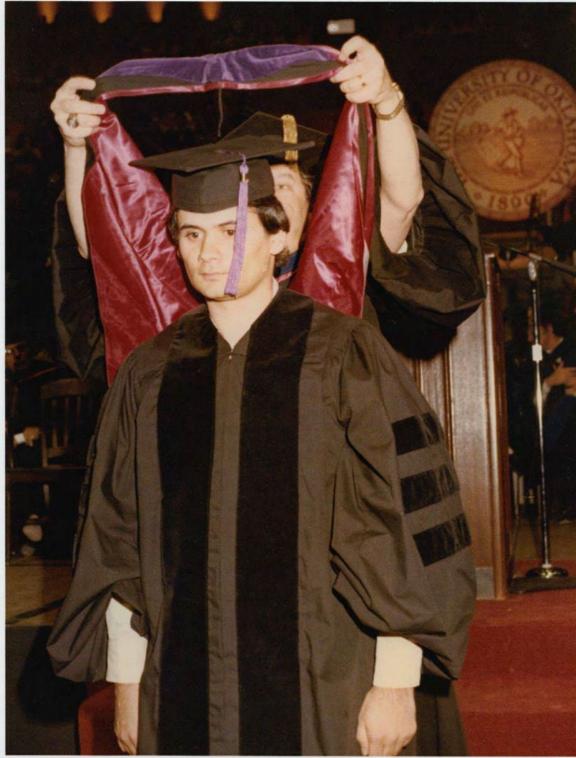
C Troop Tank stuck in mud, rainy season



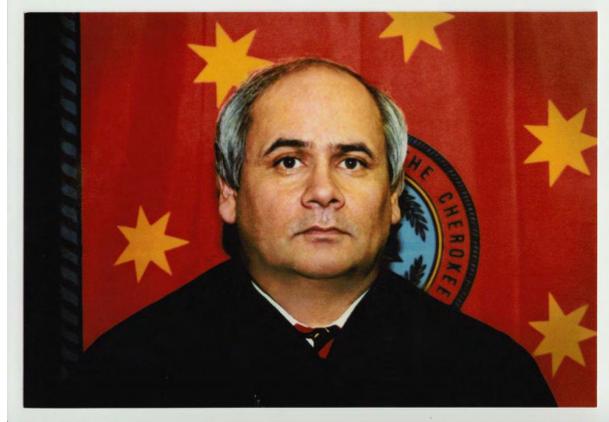
Birdwell in RVN



C Troop Tank, C-35, captured by NVA at Hoc Mon, Feb. 1968.
This was DWB's assigned tank on 31 Jan 1968, at TSN Airbase



1976 Law School Graduation



Cherokee Nation Court Picture



DWB recent photo

Treasurer's Report:

In the absence of Treasurer Jerry Cooper, Charles Watts read the 31 July 2022, Treasurer's Report, as follows :

General Fund	\$3,415.89
Medals account	\$8,231.07
Green Beret Benevolent Fund	\$2,704.00
Total	\$14,350.96

Ellis Edwards' motion to approve the Treasurer's report, which was seconded by Russ Higbie, passed unanimously.

Oklahoma Veterans Council Report

Rick Cacini reported that a lawsuit is being filed challenging Governor Stitt's appointments to the Veterans' Council.

Quartermaster Report

No report.

Chaplain's Corner

No report.

Old Business

The National SFA Convention will be in Colorado Springs, 20-24 Sep, 2022. We voted at the July meeting to cancel our October meeting due to the national convention. **PLEASE NOTE THERE WILL NO OCTOBER MEETING!** Our next meeting will be Saturday, 10 SEP 2022, at the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Headquarters.

The Oklahoma Military Hall Of Fame induction banquet is scheduled Sat, 29 OCT 2022, at the Embassy Suites, in Norman. Members are encouraged to attend. Also, the OKMHOF needs volunteers to serve as ambassadors/escorts.

If anyone can find a pizza company that is willing to deliver to the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Headquarters, we would try pizza at meetings again.

Historian/MAJ (Ret.) Joe Todd is continuing to record videos of combat veterans. He can be contacted at (918) 914-2179.

Please give Pat Carr your submissions for The Drop.

Please also give Pat Carr your old photographs (in uniform or out) to be preserved on the chapter website. We also still need names of chapter officers since inception.

Ellis Edwards' motion to approve the meeting minutes for 9 Jul 2022, seconded by Jim Selders, was unanimously approved.

New Business

Resignation of Jerry Cooper

Our Treasurer, Website Administrator, and Medals Program Administrator, Jerry Cooper, is resigning for health reasons. Below is a portion of his letter:

Jack, after much contemplation on my current medical condition, I have decided I need to reduce my SFA Chapter 32-50 activities. This is not a spur of the moment decision, but one that I have wrestled with over several days.

As you know, I have undergone multiple surgeries during the past 9 months. Because of my recent shoulder surgery, I have incurred many complications reducing my ability to work on my computer, caused anger and memory issues related to the pain medication and inability to sleep normally.

I have also decided to cancel my reservations for the SFA Convention scheduled next month in Colorado Springs, because I do not think it would be wise due to my current medical problems and forecasted limiting restrictions.

At this time, our Chapter has not committed to renting a vendors table. Also, maybe another Chapter Member that will be attending can make the Power Point Presentation that I have prepared on the SFA Award of excellence at the General Membership Meeting, or the presentation can be plated as a stand in presentation.

Listed below are the current positions I am holding in SFA Chapter 32-50, along with the target date I am planning to cease the respective activity:

#	Position/Activity	Resignation Date
1	Chapter 32-50 Webmaster	Oct 1, 2022
2	Chapter Website Administrator	Oct 1, 2022
3	Chapter 32-50 Treasurer	July 1, 2023
4	ROTC Medals Sales Coordinator	July 1, 2023
5	Green Beret ROTC Medals Webmaster	July 1, 2023

SFA Chapter 32-50 Member, Pat Carr, would be an excellent candidate in taking over the two website positions on October 1, 2022. Perhaps, Rick Cacini would be willing to take over as the JROTC Medal Sales Coordinator on July 1, 2023, after assisting me during Jan thru July 2023. Otherwise, perhaps we should negotiate a takeover by SFA National.

I believe I have made many positive contributions for SFA Chapter 32-50 over the years, but it would not have been possible without your support and encouragement as the Chapter President. I regret having to do this, but I believe it's time to step back and enjoy my retirement with my wife.

Pat Carr and Rick Cacini to Assume Duties

After meeting with the Executive Committee, Pat Carr has agreed to assume duties as Chapter Webmaster and Website Administrator. Rick Cacini has agreed to

assist Jerry as ROTC Medals Coordinator and Medals Webmaster until Jerry steps down, when Rick will take over.

50/50 Raffle

Butch Graham won \$127.00 in the 50/50 raffle, which he donated back to the Chapter. Those who wish to participate in the 50/50 drawing should bring small bills. Five dollars buys six tickets.

Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be Saturday, 10 SEP 2022, at the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Headquarters (former Krause USAR Ctr & HQ for Co. A, 2d Bn, 12th SFGA), 2101 NE 36th Street, Oklahoma City. The building is just east of Martin Luther King Blvd, which runs north-south. The entrance to parking is on the north side of NE 36th Street. The social hour begins at 1100 hours, and the business meeting begins at 1200 hrs. Please remember the building has no bar or refreshments.

De Oppresso Liber,

Charles J. Watts
D-2833
Secretary